

Meeting 15: Māyā in the Vedic religion

Wisdom? magic? illusion?

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5 June 2022

Some questions to consider

- What was *māyā*, originally?
 - What were its different aspects within the Vedic religion?
- How did *māyā* evolve in the post-Vedic period?
 - In the *Purāṇa*-s?
- How did *Śramaṇa* & *Vedānta* change the connotations of *māyā*?
- How are non-Hindu conceptions of *māyā* to be distinguished?

Māyā́ in the Ṛg-vedá's lexicon

māyā́ f. (MW on ṚV)

- Art, wisdom, extraordinary or supernatural power
- Illusion, unreality, deception, fraud, trick, sorcery, witchcraft, magic
- An unreal or illusory image, phantom, apparition

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māyā́ f. (Graßmann)

- \sqrt{man} , vgl. *māti*
- Übermenschliche Weisheit oder List, göttliche Kunst oder Zauberkunst, Zauberbild, Trugbild
- Weise oder listige Anschläge (pl.)
- Zauberei von bösen, mit Dämonen in Verbindung gedachten Menschen

Māyā́ in the Ṛg-vedá's lexicon

- Mentioned 39 times in ṚV
- Good
 - Mitrásya Váruṇasya
 - Indrásya
 - Ásurasya
 - Of the Sun & Moon
 - Of Tváṣṭṛ
- Bad
 - Dāśasya
 - Ádevasya Vṛtrásya
 - Dānavásya

The māyā-bhedā hymn (10.177)

- Very varied interpretations
- Sun? bird? more spiritual?
- What is māyā here? illusion?

Māyā́ in the Atharva-vedá

- Generally same as in RV
- But more emphasis on sorcery aspect given context
- Also, importantly: AV 8.10.22
 - Māyā́ supposedly “personified”
 - Really title for a woman

Māyā & morality

- Is māyā deceit?
- Is māyā a bad thing?
- Similarity to Abrahamic religions?

Māyā outside the Vedā

- Emphasis on illusion develops
- Emphasis on deceit still present
- Emphasis on power & magic?

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Interesting read

- Hager, B. "Die Entwicklung des Māyā-Begriffes im Indo-Arischen."
1983.