

CHAPTER VIII

The Nature and Manners of *Vedādhyaṇa* and the Fruits Resulting from the Same

Indian tradition has always witnessed a rich culture of teaching and learning. For centuries, Vedic knowledge used to be orally transmitted to students by their respective teachers. The preceptors used to try their level best to ensure that their disciples not only learn correctly recite the Vedas but also learn the best possible knowledge of the respective Vedas .

The *Vājasaneyi Prātiśākhya* in its first and the final chapter deals with the nature and manners of *vedādhyaṇa* and the fruits resulting from the same. After a keen observation of the suggestions that a reader is expected to follow while reading the holy-scriptures, it becomes clear that the said reader need not necessarily be a formal student, may be a general reader who pursues his studies following the traditional injunctions: *brāhmaṇena niṣkāraṇo dharmah ṣaḍaṅgo vedo'dhyeyo jñeyaśca*¹.

¹.cf. *sūdrapatitayorasatīśrāvaṁ svādhyāyodhyetavyah*, VP.8.29 .

Before reciting the sacred texts of the Vedas the reader must purify himself by rites like *pādasúddhi* and *ācamana* etc². Here it is to be noted that after the very initiation to the sacred thread (*upanayana saṁskāra*) the preceptor makes his disciple acquainted with the purificatory rites (*śaucavidhi*) before teaching anything else³. The duly purified person selects a properly clean place for study. Anantabhaṭṭa is of the view that the place of study should be an unimpaired one, ^{i.e. which is} not vitiated by a *śūdra* and the like⁴. After selection of the right place he should sit comfortably and begin his studies⁵. Kātyāyana emphasized the use of a comfortable seat so that the reader can fully concentrate in his studies and his attention is not distracted by anything else.

As per *Śikṣā* texts a good reader is supposed to recite the texts in an audible voice. There are the prescriptions for *madhura* (sweetness of sound), *akṣaravyakti* (proper utterance with due distinct pronunciation of words) *susvara* (with proper accentuation), *dhairya* (steadiness) and *laya* (rhythmic)

². cf. a. *prayataḥ*, VP, 1.20.

b. *śucinā*, Ibid, 8.27 .

³. cf. *upanīya guruḥ śiṣyaṁ śikṣayecchaucamāditaḥ*

ācāramagnikāryañca sandhyopāsanameva ca||, MS, II-69 .

⁴. cf. a. *śucau*, VP, 1.21 .

b. *śucau deśe*, Ibid, 8.28 .

c. *Anantabhāṣya on Ibid.*

⁵. cf. *iṣṭam*, Ibid, 1.22 .

which a good reader should follow⁶. But it is obligatory that the reader should study the Vedic texts in such a manner that it is not within hearing of a *śūdra* or an outcast⁷. In ancient times it was believed that even by hearing the sounds of the holy texts they could attain spiritual merit which was treated as non-desirable. Kātyāyana has wanted his reader to be physically fit and mentally or intellectually sound. So he has prescribed sweet juicy food and other eatables added with ghee as meals for a reader⁸. It is traditionally believed that *ghee* sharpens intellect and makes a person energetic, where as juicy food is easily digestible ones.

The time selected for studying should be an agreeable one. Kātyāyana says: *ṛtuṁ prāpya*⁹. Both the commentators interpreted the sūtra in the words: *hemantamṛtuṁ prāpya rātryāścaturthaprahare'dhīyita*¹⁰ Here it is to be stated ~~that~~ *ṛtu* doesnot necessarily mean season, rather it denotes time, a fixed time. The fourth *prahara* of the night being serene and the student being fully rested can prove to be a favorable time for studying holy scriptures. This time may be fixed by the reader for recital of the scriptures. Because that is the time when

⁶. cf. see a. PS, V.33 .

b, YS, V.87.

⁷ *śūdrapatitayorasamśrāvaṁ svādhyāyo'dhyetavyaḥ*, VP,8.29 .

⁸ *bhojanam madhuram snigdham*, Ibid, 1.25 .

⁹ cf. Ibid, 1.23.

¹⁰ *Uvāṭabhāṣya* on Ibid.

a person becomes fresh both physically and mentally and the surrounding atmosphere too remains calm and quite.

It is customary that one should recite *Om̐kāra* with three moras all accented in the acute before reciting Vedic texts. Thus in the ṚkPrātiśākhya it is said:

*sa o3miti prasvaratitrimātraḥ/ prasvarasthane sa bhavatyudāttaḥ*¹¹

Kātyāyana states that before *svādhyāyādhyayana* one should by rule utter the sacred syllable *om*. According to Kātyāyana one should utter *om* before studying the Vedic texts and the word *atha* should be uttered before studying the commentaries and the like¹². *om̐kāra* and the word *atha* are looked upon as auspicious terms. Hence, it is customary to utter them before beginning ones studies.¹³ Both the words are believed to be auspicious and reverence and utterance of Om becomes helpful in comprehending the holy texts. Thus Kātyāyana says: *taṁ vācamom̐kāraṁ pṛcchāmaḥ*.¹⁴ Commenting on this *sūtra* Uvaṭa says- *om̐kāro vācaḥ putraḥ, sa pṛṣṭaḥ san svādhyāyādāvuccāraṇena svam̐*

¹¹ ṚP, 15.5 ,

¹² a. *om̐kāraḥ svādhyāyādaḥ*, VP, 1.16 .

b. *om̐kāraṁ vedeṣu*, Ibid, 1.18 .

c. *athakāraṁ bhāṣyeṣu*, Ibid, 1.19 .

¹³ Cf. *om̐kārascāthasābhascā dvāvetau brahmaṇaḥ purā|*

kanṭham̐ bhitvā viniryātau tenemau maṅgalāvubhau||, as quoted by Uvaṭa under Ibid, 1.17 .

¹⁴ VP, 1.28 .

*mātaramarthato granthataśca kathayiṣyati| ataḥ svādhyāyādau praṇavaḥ kāryaḥ*¹⁵It may be recalled here that importance of reciting the syllable om before embarking on Vedic studies can be well-understood from the fact that in the R̥kPrātiśākhya the fifteenth chapter dealing with *vedādhyayana* has been named *omkārapāṭala*.

Kātyāyana's statements about Vedic learning are very explicit. He does not have much faith on mere reading rather he has emphasized on understanding of the texts. He wants a reader to clearly understand the faults in the pronunciation of letters or articulate sounds. He also states very carefully the scopes of a study. Along with his own views, he cites traditional views. He strongly believes that to understand the Vedic texts properly one should enrich his grammatical abilities. Because the Vedic texts mainly consists of verbal words, words formed by primary affixes, words formed by secondary affixes and the four kinds of compounds : *tiṁkṛttaddhita catuṣṭaya samāsāḥ śābdamayam*¹⁶. So unless the reader is familiar with all these grammatical aspects of the Vedic language, Vedic texts cannot be thoroughly comprehended. Ancient Indian tradition has always laid stress on proper understanding of the senses conveyed by the Śāstras and hence, has looked down upon a person who

¹⁵ *Uvatabhāṣya* on *VP*, 1.17 .

Cf. taṁ kṛttaddhitacatuṣṭayasamāsarupaṁ vedavācamōmkāraṁ pṛcchāmaḥ| omkārat vedasvarupaṁ janīma ityarthah| omkāro hi vācaḥ putrah, saḥ svādhyāyādāvuccāritah san svaṁ mātaramarthato granthataśca kathayiṣyatīti| svādhyāyādau praṇavo vaktavya ityabhiprāyah| Anantabhāṣya on *Ibid*.

¹⁶ *Cf. VP*, 1.27 .

recites a text without knowing its meaning. In the Nirukta of Yāska, it has been said: *sthānurayam bhārahārah kilābhudadhītya vedam na vijānāti yo'rtham|yo'rthajña it sakalam bhadramaśnute nākameti jñānavidhutapāpmā||yadgrhītamavijñātam nigadenaiva śabdyate| anagnāviva śuskaidho na tajjalati karhicit||*¹⁷. Furthermore, proper understanding the purport of a text depends on proper knowledge of the phonetical, morphological and other structural peculiarities of the language in which the text has been written. This fact has always been taken into consideration by the scholars of ancient India. Hence, the Śikṣā texts and Prātiśākhya were composed to teach the students the *bāhyalakṣaṇa* of the Vedic texts. Thus, in the Taittirīya Prātiśākhya, the following observation has been made-

gurutvam laghutā sāmyam hrasvadīrghaplutāni ca|

lopāgamavikārāśca prakṛtirvikramah kramah||

svaritodāttānīcatvam svāso nādo 'ṅgameva ca|

*etatsarvam tu vijñeyam chandobhāṣāmadhīyātā||*¹⁸

Veda is said to be the source of all spiritual merit: *vedo'khila dharmāṃulam*¹⁹. Again it is the traditional belief that one can attain *dharmā* by studying, teaching and listening to the recitation of Vedas:

¹⁷ cf. Nir, 1.7.

¹⁸ TP, 24.5.

Also see- Viṣṇumitra's *Vargadvayavṛtti* on RP.

¹⁹ Cf. MS, II.6 .

vedasyādhyayanāddharmaḥ sampradānāttathā śruteḥ. Even knowing the Vedas letter by letter, syllable by syllable and word by word help in earning spiritual merit.²⁰ Apart from this traditional belief Kātyāyana thinks that when the Vedic scriptures become intelligible, those become conducive to salvation, heaven, fame and longevity.²¹ Here it is to be noticed that the author of the *Vājasaneyi Prātisākhya* uses the word *jñāne* and not *adhīte*. So a mere act of repeating the Vedic texts without understanding them is said to be fruitless. It further says: *tathā bibhakti parijñānam*, i.e. even the knowledge of structural deviations of the Vedic texts (knowledge of stems, roots etc.) can become conducive to fame, heaven etc.,²²

²⁰ *VP*, 8.37 .

²¹ Cf. a. *Ibid*, 8.30 .

b. *pauruṣyam*, *Ibid*, 8.31 .

c. *svargyam*, *Ibid*, 8.32 .

d. *yasāsyam*, *Ibid*, 8.33 .

e. *āyusyam*, *Ibid*, 8.34 .

²² *Ibid*, 8.35 .