

Meeting 31: Vedic hydronyms

The Rivers of the Ṛg-vedá

Nikhil Surya Dwibhashyam

13 November 2022

Why a Vēda discussion group?

- What is Vedic literature?
 - Sāmhitā-s
 - Brāhmaṇa-s
 - Others?
- Vēda-s vs. Vedānta, Upaniṣād-s, Purāṇá-s
 - Later monism (ádvāita) vs. earlier dualism
 - 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

Some questions to consider

- Which rivers are mentioned in the Véda?
- What evidence do we have for correspondence with real-life rivers?
- Might names have been reassigned to certain rivers over time?
- What about the concept of mythical rivers that don't physically exist?

Words for rivers

- $Nadī < \sqrt{nad}$
 - cf. Gk. *Néda*, Gm. *Nette*
 - 61 times in RV
- $Síndhu < \sqrt{sidh}$?
 - 173 times in RV
- Other words for waters: *áp* (generic), *aváni*, *kulyá*, *dḥāutí*, *sarít*, *sáras*

The geography of the Ṛg-vedá

Aṣṭāú vá ak^hyat · kakúb^haḥ Pṛ^hivyaśḥ
trí d^hánua · yójanā saptá sínd^hūn.
Hiraṇyā-'kṣáḥ Savitá · Devá á 'gād
dád^had rátnā · dāśúṣe vāriāṇi.

He illuminates the Earth's eight points,
the three desert regions and the seven rivers.
The golden-eyed God Savitṛ has come,
giving choice treasures to the worshiper.

The river-hymn: 10.75

- Sínd^hu
 - Áṣvā ná, 7
- Gáṅgā
 - ^hápax!
- Yamúnā
- Sárasvatī
- Śutudrī
- Páruṣṇī
- Ásiknī
- Ārjīkīya

The river-hymn: 10.75 (contd.)

- Tr̥ṣṭāmā
- Rasá
- Susártu
- Śvetyá
- Kúb^hā
- Gomatī
- Krúmu
- Mehatnú
- Sílámāvatī
- Ūṛṇāvatī

Rivers mentioned in the Ṛg-vedá

- Many others!
 - Suṣómā &c.
- Pay attention to names themselves & their meaning
- Stratigraphy
- Different texts
- Historical events

The elusive Sárasvatī

- Real-life identity
 - Mythical identity
- Avestan correspondence
- Ghaggar-Hakra
- Drying up?

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