

Meeting 1: Vratá-s, Satyá, & Mitrá–Váruṇa

The Vedic conception of oath-keeping

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Meeting agenda

- Introduction to discussion group
- Today's meeting topic
- Free discussion

Why a Vedā discussion group?

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

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 - Later monism (ādvāita) vs. earlier dualism (dvāitā)
- Modern fixation upon later literature

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- Modern fixation upon later literature
- What is there to discuss?
 - History & linguistics
 - Metaphysics of religion
 - Moral principles
 - Nuances of Śrāutá ritual

Our plans

- Weekly meetings
- Different topic/aspect/angle discussed in depth every meeting
- Presentations
- Free-form discussions
- Eventually something more?

Today's topic: Vratá-s, Satyá, & Mitrá–Váruṇa

vratá n. (MW on ṚV)

- will, command, law, ordinance, rule
- sphere of action, function, mode or manner of life, conduct, manner, usage, custom
- a religious vow or practice, any pious observance, meritorious act of devotion or austerity, solemn vow, rule, holy practice

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satyá n. (MW)

- truth, reality (ṚV &c &c)
- a solemn asseveration, vow, promise, oath (AV &c &c)

Some questions to consider

- What is uniquely Vedic about the vratá?
- What are the religious & social consequences of breaking an oath?
- Why is the oath so fundamentally important to the Árya?
- What oaths must an Árya make?
- What are the implications of strict oath-keeping on our personal lives?
 - on social organization?

The best place to start

- Usually a collocation!
- e.g. searching `.*vrat.*` in Graßmann's dictionary
 - *ánu-vrata*, *anyá-vrata*, *avratá*, ..., *su-vratá*
- What do we notice from the words' contexts?

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- Loyalty/faithfulness (quā oath-keeping) as a distinguishing trait of ethnoreligious Árya identity?

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Ánu-vratāya · rand^háyann ápa-vratān
āb^húb^hir Índraḥ · śnat^háyann ánāb^huvaḥ.

*Subduing the oath-breaking for the oath-following,
Índra destroys the strengthless by the strong.*

—RV 1.51.9ab

- 1.51.8 makes clear: former are Dásyu-s, latter are Árya-s
- Herrenmoral? but also! piousness, loyalty

Vedic duality: avratá & asatyá

Vedic duality: Mitrá-Váruṇa

What happens to the avratá-s?

Vrátya-s, Brāhmaṇá-s & the vratá