LATEST WORK OF DR. B. C. LAW

Rājagriha in Ancient Literature (Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India, No. 58) with plates, published by the Government of India, 1938. Price Rs.2-12 or 4s. 6d. A detailed study of one of the most important cities of Ancient India has been made in this memoir under the following heads:

(a) Different names: their origin and significance.
(b) General description and topography.
(c) Antiquity and history of Rājagriha.
(d) Antiquity and location of the five hills.
(e) Rājagriha in religious history.
(f) Architecture of Rājagriha.

(Continued from page vi)

Times of India, Bombay, Feb. 22, 1936:—***: Distinguished by the scholarship characteristic of the publications in this series. Dr. Law seeks to recreate the picture of Srāvasti as it was. He draws his information mainly from ancient literature—the Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jain texts and commentaries as revealed in inscriptions on stone and sculpture unearthed by successive excavations in this area. Dr. Law has pieced together the evidence and the picture he presents is at once impressive and fascinating *** Dr. Law carries his learning lightly. He holds his reader's attention even while impressing him with his scholarship. This is not quite as easy as it sounds.
THE VEDAS AND ADHYÄTMA TRADITION

By Vasudeva S. Agrawala

It is now high time for Vedic scholars to realize, if they would redeem Vedic studies from stagnation, that the orthodox and traditional interpretation of the Vedas is essentially adhyātmic. The Brāhmaṇas of old look upon the vedas as documents of spiritual culture. Modern scholars no doubt have spent infinite labour on handling the texts and interpreting them, but they were circumscribed in their scope mostly to sifting antiquarian material which had only by chance become incorporated in these works. Where the interpretation of Vedic thought confronts them with difficulty the language of the hymns is declared to be obscure, and most of the mystical expressions are taken to be incoherent on account of the imperfect understanding of the grammar of philosophic ideas behind them. There is only one solution to this difficulty. We should now begin to study more closely the explanations of the mystical Vedic terminology offered in the indigenous literature, specially the Brāhmaṇas and the Aranyakas, which are replete with interpretational material that has remained useless in the absence of the Adhyātma-śool School of Vedic interpreters. Unfortunately there are many today who could claim to represent the Aitahasikas and Ākhyānavidas of Yāska, but very few who could say that they are carrying on the torch of the Adhyātma-vidas referred to in the Nirukta. The Asyavāmiya stūki of the Rigveda (I. 164) is a case in point. No rational explanation of this highly philosophic hymn has yet been offered. Even what little Sāvyata did in that way has been treated with indifference. This hymn offers little in the way of the material aspect of culture, but its importance for the elucidation of Aryan thought in respect of the philosophy of soul and the theory of creation cannot be over-estimated. For example, the oft-quoted verse 46 emphatically speaks of the one Supreme Spirit occupying the centre of all pantheistic conception:

इति निर्ले वदः समाहितानां
रघवे दीवं स सुपर्याव गमशान
यज्ञ पथिवा वधाय वव्यान
धर्मं वर्षं भवरिष्ठायामां

i.e., Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni, Garumā Suparna, Yama, Mātariśvā, these are some of the names the sages apply to the One. The
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Bālakhilya hymn in the eighth Mandala of the Rigveda re-echoes the same idea:

वर्णे वा हरे विवस्त्र घर्मस्।

‘The One has modified as the All.’

The One is the central entity, the object of all knowledge. In the recognition of this fact lies the paramount truth of Vedic metaphysics:

तत्र विद्वान् बलव्यति

Rig. I, 164, 39.

‘In the highest Akshara is the source of the Riks; there do all the Gods reside. Who know not Him of what use to them the Riks! But who know Him, theirs is the glory to sit in synods.’ Esoteric knowledge is extolled here in the most emphatic style. The belief in the fundamental unity of Vedic knowledge reverberates through the Upanishads and the Gitā:

तत्र विद्वान् बलव्यति।

Kaṭha Up., II, 15; Gita, VIII, 11.

The highest entity, designated Om is said to be the object of profound religious meditation.

Yāska is emphatic in censuring bookish learning in which there is no attempt to probe into deeper mysteries of meaning. ‘Dense as a block and a mere load-bearer is he who reads the texts without comprehending the secret meaning. But happy is he before whom the sense lies revealed, he of purified soul certainly attains to heavenly bliss.’ The author of the Śākhāyana Aranyaka is even more severe in his castigation of him who fails to realize the ādhyātmic truth behind the words of the texts. The particular portion of the book enunciating this point of view is called the Veda-śīrā Upanishad. It says: He who reads the Veda without understanding that secret which is the crown of the Riks, summit of the Yajus, head of the

Samans and cranium of the Atharvans is nescient, he is like a trunk with head detached.

एक चारां सुर्खां युद्धमृत समरां

Sāṅkh. Arāṇyaka, XIV, 1.

It imparts to the ādhyātmic point of view its true position as the essence of the Trayā doctrine. ‘Kalidāsa, whose works of genius were inspired by the best traditions of ancient Aryan culture, reiterates this position in the following immortal lines:

संज्ञार्हसः काव्यकां पतियते।

Māl. I, 14.

‘The Queen wearing an auspicious attire appears beautiful in the company of Kauśika robed as a nun, just as the Trayā knowledge would shine in the company of incarnate Adhyātma Vidyā.’

Let us illustrate by an actual example the difference in the meaning of a mantra interpreted in accordance with the ādhyātmic (i.e. traditional) and non-ādhyātmic points of view:

प्रतः महायुज्ञमायेऽपि मनसा विशिष्टः।

Rik. X, 177, 1.

Griffith’s rendering:

‘The sapient with their spirit and their mind behold the Bird adorned with all an Asura’s magic might. Sages observe him in the ocean’s utmost depth; the wise disposers seek the station of his rays.’ We confess inability to make out sense from this muddle of words. Now let us turn to the meaning of the Brāhmaṇas. In the Jaiminiya Upanishad Brāhmaṇa this mantra is quoted and the following explanation offered:

प्रामाण्यदीति। पतिविवेचितर्युद्धोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽस्त्रोऽ
The discerning sages behold with their intuitive eye the prānic power functioning under the influence of the mind. Within their own body they seek and realize the powers of the various gods.

A comparison of the two meanings is enough to bring home to us with conviction the wisdom of adopting the esoteric meaning wherever available. In the face of this clear enunciation of meaning free from obscurity or incoherence may we not in justice demand of our modern critical interpreters of the Veda to revise their exegetical canons? Indeed if properly explored the Brāhmaṇa literature will be rediscovered as the veritable mine of information in connection with the adhyātmi exposition of many Vedic terms.

What the old writers chiefly emphasize appertains to the spiritual (adhyātma) and the cosmic (adhidaiva) workings of creation, the secrets of the microcosm as explained in the light of the macrocosm. A clear grasp of the essential correspondence between these two orders as envisaged by the Vedic seers, is indispensable for a proper understanding of the numerous passages in the Brāhmaṇas. The microcosm within the body functions on the model of the external cosmos and both in turn throw light on the ritual of the vaidhika sacrifice. The human body bears the likeness of Yajña, says a Brāhmaṇa passage:

The workings of the human system are only a small-scale representation of the vastly extended cosmic processes working on the virāt plane. In Vedic imagery the relation of the two is indicated by saying that the microcosm is related to the macrocosm as Vāmāna is to Viṣṇu:

- vāmāna ca viṣṇavāca | Saṭh. Br. I, 2. 5. 5.
- vāmāna ca viṣṇavāca | Saṭh. Br. V, 2. 5. 4.

If it is a fact that viṣṇavāca and vāmāna are inter-related, it becomes indispensable for our purpose of interpreting the Vedic texts correctly to grasp this correspondence in terms of the ritual of the sacrifice as it seeks to interpret through its symbolism the microcosm and the macrocosm. True to this the Brāhmaṇas and the Upanishads emphasize the prānic aspect of Agnihota.

We have the famous passage in the Śāṅkhāyana Brāhmaṇa of the Rigveda:

Examples can be multiplied without effort. It is indeed possible to compile a whole volume of Vedic words and give their adhyātmi meanings from the Brāhmaṇas and the Āraṇyakas. This will be the first genuine step for the reconstruction of the lost tradition of the adhyātmi school, which once flourished so vigorously. With it the science of Vedic interpretation will also receive a new orientation and fresh impetus. The first essential thing is that scholars should cast off their prejudices against the adhyātma school. Then only can they redeem Vedic exposition from its present insipid state. Dr. E. J. Thomas lately remarked in his Foreword to Vedic Gods by Dr. V. G. Rele that the state of Vedic interpretation 'looks like a case of stalemate, where no theory can claim general acceptance'. 'Even when we think of German scholars, Ludwig, Kaegi, Pischel, Geldner, Oldenberg, or of the French school, Bergaigne, Regnau, Henry, it cannot be said that Vedic studies are in a healthy state'. Dr. Rele adduces evidence in favour of the biological interpretation of Vedic deities, and referring to this new key or new angle of vision, Dr. Thomas appropriately remarked that 'it will help the scholars of India to realize, as we are learning in the West, that the great problem is not yet solved'. Let us sincerely recognize that the adhyātma school of interpretation is most deeply rooted in the orthodox tradition of the ancient exegetical works, and that the copious material which they offer merits better treatment at our hands than that of cold neglect usually meted out to it. The various Brāhmaṇas like the Śatapatha, Aitareya, Taittiriya, and the voluminous Jaiminiya (now in course of publication from Lahore) have in the main followed the adhyātma tradition. We have only to apply our modern methods of critical research to reclaim that valuable material.

Indra, Agni, Śūrya, Viṣṇu, Prajāpati, Soma, and many other words were once freely used to denote a host of physical and spiritual conceptions which await first to be duly recognized by modern Nārīkulas and then to be applied in the course of their interpretations. To take only one example; we have a rich crop of meanings associated with Soma, and we cannot with justice restrict the meaning only to the Soma plant. The following is a list excerpted from the Vaidika Kosha of Pt. Bhagavad Datta and Pt. Hans Raja of Lahore:
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In different contexts Soma stands as a synonym for vitality, strength, germ, food, glory, truth, lustre, moon, Vṛitra (enveloper), year, Prajāpati, eagle, Vīṣṇu, Pavamāna, air, night, Indu, leaf, animal, curds, kingly power, fame, fluid, milk, etc. In further elaboration it is given in these texts that the male principle is Soma and the female Śūrā; or that the quality of dryness appertains to Agni and of humidity to Soma:


This rich material opens up a vast vista of research on the meaning of Soma. In face of this overwhelming evidence it is un-scientific to insist on only one meaning of Soma, viz., a kind of plant. It is impossible for any conscientious worker to overlook the much wider meanings of that word, and the test of scholarship lies in the capacity to judge rightly the application of a particular meaning in a particular context; we cannot in any case reject the entire evidence summarily. As a matter of fact no Vedic scholar, can do justice to his task without bringing under his control this rich store-house of terminology and its technical explanations from the Brāhmaṇical and Upaniṣadic literature. We should wherever possible supplement the Brāhmaṇical evidence with parallel passages from the Śūtras, the Epic and the Purāṇas. For example, the Mahābhārata says:


So also the explanation of Daśahotri (Ch. 21) Saptahotri (Ch. 22), Pañchahotri (Ch. 23), Chāturhotra (Ch. 25) is contained in the
Aśvamedha Parva and the dialogue of Brāhmaṇa-Brāhmaṇī (Manas-Buddhi) in the same place throws light on several kindred words.

Finally we must remember that the doctrine of prāna is the key-note of the numerous mythical legends. Most of the explanations in the Brāhmaṇas converge on the exposition of the mysterious force called Prāṇa or Life. Prāṇa and Apana are said to be the two celestial priests:

Prāṇāpye Ṛṣaya hośāra! Ait. II. 4

They are the divine physicians (daivī bhishak, Artharva, VII, 53. 1, 2), and also the Prayājas and Anvayājas of a sacrifice. The vital airs indeed represent the highest substance:

वस्त्रानेषु वर्गेषु प्राणेषु उत्तमः। Śat. VIII. 7. 7. 21

The Prāṇas are also spoken of as the primeval Rishi whose sacrifice initiates the cosmic process. It appears as if the Vedic metaphysicians interpreted all physical phenomena in terms of Prāṇa or the Vital Energy that functions at the root of each and every thing and is itself the foundation of all. Prāṇa is conceived as the paramount universal principle visible in all cosmic phenomena whether working on the universal plane or within the human body. Prāṇa is the mysterious something, the subtle principle which permeates gods and men, and distinguishes the immortal from the mortal. To the Vedic seers Prāṇa partaking of the nature of Brahman, represented the comprehensive metaphysical substratum to which they could trace the endless divergences of the external world. The manifold interpretations of the ādhyātmic school naturally concentrate on Prāṇa and they gain in importance from the light they are capable of throwing on one or the other aspect of this Vital Force.

But it is not possible to forestall all the lines of interpretation and research that may emerge in the course of the ādhyātmic approach to vedic texts. What we plead for is the recognition of the Ādhyātmic-vid School and the readjustment of our canons of research to that end.

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PRABHĀKARABHAṬṬA, THE BROTHER OF RATNĀKARABHAṬṬA, THE GURU OF SEVAI JAIISING OF AMBER

By P. K. Goede

I have reconstructed elsewhere the genealogy of Ratnākarabhaṭṭa, the author of the celebrated work on Dharmāśāstra called the Jayasimhakalpadruma. In this genealogy occurs the name of Prabhākarabhaṭṭa who was the brother of Ratnākarabhaṭṭa. According to the testimony of the Iśvaravīlasakāvya of Kṛṣṇakavi composed about 1744 A.D., Prabhākarabhaṭṭa was a habitual resident of Mathura though his son Vrajanātha resided at Jaipur in company of Maharaja Sevai Jaising. It appears that Ratnākarabhaṭṭa’s family had a Deccani origin and it is possible to suppose that his

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1 Vide my article on ’The Aśvamedha performed by Sevai Jaising of Amber (1699–1744 A.D.)’ in the Poona Orientalist, Vol. II, p. 174. The genealogy of Ratnākarabhaṭṭa as reconstructed by me on the evidence of MSS. is as follows:

Devaḥkaṭa → Prabhākaṭa → Vrajanātha (A.D. 1755)
Surname Mahāśabda—of Śāndilya Gotra.

Gokulanātha

Ratnākaṭa → Gagārama → Rāmeśvara → Viśveśvara

(A.D. 1771) (1755 A.D.) (after 1798 A.D.)

My friend Pandit Hari Narayan Purohit, B.A. of Jaipur informs me in a private communication dated 12-9-1938 that there is a grand building and garden at Jaipur which once belonged to Ratnākarabhaṭṭa, the guru of Sevai Jaising. The descendants of Ratnākarabhaṭṭa are still living at Jaipur. His library of rare MSS. or rather a portion of it that survived was added to the Private Library of H.H. the Maharaja of Jaipur. I may suggest that a Manuscripts Library in the name of Ratnākarabhaṭṭa should be opened by the Jaipur Darbar as a permanent memorial of the spiritual and religious association of Ratnākarabhaṭṭa with Maharaja Sevai Jaising which brought about a revival of Hindu religion in his reign.

2 Vide p. 170, Poona Orientalist, Vol. II. My reasons for proving the Deccani origin of this family are as follows:

(1) In the Iśvaravīlasakāvya Ratnākarabhaṭṭa is called ‘Ṛgvedi’ (fol. 37 of MS. No. 273 of 1883–84.—B.O.R. Institute MSS. Library) verse 8.

(2) The gotra of this family was ‘Śāndilya’ as stated by Ratnākarabhaṭṭa in verse 27 of the Jayasimhakalpadruma (fol. 4 of B.O.R. I, MS. 253 of 1887–91).

(3) The family deity was ‘Rāmacandra’ as Ratnākarabhaṭṭa calls himself ‘Ramāṅghri-praṇama’ (Vide verse 27 of Jayasimhakalpadruma referred to above).

(4) The surname of the family was ‘Mahāśabda’ which is equal to ‘Mahāśabde’ now current in the Deccan among Ṛgvedi Deśastha Brahmins of Śāndilya gotra. This surname is recorded by Viśveśvara, the great grandson of Ratnākarabhaṭṭa. (Ibid., p. 173).