

VOL. LXVII ]

[ PARTS I-IV

# Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute

1986

EDITED BY

R. N. Dandekar

G. B. Palsule



POONA



Printed and Published by R. N. Dandekar, at the  
Bhandarkar Institute Press, Bhandarkar Oriental  
Research Institute, Poona 411 004

1987

## SOMA-DRINK VIS-À-VIS THE RULING CLASS

BY

C. G. KASHIKAR

Recently I had an occasion to have a fresh look at that portion of the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* which dealt with the Rājasūya sacrifice ( chapters 33-37). I read with particular attention chapter 35 in which Rāma Mārgaveya of the Śyāparṇa clan of Brahmans dwelt upon the *Phalacamasa*. As stated therein, a Rājanya performing a Soma-sacrifice was not entitled to consume the Soma-Juice contained in the goblet intended for the sacrificer.

In the Soma-sacrifice of a Rājanya, Rāma Mārgaveya says, the offshoots of *Ficus Indica* and the berries of *Ficus Indica* (*Nyagrodha*), *Ficus religiosa* (*Aśvattha*) and *Ficus Infectoria* (*plakṣa*) should be procured side by side with the purchase of the Soma plant. An additional set of pressing hide (*adhiṣavaṇa-carman*), pressing planks (*adhiṣavaṇa-phalake*), a wooden trough (*dronakalaśa*), a woolen filter (*daśāpavitra*), the *Pūtabhṛt* and *Ādhavanīya* jars, a vessel (*sthālī*), a filling spoon (*udañcana*) and a goblet (*camasa*) should be arranged. When the Soma is being pressed, one should press separately half the quantity of the offshoots and berries for the Morning-pressing, and retain the other half for the Midday-pressing. When the Soma goblets are being filled in, one should fill in the sacrificer's goblet with the juice of offshoots and berries, put darbha-blades into it, throw out the first darbha-blade inside the enclosing stick of the Uttaravedi at the Vaṣaṭ-utterance, and the second one at the secondary Vaṣaṭ-utterance. When the Soma-goblets are being brought to the respective priests, one should carry towards the sacrificer his goblet. When the Soma-goblets are being lifted up, the sacrificer should lift up his goblet. When the Hotṛ is invoking Idā, the sacrificer should consume his goblet with a specific verse, and afterwards touch himself with another verse (*ABr.* 35. 6-7). Then the procedure of the Narāśamsa-goblet is similarly laid down.

This reference raises the question whether or not a Rājanya sacrificer used to consume Soma-drink in his Soma-sacrifice. As is evident from the Brāhmaṇa-texts and the Śrautasūtras, a Rājanya (or a Vaiśya) was entitled to set up the sacred fires and to perform sacrifices. Many details in this regard are available in Vedic text. Thus *ApŚS* 24. 1. 1 says that a Brahman, a Rājanya and a Vaiśya are entitled to perform a sacrifice. There are clear

references to a Rājanya performing a Soma-Sacrifice.<sup>1</sup> With regard to Agnicayana, the peculiarities to be observed in respect of a Rājanya sacrificer have been noted.<sup>2</sup> *BaudhŚS* 24. 11 enumerates the following Soma-sacrifices to be performed by a Rājanya : Rājasūya, Pṛthisava, Mṛtyusava, Kānāndha-Yajña and Śunaskarṇayajña. The Vājapeya could be performed either by a Brahman or a Rājanya. The *ĀpŚS* records the Indrastut ( 22. 10. 3; 13. 8 ), Rād ( 22. 10. 10 ), Ṛṣabha ( 22. 12. 11 ), Indrāgnyoh stoma ( 23. 13. 10 ) etc. *MānŚS* ( 9. 3. 4. 22 ) mentions Indrasya Tivrasut.

Even though a Rājanya was authorised to perform a Soma-sacrifice, the question remains as to whether he used to consume Soma-juice therein. The first occasion for a sacrificer to consume Soma is what is technically known as Savanamukhasomabhakṣa subsequent to the offerings of the Hotraka goblets in the Morning-pressing. After that, whenever a Soma cup is offered to a deity, a part of each of the Soma-goblets is simultaneously offered on the Āhavanīya fire or the goblets are merely shaken over the fire, and are brought to the respective priests and also to the sacrificer for consuming. The details in this regard are given in the Brāhmaṇa-texts and also in the Śrautasūtras. But are we to understand that any sacrificer, whether he be a Brahman or a Rājanya or a Vaiśya, invariably used to consume his goblet of Soma-juice ?

As a rule, persons belonging to the first three varṇas were authorised to perform sacrifices. In practice, however, the ritualistic religion was practised mainly by the Brahmans. This was natural in view of the fact that the recitation and preservation of the Vedic texts was primarily the duty of the Brahmans and that consequently only the Brahmans could officiate as priests at sacrificial performances. A Rājanya and a Vaiśya also had the privilege of reciting Vedic Mantras. In actual practice this meant that in his sacrifice the Rājanya or Vaiśya sacrificer was required to utter the mantras intended for the sacrificer. The remote relation of a Rājanya with the ritualistic religion becomes evident from the fact that the Agnihotra of a Rājanya used to be offered only on the Parvan-day, not every evening and morning. Unlike a Brahman sacrificer, a Rājanya Agnihotrin was not required to undertake sacrificial performances every now and then. He undertook the performance of the specific sacrifice as needed by him under the advice of his Purohita. A Rājanya ( or a Vaiśya ) could perform a Soma sacrifice, but the privilege of Soma-drink belonged to Brahman priests only. As the announcement to be made at the Rājasūya sacrifice indicates,

<sup>1</sup> e. g. *ĀpŚS* 10, 11, 6, 12, 8, 22, 5, 14, 2, 10 etc.

<sup>2</sup> e. g. *ĀpŚS* 16. 3. 4; 12. 9; 20. 23; 17. 19. 6

the royal sacrificer was the ruler of the inhabitants other than the Brahmans of his specific kingdom. Soma was the king of the Brahmans.<sup>3</sup> Brāhmaṇa-kāras have often pronounced that Brahma was superior to Kṣatra. Soma was the king of the Brahmans, and was therefore far superior to the Kṣatra, that is the ruler. Therefore it is no wonder that Soma-drink was not allowed to a Rājanya sacrificer.

In this connection it is important to see what Rāma Mārgaveya said to Sauśadmana Viśvantara – the Rājanya sacrificer (*ABr* 35.3). Presuming that a Rājanya sacrificer was required to partake of the sacrificer's portion in a Soma-sacrifice, Rāma Mārgaveya thought of three substances, namely, Soma, curds and water. Regarding the first option, Rāma Mārgaveya said to Viśvantara: "If (the priest brings to you) Soma (for consuming) it is the food of a Brahman, you will stimulate the Brahmans. With this food, among your progeny there will be one who is akin to a Brahman, he will be receiving gifts; will provide drink (= Soma) for others; will be begging food, and will be easy to be driven away" (35.3). Thus it was not advisable for a Rājanya sacrificer to have a Soma-drink. It therefore follows that it was customary for a Rājanya sacrificer not to partake of Soma in a Soma-sacrifice.<sup>4</sup>

Thinking that it was not proper for a Rājanya sacrificer to act in a Soma-sacrifice without enjoying the sacrificer's portion, Rāma Mārgaveya introduced the juice of the offshoots of *Ficus Indica* and the berries of the three *Ficus* trees as mentioned before. The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, belonging to the *Ṛgveda*, was expected principally to dwell upon the duties of the Hotṛ and his assistants. It could also speak about the duties of the sacrificer and the Brahman. The prescriptions concerning the substitute of Soma as laid down therein are rather outside its normal scope. However, the author of that portion of the *ABr* which forms part of later additions (Chapters 31–40) felt the so-called deficiency in a Soma-sacrifice in the case of a Rājanya sacrificer, and tried to compensate it in his own way.

This tradition introduced or recorded in the *ABr* found favour with the authors of three Śrautasūtras belonging to the Taittirīya recension, namely, the *ĀpŚS* (12.24.5)<sup>5</sup>, *SatŚS* (8.7) and the *VaikhŚS* (15.31). These

<sup>3</sup> e. g. *ĀpŚS* 8.12.8 *Somo 'smākaṁ brāhmaṇānām rājā*

<sup>4</sup> In respect of other offerings in a Soma-sacrifice he is asked to hand over the sacrificer's portion to the Brahman priest for consuming (34.8)

<sup>5</sup> *Yadi rājanyam vaiśyam vā yājayet sa yadi bibhaksayiṣen nyagrodhastibhinīr āhrīya sampiṣya dadhany unnrjya camaseṣu hūyamāneṣu antahparidhy angāram nirvartya itasya camasasya darbhatarunakenopahatyāham tvad asmi mad asi tvam ity angāre hutvā tam asmai prayacchet.*

Sūtrakāras have, however, prescribed this as an optional rite to be resorted to in the event of the Rājanya or Vaiśya sacrificer desiring to consume the sacrificer's portion. It is very important to note that all other Brāhmaṇa-texts except the *ABr* and all Śrautsūtras except the above-mentioned three which are comparatively of a late date are silent about this point, meaning thereby that according to their traditions a Rājanya or a Vaiśya sacrificer did not consume Soma-drink as the sacrificer's portion, nor did he enjoy a substitute.

It may, therefore, be concluded :

( i ) A Rājanya or a Vaiśya sacrificer did not consume Soma-drink or any other substitute as the sacrificer's portion in a Soma-sacrifice in any period of history of the Vedic ritualistic religion.

( ii ) The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* in its later portion prescribed for a Rājanya sacrificer the juice of the offshoots of *Ficus Indica* and of the berries of *Ficus Indica* (*nyagrodha*), *Ficus religiosa* (*aśvattha*) and *Ficus infectoria* (*plakṣa*) as the sacrificer's portion.

( iii ) The *Āpastamba*-, *Satyāśāḍha*- and *Vaikhānasa-Śraūtasūtras* which represent the junior Taittirīya tradition optionally adopted the prescription from the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, provided the Rājanya or Vaiśya sacrificer desired to consume a substitute as the sacrificer's portion in a Soma-sacrifice.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> The relation of Soma to Sāmnāyā is worth noticing here. While objecting to the New-moon sacrifice by one who has not performed a Soma-sacrifice, the *Taittirīya Samhitā* ( II. 5. 5. 1 ) asserts that one who has not performed a Soma-sacrifice bears no relation to milk. Soma indeed is milk, Sāmnāyā also is milk. So a Soma-offerer holds milk within himself through the Soma as milk. This implies that a Rājanya or a Vaiśya sacrificer did not consume Sāmnāyā as the sacrificer's portion and as ( part of ) Iḍā. This is clearly stated in the Śrautasūtras belonging to the Taittirīya recension ( *BhārṢS* IV. 22. 4; *ĀpṢS* IV, 14.2 etc ) and the *MānṢS* I. 4. 3. 20; *VārṢS* I- 4. 16 ) who refuse partaking of Sāmnāyā to the Rājanya and Vaiśya sacrificer. The *Śukla Yajurveda* which has a rather different tradition is silent about this,