EDITORIAL BOARD

Dr. R.K. Sharma  
Formerly Vice-Chancellor, Sampurnanand Sanskrit University, Varanasi; 63 Vigyan Vihar, New Delhi - 110092.

Dr. R.N. Dandekar  
Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Pune

Dr. Giorgio Bonazzoli, M.A. (Milan); M. Th. (Rome)

EDITOR

Ram Shankar Bhattacharya. M.A., Ph.D., Vyakaranacharya

ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Ganga Sagar Rai, M.A., Ph.D.
Oscar Pujol, M.A.

Authors are responsible for their views, which do not bind the Editors and the Trust.

Authors are requested to use Devanāgarī characters while writing Sanskrit ślokas and prose passages. They are also requested to follow the system of transliteration adopted by the International Congress of Orientalists at Athens in 1912 \( \text{ṛ} = r, \text{ḍ} = c; \text{ṛ} = ch; \text{ṛ} = t; \text{ṝ} = s; \text{ṛ} = s; \text{ṁ} \).

Traditional Sanskrit scholars are requested to send us articles in Sanskrit (i) dealing with the religious & philosophical matters in the Purāṇas and (ii) explaining the obscure & difficult passages in the Purāṇas.

Contents—लेखसूची

1. गङ्गासौत्रम् [Eulogy of Gaṅgā]  
   Compiled By Dr. Ram Shankar Bhattacharya  
   Pages 1-2

2. पञ्चगाञ्जाकङ्क [Eight Verses in Praise of Pañcagāṅgā]  
   Compiled By Sri Rampad Chakravarti  
   Pages 3-5

3. Advaitic Concepts in the Purāṇas  
   [ पुराणेण अहैतिकविचारः]  
   By Dr. N. Gangadharan;  
   15 Devan Colony, Muthalamman Koil Street Extn., West Mambalam, Madras 600033  
   Pages 6-24

4. Expressions and Colloquialism in the Purāṇas  
   [पुराणाय व्यवहारभाषाप्रयोगः]  
   By Smt. Prof. Dr. Sindhu S. Dange;  
   Girmar, Gokhale Road, Mulund (East), Fort Bombay-81  
   Pages 25-32

5. Archaeology and the Bhāgavata  
   [पुरातंत्रम् भागवत् च]  
   By Prof. R.N.Mehta;  
   8 Shreyas Society, Race Course (West), Baroda-7  
   Pages 33-42
Vāmāna Purāṇa, Cultural study of (S), Trivedi, Mahanand, Sampurnanand, 1975, Ph.D.
Varāha Purāṇa, Cultural study of, (S), Pandey Viswanath, Sampurnanand, 1976, Ph.D.
Varāha Purāṇa; A study of, (H), Tripathi, Usha, Gorakhpur, 1983, Ph.D.
Varāha Purāṇa; A study, (H), Bhatt, Naresh Bhagavatshankar, Patel, 1977, Ph.D.
Vāyu Purāṇa, Legends of, (H), Tyagi, Shyama Devi, Meerut, 1979, Ph.D.
Vāyu Purāṇas, Critical survey of the geographical material in the Nilamata, Matsya Viṣṇu and, Saxena, Savitri, Delhi, 1964, Ph.D.
Viṣṇu and Bhāgavata Purāṇa, Comparative study of, (S), Tripathi, Rammilap, Sampurnanand, 1970, Ph.D.
Viṣṇu, Critical and comparative study of the, and Śrīmad Bhāgavata Purāṇa, Sharma, Hukum Chand Vasisht, Punjab, 1975, Ph.D.
Viṣṇu, Critical survey of the geographical material in the Nilamata, Matsya and Vāyu Purāṇas, Saxena, Savitri, Delhi, 1964, Ph.D.
Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Cosmology in the, Sharma, Anita, Delhi, 1985, Ph.D.
Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Critical study of the, Bagai, Santosh, Delhi, 1975, Ph.D.
Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Critical study of the culture and philosophy of the, (H), Chaudhary, Damodar Prasas, Bihar, 1978, Ph.D.
Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Critical study of the religious, social and historical data in the, Chauhan, Manohar Singh, Agra, 1964, Ph.D.
Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Cultural aspects of the, Thakur, Harendra Dayal, Patna, 1970, Ph.D.
Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Dharma in, (H), Pandey, Ravindranath, Gorakhpur, 1982, Ph.D.
Viṣṇu Purāṇa, Philosophy in the, Tyagi, Seetharam, Durgavati, 1986, Ph.D.
Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa, Study of the Kāvyāsāstra portion of, (H), Misra, Paramanand, H.S.Gaur, 1984, Ph.D.
Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa, Cultural study of the, Shukla, Lakshmichand, Delhi, 1979, Ph.D.
Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa, Polity in, Shastri, Devrattan, Jammu, 1977, Ph.D.
Vrata in the Smṛtis and Purāṇas with special reference to Upāsana, Sharma, Rani, Delhi, 1977, Ph.D.

***

TAPAS AS DESCRIBED IN THE PURĀNAS *

BY

RAM SHANKAR BHATTACHARYA

[प्रलये एक पराजयु पत्ता बिवरणमुलभते, यदालक्ष्य निबन्धोऽर्पणे प्रणीतः।
पवयप्रवरूपविखनिस्मृति निबन्धेः इमे विषयवा विवाक्तमुविविशयतः।
— वीरार्जिणकस्तृती
तपस: प्रविशिष्टः, तपस्यो भक्ति, तपस्यो गृहितं व्याख्या, तपस्योः
प्रारम्भस्य अप्रास्तस्य च, तपस्यो पौराणिक्य: सूत्यः, तप:शाश्वतः; तपस्यो: स्वरूपम्, पुरुषं
गृहै गृहै च तप:; तपस्यो विज्ञानसारं, तपस्यो भक्ति:; परो:नुकूलानि स्वाभाविनि, तप:स्वाभिन्नो
दोषा गुणाद्यः, तप:स्वाभिन्न वैस्वर्ण्यशास्त्रम्, तप:कारिणो वानप्रस्थः; वानप्रस्थायं
शास्त्रम्, तप:कारिणो विज्ञानसारं, तपस्यानां तप:स्वाभाविनि, तपस्या उपयुक्तपता, तपस्या
विष्णूसारं फलानि च।]

I. The cult of tapas

Introductory

Though tapas (austerity, penance, self-castigation) does not fall under any of the five original topics (lakṣaṇas) of the Purāṇas, (namely sarga, pratisarga, vaṁśa, manvantara and vaṁsyaṁnucarita), yet they mention tapases in various occasions, chiefly in the descriptions of the vānaprastha āśrama, procedure of worship and vows and often in the delineations of the lives of almost all sages and some particular kings and even asuras. Though the Dharmasūtras and Smṛtis also deal with tapases, yet Puranic description of tapases is of varied nature and seems to contain many details not found in the Sūtras and Smṛtis. A few tapases are mentioned in the Purāṇas only.

In the following pages an attempt is being made to present the Puranic material on tapases. The richness of Puranic material on tapases may be known from the Puranic passages given in the appendix by way of example.

Tapas seems to have become an inseparable part not only of the individual life but of the social life also. This may be known from the Puranic assertion that elder and respected persons are said to be of three kinds, namely viśauvrddha, tapovṛddha and vaṉovṛddha (Bṛhat- nārādiya-p. 23.34). The influence of tapas was so deep that the Puranic

* 'Purāṇas' include the two epics and the Harivarṣa.
authors thought it worthwhile to mention which of the sacred places were not resorted to by tapasvins on account of fear; vide Sk. Kumārīka 1.12.11-12 in which five such places are mentioned, namely Kumāreśa, Stambhēśa, Barkareśvara, Mahākāla and Siddhēśa.

It is interesting to note that we find a word-play on tapas in Skanda-p. Kumārīka 4.13. The Brahmans are shown here to declare that their wealth is taken away by the 16th and 21st mute (Sparśa) letters: स्मृती शोधा चैव विकास्य गृहणिन्त नो धनम्. The 16th letter is त and the 21st is य and thus the word तपस (त) is indicated. This undoubtedly shows the popularity of tapas in ancient India.

The influence of tapas may be known from the fact that in ancient India some places were named after the names of the persons who practised tapas there; शेष यत्र तपस्तर्न तय नानानामितीशुन्त (SK. Nāgara. 12.13; Deviśa-ga-vata-p 6.12.13). This is said to justify the names of the Vāmana-āśrama and the Satyayūpa-āśrama. There are hundreds of names based on this principle. There is no doubt that the names like Bhāradvāja-āśrama, Agastya-āśrama, Dālbhya-āśrama, Kanva-āśrama etc. are based on this principle. Place names like Garga-srotas (Śālīya-p. 37.16), Bhīru-tūṇa etc. (that do not bear the word āśrama) are also based on this principle.

A point is to be noted in this connection. There are a considerable number of places where reputed persons practised tapas, though the places were not named after the names of the tapasvins. This shows that the principle holds good in those cases where either the places of tapas had no names, or the places had non-significant or less-known names.

It should not be understood that the Puranic-description of tapas are practised by individuals are true. Authors of the relevant passages, who were directly or indirectly acquainted with various kinds of tapas, usually mentioned those tapases as they thought proper according to the situation and also to their sectarian view-point. That is why sometimes similar tapases are mentioned in connection with different persons. It is remarkable to note that more or less identical verses are found in the descriptions of tapases practised by Dharmarāja (in Sk. Dāhmarāṇya 3.4-8) and Harīkeśa (in Sk. Kāśi 32.134-144) in one and the same Purāṇa.

Glorification of tapas

It is wellknown that tapas is given a high position by the authors of the Purāṇas. ¹ Even a divine character is given to tapas, for it is regarded as one of the ten divine attributes of God; see Vāyu-p. 10.65-66; Kūrma-p. 1.10.39-40 (cr. ed.) Brahmapāda-p. 3.2 218-219; Saura-p. 23.16.17. Puranic authors aver that tapas is at the very root of all deeds of great persons: महतुक कार्ये यानी से धर्म परम सता तपस्: (Sk. Kumārīka 25.6) and declare that the accumulation of tapas is superior to that of wealth (समस्याः सा धर्म परम सता तपसः: Padma-p. 5.19.246). They lay stress on the fact that dharma performed with the help of tapas is conducive to mokṣa:

योद्वेशु साध्यात्म गतिम: स कृत्याः: प्रकृतितिम: ||

य: पुनः वस्मात्साध्य: स कृत्याः: प्रकृतितिम: मेवात: ||

(Sk. Nāgara 32.41 Ven.).

The glorious position of tapas may be inferred from such statements as assert that tapas associated with  सा (restrain of internal organs),  dāma (restrain of external organs) etc. is said to constitute what is known as brahma-prakṛti (tendency of the Brahmin) (Bhāgavata-p. 11.17.66) and that it is utter foolishness to apply tapas for the fulfilment of petty desires, for it is capable of conferring liberation:

यस्िलेतु कृष्णतत्तत्त्वाणि निद्रायं महत्: ||

कामायनायस्य युक्तार्थान्त्र बह्यम: कपोलतात: ||

(Bhāgavata-p. 11.18.10).

Original śāstra on tapas

The Mahābhārata informs us that tapas was one of the themes that were treated in the śāstra composed by Brahma, the Pītāmaha (Śānti-p. 59.141). This may not be a historical statement but it can reasonably be presumed that ancient teachers regarded the practice of tapas as coming from hoary past. The frequent mention of tapas along with its results in the Vedic Śāṅhitās and Brahmāṇas testifies to the antiquity of the cult of practising tapas.

In this connection it is worthy of note that in the Purāṇas we find mention of particular tapases that are said to be spoken out by Brahma. A severe tapas called Mahāniyama is one of such tapases (Śānti-p. 340.46):

The antiquity of tapas may be proved by the statement 'tapas was chiefly practised in the Satyayuga (तपस्त: पर: कृत्यां Śānti-p. 23.28). This tapas must not be taken as physical mortification but as characterised by

---

¹ There is no need to quote any Puranic passage for this assertion. If is enough to quote the following verse by way of sample in which the four Puruṣārthas
similar position is given to tapas in Śānti-p. 13.9 (तपस्या निःशिरिति
निस्वयन्ति धीमयाम्। परं पयं च भयं एतं नेन्त्यति:) In the ladder
consisting of tapas, tyāga (renunciation) and avidhi (i.e. naiśkarmya)
tapas is placed on the first or lowest rung.

Reason for this apparently conflicting view is not difficult to seek. The
conflict is based on the specific senses in which tapas and tyāga and other
virtues are taken. To be explicit: Tapas is said to be inferior if it is taken
chiefly in the sense of physical mortification without having any
connection with some degree of spiritual development; tapas is held to be
superior if it is helpful in acquiring one-pointedness, meditation and the
like. (In this form also the element of a particular kind of external
restrain does exist to a considerable degree.) In such examples’ virtues like
renunciation and the like are taken in a narrow sense. A mechanical act
of renunciation is certainly inferior to tapas that possesses a considerable
degree of internal restriction.

List of tapases
For interested readers we are giving here a list of references to those
Purānic passages in which a large number of tapases are mentioned. In
this connection it should be noted that these passages mention tapases
sometimes by names, sometimes by direct descriptions, sometimes by
using epithets to ascetics. Sometimes tapases are indirectly known from the
acts performed by ascetics. (These lists are not exhaustive).

(A) Passages on the third or Vānaprastha āśrama:- Mārkaṇḍeya-p.
28.24-27; Bhāgavata-p. 11.18.11.19; Agni-p. 3.7.18-23;
Nārasiṁha-p. 1. 27.85-91; 1.43.120-122; Padma-p. 5.15, 33/- 349;
Garuḍa-p. 1.102. 1-6; Kuṇḍā-p. 2.27.1-38 (cr.ed.); Viṣṇudharmottara-
2.130; Devi-p. 2.9-13; Bṛhannārāyaṇa-p. 25.46-52; Bṛhadāranyaka-p.
3.7; Saura-p. 20.1-10; Narasiṁha-p. 59; Bhāgavata-p. 10.3.33-35
Anuśāsana-
p. 142.4-59.

A few tapases (chiefly mental) are sometimes mentioned in the
passages on the fourth or sannyāsa āśrama also, which are usually found
after the description of the third āśrama.

(B) Passages describing hermitages etc. Kuṇḍā-p. 2.37.93-102.
Varāha-p. 212.7-15; Bhāgavata-p. 1.18.25-27; 103.33-35; 4.34.46;
Bṛhmaṇa-p. 2.50.36-43; Sk. Kuṇḍikhanda 22.13-21; Nāgaraśāna-p.
1.5; Ch. 4; Ch. 206; Viṣṇukhaṇḍa Ayodhyā Ch. 9; Mbh. Anuśāsana-

(C) Passages describing tapases practised by individuals: Rāmāyaṇa
1.70.30-32 (Cyavana); Bhāgavata-p. 10.3.33-35 (Vasudeva and
Devaki); 4.8.71-80 (Dhruva); Matsya-p. 148.10-12 (Tāraka); 35.12-17
(Yāyati); Bṛhmaṇa-p. 2.22.69-78 (Pāraśurāma); Narasiṁha-p. 25.22-

Dignified position of Tapas
On account of possessing a highly efficacious character tapas has
been viewed in various ways by the authors of the Purāṇas. A few of such
notions are given below.

Tapas is regarded as (i) one of the sources (mūla) of Sanātanadharma (Bṛhmaṇa-p.
1.30.37-38); (ii) one of the four feet of Dharma, the other three being vidyā,
ārtha and satya (Bṛhāvata-p. 3.13.25); (iii) one of the mahāyogas
(Bṛhāvata-p. 1.16.27-30); (iv) one of the seven gates of svarga (Matsya-p.
39.22); (v) one of the five members of siva-dharma, the other four being
karma, japa, dhyāna and jñāna; (vi) one of the ten means of virtuousness
(Padma-p. 2.69.5; the printed reading ततो ध्यानम् is to be corrected to
tतस्म ध्यानम्); (vii) one of the eight component parts of dharma (Mbh.
Vana-p. 2.75); (viii) one of the eight duties or observances (caritras)
that constitute sīṣṭācāra (Matsya-p. 145.38-39); (ix) one of the yogic niyamas which are said to be
five, ten or twelve in different Purāṇas (Viṣṇu-p. 6.7.31; Agni-p.
161.20; 382.31-32; Liṅga-p. 1.8.29-30; Sk. Dharma-rāṇya 5.20-21; Garuḍa-p.
1.218.12-13; Bṛhāvata-p. 11.19.34; V.Dh. U. 3.233.202; Sk.
Kāśikhaṇḍa 35.33).

Superiority as well as inferiority of tapas
Tapas has sometimes been given a superior position than that of
yajña
and the like. Similarly it is regarded as superior to renunciation and
sannyāsa; vide Kuṇḍā-p. 1.19.33-45 (cr.ed.) where it is said that on
being asked which is to be preferred out of tapas, tyāga and sannyāsa that
lead to āśraya (highest good) Vasiṣṭha, Pulastya, Pulaha and other sages
expressed their opinion in favour of tapas.

On the other hand tapas is sometimes regarded as inferior to certain
corumbhavas. As for example, tapas is regarded as inferior to japa (the
muttering of sacred syllables) in Liṅga-p. 1.75.13 and Śiva-p. 1.17.147.
The expression tapasvibhīyo 'dhiḥ yogi in Gitā 6.46 undoubtedly
suggests the inferiority of tapas in comparison to internal yoga practice.

1. यज्ञाः देवस्तनम् तत्: (Viṣṇu-p. 91.114); सन्यासिः श्रेष्ठतमिश्रित्य परम्परा क्रिया (Śānti-p.
79.17). कर्मविपरीताय यथा प्रदेषको विशिष्टते लिङ्ग-प. 1.75.13; क्रियाविपरीताय लोपोतुष्टो
विशिष्टते (Śiva-p. 1.17.146).
II. Nature and kinds of tapases

The word tapas

From the passage तत्त्वात् हि कर्मनासाभावात् तप सात्मिकीयते (Agni-p. 175.3) it is clear that the word tapas is derived from the root tapas (Bhāvādī; sāntāpa, literally burning). This shows the character of tapas; tapas invariably causes pain to the person who practises it. This sāntāpa 1 is due to the bearing of opposites 2 or of the adverse circumstances with the view of acquiring some goal.

The above quoted passage points to the difference between vows (vrata) and tapas. The sentence कै न्त्रेते धीर्यन्तं तपस्यं वृत्तम्: प्रज्ञावते (Saura-p. 14.11) suggests that tapas is to be performed by a person who is capable of performing vrata, which are of the nature of sarīkalpa (mental resolve) as has been expressly stated by Medhatīthī on Manu 4.13 (मानस: संकल्पो ब्रतमुख्येऽ शाल्यविद्यामयं मया कर्त्त्वम् इदं व शाल्यविद्यामयम्).

Essential characteristic of tapas

A consideration of Puranic passages reveals that tapas is understood in the following three forms:

1. उपजितः परिच्छिन्दते यस्मात् च सर्वत्र तपस्यं (Kurma-p.2.11.21); चारामन्त्रिक्षरश्च सर्वरस्य विशेषं (Bṛhadāranyaka-p.3.18.89); सर्वरस्या वापि वृष्टि ज्ञानविद्यामयम् (Garuḍa-p.1.229.20 said as an alternative view); चारामन्त्रिक्षरश्च शुद्धमभावं (Liṅga-p.1.8.38; the sentence refers to tapas as one of the niyamas.) Passages like तपस्या कार्योस्याचरणं कृशी धर्मिनिन्ततां (Kurma-p.1.19.39) also shows that the chief characteristic of tapas is physical mortification.

(i) Tapas is essentially physical and it invariably creates a considerable degree of pain to the practitioner. 1 it is often regarded as 'the drying up of the body'.

(ii) Tapas is chiefly mental 2 i.e. it is of the nature of restrain primarily of the internal organ and secondarily of the external organs.

(iii) Mere mortification of the body is not to be taken as tapas; only that external restrain is to be taken as tapas which helps one to realize the self or to attain various spiritual goals. 3 Sometimes this form of tapas is regarded as the higher form of tapas.

It appears that originally the word tapas must have been used in the sense of those rigorous acts which were willingly practised to fulfil some purpose. These acts invariably cause more or less bodily mortification (sāntāpa). Mental development was not of much importance in this form of tapas. When this view came to be one-sided i.e. when mere mortification came to be regarded as tapas, the second view came into existence as a reaction. The third view is a reconciliation of these two views, and it is accepted in the schools of philosophy. 4

Tapas is undoubtedly of the nature of an act: रजस्तोष्णो यथा कर्म तपस्यामुख्य कर्म स्वस्तकृतम् (Śānti-p. 217.16). The nature of the act must be eradicative of the rājas and tāmasa qualities like distraction, unattentiveness, idleness, sleepiness, etc. In another place the Mahābhārata refers to this view by saying: तप: स्वाभिस्वतितम्. 5

One point is to be noted in connection with bodily mortification (śarīra-śoṣaṇa). According to the general view of tradition tapas is

---

1. ईद्यराजेष्यं शंक्रमणं तत् भवति नानाया (Mbh. Vana-p.211.18); संविन्यं तथ इतत्वुक्तः प्रिहितविवाहिणः (Āśvamedha-p.47.1); संविन्यं वर्ष तथा (Śānti-p.161.9); अनलोकप्ररत्नम् च वर्षस्य परं परं तथा (Brahma-p.130.18; Agni-p.372,19; Garuḍa-p.1.229.20, as an alternative view); अवहित सब्र: सति सफलार्थ सात्मिकीये (Liṅga-p.1.10.19) कार्याकार्य: मुनु ( Bhāg. P. 11.19.37); Śrīdhara observes: कार्याकार्यो भोजोपेयाः ततो न कृष्णविद्याः.

2. This may be proved by those Puranic passages that mention both internal and external restrain: e.g. भ्रमणो भयो भरीविता (Vayu-p.59.41); तस्य कार्यतथार्थं सतौ धान्यरोपस्थेत (संसाधी हि हितो वानराशास्त्रस्ते निवादिते) II (Garuḍa-p.1.49.13).

3. C. प्रदत्त विश्वासविद्या अवस्थानम् अन्नत्वेऽर्गीति हि भवते (Vyāsabhāṣya:2.1); Vācaspāti remarks: तत्त्वात्त्वमेव तत्त्वात्त्वमेव न वानरः भावमेवार्गीति (Tattvāvaiśāraḍī).

4. तपः स्वाभिस्वतितम् भास्तत्त्वात्त्वम् अवस्थानम् कर्म (Kulikā on Manu 12.104). तप: ... ययौ occurs in Mahābhārata; see Vana-parvan, Appendix no.19 and 32.

5. कार्यक्रमालाभं धर्मं वानराशास्त्राया कालाआदिक्रयाप्रणालायात तत्त्वात्त्वमेव न (Śārīraka-bhāṣya 3.4.20).
This view is particularly true if tapas is taken as a form of prāyāścitta (expiation) to get rid of the ill consequences of some sinful act, or as a means of achieving some gross worldly gain. But if tapas is performed as a yogāṅga (an auxiliary act of yoga) i. e. as a means for realizing the self, then the element of bodily mortification becomes secondary 2 (though bodily restrain is not totally overlooked). That is why the Puranic authors sometimes emphatically declare that non-violence, truthfulness etc. are to be known as tapas and not the 'drying up of the body'. 3

This view is presented in various ways. Vāyu-p. 59.41 remarks that the source of tapas (tapaso mūlam) is celibacy, muttering of sacred syllables. silence and fasting. Śānti-p 221.4 holds that a fast for a long time is considered tapas by the ignorant; according to the wise it is not so, for such a fast may create obstacle to self-knowledge. 4

Tapas—original and secondary

A peculiar use of the word tapas is found in the Puranas. While in some Puranic passages tapas is used as a distinct virtue like ahiṁsā, satya, dayā and the like (for tapas along with ahiṁsā etc. is read in one and the same sentence), 5 in other passages virtues like ahiṁsā, satya etc. are regarded as the forms of tapas. This apparently anomalous use deserves to be considered. The reason for taking tapas in two different positions is as follows:

The essential nature of tapas is 'the endurance of opposites in a particular way'. This endurance is not the same as the virtues (ahiṁsā, satya etc.) in their theoretical forms. In fact the endurance is connected with the practice of these virtues. To be explicit: if a person wants to

practise truthfulness he shall necessarily have to curb or overcome the desire of telling lies with a view to gaining something and to face its consequences with a cheerful or peaceful mind. This is what is meant by 'the endurance of opposites' (dvandvasahana). Thus it stands to reason that whenever a person practises any act of high morality, he shall have to overcome some amount of dvandva and this fact is the reason for regarding ahiṁsā, satya etc. as the forms of tapas. Such figurative use is found in all the branches of Sanskrit literature.

**Some significant epithets of tapas**

It is noteworthy that while mentioning tapases, Puranic authors often use some qualifying expressions like para, parama, ugra, duścara, ghora, dāruṇa, uttama etc. 1 Though sometimes they are used for metrical reasons, but in some places they are evidently used to serve some purpose. As for example in some places these are used to show the character of the tapas, i. e. the development in the internal excellence or external severity of the tapas; in other places these are used to denote a particular kind of tapas as is found in Harivāmaśa 1.25.4 (अनुत्तरा नाम तपः) in which the word anuttara is apparently used as an adjective of tapas. Though anuttara (in the sense 'one that has no superior') may be rightly construed with tapas, yet the commentator Nilakantha takes it in the sense of mauna (silence), evidently on the strength of the word nāma. A similar example is found in the passage स धार्मिको नाम तपस्वयम् वः (Śānti-p. 340.46). The description of the tapas as given in 340.47 shows that it is a particular kind of tapas. The external severity of tapas seems to be the reason for the epithet dāruṇa.

In दुस्सरेः नाम तपः (Brahmāṇda-p. 2.65.3) suduscara does not seem to be the name of a tapas but a qualifying expression. Here nāma may be taken as suggesting prasiddhi or any other suitable sense.

**Kinds of tapases**

Tapases have been divided in various ways. The most popular division is based on the three guṇas. Accordingly tapases are either sāttvika (in which the Sattva guṇa is predominant) or rāṣa or tāmasa. That form of tapas is sāttvika which is performed without attachment, without likes or dislikes and without any desire for acquiring worldly

---

1. तपस्वयम् (Śānti-p. 222.5; Bhāgavatī- p. 4.23.7); लस्य (Bhāgavatī-p. 4.13.4); तपस्वयम् (Vana-p. 187.5); परस्य स (Brahma-p. 130.18); दर्शनाश्चतः (V. Dh. U.2.131.42); तपस्वयम् (Śānti-p. 161.7); तपस्वयम् तपः (Śānti-P. 340.46).
prosperity but is directed to some spiritual goal; a rājāsa tapas is that which is performed with egotism, arrogance and the like and with a strong desire for secular results; and a tāmāsa tapas is that which is prompted by violence and undertaken by delusion without proper consideration.¹

For practical purposes tapases are said to be of three kinds, concerning speech (vācika or vānmaya), body (sārira or kāyika) and the mind (mānasa). For the definitions of these three, see Gitā 17.14-16.

A two-fold division of tapases is found in Śānti-p. 217.17:

\[ \text{brahmachārī mahāśa व शारीरं तप उच्चते।} \]
\[ \text{वाचनोनन्यमः सयद्ध मानसं तप उच्चते॥} \]

Here vācika tapas is included in the mānasa tapas and sārira tapas is taken in a broader sense. Though the inclusion of vācika tapas in mānasa tapas seems to be illogical, yet this inclusion has some basis. The organ vāc, though external, expresses what is conceived by the mind (यद्यवः मनसाभिज्ञजयैः तत् वाच विहः), Tāṇḍya Br. 11.1.3 and thus the function of the vāc may be taken under the function of the mind.

III. Factors connected with Tapas

Places favourable to practising tapas

From the Purāṇas it appears that the places especially favourable to tapas are not only the holy places of land but forests, coves of mountains and banks of rivers. That is why vānaprasthas (whose chief object is to practise tapas) are said to resort to tīrthas, prasravaṇas (springs), forests and rivers.

Not only the persons entering the vānaprastha āśrama, but particular sages, kings and others are sometimes said to go, at any time, to some forest, mountain, tīrtha or kṣetra to practise tapas in order to fulfil some purpose. Women also sometimes went to forests to practise tapas; as for example after the death of Kṛṣṇa-Satyabhāmā and other wives of Kṛṣṇa went to forest with the desire of practising tapas as stated in Mbh. Mauṣāla-p. 7.74. Gāndhāri, Kuṇḍi, Satyavatī (Vyāsa's mother) and some others are said to go to forest to practise tapas in the last part of their life.²

Since particular places, forests etc. are highly favourable to tapas on account of some reasons; they are rightly called tapaḥkṣetras—extremely fit for practising tapas. It appears that this epithet was given deliberately so that people would think that in these places their practice of tapas would necessarily be successful or that the places being favourable to tapas success would be achieved by exerting less effort or in less time.

In the Purāṇas following places are frequently said to be tapaḥkṣetras: Kurukṣetra, Puṣkara, Badarikāśrama, Bhṛgutūṇga, Jambūmārga, Kālāpāgrāma, Śriparvata, Prabhāsa, Prayāga, Vārāṇasi, Prthūdaka, Himālaya (mt.) Kālaṇjara (mt.), Amarakāṇṭaka (mt.), and Nāḍēśvara. Forests known as tapaḥkṣetras are the following: Dharmāraṇya, Puṣkaraṇya, Daṇḍakāranya, Ghṛhrāraṇya. Guruvisālavana, Devārūvana, Naimiśāraṇya, Pañcavaṭī, Magadhāraṇya, Siddhāraṇya, Dvaitavana, Saindhavaṇya, Kurujāṅgala and Upalāraṇya.

The glorified position of forests in the field of practising tapas may be known from such statements as तपस्यादि योऽपि रूपस्य in several Purāṇas (Garuḍa-p. 1.49.12. Kuśma-p. 1.2.78 cr.ed.) and also from two passages ज्ञानात्मातः कस्य वनम् and प्रोद्देति तत्त्वं वनम् found frequently in the puranic descriptions of the lives of sages and kings. There are strong reasons to believe that there arose a 'forest cult' in ancient India and it lasted for a long period. The following verse of the Mahābhārata may be considered in this connection:

वननिबिहिन्यनिरायतस्यनिवयाधियाः।
वनं निर्मितवसादी वसतवं वनजीविधि:॥ ²

(Anuśāsana-p. 142.13).

¹: Names of a considerable number of women, who practised tapas, are found in the Purāṇas. The daughter of Śāṅḍilya (Mbh. Śāya-p. 54), Śīvā (Udyoga-p. 109.19) and the daughter of Kuṇī Gargya (Śalya-p. 52) are well-known examples mentioned in the Mahābhārata.

²: Vanajīvin is the same as vānaprastha, which is explained as को प्रकृतिविषयोऽविनिन्यत्तिस्य वर्षतत्तिः कस्यातः यवस्य: (Mitākṣarā on Yāj. Smṛti 3.45).
Two conditions for rendering tapas well-developed

The Mbh. declares that tapas becomes well-developed (samrddha) when it gets rid of faults or defects (dośas) and at the same time it becomes endowed with qualities or excellences (guṇas):

वेदान्तलोकेऽऽद्वाभ्यां वृक्षामेव समाधितम्
एवति समुदद्वयन्ति तथो भवति केवलम्
(Udyoga-p. 43.39)

Dośas are said to be nineteen (12+7= क्रोडाद्वारा व्यस्त दोषस्य न्ततानि च सर्व जातानि). Twelve dośas are mentioned in 43.16, namely krodha (wrath), kāma (desire), lobha (avarice), moha (delusion), vidhitaś (craving), akṣpa (mercilessness), aṣṭyā (cavilling), māna (vanity), sōka (grief), sparśā (hankering) irṣyā (envy), and jugupsā (reviling).

In 43.19 the seven faults are mentioned. These faults are to be derived from the seven adjectival expressions referring to these faults: (1) sambhogasamvid (one who is full of thoughts about enjoyment), (2) viṣama (not equiposed), (3) vairagya (cavilling), (4) sūkṣma (one who is full of thoughts about enjoyment), (2) vājraprasāṁsin (one who repents of generosity), (5) kṛpaṇa (a miserly person), (6) vargapraśāṁsin (one who exalts his group), and (7) vañcerihi dvesṭā (one who hates one's wife).

Guṇas (excellences) are chiefly dama, tyāga, apramāda and vairāgya (see verses 12, 23, 28, 29 and 35).

Age, time and duration concerning the practice of tapas

There is no injunction about the age for taking up the practice of tapas, nor any statement about the age suitable for such practice. Persons in their childhood are described as going for practicing tapas, even severe tapas, as we find in the life of the celebrated devotee Dhruva, who was of four or five years of age (चतुर्दशा ज्ञात) at the time of practising tapas (Viśu-p. 1.11.34). Kings are usually said to embrace the life of an ascetic at the later part of their life.

We find no specific mention of any particular time for taking up the practice of tapas in general. There is however mention of seasons in connection with some particular tapases, as is found in Sk. Prabhāsa 21.12-13 (वर्षिकाकाराशयी च हेमन्ते सर्विश्वशयं) and in other Purāṇas. Some tapases have connection with month, day or night; cp. the expressions like मासिकपारिशिष्ट (Sk. Nāgara 169.42); एकान्तरितोभीजन.

1. ग्रीष्ममेवमधुमयानादानिकः आदिवासाय नेनादेव (Agni-p. 160.3); (Cp. Bhāgavata-p. 10.3.33 (रंगमत्वावधश्रवर्गवर्गवाक्यान्तम्यते) सहस्त्रादि ...

IV. Practitioners of tapases

Tapas and vanaprasthas (forest hermits)

Passages saying about the practice of tapas in forests by vanaprasthas are found almost in all the Purāṇas. Only a few of such passages are quoted below:

(i) वानप्रस्थापपोषनासूनुस्वर्चयन्ति
(ii) हेम... तथ एव च।
(iii) तपो हि वः सैवति काननस्यो
(iv) वसलेख्य नित्याद्वार्यानायि
(v) वानप्रस्था प्रकृयात् तपोवानाध्यायायिकम्

(Puranic chapters on the vanaprastha āśrama have already been referred to in the first section of the article).

Peculiar character of the Vānaprasthas

It is remarkable to note that the vānaprasthas were so strict in maintaining their character as ascetics (tapasvis) that they wholeheartedly refrained from taking any help or service from others and consequently they came to be known as svasārīropajīvin (lit. one who lives by his own body; Anuśāsana-p. 142.3). This evidently shows that vānaprasthas were not allowed to keep servants to look after their works. That this was a fact may be known from the descriptions of the vānaprastha-life of kings and the like as found in the Purāṇas.

The Śāstra of forest hermits

The Purāṇas inform us that a person practising tapas in a forest is called a vaikāhāsana: 'सचराचारे तस्मादध्रेष्ठे साधुदेशीयम्: स्नेत: (Vāyu-p. 59.24; Liṅga-p. 1.10.9) and that the vānaprasthas were required to follow śravaṇa vidhi (वैधिक शास्त्र: सृष्टि-प्रकृति भा: 21.15b-16a). The import of the word is not quite clear. Nilakantha’s explanation of śravapena by śāstra-

1. See also Bhāgavats-p. 11.18.6 (स्वयं मेवमहाने त्वस्य नागिनः). It appears that on account of the tiresome life the Śānti-p. 243.21 uses the expression śravapena while describing forest-hermits.
The classes are: Vāmana (vide Haradatta's comments on G. Dh. S. 3.26; Vasiṣṭhadarmasūtra 9.10). The critical ed. of the Mahābhārata however reads Sāmīnām in 21.15.

**Division of vānaprasthas**

In the Garuḍa-p. (1.49.11-13) vānaprasthas are found to be divided into three classes, namely vanavāsin, vanastha and sannyāsin. Respective duties of these three classes are described here also. It appears that in the duties of the first class, bodily hardship is predominant; of the second class, external worship is predominant; of the third class, mental control is predominant.

A fourfold division of forest hermits is given in Bhāgavata-p 3.13.27.

The classes are: Vaikhānasa, Valakhilya, Audumbara and Phenapa.

**Attractive descriptions of persons practising tapas**

Some of the Puranic descriptions of persons practising tapas are found to be extremely charming; see the description of Mārica Kaśyapa in Vāmana-p. 24.7-11; of Kapila in Brahmāṇḍa-p. 2.53.17-21.

Significant epithets bearing the word tapas are often used (in referring to persons practising tapas), namely ugratapas, taptatapas, mahatapas, dirghatapas, tapaṁkuśala, taponiṣṭha, tapaṁpratīta, tapayukta, pratihita-tapas, tapaḥ-samuddha, tapomūrti, taporāsī, tapaḥ-sīla etc.

A few examples of noteworthy epithets showing the physical aspect of the ascetics are given in the footnote. Since these epithets are used in connection with more than one ascetic in the Purāṇas, there is no need to mention the names either of the ascetics (to whom they are used) or of the particular Purāṇas.

---

1. Bṛha Pūrṇaḥ Purāṇa [VOL. XXXVIII No. 1] 84

2. The word seems to be sravāṇa (vide Haradatta's comments on G. Dh. S. 3.26; Vasiṣṭhadarmasūtra 9.10). The critical ed. of the Mahābhārata however reads Sāmīnām in 21.15.

3. Sūtra 3.13.27.

4. Attractive descriptions of persons practising tapas are found to be extremely charming; see the description of Mārica Kaśyapa in Vāmana-p. 24.7-11; of Kapila in Brahmāṇḍa-p. 2.53.17-21.

5. Some of the Puranic descriptions of persons practising tapas are found to be extremely charming; see the description of Mārica Kaśyapa in Vāmana-p. 24.7-11; of Kapila in Brahmāṇḍa-p. 2.53.17-21.

---

**Places where renowned persons practised tapas**

The Purāṇas are sometimes found to mention the names of those places where somebody practised tapas. A few names of such places along with the names of the practitioners in brackets are given below:

- Bindusarā (Bhagiratha)-Matsya-p. 121.26; Brahmāṇḍa-p. 2.18.31; Mbh. Vana-p. 145.44.
- Daṇḍakārṇya (Gotama)-Brahma-p. 85.41; 147.2; Varāha-p. 71.10; Dhūtapāpa River (Rudra)-Brahma-p. 3.13.20.
- Kanakhalā (Garuḍa)-Padma-p. 1.20.67; Matsya-p. 183.69.
- Badarikāśrama (Mitra and Varuṇa)-Matsya-p. 201.24.
- Haridvāra (Māṇḍavya)-Padma-p. 6.135.37; 6.21.1; 6.22.18.
- Indradvīma-saras (Pāṇḍu)-Mbh. Ādi-p. 119.10; Vana-p. 199.9-11.
- Mandara mountain (Śiva)-Vāmana-p. 51.74.
- Muṇḍapṛṣṭha hill (Śiva)-Vāyu-p. 111.15.

**V. Results of practising tapas**

**Tapas as a means**

That tapas is one of the powerful means for acquiring secular as well as spiritual goals has been stated in the Purāṇas, which use the word 'tapoyoga' in the sense of 'tapas as a yoga', i.e. upāya, means (Vana-p. 105.11). Puranic authors are aware that all other means can work successfully if they are aided by tapas. This notion is expressed by the Purāṇas by saying that tapas is at the root of all means (tapasam hi saḥānaṁ, Śanti-p. 161.4).

**About the efficacy of tapas**

The commentator Sūryānanda states that tapas is at the root of all means (śravāṇiḥ tapasam hi sādhanā). The commentary of Śrīvītuśāla-p. 26 illustrates the point with the following examples:

1. A person who is bereft of tapas cannot acquire the results of his efforts, and (2) anything difficult to be acquired can be realized through tapas.

---

1. Purāṇa Sūtra 3.13.27.

2. Purāṇa Sūtra 3.13.27.

3. Purāṇa Sūtra 3.13.27.

4. Purāṇa Sūtra 3.13.27.

---

**Tapas as described in the Purāṇas**

The Purāṇas are sometimes found to mention the names of those places where somebody practised tapas. A few names of such places along with the names of the practitioners in brackets are given below:

- Bindusarā (Bhagiratha)-Matsya-p. 121.26; Brahmāṇḍa-p. 2.18.31; Mbh. Vana-p. 145.44.
- Daṇḍakārṇya (Gotama)-Brahma-p. 85.41; 147.2; Varāha-p. 71.10; Dhūtapāpa River (Rudra)-Brahma-p. 3.13.20.
- Kanakhalā (Garuḍa)-Padma-p. 1.20.67; Matsya-p. 183.69.
- Badarikāśrama (Mitra and Varuṇa)-Matsya-p. 201.24.
- Haridvāra (Māṇḍavya)-Padma-p. 6.135.37; 6.21.1; 6.22.18.
- Indradvīma-saras (Pāṇḍu)-Mbh. Ādi-p. 119.10; Vana-p. 199.9-11.
- Mandara mountain (Śiva)-Vāmana-p. 51.74.
- Muṇḍapṛṣṭha hill (Śiva)-Vāyu-p. 111.15.

**V. Results of practising tapas**

**Tapas as a means**

That tapas is one of the powerful means for acquiring secular as well as spiritual goals has been stated in the Purāṇas, which use the word 'tapoyoga' in the sense of 'tapas as a yoga', i.e. upāya, means (Vana-p. 105.11). Puranic authors are aware that all other means can work successfully if they are aided by tapas. This notion is expressed by the Purāṇas by saying that tapas is at the root of all means (tapasam hi saḥānaṁ, Śanti-p. 161.4).

**About the efficacy of tapas**

The commentator Sūryānanda states that tapas is at the root of all means (śravāṇiḥ tapasam hi sādhanā). The commentary of Śrīvītuśāla-p. 26 illustrates the point with the following examples:

1. A person who is bereft of tapas cannot acquire the results of his efforts, and (2) anything difficult to be acquired can be realized through tapas.

---

1. Purāṇa Sūtra 3.13.27.

2. Purāṇa Sūtra 3.13.27.

3. Purāṇa Sūtra 3.13.27.

4. Purāṇa Sūtra 3.13.27.

---

1. Purāṇa Sūtra 3.13.27.

2. Purāṇa Sūtra 3.13.27.

3. Purāṇa Sūtra 3.13.27.

4. Purāṇa Sūtra 3.13.27.

---
as vairāja can be achieved through tapas (vairāja mans 'pertaining to Virāj, who is a gross form of Hiranyagarbha or Hiranyagarbha himself).

It is needless to say that innumerable Puranic verses declare that the practice of tapas is essential for realizing the self or attaining emancipation and that it is helpful in eradicating impurities and blemishes.

**Remarkable results of tapases**

The Purāṇas frequently speak of remarkable results that are acquired through tapas. Only a few of such results are stated below:

1. That acquirement of supernormal powers is dependent on tapas may be known from such statements as ऐवद्यमूल: प्राप्तालपूर्व न संक्य: (Sānti-p. 161.5; mark the expressions ऐव: and न संक्य:) According to the Bhāgavata-p. there are five means of attaining such powers, namely birth, medicinal herbs, tapas, mantra and yoga. The view is evidently based on Yogasūtra 4.1 (जन्मद्वितियोजनस्तपः समाधिहः: निद्राः:).

Since tapas is at the root of the whole phenomenal world (जैविक्तय तपस्य व्यवस्थनिर्दलीभवति Sānti-p. 217.15), a tapasvin becomes able to acquire supernormal powers as has been remarked by Nīlakantha on the above verse (अतातुः योगिनः व्यवस्थनिर्दलीभवति उपयोगहते).

2. In several Purāṇas Vedic mantras are said to have been manifested in the minds of the sages practising tapases.

3. After practiseing tapas for one thousand divine years, the Creator is said to have pronounced the three sounds bhūr, bhuvva and svar (Sk. Avantiksetra 4.13) and to have created all things and beings through the power of tapas.

---

1. तपस्यां वन्यार्कोरः स्वायत्तेऽपि पत्यः (Sānti-p.205.19); ज्ञाते तपस्यां वै दीर्घः: पवित्रस्व ततु मुद्यः (Aśvamedha-p. 47.3); हस्ताक्षररूपोऽपि साधनलीभवति V. Dh. U. 3.139.42; See also Śiva-p. 7.16.72; Kūrma-p. 1.13.44 (cr.ed.); Bhāgavata-p. 11.18.9 (One practising tapas is said to attain Bhagavat by passing through the śilokasa).

2. जन्मद्वितियोजनस्तपः समाधिहः: निद्राः: (भागवतः-प. 4.6.9). It is held here that all the supernormal powers that are acquired through birth, tapas etc. may also be acquired through yoga; Cp. Yogasūtra 4.1 (जन्मद्वितियोजनस्तपः समाधिहः: निद्राः:). The Bhāgavata-p uses yoga for samādhī of the Yogasūtra. The comm. Sīdhara has quoted this sūtra while commenting on this verse. The printed reading of the sūtra as quoted in the commentary slightly differs (जन्मद्वितियोजनस्तपः समाधिहः: निद्राः:). From the traditional reading of the sūtra, see also Bhāgavata-p. 6.9 (भागवतः-प. 6.9).


---

(4) It is well-known that the effect of curses (śāpas) and boons (varas) given by ascetics on account of being arrogant and pleased depends absolutely on the power of tapas of the ascetics. Sometimes we find even the mention of one's own tapas while cursing or bestowing boons. A capital example may be found in Gândhārī at the time of cursing Kṛṣṇa saying पवित्रद्वृत्तिः यमः तप: किंचिदुपासितमः....तस्य चक्रवर्त्याः (Striparvan 25.42).

(5) The most astonishing result of tapas is to create reversal in the nature of animals. This is found in Puranic passages describing a hermitage or a person practising tapas or meditation. It is shown in these descriptions that animals of opposite nature are behaving like friends or ferocious animals are playing with beasts of prey in the presence of yogins. Such a reversal of nature is undoubtedly due to the influence of tapas; cp. the Yogasūtra अहिन्साप्रियवाय: तत्तत्त्विच च (2.35).

It is needless to say that tapas enables a person to attain secular results like fame, beauty, fortune. span of life, prosperity, offspring, death of enemy, victory in battle etc. Interested readers may go through Ch. 57 of the Anuśāsana-p. of the Mahābhārata which contains a list of tapases with their respective results.

***