

Meeting 17: The Aṣvín-s

Horsemen, doctors, sons of Heaven

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Meeting agenda

- (Re)introduction to discussion group
- Today's topic præsentation
- Free discussion

Why a Vēda discussion group?

- What is Vedic literature?
 - Sāmhita-s
 - Brāhmaṇa-s
 - Others?
- Vēda-s vs. Vedānta & Upaniṣād-s
 - Later monism (ādvāita) vs. earlier dualism (dvāitā)
- Modern (religious, scholarly) fixation upon later literature

What is there to discuss?

- History & linguistics
- Metaphysics of religion
- Exegesis (e.g. countering western narratives)
- Moral principles
- Nuances of Śrāutá ritual

Our plans

- Weekly meetings on Sundays at 1200 EDT
 - Followed by more in-depth literature meeting at 1330 EDT
- Different topic/aspect/angle discussed in depth every week
- Format:
 - Præsentation
 - Free-form discussion
- Eventually something more

WhatsApp group

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

Let's introduce ourselves!

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

Who are the Ašvín-s?

■ External view

- Etymology straightforward this time: $\sqrt{ašv́a}$
- Usually but not always dual
- IE: Ašvieniai, Kástōr & Polydeúkēs, &c
 - Diff. parentage
 - Solar associations
 - Oaths & oath-breaking

Who are the Aṣvín-s?

■ Internal view

- Most frequent other than Índra, Agnί, Sóma
 - 398 mentions in RV
 - Over 50 designated hymns in RV
- Never named separately
- Synonymous with (unique) epithet *nā́satya* (not untruthful)
 - Dæmons in Avesta! (Vd. 10.9)
- Descendants of the Heavens (*divó nāpātā*)
- Yāska: son of night, son of dawn (Nir. 12.2)

Vedic descriptions of the Aṣvín-s

- Youngest of the gods (TS 7.2.7.2)
- Golden (RV 8.8.2), bright (RV 7.68.1), honey-colored (RV 8.26.6)
 - Lots of other honey imagery
- Dancing (RV 6.63.5)
- Have garland/wreath of flowers (RV 10.184.2)
- Wondrous *dasrá*, fairly unique
- *Rudrá-vartani*, *híraṇya-vartani* (red/bright/golden of path)
 - Diff. indig. interpretation of these & *dasrá*

Vedic mythemes about the Aṣvín-s

- Sun-skinned chariot (RV 8.8.2), IE connection
 - Accompanied by birds (RV 6.63.6)
 - Drawn by them & other animals? Contradiction?
- Gave 100 jars of honey (RV 1.117.6)
- Connected with travel of Sun in a day (RV 3.58.8)
 - Præcede the Dawn (RV 1.34.10)
 - e.g. *parijman*
- Physicians (RV 1.157.6); initially *asomapa*
- Helped Indra slay Vṛtrá (RV 8.8.9)
- Involved in Átri myth?

The Aṣvín-s after the Véda

- Not huge differences as seen with Índra, Rudrá
- Descent into obscurity
- MB: Cyavana story (also in ŚB)
- Nakula & Sahadeva

The Aṣvín-s outside Hinduism

Anything?

Some references

- Kazanas, N. D. "Indo-European deities & the Ṛg-vedā."
J. Indoeur. Stud., 2001.
- MacDonell, A. A. "Vedic Mythology."
Grundr. Indoar. Philol. Altertumskd., 1897.