

Nakta, 'night,' is found frequently in the Rigveda,¹ and sometimes later,² usually in the adverbial form *naktam*, 'by night'

¹ i. 13, 7; 73, 7; 96, 5; vii. 2, 6; x. 70, 6; adverbially, i. 24, 10; 90, 7; v. 76, 3; vii. 15, 15; 104, 17; viii. 96, 1.

² Chāndogya Upaniṣad, viii. 4, 2; adverbially, Av. vi. 128, 4; Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, ii. 1, 4, 2; xiii. 1, 5, 5, etc.

Nakṣatra is a word of obscure origin and derivation. The Indian interpreters already show a great divergence of opinion as to its primary meaning. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa¹ resolves it into *na-kṣatra* ('no power'), explaining it by a legend. The Nirukta² refers it to the root *nakṣ*, 'obtain,' following the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa.³ Aufrecht⁴ and Weber⁵ derived it from *nakta-tra*, 'guardian of night,' and more recently⁶ the derivation from *nak-kṣatra*, 'having rule over night,' seems to be gaining acceptance. The generic meaning of the word therefore seems to be 'star.'

The Nakṣatras as Stars in the Rigveda and Later.—The sense of 'star' appears to be adequate for all or nearly all the passages in which Nakṣatra occurs in the Rigveda.⁷ The same sense occurs in the later Saṃhitās also: the sun and the Nakṣatras are mentioned together,⁸ or the sun, the moon, and the Nakṣatras,⁹ or the moon and the Nakṣatras,¹⁰ or the Nakṣatras alone;¹¹

¹ ii. 1, 2, 18, 19. Cf. a citation in Nirukta, iii. 20.

² *Loc. cit.*, and of. St. Petersburg Dictionary, s.v.

³ i. 5, 2, 5.

⁴ Kuhn's *Zeitschrift*, 8, 71, 72. So Egeling, *Sacred Books of the East*, 12, 288, n. 2.

⁵ *Nakṣatra*, 2, 268.

⁶ Macdonell, *Vedic Grammar*, p. 74, line 8.

⁷ See i. 50, 2; vii. 86, 1; x. 58, 11; 111, 7; used of the sun itself, vi. 67, 6 (as masculine); vii. 81, 2; x. 88, 13. The sun is allied with them, iii. 54, 19. *Nakṣatra-śivas*, 'equalling the multitude of the stars,' is used as an epithet in x. 21, 10. Even in x. 85, 2, where Soma, on the lap of the Nakṣatras, is

mentioned, 'stars' would do; but, as this hymn refers to two of the later Nakṣatras, 'lunar mansions' may well be meant.

⁸ Av. vi. 10, 3; Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā, xxiii. 43; Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa, x. 1, 1; Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, iv. 10, 12.

⁹ Av. vi. 128, 3; xv. 6, 2; Taittirīya Saṃhitā, i. 8, 13, 3; Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā, xxii. 29, etc.

¹⁰ Av. v. 24, 10; vi. 86, 2; Taittirīya Saṃhitā, iii. 4, 5, 1; Kāṭhaka Saṃhitā, xxxv. 15; xxxvii. 12; Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā, xxx. 21; xxxix. 2, etc.

¹¹ Taittirīya Saṃhitā, i. 2, 2, 2; ii. 6, 2, 6, etc.; Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā, xxx. 21 etc.; Kāṭhaka Saṃhitā, Āśvamedha, v. 5, and very often elsewhere.