The Vedic corpus: some questions*

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1. HARD CORE OF THE VEDAS

The Veda corpus is supposed to be, by common consent, the oldest and the most authoritative fountainhead of almost all tradition in India. In fact, it is with respect to the express acknowledgement or denial of their authority that the various traditions tend to define themselves and be defined by others in the long course of Indian history. Except for Buddhism, Jainism and certain forms of Tantrism, even radical movements against Brahmanism tended to make themselves acceptable by claiming derivation from the Vedas or at least by acknowledging their authority. The Vira Śaiva movement in South India which started as early as the twelfth century A.D. is a classic example of this.

So is perhaps the movement of Śaiva-Siddhānta which tries to articulate the classical Tamilian thought on philosophical issues, primarily of an ontological kind, without questioning the authority of the Vedas. Dayanand Saraswati’s repudiation of all later scriptures, and the response which his call for a return to the Vedas aroused at the end of the last century, is another testimony—if testimony be needed—to the same truth. But when one asks oneself the question as to what it is whose authority is being invoked or being denied, one does not find from the texts or the tradition any clear or definite answer. There is, of course, the famous statement, purporting to give a clear-cut answer to the question, that it is the Mantras and the Brāhmaṇas which constitute the Vedas. But then, what are the Mantras and the Brāhmaṇas which form the body of the Vedas? Do the Brāhmaṇas include or exclude the Āraṇyakas and the Upaniṣads? In case they are taken to include the latter, the question would arise as to whether they include all of them or some of them. It is difficult to accept—and nobody does—that the Upaniṣads, composed as late as thirteenth or fourteenth century, are to be included in the Vedic corpus. But, on the other hand, if we include only those Upaniṣads which form an integral part of the Sāṁhitās, the Brāhmaṇas or the Āraṇyakas, then we would have to exclude such well-known Upaniṣads from the Vedic corpus as the Mūndaka, the Māndūkya, the Praśna and the Śvetāṣṭāvatā which are not supposed to form a part of any of them.

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Though all care has been taken to check the factual accuracy of the statements made in this article, there may still be marginal inaccuracies at places. However, I do not think they will affect the main conclusions in any substantive manner.
Perhaps, one way out of the dilemma might be to draw a date line and say that Upaniṣads, written after the date so chosen, will not be counted as part of the Vedic corpus. But not only would any date line so chosen be arbitrary; it would also run into the difficulty that some great Ācārya or other has treated the left-out Upaniṣads as a part of Śruti, that is, the Vedas, assuming the two to mean the same thing. The difficulty might be solved by treating all the Upaniṣads, referred to by any of the Ācāryas, as part of the Vedas, or to delink the notion of Śruti from its close identification with the Vedas and treat it as including all texts which are regarded as having ultimate authority in the tradition that recognizes the Vedas as authority also. But the problem, then, would be how to distinguish between the so-called non-Vedic Śruti from the same tradition regards as Śruti, that is, texts of secondary authority. Perhaps, we could think in terms of a hierarchy of authority amongst the texts of the so-called orthodox or mainstream tradition in India with Śruti, the Brāhmaṇas, the Āraṇyakas and the Upaniṣads which are integral part of the first three at the top. The Upaniṣads, which are independent of these and have been referred to by the Ācāryas as authoritative, could then be treated as occupying the second place in the hierarchy of authority with the Śruti texts occupying the third place.

The notion of a hierarchy of authoritative texts is well known both in legal and non-legal contexts. But if the above formulation were to be accepted, then one also would have to decide who is to be accepted as an Ācārya in the tradition and what is to count as a Śruti text. In other words, what shall be the criteria for any text or person being designated as a Śruti or an Ācārya? The issue is important as it has to be decided whether the term Ācārya is to be confined only to the well-known Ācāryas of the Vedānta tradition or it can be considered to include other founders of famous Śramaṇaīya also. The Śramaṇaīya extend, as is well known, to all schools—Vedic or non-Vedic. The famous founders of the various Buddhist schools, for example, are all known as Ācāryas. Asanga, Vasubandhu, Nāgārjuna, Dharmakīrtī are some of the well-known names in that tradition. The same situation obtains in Jainism also. But even if we count the non-Vedic Ācāryas out, we will have to settle the issue with respect to the non-Vedānta Ācāryas of the tradition. The simple solution would, of course, be to accept only the so-called Vedantic Ācāryas, and even amongst them only those who are usually recognized as such. This would leave, besides Gaudapāda and Śaṅkara, only Vyākaraṇācārya, Rāmānujaśārya, Madhvacārya, Vallabhaśārya and Nimbarkacārya. But even this extreme extensional restriction, imposed on the term Ācārya in this context, would not serve the purpose as neither Vyākaraṇācārya nor Rāmānujaśārya nor Vallabhaśārya nor Nimbarkacārya has written separate, independent Bhāṣya or commentaries on any of the Upaniṣads. Only Madhva has written independent commentaries of his own which happen to be on the same texts on which Śaṅkara is also supposed to have written his commentaries. There is some dispute amongst scholars regarding the attribution of Śaṅkara’s commentaries to Śaṅkara himself. Paul Hacker and Sengaku Mayeda are supposed to have done the most careful work in this connection; but, as the same type of work has not even been attempted with respect to the work of the other Ācāryas in the Vedantic tradition, there can hardly be any significant comparative judgment about it.

One may argue that it was not necessary for the Ācāryas in the Vedantic tradition to write independent commentaries on the Upaniṣads, as they had already written commentaries on the Brāhmaṇa-Sūtras which was supposed to contain the quintessence of the Upaniṣads themselves. But if this were really the case, one would be hard put to explain why Śaṅkara or Madhva wrote Bhāṣya on both the Brāhmaṇa-Sūtras and the Upaniṣads. On the other hand, it seems equally wrong to think that all the Vedantic Ācāryas have written commentaries on the Brāhmaṇa-Sūtras, even if they have not done so on the Upaniṣads. If Dastugpata’s list of the works of Yāmunācārya, given in the third volume of his History of Indian Philosophy, is taken to be authoritative, then it can safely be said that he has not written any independent, full-fledged Bhāṣya on the full text of the Brāhmaṇa-Sūtras. The same will be true of Nimbārka if the list of his works, given in the Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies (vol. 1, ed. Karl H. Potter), is taken to be complete and authoritative.

It may be noted that even the general impression regarding the authoritative character of the so-called Prasthāñas only for the Vedantic Ācāryas is not sustained by the evidence, as many of them have not only not written any commentaries on the Upaniṣads or the Brāhmaṇa-Sūtras, but even on the Gītā which forms the third text of the triad. Neither Nimbārka nor Vallabha, for example, has written commentaries on the Gītā. The latter has instead written on the Bhāgavata, while the former has not done even that. It is only Madhva who has written on the Brāhmaṇa-Sūtras, the Upaniṣads, the Gītā and the Bhāgavata. Śaṅkara has commented only on the first three, Rāmānuja on the first and the third, Yāmunācārya only on the third, Vallabha on the first and the fourth and Nimbārka on neither. One wonders how, in the light of this evidence, the myth of the Prasthānātmya came to be accepted even by such scholars as Radhakrishnan who himself wrote commentaries on the first three, falsely imagining that he was following in the footsteps of the great Ācāryas.

One may, of course, give up the criterion of independent commentary on the texts usually supposed to belong to the Vedic corpus, and be satisfied with what may be called authoritative references to them in the works written by the Ācāryas. However, as neither the question regarding the authenticity of the attribution of the various texts to the Ācāryas has been settled nor all the texts allegedly written by them have been published, it is not possible to adopt the alternative and reach any satisfactory conclusions on its basis. But even a cursory glance at the material, wherever available, suggests that no startling results may be expected from the procedure. The Vedic texts
considered by Rāmānuja, for example, in his Śrī Bhāṣya on the Brahma-
Śūtras relate mainly to such well-known Upaniṣads as the Kaṭha, the Kaūṣ-
taki, the Chāndogya, the Tatāttriya, the Pātraṇa, the Bṛhadāranyaka, the
Mundaka and the Śvetāsvatara.¹

The question as to whether the Upaniṣads form a part of the Vedic corpus
or not has always been there. But even those, who have not hesitated to give
an affirmative answer to the question, have not generally accepted all the
texts that have been known as the Upaniṣads in the tradition as part of the
corpus. Nor have they ever been able to give any reason why only some of
the Upaniṣads should be included in the corpus and the others excluded.
The same has never been the situation with respect to the Sāṅhitās and the
Brāhmaṇas. As for the Aranyakas, nobody seems to have raised any questions
about them. Those, who have regarded the Sāṅhitās and the Brāhmaṇas as
alone forming the genuine Vedic corpus, have ignored both the Aranyakas and
the Upaniṣads, and relegated them to a secondary place in the context of
the acceptance of authority in the Vedic tradition of India. On the other
hand, those who have opted for the inclusion of the Aranyakas and the
Upaniṣads as essential parts of the Vedic corpus, have tended to emphasize
the latter, and treated the former as providing a transition to the latter and
thus a sort of no-man’s land in which neither the votaries of Karma in the
technical Vedic sense nor those of Jñāna found any interest whatsoever.

If we forget the Aranyakas and the Upaniṣads, what remains are the
Mantras and the Brāhmaṇas making up the hard core of the Vedic corpus.
And this is what tradition has consecrated as the Vedas. But what is this hard
core about which there seems hardly any dispute? Perhaps, one should disting-
uish between the two, and ask about the relative priority with respect to their
claim to form the hard core of the Vedic corpus. Perhaps, most would opt for
the priority of the Mantras over the Brāhmaṇas, though it be by no means
the case that the latter have no votaries of their own against the primacy of
the Mantras. In fact, the dispute with respect to this issue, as we shall see
later on, reaches down to the very heart of the dispute as to what is to be
understood as the Vedas even in the tradition.

II. SĀMAVEDA: A BOOK OF MELODIES

But even supposing we accept, however provisionally, the primacy of the
Mantras over the Brāhmaṇas, the question remains as to what Mantras are
supposed to constitute the Vedas. The question may seem preposterous,
unwarranted and even gratuitous when everybody has assumed since times
immemorial, that there are four Vedas known as Ṛk, Sāma, Yajur and
Atharva and the Mantras contained in them give each its distinctive identity,
status and flavour. But this is just not true. The Sāmaveda, for example, for
the most part, does not have any separate Mantras of its own and yet is
regarded as a separate, independent Veda in its own right. According to Jan
Gonda, only 76 stanzas out of 1810 in the Kaṭhūmā Sāṅhitā are not found in
the Ṛgveda.² Had he included the Aranya Kāṇḍa which consists of 55
stanzas, the ratio of the non-Ṛgvedic part to the Ṛgvedic part would be about
four per cent. The Yajñiniya Sāṅhitā of the Śāmaveda, on the other hand,
seems to contain only 48 non-Ṛgvedic stanzas out of a total of 1678 stanzas
as given in Dr. Raghu Vira’s edition of this work.³ The ratio of non-Ṛgvedic
part to the Ṛgvedic part in that case would be about three per cent. One
cannot certainly claim that it has the status of an independent text on the
basis of only three or four per cent new material in it. Or, if one wants to
do so, one would have to take only this three or four per cent as constitut-
ing the real independent Sāmaveda text, and not all that goes under that
name and is usually included in it.

But even this three or four per cent is not as innocent as it looks. First,
many of these stanzas are found not only in other Sāṅhitās but also in other
works on ritual, as Gonda has remarked, even if they are not found in the
extent Sāṅhitās of the Ṛgveda. Secondly, there is some evidence to suggest
that traditionally all the Mantras of the Śāmaveda were supposed to have
been taken from the Ṛgveda. The very title of the two parts of the Śāma-
veda—Purvāravikāh and Uttarāravikāh—as Gonda has noted, suggests this.
Gonda has translated these as ‘collections of ṛc stanzas’ and has said that
this name is most appropriate because, 76 excepted (a few of these occur
in other Sāṅhitās or works on ritual), all these stanzas are taken from
the Ṛgveda-Sāṅhitā, mainly from the books VIII and IX of that corpus.⁴ But
even the so-called exceptions seem only apparent as Sāyaṇa, in his Prolego-
num to the Ṛgvedabhiṣaya, has written that the Śāma verses are all taken from
the Ṛgveda,⁵ and hence it may be taken as established that at least in his time
there were no Mantras in the Śāmaveda which had not been taken from the
Ṛgveda. The English translation of Sāyaṇa’s original,⁶ is of course, not as
accurate as one would have wished, but the sense, on the whole, seems to
remain the same. In fact, one may assume that had exceptions been known
in Sāyaṇa’s time, he would certainly have mentioned them. The very fact
that he has not done so may be taken as a fairly strong evidence in favour of
the view that traditionally the Śāmaveda was not supposed to contain any
Mantras which were not found in the Ṛgveda. The phrase Ātritātvād may
reasonably be taken to mean this.

But, ultimately, even this controversy regarding the fact as to whether
there are any independent Mantras which belong to the Śāmaveda and the
Śāmaveda alone is irrelevant, for, as everyone knows, the Śāmaveda is not
supposed to be concerned with the content of any Mantra or set of Mantras,
but only with the way they should be sung. As Gonda has clearly stated:
‘Now, in both books the essential element is not the texts—the Śāmavedins
are less interested in the meaning of the words than (sic) obviously Gonda
meant to write “or” not “than”) in prosodic correctness—but the melody.’⁷
And, as he adds: ‘To teach the melodies is their very purpose.’⁸ But if this is
the central purpose of the Sāmaveda, then it is Veda in a sense which is very different from the sense in which the Rigveda is regarded as one. The Mantras occurring in the Sāmaveda could, then, only have an illustrative function, for a melody can be sung to different stanzas without losing its identity. On the other hand, as the same stanza can be sung to different melodies, the uniqueness of identity of the Mantric text ceases to be relevant in the musical context. In fact, most texts undergo an alteration because of the requirements of the song, a situation which obtains abundantly in the case of Sāmaveda also.

Many of the differences between the Rigvedic verses and their Sāmavedic version is attributed to this fact. As Gonda has written: "Some of these Rigvedic verses appear with different readings which must be explained as due to alterations introduced when the words of the text were set to music." It may, of course, be said that, as the Śāma singing was an integral part of the Vedic Vajña, both the Mantra and the melody were so integrally and intimately related that, at least in that context, one cannot think of one without the other. The Udghātar, along with his assistants who were usually five in number, formed an integral part of the ceremony constituting the Srauta rites which formed the Vedic sacrifice, and the Udghātar was the priest who chanted the hymns which are there in the Sāmaveda. But if this is accepted, then it would mean that those hymns of the Rigveda which are not included in the Sāmaveda could not be sung to the Śāma melodies; or even if they could be so sung, they could not be used in the Vedic sacrifice just because they have not found their way into the collection that goes by the title of the Sāmaveda today. In case we accept this conclusion, we would be forced to divide the Rigvedic Mantras into those which could be used in the Vedic sacrifices and others which could not be so used. The former would be further divided into those which are sung to the Śāma melodies by the Udghātar and his associates and the others which are recited by the Adhvarya and are found in the Tājurveda. The latter, that is, those which are found neither in the Sāmaveda nor in the Tājurveda would be deemed to have no role to play in the Srauta sacrifices, and thus would provide the hard core for that part of the Rigveda whose meaning has no relation to the sacrifice, and hence has to be understood as essentially independent of it. This, as we shall see later, would affect the usual understanding of what the Vedas are in a fundamental manner.

The Sāmaveda, then, cannot be considered a Veda if by ‘Veda’ we mean a text with independent Mantras of its own. We may, of course, treat the three or four per cent of the present texts which are not found in the Rigveda as forming the Sāmaveda. But as even these are important only for the melody to which they are supposed to be sung, it is that melody which would constitute the Veda and not the Mantras that are distinctive of it. It should be remembered that even the Mantras from the Rigveda are subjected to relevant modifications, so that they may be suitably sung. The comprehensive term for all these modifications, required for a Mantra to be sung according to the Śāma pattern, is called Stobha. As Gonda observes:

Stobha is a comprehensive term for all modifications to which a re is subjected when it is sung to a melody of the Sāmaveda, viz. modifications (e.g. lengthening) of syllables, repetitions, breaking up of words, insertions of apparently insignificant words or syllables such as hoyi, hāva, há (so-called ‘chanted interjections,’ padastobha, often briefly stobha)—which, admitting of a mystical interpretation, could serve esoteric purposes—and short inserted sentences (vākyastobha).

But even if complete sentences could be inserted for melodic purposes, what happens to the sacrosanct character of the Rigvedic Mantras which were supposed to have been revealed and thus not amenable to any modification whatsoever? It may be said that, as the Sāma was also revealed, there is no harm in admitting one revelation as modified by another. But if revelation can be modified in such an arbitrary manner, it can hardly be considered a revelation at least by those who are prepared to modify it. The result of these modifications was, as is well known, not marginal but substantive in character. As Gonda observes: ‘...it will on the other hand be clear that the luxuriant ornamentation of śāman chants affected by repetitions, insertions, ungrammatical mutilations, whatever their significance for the believers, etc. render them abnormal as pieces of literature.’ It should be remembered that traditionally the Sāmaveda is supposed to have about a thousand Śākhās, though only two of them are extant at the present, the Kauṭumika and the Jaiminiya or the Tālavakāra. But this would imply that there were as many arbitrary modifications or Stobhas, both Padastobha and Vākyastobha, as the Śākhās, thus rendering the whole notion of Vedic revelation virtually meaningless. Not only this. As the same Mantra can be sung to different melodies, it is extremely likely that different Śākhās would sing the same text to different tunes, and that the modifications introduced might be due to this exigency rather than any other. But this would result in there not being just one Sāmaveda but as many as there are Śākhās with all their variations in melody and textual modifications.

In fact, as music was the central concern of the Sāmaveda, the actual text of the Mantras which were to be sung to those melodies seem to have become less and less important. There is some evidence to suggest that there was a school of Śāma which held that the real Śāma was independent of the Mantra and, in fact, had nothing to do with it. Dr. Mukund Lath, the well-known scholar on the history of music, has drawn attention to this in one of his recent articles entitled ‘Ancient Indian Music and the Concept of Man.’ He writes:

Śāma was a revealed form in its own right, just as the rea-s. Further, in
many cases, sāma was valued for music alone. An example is that of the anrca sāma. Anrca-sāma was a form of Sāma that had no ōk base and was sung to meaningless syllables.\(^{13}\)

The term Anrca, literally speaking, can only mean a melody which is not sung to a ōk Mantra. Dr. Lath has, however, taken it to mean a melody which is sung to no text whatsoever. This is rather an arbitrary interpretation, the justification of which is supposed to lie in the Jaintiinya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa where, in the Praṭhama Ḫaṇḍa of the fourth Anuvāka of the first Aḍhyāya, it is said that Sāmanīrṣeva svargam lokam prayāteti; and in the second Ḫaṇḍa of the sixth Anuvāka of the third Aḍhyāya it is said that sa melārṣeva sāmaā satirayadhīna.\(^{14}\) The identification of Anrca with Aśastra, though not entirely unjustified, rests on the assumption that ōk alone can be the body of the Sāma. But this obviously is a questionable assumption. For, if ōk is taken to mean the corpus of Mantras which are found in the Rgveda and if it is accepted that there is no substantive ground at present to think that the three or four per cent of the Mantras in the Sānveda belong to the Rgveda, then these Mantras obviously form the non-ōk body for the Sāma melodies, according to the Sānveda itself. But the term ōk may be taken in a wider sense as referring not only to the Mantras which are actually found in the Rgveda but to any Mantra or Mantras which display the basic characteristics found in them. But even if this extended sense of ōk is accepted, it would not necessarily lead to the interpretation which Dr. Lath is putting on it for the simple reason that any particular melody can be sung to a diverse number of texts, ōk or non-ōk, unless it be established that the Sāma melodies can be sung only to texts which display the ōk characteristics. The identification, therefore, that Dr. Lath wishes to establish between the Anrca and Aśastra cannot be established.

Besides this, there are other objections to Dr. Lath’s attempt to identify the two. First, he seems to assume that only meaningful words and/or sentences could be said to form the body or Aśastra of music. But there is no reason for this assumption. The term ‘body’ here merely means Aśastra or base and that could be provided by anything, meaningful or meaningless. Secondly, the distinction between meaningful and meaningless is relative, and that which is meaningless in one context or at one time may become meaningful in other contexts or at other times. The so-called meaningless syllables to which sāma came to be sung were later on invested with profound, mystical meanings. The word Om is the classical example of this. Thirdly, Dr. Lath seems to have overlooked the fact that while the first story refers to Devas, the second refers to men. Presumably, the Devas, usually translated as gods, did not have bodies—at least human bodies. There is, of course, the added question as to why the Devas desired heaven when, being Devas, they may be presumed to be already there. On the other hand, it may also be noted

that in the second story the king did not want to go to heaven but only to meet his friend who had died.

However it may be, the stories do show a desire to assert the independence of the essential Sāma from its accidental involvement with the Mantras of the Rgveda. Not only this, there is a strange undercurrent of hostility to the Rgveda and a desire to show the superiority of the Sānveda over the Rgveda. The Mantras of the latter are compared to the body while the Sāma is considered to be its soul. After the soul has left, the various parts of the body are supposed to be scattered all over which are then collected by Prahāpi and given the form of the Rksanāth. Surely, the denigration of the venerable revealed Rgveda could not have gone farther.

The so-called essence of the Sānveda, that is, the melodies contained therein, are usually divided in at least a seemingly non-essential manner. The first division is made on the basis of the place where the melodies may be sung, that is, in a village or a forest. The second division is based on the basis of their use in the sacrifices or rituals of various types. The former are called the Grāmagesyagāna and the Aanyaagāna, the latter the Uṣagāna and the Uṣagāna. It is obvious that the two bases for division are based on different criteria. In fact, the latter are supposed to be an adaptation of the former for ritual or sacrificial purposes. As Gonda observes:

The Uṣagāna containing the sānas in their ritual order adapts (ah) the melodies of the Grāmagesya to the exigencies of the ritual praxis. The Aanyaagāna—the name is an abbreviation of Uharahasyagāna, rathya ‘secret’ being synonymous with aranyaaka—has the same relation to Aanyaagāna with which it is affiliated.\(^{15}\)

If this is accepted, then it would imply that Sāmagāna was used in two radically different contexts, one of pure singing and the other of rituals and sacrifices. The former was distinguished only by the place where one was supposed to sing them, the latter by the sort of sacrifice or ritual one was engaged in. But then not only would it have to be accepted that the context of the sacrifice is contingent for the Sāmaveda, but also that the so-called modifications in ōk Mantras are necessitated by two different kinds of exigencies—one, those arising from the fact of something being sung at a certain place and the other from the fact of their being used in ritual or sacrifice. The necessity for modification imposed by the former may be regarded as far more intrinsic than those implied by the latter. But it is not quite clear why any modifications should be needed by the fact that something has to be sung in a village or a forest. Similarly, it is not clear why any sacrifices involving a Uṣagāna should be performed in secrecy in a forest.

Also, Gonda’s discussion seems to imply that the hard core of the Sāmaveda is the Pāravīcīka, even though chronologically it may be later, and the important distinction there is between the Aanya Kāṇḍa and the rest. The
Mantras in the Aranya Kāṇḍa are supposed to be sung in a secluded place such as a forest, while the rest require no such secrecy and may be sung in places where others are present, such as a village. The modifications involved in the 8 Mantras in these contexts is due to the exigency of singing, though it is not clear what difference, if any, should be made to the style of singing by the fact that it is sung in a forest or a village. The Uttarārācārika, if Gonda's statement is to be believed, should be the same as the Mantras in the Purāvācārika except that they have added modifications required by their use in rituals and sacrifices. However, it is not clear why these modifications should be needed and whether they can be regarded as musical in nature.

Unfortunately, it is not true that the Mantras in the Purāvācārika and the Uttarārācārika are the same, as would have to be the case if Gonda's statement is correct. From a rough calculation of the Varānākramakastikā given in the Śāmaveda Sanātana published from Pardi under the editorship of Satvalakar, it would appear that only 267 of the Mantras are repeated at more than one place in the text. Out of these, as many as 259 from the Purāvācārika including the Aranya Kāṇḍa and the Mahānāmaṇyaśāstra are repeated in the Uttarārācārika which is supposed to be concerned with rituals and sacrifices. But while this lends some credence to Gonda's claim, it should not be forgotten that the majority of the Mantras of the Purāvācārika, 391 to be exact, are not repeated in the Uttarārācārika. The total number of Mantras in the Uttarārācārika being 1225, even if we take out 259 of them which are mere repetitions from the Purāvācārika, there remains a hardcore of 966 which belong to Uttarārācārika and Uttarārācārika alone. Surprisingly, there are repetitions—both full and partial—in the Uttarārācārika itself. Mantras (Nos. 758 and 1331), for example, are repeated in full in those numbers 1624 and 1679 respectively. On the other hand, there are partial repetitions of Mantras 651, 1145, 1575, 1576, 1577 and 1578 in 763, 1465, 1703, 1704, 1694 and 1695 respectively.

Gonda is a careful scholar and it is surprising to find him mistaken, particularly in the context of Vedic studies. What is, however, even more surprising is his explanation of Uḥyaṇa and Uḥyaṇa as a modification of the Śāmaṇḍa for ritual and sacrificial purposes. The use of the term 'modification' in this context can only be regarded as misleading in the extreme. Even a cursory look at the text of the Uḥa and Uḥyaṇa would show that what is happening is an incredible elaboration, complication and innovation which can hardly be described as modification by any stretch of imagination. The Uḥyaṇa, for example, is supposed to start from Mantra 1160 of the Uttarārācārika, yet it is preceded by thirty-three full pages of Uḥyaṇa in the text. Similarly, Uḥyaṇa is supposed to end with Mantra 1159 of the Uttarārācārika, yet it continues on and on for almost eighteen pages of the text.  

The examples can be multiplied, but it is obvious that the situation that obtains in the case of the Uḥa and Uḥyaṇa can by no means be described as 'modification', as Gonda seeks to do. Not only this, even his equation between the Aranyaka Kāṇḍa and Uḥyaṇa does not seem to be correct as the number of Mantras, common to the Aranyaka Kāṇḍa and the Uttarārācārika as a whole, hardly add up to ten out of fifty-five if the Mahānāmaṇyaśāstra is not included and out of sixty-five if it is included. However, none of these eight Mantras of the Aranyaka Kāṇḍa repeated in the Uttarārācārika, is recited in a place where it could be subjected to an Oḥyaṇa treatment. In fact, the five Mantras, which are repeated in the section where they are subjected to Oḥyaṇa treatment, are taken from those portions of the Purāvācārika which occur earlier than the Aranyaka Kāṇḍa. We may conclude, then, that the presumed relation between the Aranyaka Kāṇḍa and the Uḥyaṇa does not exist.

The styles of singing that may be regarded as the hard core of the Śāmaṇḍa need a description other than the one usually offered in terms of Grāma-gyāṇa, Aranyaka, or even Uḥa and Uḥyaṇa. Basically, it is a question of the identification of melodies, musical patterns and their distinctive differences from one another. It is strange that it has been usually alleged that there was no written notation for writing music in India till very recent times, when there must have been such a system since at least the time when the Śāmaṇḍa were reduced to a written form. In fact, the relation of traditional Śaṇa singing to the development of musical tradition in India needs to be explored in greater depth than has been done until now.

The Śāmaṇḍa, thus, can hardly be considered a Veda as not only it has no independent text of its own, but is not even supposed to have one in the strict sense of the term. Once the concepts of Anūra and Aṣṭuṣ Śaṇa are accepted, and the emphasis shifts from the text to the melody, the way is opened for the development of pure music for the sake of music. And once the emphasis turns on the music, there develop as many schools as there are styles of singing. The so-called one thousand Sākhās of the Śāmaṇḍa may perhaps be understood in some such way. They might have been like the musical Grāmaṇās of today—proliferating over centuries and developing and preserving their distinctive styles and taking pride in them just as they do today.

III. Division of Yajurveda

The Śāmaṇḍa, even in the tradition, has not been given the same importance as the Yajurveda. The Yajurveda, in fact, is the heart of the Yajña as without it the Yajña cannot even be conceived. Śiṃaṇḍa wrote his first Bhūṣya on the Yajurveda and not on the Agama. Presumably, there were great objections to this, as in his Preface to the Kṛṣṇalekhaṇa he tries to explain why he did this. And his explanation is none other than that of its prime importance for the performance of sacrifice which is the central concern of the Vedas. As he argues: '...still the Yajurveda is properly explained before it. Because the Yajurveda is most important for the sacrifice; and it is in order to perform the sacrifice that we must know the meaning of the Veda.' And later he says:
prevailing idea, therefore, that the differences between the two amount only to the stylistic fact that while the Mantra and the Brähmana portions are amalgamated in the one they have been separated in the other is incorrect. The differences go far deeper and substantially warrant their being treated as separate Vedas.

The Śākta Yajurveda, in fact, comprises many more Mantras than are found in the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda. As Gonda observes: 'The mantras proper, many of which in fact are egadic verses, are more numerous and important than in the Black Yajurveda.' Not only this. 'The text has...in course of time been much enlarged.' In fact, only one to eighteen chapters are supposed to belong to the original part of the Vājasaneyi Sanhitā of the Śākta Yajurveda. as 'they are the only ones that coincide with the ancient parts of the Black Yajurveda and are alone in being commented upon in the corresponding first nine books of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, no more than a few quotations from the following chapters being found in that voluminous work.' But if twenty-two chapters out of forty are later additions to the Sanhitā and if they have not been even commented on in the relevant Brāhmaṇa related to the text, then how can the Vājasaneyi Sanhitā of the Śākta Yajurveda be regarded as authoritative at all? Also, there is supposed to be an 'ancient part of the Black Yajurveda with which the first eighteen chapters of the Vājasaneyi Sanhitā of the Śākta Yajurveda are supposed to coincide. But if that be so, then the hard core of the Yajurveda should be regarded as consisting of those texts which are common to the two. But if one looks closely at the list of the Mantras which are common to the Vājasaneyi and the Taṭṭṭitiṣya Sanhitās of the two Yajurvedas as given by Keith, one finds that while, by and large, Gonda's statement is correct, it is not as completely true as one would expect it to be from the way he has put it. For example, large parts of chapters 24 and 25 of the Vājasaneyi Sanhitā are found in Kānda V, prāṇāhāya 5, 6 and 7. Similarly, Kānda 7, Prāṇāhāya 1 reproduces Mantras from adhyāya 22 of the Vājasaneyi Sanhitā. Elsewhere, we have mantras from chapters 33, 22, 19, 39, 38, 35, 27, 29 and 23. In fact, more than sixty Mantras from the Vājasaneyi Sanhitā are found in the Taṭṭṭitiṣya Sanhitā, according to the list given by Keith.

The Vājasaneyi Sanhitā of the Śākta Yajurveda, we are told, borrows at least fifty per cent of its material from the Ṛgveda. According to Gonda: 'Half of this Sanhitā consists of verses, most of which (over 700) occur also in the Ṛgveda.' It is not clear from Gonda's statement whether these verses from the Ṛgveda are confined only to the first eighteen chapters of the Vājasaneyi Sanhitā of the Śāklayajurveda or are scattered all over the text. Further, it is not clear what Gonda means by a verse in this statement. In case he means a Mantra, then he seems to be definitely wrong, for the total number of Mantras in the Vājasaneyi Sanhitā happens to be 398, and 700 is certainly not half of that number. Perhaps, Gonda is referring to Kaṇḍikās...
and not Mantras, but even they are 1975, a number substantially higher than twice 700 which he ascribes to them.

In fact, the whole problem is further complicated by the fact that there is no single criterion for deciding what constitutes a Mantra. Prof. Dandekar has brought to my attention the fact that Sāyaṇa in his Preface to the Rgvedabhashya, has extensively considered this question and concluded 'It is a good definition to say that whatever the sacrificing priest calls a Mantra is such. But what if the Yajñikas differ? Sāyaṇa has not considered this possibility. On the other hand, Aparajānta Śrāvastīāśī first defines Brahmaṇa as Karmayadonā (24.1.30-35) and Mantra as that which is not a Brahmaṇa. But perhaps it is this discrepancy in the criteria used which explains why, even when the printed text is almost the same in two different editions of the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda, the number of Mantras given by them differs—a fact which would otherwise be totally inexplicable. Take, for example, the number of mantras contained in 1.1.4, 1.1.5 and 1.1.6 of the Taittirīya Sanhitā of the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda; the number of mantras given by them differs—a fact which would otherwise be totally inexplicable. Take, for example, the number of mantras contained in 1.1.4, 1.1.5 and 1.1.6 of the Taittirīya Sanhitā of the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda edited by Satwalekar and the Mādā Yajurveda Sanhitā edited by Maharishi Dvararā. The former contains 19, 17 and 11 Mantras respectively while the latter gives their numbers as 17, 18 and 12 respectively. It is not as if the text is different in the two editions, but what is conceived of as a Mantra differs in the two cases. It is also not the case that the discrepancy is confined to these three Kāndikās only. One finds it again in 1.1.10, 1.1.13, 1.6.21, 1.6.6, and so on. It may also be noted that there is no uniformity in the discrepancy. It is not as if one has always more or less Mantras than the other, or that the amount by which it is more or less is the same. In fact, Sāyaṇa in his commentary on the very first Mantra of Taittirīya Sanhitā of the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda, wrote that there was a difference of opinion regarding whether it was to be construed as one Mantra or two Mantras. He writes, 'स केवले युग्मक्लोक्ता न हृद्यते साहु' (He is obvious from the wording that there are two opinions on the matter—some holding that because of the repetition of the word Yagmad twice, the text should be construed as containing two Yajūśa Mantras instead of one, while others are of a contrary opinion. But it is equally obvious that whatever may be one's opinion on the matter, it is bound to be arbitrary in character and essentially undecided in principle. The differences regarding the total number of Mantras in Taittirīya Sanhitā 1.1.4, for example, do not arise because of the difference of opinion regarding Yagmad as it does not occur there at all. The first difference, for example, occurs in the treatment of द्रव्यप्रभुमात्र as a separate independent Mantra by Satwalekar while Daivarāṭa treats it as a part of the previous Mantra. The second difference arises because Satwalekar treats देववर्ग स्त्रिया as a separate Mantra while Daivarāṭa treats it as forming a part of the earlier Mantra. None of these distinctions rests upon the use of Yagmad about which Sāyaṇa had written in his commentary. *

*Incidentally, Sontakke and Dharmadhikari seem to regard द्रव्यप्रभुमात्र as an independent Mantra but as forming a part of the Mantra starting from 'वृजसेरे' and

Obviously, the situation is disquieting; but none of the eminent editors of the text seem to feel disconcerted by it as none of them has given any reason as to why his construal of the Mantra should be accepted rather than that of the others.

Besides this problem of what constitutes a Mantra and that of the relationship between the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda and the Śūkla Yajurveda, there is the deeper problem of the so-called Sākhās of these Sanhitās. After all, there is no such thing as Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda. There is either the Taittirīya Sanhitā or the Kātyāṇa Sanhitā or the Kapāliṣṭhāna Sanhitā or the Māraṇāyana Sanhitā and each has a distinctive status and character of its own which is different from the others. Keith has given a charted column of the four Sanhitās of the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda in his well-known work on this Veda, taking the Taittirīya Sanhitā as the standard base and comparing others in relation to it. The comparison reveals that out of a total of 651 Kāndikās of the Taittirīya Sanhitā, only 490 are found in the Kātyāṇa Sanhitā, 417 in the Māraṇāyana Sanhitā and 229 in the Kapāliṣṭhāna Sanhitā. Thus the number of Kāndikās, missing in the Kātyāṇa, happens to be 161, while in the case of Māraṇāyana and Kapāliṣṭhāna it happens to be of the order of 234 and 432 respectively.

Now this is not a minor or negligible difference, and to treat it as such is to do violence to facts. If one looks at the matter closely, one finds that in the Kapāliṣṭhāna Sanhitā, the whole of the 6th and 7th Prapūṭhaka and large parts of the 8th Prapūṭhaka of the first Kāṇḍa are missing. As for Kāṇḍa 2, it is almost totally absent except for ii.5.4, ii.6.4, ii.6.5. and ii.6.6. In Kāṇḍa 3, the story repeats itself. Except for iii.1.8, iii.2.10, iii.5.7 and iii.5.8, we draw a complete blank. In Kāṇḍa 5, in prapūṭhakas IV, V, VI and VII, we again find very few occurrences, the total number coming to none only. As for Kāṇḍa 7, it is almost totally absent from Kapāliṣṭhāna Sanhitā except for one solitary piece mentioned in vii.2.7. Thus, if we take Kāṇḍas 2, 3, 5 ending with 'किरप' (see p. 69). Neither Sāyaṇa nor Bhaṭṭabhāskara seems to have anything to say about this in his commentary on this Mantra. The situation thus may be summarized in the following way:

According to Satwalekar, the mantra should read as:

1. द्रव्यप्रभुमात्र युग्मक्लोक्ता मुख: (Mantra no. 93, p. 2).

According to Sontakke and Dharmadhikari as:

2. द्रव्यप्रभुमात्र युग्मक्लोक्ता मुख: (विवर्णय) युग्मक्लोक्ता मुख: (p. 69).

And according to Daivarāṭa as:

3. द्रव्यप्रभुमात्र युग्मक्लोक्ता मुख: (केताप्रभ) युग्मक्लोक्ता मुख: (p. 4)
and 7 we find that the total number of occurrences comes to about eighteen only.

However, it is not only that large parts of what is found in the Taittiriya Sanhítá is absent from the Kaþphala Sanhítá, but also that what is found in the latter is absent in the former. If we take Keith's comparative chart as the basis and reverse the direction of comparison, we find that only twenty-six chapters out of forty-seven have any counterpart in the Taittiriya Sanhítá. Even amongst the chapters that do have a counterpart in the Taittiriya, some are only nominally there. Chapter 4, for example, has only one part, that is, section 8, represented in the Taittiriya, and that, too, occurs only partially. Similarly, chapters 34 and 47 have only sections 1 and 2 respectively, represented in the Taittiriya. It is true that the manuscript of this Sanhítá has been found only in a fragmentary form, but even in such a fragmented form it contains material that is not found in the Taittiriya Sanhítá, and yet was treated as authoritative by the followers of the Sákha as the followers of the Taittiriya did theirs.

The situation is no different with Káthaka Sanhítá of the KṚṣṇa Yajurveda. The former does not merely have 101 Kaṅkṣás less than the Taittiriya Sanhítá but also has at least three Śhānakas, that is, full chapters which are not found in the Taittiriya Sanhítá. These are Śhānakas 36, 37 and 38. Even where a Śhānaka has a counterpart in the Prapâthaka of the Taittiriya Sanhítá as Śhānakas 14 and 35, the number of Anuwākas which are found in the latter are very few. For example, only the first four Anuwākas of Śhānaka 14 find a place in the Taittiriya, when their total number in that Śhānaka happens to be ten. The situation is worse if we look at Śhānakas 36, 37, and 38. Out of its twenty Anuwākas, only two are found in the Taittiriya, that is, nos. 8 and 13. As for the Maitrāyaṇi Sanhítá, it has not only 234 sections less than the Taittiriya Sanhítá, but its whole fourth Kaṅga is supposed to be Khila, that is, an appendage or addition which is not supposed to be a regular part of the text. But if this is so, then those parts of the fourth Kaṅga of the Maitrāyaṇi Sanhítá which are found in the Taittiriya Sanhítá should also be regarded as Khila. But the counterpart material of the fourth Kaṅga of the Maitrāyaṇi Sanhítá is scattered over all the Kaṅgas except 5th and 7th of the Taittiriya Sanhítá. This would make these portions Khila also, unless what is regarded as Khila in one Sanhítá need not be regarded as Khila in another. But normally the Taittiriya Sanhítá is not supposed to have any Khila portions in it—a situation that can be explained only on the latter hypothesis. But if it is seriously accepted, it would destroy the very idea of their being one KṚṣṇa Yajurveda and the so-called other Sanhítás being its Sákhas.

IV. VEDIC SĀKHĀS

In fact, the whole question of Sákha needs to be examined with greater care than seems to have been done until now. Normally, a Sákha implies some-thing akin to what is meant by the term 'recension' with respect to a text. There is a large common core and marginal variations in different renderings of the same text. The term Sákha, however, has the added connotation of being a school which had branched off from a common source and developed differences because of that. But even though this is the usual accepted story, it hardly squares with the facts as even superficially known. If one asks, for example, which is the Yajurveda and what are its Sákhas, there is no satisfactory answer. First, there is no such thing as the Yajurveda. We have either the KṚṣṇa Yajurveda or the Śukla Yajurveda. These are not treated as Sákhas of the Yajurveda, but if one were to do so one would have to point to some Māla Yajurveda of which they were the Sákhas. And there is no such Yajurveda extant at present. But do we, then, have a KṚṣṇa Yajurveda or a Śukla Yajurveda? As far as I know, there is no such thing either. What we have is the Taittirya Sanhítá or the Káthaka Sanhítá, or the Kaśphala Sanhítá or the Maitrāyaṇi Sanhítá. These are all supposed to be Sákhas of the KṚṣṇa Yajurveda, but then where is the KṚṣṇa Yajurveda of which these are the Sákhas? Normally, the Taittiriya Sanhítá is treated as being identical with the KṚṣṇa Yajurveda proper and the rest as its Sákhas, but no justification seems to be given for it. In fact, if we look at the structure of these four Sanhítás of the KṚṣṇa Yajurveda, they show such variations that it is difficult to see how they could be regarded as Sákhas of one and the same Veda. The Taittiriya Sanhítá is divided into seven Kaṅgas, each further divided into Prapâthakas which are then further divided into Anuwākas consisting of Mantras and Brāhmaṇas. The Káthaka Sanhítá, on the other hand, has no Kaṅgas but only Śhānakas which happen to be forty in number. These are divided into Anuwākas which contain the Mantras. The Kaśphala Sanhítá, which also is supposed to belong to the Káthakas, consists of forty-seven chapters containing various sections. The Maitrāyaṇi Sanhítá, on the other hand, consists of only four Kaṅgas containing Prapâthakas which consist of Anuwākas containing Mantras.

It is not only that the structure of these texts is different but also the sequence of the Mantras or even the Anuwākas is different in different Sanhítás. Even a cursory look at the comparative chart given by Keith reveals this. To give but one example, while 1.6.6 is found in the 5th Śhānaka of the Kāthaka Sanhítá, 1.67 is found in the 31st and 32nd Śhānaka of the Kāthaka Sanhítá. But if both the structure and the sequence are so different, how can they be regarded as variants of the same Veda? Gonda has admitted: 'What is lacking is the original Yajurveda Sanhítá.' Not only this, according to him, 'the considerable difference between the Śhānakas extant does not even allow us to attempt its reconstruction, except for some sections, among which that dealing with the horse sacrifice.' Gonda's own conclusion is: 'So we are led to assume that, while part of these collections developed from one common source, they were after their separation, amplified according to a similar plan or similar principles.' But even if the plans or principles
behind the amplifications were similar, the contents were not. And it is the difference in contents that is crucial for determining whether they are to be regarded as different or just minor variations of a single text. Not only this, Gonda does not even see the significance of the whole activity of addition and amplification on the part of the Rṣis of a presumably common heritage which had been given to them as a common Vedic patrimony. Obviously, they would not have regarded it as Apaurusye or revealed, or viewed it in any such manner that it was only to be memorized and passed on and nothing added to it or altered.

In fact, the very large proliferation of the Sākhās, at least as mentioned in the tradition, testifies to the fact that the Rṣis of those days treated their Vedic patrimony with a degree of freedom that seems sacrilegious when viewed in the perspective of attitudes with which the Vedas have been traditionally looked at for a long time past. The Yajurveda itself is supposed to have 101 Sākhās, the Sāmaveda 1000, the Atharvaveda 9 and Rigveda 21. The works of most of these Sākhās are not available today, but the very fact that such was the opinion prevalent in Patanjali's time is sufficient to prove that the Vedas were regarded in a totally different way in Vedic times. At what point and why the development of Vedic Sākhās stopped is an interesting historical question which needs to be investigated further. Perhaps the interest shifted from the sacrificial ritual to the Upāniṣadic speculation which continued to be written till as late as the thirteenth century A.D.

The problem of the Sākhā, even in their extant versions, deserves more serious attention than has been given to it up till now. Ultimately, it is the differences or the additions, deletions and modifications in the various Sākhās that are distinctive of them, and these have to be emphasized and brought out in a distinctive manner. It should not be forgotten in this connection that even when there is a repetition of the text between one Sāhā of another, it is seldom complete or total. Also, normally it is embedded amongst other material which is absent in the text in terms of which the comparison is sought to be attempted. Keith's table comparing the contents of the Taśṭṭiṣṭya Sanhitā with the other texts of the Yajurveda is thus systematically misleading; it not only makes confusion between a Kāṇḍikā and Mantra, but also gives the impression that the whole of the Kāṇḍikā or the Brāhmaṇa text has a counterpart in the other texts when, in fact, it has only certain of its parts common with them. Further, for a fuller comparison each of the texts should have been taken as the basis for comparison and not just the Taśṭṭiṣṭya Sanhitā, as only then we could have had a complete, full-bodied picture of the situation.

The problem of the Sākhā gets further complicated by the fact that even the same Sākhā is multiplied into several subdivisions which have independent texts of their own. The Kāṭhaka, for example, are supposed to be divided into twelve Sākhās which in turn have their own subdivisions. In fact, the Kāpiṣṭhaka and the Maitrāyaṇi are both supposed to belong to the Kāṭhaka school. But then to which school does the Kāṭhaka Sanhitā belong? And in case it is the original Sanhitā of the Kāṭhaka school, then how is it that there are substantial differences, including structural ones, between it and the Kāpiṣṭhaka and the Maitrāyaṇi Sanhitās which are also supposed to belong to the same school? Further, what happens to the Taśṭṭiṣṭya and to what school does it belong?

There seems little point in ignoring these questions or brushing them under the carpet. In fact, the Maitrāyaṇi Sanhitā, as already pointed out, raises the problem of the whole fourth Kāṇḍa which is supposed to be Khila in character. Also, the Sanhitā has a total of 1701 Mantras taken from the Rigveda out of which 1062 belong to the fourth Kāṇḍa. These are taken from all the Mandas of the Rigveda including the Pārśvaṇa part. But these are not the Mantras which are treated as Khila in the Rigveda, and if they are not so treated there, how can they be so treated here? Further, the occurrence of such a large number of Mantras from the Rigveda raises problems of its own. As already discussed in the context of the Sāmaveda, it raises the basic question of the unique identity of a text being regarded as a separate Veda by itself.

**Rg-Vedic Repetitions**

The problem of repetitions, in fact, plagues the Rigveda itself. Even a cursory glance at Bloomfield's *Rig-Veda Repetitions* would show the enormity of the extent of these repetitions and the complex problems they pose for any serious student of the subject. It is not only that a very large number of Mantras from the Rigveda are repeated in the other Vedas, but that there are substantive repetitions in the Rigveda itself. *Rig-Veda Repetitions* is based on Bloomfield's earlier monumental work, *The Vedic Concordance*, published in 1906. As Bloomfield himself has said in the Introduction to *Rig-Veda Repetitions* the complete picture of Vedic repetitions would emerge only when the *Reverse Concordance* is completed. Unfortunately, no one seems to have completed Bloomfield's unfinished work in this area until now. Yet, even the *Rig-Veda Repetitions* throws light on the way in which the poets of the Rig-Veda exercised their art... by studying the manner and extent to which they borrowed from one another, imitated one another, and, as it were, stood upon the shoulders of one another" (italics mine). But if this was the question of one Vedic Rsi to another, how can that relationship be understood either in terms of Apauruseyata or revelation or even in terms of the usual notion of Vedic authority? The problem is even more complicated as the text of the Rigveda along with the Sanhitās of the other Vedas include portions which are self-consciously proclaimed as Khila. Now, if people were prepared to add even to the Rigvedic Mantras and pass them off as originally belonging to the Sanhitā then where is that sacrosanct attitude to the Veda about which there is such incessant talk amongst the scholars of
the tradition? In fact, there are supposed to be Khilaś 'which found entrance into the Rigveda-Sanhitā.' According to Gonda: ... they are real, though insignificant, Vedic hymns; but are considered to be inferior and half-apocryphal.

Gonda does not seem to realize the import of what he himself is saying, a situation not unusual in the field of Vedic scholarship. First, if the Vedas are to be regarded as Vedas, there cannot be a distinction of superior and inferior, or significant and insignificant between its different parts. Also, there can be no such thing as 'half-apocryphal'; either it is apocryphal or it is not. Gonda is misled into characterizing it as such, because the Vālakāhīyas, unlike those which are just Khilaś, 'found entrance into the Rigveda-Sanhitā.'

But that was the intention of all the Khīda compositions; only some succeeded while others failed. Yet, even those who failed found a permanent place in the Pārāśāja section of the Sanhitā.

It may be said that we are totally mistaken in our approach as we are thinking of the Vedas as if they had some distinctive, specific content of their own. It is this presupposition that makes us wonder about the large-scale repetitions which are found in the texts as they ought not to be construed as contents but rather as different aspects of the Vedic ritual in the context of which alone they have meaning. The Vajīga formulas, for example, are supposed to be spoken by the Adhivārya at the sacrificial ritual while the Udgātā recited the hymns of the Śāmaaveda to the melodies prescribed in them. The Hotar, on the other hand, 'was supposed to recite definite consecutary texts (yājya), and the śāstra. As 'the latter represent the oldest prose preserved from the period of the Śāmaaveda, it may be taken that the Hotar represented the Śāmaaveda at the Vedic Yajña just as the Adhivārya represented the Vajīga and the Udgātā, the Śāmaaveda. The Śāmaaveda, even though having only 'slight relation to śrāvita rites seems to have got itself there in the role of a priest 'who, briefly called the brahman, oversees, accompanies (anumānta) and corrects by means of expiatory formulas (priyāṣcita) possible accidents and blunders of the officiants.

The fourfold division of functions between the Hotar, the Udgātā, the Adhivārya and the Brahmaṇa corresponds, we are told, to the four Vedas, and the unity of the sacrifice is the unity of the Vedas. But this idyllic picture hardly corresponds to the facts as attributed to the tradition itself. First, it is well known that the Ātharaaveda never enjoyed the same status as the other three Vedas in the tradition. As Gonda writes:

Although the doctrine of the fourfold Veda...found acceptance various later texts continued speaking of the Threefold Holy Knowledge. Even in modern times there have been brahmins who refused to recognize the authority of the promulgators of the fourth Veda, because of a certain prejudice prevailing against it. Even today brahmins of the other Vedas do not dine or marry with the atharvanic (paippalādina) of Orissa.

The more important point, however, is that even the other two Vedas, that is, the Śāmaaveda and the Yajurveda have their material borrowed from the Rigveda in such an overwhelming quantity as to make nonsense of the claim that each is performing a different function in the ritual sacrifice. If, for example, Re and Yajūsa are totally different, then how can a Re Mantra perform the Yajūsa function in the ritual? It is not as if the Re Mantras that perform the Yajūsa function do not perform, say, the Śāma function in the sacrifice. In fact, when the same text from the Rigveda is found both in the Śāmaaveda and the Yajurveda, one would be hard put to distinguish its respective functions in the three Vedas or in the sacrifice in which it is used. As most of the Mantras of the Śāmaaveda are from the Rigveda and a very large portion of the Mantras in the various Sanhitās of the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda or the Śākta Yajurveda are also from the Rigveda, it is extremely unlikely that the Śāmaaveda and the Yajurveda have no Mantras in common. Even if we forget the Rigveda for the moment, the occurrence of a Mantra both in the Śāmaaveda and the Yajurveda would militate against the view being propounded above. Take, for example, the Mantra 1.456 of the Śāmaaveda (Indro Viśvasya rājat) which also occurs in the Yajyapayi Sanhitā of the Śūkla Yajurveda as the eighth Mantra of the thirty-sixth Adhyāya. Now, shall we treat it as performing a Śāma function or a Yajūsa function? It is true that in the latter it occurs not as the whole Mantra but only as a part of one (Indro Viśvasya rājat Šām naṃ asta dvipade Šām etuspadam). But then this raises the old question we raised earlier; 'What is a Mantra?' Surely, if 'Indro Viśvasya rājat' forms one complete Mantra in the Śāmaaveda, it cannot cease to do so in the Yajurveda.

The Ātharaaveda itself is supposed to have taken whole sections of the Rigveda for use by the Brahmaṇ priest in the sacrifice. According to Gonda:

... it was for the ritual use of this brahman priest, and specially for one of his assistants, the brahmanāchāryaṃ, that AVS, XX was, as their special collection (Sanhitā), added to the corpus. Some portions (13 of the 143 sūkṣtas) excepted this book consists of literal borrowings from the Rigveda-Sanhitā.

To get some idea of the sort of borrowing that was done, we may take the first Sūkta of XXth Kānda of the Ātharaaveda. It consists of only three Mantras, the first taken from the 10th Sūkta of the Mandala III of the Rigveda, the second from the 86th Sūkta of the Mandala I of the Rigveda and the third from the 46th Sūkta of the Mandala VIII of the Rigveda. This, frankly, is not even straight borrowing, but borrowing to cover one's tracks so that none may suspect the act of borrowing. These are borrowings of whole full-fledged Mantras from the sūkṣtas. One would be hard put to explain how they undergo a differentiation of function just from the fact of being borrowed in such a clandestine manner from one text into another. In fact, one may
easily find from Bloomfield’s *Vedic Concordance* scores of instances where the same text occurs in all the four Vedas. The proponents of the sacrificial functional theory would be hard put to account for such a situation. The usual way out is the *ad hoc* injunction that if in any sacrifice a particular Mantra is being used from a particular Veda which is presumed to perform the function peculiar to that Veda alone, then the same Mantra, even if it occurs in the other Vedas, is not to be used in that sacrifice for the performance of the other functions belonging to those Vedas. But this obviously is an *ad hoc* solution to the problem which must have been adopted by the ritual practitioners to avoid the embarrassment caused by the identity of Mantras in what were ostensibly supposed to be different Vedas.

The operational theory of the Vedic texts is deeply enshrined in the **Mi-maśā** way of looking at them. Sayana’s commentary on the Vedas is perhaps a classical example of this. In fact, his decision to write first his commentary on the *Yajurveda* and his defence thereof, as already pointed out, is an evidence of this. But this, it is forgotten, would make Brāhmaṇas the centre of the Veda as it is they and they alone which operationalize the Veda. The Mantra portion would then be subsidiary or ancillary to the Brāhmaṇas as it is through them that they find their meaning which is contained in the sacrificial operations that they specify. The procedure, followed in the **Taittirīya Sanhitā**, not to separate the Brāhmaṇa portion into independent texts, would then be justified as there is no point in giving the operational meaning separately when it alone tells us what is being meant. Also, if it is the Brāhmaṇas that provide the meaning to the text, then, strictly speaking, there would be as many Vedas as there are Brāhmaṇas. This would be in accordance with our earlier conclusion that it would be more correct to treat the extant texts of the so-called **Sākhās** as independent works rather than as variants of a common text, as they are generally held to be. In fact, even when there is a textual repetition between the different Sanhitās of the various **Sākhās**, it is very seldom in the same order and almost always embedded in extraneous material. Even a cursory examination of any of the contents of the **Taittirīya Sanhitā** with the other texts of the **Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda** as given in Keith’s work, *The Veda of the Black Yajus School Entitled Taittirīya Sanhitā*, would convince one of this. But if the sequence itself is changed in an operation or if it is embedded in a different context, it cannot be deemed to have remained the same operation. Thus, the induction of the Brāhmaṇas into the central position for understanding what a Veda is would make the Vedas far more in number than most would like to admit.

Also, once the Brāhmaṇas are accepted as essential parts of the Vedas or as identical with them, it would be difficult to argue for the so-called *Aparavaṃśyatva* of the Vedas, for none would seriously maintain that all the ritualistic instructions along with the stories that are meant to emphasize their importance are not of human origin. At least, their conflicting diversity and the attempt to make them acceptable through all the various ways, which are included under the so-called **Arthavādā** doctrine evolved by the **Mi-maśā**-sakas, could hardly be ascribed to anyone but the human carriers of the Vedic tradition. And as far as ritual is concerned, it is they and they alone who have any authority in the matter. In fact, for the sacrificial ritual, it is not even the Brāhmaṇas which alone are sufficient. One needs the Śrauta or the Kalpaśūtras also, and not just them but the whole of what is usually called the Veda’s literature with them. Thus, along with the Brāhmaṇas and the Kalpaśūtras we have to have the knowledge that is embodied in the texts known as the **Śiśā, Vāikarāṇya, Niśkta, Nighraṇa, Chandas** and **Jyotisā** in order to perform the sacrificial rituals as they are supposed to be ordained by the Sanhitās and the Brāhmaṇas. But no one has ever maintained that the Vedāṅgas are not of human origin. In fact, they have always been treated as Śruti and not śrutis. But if this is so and if it is also true that without their knowledge one cannot perform the prescribed sacrifices correctly, and if the injunction for performing those sacrifices is the essence of the Vedas, it follows necessarily that the Vedas can not, in principle, be *Aparavaṃśya* in character.

V. **NEED OF THE REVISION**

According to tradition, it was the sage Vyāsa who gave shape to the present collection which is known as the Vedas. It is difficult to believe this of all the **Sūkhās** of the different Sanhitās or of the various Brāhmaṇas that are supposed to be associated with them. As for the **Upaniṣads**, particularly those which are selections out of pre-existent Vedic texts, it is difficult to believe that the same person, who made the first arrangement, made the second selection also. The latter activity presupposes the former and hence, most probably, would have been undertaken by someone other than Vyāsa who came after him. But however it may be, the whole thing is so unsatisfactory that a new arrangement of the whole Vedic corpus is urgently needed. There is nothing sacrosanct in what somebody collected thousands of years ago and the format that he gave to that collection. We need a new Vyāsa for modern times who would undertake the work keeping in view the needs of the times.

For far too long, the problems relating to the Vedic texts have been swept under the carpet. Even when formulated, they have been seldom squarely faced. The tradition has been accepted too unquestioningly, as if what somebody arranged and edited has to be taken as the final word in the matter. That there are four Vedas, and that they are the Śruti or the final authority for all orthodox Hinduism is axiomatically accepted by everybody who writes on the subject. Also, that they form a unity, a musical harmony like that of a string quartet. The so-called **Sūkkha** are nothing but recensions of the same text, and there are no problems in this best of all possible worlds.

The truth, however, is very, very different. Instead of the proclaimed
harmony, there is a continuous one-upmanship amongst the specialists of the different Vedas. It is not only the Śāmaavedin who regalates the Rksaśaṁhitā to the realm of the lifeless body whose soul is the Śāma, as pointed out earlier in our discussion of Dr. Lath’s article on ‘Ancient Indian Music and the Concept of Man’. The Ātharvavedin explicitly asserts that those who study the Threefold Veda will reach, it is true, the highest heaven, but yet the Atharvans and Angirasas go beyond to the great worlds of Brahmā.\(^{48}\) Not only this, in order to assert their supremacy over the other three Vedas, the Ātharvaveda resorted to ‘the spread of legends and allegorical stories in which the other Vedas are represented as incompetent and the Atharvaveda appears as superior to them.\(^{49}\) As for the Yajurveda, it places itself not only in the centre of the sacrificial ritual, but by making the ritual itself as central to the Veda it regulates all the non-ritual parts of the other Vedas to a secondary status and dismisses them as Arthatava.

As for the Sākhās being recensions, one can only say that the use of the term in this context is systematically misleading. It tends to suggest that there are various manuscripts of the same text from which the original may possibly be reconstructed. This, obviously, is not the case. Each Sākhā may have its own variant manuscripts out of which the original Sainihita of the Sākhā may possibly be reconstructed. On the other hand, the text belonging to a particular Sākhā cannot be regarded as a ‘recension’, even in the literal, technical sense given to it in The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary. The latter gives the meaning of ‘recension’ as ‘the revision of a text, est. in a careful or critical manner; a particular version of a text resulting from such revision.’ Now the Sākhās are not the result of any attempt at ‘careful or critical revision’ of a pre-existent text on the part of anybody. Further, there is so much of addition, omission and change of sequence that they cannot be regarded as even ‘revisions’ of the text, for any revision in order to be called a ‘revision’ must be only marginal in character.

The Vedas, thus, have to be rescued from the age-old forms in which they have been imprisoned and immobilized. For this, a new way of looking at the texts is required. It is hoped that this essay would provide a small, first step in this direction.

Notes and References

1. Diwan Bahadur V.K. Ramanujachari, Vedic Texts Considered in the Śrī Bhāshyam (Kambakonam, 1930.)
3. Raghu Vira, Śāmveda of the Jaiminiyas: Text and Mantra Index (Lahore: The International Academy of Indian Culture, 1938).
4. Gonda, p. 313.
6. Sāyaṇa has written, सायाणसाहित्यिकस्म, which may be translated as ‘because of the fact that Sāmveda is completely based on the Rgveda.’ Dr. Lath has suggested that the term Rg here should not be taken to mean the Rgveda but rather the Rg Mantras which may be found in the Rgveda or in any of the other Sainihitas. This would have been plausible if those Mantras of the Sāmveda which are not found in the Rgveda were to be from any of the other Sainihitas. Also, it raises the problem of finding the essential characteristics which constitute a re mantra.
8. Ibid., p. 314.
10. Ibid., p. 316.
11. Ibid.
13. Lath, p. 5.
17. The mantras that are so repeated are 108, 122, 184, 320 and 465.
19. Ibid., p. 5.
22. Ibid., p. 328.
23. Ibid., p. 328.
24. Keith, op.cit.
26. Sāyaṇa, Peter Peterson, p. 44.
30. Gonda, p. 323.
31. Ibid., p. 323.
32. Ibid., p. 324.
33. All of these estimates are based on Patanjali’s statement in the Mahābhāṣya. See Bhagavada Dutta, Vaidika Vāgisyasā Kā Itihāsa, (Dehli: Pranava Prakashana, 1978).
36. Bloomfield, p. 3.
37. Gonda, p. 37.
38. Ibid., p. 37.
39. Ibid., p. 37.
40. Ibid., p. 36.
41. Ibid., p. 36.
42. Ibid., p. 268.
43. Ibid., p. 269.
Wittgenstein: a second look*

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II On Natural History

"When you are philosophising you have to descend into primal chaos and feel at home there."

—WITTGENSTEIN

It is appropriate that I should begin this lecture with a characterization of the kind of enquiry that I tried to conduct in the first lecture. If my enquiry was Wittgensteinian, such a characterization would go a long way to help us in comprehending what Wittgenstein wanted to achieve through philosophical enquiries. (As whether this kind of an enquiry is philosophical at all may itself be a debatable—and obviously a much debated—issue, we might as well drop the qualification 'philosophical', and try to understand what constitutes a Wittgensteinian enquiry.)

It is said that there are two kinds of philosophers: one of these, if better educated, would turn out to be theologians; and the other, if well educated, would turn out to be scientists. I take pride in my self-education, and I do not think that Wittgenstein ever regretted his training; so it is impossible with either of us to have received any education other than the one we received respectively. Consequently, the earlier enquiry about names has not been either scientific or eschatological. And if it does not qualify for the appellation 'philosophy' either, it is because—as Wittgenstein was fond of saying—it is not philosophy, but only a distant descendent of philosophy (and hence, I may add, is necessary).

Now, what did we achieve in the earlier enquiry? Or, to be a bit modest, I may drop that presumptuous query and ask: what was it that we (Wittgenstein and I, that is) were struggling to gain? Obviously, we were striving to find out a plausible answer to the quadrinomial question: what is a name? We were trying to spin a theory which would account for a symbol's being a name. This much is evident, I trust. But, I am afraid, it may not be all that obvious that we intended this theory to be in consonance with our intuitive understanding of what constitutes a name, that is, the understanding which each proficient user of language (any empirical or natural language, that is) would exemplify in using names. This is to say that we were attempting theoretically to account for a chunk of our linguistic behaviour which goes under the name of naming. Thus— we can now introduce a technical term—we were trying to work out a natural history of naming (or a natural history of names), and thereby a natural history of man, for the former is a part of the latter.

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