There are said to be 33 individual gods (not counting ‘bands’ of gods):
11 each for the three zones of earth, air, and heaven.
There is also a group of gods, said to be 40 in number, called Vísvé dēvāḥ
Celestial gods

1 **Dyaus** (*djęeus ‘sky god’) usually invoked as part of the dual god Dyāvā-pṛthiví (Heaven-and-Earth), killed and ejected from heaven by his oldest son, **Indra**; ruling functions transferred to:

2 **Váruṇa** (< etym. connection to Greek **Ouranos** is now disputed)
   
   He established heaven and earth and regulates the universe, upholding cosmic order (*ṛtá <*h₂r-tó*); Connected to **Ahura Mazdā** in Zoroastrianism.

3 **Mitra** (*mi-tró-s ‘contract’)

   God of contracts, associated (as sun or day) with **Varuṇa** (as darkness or night/evening)

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Varuṇa
Mitra-Varuṇa

• The pairing of Mitra and Varuṇa is more important than either alone.
• They are asuras (divine beings) who possess māyā (occult power);
• Together they are rulers and guardians of the whole world who uphold the order of the universe.
• Mitra and Asura (→ Ahura Mazdā) are represented in Zoroastrianism, so these gods are old.

The Aditya

• Both Mitra and Varuṇa are sons of Aditi a goddess ‘Freedom’ (< *ṇ-dh₁-t-i- ‘unbound’ < *deh₁ ‘bound’), a group called the Aditya
• The Aditya also includes Aryaman, Bhaga (< *bh₂agos), Aṁśa, Dakṣa
• The Adityas are sometimes equated with Zoroastrian Amāṣa Spāṇta (the Life-Giving Immortals)
Celestial Gods (cont.)

4 Sūryā (*sh₂uH₂ieh₂ ‘sun’): goddess of the Sun

5 Savitṛ (*seH-tr- ‘stimulator, generator’, cf. sūnūḥ ‘son’ < *suH-n(e)ú-) god of Stimulation: golden and radiant

6 Pūṣan (< *poulos- ‘to thrive’, an Indo-Iranian root)
   Observer of the universe, transporter of the dead, guardian of prosperity and associated with travel. He moves in a goat-drawn chariot and marries the daughter of Sūryā (the Sun). A connection to Greek Pan is disputed.

Sūryā
Celestial Gods (cont.)

7 The (two) Aśvins (*ēkū-in- ‘horsemen’) or Aśvinā
Inseparable twin Horseman gods, invoked to relieve distress, conected with celestial light and representing half-light, half-dark; sons of Dyaus, they marry the Sun (Sūryā).

8 Uśas (*h₂eus-o-s ‘dawn’): goddess of Dawn, daughter of Dyaus, and sister of Rātrī, goddess of the night. They are paired as a dual divinity Uśāsā-náktā or Náktośāsā

9 Rātrī (Night): sister of Uśas (Dawn)

10 Trīta Aptya (‘Third in the Water’ for the third form of fire, lightning)

11 Mātariśvan: Indian ‘Prometheus’, who stole fire from the gods and gave it to humanity

Aśvins
Atmospheric Gods

1 **Indra**: god of thunder and of battle; most human-like of all the Gods, has superhuman strength and power parallels to Greek demi-god Herakles/Hercules.

2 **Apāṃ nāpāt**: (*h₂ep-oHom *nepōt ‘grandson/nephew’ ‘of the waters’) Son of the Waters, an Indo-Iranian god

3 **Rudra**: (*rud-ró-s < *reúd-H- ‘to cry, weep’) Father of the Maruts, often noisy and wrathful and complaining; replaced by Śivá in later Hinduism

**Indra**
Atmospheric Gods (cont.)

4 Marutas (Maruts): a warrior band of brothers, always mentioned as a group

5 Parjánya: god of Rain and the Rain-cloud

6 Vāta (*ūēh₁-t-os < *ūeh₁ ‘to blow‘): God of the (noisy) Wind; the breath of the gods, also called (or paired with) Vāyú (*ūēh₁-ju-).

7 Āpas (*h₂ēp-os): The Waters, usually represented as mothers

Chthonic/Terrestrial/Earth gods

1 Agni (*h₁egni-s): god of fire; along with Soma he is a deified part of the ritual sacrifice (yajña < *Hīaṅ-g-n-os)

2 Soma: (*seu-mo-s) God of the Soma plant and its juice; the juice is often called mádhu ‘sweet’ (< *médhu ‘MEAD’ < OE medu)

3 Prthiví: Earth goddess, usually in the pairing Dyávā-prthiví, a dual compound meaning Heaven-Earth (Dyaus, Prthiví).

4 Various river goddesses:

Sarasvati, a river in northern India, the most important

Sindhu (= ‘Indus’ River), Vipāś and Śutudrī (tributaries of the Panjāb)
Other Figures

Yamá: Ruler of the Dead whose sister is Yamí. He is the ‘only mortal’, the first to die and the Father of Humanity. They are equivalent to Zoroastrian Yima and Yimeh; Yima may be equated with the Norse Ymir.

Víšṇu: much less important in RV than in later Hinduism: god of ‘3 steps’

Bṛhas-páti, also called Bráhmaṇas-páti, ‘Lord of Prayer’: an Indic god

Púruṣa: the Primal Human: a giant whose body was carved up to create the material universe, not mentioned in any early books

Pitáras: The Fathers, blessed dead who dwell in the third heaven (Víšṇu’s third ‘step’)

Agni
Creation Hymn

• Much is asserted as unknown
• Ffirst there was non-existence (ásat) from which existence (sat) evolved.
• Water was the first material product;
• Heat (tapas) then changed water into desire (káma) and intelligence or mind (mánas)