CONTRIBUTION TO THE FUNCTIONING OF *dvár-/dúr-* IN THE ṚGVEDA

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The word *dvár-/dúr-* is usually associated in one's mind with the house. It is regarded as the only part of the house mentioned in the Ṛgveda (RV), which testifies to the fact that the house was really a kind of building (and not only a social notion – home). In addition, two names for house in the RV (and there is a whole group of synonyms referring to this notion) are derived from the root *dúr-*: *dúrya-* and *duroṇá-* (Elizarenkova 1995: 24–27).

The consistent formal, semantic and functional linguistic analysis of this word given here, accompanied by the description of its mythological background in the text and stylistic peculiarities, is intended to give a more exact and objective idea of how *dvár-/dúr-* functioned in the hymns.

According to Grassmann, the meaning of *dvár-/dúr-* f. is 'Thür' – the two forms of the stem are given as separate items in his dictionary (Grassmann 1955: 651, 613). Böhtlingk, however, gives as the first meaning of this word in Sanskrit 'Thor, Thür, Eingang oder Ausgang überh.' (Böhtlingk 1882: 133). Mayrhofer follows Grassmann in this respect, formulating the meaning of *dvár-* as 'Tür, Tor, (Du.) die beiden Türflügel' (Mayrhofer 1992: 764–765).

dvár-/dúr- is a feminine root-stem of Indo-European origin with many parallels in other languages, though there are some difficulties in explaining its phonetic development from the IE root *d^hu̯er-, *d^hu̯or-, *d^hur- 'door, gate'. On the synchronic level, in Vedic, this is a rare case in which there is no verbal root corresponding to the nominal root-stem. E. Benveniste, who has analysed the names for door in Indo-European languages, makes the following remark in this connection:

> *dhwer-* is an unanalysable term by itself, which cannot be attached to any verbal root, and its etymological signification escapes us; but it is possible that we have here a term for a material object which owes its name to the functions which it fulfils (Benveniste 1973: 254–255).

The substantive *dvár-/dúr-* is found in the RV 44 times. The category of grammatical number is expressed by this nominal stem in a peculiar way: there is no grammeme of the singular, and the paradigm consists only of the dual (9) and plural (35) forms. The dual number presupposes that the corresponding denotatum consists of two parts (two halves of a gate or door); as for the plural number, this does not mean an aggregate made up of many parts or details, but expresses the multitude of denotata. This is a general statement which is not always evident in concrete contexts.

The paradigm of grammatical cases is represented by three grammemes: nominative, accusative and vocative (the latter not being, strictly speaking, a case-form as it has an appellative function, and not a descriptive one like the nominative and accusative). Most frequent is the accusative (35) used with both dual and plural inflexions (du. – 9, pl. – 26), while the nominative and vocative are used only in the plural (Nom. pl. – 6, Voc. pl. – 3). So the plural inflexion is found in all three case grammemes, but the dual only in the accusative.

The nominal root-stem *dvár-/dúr-* preserves in principle the apophony caused by the ancient accent shift (Burrow 1955: 219), but the accent shift itself has been abandoned. The vṛddhi grade of the root vowel is found in the strong cases: Acc. du. *dvárā/dvárau*, Nom./Voc. pl. *dváraḥ*), and the weak grade is found in the Acc. pl. *dúraḥ*, but the accent is always on the root vowel, except for one form which follows the ancient vowel shift: Acc. pl. *duráḥ* – II,2,7. Two examples of exceptions in vowel degree are found in the late part of the text: Nom. pl. *dúraḥ-* in I,188,5 and Acc. pl. *dváraḥ* in I,130,3.

Some tendencies can be traced concerning the distribution of certain grammatical forms of *dvár-/dúr-* in various types of mythological contexts. The Nom. pl. is found almost always in the Āprī (or its variant Āpra) hymns, where *dúraḥ* functions as a key-word either in the fifth or in the sixth stanza. It is used as the subject of the verbs with the following lexical meanings: 'to go asunder', 'to open' (intr.) – *ví śri-* (I,13,6; 142,6; II,3,5a; VII,12,2); 'to spread out', 'be wide' – *ví prath-* (II,3,5c); and 'to open (intr.)' – *úd hā-* (IX,5,5). For instance, II,3,5 reads as follows:

> *ví śrayantām urviyá hūyámānā*
> *dváro devíḥ suprāyaṇá námobhiḥ |*
> *vyácasvatīr ví prathantām ajuryá*
> *várṇam punāná yaśásaṃ suvíram ||*

'Let the invoked divine gates go asunder widely, [the gates] pleasant to be trodden, owing to [our] salutations! Let them open [, so as to become] spacious, clarifying the glorious *varṇa* rich in heroic men!'

This is a typical example. The gates (always plural) are semi-personified and deified in these liturgical hymns. They are described with much exaggeration as sacred objects worshipped by the devotees, and seem to have in common with their real prototype only the main function – to open. In only one context is the material nature of *dvā́raḥ* revealed, and the poet mentions their leaves – IX,5,5, (Āprī):

> *úd ā́tair jihate bṛhád*
> *dvā́ro devī́r hiraṇyáyīḥ |*
> *pávamānena sū́ṣṭutāḥ ||*
>
> 'The divine golden gates open high with their leaves, being
> well praised by Pavamāna.'

In four out of five examples the verb connected with the Nom. pl. *dvā́raḥ* in the Āprī-hymns has the form of 3 pl. impv., expressing a wish or request addressed to the gates, and only in IX,5,5 is it found in the 3 pl. present indicative.

There is a context in the late part of the RV showing deviations from the tendencies described above. The Nom. pl. of the subject is *dúraḥ* (and not *dvā́raḥ* like elsewhere), the predicate is represented by a verb of an unusual lexical meaning (*kṣar-* 'to stream' [trans.]) in an unusual grammatical form (3 pl. impf. ind.), not to mention some other vague forms. This is a stanza from an Āprī-hymn I,188,5:

> *virā́ṭ samrā́ḍ vibhvī́ḥ prabhvī́r*
> *bahvī́ś ca bhū́yasīś ca yā́ḥ |*
> *dúro ghṛtā́ny akṣaran ||*
>
> 'Ruling separately, ruling together, spacious, many, and those
> that are even more, the gates streamed torrents of ghee.'

The first two forms are nominative singular, while the rest of the epithets and the predicate are in the plural. K. Geldner interprets them as proper names: "Virāj (Herrscherin), Samrāj (Allbeherrscherin)" (Geldner 1951: 269), though *samrā́j-* is not otherwise used in this function in the RV. L. Renou translates it in the following way:

> La porte (régnant) séparément, (la porte) régnant conjointement, les (autres) *Portes*
> amples, puissantes et nombreuses et / plus nombreuses (encore) ont laissé-couler les
> beurres-fondus (Renou 1965: 42).

But later on, commenting on another passage, he remarks: "*dúraḥ* est partout Acc., y compris 1.188,5" (Renou 1966: 57).

Three times in the Āprī-hymns *dvā́r-* is represented by the Voc. pl., and the corresponding verbal predicate has the form of 2 pl. impv. The gates are asked as usual to go asunder (*ví śri-* V,5,5a; X,70,5b; 110,5a), to make the sacrifice complete (*pṛ-* V,5,5c), to touch the sky (*spṛś-* X,70,5a), to hold the divine chariot (*dhṛ-* X,70,5d), and to be trodden with pleasure (*suprāyaṇá* X,110,5d). This is a semi-personification of *dvā́r-*.

The impression is received that the gates which are invoked in these hymns symbolize in the ritual a kind of border-gate between earth and heaven, the human and the divine world. When the gates open, the devotees obtain access to all the desirable things given by the gods, who come themselves in their chariots to the place of sacrifice. Cf., for instance, X,70,5:

> *divó vā sắnu spṛśátā várīyaḥ*
> *pṛthivyắ vā mắtrayā ví śrayadhvam |*
> *uśatír dvāro mahinắ mahádbhir*
> *deváṃ rátham rathayúr dhārayadhvam ||*

> 'Touch the surface of the sky, [and] even further, or spread
> all over the earth! O gates, willing [it], together with the
> powerful [gods], hold with your power the divine chariot,
> desiring for [this] chariot!'

So, the use of *dváraḥ* in the Āprī-hymns is always symbolic, based on the mythological ideas and ritual practice of the Ṛgvedic Aryans.

Once the Acc. pl. is found in an Āprī-hymn (VII,2,5a-b): *svādhyò ví dúro devayántó | 'śiśrayū ratharyúr devátatā* 'Benevolent, devoted to the gods, they opened the gates, longing for the chariot for the divine service' ("they" = the priests). Again, the motive of the divine chariot passing through the ritual gates seems to be represented in the first line, but this time it is the priests who open the gates (cf. the previous context).

The accusative is the most frequent case grammeme, as has been mentioned before. It is used both in the dual and in the plural. The Acc. du. shows great uniformity in verbal construction: 8 times out of 9 it expresses the direct object of verbs with the lexical meaning 'to open' (trans.): *ví var-* (IV,51,2; VII,95,6; VIII,39,6); *ápa var-* (III,5,1; VIII,5,21); *ví ar-* (I,48,15; 128,6); and *ápa ar-* (IX,10,6). On one occasion the verb is *añj-* 'to anoint' (VIII,63,1). The agent who opens the gates is in the majority of cases a solar deity: Agni or Uṣas (5 times). The characteristic nominal construction is that with the genitive. The substantive in the genitive governed by *dvárā* usually has an abstract meaning: *dvárāv ... divá* 'the gate of the day' (I,48,15), *dvárā támaso* 'the gate of darkness' (III,5,1), *dvárāv ṛtásya* 'the gate of the Cosmic Law' (VII,95,6), *dvárā matīnám* 'the gate of thoughts' (IX,10,6).

Thus the most typical use of *dvárā* is in contexts like I,48,15: *úṣo yád adyá bhānúnā | ví dvárav ṛṇávo diváḥ* 'O Uṣas, when you open today with [your] ray of light the gate of the day ...'; or III,5,1: *ápa dvárā támaso váhnir āvaḥ* 'The conveyer [of oblations], he opened the gate of darkness' ("he" = Agni).

The agent opening the gates can also be a Ṛṣi, or mediator between mortals and gods, as, for example IX,10,6: *ápa dvárā matīnám | pratnắ ṛṇvanti kārávaḥ* 'The ancient singers open the gate of thoughts' (also VII,95,6). It can also be another

variant form of mediator, the forefather of the human race Manu, who had established the sacrifice in days of yore. In VIII,63,1 it is said about Indra: *yásya dvárā mánuṣ pitá | devéṣu dhíya ānajé* 'whose gate father Manu had anointed with thoughts'[1] – which means that Indra has to enter the gate and fulfil the wishes of his worshippers.

Judging by the broad mythological context, there existed an implicit opposition: *outside – inside*. The gods were outside, the worshippers were inside. There was a kind of wall between them with a locked gate which might be opened from both sides. The gods opened the gate from outside, and came with their chariots to the sacrificial place. It was the aim of the worshippers to hold the gods' chariot at the gate, and to take advantage of the divine gifts, lest their rivals should take them away for themselves. The Ṛṣis, who were mediators between gods and mortals, were able to open the gate from inside by means of their poetic thoughts and prayers.

Only once does the substantive governed by *dvárā* in the genitive construction denote a concrete object, 'the cow-pen', in IV,51,2: *vy ù vrajásya támaso dvára- | uchántīr avrañ chúcayaḥ pāvakáḥ* 'They opened the gate of the cow-pen, of darkness, the shining, bright, pure ones.' *vrajá-* in this context seems to be synonymous with *támas-*, all the more so, because according to the Vala-myth, the rock served as a cow-pen to the reddish cows, the morning dawns that were locked inside.

So the general tendency is for the dual form *dvárā* always to have a metaphorical meaning in these genitive constructions. One syntactic peculiarity of the word should also be noted: *dvárā* is never found with an adjectival attribute. The relations of possession are expressed only by the genitive construction of the substantive.

There are also some stylistic and mythological restrictions concerning this dual form. *dvárā* is not used in the Āprī-hymns, where we find only the plural form. In addition, this dual form is not found in the "descriptions" (which according to the style of this text are rather mentions than logical linear expositions) of the Vala-myth. In connection with Vala only plural forms of this word are used.

The Acc. pl. which is normally represented in the RV by the form *dúraḥ* functions mostly (16 times out of 26) as a direct object of verbs meaning 'to open' (trans.): *ví var-* (I,68,10; 113,4; V,45,1; VI,17,6; 62,11; VII,79,4; IX,45,3; 64,3), *ápa var-* (I,121,4; II,2,7; III,31,21; X,120,8; 139,6), *ví ar-* (I,69,10; VI,18,5), *ví śri-* (VII,2,5). In addition, some verbs of cognition govern this form: *ví jñā-* (I,72,8) 'to distinguish', 'to understand'; *prach* (I,120,2) 'to ask', 'to find out'; and some verbs of movement: *úpa car-* (VII,46,2) 'to come near'; *ví dhāv-* (X,29,3) 'to run through'; and finally the verb *añj-* 'to anoint' (VII,2,5).

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[1] The translation follows the interpretation of H. Oldenberg who admits the possibility of a double Acc. with the verb *añj-* (Oldenberg 1912: 125).

In the largest group of contexts the Acc. pl. is found in connection with the Vala-myth (9 times out of 26), and the agent who opens the gates is usually Indra. He may be followed by the divine singers Aṅgirases, but his usual companions, the storm-gods Maruts, are never mentioned as his assistants opening the gates. For instance, VII,17,6: *áuṛṇor dúra usríyābhyo ví dṛḷhá-* | *úd ūrvád gā́ asṛjo áṅgirasvān* 'You have opened the gates, the stronghold for the reddish cows; followed by the Aṅgirases you have set free the cows from [their] dungeon'; and VI,18,5: *ṛṇóḥ púro ví dúro asya víśvāḥ* 'You have opened the forts, all his gates' ("you" = Indra, "his" = of Vala). The rock in these contexts is regarded as a cow-pen or a fort, and when Indra sets it asunder with his vajra, he 'opens the gates' of it. Thus *dúraḥ* in the Vala-myth refer to a material object.

The agent opening the *dúraḥ*, can be other than Indra, and then the corresponding context does not belong to the Vala-myth. Several times the solar deities are mentioned as agents: Agni (I,68,10; II,2,7; IV,4,6), Uṣas (I,113,4; VII,79,4), and Sūrya (V,45,1); in single cases these are Soma (IX,45,3 = IX,64,3) and the Aśvins (VI,62,1). Twice the priests are said to open the gates (I,69,90; VII,2,5).

If the contexts in which a deity opens the gate(s) in the dual or in the plural are compared with the aim of finding any difference in the functioning of *dvā́rā* and *dúraḥ*, the following observations can be made. The verbs governing the dual and the plural forms are the same. If there is no specification of what kind of a gate is opened, one can find rather similar contexts. Compare, for instance, the following two contexts:

VIII,39,6c-d: *agníḥ sá draviṇodā́* | *agnír dvā́rā vy ùrṇute*
    'Agni, he is granting wealth, Agni opens the gate.'

I,68,10c: *ví rā́ya aurṇod dúraḥ purukṣúḥ*
    'He opened the riches, the gates [leading to them], [Agni] rich in cattle.'

The difference lies in the specification of the substantive *dvā́r-/dúr-*. When it is in the dual, its more precise attribution is expressed by means of genitive constructions, but in the plural it can be defined both by means of genitive constructions and constructions of agreement with an adjectival attribute. The comparison of the two groups of genitive constructions shows that *dvā́rā* usually governs other substantives in the genitive case than *dúraḥ*. The substantives governed by *dvā́rā* were enumerated above. As for *dúraḥ*, they can govern substantives of both abstract and concrete meaning: *rāyó dúro* 'gates of riches' (I,72,8), *drúho mánuṣasya dúro* 'gates of human offence' (I,121,4), *dúraḥ paṇīnā́m* 'gates of the Paṇis', *dúro áśmavrajānām* 'gates of those whose pen is a rock' (X,139,6).

There is only one word that can be used in the genitive construction both with the dual form *dvā́rā* and the plural *dúraḥ*, and that is *vrajá-* 'the cow-pen', a substantive with a concrete meaning. Compare:

VI,62,11: *dṛḷhásya cid gómato ví vrajásya | dúro vartaṃ gṛṇaté citrarātī*
 'Open to the singer the gates even of a firm cow-pen, O you two with
 wonderful gifts' (= the Aśvins)

with IV,51,2: *vy ù vrajásya támaso dvára- | uchántīr avrañ chúcayaḥ pāvakáḥ*
 'They opened the gate of the cow-pen, of darkness, the shining, bright,
 pure ones.'

Once more *vrajá-* is found in combination with *dúraḥ* as part of a compound word *áśmavraja-*, X,139,6: *ápāvṛṇod dúro áśmavrajānām* 'He opened the gates of those whose pen is a rock.'

The primary, material meaning of *vrajá-* is well testified in the RV (Grassmann 1955: 1351). There is no doubt that *dvár-/dúr-* in combination with *vrajá-* means 'the gate of a cow-pen'; all the rest is the further development of metaphorical use of this noun, which is in general characteristic of the style of the Ṛgvedic hymns.

One more peculiarity should not escape attention – the absence in the RV of the genitive construction meaning 'the door of a house'. This is closely connected with the problem of what kind of a dwelling it was, in which the Aryans lived in the times of the 'family' maṇḍalas of the RV. The question arises of whether or not the gate of a cow-pen might have coincided in that time with 'the door of a house': that is, that people lived in one enclosure with their cattle.

In contrast to the dual, the plural form is characterized by many epithets: adjectives, participles, and adjectival pronouns. As a rule, the epithets are attributed to *dvár-*, mainly in the Nom. and Voc. pl.; and rarely in the Acc. pl. The most frequent epithet is *devíḥ* 'divine' (I,13,6; 142,6; II,3,5; V,5,5; IX,5,5; X,110,5), while *mắnuṣīḥ* 'human' is found only once (V,45,1). They often have an evocative character, such as, *suprāyaṇáḥ* 'pleasant to be trodden' (the gates are asked to be like that for the worshippers) (II,3,5; V,5,5; X,110,5), *uśatíḥ* 'willing' (VII,17,2; X, 70,5), *ávantīḥ* 'helping', 'benevolent' (VII,46,2). They are *hūyámānāḥ* 'invoked' (II,3,5) and *súṣṭutāḥ* 'well lauded' (IX,5,5) for their impressive appearance; the gates are *hiraṇyáyīḥ* 'golden' (IX,5,5), *bṛhatíḥ* 'tall' (X,110,5), *vyácasvatīḥ* 'expansive' (II,3,5; X,110,5), *vibhvíḥ* 'spacious' (I,188,5), and *prabhvíḥ* 'mighty' (I,188,5). Divine qualities are attributed to the gates: they are *ajuryáḥ* 'not subject to decay' (II,3,5), and *asaścátaḥ* 'not ceasing' (I,13,6). They are lauded because of their high moral qualities: they are *ṛtávṛdhaḥ* 'strengthening the Cosmic Law' (I,13,6; 142,6), and *víśvaminvāḥ* 'all-invigorating' (X,110,5). Their number is stressed by the epithets: they are *bahvíḥ* 'many' (I,188,5), and even *bhúyasīḥ* 'more than many' (I,188,5); sometimes *víśvāḥ* 'all' the gates are mentioned (III,31,21; VI,18,5; X,120,8). Twice it is said about Indra that he has opened (sc. for the worshippers) *sváḥ* [all] 'his' gates (III,31,21; X,120,8). The usual state of the gates is *párivṛtāḥ* 'closed' (I,130,3), and only a deity or a priest can open them.

The majority of these epithets are found in the Āprī-hymns, and the way they function confirms the impression that the aim of this ritual was to open the gates or to make gods do this by means of exaggerated laudations, that is by praise hymns. Cf., for instance, the following stanza (X,110,5) from an Āprī-hymn.

vyácasvatīr urviyā́ ví śrayantām
pátibhyo ná jánayaḥ śúmbhamānāḥ |
dévīr dvāro bṛhatīr viśvaminvā
devébhyo bhavata suprāyaṇā́ḥ ||

'Let the spacious [gates] open like adorned wives [do it] for
[their] husbands! O divine gates, tall, all-invigorating, be
pleasant for the gods to be trodden!'

The Acc. pl. can also express a destination – the deity is invited to approach the gates on the other side of which the priests are waiting. For instance, X,29,3 *dúro gíro abhy ùgró ví dhāva* 'Hurry up as a violent [god] to [our] gates, to the praise songs!' (to Indra).

Another example of this kind (VII,46,2) presents, albeit vaguely, the idea that the notion of *dúraḥ* is somehow connected with the abode:

sá hí kṣáyeṇa kṣámyasya jánmanaḥ
sā́mrājyena divyásya cétati |
ávann ávantīr úpa no dúraś cara-
anamīvó rudra jā́su no bhava ||

'It is owing to [his] abode that he observes the terrestrial
race, owing to [his] sovereignty the celestial one.
Benevolent, approach our benevolent gates! Do not strike
our descendants with illness, O Rudra!'

In this passage there seems to be an implicit opposition of Rudra's abode with the abode of men, where the descendants live together with the older generation. But all this is rather indistinct, of course.

L. Renou's comments on this passage are very significant:

dúraḥ (qui ne comporte ni sing., ni duel) s'oriente vers "maison" (cf. *gṛhá* plur.), alors que *dvā́r* est duel, au sens de "porte" (aussi figuré), proprement sans doute "battant de porte"; le plur. n'est attesté que dans le āprī et avec valeur semi-personnifiée (Renou 1966: 161).

The Acc. pl. *dúraḥ* is once implied as a direct object of an elliptical construction in VII,2,5. It is said in pādas a-b that the priests have opened the gates (*dúro ví śri-*, see above). Pādas c-d contain an elliptical turn: *pūrvī́ śíśuṃ ná mātárā rihāṇé | sám agrúvo ná sámaneṣv añjan* 'They have anointed many [gates] like two [cow-] mothers, licking their calf, like virgins [are anointed] for the [nuptial] festival.'

The translation of these pādas follows Renou's interpretation, who notes in his comments that the dual form *pūrvī́* is explained by the influence of the dual *mātárā* (Renou 1965: 46, 117).

It should be mentioned that the verb *añj-* also governs once the dual form *dvárā* in VIII,63,1, where father Manu anointed Indra's gate (see above). On both occasions when the construction 'to anoint the gate(s)' is found in the RV, the agent is not a deity, but mediators between mortals and gods: the priests and Manu, who had established the sacrifice. It is an action directed towards the gates from inside, that is from the side of the worshippers. In the ritual practice the verb *añj-* whether used literally or figuratively means to embellish the deity in a way characteristic of the particular deity: Agni with ghee, Soma with milk, etc. At the same time this verb is also used in connection with the sacrificial post: *svárum añj-* 'to decorate the sacrificial post'. So, the phrase *dvárā/dúraḥ añj-* provides no information about the material nature of the gate(s), but only shows that *dvā́r-/dúr-* in the RV was an object of religious worship.

Rare syntactic constructions with verbs of cognition are found only in the late part of the text. The construction *dúro ví jñā-* 'to discern the gates' occurs in a stanza of an Agni hymn (I,72,8):

> *svādhyò divá ā́ saptá yahvī́*
> *rāyó dúro vy ṛtajñā́ ajānan |*
> *vidád gávyaṃ sarámā dṛḷhám ūrváṃ*
> *yénā nú kam mā́nuṣī bhójate víṭ ‖*
>
> 'With good intentions they [discerned] from the sky the
> seven young [rivers]; knowing the Cosmic Law, they
> discerned the gates of riches. Sarama found the firmly
> [closed] enclosure of cows which the human race still
> enjoys now' ("they" = Aṅgirases or *pitaras*).

This is an allusion to the Vala-myth. The typical direct objects of the verb *jñā-* are substantives denoting the most sacred objects and notions: the Cosmic Law, the sacrifice, the sun, the name of a god or goddess (which means the essence of the bearer of that name) etc. The fact that the gate also belongs to this list shows the high value of the gate in the world-view of the Ṛgvedic Aryans.

The syntactic construction *dúraḥ prach-* 'to ask about the gates' is found in the Aśvin hymn I,120,2: *vidvā́ṃsāv íd dúraḥ pṛched | ávidvān itthā́paro acetā́ḥ* 'Let the one who does not know ask those two who are such knowers about the gates, any other person [acts] senselessly.' The phraseology of these pādas sounds like an echo of the typical *brahmodya* vocabulary, and the *brahmodyas*, as is well known, deal with cosmological riddles about which questions are asked. Compare, for instance, the following passages from the famous Riddle hymn:

I,164,5a-b: *pākaḥ pṛchāmi mánasā́vijānan | devā́nām enā́ níhitā padā́ni*
    'An ignorant fool, I ask in my mind about the hidden footprints of the
    gods';

I,164,6a-b: *ácikitvāñ cikitúṣaś cid átra | kavī́n pṛchāmi vidmáne ná vidvā́n*
    'Unknowing, ignorant, I ask for knowledge about it from the poets who
    know' (O'Flaherty 1981: 76).

This stylistic similarity shows that the concept of gate was held sacred in the RV.

<p style="text-align:center">*   *   *</p>

In conclusion, it should be stated that the meaning 'door of a house' is not testified
in the RV for *dvā́r-/dúr-*. The primary meaning of this word was 'gate of a cow-
pen'. It is very probable that the same entrance was used for the cattle and the
people who lived together in a kind of common enclosure inside which was found a
collection of dwellings and stalls. This supposition is supported by the fact that
some denominations of a house in the RV can be correlated in the plural form with
one denotatum (*gṛhá-*, *dū́rya-*). The connection of *dvā́r-/dúr-* with the dwelling of
people can also be traced etymologically: *dū́rya-* and *duroṇá-* are derived from the
root *dúr-*.

    The word *dvā́r-/dúr-* functions most frequently in the hymns in a metaphorical
sense. There are three main types of contexts in which this word is found in the
RV: a solar deity or a priest opens the gate; the Vala-myth; and the Āprī-hymns, in
which *dúraḥ* is a key-word of a certain stanza. The functioning of *dvā́r-/dúr-* in
each type of context is characterized by certain formal peculiarities. Of the two
testified grammemes of number (the word has no singular forms) the dual forms are
used only in the first group of cases, while the plural ones are used in the second
and third groups. So there exists here a strict complementary distribution. Of the
three case grammemes making up the paradigm of this word, nominative, vocative
and accusative, the nominative and vocative are used only in the plural. They are
found in the Āprī-hymns, and not in the Vala-myth. The grammeme of the accusa-
tive can function in any group of contexts with both the dual and plural inflexion.
Forms of the accusative of both numbers are governed mainly by a group of verbs
meaning 'to open' (trans.). The subject of this predicate, the agent who opens the
gate, is either a god (Indra, a solar deity) or the priests (it may also be other medi-
ators). The gate symbolizes a frontier between the two worlds. It can be opened
from both sides, and to open the gate means for mortals to obtain access to the
divine gifts.

    The Nom. and Voc. pl. forms found in the Āprī-hymns are syntactically con-
nected with the same group of verbs meaning 'to open' (intr.) – worshippers plead

with the gates to "open". In this situation can be seen semi-personification of the gates and their exaggerated laudation. Chains of adjectival attributes qualify the Nom./Voc. pl. form *dvā́raḥ*.

The dual and the plural forms of *dvā́r-/dúr-* both occur in syntactic constructions with the genitive case expressing appurtenance. *dvā́r-/dúr-* in these constructions is mostly used metaphorically: the gate of darkness, the gate of riches etc. The lists of substantives in the genitive are different in the dual and in the plural. Only one substantive is found in both lists: *vrajá-* and 'the gate of cow-pen' can be *vrajásya dvā́rā* and *vrajásya dúraḥ*. This seems to be the primary meaning of this construction, which refers to a material object. In the mythological context of Vala *dúraḥ* is used figuratively, designating a break in a rock caused by Indra's vajra which served as an exit for the cows that had been locked inside.

The result of this short investigation is that we still know very little about how 'the door of a house' looked in Ṛgvedic times. It would be wiser to speak about the entrance into the dwelling where people lived without rejecting the possibility that the gate of a cow-pen might coincide with 'the door of a house'. The only hints at its material nature are that it consisted of two parts and had a kind of frame.

At the same time the hymns of the RV provide us with a clear idea of the prominent role played by the gate in mythology and ritual. The concept of a gate symbolizing the frontier between the sacred and the profane realm is revealed distinctly in the hymns, along with the image of a ritual with the aim of opening the gates, making the gods pass through them and rewarding the devotees.

This symbolic function of the door and gate is well known in many archaic cultures and folk-beliefs: the data of the RV are supported by many typological parallels. The door (gate) is regarded over a wide area as a protection from danger that threatens from outside, and all the parts of the door partake of a sacred character (Leach 1949: 321). In many cultures the gate symbolizes a means of communication between the living and the dead (Jobes 1962: 633). The gate is a very important object in Slavonic folk-beliefs and magical practices. It is believed to be a symbolic frontier between "one's own" territory and the "outside" alien world. Actions connected with the gate have above all a communicative and evaluative function (information about the wedding, birth, death etc.). This is when relations between the family and the community are concerned. But if contacts with the "alien" world take place, the aim of the magical ritual is to protect "one's own" territory from the hostile forces from outside (Vinogradova & Tolstaja 1995: 438). The opening of the Tsar's gates, meaning the transition from the profane to the sacred, is the central point of certain rituals in the Russian Orthodox Church.

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