Chapter X

Gotra and pravara

The relation between gotra and pravara is a riddle for sociological investigation. The author of Pravaradarpana holds that the pravara-Ṛisīs are the paternal ancestors (father, grand father, great grand father etc.) of the gotra-Ṛiṣī. This view has been favoured by Rao and Kane. The other view, as referred to by Medhātithi, regards the pravara-Ṛisīs as the descendants (son, grand son etc.) of the gotra-Ṛiṣī. According to both these viewpoints, the pravara-Ṛisīs are connected by blood with the gotra-Ṛiṣī.

Of the two interpretations the first seems to be based upon the wider sense of gotra and the second upon its narrower sense.

1 - See p. 151, Pravaradarpana, Gpnk, --- gotra-bhūtasya riṣeh pitṛi-pitāmaha-prapitāmahādayah eva pravarāh.

2 - See p. i, Bhūmīkā, Gpnk, --- gotrārṣeh vamśe eva pūrvaḥ janitāḥ pravarāh.


4 - Medhātithi comments upon Manu III. 5, -- riṣir-Vasiṣṭhādih ādyah vamśasya kartā tadgotrāḥ tatah pra:-sūtāḥ pravarāḥ iti tat-putra-pautrāh.
In the wider sense the word 'gotra' denotes the septs of the eight principal Rishi-clans. Parāśāra, as a subdivision of the Vasiṣṭha clan, would be regarded as gotra. The gotra-Rishi Parāśāra would be considered as the descendant of the pravara-Rishi Vasiṣṭha and Sākti.

In the narrower sense the word 'gotra' indicates the eight principal Rishi-clans and not the septs, included in them. The Parāśāras would be regarded not as a gotra, but as a sept of Vasiṣṭha gotra. The gotra-Rishi Vasiṣṭha would be considered as the ancestor of the pravara-Rishi Sākti and Parāśāra.

1 - The wider sense of gotra is suggested by its 'progeny' sense, as recognised by Baudhāyana; see Baudh X. 54, op. cit.; also Nārāyaṇa’s com. upon Āśv. Śr. S. II. 6. 10, eteṣām apatyam iti ye smaryante tad-gotram iti uchyante. yathā Jamadagnēḥ gotram Vatsādayah tathā Gautamasya Āyāsyādayah ...

2 - Vide Baudh VIII. 48.

3 - Vide Kūrma I. 19. 23; the Purānic name of Sākti is Sāktri; the pravara of Parāśāra gotra contains the names of Vasiṣṭha, Sāktya and Pārāśārya; see Baudh VIII. 48.

4 - The narrower sense of gotra is suggested by the interpretation of 'samāna-gotratva' by Baudhāyana and Āśvalāyana; vide Baudh I. 2, op. cit.; Āśv. Śr. S., Parisiṣṭa, p. 467, op. cit.
Neither of the two interpretations of pravara is applicable to irregularly constituted pravaras.

The pravara-Risis, attached to the Mitrayu gotra, are Bhrgu, Vadhryasva and Divodasa. Of them the first is not related by blood to Mitrayu, though the second and the third Risis are the ancestors of the latter.

Similarly, the Kanvas are associated with the pravara-Risis Angiras, Ajamidha and Kanvas, of whom the last two are ancestors of the Kanvas, but the first-mentioned is not connected by blood with them.

The pravaras of popular origin are in many cases arbitrarily ascribed to gotras. The pravara-Risis are rarely found to be related by blood to the gotra-Rishi. For example, the pravara of Kausika gotra contains the names of the Risis Kusika, Atri and Jamadagni, of whom the second and the third are founders of separate gotras and not connected by any blood tie with the Kusikas.

1 - Vide Baudh I. 7.
2,3 - See p. 116, AIHT.
4 - Vide Baudh IV. 21.
5 - See p. xi, Introduction, Gpnk.
6 - See p. 77, Samwandha-mirnaya, op.cit.