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There are possibilities that such idea was not utilized in practice in spite of Konark erotics. Thus Tantricism was definitely of a sober variety in the Sun-cult of early medieval and medieval periods.

 VALIDITY OF THE PURANIC VIEW ABOUT THE NATURE OF VEDIC RECENSIONS

By
RAM SHANKAR BHATTACHARYA

Sāmaśramin's assertions regarding the faulty character of Puranic view

While discussing the nature of Vedic recensions (śākhas) the celebrated Vedic scholar Satyavrata Sāmaśramin has asserted that the Puranic account of Vedic recensions (veda-śākha-vibhāga) is untrustworthy on account of the following reasons(Vide Aitareyā-locanam, pp. 119-126):

(i) From some Puranic passages (Bhagavata-p. 12. 6. 54-60; Viṣṇu-p. 3.4. 16-25) it appears that a śākha is a portion of a Veda (vedānā). As the Bhāgavata-purāṇa is divided into twelve skandhas and each skandha into many adhyāyas, so the one Veda has been divided into four parts (i.e. the four Vedas) and each part into sub divisions (called śākhās). As the readings and contents of each adhyāya of the Bhāgavata-p. are different from those of other adhyāyas, so the mantras and contents of each śākhā are

1. Though 'śākha' means 'a saṃhitā along with its brūṁmacā' (मन्त्रांतःसंस्थापातेरिस्कं शास्त्रम्, Medhātithi on Manu 2. 165) yet here the word stands for the saṃhitā only. The Purāṇas speak of śākhās as 'śāhitasāṃ kiṭkalakā:' (Viṣṇu-p. 3.6.15). Cp. the expression saṃhitāsamā (Viṣṇu-p. p. 3.6.3) in connection with śākhās. The expressions सर्ववाचायायनम् and सर्ववाचायायायायायāyāya used in the Mīmāṃsā philosophy also show that the word śākha may well refer to the saṃhitā only.

2. Following statements of Sāmaśramin are worth noticing:

(1) Purāṇa-p. 119-120: तदां पुराणेऽपि शास्त्रात्यावस्तेन वेदोऽपि स्त्रादेविवाहम् (p. 122); तस्मात् पौराणिक: शास्त्रात्यायात्मात्मविवाहम्: (p. 124); एव स तस्मृत्त विकृतवृद्धिपराभवति: तत्तवेन शास्त्रात्यायात्मात्मविवाहम्-मेव (p. 126).

in a personal communication. Even this discovery will not compensate for the absence of an image of Saura-Śakti in Tantric pose.
different from those of other sākhās of a Veda. Thus it follows that as the reading of one chapter of a skandha of the Bhāgavata-p does not mean the reading of a whole skandha, so the reading of one sākhā of a Veda does not mean the reading of one whole Veda. All this is against the established view of Vedic tradition. That sākhās of a Veda are not different portions may be known from Anukramani of Saunaka which says that most of the mantras in the Śākapala and the Bashkala sākhā (of the Rgveda) are the same though the order of the mantras is different in a few places. A perusal of the extant sākhās of each of the four Vedas would show that the sākhās cannot be regarded as different portions of a Veda.

(ii) The Puranic authors were not well-informed of Vedic matters. That is why the well-known Śākhāyana sākhā has not been mentioned in the Viṣṇu and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa.

(iii) Since according to the Purāṇas all the sākhās of a Veda constitute the Veda (sākhās being the portions of a Veda), the study of a Veda would mean ‘to study all the sākhās of a Veda’—an act which is highly impossible. This is against the Manusmṛti, which enjoins that a person should study the entire Veda (kr̥ṣṇa veda) (2.165). (A period of 12 years is given for this study by Manu 3.1 and other Dharmaśāstra works).

(iv) The assertion of the Kūrma-p. (Pūrva. 51) that Vyāsa alone composed all the recensions of the Vedas (like the composition of the eighteen Purāṇas) is not accepted by the Vedic tradition. The verses quoted by Sāmaśramin occur in the Ven. ed. of the Kūrma-p. 1.52. 19-20.

Validity of Puranic authors' views about Vedic matters

Before showing the validity of the Puranic views about the nature of Vedic recensions, we want to submit that there are strong grounds to believe that Puranic authors were intimately acquainted with Vedic matters. Following examples may be considered in this connection:

3. It has also been stated by Sāmaśramin that the wrong view about the nature of Vedic sākhās found in the Sanskrit dictionary Vācaspatayam (সাক্ষা বৈষাসপত্য) and in the Bengali Viśvakośa by Nagendra Nath Basu is due to the mistaken idea of the Purāṇas that a sākhā is a 

(i) While describing vows, worship etc. the Purāṇas quote a large number of Vedic mantras and mention the names of many sūktas, anuvākṣas, adhīyāyas of the Vedas. All of these mantras etc. are found to occur in the Vedic works (some however occur in the Sūtra works).

(ii) Puranic descriptions of the sacrifices (along with the mention of stomas etc.) are found to follow the Sūtra works.

(iii) Definitions and characteristics of the three kinds of mantras and of the brahmaṇas are found to be based on the authoritative works of Vedic tradition.

(iv) The Purāṇas often speak of many views (concerning dharma etc.) and remark that they are held by the Vedas. Almost all of such views are found in the Vedic works.

(v) The Purāṇas contain many tales or stories (ākhyaṇa etc.) which are said to be based on the Vedas. All of these stories are found to occur in the Vedas. It is however needless to say that these tales in the Purāṇas are in more or less exaggerated forms since the Vedic matter was augmented by adding new materials to serve the purpose of the Puranic authors.

That the Purāṇas contain such pieces of information about the sākhās as show the trustworthiness of Puranic views about the nature of Vedic sākhā is proved by the following facts:

4. In my purāṇavatvādīśāstraik sākhā ki mehākṣātaḥ āchārya (Ch. II, sec. 3 and 5) it is shown that sūktas, anuvākṣas, sūmans etc. mentioned in the Purāṇas do occur in Vedic works.

5. There are however corrupt readings in the printed editions of the Purāṇas on account of which it becomes sometimes difficult to identify them or to trace them in Vedic works. As for example Śiva-p. 5.51.47 mentions अजनासुक्ति which must be corrected to राजसुक्ति (राजसुक्ति).

6. See purāṇavatvādīśास्का सामाजी का महाक्षात्मक अध्ययन, Ch. I, sec 2-3.

7. Ibid. Ch. IV, Sec. 5.
(i) The total number of sākhās of each Veda as given in the Purāṇas is found to be the same as stated in various authoritative works.

(ii) The names of a large number of sākhās as given in the Purāṇas are also found in the works belonging to Vedic tradition.

(iii) Epithets of sākhākāras as given in the Purāṇas are found to be corroborated by the works belonging to Vedic tradition.

Non-Puranic character of sākhāvibhāga

It is to be known that the subject of Vedic sākhā does not fall under any of the five or ten characteristics of the gatha is not included even in the materials called sākhya, upākhyāna, gāthā and kalpaśuddhi (or kalpajokti), which were incorporated in the Purāṇa afterwards.

This shows that sākhāvibhāga does not bear the character of those subjects that are naturally suited to the works of Puranic nature. It can be observed that the enumeration of sākhās is neither useful (as it serves no secular purpose like the vanśa-lists in the Purāṇas) nor attractive to those authors of the Purāṇas who were votaries of different sects. That is why the section on sākhāvibhāga is found only in a few Purāṇas, namely the Bhāgavata (12.6.7), the Vāyu (Ch. 60-61), the Brahmadāna (1.34-35) and Viṣṇu (3.4-6). The Agni contains a very brief account (271.1-10) and the Kūrma (1.52) simply mentions the number of sākhās of each of the four Vedas without giving the names of the sākhākāras.

Thus it follows that the Puranic authors received the material of Vedic sākhā from the teachers of Vedic tradition and included it in the Purāṇa with a view to glorifying Vyāsa and his tradition. It is this purpose that prompted Puranic authors to include this subject. It is remarkable to note in this connection that Vyāsa's connection with the division of the Vedas and their recensions is not mentioned in the work of Vedic tradition, namely Nirukta, Brhaddevata, Anukramaṇi etc.

It can thus be reasonably inferred that many meaningful expressions found in the Puranic chapters on sākhāvibhāga are likely to be found in ancient works. A perusal of the works of Vedic tradition lend strong support to our assumption.

Nature of Vedic sākhās as conceived by Puranic authors

Though the Puranic authors, while referring to a Veda and its recensions, use the world 'tree' and 'branches' respectively, giving rise to the wrong idea that sākhās are the different portions of a Veda (as found in the work of Śaṇmāraṁī), yet there is a clear Puranic passage that removes the wrong idea by showing the true nature of Vedic recensions. The passage reads as under:

8. Ibid. Ch. III, Sec. 1.
9. As for example the Purāṇas inform us that the Śākakhāra Śākapyāṣi was the author of a work on Nirukta (Vāyu-p. 60.65; Viṣṇu-p. 3.4.33; Brahmāṇḍa-p. 1.35.3)—a fact mentioned in the works like Yāska's Nirukta (4.3). Similarly the epithet padavittama is given to the Śākakhāra Śākalya in Vāyu-p. (60.53) and Brahmāṇḍa-p. (1.35.1). That Śākalya was the author of the padopāthā of the Āṅgika is an established fact (See Nirukta 6.28).
10. Sarga, pratisarga, vanśa, manvantara and vanmāṇucarita or vanmāṇucarita. For the elucidation of these, see the article पुराणसीन्यान्तरिकम् in Purāṇa Vol. I, No. 2.
11. Sarga, visarga, vṛtti, rākṣā, antaras, vanśa, vāṃśānu­carita, sāṃsthā, hetu and apāraaya (Bhāg. 12.7.9). Bhāg. 2.10.1 contains a similar view. See also Br. Vai. 4.131.6-10.
12. अयोगायायान्यायायान्यायायिःकलपुजुरिकः ||
पूर्वाश्चिमः चक्रे पुराणसीन्यान्तरिकः ||
(Viṣṇu-p. 3.6.16, Vāyu-p. 60.21; Brahmāṇḍa-p. 1.34.21). see my पुराणसीन्यान्तरिक्य सामग्री का समीक्षात्मक अध्ययन; नृविन्ध, p. 21.
13. वेदवेदी विद्वानी विद्वा पदार्थम् (Bhāg. 2.7.36); वेदमप्रायः यान्य पदार्थ साधनः समाधानः ... (Vāyu-p. 1.45); अनं तेवदरो: शास्त्रादृश्तेषु पुराणसीन्यान्तरिकः (Bhāg. 1.3.21); अनं तेवदरो: शास्त्रादृश्तेषु पुराणसीन्यान्तरिकः (Bhāg. 1.4.23); अनं तेवदरो: शास्त्रादृश्तेषु पुराणसीन्यान्तरिकः (Viṣṇu-p. 3.5.1; Agni-p. 150.27); etc.
14. As this verse occurs in the same section in which the division of the Vedas has been described it may be taken to be of utmost importance.
The verse says that all the four recensions of the original Purāṇa-saṁhitā composed by the disciples of Vyāsa had four sections (pādās) each. They had the same subject matter and their difference lay in the difference of readings and not in the difference of contents as is found in the Vedic recensions.

The expression वेदान्त यथा तथा is highly significant. It undoubtedly shows that the śākhās of a Veda are not the different portions of the Veda, each having its own subject but are the variations of a Vedic text.

Character of composition of the recensions

It is gratifying to note that besides the above-quoted general statement disclosing the real nature of Vedic recensions, there are such Puranic passages as vividly describe the process of composition of these recensions. From these passages it appears that the difference in recensions consists in the difference of accent, letters etc. as well as in the difference in the order of mantras, sūktas etc. The difference of purpose and similar other factors are said to be the causes of such changes.

These Puranic passages assert that one single Veda was divided into four by the sage Vedavyāsa in the Dvāpara yuga and further declare that these Vedas were variously arranged by the

15. See Vāyu-p. 61.57-61 and Brahmāṇḍa-p. 1.35. 63-69 for some details of these Purāṇa-saṁhitās. See also Viṣṇu-p. 3.6.17-19, Agni-p. 271.11-12 and Bhāgavata-p. 12.7.5
16. एको वेदान्तुपदाद्वेषत्तैत्तिर्विविधते II १० सरोधादामपुराण दृष्टवते हावरस ॥ वेदान्तवातिशूर्य तु व्यस्ते हावरस ॥ ११। अथापूर्वं: पुनःवेदा भिक्षते दृष्टिविभाषे:। मन्त्रावातिशूर्य विविधतः:। ॥ १२। सामान्यवाद एकीकरण contemplated दृष्टिविभाषे:। कविन्तु कृतिन्तु II १३। (Vāyu-p. 58.10-13).

एको वेदान्तुपदाद्वेषतत्तैत्तिर्विविधते। संस्कृतवाद एकीकरण् पदार्थं दृष्टिविभाषे:। कविन्तु कृतिन्तु ॥ १२। अथापूर्वं: पुनःवेदा भिक्षते दृष्टिविभाषे:। मन्त्रावातिशूर्य विविधतः:। ॥ १३। सामान्यवाद एकीकरण contemplated दृष्टिविभाषे:। कविन्तु कृतिन्तु। (Brahmāṇḍa-p. 1.31.11-13).

एको वेदान्तुपदाद्वेषतत्तैत्तिर्विविधते। संस्कृतवाद एकीकरण् पदार्थं दृष्टिविभाषे:। कविन्तु कृतिन्तु। (Līṅga-p. 1.39.57-59).

एको वेदान्तुपदाद्वेषतत्तैत्तिर्विविधते। संस्कृतवाद एकीकरण् पदार्थं दृष्टिविभाषे:। कविन्तु कृतिन्तु। (Kūrma-p. 1.29.43-46a; the cr. ed reads संस्कृतवाद एकीकरण contemplated in verse 44 and सामान्यवाद एकीकरण contemplated in verse 46a).
sons of the sages by changing the accent and letters and also by arranging the mantras and brāhmaṇas in various ways. Thus saṃhitās of each Veda were prepared, which were mostly similar, though in some places there were differences in them.

Though the readings of these passages are corrupt in many places, yet the sense is sufficiently clear. The words दूषितिः, मन्त्र-ब्राह्मणविप्रयास, समन्वया and दक्षिणा and the use of the roots सिद्ध (सिद्धणी) and धस् + हु (धहहला) are of utmost importance in determining the nature of composition of Vedic recensions. These Puranic passages evidently falsify the view of Sāmaśramin. It may be noted in passing that a comparison of the Puranic view as presented in these verses with Sāmaśramin's own view about the nature of Vedic sākhās would show that both the views agree in all essential points—a fact which cannot be denied.

Significance of the words vrksa and sākhā in connection with sākhā-vibhāga

Now a question presents itself. If the Puranic authors are considered to be aware of the fact that the sākhās of a Veda are not different portions of the Veda, what is the relevance of using the words ‘tree’ and ‘branches’ at the time of referring to a Veda and its recensions? Is a branch not a portion of a tree?

We reply that the use of these two words is to be taken not literally but in a figurative sense. The significance of a simile is to be determined according to the intention of the author, or to the nature of the context or circumstances. Since the Puranic authors were aware of the real nature of Vedic sākhās (as shown above), the simile is to be interpreted in a way that is in consonance with this nature.

According to us the purpose of using the simile is to show (i) similarity and (ii) gradual appearance. To be explicit: As branches of a tree are similar to one another in many respects, so the recensions of a Veda are similar in their verbal form and con-


Thus it is clear that Sāmaśramin has misunderstood the significance of the simile of ‘tree and its branches’. Consequently his contention that ‘as all the branches are the component parts of a tree and as each branch is different from other branches, so all the recensions of a Veda are, according to the Purāṇas, different portions of one and the same Veda’ becomes baseless.

If a sākhā is regarded as a Veda (according to Vedic tradition) then what is to be conceived as the tree (branches presuppose the existence of a tree)? Puranic authors seem to think that the saṃhitā of each Veda, composed by Vyāsā, is to be regarded as the (original) tree, since all later saṃhitās (sākhās) are based on it. We may further add that whenever a sākhā gives rise to another sākhā (i.e. whenever the disciples of a sākhākara sage compose new works on the basis of the sākhā taught by their sākhākara-teacher) the original sākhā must be regarded either as a tree (in a secondary sense) or as a main branch. Puranic authors came to know of this fact and accordingly they used such words as anu-śākhā pratishākhā, carona, etc. to show the position occupied by a sākhā in connection with others (see Viṣṇu-p. 3.4.18; 3.4.25; 3.11.15; Bhāg. 12.6.52 etc). The original import of these terms remains to be determined.

A study of the relevant works reveal that the conception of tree is Puranic in character, since it is not to be found in the works of Vedic treating, which use the words sākhā, bheda and the like subjects.

18. Cp. अनुस्वरूपे विका: कलापस्य (Mahābhāṣya 2.4.3.). It shows that the Katha sākhā is based on the Kalāpā sākhā and as such the former is mostly similar to the latter. Some teachers of Vedic tradition expressly declare that the sākhā of Nakalaya was the source of five sākhas composed by his disciples.

19. Śabara says द्वारा शास्त्रीय वेदम्य शास्त्रः (on MS. 2.4.17). Similarly Kumārila used the word शास्त्र (एवं शास्त्रविश्वव ब्रह्माणिक्षुद्वर) on M. S. 2.4.17. These show the validity of the Puranic conception of वेदम्य in connection with शास्त्र.
Reasons for the non-mention of śākhās

Now the objection (raised by Sāmaśramin) that the well-known Śāṅkhāyana śākhā of the Ṛgveda has not been mentioned in the śākhā sections of the Bhāgavata and Viṣṇu Purāṇas—a point which shows the invalidity of the Puranic account of Vedic śākhās—remains to be solved. We may further add that this śākhā has not been mentioned in the longer lists of śākhās given in the Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas.

Before stating the reasons for the non-mention we want to say that until critical editions of these Purāṇas, especially of the Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, are prepared, nothing can be said definitely regarding the non-mention of a particular śākhā.

Even if we accept that the Śāṅkhāyana śākhā has not been mentioned in these four Purāṇas, the reason for this non-mention is not difficult to conceive. It seems that the Puranic authors did not mention it deliberately as they considered it to be a work not belonging to the tradition of Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana Viṣṇa. The Puranic authors may be wrong in their supposition, but it cannot be denied that the non-mention is not due to the ignorance of the Puranic authors but to some definite notion.

The Agni-p. in its brief account of śākhāvibhāga has mentioned the Śāṅkhāyana śākhā (272.2). (Sāmaśramin has also referred

20. Cp. the Puranic assertion that Vedas were divided many times by Vyāsa in former ages (manvantaras) (Liṅga-p. I. 7; Brahmāṇḍa-p. I. 35 and Viṣṇu-p. III. 3) and that the śākhāvibhāga in all ages is sama, similar (Viṣṇu-p. 3.6.32; Vāyu-p. 61.74; Brahmāṇḍa-p. 1.35.84). This may be taken to mean that the Puranic authors came to know of such śākhās as were not connected with the tradition of Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana Viṣṇa.

21. That our assumption, namely ‘Puranic authors did not mention those śākhās in their lists of śākhākāras which were not connected with the tradition of Kṛṣṇa-dvaipāyana Vyāsa’, is not baseless may be proved from the non-mention of the Śvetāsvatara śākhā in these lists. The sage Śvetāsvatara is said to have lived in the Svāyambhuva manvantara (i.e. he lived long before Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana Vyāsa); see Kūrma-p. 1.14.23-50; Saurā-p. 27.12-28. (The Puranic description of this sage is sectarian in character).

Questions arising from Puranic statements

In conclusion I want to submit that there arise some intricate questions from the Puranic statements regarding the division of the Veda and the composition of śākhās that require to be solved. Only two problems are given here by way of sample:

1. The words चतुः, गद्यस, गामनं and अवकर्णम् used in connection with the composition of the four Vedas, mean the four kinds of mantras as the context shows. That the first three are the three kinds of mantras is well known (vide Mimāṃsā-sūtra 2.1.35-37).

2. Similar figurative statements are found regarding Puranic literature also. Though the Puranic authors were aware that one Purāṇa-samhitā was composed by Vyāsa and that several versions or redactions were prepared by his disciples, yet such statements in the Purāṇas are not wanting as declare that all the eighteen Purāṇas were composed by Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana Vyāsa.
Atharvan is not regarded as a kind of mantra like the r̥c etc. What is the characteristic of the mantras of the Atharvan?

(2) According to the Purāṇas Vyāsa composed the four Vedic saṁhitās by compiling the mantras only and he taught them to his four disciples. The Puranic view is valid so far as the R̥k-saṁhitā is concerned. In the Śuklā-yajuḥ-saṁhitās there are a good number of mantras of the r̥c type. A few mantras of the Yajus type are found in the Atharva-saṁhitā also. Were these mantras incorporated in later times to fulfill some purpose?

BOOK-REVIEW

Vimarsacintamani (in Sanskrit)—By Padmabhūṣaṇa Pt. Baladeva Upādhyāya; Publisher: Sarada Samasthana, 37 B, Ravindra Puri, Varanasi-5; pages 385; price Rs. 80/-.

The book under review is a collection of essays (arranged in eight groups) on a variety of subjects concerning the field of Indian Culture and Sanskrit. The work is marked not only by much fresh information about a large number of authors and their works but also by new presentation of old facts. The treatment is descriptive, historical and critical and the language is lucid, graceful and easily understandable. The author, in most cases, has spared no pains in gathering the least bit of information. He has proved that compositions in Sanskrit can be made successfully even while treating a subject through the process of modern research.

Some of the important topics dealt with in the book are: Lives of Kṛṣṇa and Saṁyana; scientific basis of the views of Vedānta; Tantrikā kāla; connection of the Bhojpuri language with the Mahābhāṣya; glory of Sanskrit; discussions on a few works, namely Vākyapadiya, Pārasīka-prakāśa (a grammar of the Persian language in Sanskrit); Bṛhat-saṁhitā and its commentator, Hayata, a work on Arabian jyotiṣa, Bhātikāndrikā, Bhaktiratnāvali, Kāvyālāṅkāra (of Bhāmaha), Vālmīkīrnavā (a lexicon), Nāgānanda; a detailed survey of Sanskrit works of various schools composed in Vārāṇasi; informative reviews of a considerable number of books; memoirs of two savants, namely M. M. Gopinātha Kaviraja and M. M. Rāmāvatāra Sarman.

Often the book makes a pleasant and illuminating reading by informing the readers that kerosine oil is called Pūrṇaṁ taila (p. 219), that Kālidāsa was called Galidāsa in the Mongolian language (p. 39); that a library is called pustakāśrama in Cambodia (p. 225).

We thank the author for his careful effort in using the correct forms of a few words, as e.g. he has used the correct form अलिक instead of the incorrect form अलिक that is frequently used by modern scholars of Sanskrit. In a few places we however differ