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VYĀSA-PŪRNIMA NUMBER

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We are indebted to the Vāyu Purāṇa and the Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa for a precise statement of how Dvāpaiṇyāna Vyāsa as an institution accomplished the difficult and important task of originating the Purāṇa Saṃhitā. The two texts are as follows:

The compilation of the Purāṇa Saṃhitā is traditionally attributed to Krishṇadvaipāyana Vyāsa. He also accomplished a similar literary task in respect of the mass of Vedic mantras which in course of time had become divided into many schools. Their names for each Veda are listed in the Charaṇa-Vyūha and several Purāṇas. The credit is given to Vyāsa for organising the Saṃhitā texts of the four Vedas through his four pupils viz. Pāila for Rīgveda, Vaiśampāyana for Yajurveda, Jaimini for Sāmaveda and Sumantu for Atharvaveda. Here we are concerned with what Dvāpaiṇyāna Vyāsa undertook to do with respect to the transmission of the Purāṇa Saṃhitā.
Separating Brahmā and Vāyu as mythical names we have a list of 25 teachers for whom a period of 500 years may be allowed counting 20 years for each generation from the time of Udatas to that of Dvaipāyana Vyāsa. That was the pre-Saṁhitā stage of Purāṇa transmission. Its chronological position is problematical but a tentative supposition may be 1500 B.C.—1000 B.C. or even somewhat earlier.

We find from several versions e.g. in Linga Purāṇa ch. 64. that Parāśara in the above list occupied an important position so far as Purāṇa Saṁhitā was concerned; and it appears that Vyāsa himself owed his knowledge of the Purāṇas to Parāśara. It is said that Vasishtha had a son named Śakti whose posthumous son was Parāśara. His pupil was Jātukāraṇa and his disciple was Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa (asaukṛṣṇa-śrutiśāstra-dṛṣṭāntam: mās: Vāyu 103.66). Probably Jātukāraṇa was a senior fellow student of Vyāsa and the two learnt the Purāṇa from Parāśara. Vyāsa’s role in this literary activity was two-fold: firstly, his relationship with the bards who were the traditional custodians of the Purāṇas and secondly, with the authorship of the Purāṇa Saṁhitā in a precise literary form.

Mūla Saṁhitā

Vyāsa found that the material of the Purāṇas was in the hands of the Sūtas or bards. Their number seems to have been quite large and they were connected with many families and royal houses and they went about in their round meeting people with the object of imparting to them what they knew of the ancient genealogies, ballads and anecdotes. They were also invited for this purpose and held recitations. This institution of the bards was an ancient one referred to in the Yajurveda (Śatārduṭhya Book XVI. 18, 26 as Sūta Kṛṣṭṭṛ). The most important person of this class in the time of Vyāsa was Romaharshaṇa or Lomaharshaṇa. He was well versed in the material that had been orally handed down. He was taken into confidence by Vyāsa to collaborate in organising this branch of knowledge in a systematic manner and to continue what the Sūtas were already doing in the
form of Kathā recitations. The work of collaboration between Dvaipāyana and Lomaharshaṇa seems to have been on this pattern that Vyāsa supplied the Vedic material of Purānic lore since the Purāṇas also existed in the time of Vedas and the Purāṇa knowledge is mentioned there by name. This is clearly specified in the Vāyu stating that Vyāsa undertook the substance of the Vedic subject matter to incorporate the same in the Purānic corpus. This material seems to have appertained to various creation myths of the Rigveda and other Saṃhitās. The Śūta, on the other hand, contributed his portion in the form of dynastic lists and genealogies of Rishis and kings.

This was the Mūla Saṃhitā or the original Purāṇa Saṃhitā at which Dvaipāyana himself seems to have worked. The Vishṇu Purāṇa ascribes its authorship to Romaharshaṇa and says that this formed the Mūla Saṃhitā which was the original of the three subsequent Saṃhitās giving the form of definitive texts by Kāśyapa, Śāvārṇi and Śāṃśāpāyana. This seems to have contained mostly the topics and subjects forming the Purāṇa tradition and was of the nature of that class of literature which, according to Paninian definition, was styled as ‘tena proktam’ (IV.3.101). Lomaharshaṇa being instructed in this manner by Vyāsa as teacher continued the recitations of the Purāṇa Saṃhitā as other members of his class had been doing from much earlier times. Dvaipāyana and Lomaharshaṇa may be credited with the pravachana of the Mūla Purāṇa Saṃhitā in a manner that the Prokta technique of book-making implied. It was the cultivation of a new branch of knowledge by an eminent teacher who imparted its instructions to his discipes or members of his school. His own son named as Larma-harshaṇi Śūta became an adept in this art. The house-holders assembled at Naimishāranya and known as Naimishīyaḥ besided under the leadership of Śaunaka to listen to a prolonged recitation of the Purāṇa Saṃhitā from the mouth of Lomaharshaṇa. The Mūla-Saṃhitā was styled as Lomaharshaṇikā Saṃhitā. It is problematical how far that Saṃhitā was in the form of verses. It rather seems to have consisted mainly of

the topics on which Lomaharshaṇa explicated for the delectation of his Naimishīya audience. We know from other sources that the progress of the twelve year session was interrupted during its ninth year (Tāndya* 25.6.5). The thread was later on taken up on the banks of the Sarasvati in Kurukṣetra by some other Śūta.

The next approach of Romaharshaṇa in fulfilment of his obligation was more of an academic nature i.e. teaching the Mūla Saṃhitā i.e. the Lomaharshaṇikā Saṃhitā or the Purānic lore to regular students who studied as an integral subject or branch of learning and on the tradition in schools similar to that of the Vedic schools. Romaharshaṇa admitted six pupils or students for this purpose to whom he imparted the mūla-saṃhitā as his Brahmacārins. They were Brahmacārins students under him, whose term of admission coincided with the period in which they learned the subject. For this special purpose we are envisaging some arrangement as implied in Paṇini’s rule Vardhāṇam (V.1.94). The names of these six students are recorded in both Vāyu and Brahmacāraṇa together with their Gotra names as follows:

1. Śrūṇti Abhayś (i.e. of Atrī Gotra)
2. Abhūtānā Kaśyava (i.e. of the Kaśyapa Gotra)
3. Abhvānā Bharadvāja (i.e. of the Bharadvāja Gotra)
4. Bhrīvānā Vasiṣṭha (i.e. of the Vasiṣṭha Gotra)
5. Sāmīdva Saṃśāpa (i.e. of the Sāvārṇa Gotra)
6. Sṛmāṇa Śaṭāpāna (i.e. of the Śaṭāpāna Gotra)

(also Viṣṇu III. 6, 17-9 एवं विष्णुस्य वाच्यानवः 17)

* तेहि स सन्तर्णम् एवयुक्तस्तु व श्रुतवियु कर्मानुपर्यायोऽि तत्तत्त्वम् समाचारितम् ति

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It is said that Romaharshaṇa made six divisions of his Mūla Purāṇa Saṁhitā and taught his six pupils each one of them. Evidently this Mūla Saṁhitā had not yet taken the form of a book but consisted mainly of large number of topics and subjects. Their exact nature is not indicated. The Paṭṭilakhaṇaḥ Purāṇa is a later attempt to give some idea of what the Mūla Saṁhitā comprised, but the same seems to have been of a fluid nature in which floating topics and themes from earlier and contemporary traditions were admitted with a certain amount of freedom. The details of the corpus depended on the interest of the listeners and the competence of the bards to comply with their wishes. The method of the interlocutors and narrators which is always recorded in the Purāṇa therefore played an important part in the organizing of the subject matter.

PARA-SĀMHIṬĀ

Of the six students of Romaharshaṇa only three became the regular authors of the Purāṇa Saṁhitā texts. These were firstly Kaśyapa, secondly Sāvarṇi and thirdly Śaṁśaṭhikā. The other three viz. Sumati Ātreya, Mitrayu Vāsishṭha, Agni-varchas Bhāradvāja seem to have been of a less marked calibre and did not launch upon any literary venture.

The literary activity of the three pupils comes under the category of Kṛta granthas (IV. 3. 87) of Pāṇini as coming next to 'tena proktam'; this is clearly mentioned in the Vāyu Purāṇa. Kāśyapa: सहिताकारता i.e. he gave it the form of a regular text or book. Thus there were two stages in the art of book-making, viz., the cultivation of a branch of knowledge by a master mind or original thinker and secondly, its treatment in the form of a book. These two stages were distinguished as 'tena proktam' and 'adhikriśya krite granthe'. The teacher who mastered the subject and gave it the form of a regular book was the real grantha-kartā. Such was the status of Kaśyapa who is mentioned as Saṁhitā Kartā. The style of Kaśyapa's work was simple and it consisted of Vākyas or sentences having some topics for their meaning (काश्यप्यायं कार्यकित: ). This appears to signify that these Saṁhitās were in a versified form, in a very simplified style as we find in several places in the extant older Purāṇas. The Saṁhitā texts of these three authors have been distinguished as परसामहिताः to show their difference from the शून्यसामहिताः.

The Saṁhitā text of Kaśyapa Akrūtavrata became famous as Kāśyapika, the Saṁhitā of Sāvarṇi Saumadatti as Sāvarṇikā and the third one of Śaṁśaṭhikā as Śaṁśaṭhikā. These three were regular Saṁhitās which took the form of text or books consisting of ślokas, of which the common source was the Mūla-Saṁhitā of Romaharshaṇa.

The extent as to the number of verses of these regular texts is given as 4000 ślokas each. This held good in the case of Kaśyapika and Sāvarṇikā but the extent of the शून्यसामहिताः was some what different. What exactly it was is not said but in the Liṅga Purāṇa (64.122) we read of six thousand verses (वेद शब्दचिन्ताम) as the Purāṇa text in the initial stages when these compilations were being done and that may have been the number in the शून्यसामहिताः.

THE THEORY OF PĀṬHĀNTARA

The reason why one Mūla Saṁhitā became transformed as three Para-saṁhitās in the hands of Kaśyapa, Sāvarṇi and Śaṁśaṭhikā is so clear and precise that any modern disquist should not wish for anything better. It is said that there was no essential difference between them but their distinction was rooted in variant readings or repetitions: नाशत्रे प्रसन्नुता वेदशाला व यथा. The comparison with the Vedic Śākhās which were distinct from each other owing to their variants of words and phrases or repetitions of Mantras here and there is quite apt and graphic. In order to give a clear idea of the one Purāṇa Saṁhitā becoming three-fold in the hands of three disciples who had studied the subject from a common teacher.

एकाधिविषयिकः—

This statement is quite happy and initiates us more intimately into the inner nature of the three subsequent Saṁhitās. They were treating of the same topics or expressing the same meaning.
or declaring identical themes (एकार्णश्चाचिका:). The uniformity of significance was the most distinguishing feature of authorship for the three Sāṁhitās. What this subject matter (एकार्ण) was we are left to conjecture and we may not be far from the truth if we discover these topics from the nature of the earlier (वंश) Purānic text. Cosmogony (सम्बं) and genealogy were essentially two such subjects. The other two appear to have been Manvantara descriptions and pratisarga or dissolution. Thus Sarga and Praśisarga became one pair and Manvantara and Vaśyā another pair of the subjects treated. For this reason the original Sāṁhitās consisted of four pādas or a four-fold divisions and for following this scheme they were known as चतुर्भाषा:

(‘चतुर्भाषा पुराण द्रव्यां विषिष्ट पुरा’ Vāyu, 32. 67.)

The चतुर्भाषा division is preserved only in the Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇas.

These are named as:

प्रक्रिया प्रथम: पादः क्रमवस्तुपरिवर्त: प्रक्रियापाद ।
उपोद्वारातुपुष्करथ उपसंहार एव च Vāyu 4.13.

प्रक्रियापाद
अनुप्रक्रियापाद
उपोदवातिरं उपसंहार
उपसंहारापाद

These more or less correspond to the प्रक्रियापाद definition as follows:

1. प्रक्रियापाद i.e. creation corresponds to Sarga; विषिष्ट पुरा implying तुलिपालिका. Chs. 1-6 in Vāyu are so named. The original topics under this head seem to have dealt with एकार्णविनिग्रहः or विविधविनिग्रहः and the birth of ब्रह्म from the golden egg. These three were Vedic topics enunciating the metaphysics of creation and were recast by Purānic writers in their own mould and definitions.

2. अनुप्रक्रियापाद—अनुवक्तनलय: literally implied connected matter i.e. the subjects connected with the first portion of तुलिपालिका. It included the birth and genealogies of वेदतिस्वरूपम्, देवतिस्वरूपम् and राजास्वरूपम् but the last topic was transferred to the उपोद्वारातिरं division.

In the Vāyu the अनुप्रक्रियापाद division extends from Ch. 7 upto 58 with a supplementary portion of six chapters (59-64) added later on. At the end of its 58th ch. the Vāyu states:

अनुप्रक्रियापाद: समाप्त: स्विस्वरूपं निवेदयत: । (58. 126).

At the end of ch. 64 the same is repeated as follows:

इत्येक चै वा मया पादो द्वितीय: क्रिष्टो विषिष्टाः: । (64. 31)

The description of the वेदतिस्वरूपम् seems to have formed part of देवसंहार and came under this चतुर्भाषा.

3. उपसंहारापाद

It seems to correspond to the मन्वन्तर division of the Purāṇas together with the dynastic lists of solar and lunar dynasties and the achievements of individual kings like Māndhātā, Harihārā, Pururavas and Yajñavalkya also were dovetailed under Vaśyā. This seems to have been the subject styled उपोद्वाराति or the beginning and continuation of the genealogies.

The subject of Manvantaras specially ज्ञातस्वरूपम् and वैष्णव is found in three places in Vāyu viz. ch. 21, 61-62 and 85-89. This may be due to careless redaction and interposition of exotic material in place which do not conform to the context.

4. उपसंहार

This was the same topic as प्रक्रियापाद treating of the destruction of the worlds and to withdrawal of creation into its source. The Vāyu names this frankly as प्रक्रियापाद (ch. 102).

THE PAṄCHALAKSAṆA

The number of topics of the Purāṇas is generally put as प्रक्रियापाद वेदतिस्वरूपम् विषिष्ट वैष्णव शंकरात्मकम् (Vāyu 4. 10-11; Matsya 53-64).

These subjects seem to have been quite compact to cover the pages of a single book of modest size, i.e. four thousand ślokas in extent. It is possible to recover it from the extant oldest
Purāṇas, like the Vāyu, Brahmāṇḍa etc. In course of time the number of topics was increased considerably from five to ten and from ten to hundred or more as found in the मस्त (Ch. 53 and 290) भागगत (II. 10. 1-6) and the आदिशंपरवर्त्तित (XI. 31-56). According to the Nārada P. (Ch. 92-109) this list includes several hundred topics for all the eighteen Purāṇas.

ANALYSIS OF THE PRESENT VĀYU PURĀṆA:

It is necessary to examine closely the contents of the present Vāyu Purāṇa to recover the Mūla Samhitā of about 4000 ślokas. We may proceed by eliminating such chapters as appear on the surface to bear the stamp of a later date or subsequent redaction, which are as follows:

INTERPOLATIONS

PRAKRIYĀ PĀDA

Chapter

1. Anukramapikā (a long ch. of 205 ślokas giving the contents of the Purāṇa).

ANUSHANGA PĀDA

8. Chaturāśrama vibhāga
11. Pāṣupatayoga
12. Yogopasarga
13. Yogaśvarya
14-15. Pāṣupatayoga
16. Śauchāchāra
17. Parmāṇāramavidhi
18. Yati Prāyiṇāchitta
19. Arishṭanirūpāṇa
20. Omkārprāptilakṣaṇa
23. Mahēśvaravatārā yoga
24. Śarvastava (Śivastotra by Vishnu)
25. Madhukaiṭabhotpati
26. Svarotpattiḥ

27. Mahādevatānu-varṇanam (A description of the 8 names of Śiva and of the 9th as Kumāra).
32. Yugadharma
34-53. Jambudvīpa, Bhuvanakosā, Jyotish-prachāra,
54. Nīlakanṭhastava
55. Lingodbhava.

29. Agnivamśa-A concocted genealogical tree of the family of Fire which was improved by some Vedic scholar during Gupta times. The idea was inspired by the Sūrya and Chandra-Vamśa list. It is a compilation of 49 names of fire arranged as a family tree. It is also found in Matsya P. and also in the Epic.

56. ‘Pitṛvarṇanam
57. Yajñavarpanam
58-64. Chaturyugākhyāna
Rishi Lakṣaṇa Veda Śākhā Purāṇaśākhā, Mahāsthana tirtha, Pṛthividhōhana.

UPODGHĀṬA PĀDA

71-87. Śrāddha
97-98, Vishṇumāhātmya

UPASAṆHĀṆA PĀDA

101. Bhūrlokiyāvasthā
104. Vyāsasamśayopanodanam
105-112. Gayāśrāddha,

103. Śrīśtiyāraṇam—A repetition of the description of creation in later terminology importing the agency of the 3 guṇas and three devas.

The above statement of the spurious material extending over 80 adhyāyas appears to be very near the truth with a probable margin of 10%. The broad topics relating to Pāṣupata yoga, Ashtaṅga Yoga, Bhuvanakosha, Śrāddha, Gayā Māhātmya are undoubtedly later fabrications and cannot in any manner be ascribed to the Mūla-samhitā. Besides the subject-matter being
of a later stratum some of these chapters are missing in manuscripts and their number of verses is quite long. The size of the original chapters is usually much less in their number of ślokas. Thus we may re-arrange the Chatushpāda Mūla Purāṇa Saṁhitā as confined to the following topics and chapters as far as possible to retrieve them from the present recension of the Purāṇa.

**Original**

I. **PRAKṚṢṬIYĀ PĀDA**

Subjects

2. Dvādaśavārṣhika Sattīa
3. Prajāpatiśṛśiṣṭī
4-6. Sṛṣṭiprakaraṇā (Account of creation).

II. **ANUSHANGA PĀDA**

7. Pratisamdhīvarpanam
9. Devādiśṛśiṣṭī
10. Dakshavaṁśa
21-22. Kalpanirūpaṇam
28. Rishivāṁśa (genealogy of the Rishis)
30. Dakshaśāpa
31. Devavaṁśa
33. Svāyambhuvavaṁśa

III. **UPODGHAṬA PĀDA**

65. Prajāpativaṁśa
66-69. Kāśyapiya Prajāsarga
70. Rishivaṁśa
88-89. Vaivasvatanuvaṁśa
90-95. Somavaṁśa
96. Vishivravaṁśa
(A corollary of the Somavaṁśa subsequently added)
99. Turvasvādivaṁśa

IV. **UPASAṄHARA PĀDA**

100. Manvantarāṇisarga
(should be carried to Upodghaṭa)
103. Pratisarga-varpaṇam.