

Meeting 2: Yóga, múnis, and orthodoxy

The Vedic predecessors of a classical tradition

Nikhil Surya Dwibhashyam, Rohan Pandey

27 February 2022

Meeting agenda

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

Why a Vedā discussion group?

- What is Vedic literature?
 - Sāṃhitā-s
 - Brāhmaṇa-s
 - Others?

Why a Vedá discussion group?

- What is Vedic literature?
 - Sámhitā-s
 - Bráhmaṇa-s
 - Others?
- Vedá-s vs. Vedánta & Upaniṣád-s
 - Later monism (ádvāita) vs. earlier dualism (dvāitá)
- Modern (religious, scholarly) fixation upon later literature

Why a Vedá discussion group?

- What is Vedic literature?
 - Sámhitā-s
 - Bráhmaṇa-s
 - Others?
- Vedá-s vs. Vedánta & Upaniṣád-s
 - Later monism (ádväita) vs. earlier dualism (dvāitá)
- 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
- Different topic/aspect/angle discussed in depth every meeting
- Format:
 - Præsentations
 - Free-form discussions
- Eventually something more?

Let's introduce ourselves!

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

Some questions to consider

- What *is* Yóga exactly?
- What forerunners (if any) of what we know today as Yóga can be found in the Vedic religion?
 - To what extent were these forerunners already mainstream?
- To what extent is Yóga a uniquely post-Vedic or even Śramaṇá belief-system?
 - Can Yóga be synthesized with orthodox Vedic tradition?
- What biases in western Indology can be noticed from western analysis of Yóga?
- We'll return to these at the end!

What is Yóga?

- In the Vedá-s:

yogá m. (MW)

- the act of yoking, joining, attaching, harnessing, putting to (of horses) (RV)
- a yoke, team, vehicle, conveyance (ŚB)
- employment, use, application, performance (RV)
- undertaking, business, work (RV, AV, TS)

What is Yóga?

- In the Vedá-s:

yogá m. (Graßmann)

- das *Anschrren* des Zugthieres oder Wagens [G.]
- *Anschrung, Fahrt*
- bildlich: das *Anschrren* d. h. *zurüsten, in Thätigkeit setzen* mit G.
- *Unternehmung, Werk*
- mit *kṣéma*: *Arbeit* und *Ruhe*

What is Yóga?

- Etymology: nominal derivation
 - Accent: nōmen āctiōnis vs. agentis

√yuj (MW)

- to yoke or join or fasten or harness (horses or a chariot) (RV &c)
- to make ready, prepare, arrange, fit out, set to work, use, employ, apply (RV &c)
- to fix in, insert, inject (ŚB)
- to turn or direct or fix or concentrate (the mind, thoughts &c) upon (L.) (TS &c)
- to join, unite, connect, add, bring together (RV &c)
- to join one's self to (A.) (RV)

What is Yóga?

- Yóga as broadly understood in classical sense:
 - Discipline of the mind (cf. TS radical)
 - Origins in at least Kaṭ^ho-'paniṣád (ca. Budd^há)
 - 1 of 6 Hindu dárśana-s
 - Expounded in Yoga-sūtra-s of Patañjalí (ca. CE)
 - We'll focus on this today.

What is Yóga?

- Yóga as broadly understood in classical sense:
 - Discipline of the mind (cf. TS radical)
 - Origins in at least Kaṭ^ho-'paniṣád (ca. Budd^há)
 - 1 of 6 Hindu dárśana-s
 - Expounded in Yoga-sūtra-s of Patañjalí (ca. CE)
 - We'll focus on this today.
- Yóga as understood in western sense:
 - Purely haṭ^ha-yóga: from $\sqrt{haṭ^h}$ "force"
 - Even more specifically: ása[́]na-s
 - Much more modern! Perhaps even Western construct?

What is Yóga?

- Yóga as broadly understood in classical sense:
 - Discipline of the mind (cf. TS radical)
 - Origins in at least Kaṭṭh'o-'paniṣád (ca. Budd^há)
 - 1 of 6 Hindu dárśana-s
 - Expounded in Yoga-sūtra-s of Patañjalí (ca. CE)
 - We'll focus on this today.
- Yóga as understood in western sense:
 - Purely haṭṭha-yóga: from $\sqrt{haṭṭh}$ "force"
 - Even more specifically: áśana-s
 - Much more modern! Perhaps even Western construct?
- Point is: all decidedly post-Vedic! or so it seems...

Origins of contemplative tradition

■ Famous creation hymn from ṚV:

N' āsad āsīn · n' ó sád āsīt tadānīm.
Ná 'sīd rájo · n' ó víomā paró yat.
Kīm á 'varīvaḥ? · Kúha? Kásya śárman?
Ámbhaḥ kīm āsīd · gáhanam gabhírám?

*The non-being was not, nor was the being then.
The sky was not, nor the heavens beyond it.
What moved it? Whither? In whose shelter?
Were there the waters impenetrable and deep?*

Iyám víśṣṭir · yáta ā babhúva,
yádi vā dadhé · yádi vā ná —,
yáv asy' ádhy-akṣaḥ · paramé víoman,
sá aṅgá veda · yádi vā ná véda.

*He who was there from this creation,
whether he formed it or whether not,
the observer of this (world) in the highest heavens,
he indeed knows, or he knows not.*

—ṚV 10.129.1,7

■ (NB metrical lacuna.)

The Vedic muni-s: RV 10.136

- “Yoga and the Ṛg Veda: An Interpretation of the Keśin Hymn.”
 - Werner, K. *Religious Studies*, 1977, vol. 13, 3, pp. 289–302.
- Also written by Mányu! Chronology? Meter?

The Vedic muni-s: RV 10.136

- “Yoga and the R̥g Veda: An Interpretation of the Keśin Hymn.”
 - Werner, K. *Religious Studies*, 1977, vol. 13, 3, pp. 289–302.
- Also written by Mányu! Chronology? Meter?

Keśí Agnīm, keśí viṣám,

keśí bibharti ródasī.

Keśí vísvaṁ súar dṛśé.

Keśí 'dām jyótir ucyate.

Múnayo vāta-raśanāḥ

piśāṅgā vasate mālā.

Vátasy' ānu dhrājīm yanti,

yád deváso ávikṣata.

*The long-haired (bears) Agní, the long-haired
(bears) the waters,*

the long-haired bears the Heavens and Earth.

*The long-haired is all the light to see,
the long-haired is called this light.*

The muni-s, with wind for reins,

wear (clothes) soiled tawny.

*They follow the wind's motion
where the gods have entered.*

The Vedic mûni-s: RV 10.136

Únmaditā māúneyena
vâtā á tast^himā vayám.
Śárīr' éd asmākaṁ yūyám
mártāso abhí paśyat^ha.

Antárikṣeṇa patati
vísvā rūpá 'va cákaśat.
Múnir devásya–devasya
sāúkr̥tyāya sák^hā hitāḥ.

Vátasy' áśvo vāyóḥ sák^hā
at^h' o devé-'śito múnīḥ.
Ub^hāú samudráv á kṣeti
yáš ca púrva ut' áparaḥ.

*Enraptured by mûni-ness
we have mounted the winds.
Our bodies indeed, O ye
mortals, look upon.*

*He flies in the air,
beholding every form.
The mûni is of every god
made the friend for good work.*

*The wind's steed, Vāyú's friend,
is the god-moved mûni.
He inhabits both the oceans
the eastern and the western alike.*

The Vedic muni-s: RV 10.136

Apsarásāṁ Gand^harvāṇām
mṛgāṇāṁ cáraṇe cáran
keśí kétasya viduān
sák^hā svādúr madíntamaḥ.

Vāyúr asmā úp' āman^hat.
Pináṣṭi smā kunannamā
keśí viśásya pátreṇa
yád Rudrén' ápibat sahá.

*The Apsarás-es', Gand^harvá-s'
and beasts' path following,
the long-haired, knowing the will,
is a friend sweet and most delightful.*

*Vāyú has mixed (the drink) for him.
He pounds the inflexible
when the long-haired has drunk water
from the cup with Rudrá.*

What is Yóga?

- Werner: “The *keśins* as well as the *śramaṇas* were not dissenters from the orthodox religion, but rather the representative of a different tradition.”
 - But what evidence is there for either position?
 - None, in my opinion
- Common pitfall in (especially western) Indology: contradiction vs. synthesis
- See also: the Vrátya-s

Haṭṭha-yóga in the Vedá-s?

- Mudrá-s? Ásana-s?
 - No.
- Breath control? “The Science of Respiration and the Doctrine of the Bodily Winds in Ancient India.”
 - Zysk, K. G. *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 1993, vol. 113, 2, pp. 198–213.
- Atḥarva-vedá: strong focus on prāṇá
- But is this really Haṭṭha-yóga?

Some questions to consider

- What *is* Yóga exactly?
- What forerunners (if any) of what we know today as Yóga can be found in the Vedic religion?
 - To what extent were these forerunners already mainstream?
- To what extent is Yóga a uniquely post-Vedic or even Śramaṇá belief-system?
 - Can Yóga be synthesized with orthodox Vedic tradition?
- What biases in western Indology can be noticed from western analysis of Yóga?
- We'll return to these at the end!