

Rigvedic Pur

N Kazanas, Omilos Meleton, Athens, Oct. 2004.

The word *pur* occurs in the *RV* (= *Ṛgveda*) more than 70 times, when compounds *pūrbhīd* and *puramḍarā* are put aside. Mayrhofer (1956-) rightly questions a relation with *piparti*⁽¹⁾ 'füllt, fills' but surprisingly makes no connection with *piparti*⁽²⁾ 'rettet, schützt / saves, protects'; the ancient *Dhātupāṭha* gives √*pṛ* *pālanapūraṇayoh* 'in the sense of protecting and filling', where obviously the first meaning connects with *pur*.

The word is variously translated as castle, citadel, fort, fortification, fortress, rampart, stronghold, wall and city or town. It is recognized as cognate with Greek *πόλις polis*, Lithuanian *pilis* and Lettish *pils*, all three meaning 'town, fort'. However, a careful examination of the use of *pur* in the *RV* (with the aid of A. Lubotsky's *Concordance...* and the *Vedic Index*) shows that it has only the meaning of defence or protection. Take the example of *Suṣṇa*'s 'mobile' *carīṣṇu pur*, VIII 1, 28. None of the structures mentioned above can fit here: no such structure in the rigvedic material world is mobile and, in any case, this *pur* belongs to the demon of drought, a supernatural figure. (It was once suggested that *pur* might be a chariot, but *pur* is a defensive structure and not offensive like the chariot.) K Geldner translates *wandelnde Burg* 'mobile/mutable town/fort' and adds in a note (28a) *die Zauberburg* 'the magical Burg' which seems correct (1951-7). He helps further by giving two references: (a) I 121, 10 is ambiguous because it speaks of light and darkness, of *Suṣṇa*'s *ojas* 'might' and of his *phaliga* which has uncertain meaning but has been thought to be 'cloud' or 'cave'; (b) V 31, 7 is unambiguous in that it lauds *Indra*'s strength shown in killing the serpent *Ahi*, in arresting *Suṣṇa*'s *māyā* 'magic, occult power' and in driving away the *Dasyus*. *Māyā* will be discussed later on but we can note here that it is not unconnected with *pur*. Then, ṛṣi *Agastya* prays (I 166, 8) to the *Maruts* (regarded as Storm-gods) to protect (*rakṣ-*) from evil (*agha*) and injury (*abhihruti*) the man they favour (*av-*) "with hundred-fold purs *śatābhujibhiḥ pūrbhīḥ*": here too no physical structures with hundred walls or folds could possibly protect a man from evil (sin or impurity) and injury; no such many-walled structure existed (allowing for a hyperbole) and, in any case, the *Maruts* are not builders. Here, however, Geldner gives (ibid) *Mit hundertfachen Burgen* 'with 100fold Burgen (=towns/forts)' – which means nothing. Of course it could be argued that the use here is metaphorical, but we shall find that in all instances the use is "metaphorical" and that *pur* rarely denotes unambiguously a material fortification and nowhere a town. Most frequently it denotes a supernatural, occult or magical protective force or field.

In a reply to Prof. M. Witzel D Frawley thinks that the *RV* is connected with a "semi-urban culture like the Harappan" (2002:13). He states: "the term *pur* for city (a term that obviously means city in Greek thought, ie Pura = Polis) is common throughout the text [of the *RV*]". The Greek and Baltic cognates being far too distant cannot furnish acceptable evidence for rigvedic usage any more than the later use of *pur/pura/purī*; so all this must be disregarded in respect of the *RV*. However, as was indicated earlier, a metaphorical use of a material defensive means should not be ruled out. Starting with a simple protective bulwark (even a hump on the ground or a fissure) this developed into an elaborate defensive wall protecting a human settlement; this in turn extended to the human settlement, i.e. a town/city fortified. This is well reflected in the Greek *akro-polis*, usually the fort a little above the urban area, or in the later Indic *-pura* 'a (fortified) town', as in *Hastinā-pura*, *Jai-pur(a)*, etc. But in the *RV* *pur* has no such significance.

Frawley continues, "Both the Vedic people and their enemies have a hundred, i.e. several [purs] (*śatapura* eg *Rigveda* 6.48.8; *RV* 2.4.6; *RV* 4.27.1)". The first reference VI 48,8 is a prayer to god *Agni* to protect (*pāhi*) from anxiety (*aṃhas*) the one-who-kindles-the-fire with *śatām pūrbhīḥ* "a hundred purs" – whatever *pur* might be. Frawley is misreading the text, which does not say there are 100 'cities' but that a specific type of person should be protected with 100 *purs*; obviously, as above, a fire-kindler can't be protected from anxiety with 100 forts or cities! The second reference is to *Indra* crushing the 100 purs of *Śambara*, a much repeated motif in the *RV*. If *Śambara* is not a native aboriginal king against whom the Aryans are fighting

(and Frawley like myself does not believe any such thing) but is a fiend or demonic figure in a magical, *non-material* dimension of the world we know, then his 100 (or 99) *purs*, prove nothing about the existence of actual Aryan cities. The third reference is again to 100 *purs* but these are *āyasī*, i.e. of metal (copper, bronze ?), and surely the Vedic people had no metal-made cities. What is more, these 100 metallic *purs* are said to guard/confine/conceal (*rakṣ-*) the celestial Eagle (or some such divine figure). There is no conceivable sense in which 100 cities could possibly do such a thing; here Geldner translates *hundert eherne Burgen* '100 bronze Burgs' but connects them with demons (*Dämonen*, n 1c). (Further down, note 2, I consider the possibility that these *purs* are within the womb *garbhe*.) Consequently all three references (and one could quote several more just as inapt) do not indicate that there were cities in the ordinary world of the *RV*. However, Frawley refers also to "the Vedic city or *pur* as 'wide, broad and extensive'" (in *RV* I 189,2). But in this hymn also the poet prays to Agni to lead him and his clan or people afresh and with prosperity (*svastibhiḥ*) beyond all difficulties and become (*bhāvā*) a *pur* "wide, broad and extensive" for them and their offspring (*tokāya tānayāya*). It is again inconceivable that Agni would become a "city". So Frawley's interpretation of *pur* is wrong.¹

R.S. Bisht, the eminent archaeologist, excavator at Banawali, also takes *pur* to be 'city/town'; this is one of his main points of convergence between the *RV* and the Harappan or Indus-Sarasvatī Civilization (1999/2000). He gives a long list of references assuming *pur* to mean 'town' but does not apply philology to analyse contextually any one of them: the mere repetition that *pur* indicates a town/fort proves nothing. What is worse, there are mistranslations of some passages in the *RV* where the indeclinable *purās* 'before, in front' (with uddāta on the termination) is (inadvertently?) taken as the nom/acc pl *purās* 'towns' (with accent on the stem: p 410-411 and n 190). Also, he should know there is no evidence of Harappan 'hundred-buttress forts' and metallic ones (*āyasī pur* in *RV*) nor of towns destroyed by human violence (eg fire). The *RV* is definitely pre-Harappan on two very significant counts (and others, less important). First, it knows not rice *vrihi*, so essential to later rituals, cotton *karpāsa*, silver *rajata-*, brick *iṣṭakā* and fixed hearths/altars (amply attested in the Brāhmaṇas and/or Sūtras) – all of them important items of the Harappan culture. Second, the Sarasvatī river dried up almost completely by c 1900 BC, and *RV* VII, 95, 2 says that the river flows "from the mountains to the ocean". So the *RV* is earlier than 1900 BC. However, G. Possehl, another expert on the ISC, examined (1998) all the palaeoenvironmental and geological data relevant to the Sarasvatī and concluded that the river could have flowed down to the ocean only before 3200 *at the very latest*, preferring a date closer to c 3800! P.H. Francfort had arrived at a similar conclusion six years earlier (1992). Between, say, 3200 and 1900 the river stopped flowing into the ocean and went through further stages of dessication. So, on this evidence, the *RV* is pre-Harappan; it is the Brāhmaṇas that converge with early Harappan phases. We should note that in a recent article S. H. Levitt by comparing the development of religious themes and images in the early Mesopotamian and Vedic traditions arrives at the same conclusion, namely that the early *RV* may well be before 3000 (Levitt 2003). That the Rigvedic people, the five traditional tribes, lived in communities is undoubted. Although nomads should not be excluded, many of the communities were settled along the banks of the 7 rivers and chiefly the Sarasvatī (*RV* III, 23, 4; VI, 61, 12; etc). They had agriculture, as is testified by hymns IV, 57 (to *kṣetrapati* 'Lord of the field/soil'), VIII, 91, 5 (girl Apālā and her father's field), X, 101, 3 (cultivation) and by so many implements – *khanitra* 'shovel', *lāṅgala*, *sīra* 'plough', *sr̥ṇī* 'sickle', etc. Then, they were weavers with loom, shuttle, warp and woof (*RV* I, 134, 4; II, 36, 6; VI, 9, 2-3; etc). They also had metallurgy and smithies of sorts (IV, 2, 17; V, 9, 5; IX, 112, 2; etc). All such activities imply a settled people, not nomad pastoralists (as the distorting Aryan Invasion Theory would have them). But the towns of the Harappan mature or late phases are a far cry from the Rigvedic settlements – which are more accurately reflected in Plato's early ideal community, leading a simple agricultural life, eating barley-bread, drinking wine in moderation and singing hymns to

¹ If one thinks the rigvedic people lived in towns and had forts, one should look for other kinds of evidence – though I think there is no indication of urban structures in the *RV*.

the gods (*Republic* 372E). The word *pur* provides no evidence at all for the existence of towns or forts (as in historical times) in the Rigvedic world, as is shown in this study,¹ though some crude material defences were used at times.

I shall not tire the reader with other writings which claim that *pur* denotes 'city/fort' or any of the meanings listed above (see particularly W Rau 1976 and Mayrhofer 1996). I shall only advert briefly to the *Vedic Index* (I, 538-9), which also refers to I 189, 2 with its *prithvī bahulā na urvī pur*, stating that this "fortification" must have been "of considerable size": I dealt with this in an earlier paragraph. This valuable work notes that "a fort 'made of stone' (*aśmanmayī*) is mentioned", also "strongholds of iron (*āyasī*) ... but these are probably only metaphorical". It refers to the "Autumnal (*śāradī*) forts" which "apparently" belong to *Dāsas*, perhaps "against Aryan attacks or against inundations in that season," and to forts "with a hundred walls (*śatabhunjī*)". It concludes by mentioning the "siege of forts" in post-rigvedic *Samhitās* and *Brāhmaṇas* and that fire was used in these sieges according to *RV* VII 5,3.

This is a good brief summary but the comments in the *Vedic Index* are misleading since they are based on the Aryan Invasion Theory. Starting with the last point – the use of fire during sieges is imaginary. It is well established now that no Harappan towns had been sacked by allegedly invading Aryans. *RV* VII 5,3 says merely that the 'dark tribes' (*viśa āsikinīḥ*) fled in disarray for fear of Agni Vaiśvānara, the god (not ordinary fire, surely) who shone glowing while 'rending' (*darayan*, not 'burning down') their purs. The 'dark tribes' could be fiends or fears active at night and/or evil, demonic forces.

The references to later texts concern conflicts between *asuras* 'demons' and *devas* 'gods'. In fact, in *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* I 23 the Asuras made the earth a copper/bronze (*ayasmayī pur*), the Midspace (*antarikṣa*) a silver (*rajatā pur*) and the sky a golden (*hariṇī*) one. Obviously these *purs* have nothing to do with any kind of human towns or citadels. The same *Brāhmaṇa*, a little further on, II 11, says that the gods, in order to protect their sacrifice from the Asuras, placed around the sacrificial post three *purs agnimayī* 'made of Agni'. Surely it would be absurd to suppose that Agni built three 'fortifications' of stone or metal or mud or wood round the post. In fact this same passage explains that the repulsing of the Asuras is done by taking the holy fire round the place thrice (*paryagni kurvanti ... tripuram paryasante*)! Here surely we have a kind of ritual magic. And the same is found in *Taittiriya Samhitā* II 5, 3 where if a man comes under attack of witchcraft (*abhicaryamāṇa*), he should perform the ten-night-ritual and thereby surround himself with the protection of a *devapur* 'divine *pur*'! In the same *Samhitā* VI 2, 3 the Asuras had three *purs*, the lowest being of copper, the next of silver and the highest of gold: Rudra cleft them with an arrow made up of the powers of Agni, Soma and Viṣṇu.

The *pur* of stone (*aśmanmayī*) occurs only once in *RV* IV 30,20, where Indra overthrew 100 of them for the benefit of his protégé Divodāsa, a liberal offerer. On the face of it these stone-forts would seem to belong to human enemies of Divodāsa. But from other references to this incident (I 51,6; 112,14, the *Aśvins* help here; 130,7; etc, but especially II 14,6 and 19,6) these *purs* belong to the drought-demon Śambara. So even these cannot be said to be in any way ordinary human forts (or cities) built of stone.

I submit that the *aśmanmayī pur* no less than the *āyasī* 'metallic' one is metaphorical denoting a degree of hardness and colour or some such quality (like the silver and golden ones in *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* and other post-rigvedic texts).

The references to metallic *purs* are many. One at least says that Indra with the bolt in his arms killed the Dasyus and brought down (*nitārit*) [their] metallic *purs* (II 20,8). Here we might think the Dasyus are local aborigines destroyed by the invading Aryans, but they had no metal-forts, surely. We can say that this is a metaphor and refers to hardness and/or colour also. But I don't see why the poet should describe an ordinary fortification of stone+mud+wood as

"metallic". Stone is just as shiny and hard as the metal *ayas* and mud or wood or both can hardly be shiny or hard like metal. (We don't really know what is involved exactly since the construction and constitution of the purs are nowhere given in the *RV*.) Moreover it is Indra, a super-natural force, that destroys them – not men's weapons. Let us see the other references. We have already examined the 100 metal-forts that guarded the Eagle (IV 27,1): here these forts are in the womb *garbhe* (or under the charge of demons).² Then three references (I 58,8; VIII 3,7 and 15,14) are prayers to Agni to protect the poet (and his people) from various calamities including anxiety *amhas* (I 58,8) with *purs* of metal. Another one, X 101,8, is a prayer to the Viśvedevās to "fashion (*kr̥ṇudhvam*) inviolable metal *purs*" in connection with the pouring of the soma-drink; since only demons interfere with the sacrifice, the required *purs* would be of such substance as to stop those other-worldly forces. Another one (VIII 95,1) calls the river Sarasvatī "a metal *pur*" which is a secure support/defence (*dharuṇa*). In yet another one (VIII 100,8) the Eagle (*suparṇa* here) pierced the metal *pur* with the speed of mind, flew to heaven and fetched soma to the Boltbearer. All are non-material *purs* including those of the Dasyus in II 20,8. The three of Agni and the one of the Viśvedevās are certainly magical or super-natural in some way.

However, the reference to the seven *purs* of the enemies of king Sudās in VII 18, 13 seems to be different. This hymn refers to the fighting of Sudās and the confederation of the ten kings, an internecine war which Sudās won with Indra's help. In this hymn Indra destroyed all their 'fixed/firm defences' (*dṛṃhitāṇi*) and their 7 *purs*, which here probably describe some kind of material structure. But even here some aspects are ambiguous. It is not as though Sudās attacked the 10 kings on their own native ground. This battle took place by the river Puruṣṇī where Sudās and his army was hard pressed, surrounded on all sides by the more numerous forces of the 10 kings (*RV* VII, 83, 6-8). What exactly were the *dṛṃhitāṇi* and *purs* destroyed by Indra? Surely the confederate foes could have had no forts/citadels, unless they were 'secure defensive positions'. But I am again inclined to think that the reference is to non-material protective means. The incident is most probably historical, but the number 7 has mystical associations and occurs in other cases.

There are some references to 'autumnal' *sāradī purs* but not many. In I 131,4 Indra overpowered unspecified "autumnal *purs*" known in former times. In I 174,2 he broke down the seven autumnal *purs*, shelter of tribes "with abusive speech *mṛdhrāvāc*". Here these tribes could be human beings. In VI 20,10 Indra again destroys seven autumnal *purs*, shelter of Dāsas. Here too the Dāsas may be said to be human beings. These may be instances where the *purs* could belong to humans. However, the recurring mystical number 7 and the destruction by a god introduce strong elements of doubt and suggest again the supernatural. Moreover, I wonder if we are entitled to translate this adjective *sārada-* as 'autumnal'. It would be more correct, perhaps, in these cases to translate as 'ancient/old/enduring', or 'annual' in the sense of being renewed every year. These are ancient or annual (and to us) supernatural means of protection.

In connection with the supernatural aspect, most interesting is the curious reference to Śuṣṇa's 'mobile' *carīṣṇu pur*, VII 1,28, which Indra crushed with blows of his bolt. Clearly, a mobile *pur*, as shown earlier, is beyond all concepts of forts, cities, ramparts or whatever, in the physical world of the Vedic people. (Quite rightly Geldner connected it with magic.) Only a

² Here Geldner and others think that demons hold imprisoned the Eagle in these metal forts. This is possible, of course. Truth is that this myth with its various interconnections is lost to us. There is not enough information in the *RV* to enable us to reconstruct it even approximately. Post-rigvedic sources with their fragmented references already indicate that they no longer have it complete or understand it fully. For references, see *Vedic Index* under 'Vāmadeva'. I find most interesting the re-occurrence of the verse *RV* IV 27, 1 in *Aitareya Upanishad* II 1, 5 and its interpretation there. The Upanishad suggests that here the spirit of seer Vāmadeva is confined and breaks free.

concept within what is usually regarded as the "mythological" super-natural sphere can make sense of Śuṣṇa's *carīṣṇu pur*. This at once illumines and suggests a similar sense for Agni's metallic *purs* and particularly the one which is *śatābhujī*, VII 15,14: obviously this fiery field with 100 folds or encirclements can only be magical or occult. One may argue that it is ordinary physical fire that destroys the *purs* of enemies but it is difficult to see how such a fire (or many fires) could repulse inimical armies. (Surely the enemies also could use fire as a weapon.) Fire would dispel the darkness of night or creatures of darkness like ghosts and fiends – or wild animals. Then, there are the prayers that Agni should guard people against distress and anxiety with his *purs* (I 58,8; VI 48,8), which would involve an esoteric psychological or spiritual type of protective means. The *śatābhujī pur* of the Maruts, I 166,8, is not very different, as was indicated earlier.

Just as interesting is the reference to *āmāsu pūrṣu parāḥ* wherein is protected the Offspring-of-Waters *Apām Napāt* II 35. W O' Flaherty translates this as "far away in fortresses of unbaked bricks" (1981:105) and one can't help but wonder where she found the "bricks", since the *RV* mentions them nowhere! I can only assume she follows Geldner who translates *In den rohen Burgen* 'in raw towns/forts', which means nothing, and who, to cover up the deficiency, adds in a note (6c) *nicht wie die gewöhnlichen Burgen aus gebrannten Ziegelsteinen gemacht* 'not like the usual Burgs made from baked bricks' (!) without telling us where in the *RV* we find 'usual Burgs made from baked bricks' (ibid) – since there are no such constructions! Then O' Flaherty in an explanatory note mentions Agni, "safe... among enemies who do not control fire and so do not fire their bricks, or who (as the sun) is safe from his enemies... in his own 'natural' citadels not made of baked bricks, ie the clouds". The confusion here is almost unbelievable. Why and how exactly would Agni feel safe in such conditions and who are these "enemies"? Fire's biggest enemy is water; so fire dives and dwells in the waters protected within fortresses of unbaked bricks! Is this at all sensible? I don't think so. As for the sun, are not the clouds themselves his only traditional enemies? Neither unbaked-brick-fortresses (in water?!) nor physical enemies are involved here. *āma-* here (and perhaps elsewhere) should mean 'non-artificial, natural'. Thus *Apām Napāt* in his own non-artificial, natural, divine condition with his own occult, defensive powers (*pūrṣu*) is protected against any malignity or niggardliness (*arāti*) and falsehood or unrighteousness (*anṛta*). If we had even one description of material forts/towers elsewhere in the *RV*, we could take *pūrṣu* here as being metaphorical towers (billows, perhaps).

Another interesting case is the *gómati púr* in *RV* VIII, 6, 2. The phrase at first sight presents a difficulty since the adjective is usually translated as 'having kine'. But *go-* can mean 'wealth' by extension and certainly 'star, light'. So the phrase can just as plausibly be translated as 'protective-fold rich in light'. So this is ambiguous: it could be a pen with cows also but hardly a city.

There are many more instances of *pur* without any other distinctive feature: I 33,13; II 19,6; IV 16,4 and 26,3; VI 20,3; VII 19,5; etc. All the non-divine *purs* are destroyed by Indra mainly, to a much lesser extent by Agni (VI 16,39; VII 5,3; X 46,5) and even less by Soma (IX 48,2). In one case Indra is said to have shattered (*vṛṇak*) the *purs* of Cumuri, Dhuni, Pipru, Śambara and Śuṣṇa – all demonic figures. Elsewhere he destroys other demons' *purs*, Vala's (VI 18,5) and Namuci's and Vaṅṛda's (I 53, 7-8). Often he uses his bolt (eg I 33,13) which is said to be his bull (I 131, 3) but in other cases he uses simply his *ojas* 'might/strength' (eg I 53,7) or his *māyā* 'magical power' (I 51,5). He uses this *māyā* in other exploits also as when he stops the overflowing waters of a river or puts to sleep 30.000 Dasas (IV 30,12 and 21). This occult power is of course an attribute of other gods as well, chiefly of (Mitra and) Varuṇa; it is by means of this that Varuṇa, the chief *māyīn* 'wielder of *māyā*', creates and regulates various phenomena in the world.

The power *māyā* is also an attribute of *asuras*, in the later sense of 'demons'. As we saw, in V 31, 7 Śuṣṇa is said to have *māyā*. Then, in X 138,3 Indra destroys the firm works (*dr̥ḥa*, here

but elsewhere *pur*) of demon Pipru who is described as *māyin*; in I 117,3 the Aśvins offset the *māyā* of "the malignant Dasyu" and free Atri. I think that *māyā* and *purs* are connected in that the *purs* are created by gods and asuras with this power. Nowhere in the *RV* do we find one single statement that any *pur* (or *dr̥lha*) was destroyed by human beings just as we find no statement that any *pur* was constructed by human beings (though VI 45, 9 does refer to men's *dr̥lhāni*, which however are created by *māyā*, and asks Indra to destroy them). In VI 75,19 the poet says 'the holy power (or prayer) is my inmost armour' *brāhma vārma mamāntaram*. The divine *pur* is like this inner *varma* which is *brahma*. In fact, in *Atharvaveda* V 8, 6 we find the interesting verse "when [the enemies] attacked the divine strongholds (-*pur*-), the holy-power (*brahma*) made protective armours (*varmāṇi*)" (or "[Indra] made the brahma-power into armours"):³ here we have all three elements. From this point of view the hymns refer perhaps to an age we have long forgotten and ceased to believe in, the age when divine beings mingled with human beings and helped them with divine *purs* against demonic beings and their *purs*. I say "perhaps" because it is difficult for us to accept such a situation as real, yet it does not seem impossible.

In that far distant age some men too are said to have used *māyā* or a manifestation of it as mental power, speech, knowledge, or the holy brahma-power. This spiritual power is used by Vasiṣṭha to help king Sudās defeat his enemies (*brahmaṇā* instr VII 33,3); by the same *brahmaṇā* Atri disclosed the sun (V 40, 6). Viśvāmitra stopped the flow of the rivers by the force of his speech *vacas* (III 33,8 and 10). The Ṛbhus, again, used 'power-of-mind' *manas* (IV 33,9) and 'true holy-spells' *satyamantra* (I 20,2-4) or *dhī* and *dhīti* 'thought, visionary power' (I 110,4; IV 36,2 and 4) to perform their miraculous deeds, like the rejuvenation of the Parents (IV 33,3) and so on; consequently they were given immortality in the mansion of the Sungod (I 110, 2-4). For almost 2000 years Christians, most learned people and scientists as well as uneducated folk, have accepted as true the miracles performed by the prophets of the Old Testament (Moses crossing the Red Sea, etc) and by the apostles and saints (rescuing and healing people). Yet when they meet similar miraculous works by the ṛṣis (= prophets and saints) in the Vedic hymns, they call them "mythology", as if divine powers are restricted only to Christianity. Moreover, the ṛṣis' attainment of a divine condition or immortality is, surely, no more "mythological" (unreal or incredible) than the prophets' and saints' attainment of a celestial or paradisaal state basking in God's radiance. Most modern scholars think to solve the problem of this discrepancy by rejecting all miracles, religion and spirituality – which seems to be a much more general attitude now. But surely the miracle of life, birth and death, and the spirituality of mind, word and action will never cease, however materialist and drab or hedonistic ordinary life becomes.

Indeed, Dr J. Mack, a psychiatrist at Harvard University, writes: "It appears ever more likely that we exist in a multidimensional cosmos or multiverse... The cosmos... far from being an empty place of dead matter and energy appears to be filled with beings, creatures, spirits, intelligences, gods... that have through millennia been intimately involved with human existence" (1999: 169). Thus, there is no reason not to interpret *pur* as a supernatural defence.

³ For similar uses of *brahma* being *varma* see also AV VII 100, 1; VIII 2, 10; IX 2, 16; XVII 1, 27-28: all noted in Geldner (vol 34, p 178, n 19d).

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