

# ASTRONOMY IN VEDIC LITERATURE

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*The victory of Aryans over ethnic people of Indus plateau left them initially to scattered and lonely lives. At that stage they were intimately connected with neighbouring environments and cosmic events. The daily rotation of day and night, apparent motion of the sun, seasonal changes, appearance and disappearance of the moon in the night sky, made deep impressions in their mind, which at the end took the shape of a new branch of science—Astronomy.*

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**N**early two thousand years before the birth of Christ the Aryan people settled along the plateau of Indus river after their invasion over ethnic people. On those lonely days these people had the environment as their only companion. Most of them had to settle in scattered groups and their lives were surrounded by forests with trees and shrubs, rivers, hillocks and many other living and non-living objects. Their day-time lives were influenced by the rays of the sun. They were astonished to find the morning sun rising in the east, crossing the sky during day time and setting in the western sky in the evening. They stared at the night moon which was found to change its shape and size every night and became a glowing disc on a night known as 'Pūrṇimā' or Full Moon night.

From the next day the shape and size of the moon was found to decrease every night ultimately to vanish completely on a night 15 days after 'Pūrṇimā'. This dark night without moonlight was known as 'Amāvasyā' or New Moon night. They were astonished to find many other cosmic bodies in the sky such as stars, planets, comets, meteors etc. Their long association with the surroundings helped them to learn more about environment. In their clannish lives they had to collect their food from the neighbouring forests. They also had to depend on cultivation of land which were largely influenced by climatic conditions particularly on rain, seasonal changes, sunny days etc. The appearance and disappearance of the sun, the moon, the stars, the regular changes of seasons

made deep impressions on the minds of the simple-hearted Aryans and helped them to develop deep curiosity which ultimately transformed into a new branch of science --- Astronomy.

Vedic people were astonished to look at the glowing yellow disc of the sun :

Yo Bhānunā Pṛithibīm Dyāmuṣemāmāṭaṣān Rodasī  
Anṭarikṣam || RV 10.88.3

[( *Oh Sun God !*) You have enveloped the whole world, sky and the heaven with your bright radiation.]

The auspicious moment just before sunrise is known as 'Ūṣā' (Dawn). Every night after the end of darkness, the arrival of the sun is declared by Ūṣā. The alleviator of all human ailments, the beautiful and dynamic Ūṣā appeared after the end of a dark night (RV 1.123.1).

Penetrating the deep darkness of night appeared an enormous ball of fire on the eastern sky:

Agñirbhānunā Ruṣaṭā Swaṅga Ā Yāṭo Viśwā  
Sadmānyaprāḥ || RV 10.1.1

[The glowing flame of the fire (sun) enveloped all dwelling-places of the world by the brilliance of its light.]

The sun rises in the eastern sky :

Idamuṣyaṭ Puruṣamaṁ Purasṭājyoṣiṣtamaso  
Bayunāvadaṣṭhāt | RV 4.51.1

[This formidable luminous light rises in the eastern sky removing darkness of night ]

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