

PREAMBLE

The Vedas -- the Indian Books of Knowledge -- form the most ancient literature not only of India, but of the whole world. Being written in the Sanskrit language of an archaic type, they cannot be understood fully. Attempts have, therefore, been made from old times for the elucidation of those texts. Just as several Vedic scriptures have been lost for ever for want of a continuous tradition, similarly several commentarial works pertaining to those scriptures are no more available to us. In this connection the most notable work goes to the credit of Sāyaṇācārya who composed -- or rather caused to be composed -- in the 14th century A.D., Sanskrit commentaries on most of the available Vedic texts. There are a few others whose commentaries on one or more texts either in full or in part are still available to us.

A fresh impetus was given to the Vedic studies when, about two centuries ago, India came in contact with the western world through the British who established their rule over India, several scholars -- British, European and American -- began to study the Sanskrit language and literature -- particularly the Vedic literature and brought out critical editions of Sanskrit and Vedic texts with translations and notes. This study of Sanskrit largely contributed to the history and culture of the world, and was also responsible for the creation of new sources of knowledge like comparative philology, comparative mythology and comparative religion.

As a consolidated study of the ancient Indian sources, several works were written from time to time taking the survey of the history, religion and culture of India in the various stages. Histories of Sanskrit literature, also came to be written. All this research activity has no doubt brought to light India's ancient heritage, even though certain aspects might still be covered more or less with darkness. If we pay a closer attention to the work done so far, it would be observed that the Ṛgveda - admittedly the first and the oldest of the Vedas - has, naturally enough, claimed the foremost attention. The Atharvaveda - another metrical Saṁhitā and the Veda of the 'masses' - has been adequately studied and is still being studied in all aspects and in an adequate proportion. The Śāmvēda, which is nothing but a reflection of the Ṛgveda created for a specific purpose, has been claiming some attention so far as its literature is concerned. From the prehistorical point of view, it is not of much significance. When we come to the Yajurveda, we find that the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda has been and is being studied to a certain extent on account of its specific character, namely a combination of the Mantra and Brāhmaṇa portions. Out of the four available recensions of that Veda, the Taittirīya recension has been subjected to a detailed study.

The case of the Śukla Yajurveda is different. The peculiarity of the Śukla Yajurveda, which is subdivided into Mādhyandina and Kāṇva recensions, is that its Mantra portion and the Brāhmaṇa portion are separate from each other; the Brāhmaṇa is

separated from the Mantra. Hence, the VĒjasanya Saṁhitā of the Śukla Yajurveda which consists of mantras alone, is comparatively smaller. However, this may be, the purpose of the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda and the Śukla Yajurveda is the same, namely, the representation of the ritualistic details. Consequently, whenever there is an occasion for dealing with the Yajurveda from any aspect, the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda - and therein again the Taittirīya recension - being the seniormost, occupies the first and foremost position, with the result that the Śukla Yajurveda is almost neglected; it receives very scanty attention. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa of that Veda, which is significant on account of its extent and contents, is no doubt carefully and adequately studied; but its Saṁhitā has unfortunately met with a different lot. So far as the traditional studies are concerned, we have the commentaries of Uvāṭa and Mahīdhara on the Madhyandina Saṁhitā, Śāyana's commentary on the first twenty chapters of the Kāṇva Saṁhitā, and Anantāchārya's commentary on the remaining chapters of the Kāṇva Saṁhitā which is yet in manuscript form. But when we come to the modern studies, we find that very little has been done in respect of this Saṁhitā. Besides the translation by R.T.H.Griffith, we scarcely find any special work devoted to the study of this Saṁhitā. In the consolidated studies of the Vedic literature, too, this Saṁhitā is inadequately represented.

So against this background, on the kind suggestion of the late Dr. N. J. Shende, I have taken up a study of the Śukla

Yajurveda particularly of the Vājasaneyā Mādhyandina Saṁhitā. I have referred to the Vājasaneyā Kāṇva Saṁhitā wherever necessary. These two recensions of the Śukla Yajurveda are almost identical except for the arrangement and verbal variations here and there.

In this thesis I have studied the Vājasaneyā Mādhyandina Saṁhitā in all aspects. These cover the external aspects as shown in Books I-II and the internal aspects as seen in the Books III-VI.

Book I, named as: "Metrical Saṁhitās (the Ṛgveda and the Atharvaveda) and the Vājasaneyā Mādhyandina Saṁhitā", presents a study of such verses from the Ṛgveda and the Atharvaveda as are found also in the Vājasaneyā Mādhyandina Saṁhitā. Here the comparison concerns the following aspects: Verbal variations in the Śukla Yajurveda mantras, if any, have been recorded. Similarly additions and alterations made in the mantras of that Veda in comparison with the Ṛgveda and the Atharvaveda have also been recorded. The ritualistic employment of the mantras from all these three Vedas has been mentioned, and in doing so reference has always been made to the Śrauta and Gṛhya Sūtras of the Śukla Yajurveda. Different traditional explanations of the Śukla Yajurveda mantras, if any, have been noted. The names of metres, Ṛsis and deities of the mantras of all the three Vedas as given in Anukramanīs have been recorded.

In Book II, named as "Literary Criticism", the language and style of the metrical, non-metrical (prose) and mixed portions of the Śukla Yajurveda have been studied. A detailed textual com-

parison between the Śukla Yajurveda and the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda Taittirīya Saṁhitā - the best representative of the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda - has further been made. The names Śukla and Kṛṣṇa have also been traced to their original sources.

Book III (Mythology) makes the study of the major and minor deities mentioned and described in the Śukla Yajurveda Saṁhitā. The birth, forms, qualities, functions, abode, relations and myths relating to each deity have been dealt with.

Book IV, which concerns itself with "Religion", deals with the various rites and rituals prescribed in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa with reference to the Kaṇḍikās of the Śukla Yajurveda and also differences met with in the Śrauta Sūtra of that Veda, namely, the Kātyāyana Śrauta Sūtra. This book also covers some Ritualistic Aspects of the Religion, namely, Priesthood, Dakṣiṇā, and Atharvanic element.

Book V, titled as "Sociology", presents a study of the Land and People and the Economic and Civic Life in the Śukla Yajurveda period. The study is exclusively based on the Saṁhitā of that Veda.

Lastly Book VI traces the "Philosophy" as discernible only in the Kaṇḍikās of the Śukla Yajurveda.