

Meeting 40: Wives, mothers, rivers  
The Goddesses of the Véda

Nikhil Surya Dwibhashyam

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# Why a Vēda discussion group?

- What is Vedic literature?
  - Sámhitā-s
  - Bráhmaṇa-s
    - ĀṢS 24.1.31: Mántra–Bráhmaṇayor Veda-nāma-d<sup>h</sup>eyám
  - Others? What is Śrúti?
- Vēda-s vs. Vedāntá, Upaniṣád-s, Itihāśá-s, Purāṇá-s
  - Later philosophies like monism (ád<sup>v</sup>āita)
  - Moral–political subtexts
- Modern (religious, scholarly) fixation upon later literature

# What is there to discuss?

- History & linguistics
- Metaphysics of religion
- Exegesis (e.g. western vs. Eastern narratives)
- Moral principles
- Nuances of Śrāutá ritual
- How we can apply 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
  - Children's books
  - Poëtry collective
  - Documentation
  - Actual rituals

# WhatsApp group

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

# Let's introduce ourselves!

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

# Contents

- What are the Goddesses?
- Uṣás
  - Rātrī
- Vác
  - “Devī-sūkta”
- Indrāṇī
- Varuṇāṇī, Agnāyī; Rudrāṇī; Sūryā
- Áditi, Dīti
- Pṛthivī
- Apsarās-s, Áp-s, rivers
- In the sacrifice

# Goddess

- *Devī*: feminine of *Devá*
  - (from  $\sqrt{div}$ )
- Metaphysically and grammatically: feminine counterparts
- Primarily: *Devá-patnī*; *Devānām pátnī*
- Some representing primary natural phenomena



- The Dawn: primary natural phænomenon
- Highly honored! >20 hymns, >300 times in ṚV
- Praised for beauty
- Awakens all
- Breath of everything
- Wife of Súrya

- Praised much less (RV 10.127)
- Still: this praise is theologically important
  - “Evil” connotations?

# Wives of the Gods

- Rarely important mythological role
- Feminine counterparts
- Indrāṇí!
- Varuṇānī, Agnáyī; Rudrāṇí; Súr्या

# Mothers of the Gods

- Áditi, Dítī
- Pṛthivī

## In the sacrifice

- Usually offered oblations alongside Theri husbands
- But lesser!
- e.g. Paşu-band<sup>ha</sup> (ĀṢS 7.27.10): portion of tail