

Meeting 41: Boats, carts, chariots

Transportation in the Vedic religion

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29 January 2023

Why a Vēda discussion group?

- What is Vedic literature?
 - Sāmhitā-s
 - Brāhmaṇa-s
 - ĀṢS 24.1.31: Māntra–Brāhmaṇayor Veda-nāma-d^heyām
 - 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

<https://chat.whatsapp.com/IXCQEkhfrcwHI7CNY8Fgat>

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

Contents

- Linguistics
- The vehicle
- Beasts of burden
 - The horse
 - The ox
 - The ass
- The cart
- The chariot
- Chariot-racing
- The boat
- Smoke
- Teleportation

√*vah* (MW on RV)

- to carry, transport, convey (with instr. of vehicle)
- to lead, conduct (esp. offerings to the gods, said of Agni)
- to bear along (water, said of rivers)
- to draw (a car), guide (horses &c.)

- *Vā́hana*: AB; ifc. in ṚV
- *Ánas*
 - *Anaḍ-váh*
- Side note: *su-k^há* (VS & later)

The vehicle

- Lack of later, unique váhana-s for each God
- Instead: invariably horses, oxen, chariots
 - *Váhni*

The horse

- *Áśva*
- The second-most prized and sacred animal
- RV 1.163.10 (Griffith):
 - Symmetrical in flank, with rounded haunches, mettled like heroes, the Celestial Coursers put forth their strength, like swans in lengthened order, when they, the Steeds, have reached the heavenly causeway.
- Innumerable descriptors: *vājín*, *āśú*, *árvant*, &c.
 - Battle!
- Prohibition on consumption?

The horse in mythology

- Most famously: Aṣvín-s
- Hárī
- Súrya's horses
- Many important horses, some named (e.g. Pāidvá)
 - Dad^hikrá?
- Lots of other imagery

The ox

- *Anaḍ-váh, gó, &c.*
- Castration: *vád^hri* vs. *vṛṣan*
- Cart of Uṣás
- Generic use as draft-animal
- Prohibition on consumption?

The ass

- *Gardab^há*, *aṣvatará* (mule)
- Inferior connotations
- cf. RV 1.29.5, 3.53.23
- Inauspicious or noisome cry
- But still valuable: given as gifts (RV 8.56.3)
- *Dví-retas* (TS 5.1.5.5)

The cart

- Draft-wagon: distinguished from chariot!
 - But *anar-víṣ* (RV 1.121.7)
- Uṣás
- Bridal wagon in marriage-hymn
 - Covering (*chadís*)

Chariot-racing

- One of only two games mentioned in the Vēda
- Præstigious sport
 - Exorbitant prizes won
- RV 10.102: Múdgala & Mudgalání
 - Metaphors in hymn

The boat

- River-crossing
- Not very advanced (“ships”?)
- Lots of imagery
 - RV 2.42.1 on the bird's voice

Smoke & teleportation

- Agní as messenger (*dūtá*)
- Transport to Svargá
- Ápsaras-es
- Devá-s
 - Transmutation (e.g. horses)

References

- Gode, P. K., 1946. "Carriage-manufacture in the Vedic period & in ancient China in 1121 B.C." Ann. Bhandarkar Orient. Res. Inst.
- MacDonell, A. A., Keith, A. B., 1912. *The Vedic index of names & subjects.*