

Meeting 42: Booty & trade

The Vedic economy

Nikhil Surya Dwibhashyam

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Why a Véda discussion group?

- What is Vedic literature?
 - Sámhitā-s
 - Bráhmaṇa-s
 - ĀṢS 24.1.31: Mántra–Bráhmaṇayor Veda-nāma-d^heyám
 - Others? What is Śrúti?

Why a Véda discussion group?

- Véda-s vs. Upaniṣád-s, Itihāśá-s, Purāṇá-s, Vedāntá
 - AV 15.6.11–12?
 - Later philosophies like monism (ádvāita)
 - Moral–political subtexts
- Modern (religious, scholarly) fixation upon later literature

What is there to discuss?

- History & linguistics
- Metaphysics of Vedic religion
- Exegetical narratives
 - Western vs. Eastern
 - Scholarly “vs.” religious
- Moral principles
- Nuances of Śrāutá ritual
- Applying Vedic principles to our lives

Our plans

- Weekly “general audience” meetings on Sundays at 1000 EST
 - Followed by in-depth literature meeting at 1130 EST
- Different topic/aspect/angle discussed every week
- Format:
 - Præsentation
 - Free-form discussion
- Eventually something more
 - Poëtry composition
 - Children's books
 - Documentation
 - Actual rituals

WhatsApp group & Discord server

<https://chat.whatsapp.com/IXCQEkhfrcwHI7CNY8Fgat>
<https://discord.gg/F5ExYJKrMk>

Let's introduce ourselves!

- Briefly!
- Name
- School (if student) or where you're based
- How you found this group
- Background/interest in Hinduism & Vedic literature

Discussion questions

- How did the Vedic Ārya-s earn their living?
 - How did it change across time?
- How advanced were Vedic economics? What financial systems were in place?
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Contents

- On nomadism
- Means of living
 - By caste
- Agriculture
- Trade
 - Currency
 - Barter
 - Sóma
- Plunder
 - The assembly
 - Distribution
- Property rights
 - Slavery
 - Inheritance

The meaning of life

- The Classical puruṣ'-ārtha-s
 - Dhárma
 - Ártha
 - Kāma
 - Mokṣa (non-Vedic)

The meaning of life (contd.)

- The Vedic goals of life (my own interpretation)
 - Āyus
 - Śrī
 - Śrávas
 - Svargá (most importantly)
- “Materialism”
 - The nature of the yajñá

Æconomic virtues in the Vēda

■ Wealth

- Be rich!
- *Gatá-ṣrī*
- By virtuous means
 - “Greedy behavior?”

■ Charity

- Be generous!
- RV 10.117.4

Nomadic life

- Continued proliferation of Ārya
 - “Āryāvartá”
 - Over generations: *prajā dakṣiṇā ’bhi-jāyantīr yanti* (MS 4.7.9)
- Nomadism can be a misnomer
 - But: the Vrātya-s
- Better: pastoralism
 - Rural vs. urban life
 - The grāma

Means of living

- Priestly
- Plunder
- Largest class: sæcular
 - Thriving art
 - Artisans
 - Herders
 - &c. &c.

Agriculture

- The calendar
- Sacrifices centered around agriculture
 - Ṣunāsīrīya
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Food

- Grains: yáva (barley), dhāná, saktu, odaná
- Beans: māṣa, mudgá
- Fruit (phála): melon (urvāruká)
- Aquatic plants: ávakā
- & others, e.g. sóma, alcohol (súrā, e.g. RV 1.116.7)
- But chiefly, animal products
 - Honey (mádhu)
 - Dairy: milk (kṣīrá, dugdhá, páyas), curd (dadhán), butter (sarpís), ghee (ghṛta), sour cream (mástu), mixture (āmíkṣā)
 - Meat (mās, e.g. RV 1.161.10): buffalo (mahiṣá, e.g. RV 5.29.8), goat (ajá, e.g. RV 1.162.4), sheep (meṣá, e.g. RV 10.91.14); sacrificially horses (e.g. RV 1.162.9) & kine (e.g. RV 10.86.14)

Currency

- Niṣka
- Kraya
- Hiranya

The dáksina

- Priestly fees
 - Specific
- Often quite exorbitant
- But often restrictions (see Dhárma & later literature)
 - Most often kine and gold

The sóma-sale

- Ritualized incorporation of Śūdrá
- Originally Gandharva-s

Plunder

- Of enemies
- Of Ārya-s
- Within a tribe?
 - Theft
 - Bad nails

The vidátha

- Also: sabhá
- Distribution of plunder by the king
- What is known about it?

Property rights

- Stirner or Nietzsche, or whoever else you præfer
 - Based on force
- *Vāṣya máyi, yát te paró níhitaṁ, tád á' hara* (§B 1.3.2.15)
- Women?
- Śūdrá-s: anyasya preṣya, kāmotthāpya, yathākāmavadhya (AB)
 - Bahu-paṣu, pādāvanejya (PB)

References

- MacDonell, A. A., Keith, A. B., 1912. *The Vedic index of names & subjects.*

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