# Adhidaivatapakṣa of the Ṛgvedic Aśva


H.S. Sudarshan

IKS Center – MoE
Center for Ancient History and Culture
JAIN University, Bengaluru

# Introduction

1. Not many records exist of comets in the historic period
2. A record of 26 comets from an ancient period (vedanga period), has survived to the present times. These are known to us from:
   - Bṛhatsaṁhitā (6th cent. CE)
   - Quotations in the commentary on it by Utpala (10th cent. CE)
   - Quotations in the Adbhutasāgara (12th cent. CE)
   - In the surving manuscripts of Vṛddha Garga (before the common era)

RN Iyengar. (2008). Archaic Astronomy of Parasara and Vrddha Garga. *IJHS, 43(1)*, 1.
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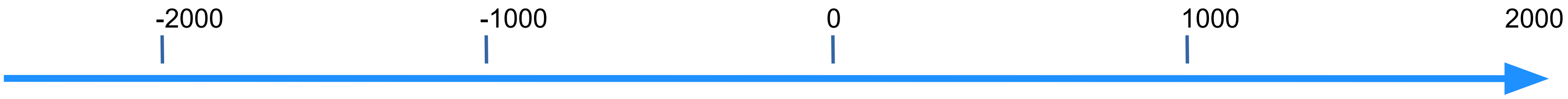


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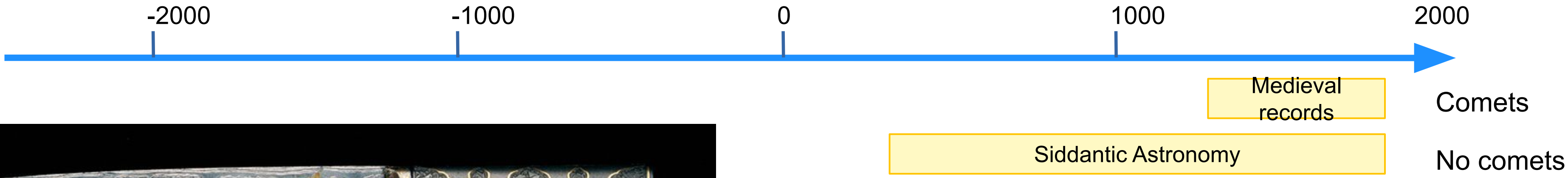

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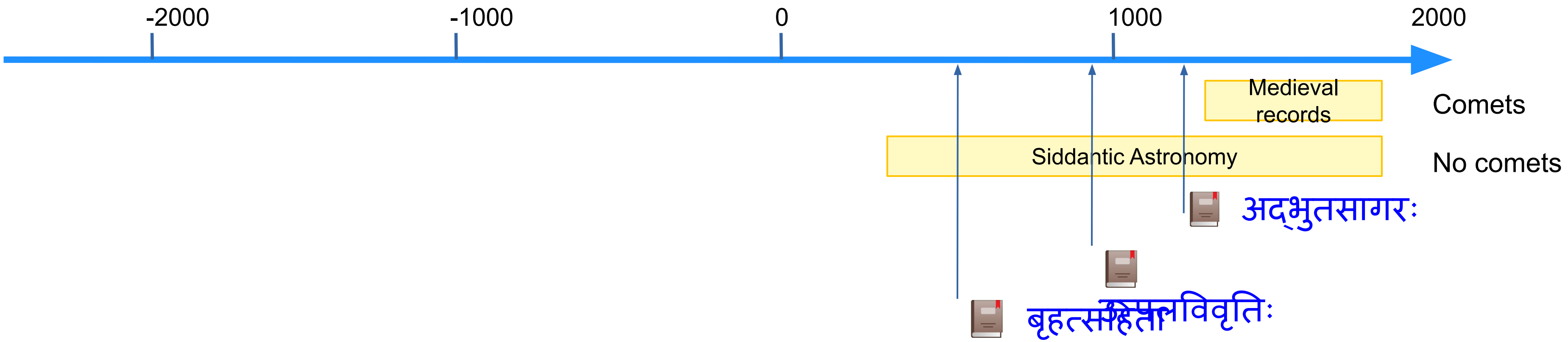

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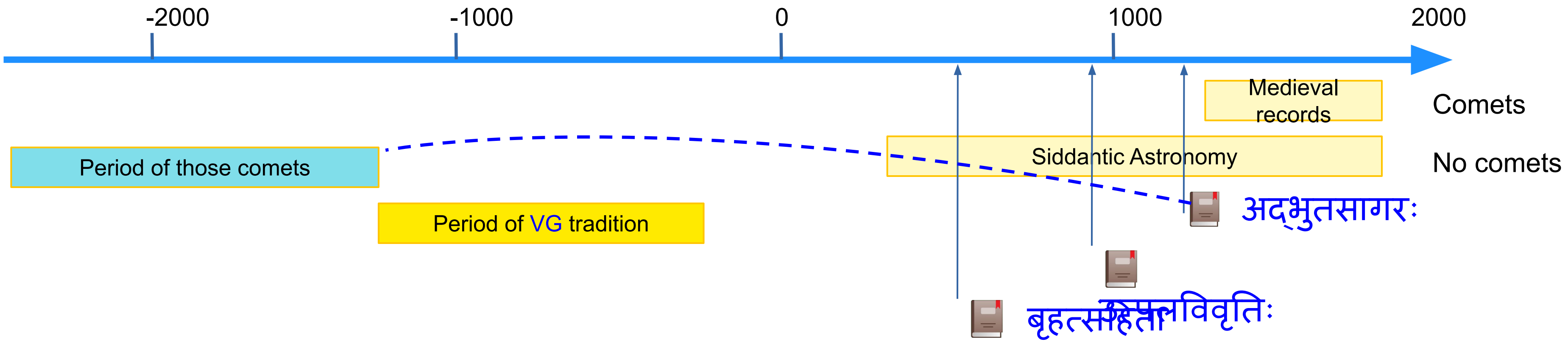

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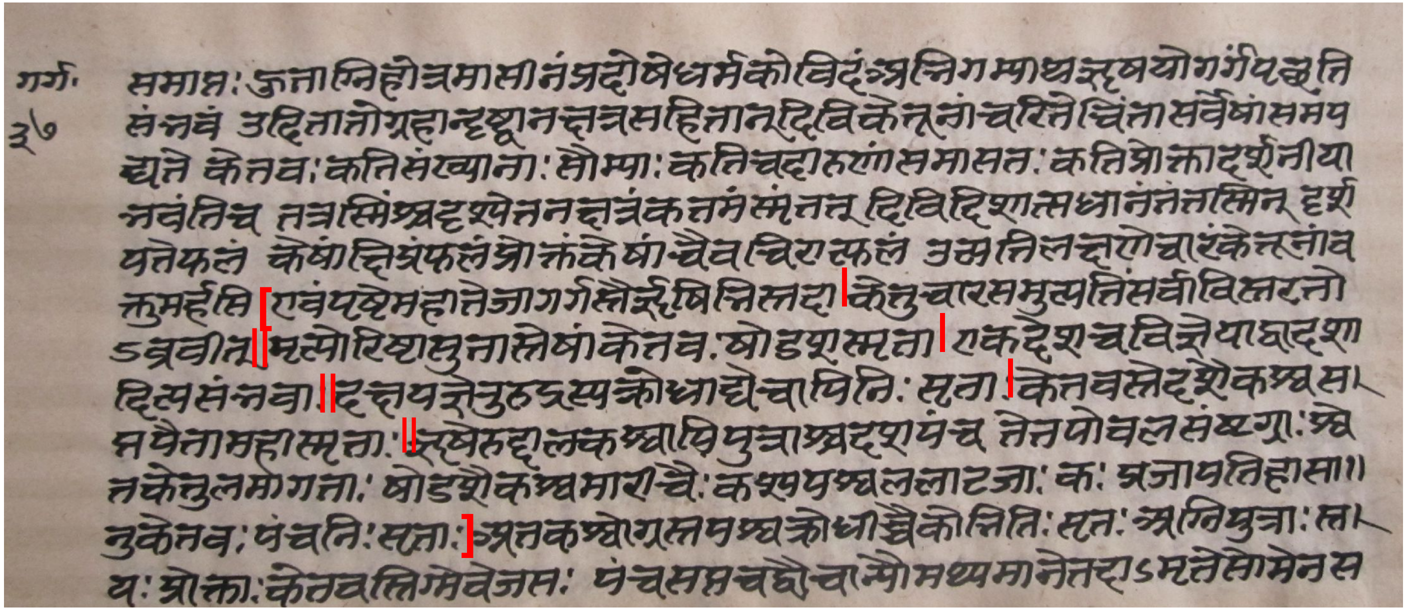

- Samhita of ~6000 *ślokas*
- Editing from 10 *Mss*
- Ch. Ketumālā, one of 64 *aṅgas*
- List of 101 comet names + an observed cycle of 26 comets
- An older chapter with questions & answers
- 108 ग्रहाः = 101 comets + 7 ताराग्रहाः

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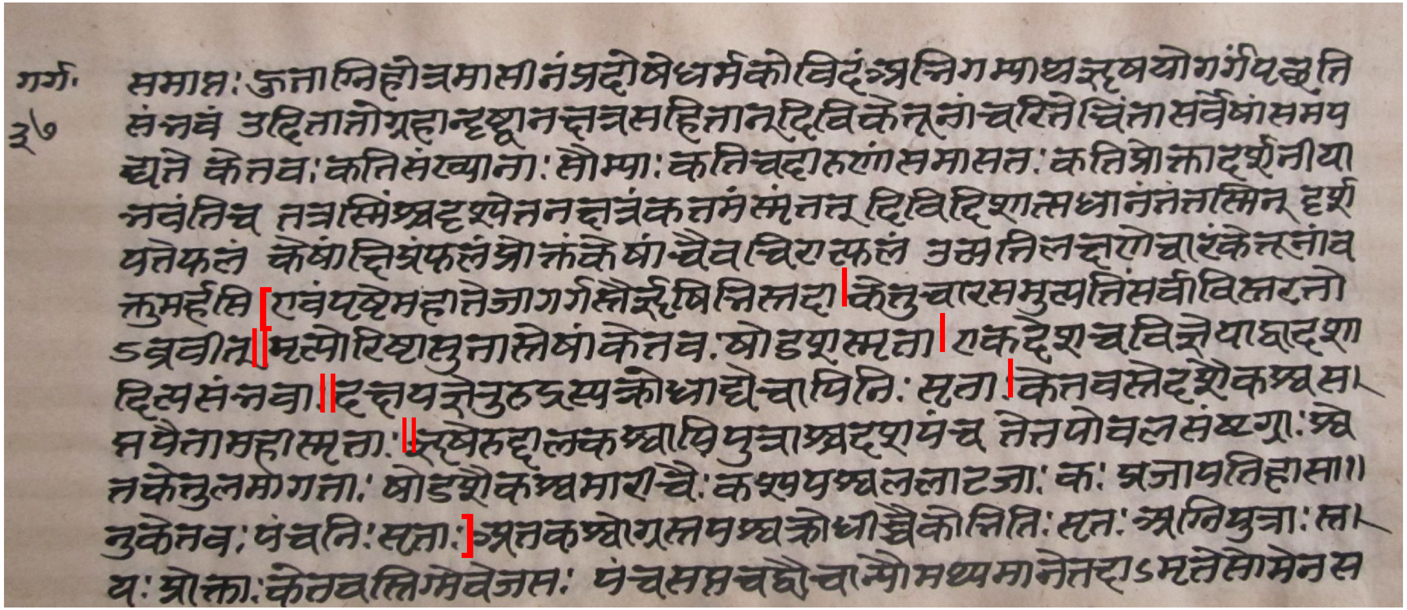

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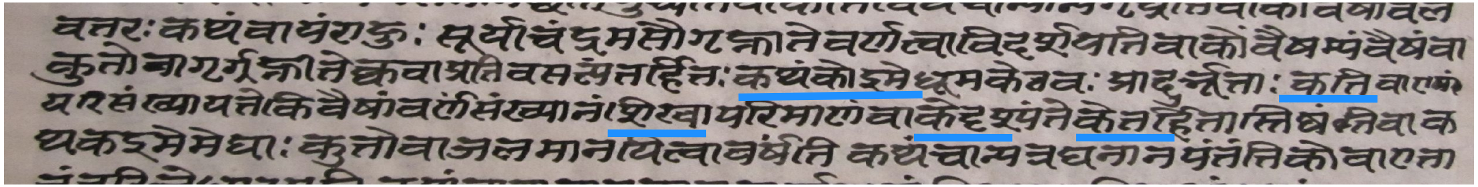


How are the Dhūmaketus born? How many are there? How are their colours & tails? Who are visible and who not? वेदोक्तनां ग्रहाणाम् अष्टशतं संख्यायते, तत्र एकशतं केतूनां पठ्यते। सौमार्कौ पञ्च च ताराग्रहाः। भीमरूप उदग्रो ग्रहो धूम्रवर्ण एकशिखो विभावसोः पुत्रो धूम्रवर्णस्य शिखया च उपधूपयते नक्षत्राणि इत्यतो धूमकेतुः॥

# Comparisons of Parāśara’s केतवः

Fig 11.1 Seal numbers, M1171 and M297 (After: J.Marshall)

**चलकेतुः** – शूलसदृशं शिरः

ब्रह्मदण्डम् – Trident, त्रिशूलं, त्रिशिराः, विश्वरूपः

# Comets of Vṛddha-Garga : names

1. Dhūmaketu – Smoky, bow shaped
2. Kabandha – Like a truncated human body
3. Brahmadaṇḍa – Coloumn-like, 3 colours, 3 heads, (Trisira, Trisikha,...)
4. Āngiras – Seen on solar orb. Like a human being with a bow seated in a chariot
5. Viśvarūpa – A group, Causing fire disaster on earth (3 heads)
6. Śvetaketu – Causes famine. May be seen along with another comet named "Ka"
7. Ka – Seen like a yoke in the West. Famine for 10 years
8. Raśmiketu – Rises in Krttika. Devastation
9. Dhruvaketu – Climate alteration
10. Calaketu – Earthquakes, disasters

# Comets of Vṛddha-Garga : names

1 In those texts, Comets are referred to by the word *Ketu*; And Indian languages use *Dhūmaketu* for comet

2 *Dhūmaketu* is seen in later Sanskrit literature too; Gītagovinda (13th cent. CE)

3 In those texts, some of those comet names are common with Vedic dieties (Tvaṣṭa, Triśiras, Vibhāvasu, Ka, Viśvarūpa, Taskara)

# Introduction: Yaska's *adhidaivata*

सोमः
per
यास्कः

अधिदैवतम् - दिवि संस्थितम्, विदुश्चन्द्रमसम्

अधियज्ञम् - रूपविशेषैरोषधिः

अध्यात्मम् - सोम आत्माप्येतस्मादेवेंद्रियाणां जनिता

सोमः

सोमं मन्यते पपिवान्यत्सम्पिंषन्त्योषधिम्। सोमं यं ब्रह्माणो विदुर्न तस्याश्नाति कश्चन॥
RV (10.85.3)

अग्निः

विद्मा ते अग्ने त्रेधा त्रयाणि विद्मा ते धाम विभृता पुरुत्रा । RV (10.45)
जातवेदा स्तुतो मध्ये स्तुतो वैश्वानरो दिवि॥ BD

RN Iyengar. (2010). Comets & meteoritic showers in the Ṛgveda. *IJHS, 45(1)*.

# In the Vedas

1 Words *Ketu* & *Dhūmaketu* found in Vedas too; However interpreted as agni (smoky fire of *yajña*) in Sāyaṇa's *adhiyajna* commentary (13th cent. CE)

2 An investigation (Iyengar 2010) explores Yaska's *Adhidaivata* interpretation, applying to *Dhūmaketu* & *Maruts* in the Rgveda

अश्वं न त्वा वारवन्तं वन्दध्या अग्निं नमोभिः.. स नो महाँ अनिमानो धूमकेतुः पुरुश्चन्द्रः.. विश्पतिर्दैव्यः .. उक्थैरग्निर्बृहद्भानुः ॥ RV 1-27-1,11,12

Tailed horse, Without specific measure, Big bright celestial, Wide motion, Colourful

"In *Adhidaivata*, they are found to refer to transient celestial objects like Comets & Meteors"

# Aśva sūkta, 1st maṇḍala, 163rd sūkta

- Many *sūktas* with *Aśva* & *Keśī* are yet to be studied for cometary imagery
- Present study is of Aśva sūkta 1-163. Both 162 (22 mantras) & 163 (13 mantras) refer to *Aśvamedha Yāga*
- The *sūktas* of the *Ṛshi* Dīrghatamas Aucathya are known for being riddle-like, having multiple & deep meanings; *Maṇḍala* 1, 24 sūktas 140-164, 242 *mantras*

तमवस्थितमुपाकरणाय यदक्रन्द (1.163) इत्येकादशभिः स्तौत्यप्रणुवन् । Aśvalāyana Śrauta Sūtra

Recited to praise the Sacrificial Horse brought for the *Upākaraṇa Karma* in the middle of the *Aśvamedha Yāga*

# Asvamedha (RV 1-163)

The *Asvamedha Yajna* is understood as a horse sacrifice ritual on the earth. The horse is supposed to go to the sky towards the devatas

Sayana also says the horse flies down from the sky to the ground

The *sūkta* is in the first person, with the word *apaśyaṁ* (I saw) ु सेused repeatedly

It describes a celestial *Asva* moving in the sky, with descriptions of high speed, bright object, flying or gliding down. It first describes having seen the head first. That it has falcon wings, legs of a deer, hoofs of metal

The 10th mantra refers to it in plural, where it says that the *Asvas* are flying in formation similar to Swans

In *adhidaivata* perspective: Gods did a sacrifice of the horse in sky, a replica of which, men are doing on earth.

यदक्रन्दः प्रथमं जायमान उद्यन्त्समुद्रादुत वा पुरीषात्। श्येनस्य पक्षा हरिणस्य बाहू उपस्तुत्यं महि
अर्वन्॥1
यमेन दत्तं त्रित एनमायुनगिन्द्र एणं प्रथमो अध्यतिष्ठत्। गन्धर्वो अस्य रशनामगृभ्णात्सूरादश्वं वस
निरतष्ट॥ 2
असि यमो अस्यादित्यो अर्वन्नसि त्रितो गुह्येन व्रतेन। असि सोमेन समया विपृक्त आहुस्ते त्रीणि
बन्धनानि॥
त्रीणि त आहुर्दिवि बन्धनानि त्रीण्यप्सु त्रीण्यन्तः समुद्रे। उतेव मे वरुणश्छन्त्स्यर्वन्यत्रा त आहुः प
जनित्रम्॥ 4
इमा ते वाजिन्नवमार्जनानीमा शफानां सनितुर्निधाना। अत्रा ते भद्रा रशना अपश्यमृतस्य या अभि
गोपाः॥5
आत्मानं ते मनसारादजानामवो दिवा पतयन्तं पतंगम्। शिरो अपश्यं पथिभिः सुगेभिररेणुभिर्जे
पतत्रि॥ 6
अत्रा ते रूपमुत्तममपश्यं जिगीषमाणमिष आ पदे गोः। यदा ते मर्तो अनु भोगमानळादिद्ग्रसिष्ठ
ओषधीरजीगः॥ 7
अनु त्वा रथो अनु मर्यो अर्वन्ननु गावोऽनु भगः कनीनाम्। अनु व्रातासस्तव सख्यमीयुरनु देवा म
वीर्यं ते॥ 8
हिरण्यशृङ्गोऽयो अस्य पादा मनोजवा अवर इन्द्र आसीत्। देवा इदस्य हविरद्यमायन्यो अर्वन्तं प्रथ
अध्यतिष्ठत्॥9
ईर्मान्तासः सिलिकमध्यमासः सं शूरणासो दिव्यासो अत्याः। हंसा इव श्रेणिशो यतन्ते
यदाक्षिषुर्दिव्यमज्ममश्वाः ॥10
तव शरीरं पतयिष्ण्वर्वन्तव चित्तं वात इव ध्रजीमान्। तव शृङ्गाणि विष्ठिता पुरुत्रारण्येषु जर्भुराणा
चरन्ति॥ 11
उप प्रागाच्छसनं वाज्यर्वा देवद्रीचा मनसा दीध्यानः। अजः पुरो नीयते नाभिरस्यानु पश्चात्कवयो य
रेभाः॥ 12
उप प्रागात्परमं यत्सधस्थमर्वाँ अच्छा पितरं मातरं च। अद्या देवाञ्जुष्टतमो हि गम्या अथा शास्ते व
वार्याणि॥13

# (1-163) Mantra 1 to 6

यदक्रन्दः प्रथमं जायमान उद्यन्समुद्रादुत वा पुरीषात्। श्येनस्य
पक्षा हरिणस्य बाहू उपस्तुत्यं महि जातं ते अर्वन्॥1
यमेन दत्तं त्रित एनमायुनगिन्द्र एणं प्रथमो अध्यतिष्ठत्। गन्धर्वो
अस्य रशनामगृभ्णात्सूरादश्वं वसवो निरतष्ट॥2
असि यमो अस्यादित्यो अर्वन्नसि त्रितो गुह्येन व्रतेन। असि
सोमेन समया विपृक्त आहुस्ते त्रीणि दिवि बन्धनानि॥3
त्रीणि त आहुर्दिवि बन्धनानि त्रीण्यप्सु त्रीण्यन्तः समुद्रे। उतेव मे
वरुणश्छन्त्स्यर्वन्यत्रा त आहुः परमं जनित्रम्॥4
इमा ते वाजिन्नवमार्जनानीमा शफानां सनितुर्निधाना। अत्रा ते
भद्रा रशना अपश्यमृतस्य या अभिरक्षन्ति गोपाः॥5
आत्मानं ते मनसारादजानामवो दिवा पतयन्तं पतंगम्। शिरो
अपश्यं पथिभिः सुगेभिररेणुभिर्जेहमानं पतत्रि ॥6

First born (Agni)
Falcon wings, Deer limbs
From atmosphere

Connection with devas

Secretly connected with Soma

3 bindings. Born high above

Horseshoe, reins

Falling from the sky. Flying striving head in heavenly path

# (1-163) Mantra 7 to 13

अत्रा ते रूपमुत्तममपश्यं जिगीषमाणमिष आ पदे गोः। यदा ते मर्तो अनु
भोगमानळादिद्ग्रसिष्ठ ओषधीरजीगः॥7
अनु त्वा रथो अनु मर्यो अर्वन्ननु गावोऽनु भगः कनीनाम्। अनु व्रातासस्तव
सख्यमीयुरनु देवा ममिरे वीर्यं ते॥8
हिरण्यशृङ्गोऽयो अस्य पादा मनोजवा अवर इन्द्र आसीत्। देवा इदस्य
हविरद्यमायन्यो अर्वन्तं प्रथमो अध्यतिष्ठत्॥9
ईर्मान्तासः सिलिकमध्यमासः सं शूरणासो दिव्यासो अत्याः। हंसा इव
श्रेणिशो यतन्ते यदाक्षिषुर्दिव्यमज्ममश्वाः॥10
तव शरीरं पतयिष्ण्वर्वन्तव चित्तं वात इव ध्रजीमान्। तव शृङ्गाणि विष्ठिता
पुरुत्रारण्येषु जर्भुराणा चरन्ति॥11
उप प्रागाच्छसनं वाज्यर्वा देवद्रीचा मनसा दीध्यानः। अजः पुरो नीयते
नाभिरस्यानु पश्चात्कवयो यन्ति रेभाः॥12
उप प्रागात्परमं यत्सधस्थमर्वाँ अच्छा पितरं मातरं च। अद्या देवाञ्जुष्टतमो
हि गम्या अथा शास्ते दाशुषे वार्याणि॥13

High above. Proṣṭapada
Consume plants

Swarms follow & befriend you

Golden horns. Metal legs.
Fast movement. Lesser Indra

Celestial born. Flying in
formation like swans

Flaying blazing manes/hair

Reads like the account
of a celestial object

# Sāyaṇa’s Commentary

**Mantra 6** - आत्मानं ते मनसारादजानामवो दिवा पतयन्तं पतंगम्। शिरो अपश्यं पथिभिः सुगेभिररेणुभिर्जेहमानं पतत्रि॥
Sāyaṇa -
.. "**अवः** अवस्तात् सामर्थ्याद्भूमेः। भूमिमारभ्य "**दिवा** अन्तरिक्षेण मार्गेण "**पतङ्गम्** आदित्यं "**पतयन्तं** गच्छन्तं व्याप्नुवन्तम्। यद्वा- यतो "**दिवा** अन्तरिक्षेण मार्गेण दिवि वा "**पतयन्तं** गच्छन्तं पतङ्गमादित्यम् "**अवः** आवः व्याप्नोषि..

**Mantra 7** - अत्रा ते रूपमुत्तममपश्यं जिगीषमाणमिष आ पदे गोः॥
Sāyaṇa -
.. "**ते** तव "**उत्तमम्** उक्तरूपेणोत्कृष्टतमं "**रूपम्** "**अत्र** अस्मिन् यागदेशे "**अपश्यं** पश्यामि। कीदृशम्? "**गोः** भूम्याः "**पदे** स्थाने देवस्थाने देवयजनप्रदेशे आजिधावनस्थाने वा । ..

**Mantra 11** - तव शृङ्गाणि विष्ठिता पुरुत्रारण्येषु जर्भुराणा चरन्ति ॥

Sāyaṇa -
"**शृङ्गाणि** शिरसो निर्गताः शृङ्गस्थानीयाः केशाः। .. अत्र अश्वस्य शृङ्गाभावात् तद्वदुन्नतानि तेजांसि परिगृह्यन्ते॥

The *adhiyajna* interpretation concerns which humans should replicate celestial yajna on the ground

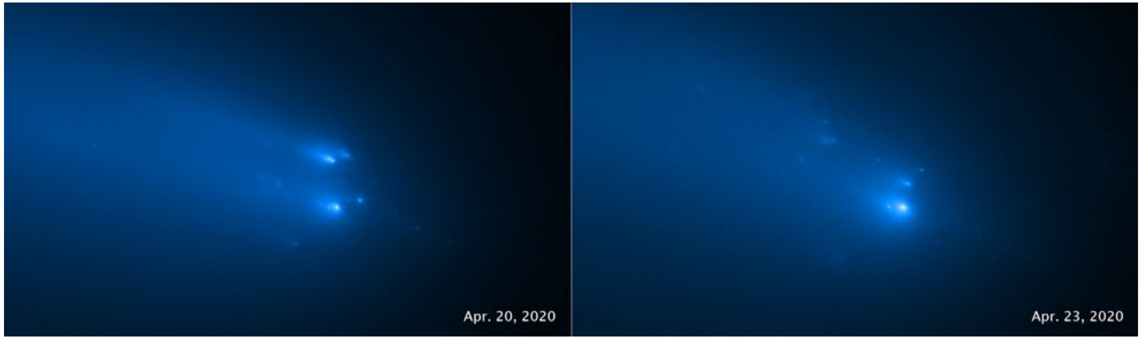
Literally “Flying from sky to down”. Y*ajna* perspective as “Flying from earth to sky”

Uttama = “best” or “above”

At the “cow’s foot”
Proṣṭapada constellation

Horns = hair/mane, flaling, varied, are emnating flickering rays

# Example occurances




Hubble resolved roughly 30 fragments of comet C/2019 Y4 (ATLAS) on April 20, 2020.

Ontario, 27 Nov 2013

Meteor trail over eastern Russia Feb. 15, 2013, by the Russian Emergency Ministry.

Meteor incident in Kerala, evening of February 1, 2021

# In Conclusion

- Even though tradition does not provide *adhidaivata pakṣa* as an explanation for *Aśva sūkta*, it can be interpreted as a phenomenon in the sky
- The celestial phenomenon refers to a birth of a horse in the sky, that was sacrified by the devas
- Those descriptions match to a moving celestial object, may be a comet, which came down to the earth, perhaps as a meteorite
- Therefore, an *adhidaivata* interpretation is possible for *Aśvamedha yāga*

Other references

त्वाष्ट्री तु सवितुर्भार्या वडवारूपधारिणी। असूयत महाभागा सान्तरिक्षेऽश्विनावुभौ॥ MB 1-66-36
महद्धयशिरो भूत्वा यत्तद्वेदविदो विदुः। तमग्निमुद्गिरद्वक्त्रात्पिबत्यापो महोदधौ॥ MB 1-179-22
त्वष्टा वीरं देवकामं जजान त्वष्टुरर्वा जायत आशुरश्वः । TS 5.1.11
Gods do in sky, men do on earth ॥ SB

# Thank you

H.S. Sudarshan
R.N. Iyengar
Center for Ancient History and Culture
JAIN University, Bengaluru

# Other references

गार्गीयं शिखिचारं पाराशरमसितदेवलकृतं च। अन्यांश्च बहून्दृष्ट्वा क्रियतेऽयमनाकुलश्चारः॥BS (11.1)

त्वाष्ट्री तु सवितुर्भार्या वडवारूपधारिणी। असूयत महाभागा सान्तरिक्षेऽश्विनावुभौ॥ MB 1-66-36

महद्धयशिरो भूत्वा यत्तद्वेदविदो विदुः। तमग्निमुद्गिरद्वक्त्रात्पिबत्यापो महोदधौ॥ MB 1-179-22

त्वष्टा वीरं देवकामं जजान त्वष्टुरर्वा जायत आशुरश्वः। TS 5.1.11

Gods do in sky, men do on earth॥ SB

वि॒द्मा ते॑ अग्ने त्रे॒धा त्र॒याणि॑ वि॒द्मा ते॒ धाम॒ विभृ॑ता पुरु॒त्रा। वि॒द्मा ते॒ नाम॑ पर॒मं गुहा॒
यद्वि॒द्मा तमु॒त्सं यत॑ आज॒गंथ॑॥RV 10-45-2, इहाग्निभूतस्त्वृषिभिर् लोके स्तुतिभिरीळितः। जातवेदा स्तुतो मध्ये स्तुतो वैश्वानरो दिवि॥ BD 67

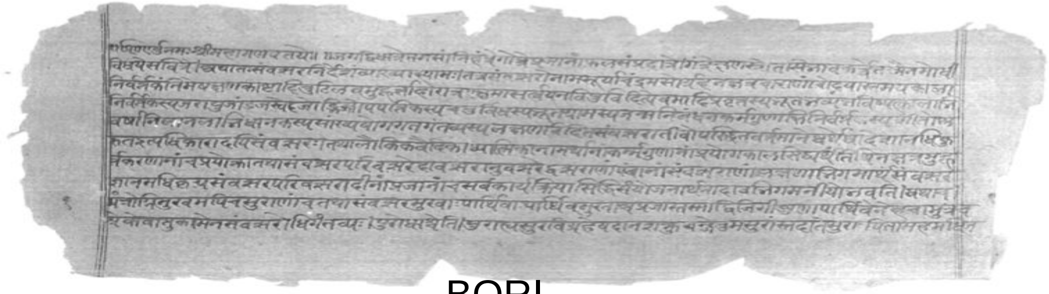
अथ यो गर्भोऽन्तरासीत्। सोऽग्निरसृज्यत स यदस्य सर्वस्याग्रमसृज्यत तस्मादग्रिरग्रिर्ह वै तमग्निरित्याचक्षते
परोऽ
क◌्षं परोऽक्षकामा हि देवा अथ यदश्रु संक्षरितमासीत्सोऽश्रुरभवदश्रुर्ह वै तमश्व इत्याचक्षते परोऽक्षम्परोऽक्षकामा हि देवा अथ यदरसदिव स रासभोऽभवदथ यः कपाले रसो लिप्त आसीत्सोऽजोऽभवदथ यत्कपालमासीत्सा

सूतस्य गृहान्परेत्य वारुणं यवमयं चरुं निर्वपति सवो वै सूतः सवो वै देवानां वरुणस्तस्माद्वारुणो भवत्येतद्वा अस्यैकं रत्नं यत्सूतस्तस्मा एवैतेन सूयते तं स्वमनपक्रमिणं कुरुते तस्याश्वो दक्षिणा स हि वारुणो यदश्वः -
५.३.१.[५]

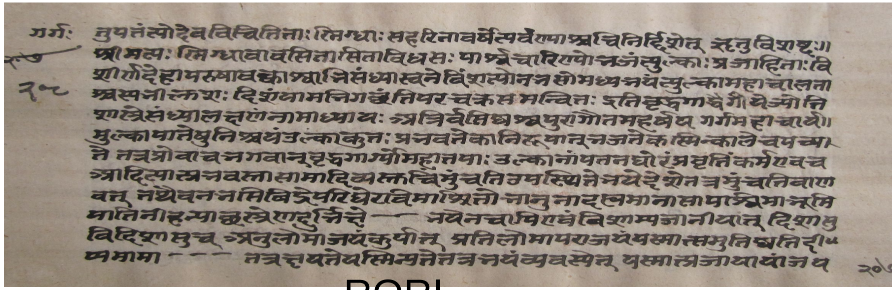
(काम्या अश्वदानवत इष्टिः) प्रजापतिर्वरुणायाश्वमनयत्, स स्वां देवतामार्छत्, स पर्यदीर्यत स एतं वारुणं चतुष्कपालमपश्यत् तं निरवपत् ततो वै स वरुणपाशादमुच्यत वरुणो वा एतं गृह्णाति योऽश्वम् प्रतिगृह्णाति यावतोऽश्वान् प्रतिगृह्णीयात् तावतो वारुणाञ् चतुष्कपालान् निर्वपेत्। वरुणमेव स्वेन भागधेयेनोपधावति स एवैनं वरुणपाशान् मुञ्चति। TS 2.3.1.2

(अश्वमेधाङ्गमन्त्रकथनं) आऽक्रान् वाजी पृथिवीमग्निं युजमकृत वाज्यर्वाऽक्रान् वाज्यन्तरिक्षं वायुं युजमकृत वाज्यर्वा द्यां वाज्याऽक्रंस्त सूर्यं युजमकृत वाज्यर्वा। अग्निस् ते वाजिन्
युङ्ङ् अनु त्वा रभे स्वस्ति मा सम् पारय वायुस् ते वाजिन् युङ्ङ् अनु त्वाऽऽ रभे स्वस्ति मा सम्। TS 7.5.19

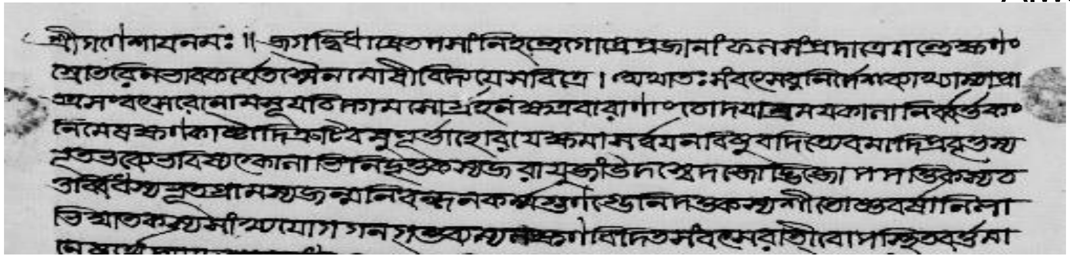
# Some VGJ Manuscripts



BORI
Pune



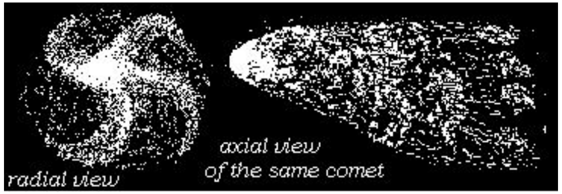
RORI
Alwar



BN Paris

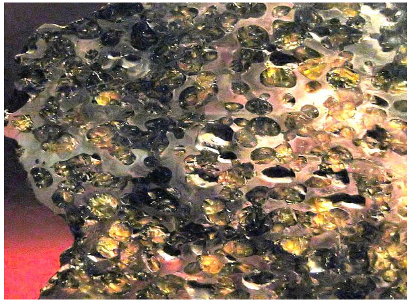
DAV
Chandigarh

# Comet images



# Agni and gems

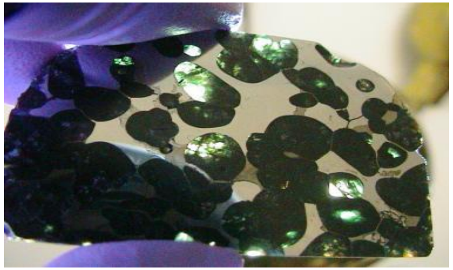
अग्निमीळे पुरोहितं यज्ञस्य देवमृत्विजम् । होतारं **रत्नधातमम्**॥ RV (1.1.1)



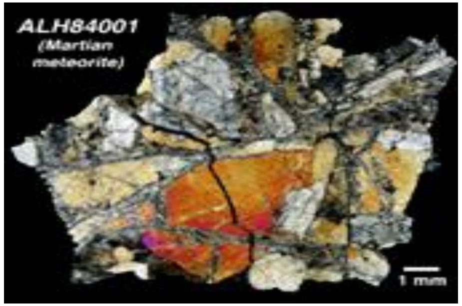
Kansas, 1949

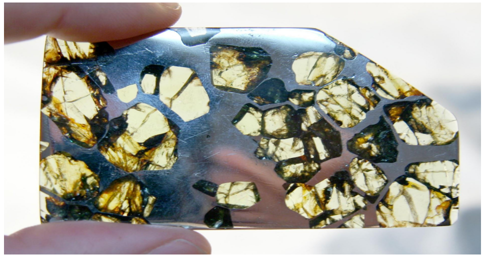
China, 2000

Russia, 1947

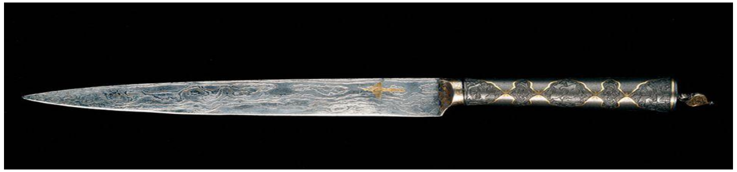


Kansas, 1948



Argentina, 1951



Punjab, 1621