

## CHAPTER – V

### SOCIAL, HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

This chapter comprises of the Social, Historical and Geographical data found in the minor Upaniṣads of AV undertaken for study.

The social data consists of the Varṇa (caste) system as well as the Āśramas prevalent in the society during the times of minor Upaniṣads of AV taken up for study. Basically we find references to Brāhmaṇa Varṇa prominently in these minor Upaniṣads. Similarly though we find references to all the Āśramas in these minor Upaniṣads, Brahmacaryāśrama and Saṁnyāsāśrama find more privilege. There is hardly any reference to the Gṛhastha and Vānaprastha Āśramas. Unlike the social data found in AV as well as major Upaniṣads, which is replete with the family life, caste system, marriage and position of women, education etc. we are unable to get a clear picture of the society prevalent during the times of these minor Upaniṣads.

### SOCIAL DATA

#### THE VARṆA SYSTEM

*Varṇa* means a class, caste or an order. According to Yāska,<sup>1</sup> the word *Varṇa* lit. 'colour' is traced to the root  $\sqrt{Vr}$  = to cover lit. tha which covers things.

We find the reference to *Varṇa* system at two places in the minor *Upaniṣads* of AV undertaken for study. *Śāṇḍilya Upaniṣad* (III.1) states : तस्मात् . . . वर्णस्त्रियोऽग्र्यश्च जायते । while it is stated in the *Parabrahma Upaniṣad* : वर्णाश्रमाचारविशेषाः पृथक्पृथक् शिखा वर्णाश्रमिणामेकमेव । There are four *Varṇas* or castes viz. *Brāhmaṇa*, *Kṣatriya*, *Vaiśya* and *Sūdra*. We find few references to the *Brāhmaṇa* caste in the minor *Upaniṣads* of AV undertaken for study. *Śāṇḍilya Upaniṣad* (III.1) states : तस्मात् . . . वर्णस्त्रियोऽग्र्यश्च जायते । while it is stated in the *Parabrahmopaniṣad* : वर्णाश्रमाचारविशेषाः पृथक्पृथक् शिखा वर्णाश्रमिणामेकमेव ।

There are four *Varṇas* or Castes viz. *Brāhmaṇa*, *Kṣatriya*, *Vaiśya* and *Sūdra*. We find few references to the *Brāhmaṇa* caste in the minor *Upaniṣads* of AV undertaken for study. *Śāṇḍilya upaniṣad* (III.1) states : तस्मात् . . . वर्णस्त्रियोऽग्र्यश्च जायते ।, while it is stated in the *Parabrahmopaniṣad*:

<sup>1</sup> Varma Siddheshwar — The Etymologies of Yāska, page 65

वर्णाश्रमाचारविशेषाः पृथक्पृथक् शिखा वर्णाश्रमिणामेकमेव । There are four Varnas or Castes viz Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdra. We find few references to the Brāhmaṇa caste in the minor Upaniṣads of AV undertaken for study like *Atharvaśira* (4,7)<sup>1</sup>, *Śāṇḍilya* (I.63)<sup>2</sup>, *Parabrahma* (1,4,9,12)<sup>3</sup> and *Annapūrṇā* (IV.37)<sup>4</sup>. *Parabrahmopaniṣad* (3,5)<sup>5</sup> refers to the word 'Vipra' and *Annapūrṇā Upaniṣad* (V.116)<sup>6</sup> and *Atharvaśikhā* (2) mentions the term 'Dvija' and *Atharvaśira* mentions 'Śrotriya'.

Manusmṛti states the characteristics of Dvija or Vipra :

आचारः परमो धर्मः श्रुत्युक्तः स्मार्त एव च ।

तस्मादस्मिन्सदा युक्तो नित्यं स्यादात्मवान्द्विजः ॥१.१०८॥

आचाराद्विच्युतो विप्रो न वेदफलमश्नुते ।

आचारेण तु संयुक्तः संपूर्णफलभाग्भवेत् ॥१.१०९॥

Śrotriya is defined in Vaikh. Gr. Sūtra (I.1); Āp. Dh. Sūtra (II.3.6.4) and Baud. Gr. Sūtra (I.7.3) : उपनीतः सावित्र्यध्ययनाद् ब्राह्मणः । वेदमधीत्य शरीरैरा पाणिग्रहणात्संस्कृतः पाकयज्ञैरपि यजन् श्रोत्रियः । वै.गृ.सू.-१.१॥

The Āp. Dh. S. and Baud. Gr. S. define a Śrotriya as one who has studied one Śākhā of a Veda : धर्मेण वेदानामेकैकं शाखामधीत्य श्रोत्रियो भवति । आप.ध.सू.-२.३.६.४॥ एकां शाखामधीत्य श्रोत्रियः । बौ.गृ.सू.-१.७.३॥

Manusmṛti states :

श्रोत्रियायैव देयानि हव्यकाव्यानि दातृभिः ।

अर्हत्तमाय विप्राय तस्मै दत्तं महाफलम् ॥३.१२८॥

This proves that Brahmins were given utmost importance. We find references to the term 'Brāhmaṇa' also in the *Phalaśruti* i.e. the reward of worshipping the deity, in the Upaniṣads like *Atharvaśira*, *Sūrya* and *Dattātreyā*.

<sup>1</sup> सामाथर्वाङ्गिरसो ब्रह्म ब्राह्मणेभ्यः प्रणामयति नामयति च तस्मादुच्यते प्रणवः । अथर्वशिर-४॥ - य इदमथर्वशिरो ब्राह्मणोऽधीते अश्रोत्रियः श्रोत्रियो भवति ।

<sup>2</sup> सन्ध्ययोर्ब्राह्मणः काले वायुमाकृष्य यः पिबेत् । त्रिमासात्तस्य कल्याणी जायते वाक् सरस्वती ॥शाण्डिल्य-१.६३॥

<sup>3</sup> हंसेति वर्णद्वयेनान्तः शिखोपवीतित्वं निश्चित्य ब्राह्मणत्वं ब्रह्मध्यानार्हत्वं . . . केशसमूहशिखाप्रत्यक्षकार्पास-तन्तुकृतोपवीतित्वं . . . । परब्रह्म-१॥

येन सर्वमिदं प्रोतं सूत्रे मणिगणा इव । तत्सूत्रं धारयेद्योगी योगविद्ब्राह्मणो यतिः ॥परब्रह्म-४॥

कर्मण्यधिकृता ये तु वैदिके लौकिकेऽपि वा । ब्राह्मणाभासमात्रेण जीवन्ते कुक्षिपूरकाः ॥परब्रह्म-९॥

शिखा ज्ञानमयी यस्य उपवीतं च तन्मयम् । ब्राह्मण्यं सकलं तस्य नेतरेषां तु किञ्चन ॥परब्रह्म-१२॥

<sup>4</sup> तमेव धीरो विज्ञाय प्रज्ञां कुर्वीत ब्राह्मणः । अन्नपूर्णा-४.३७अ,ब॥

<sup>5</sup> स वेदवित्सदाचारः स विप्रः पक्तिपावनः ॥परब्रह्म-३क,ड॥ बहिः सूत्रं त्यजेद्विप्रो योऽविज्ञानतत्परः ॥परब्रह्म-५अ,ब॥

<sup>6</sup> जाग्रत्येव सुषप्तस्थः कुरु कर्माणि वै द्विज । अन्तः सर्वपरित्यागी बहिः कुरु यथागतम् ॥अन्नपूर्णा-५.११६॥

In the *Sūrya* as well as *Dattātreyā Upaniṣads* it is stated that a person who mutters or chants the eight syllabled *mantra* of *Sūrya* (ॐ घृणि सूर्य आदित्य ।) and *Dattātreyā* respectively becomes a *Brāhmaṇa* : यः सदाऽहरहर्जपति स वै ब्राह्मणो भवति । अष्टमूर्त्यष्टमन्त्रा भवन्ति । यो नित्यमधीते . . . . . स एव ब्राह्मणो भवति ।

It is stated in the concluding paragraph (Seventh Para)<sup>1</sup> of *Atharvaśira Upaniṣad* that if a Brahmin follows a particular code of conduct specified by the *Upaniṣad* i.e. studies this *Atharvaśira Upaniṣad*, he becomes *Śrotriya*, *Upanita*, and becomes purified by the deities like Agni (Fire), *Sūrya* (Sun) and Soma (Moon); as well as by truth (reality) and by everything (i.e. all deities in general). Moreover, he derives the fruits of (1) having studied all the *Vedas*, (2) having observed all the vows and austerities, (3) having performed all the sacrifices, (4) having recited *Gāyatrī* a hundred thousand times (*sahasra*) as well as (5) *Praṇava* ten thousand times (*Ayuta*). Commentator *Upaniṣad-Brahma-Yogī* opines that every time the person memorises this *Grantha*, he sacrifices ten generations of his progeny and rows of diners falling in the range of his vision. Thus having recited this once, he becomes pure and cleansed and attains the merit of the performance of all austerities; having recited it for a second time he acquires *Gāṇapatya* (the merit of worshipping *Gaṇapati*), having recited it thrice he attains the Supreme Reality. Thus, in this manner the author of the *Atharvaśiras Upaniṣad* enjoins the fruit to the person of a *Brāhmaṇa* class i.e. a Brahmin, for attaining the highest aim or goal of human life viz. *Mukti* (final Beatitude).

This shows that a man was not considered as a Brahmin just because he is born in a Brahmin family, but it was due to his qualities and actions that he was known as a Brahmin as it is stated in the BG by Śrīkrṣṇa : चातुर्वर्ण्यं मया सृष्टं गुणकर्म विभागशः । भ.गी.-४.१३अ,ब॥ and in *Śaṅkaravijaya* : जन्मना जायते शूद्रः कर्मणा द्विज उच्यते ।

There is only one reference to the four *Varṇas* viz. the Brahmins, the *Kṣatriyas*, the *Vaiśyas* and the *Sūdras* in the tenth *Maṇḍala* of *RV*<sup>2</sup>.

In *YV* also we find reference to the above mentioned four *Varṇas* :

ब्राह्मणे ब्राह्मणं क्षत्राय राजन्यं मरुद्भ्यो वैश्यं तपसे शूद्रम् । यजुर्वेद-३०.५॥

The *Brāhmaṇas* devoted themselves to learning and acquiring wisdom and

<sup>1</sup> य इदमथर्वशिरो ब्राह्मणोऽधीते अश्रोत्रियः श्रोत्रियो भवति अनुपनीत उपनीतो भवति सोऽग्निं पूतो भवति . . . . . तृतीयं सप्तैवेवमेवानुप्रविशत्यो सत्यमो सत्यम् ॥ अथर्वशिर-७॥

<sup>2</sup> ब्राह्मणोऽस्य मुखमासीद् बाहू राजन्यः कृतः । ऊरु तदस्य यद्वैश्यः पदभ्यां शूद्रो अजायत ॥ १०.९०.१२॥

following the liberal arts and sciences.

Brāhmaṇa is considered to be the best in Manusmṛti and a Brāhmaṇa who studies this Śāstra, does not incur sin :

ऊर्ध्वं नाभेर्मेध्यतरः पुरुषः परिकीर्तितः ।  
तस्मान्मेध्यतमं त्वस्य मुखमुक्तं स्वयंभुव ॥१.१२॥  
वेदं शास्त्रमधीयानो ब्राह्मणः शंसितव्रतः ।  
मनोवाग्देहजैर्नित्यं कर्मदोषैर्न लिप्यते ॥१.१०४॥

Bhāgavata states that a Dvija (twice-born), is a person for whom all the sixteen purificatory rites have been done without a break from the time of conception and who is pure by birth and work and is enjoyed the duty of performing Yajñas etc.:

संस्कारा यदविच्छिन्नाः स द्विजोऽजो जगाद यम् ।  
इज्याध्ययनदानानि विहितानि द्विजन्मनाम् ।  
जन्मकर्मविदातानां क्रियाश्चाश्रमचोदिताः ॥७.११.१३॥

Bhāgavata enjoins six duties to the Brāhmaṇa :

विप्रस्याध्ययनादीनि षडन्यस्याप्रतिग्रहः ।  
राज्ञो वृत्तिः प्रजागोसुरविप्राद् वा करादिभिः ॥७.११.१४॥

Here Brāhmaṇa is mentioned as the repository of the whole Veda : सर्ववेदमयो विप्रः ॥७.११.२०॥ Further the mental traits of Brāhmaṇa are stated :

शमो दमस्तपः शोचं सन्तोषः क्षान्तिरार्जवम् ।  
ज्ञानं दयाच्युतात्मत्वं सत्यं च ब्रह्मलक्षणम् ॥७.११.२१॥

Highlighting the importance of four castes, D. G. Apte<sup>1</sup> states : "In India a state of Social equilibrium existed for thousands of years before the English conquered the country. This equilibrium was the result of the division of the whole society into four castes or classes each based upon heredity. Śukrācārya<sup>2</sup> says : "Not by birth are the *Brāhmaṇas*, *Kṣatriyas*, *Vaiśyas*, *Sūdras* and *Mlecchas* separated but by virtue and work." Satyakāma Jābāla, as mentioned in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (IV.4), had no *Gotra* or family name. He is known so after his mother Jābālā.

The theory of occupation is based upon two factors. Firstly, the society needs many things, which no single person can do efficiently. Secondly,

<sup>1</sup> Apte D. G. — Our Educational Heritage, page 16

<sup>2</sup> Śukranīti-1.75-80; 4.43-44

every person has some particular tendencies, and, if left free, he follows his own bent of mind. Society leaves every man free to choose his own line of work. Similarly, we find the occupation of teaching in the minor *Upaniṣads* of *AV* undertaken for study. The teacher or preceptor is an erudite sage well versed in the Vedas and scriptures, who is capable of answering all the questions asked by his disciples. The structure of the society was thus not a rigid one. Instead of the hierarchy, interest and learning were given importance. The teacher was respected and duly approached by the student.

Thus the social structure in ancient India was based on certain principles regarding which Dr. Veda Mitra<sup>1</sup> states : "It was a wise and statesman-like classification which procured a general distribution of wealth, expelled misery and want from the land, promoted mental and moral progress, ensured material efficiency and above all, made tranquillity compatible with advancement. This classification was called the *Varṇāśrama* system."

D. G. Apte<sup>2</sup> opines : "The four *Varṇas* beginning with the *Brāhmaṇa* must have been the products of the deliberate attempts of our ancient *Ṛṣis*, who intuitively visualised the importance of maintaining types and laid down laws leading to isolation of each type."

It is, however, very depressing to note that states R. K. Mookerji<sup>3</sup>, "The principle of caste-system which is an outstanding peculiarity of India is much misunderstood . . . . . Unfortunately more emphasis has come to be laid on caste than on the *Āśrama*. Caste divides and that on the basis of birth. But the *Āśrama* system unites, binding all castes in its common rules to lead life along a regulated course of development by natural stages."

## THE *ĀŚRAMAS*

The word *Āśrama* is derived from the root  $\sqrt{śram}$  = to exert, to labour and etymologically means a stage in which one exerts oneself.<sup>4</sup> Hence it means the period of life when duties are performed. The ultimate end of human life is to attain one goal, viz. the highest spiritual consciousness, and to that end, man has to direct his energies proportionately in four different stages.

The four principal stages of life are termed as the four *Āśramas*, viz.

<sup>1</sup> Veda Mitra — Education in Ancient India, page 1

<sup>2</sup> Apte D. G. — Education in Ancient India, page 23

<sup>3</sup> Mookerji R. K. — Hindu Civilization, page 60.

<sup>4</sup> Kane P. V. — History of Dharmaśāstra, vol. II, part I, page 425

*Brahmacarya, Gṛhasthya, Vānaprastha and Saṁnyāsa.*<sup>1</sup>

In the *Jābāla Upaniṣad* (*khaṇḍa*-4), the author mentions the four *Āśramas* in successive order to be followed by a human being :

ब्रह्मचर्यं समाप्य गृही भवेत्, गृही भूत्वा वनी भवेत्, वनी भूत्वा प्रव्रजेत् ।

i.e. a person should not directly enter into the fourth *Āśrama* or renounce but the practice normally followed is after *Brahmacaryāśrama* (celibacy-studentship) a person should become a *Gṛhastha* (householder), after a *Vanī* i.e. *Vānaprasthin* (to reside in forest) and finally he should renounce (*Saṁnyāsāśrama*) : कृतवान्स्वाश्रमाचारो मन्त्रानुष्ठानमन्वहम् । अत्रपूर्णा-१.८ ॥

*Brahmacārī*, *Gṛhastha* and *Vānaprastha* are number of times referred to in the context of renunciation for entering the last *Āśrama* i.e. *Saṁnyāsāśrama* in the *Āruṇeyi Upaniṣad* (2) : गृहस्थो ब्रह्मचारी वानप्रस्थो वा लौकिकाग्निनुदाराग्नौ समारोपयेत् । . . . कुटीचरो ब्रह्मचारी कुटुम्बं विसृजेत् ।

According to P. V. Kane<sup>2</sup>, “The person who belongs to the last i.e. fourth *Āśrama* is also known as a *Parivrāt* or *Parivrājaka* (one who does not stay in one place but wanders from place to place) or a *Bhikṣu* (one who begs for livelihood), *Muni* (one who ponders over the mysteries of life and death) or *Yati* (one who controls his senses).”

The duties of *Brahmacārins* (VII.12.1-16; XI.17.21.36)<sup>3</sup>; *Vānaprasthins*. (VII.12.17-22; XI.18.1.11)<sup>4</sup>; *Saṁnyāsins* (VII.13.1-10; XI.18.12.17)<sup>5</sup> and *Gṛhastha* (VII.14; XI.17.37.46)<sup>6</sup> are enumerated in the seventh Skandha of *Bhāgavata*.

There are three different points of view, as pointed out by P. V. Kane<sup>7</sup>, with reference to the four *Āśramas*; viz. *Samuccaya* (orderly coordination), *Vikalpa* (option) and *Bādha* (annulment or contradiction). The first view refers to those who follow the order of the *Āśramas* as pointed out by *Jābālopaniṣad* earlier : ब्रह्मचर्यं समाप्य गृही भवेत्, गृही भूत्वा वनी भवेत्, वनी भूत्वा प्रव्रजेत् । This is also seen in *Vedāntasūtras* (III.4.40) : तद्भूतस्य

<sup>1</sup> The *Āpastamba Dharmasūtras* (II.9.21.1) and *Vaikhānasa Dharmasūtras* (II.1.13) also agree to the four stages of life mentioned above.

<sup>2</sup> Kane P. V. — *History of Dharmaśāstra* - vol. II, part I, page 417

<sup>3</sup> ब्रह्मचारी गुरुकुले वसन् दान्तो गुरोर्हितम् । आचरन् दासवन्नीचो गुरौ सुदृढसौहृदः ॥७.१२.१॥

<sup>4</sup> वानप्रस्थस्य वक्ष्यामि नियमान् मुनिसम्मतान् । यानातिष्ठन् मुनिर्गच्छेद्विलोकमिहाञ्जसा ॥७.१२.१७॥

<sup>5</sup> कल्पस्त्वेवं परिव्रज्य देहमात्रावशेषितः । ग्रामैकरात्रविधिना निरपेक्षश्चरेन्महीम् ॥७.१३.१॥

<sup>6</sup> गृहेष्ववस्थितो राजन् क्रियाः कुर्वन् गृहोचिताः । वासुदेवार्पणं साक्षादुपासीत महामुनीन् ॥७.१४.२॥

<sup>7</sup> *ibid* page 424

तु नातद्भावो जैमिनेरपि नियमातद्रूपाभावेभ्यः । which states that a man cannot take *Samnyāsa* immediately after *Brahmacarya*. Manu in his *Manusmṛti* (IV.1; VI.1,33-37,87-88) also supports this.<sup>1</sup> “It is of interest to note”, remarks Kabir<sup>2</sup>, “that a man was entitled to renounce the world only when he has passed through the three earlier stages. He had to serve as an apprentice in the school of life, discharge his duties to family and society and remain as an elder but detached member of the community before he was free to seek individual salvation.” The first part of *Jābālopaniṣad* quoted above refers to his view,; while later on the same *Upaniṣad* advocates another view i.e. *Vikalpa* (option) as an alternative to the first view – *Samuccaya* : यदि वेतरथा ब्रह्मचर्यादेव प्रव्रजेद्गृहाद्वा वनाद्वा । – Here there is an option after *Brahmacarya* i.e. a man may become a *Parivrājaka* immediately after he finishes his study or immediately after the householder’s way of life. This view is accepted by *Vasiṣṭha* (VII.3); *Laghu Viṣṇu* (III.1) and *Yāj* (III.56); *Āp.Dh.S.* (II.9.21.7-8; II.9.22.7-8). The *Vasiṣṭha* and the *Gautama Dharmasūtras* permit a person to enter the order of *Samnyāsa* even in the childhood, if he has an aversion towards social life and has spiritual leanings. They do not consider it necessary for everyone to pass through the second *Āśrama* i.e. *Gārbhasthya* : तस्याश्रमविकल्पमेके ब्रुवते । गौतम धर्मसूत्र-३.१ ॥ तेषां वेदमधीत्य वेदौ वा वेदान् वाऽविशीर्णं ब्रह्मचर्यो यमिच्छेत् तमावसेत् । वसिष्ठ धर्मसूत्र-७.२ ॥

Apart from the regular order of the *Āśrama* system, it is stated in the *Āruṇeyī Upaniṣad* that a person who has realised the true import of the Vedas may renounce or give everything either before *Upanayana* (initiation ceremony) or after it : खलु वेदार्थं यो विद्वान्सोपनयनादूर्ध्वं स तानि प्राग्वा त्यजेत्पितरं पुत्रमग्न्युपवीतं कर्म कलत्रं चान्यदपि । The word ‘*Upanayana*’ literally means leading or taking near the *Ācārya* (for instruction or studies) (उप + नी). *Mātrudatta*<sup>3</sup> while commenting on *Hir. Gr. sūtra* (I.1.1) states : वेदाध्ययनायाचार्यसमीपनयनमुपनयनम् । Another meaning of *Upanayana* is the *Samśkāra* i.e. the rite by which the boy is taken to the *Ācārya*. The AV (XI.5) refers to a *Brahmacārin* (Vedic student) gathering sacred fuel for fire-worship and bringing alms (begged from door to door) to the teacher. There are also prayers in the AV for liturgical employment at the ceremony of Initiation (*Upanayana*).

<sup>1</sup> चतुर्थमायुषो भागमुषिरवाद्यं गुरौ द्विजः । द्वितीयमायुषो भागं कृतदारो गृहे वसेत् ॥४.१॥

ब्रह्मचारी गृहस्थ वानप्रस्थो यतिस्तथा । एते गृहस्थप्रभवाश्चात्वातरः पृथगाश्रमाः ॥६.८७॥

सर्वेऽपि क्रमशस्त्वेते यथाशास्त्रं निषेविताः ॥६.८८अब॥

<sup>2</sup> Humayun Kabir — Indian Philosophy of Education, page 173

<sup>3</sup> Quoted by P. V. Kane — History of Dharmaśāstra - vol. II, part I, page 268 (fn.)

In the *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* (I.2.11)<sup>1</sup>, we find reference to the renunciation. *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* (II.1.7)<sup>2</sup> highlights that apart from truth and faith, the physical attributes of celibacy and austerity in addition to living in the forest and begging of alms are applauded and almost prescribed for the final emancipation. In this *Upaniṣad* it is clearly stated that it is through correct knowledge and celibacy, one can experience the self.<sup>3</sup> “The highest truth in life can only be obtained by the disciplined life of a student in pursuit of knowledge par excellence”, opines Jogeswar Sarmah<sup>4</sup>.

The third view i.e. *Bādha* is supported by the scholars like Gautama (III.1,35) and Manu (III.77-80; VI.89-90; Vas.Dh.S.-VIII.14-17; Viṣṇu Dh.S.-LIX.29), who establish that the *Gr̥hasthāśrama* (the *Āśrama* of householder) is the highest and that there is in reality only one *Āśrama* (*Brahmacarya* being preparatory to it and the other *Āśramas* are inferior to it).

In the minor *Upaniṣads* of *AV* undertaken for study, we do not find such a reference highlighting the importance of *Gr̥hasthāśrama* but there is a reference to the term ‘*Gr̥hastha*’ (householder) viz. It is stated in the *Āruṇeyī Upaniṣad* that a person desirous of taking up *Saṁnyāsa* should abandon number of things : गृहस्थो ब्रह्मचारी वानप्रस्थो वा लौकिकाग्नीनुदराग्रौ समारोपयेत् . . . ॥२॥ while the outward appearance or characteristics of *Gr̥hastha* are given by *Parabrahmopaniṣad* : बहिर्लक्ष्यमाणशिखायज्ञोपवीतधारणं कर्मिणो गृहस्थस्य । and बहिर्लक्षितकर्मशिखा ज्ञानोपवीतं गृहस्थस्य । परब्रह्म ॥ which points out that according to the *Varṇas* (castes) and *Āśramas* the *Śikhā* differs. And the sacred thread forms a part of the outward appearance of a *Gr̥hastha*.

Moreover, it is advised to the *Kutīcara* type i.e. the lowest rank of *Saṁnyāsins*, and a *Brahmacārī* to renounce family : कुटीचरो ब्रह्मचारी कुटुम्बं विसृजेत् । आरुणेयी-२ ॥ A *Kutīcara* is a monk who begs in the house of his son. This is the only reference to the term ‘*Kuṭumba*’ (family) found in the minor *Upaniṣads* of *AV* undertaken for study.

<sup>1</sup> तपः श्रद्धे ये ह्युपवसन्त्यरण्ये शान्ता विद्वांसो भैक्षचर्या चरन्तः । सूर्यद्वारेण ते विरजाः प्रयान्ति यत्रामृतः स पुरुषो ह्यक्तययात्मा ॥ मुण्डक उप.-१.२.११ ॥

<sup>2</sup> प्राणापानौ ब्रीहियवौ तपश्च श्रद्धासत्यं ब्रह्मचर्यं विधिश्च ॥ मुण्डक उप.-२.१.७ ॥

<sup>3</sup> सत्येन लभ्यस्तपसा ह्येष आत्मा सम्यग्ज्ञानेन ब्रह्मचर्येण नित्यम् । मुण्डक उप.-३.१.५ ॥

<sup>4</sup> Sarmah Jogeswar — Philosophy of education in the *Upaniṣads*, page 79



In the tenth section of the fifth chapter of *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (V.10.1)<sup>1</sup>, we find reference to *Vānaprastha* and *Samnyāsa*. However, in *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (VIII.15.1), the *Gr̥hasthāśrama* finds much favour.<sup>2</sup> In the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* (I.11.1)<sup>3</sup> we find indirect reference as to the existence of *Āśramadharma*, especially of *Brahmacarya* – the student life and the *Gr̥hastha* – the life of the householder.

#### CONCLUSION :

The study of the four *Āśramas*, their duties and divisions stated in the minor as well as major Upaniṣad and especially in the texts of *Dharmaśāstra*, convince a person that the scheme is best adjusted to the physical, intellectual, social and spiritual development of a man. The first quarter of life is the most convenient period for growth of body and intelligence, inculcation of right habits and mastery of knowledge and was therefore to be devoted to that work. Various types of *Vratas* and observances, which would lead to the physical and spiritual development of the youth, are strictly to be observed. The person is taught the restraint of senses.

The second *Āśrama* is the period when all capacities fully developed in the first *Āśrama* are to be utilised for man's social and spiritual good. This *Āśrama* is in fact the keystone of the arch of an Indian's life. It is on the householder that all the people observing other *Āśramas* depended for their maintenance as beings upon life-breath.<sup>4</sup> Similarly *Manusmṛiti* states:

यथा वार्युं समाश्रित्य वर्तन्ते सर्वजन्तवः ।

तथा गृहस्थमाश्रित्य वर्तन्ते सर्व आश्रमाः ॥३.७७॥

यस्मात्रयोऽप्याश्रमिणो ज्ञानेनात्रेन चान्वहम् ।

गृहस्थेनैव धार्यन्ते तस्माज्ज्येष्ठाश्रमो गृही ॥३.७८॥

This is therefore properly called the noblest of the *Āśramas*. *Gr̥hasthāśrama* is eulogized in *Cāṇakyanītisāra*<sup>5</sup>.

The third *Āśrama* viz. *Vānaprastha* is to be devoted to the practice of

<sup>1</sup> ये चेमेऽरण्ये श्रद्धा तप इत्युपासते । छा.उप.-५.१०.१॥

<sup>2</sup> आचार्यकुलाद्देदमधीत्य यथाविधानं गुरोः कर्मातिशेषेणाभिसमावृत्य कुटुम्बे शुचौ देशे स्वाध्यायमधीयानो धार्मिकान्विदध-  
दात्मनि सर्वेन्द्रियाणि संप्रतिष्ठाप्याहिं सन्तु सर्वभूतान्यन्यत्र तीर्थेभ्यः . . . . . छा.उप.-८.१५.१॥

<sup>3</sup> वेदमनूच्याचार्योऽन्तेवासिनमनुशास्ति । सत्यं वद । धर्मं चर । स्वाध्यायान्मा प्रमदः । आचार्याय प्रियं धनमाहृत्य प्रजातन्तुं  
मा व्यवच्छेत्सीः । तै.उप.-१.११.१॥

<sup>4</sup> यथा वार्युं समाश्रित्य वर्तन्ते सर्वजन्तवः । तथा गृहस्थमाश्रित्य वर्तन्ते सर्व आश्रमाः ॥मनुस्मृति-३.७७॥

<sup>5</sup> सानन्दं सदनं सुताश्च सुधियः कान्ता न दुर्भाषिणी सन्मित्रं सुधनं स्वयोषिति रतिश्चाज्ञापराः सेवकाः । आतिथ्यं शिवपूजनं  
प्रतिदिनं मृष्टान्नपानं गृहे साधोः सङ्गमुपासते हि सततं धन्यो गृहस्थाश्रमः ॥चाणक्यनीतिसार-१२.१॥

penance and control of passions so that a way would be paved for a final slipping off to the fourth *Āśrama*, which aimed at a complete renunciation of everything.

Radhakrishnan<sup>1</sup> opines : “The Hindu system of *Āśrama* according to which every one of the twice-born towards the close of his life must renounce the world and adopt the homeless life and the ascetic’s garb has had great influence on the Indian mind.”

### HISTORICAL DATA

The Historical Data comprises of the information of those Historical personages referred to in the minor Upaniṣads of AV undertaken for study like Atharvan, Aṅgiras, Atri etc.

#### ATHARVAN

In the *Atharvaśikhā Upaniṣad*, Sage Pippalāda of *Aṅgirā* family and Sanatkumāra (the mind born son of Brahmā) approached Lord Atharvan to know about that Deity which should be meditated upon.

ॐ पिप्पलादोऽङ्गिराः सनत्कुमारश्चाथर्वाणं भगवन्तं पप्रच्छ भगवन्किमादौ प्रयुक्तं ध्यानं  
ध्यायितव्यं किं तद्ध्यानं को वा ध्याता कश्चिध्येयः इति ।

Atharvan, here seems to be celebrated teacher of *Yoga*. In the *Śāṇḍilya Upaniṣad*, Śāṇḍilya is instructed by Atharvan into the eightfold *Yoga*, as a means of securing Final Beatitude for the benefit of the self and the way to purify the Nāḍis (nerves). We are further told that Śāṇḍilya could not secure Brahmavidyā even after the study of the four vedas, so he came to Atharvan and asked him to teach him the Brahmavidyā, whereby he would secure Śreyas or eternal bliss. Atharvan instructed him into the nature of the Brahman, that it is the One, omnipresent, subtle, pure and conscious cause of the whole creation. It bears all world and the creatures in it. The Brahman is attained through *Yoga* alone :

अथ ह शाण्डिल्यो ह वै ब्रह्म ऋषिश्चतुर्षु वेदेषु ब्रह्मविद्यामलभमानः किं नामेत्यथर्वाणं  
भगवन्तमुपसन्नः पप्रच्छाधीहि भगवन् ब्रह्मविद्यां येन श्रेयाऽवाप्स्यामीति । . . . मा  
शोचीरात्मविज्ञानी शोकस्यान्ते गमिष्यति । शाण्डिल्योपनिषद्-२ ॥<sup>2</sup>

Atharvan also instructs Pippalāda and others on the object of meditation viz. Omkāra or Praṇava.

<sup>1</sup> S. Radhakrishnan — The Principal *Upaniṣads*, page 673.

<sup>2</sup> Also compare a similar statement of Śāṇḍilya given by Śaṅkara in his Bhaṣya on Brahmasūtra. II.2.44

This is 'the Śikhā of Atharvan' or 'the most prominent teaching of Atharvan', i.e. the Atharvaśikhā. The *Atharvaśiras Upaniṣad* contains the glorification of Rudra. In this *Upaniṣad* it is pointed out that Atharvan (i.e. *Atharvaṇic* knowledge) is the well-protected divine treasure hence it gets this name because Atharvan is rested in the head and heart of Rudra. The *Sūryopaniṣad* consists the praise of the God Sūrya by Atharvāṅgiras.

The name of Atharvan occurs about fourteen times in the RV, thrice in the plural. He generally appears as an ancient priest. In the RV.I.83.5; VI-15.17; VI.16.3; X.21.5 and X.92.10; he appears as the first enkindler of fire and also as the founder of sacrifice. The RV refers to Atharvan in I.10.16; I.48.2; I.80.16; V.47.24; VII.1.1; VIII.9.7 and X.87.12.

Further the word Atharvan appears to have an appellative meaning of 'a priest' in (IV.47.24; IX 11.2 and X.129.9). Sāyaṇa in his *bhāṣya* on RV (VIII.9.7), explains it as (a + tharvan = free from coercion) and in his *bhāṣya* on VS VIII.56 as *Upārhiyamāṇah*. Yāska (*Nirukta* XI.18) interprets it as (a + tharvan = not moving i.e. firm).

Atharvan is said to be establisher of *Samśkaras* (Sacraments) and *Yajñas* :

ते हि प्रजाया अभरन्त वि श्रवो बृहस्पतिर्वृषभः सोमजामयः ।

यज्ञैरथर्वा प्रथमो वि धारयदेवा दक्षैर्भृगवः सं चिकित्रिरे ॥ ऋग्वेद-१०.९२.१० ॥

He was an ancient *Upādhyāya* (preceptor) (RV.X.12.9) as stated in *Śat. Br.*-XIV.4.4.22; VII.3.28.

In the AV, the Atharvans are referred to as medicinemen to have tied on themselves, the amulet of Khadira (Fāla) and with Aṅgiras to have broken open the fortress of Dasyus (AV-X.6.20). They are described as destroying the goblins with a magical herb (AV IV.37.7), vide AV-IV.1.7; V.11; VII.104; XI.6.13 and XVIII.3.54.

"Atharvana seems to have been a very popular teacher. As has been said above he was the chief of the Aṅgirasas. It was perhaps, on account of this immence of Atharvan, seen also in the contribution of the largest number of the hymns to the AV that the *Veda* was named after him opines Dr. N. J. Shende."<sup>1</sup>

Aṅgirasa is also found in the compound Atharva - Aṅgirasah, which occurs as a designation of the *Atharvaveda* in AV (X.7.20) and later on the *Śatapatha Brahmana* - XI.5.6.7 etc. It is called Atharvāṅgirasah because it is a combination of Atharvaṇ and Aṅgirasa.

<sup>1</sup> Shende N. J. — The Religion and Philosophy of AV, page 293.

He is referred as the first person of Aṅgiras family and he has connection with *Atharvaveda*, the reference of which is found in (*Mahābhārata-Udyog parva* - XVIII.7-8; *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* - I.1.1-2; *Vāyu Purāṇa* - 74; *Brahmāṇḍa* - V.65.12 and *Harivaṃśa* - I.25)

The Atharvans are identified with the Bhṛgu in the *Cūlika Upaniṣad* of AV, and in the *Mantrikā Upaniṣad* of the YV:

मन्त्रोपनिषदं ब्रह्म पदक्रमसमन्वितम् । पठन्ति भार्गवा ह्येतदथर्वानो भृगूत्तमाः ।

It is very likely that the families of the Atharvans and the Bhṛgu are the sub-divisions of the ancient family of the Aṅgiras. That is how we get the names Atharvāṅgiras and Bhṛgvaṅgiras.

Atharva or Atharvan is also referred in Major Upaniṣad viz. *Muṇḍaka* (I.1.1); *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* (II.6.3; IV.6.3) and also *Praśna* (II.8). The *Devī Upaniṣad* (1) claims that the Upaniṣadic teaching is the sacred knowledge of the Atharvan.<sup>1</sup>

### ĀṆGIRASA

Angiras is mentioned as a teacher in the *Ātmopaniṣad*: ॐ अथैवाङ्गिरास्त्रिविधः पुरुषस्तद्यथा बाह्यात्माऽन्तरात्मा परमात्मा चेति । The *Ātman* is the body. The *Antarātman* is the soul, which undergoes different experiences. The *Paramātman* is the cosmic Soul (Brahmānanda). He is the one and eternal. He is the only Reality and the world is an illusion. The knowledge of this Brahman leads a man to liberation (Mokṣa). This is thus the doctrine of absolute monism that Aṅgiras preaches here. Āṅgirasa discusses on the truth about rebirth in this *Upaniṣad*, the way to be free from rebirth and to be free from the bondage of this *Samsāra* or mortal world.

Etymologically the name is generally derived from *Aṅgāra* (cf. AB III.34; MBh.-13.4.122); *Nirukta* III.37 and *Sāyaṇabhāṣya* on RV III.31.7). Tilak<sup>2</sup> thinks that the word, Aṅgiras is etymologically connected with the Greek *aggilos* (= a messenger) and Persian *aṅgara* (= a mounted corner). Aṅgiras is often referred to in the Vedic texts (cf. RV.1.31.17; I.45.3; I.139.9; VIII.43.3 and AV.IV.29.3 etc.). The word Aṅgira, when used in Plural, signifies Manes (RV.I.62.2, X.14.6). Here he is also known as Navagva, Bhṛgu and Atharvan. He is closely connected with the production of fire and the inauguration of the fire-cult. He has been mentioned along with

<sup>1</sup> In other minor Upaniṣads like *Nṛsimhapūrvatāpini* (12,5-9), *Cūlika* (10,14), *Athavaśiras* (6), *Atharvaśikhā* (1), *Samnyāsa* (1) etc. 'Atharvan' is referred.

<sup>2</sup> Tilak B. G. — *The Arctic Home in the Vedas*, page 160 (quoted by V. G. Rahurkar, page 235-238)

Manu, Yayāti and Bhṛgu (RV. I.31.17; I.139.9; VIII.43.13) and also with Dadhyañ, Ātharvaṇa, Priyamedha, Kaṇva and Atri. "But when it is used by itself and in singular, it normally stands for the seer Aṅgiras. When it occurs in plural, it denotes the family of Aṅgiras" opines Dr. V. G. Rahurkar.<sup>1</sup> The Aṅgirasas are said to have found out Agni concealed in the trees of the forest and to have churned him out. Therefore, the fire is called Aṅgiras and 'the sun of strength' (RV. V.11.6). Nirukta (II.17) states Aṅgiras to have sprung from Agni. Shende<sup>2</sup> seems to be right in concluding that "Aṅgiras himself must have started the cult of the fire-worship and the succeeding generations of the Vedic seers admitted his claim to be their revered father. The Aṅgirasas are also, in a more general way, connected with the Ādityas, the Rudras, the Vasus as well as the Atharvans (AV.XI.8.13) and Yama (RV-X.14.3).<sup>3</sup> Besides being regarded as the priest of the gods and also as lord of sacrifices i.e. attendants of Agni who is often described as a messenger between heaven and earth, he was also a teacher of *Brahmavidyā*. Various legends occur in the *Brāhmaṇas*<sup>4</sup> about the Aṅgirasas. In some Upaniṣads<sup>5</sup> they are referred to as great teachers of Indian Philosophy. In the *Muṇḍakopaniṣad* of AV (I.1.1.2; III.2.11), Aṅgirasa figures as one, who taught *Brahma-Vidyā*. Aṅgiras imparts instructions to Śaunaka regarding monism (III.2.8), qualified monism (III.1.3) and dualism (III.1.1) in the *Muṇḍakopaniṣad*. "Aṅgiras' speculations on immortality (III.2) have provided many ideas and expressions to the *Bhagavadgītā*. A comparison of the second section of this *Upaniṣad* with the 11<sup>th</sup> chapter of the *Bhagavadgītā* will bring out this point." states Dr. N. J. Shende.<sup>6</sup> The sage Aṅgirasa is also referred in several minor *Upaniṣads* like *Nṛsimhapūrvatāpini* - V.9 and *Atharvaśikhā*-1 and *Brahmopaniṣad* - 1.

In the epics - the *Mahābhārata* and the *Rāmāyaṇa*. He plays a very important role. Aṅgirasa was one of the seven Ṛṣis, (as mentioned in *Mahābhārata-Śāntiparva* - 322.27, viz. Marīca, Atri, Aṅgiram, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Vasiṣṭha. He is also one of the ten primordial sages as mentioned in *Manusmṛti*. I-34,35.

<sup>1</sup> Rahurkar V. G. — The Seers of the Veda, page 235-238

<sup>2</sup> op. cit. — page 110

<sup>3</sup> In the family maṇḍalas, the Aṅgiras are admitted to be the great seers or philosophers of ancient times. (cf. RV.II.17.1; III.31.19, 53.7; IV.2.15-17; V.8.4; VI.11.3 and VII.42.1).

<sup>4</sup> AB-III.37, VI.14; TB II.1.1, II.2.3-5-7; ŚB.V.1.13; TMB XII.11-10-11; GB I-4.25, I.11.8

<sup>5</sup> Chāndogya Upa. I.2.10; III.16-17; Bṛhad-II-6; Muṇḍakopaniṣad I.1-2-3; III.2.11; Praśnopaniṣad-III.2.8, III.1.3; VIII.2; Maitreyi-VII.5.

<sup>6</sup> Shende N. J. — The Religion and Philosophy of Atharvaveda, page 232

## ATRI

Sage Atri is referred in Jābāla Upaniṣad, where he asks Yājñavalkya about realising the infinite un-manifest self and about the importance of sacred thread for a *Brāhmaṇa* : अथ हैनमत्रिः पप्रच्छ याज्ञवल्क्यं य एषोऽनन्तोऽव्यक्त आत्मा तं कथमहं विजानीयामिति । १२॥ अथ हैनमत्रिः पप्रच्छ याज्ञवल्क्य पृच्छामि त्वा याज्ञवल्क्य अयञ्जोपवीतीकथं ब्राह्मण इति । १५॥

Atri is also referred in major *Upaniṣads* viz. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* II.2.4. - वागेवान्निर्वाचा ह्यन्नमद्यतेऽतिर्ह वै नामैतद्यदत्रिरिति । and in *Mahānārāyaṇa Upa.* (VI.5) it is said - अग्रे अत्रिवन्नमसा गुणानः ।

The name 'Atri' is perhaps derived from the root 'ad' - to eat, in the sense of devouring', as the cognate word Atrin; a frequent adjective in the RV.; used to describe demons, seems to have this meaning, states A. A. Macdonell.<sup>1</sup> The word Atri occurs about 50 times in RV.<sup>2</sup> The fortieth hymn in the fifth *maṇḍala* is generally considered to be the family hymn of the Atris.

The AV also refers to Atri finding and placing the sun in the sky (AV XIII.2.4, 12, 36).

दिवि त्वान्रिधारयत् सूर्या मासाय कर्तवे ।

स एव सुधृतस्तपन् विश्वा भूतावचाकशत् ॥अथर्ववेद-१३.२.१२॥

H. H. Raṅga-Avadhūta Mahārāja<sup>3</sup> of Nareshwar have described the term 'Atri' beautifully, in his book *Amara-Ādeśa*. 'अ', 'त्रि' means that sage who has surpassed :

- (1) The three stages of knowledge viz. *Śubhecchā*-Good desire, *Vicāraṇā* and *Tanumānasā*
- (2) The three *Guṇas*-*Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*.
- (3) The three stages of mind viz. *Mūḍha* (Silly, Foolish), *Kṣipta* (Distracted mad) and *Vikṣipta* (Bewildered, Agitated) and one who is extremely lustrous i.e. sage Atri.

<sup>1</sup> Macdonell A. A. — Vedic Mythology, page 145

<sup>2</sup> Atri - I.139.9, 183.5, V.7.10, 40.6.8, 73.6.7, 74.1, 78.4, VIII.42.5; Atrayaḥ - V.22.4, 39.5, 40.5; Atrim - I.116.8, 117.3, II.8.5, V.15.5, VI.50.10, VII.71.5, VIII.5.25, X.143.1, 2, 150.5; Atraye - I.51.3, 112.7, 16, 118.7, 119.6, 180.4, VII.68.5, VIII.73.3, 7.8, X.39.9, 143.3; Atribhyah - V.67.5; Atrech - V.2.6, VIII.35.19, 36.7, 37.7; Atrinam - VIII.36.6, 38.8; Atre - V.40.7; Atrivat - I.45.3, V.4.9, 7.8, 22.1, 51.8, 10, 72.1 as given by V. G. Rahurkar — The Sages of RV, page 61.

<sup>3</sup> H. H. Raṅga-Avadhūta Mahārāja — *Amara-Ādeśa*, page 62-63

Various attempts have been made to determine the date of Atri. It is for instance suggested that the svarbhānu (name of Rāhu) legend owes its origin to Atri's skill in anticipating the occurrence and duration of the solar eclipse. Sengupta<sup>1</sup> has accordingly suggested 4000 BC as the probable date of the Atri family. Altekar<sup>2</sup> on the other hand, adduces the evidence of the purāṇas, where Atri is mentioned as the son - in - law of king Ṛceyu of the Paurava dynasty, who flourished about five generations later than Gr̥tsamada. The date of Gr̥tsamada is tentatively fixed at 2700 B.C. so Atri must have flourished according to Altekar, in about 2600 BC.

Atri is considered as he is represented in the Astronomy as one of the stars of the Great Bears one of the mind born sons of Brahmā and Saptar̥sis- seven great sages.

मरीचिमन्त्रङ्गिरसौ पुलस्त्यं पुलहं क्रतु ।

प्रचेतसं वशिष्ठश्च भृगुं नारदमेव च ॥मनुस्मृति १-३५॥

The Saptar̥sis constitute a distinct group of ancient Vedic Ṛsis who have attained a kind of traditional sanctity. The Saptar̥sis are mentioned four times in the ṚV (I.31.5, IV.42.8, X.109.4 and X.130.7); in VS (XIV.24) and AV (XI.1.1.24; XII.1.39 etc.).

In the Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa (II.117-119), an account is given of the visit paid by Rāma and Sītā to Atri and Anasūyā in their hermitage.

There are two books attributed to him viz. Atri Saṁhitā and Atri Smṛti. The Atrisamhitā comprises of nine Adhyāyas and thoughts regarding Yoga, japa, karma – vipāka, Prāyaścitta etc. are discussed in it.

According to S. G. Moghe,<sup>3</sup> "It is further interesting to note that in the Śānti-parva of the Mahābhārata, Atri is mentioned as the son of Brahmā and father of Soma, the Moon, whom Brahmā installed as the sovereign of all plants, Brāhmaṇas and stars. According to Purāṇas, Atri is connected with the lunar dynasty.

Thus the sage Atri is mentioned not only in Vedic texts but also in Brāhmaṇa literature and in the ancient epics like Rāmāyaṇa, and in a number of Purāṇa works. This shows that, Atri was not only a celebrated sage but also a prominent scholar and law-maker like Manu and Yājñavalkya.

<sup>1</sup> Senagupta — Journal of the Asiatic Soc. of Bengal, Calcutta, VII, page 92

<sup>2</sup> Altekar — Proceedings of the Indian History Congress – III, page 49

<sup>3</sup> Moghe S. G. — The Fifth Maṇḍala of the R̥gveda, H. D. Velankar, page 29-30

## YĀJÑAVALKYA

In the Jābālopaniṣad (Khaṇḍas 1 to 5), Yājñavalkya is glorified as a Ṛṣi, knower of the Supreme Reality, who provides answers for the following questions : अथ हैनमन्निः पप्रच्छ याज्ञवल्क्यं य एषोऽनन्तोऽव्यक्त आत्मा ते कथमहं विजानीयामिति ॥२॥ अथ हैनं ब्रह्मचारिण ऊचुः किं जाप्येनामृतत्वमब्रूहीति ॥३॥ अथ ह जनको ह वैदेहो याज्ञवल्क्यमुपसमेत्योवाच भगवन् संन्यासमनुब्रूहीति ॥४॥ अथ हैनमन्निः पप्रच्छ । याज्ञवल्क्यं पृच्छामि त्वा याज्ञवल्क्यं अयज्ञोपवीती कथं ब्राह्मण इति ॥५॥

Yājñavalkya is often referred to in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad <sup>1</sup>. He is also referred in Minor Upaniṣads like Rāmottaratāpaniya (1,2,4,5) and Mukti Upa. (1.39). There is an Upaniṣad on his name viz. Yājñavalkya Upaniṣad. Yājñavalkya is an outstanding philosopher of the Upaniṣadic age. Uddālaka was his teacher from whom he received instruction on the doctrine of Mantha (Br. Upa.-VI.3.7). But he defeated his own Guru Uddālaka in a debate held in the assembly of scholars of the entire Kurupañcāla country (Br.Upa.-III.7.2) which was summoned by Janaka, the emperor of Videha, in connection with his celebration of the Aśvamedha sacrifice. In that assembly, the sages like Hotāśvala, Jāratkarava, Ārtabhāga, Bhajyu Lāhyāyani, Uṣasta, Kahola, Uddālaka and Śākalya along with Gārgī put several questions to Yājñavalkya, but the scholar maintained his superiority against all the renowned scholars.

On another occasion, Janaka humbly approaching Yājñavalkya as his formal Guru, asked him to impart instructions. Yājñavalkya, being asked by Janaka, began delivering his discourse on Brahman.

The etymology of Yājñavalkya can be given as follows :

यज्ञस्य वल्को वक्ता । तस्य गोत्रापत्यम् । यज्ञवल्क + गगादिभ्यो यम् । ४.२.१०५। इति यज् । धर्मशास्त्रप्रयोजकमुनिविशेषः ।

महर्षिरयं याज्ञवल्क्यः सूर्यात् शुक्लयजुर्वेदं प्राप्तवान् ।

तेनासौ चतुरो वेदांश्चतुर्भिर्वदनैर्विभुः ।

सव्याहृतिकान् सौकाशश्चातुर्होत्रविवक्षया ॥भा.पु.-१२.६॥

His three books are famous viz. Yājñavalkya Smṛti, Yoga Yājñavalkya and Bṛhadyogī-Yājñavalkya.

In Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (IV-5.1) there is a reference to his two wives-

<sup>1</sup> I.4.3; II.4.3, 4.12; III.1.2-10; III.2.1, 10-13; III.4.1; III.5.1; III.6.1; III.7.1,2; III.3.1; III.8.2,3,5,6; III.9.1,10-18, 20-25; IV.1.1-7; IV.2.1,4; IV.3.1-6, 15, 32, 33; IV.4.23; IV.5.1-3, 5, 13, 15; VI.3.7, 8; VI.5.3



Maitreyī and Kātyāyanī. The famous philosopher Yājñavalkya is introduced as an outstanding personality of the Bṛhadāraṇyaka - in connection with a discourse with his wife Maitreyī on the way to the acquisition of immortal life. He is also referred to as a scholar in Śat. Br. (I-1.13, II.3.1.21, IV-2.1.7; III.3.1.2).

Yājñavalkya states, “nothing of any moment can be apprehended unless and until the self itself is apprehended”- “As clouds of smoke proceed from the fire kindled with damp fuel, so do all the sciences such as Ṛgveda, Yajurveda and Sāmaveda, the Itihāsa-purāṇa and the rest proceed from this ultimate self. It is from him alone that all these are breathed forth.” The self is the Summum Bonum of life.

अरेऽस्य महतो भूतस्य निश्चसितमेतद्यद्वेदोयजुर्वेदः सामवेदोऽथर्वाङ्गिरसं इतिहासः पुराणं  
विद्या उपनिषदः श्लोकाः सूत्राण्यनुव्याख्यानानि . . . ।बृहद्.-४.५.११॥

Belvalkar and Ranade<sup>1</sup> states, “In his criticism of the earlier philosophers in Bṛhad IV-1, Yājñavalkya argues that the Ātman is the metaphysical back-ground and support of the entire outer and inner world. In his discussion with Maitreyī, Yājñavalkya proves that the Ātman is and should be the final end and goal of all efforts and aspirations.

### ĀŚVALĀYANA

He is referred to in the Kaivalyopaniṣad, where it is stated that he approaches Parameṣṭhin (Brahmā) and asks him to impart the knowledge of Brahman, the highest Being :

अथाश्वलायनो भगवन्तं परमेष्ठिनमुपसमेत्योवाच-

अधीहि भगवत् ब्रह्मविद्यां वरिष्ठा सतां सद्भिः सेव्यमानां निगूढाम् ।

ययाऽचिरात् सर्वपापं व्यपोह्यं परात्परं पुरुष याति विद्वान् ॥१॥

He is also referred in the Praśnopaniṣad (I.1;III.1) of AV-कौशल्यश्चाश्वलायनः ।

His main famous books are Āśvalāyanagr̥hyasūtra, Āśvalāyanaśrautasūtra, Āśvalāyanasmṛti. At the end of his sūtras, he has bowed down to Śaunaka his Guru saying - ‘Namaḥ Śaunakāya’. His Śrautasūtra contains 12 Adhyāyas and Gṛhyasūtra contains 4 Adhyāyas.

Many ancient Indian writers seldom date their works. Hence it is difficult to ascertain the date of Āśvalāyana. There is no reference either to his parents or to his patron in his Gṛhyasūtra. We are left with little

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, page 433-435

information about his pedigree or his age. But we find ample references to ancient 32 teachers by name, in Āśvalāyana Gr̥hyasūtra (III.4.4) like Sumantu, Jaimini, Vaiśampāyana, Paila etc.

Śaunaka's date can be fixed from the evidence that he quotes Yāska's (500 BC) Nirukta and ignores Kātyāyana's (300 BC) Sarvānukramāṇi altogether, in his Bṛhaddevatā. So he can be placed between 500-350 BC. Āśvalāyana who accords reverence to him and cites him as authority can also be associated with this date. There is evidence to prove that Āśvalāyana who refers to Itihāsa - Purāṇa in the Gr̥hyasūtra was not a contemporary of Śaunaka who lived in the fourth century B.C., opines Dr. Narendranath Sharma.<sup>1</sup> According to Weber<sup>2</sup> he was a contemporary of Pāṇini. C. V. Vaidya<sup>3</sup> states his date to be 100 B.C.

### BHṚGU

In Sītopaniṣad (8), sage Bhṛgu is said to worship Sītā, who is mentioned as Goddess Lakṣmī sitting on the divine throne of Lotus : भृगुपुण्यादिभिरभ्यर्च्यमाना देवी दिव्यसिंहासने पद्मासनेरूढा सकलकारणकार्यकरी लक्ष्मीर्देवस्य पृथग्भवनकल्पना ॥

Bhṛguvalli is referred to in the Taittirīya Upa. (III.1.1-भृगुर्वै वारूणिः). One Bhārgava Vaidarbhi is mentioned in Praśna Upa. The Cūlikā Upa. 10, explicitly mentions that the Bhṛgus, the Ātharvaṇas, praise various deities in the AV (11-15).

In Śrīmadbhagavadgīta (X.25) Lord ŚrīKṛṣṇa says that he is the Bhṛgu among Maharṣīs (great sages) – महर्षीणां भृगुरहं गिरामस्म्येकमक्षरम् ॥भ.गी.-१०.२५अब॥ We find similar statement in Śrīmad Bhāgavatam : ब्रह्मर्षीणां भृगुरहम् । भाग-११.१६.१४॥ His etymology and origin is given in the Mahābhārata :

पुरुषा वपुषा युक्ताः स्वैः स्वैः प्रसवजैर्गुणैः ।

भृगित्येव भृगुः पूर्वमङ्गरेभ्योऽङ्गिराभवत् ॥महाभारत-८५.१०५॥

अङ्गारसंश्रयाच्चैव कविरित्यपरोऽभवत् ।

सह ज्वालाभिरुत्पन्नो भृगुस्तस्माद् भृगुः स्मृतः ॥महाभारत-८५.१०६॥

Etymologically the word Bhṛgu has been derived from the root √Bhrj 'to

<sup>1</sup> Sharma Narendranath — Āśvalāyana Gr̥hyasūtram, page xiii-xiv-Introduction.

<sup>2</sup> Weber — History of Sanskrit Literature, page

<sup>3</sup> Vaidya C. V. — History of Sanskrit Literature, vol. IV, page 3.

burn, to roast.<sup>1</sup>

“Yāska (Nirukta III.7) derives it from the root  $\sqrt{\text{bhraj}}$ , to roast. The MBh. (XIII.4.122) connects the word Bhṛgu with Bhṛk, which means 'flame'. Bergagne<sup>2</sup> equates Bhṛgu with fire while Kuhn and Barth<sup>3</sup> say that Bhṛgu represents the fire in form of the lightning,<sup>4</sup>” states Rahrkar V. G.<sup>5</sup>

The Bhṛgus are mentioned about a dozen times in the ṚV<sup>6</sup>, in the Agni hymns, where they are chiefly connected with the bringing forth of fire to men. They are said to have performed sacrifices and worshipped fire for divine birth. (cf. ṚV. I.127.7, I.158.6) It seems that fire was first brought forth by Mātariśvā, the messenger of Vivasvān, and he handed it over to Bhṛgu as a treasure. (ṚV.I.60.1; I.93.6) Mātariśvā is said to have kindled the hidden Agni for the Bhṛgus. (ṚV III.5.10). As the ancient ancestors of mankind and particularly as the earliest sponsors of the fire-cult, the Bhṛgus are mentioned in the ṚV in association with the Aṅgirasas (ṚV. VIII.43.13 and X.14.6), the Navagvas (ṚV X.14.6) and the Atharvanas (ṚV. X.14.6 and X.92.10). Where Atharvan established Saṁskāras and Yajñas, Bhṛgus also by their calibre, brought forth themselves as deities (ṚV.X.92). According to V. G. Rahrkar,<sup>7</sup> “Bhṛgu, the son of Varuṇa, is traditionally mentioned as the alternate author, with Jamadagni, (ṚV-IX.65) and with Nathita and Cyavana, (ṚV-X.19).

Bhṛgu is believed to be associated with fire in some special manner. Bhṛgu and, after him, the Bhṛgus are regarded as the discoverer of fire for mankind. According to V.G. Rahrkar<sup>8</sup> : “Mātariśvan may be said to have discovered fire in the ṚV, but it may be the physical phenomenon of fire in its natural condition while Bhṛgu was traditionally believed to have been the first to utilise fire in vedic ritual and to have thus been responsible for the 'ritualistic' discovery of fire, i.e. Bhṛgu produced it through his might that is, through churning”.

The Manusmṛti (V.1,2; VII.2) characterises Bhṛgu as ‘fire-born’ and styles him as ‘Mānavo Bhṛgu’. It will be thus seen that in the Brāhmaṇas, the MBh, the Purāṇas and the Smṛti, some allegorical mode of describing

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Sukthankar, “The Bhṛgus and the Bhārata

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Sukthankar, op. cit.

<sup>3</sup> Sāyaṇa however explains the word as ‘भ्रष्टारः हविषां पापानां वा’ (Sāyaṇabhāṣya-ṚV-I.127.7; I.143.4, VSM-I, page 897.

<sup>4</sup> The root has its cognates in Greek phleego, in flangere, fulere (to blaze)

<sup>5</sup> Rahrkar V. G. — The Seers of Ṛgveda.

<sup>6</sup> ṚV — I.58.6; I.127.7; I.143.4; II.4.2; IV.7.1; VI.2.4, VI.8.4, X.46.9; X.122.5)

<sup>7</sup> Rahrkar V. G. — The Seers of the Ṛgveda, page 215-220

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

the origin of Bhṛgu has been resorted to. This clearly indicate that, being a seer of remote antiquity, the tradition regarding his birth and parentage was completely forgotten.

### ŚĀṆḌILYA

Śāṇḍilya is a name of a sage from Śāṇḍila family – शण्डिल्यस्य मुनेः गोत्रापत्यमिति । There is a dialogue between sages Śāṇḍilya and Atharvan in the Śāṇḍilya Upaniṣad.(1) where Śāṇḍilya is instructed by Atharvan into the Aṣṭāṅga-yoga – eight fold yoga, for attaining liberation : अथ ह शाण्डिल्यो ह वै ब्रह्म ऋषिश्चतुर्षु वेदेषु ब्रह्मविद्यामलभमानः किं नामेत्यथर्वाणं भगवन्तमुपसन्नः पप्रच्छाधीहि भगवन् ब्रह्मविद्यां येन श्रेयोऽवाप्स्यामीति ॥द्वितीयोऽध्यायः॥

Atharvan instructed him into the nature of Brahman, as the one, omnipresent, subtle, pure and conscious cause of the whole creation, who bears all worlds in Him. In the *Śāṇḍilya Upaniṣad*, Śāṇḍilya also asks Atharvan about the way to Purify the *Nāḍis* (nerves) : अथ हैनमथर्वाणं शाण्डिल्यः वप्रच्छ केनोपायेन नाड्यः शुद्धाः स्युः ॥१.१५॥

In *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* in all the 6-10 *Kāṇḍas*, wherever there is any reference to *Sam̐skāra* (sacrament) related to Agni, there Śāṇḍilya is referred as a *Śreṣṭha* (best) *Ācārya*. (Śat.Br.-V.2.15; X.1.4.10; IV.1.11; VI.3.5; V.9; IX.4.4.17). In *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (VI.5.4), he is stated to be the disciple of a sage named 'Vātsya'. Moreover he is referred as disciple of number of *Ācāryas* in the same text (IV.6.1) : (१) कैशोर्य काम्य (बृ.उप.-२.५.२, ४.५.२२,२८); (२) वैष्णपुरेय (बृ.उप.-२.५.१०, ४.५.२६); (३) कौशिक (बृ.उप.-२.६.१, ४.६.१-३); (४) गौतम (बृ.उप.-२.५.२०, ४.६.१,३); (५) बैजवाप (बृ.उप.-२.५.२०, ४.५.२६), (६) आनभिम्लात (बृ.उप.-२.६.२)

In *Bṛhad Upa.* (II.6.1.3; VI - 5-4) and *Śat. Br.* (XIV-7-3.26), other *Ācāryas* are also mentioned as his disciples like Kaundinya, Āgniveśya, Vātsya, Vāmakakṣāyaṇa, Vaiṣṭhapūreya, Bhāradvāja etc. In *Āśvalāyana Gṛhya Sūtra*, Śāṇḍilya is referred as a *Gotrakāra Ācārya*.

There are following texts to his credit : (1) *Śāṇḍilya-Smṛti* (2) *Śāṇḍilya Dharma-Sūtra* (3) *Śāṇḍilyatattvadīpikā* and (4) *Śāṇḍilya Bhakti-sūtra*. There is a reference to *Gṛhyasūtra* written by Śāṇḍilya in the *Āpastasmba Dharma-sūtra* (IX.11.21). Śāṇḍilya is also referred to by Śaṅkarācārya in the *Bhāṣya* on *Brahmasūtras* (II.2.44) where the knowledge imparted by Śāṇḍilya is known as *Śāṇḍilya-vidyā*.

The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (III.15), depicts the nature of Brahman as

'Tajjalān'; where the whole creation is said to have originated, is sustained and gets dissolved in this Brahman. Śāṇḍilya, has very nicely and meaningfully depicted *Ātman* in two forms as the biggest i.e. infinite & omnipresent and smallest i.e. of the form of Atom. (*Ch. Upa.* III.14.3). Further he states : सर्वकर्मा सर्वकाम . . . आत्माऽन्तर्हृदयएतद्ब्रह्मैतमितः त्रेत्याभिसभविता-स्मीति यस्य स्याददा व विचिकित्साऽस्तीति ह स्माह शाण्डिल्यः शाण्डिल्यः ॥ छा.उप.-३.१४.४ ॥

### JANAKA

Etymologically the word 'Janaka' means : जनयति इति जनकः = पिता. vide Janaka is referred in *Sītōpanisad* (4) where he approaches sage Yājñavalkya and requests him to tell about *Samnyāsa* : अथ ह जनको ह वैदेहो याज्ञवल्क्यमुपसमेत्योवाच भगवन् सन्यासमनुब्रूहीति । Similarly Janaka questions Yājñavalkya about 'the supreme light of man', in *Bṛhadaranyaka Upa.* (IV.3.2-5) also : याज्ञवल्क्य किंज्योतिरयंपुरुष इति । आदित्यज्योतिः . . . ॥ २ ॥

Yājñavalkya's first answer is that the light of man may be said to be the sun. So Janaka further asks. "When the sun has set what is the light of man?" Yājñavalkya thereupon tells him that the light of man may then be said to be the moon. And being further asked by Janaka, Yājñavalkya replies the fire, then the sound, and finally the *Ātman*.

"According to F. Kamil Bulke<sup>1</sup> : the first reference of Janaka is found in the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* of *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda* (III.10.9)." Reference has been made to Janaka in *Br. Upa.*-III.1.1; IV.1.1; IV.2.1; IV.7; V.14.8 etc.

In *Bṛhad Upa* (V.14.8), Janaka explains the significance of *Gāyatrī* to *Budil-Āśva-tapasvi* (V.14.8) and in *Br. Upa.* (II.11.1) there is a dialogue between Gārgya Bālākī and Ajātaśatru, which is also found in *Kauśītaki Upaniṣad* (IV.1) and *Śāṅkhāyana Āraṇyaka* (VI.1).

The reference found in *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (XI-3.1.2.4) is found in *Jaimini Brāhmaṇa* (I.19). Where Janaka Vaideha asks Yājñavalkya a question regarding *Agnihotra* and having obtained proper answer he is awarded 100 villages. The second reference found in *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* is XI.4.3.20 where Janaka rewards Yājñavalkya with 1000 cows. In the third episode, there is a story of Janaka becoming the *Brāhmaṇa* (Śat Br. XI.6.2.1-10). The fourth episode is also found elsewhere, along with *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (XI.6.3.1 etc.). Janaka gives lot of *Dakṣiṇā* (Sacrificial fee) to sacrificers and arranges a *Yajña* and decides to give

<sup>1</sup> Father Kamil Bulke — *Rāmākathā* (Utpatti Aur Vikāsa), Pub. — Hindi Parishad Viśvavidyālaya, Prayāga.

1000 cows as a reward to the most learned Brahmin. This episode is also found in *Jaimini Brāhmaṇa* (II.76.77) and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*.

In *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, there is a reference to two kings named Janaka - one is the son of Mithi and another one is the son of Hrasvaromā and the father of Sītā.

अरण्यां मथ्यमानायां प्रादुर्भूतो यतश्च सः ।

अतो मिथिरिति ख्यातो जननाञ्जनकोऽभवत् ॥२.७१॥

In *Vālmīki Rāmāyaṇa*, *Mahābhārata* and *Bhāg. Purāṇa*, 'Janaka' is said to be of descendant of great family of Mithilā country (Deśa).

जनकानां कुले जाता राघवानां कुले वधू ।गौडीय रामायण-५.३६.२०॥

सीतापि सत्कुले जाता जनकानां महात्मनाम् ।रामायण-७.४५.४॥

Janaka is also named as, Mithila, Videha etc. in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.<sup>1</sup> He established a city called Mithilā. His son was Udāvasu. His descendents are called Janaka (*Bhāg. Purāṇa* IX.13.13; VI.3.20).

According to Bulke<sup>2</sup>, "It can be finally said that any king of Mithilā was known as Janaka. In Upaniṣadic literature, Janaka and father of Sītā, their identity is not impossible, but looking to the points given above, it is doubtful." In *Vāyupurāṇa* (89.15) and *Padmapurāṇa* (*Pātāla Khaṇḍa*-57.5) etc, the father of Sītā, Janaka is also known as Sīradhvaja. In *Uttarārāmacarita* (Act.IV) Janaka addresses himself as वैदेहः सीरध्वजः (भगवत्यरुन्धति वैदेहः सीरध्वजोऽभिवादयत्). Again Janaka is referred in *Uttarārāmacarita* as a renowned personality.

जनकानां रघूणां च सम्बन्धः कस्य न प्रियः ।

यस्य दाता ग्रहीता स्वयं कुशिकनन्दनः ॥उत्तररामचरितम्-२.१७॥

Bulke<sup>3</sup> opines : "Looking to the above citations, it is clear that Janaka is referred more in Upaniṣadic literature than the other characters of *Rāmāyaṇa*. In modern *Rāmakathā* literature, Vedic Janaka and Janaka of *Rāmāyaṇa* are one and the same person. But in reality there is no proof to prove their identity. It has to be accepted that anywhere in Vedic literature there is no reference to Sītā being his daughter or Rāma being his son-in-

<sup>1</sup> Several references regarding him are found in the different Purāṇas : *Padmapurāṇa*-*Pātālakhaṇḍa*-30, *Kālikāpurāṇa*-38, *Gaṇeśapurāṇa*-I.6.5 and *Brahmavaivartapurāṇa*-II.16.15.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> op. cit.

law.” Siddheshvar Shastri Chitrav<sup>1</sup> points out that Janaka was contemporary to Yājñavalkya. At that time his name was Daivarāti. According to the lineage father-in-law of Lord Rāma – Sīradhvaja Janaka is several generations ahead of this Janaka (i.e. predecessor).

Thus, Janaka was not only a king or father of Sītā but also a prominent scholar mentioned in Upaniṣadic as well as Purāṇic texts.

### ĀRUṆI

Āruṇi means – अरुणस्य अपत्यं पुमान् इति आरुणिः । i.e. Son of sage Āruṇi.

He is referred to as a *Paramahansa* in the *Jābālopaniṣad* (sixth *Khaṇḍa*) :

तत्र परमहंसा नाम संवर्तकारुणिश्चेतकेतुर्दुर्वासक्रभुनिदाघजडभरतदत्तात्रेयरैवतकप्रभृतयो . .  
. . परित्यज्यात्मानमन्विच्छेत् ।

In the *Āruṇeyi Upaniṣad* (1), he approaches Brahmā to know about the way in which he can relinquish work altogether :

ॐ आरुणिः प्रजापतेर्लोकं जगाम तं गत्वोवाच केन भगवन् कर्मण्यशेषतो विसृजानीति ।

Āruṇeya is the family name of Uddālaka Āruṇi, the son of Aruṇa Aupaveśi Gautama and father of Śvetaketu (Śat. Br.-X.3.4.1; Ch. Upa.-V.3.1). He is referred to as explaining the Prāṇa-vidyā in Jaiminīya-Uttara-Brahmaṇa (II.5.1).

Various references to Āruṇi are found in Vedic literature. In Aitareya Āraṇyaka (II.1.4), he worshipped Brahmā by keeping his eyes fixed on the eight petaled lotus of the heart. He is referred to as the destroyer of enemies and non-destroyer of Agni Adhvaryu in Śat. Br. (I.1.2-11). He is mentioned as praising Agnihotra (Śat. Br.-II.3.31). He approached Vasiṣṭha Caikitāyana for obtaining knowledge (Jai. Utta. Br.-I.42.1). The most advanced philosophical discussion is found in Chāndogya Upaniṣad-VI, communicated by Āruṇi, to his son Śvetaketu. According to Belvalkar and Ranade<sup>2</sup>, there are three points that emerge almost immediately in the conversation that took place between Śvetaketu and his father Āruṇi on the topic presented by his spiritual father before him. The father told him first to find that by knowing which everything might become known. Secondly, this same Supreme Object of knowledge might be regarded from the cosmological point of view, as the substratum of all things, just as the substratum of all iron weapons is iron, the substratum of all golden

<sup>1</sup> Chitrav Siddheshwar Shastri — Prācīna Caritra Kośa, page 219

<sup>2</sup> Belvalkar and Ranade — Creative Period, page 224-225

ornaments is gold; similarly is the substratum of all phenomenal objects. And, thirdly, the father commented that when this knowledge was obtained, when this external substratum was found out, the knowledge of that alone was real, while everything else was merely the phenomenal manifestation of it. Āruṇi is severally referred in the major Upaniṣads like Chā. (III.11.4; V.11.2; V.17.1; VI.8.1); Br. (III.6.1,23; VI.3.7; VI.4.4); Kaṭha (I.1); Kauṣī. (I.1). He is also referred to by the name Āruṇeya in Chā. (V.3.1; VI.1.1) and Br. (VI.2.1) and Aruṇa in Br. Upaniṣad (VI.5.3). He is one of the greatest philosophical teachers of the Upaniṣadic age. His contribution to the different aspects of Philosophy, Metaphysics, Psychology and Cosmology paved the way for the development of many new theories and doctrines. Yājñavalkya is said to be his disciple. The repeated instruction of 'Tat-tvam-asi' to his son Śvetaketu contains the culmination of the philosophical vision of Uddālaka (Ch. Upa.-VI.8).

### ŚVETAKETU

He is referred to as a Paramahansa in the sixth Khaṇḍa of Jābālopaniṣad :  
 तत्र परमहंसा नाम संवर्तकारुणिश्चेतकेतुदुर्वासक्रभुनिदाघजडभरतदत्तात्रेयरैवतकप्रभृतयो . . .  
 परित्यज्यात्मनमन्विच्छेत् ।

He is a famous philosophical preceptor (Ācārya) in Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (X.2.7.12); Chāndogya Upaniṣad (V.3.1) and Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad (III.7.1; VI.1.1). He is mentioned as a descendent of preceptors named Aruṇa and Uddālaka, hence his family name i.e. 'Āruṇeya' and 'Auddālaki'. In Chā. Upa. (V.11.2), he is known as the grandson of sage Aruṇa and son of Uddālaka Āruṇi<sup>1</sup>.

In the Kauṣītaki Upaniṣad (I.1), he is mentioned to be the son of Āruṇi and as a descendent of sage Gautama, who obtained knowledge from 'Citra Gārgyāyaṇi'. Similarly he is referred to in the Mahābhārata :

बभूवोद्दालको नाम महर्षिरिति नः श्रुतम् ।

श्वेतकेतुरितिख्यातः पुत्रस्तस्याभवन्मुनिः ॥म.भा.-१.१२२.९॥

इति तेन पुरा भीरु मर्यादा स्थापिता बलात् ।

उद्दालकस्य पुत्रेण धर्मणा वै श्वेतकेतुना ॥म.भा.-१.१२२.२०॥

According to Jogeswar Sarmah<sup>2</sup> : "He was contemporary of Janaka, Emperor of Videha, whom he met while travelling about with two other companions and took part in the discussion started by the king. We find

<sup>1</sup> Also refer MBh. Ādi parva-CXIII.22

<sup>2</sup> Jogeswar Sarmah — Philosophy of Education in the Upaniṣads, page 111.



There are two Saṁhitās of AV. One of them is composed by Śaunaka and other one by Pippalāda. It has 20 Kāṇḍas and its first mantra is : शन्नो देवीः . . . । Other than Paippalāda Saṁhitā, there is one Brāhmaṇa text called 'Paippalāda Brāhmaṇa' which consists of eight Adhyāyas. Two more works of Pippalāda recension are : 'Pippalāda Śrāddhakalpa' and 'Agastya Kalpasūtra'. The Garbha Upaniṣad contains the Mokṣa-śāstra of Pippalāda. The Upaniṣad gives a detailed description of the life of a soul in embryo from the time of conception. The Pañcabrahma Upaniṣad (22) also mentions Pippalāda to be acquiring knowledge from God Maheśa regarding the five Brahmans. In the Śarabha Upaniṣad we are told that Pippalāda approached Brahmā to know from him the relative importance of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Rudra. Brahmā points out that Rudra in the Śarabha form is the highest of all Gods. According to N. J. Shende,<sup>1</sup> "The unity in the Trinity of Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa is the Mahāśāstra of Pippalāda."

### ŚAUNAKA

In Parabrahmopaniṣad (1), sage Śaunaka asks about the Highest Being, to Bhagavān Pippalāda of Aṅgirā family : ॐ शौनको ह वै महाशालोऽङ्गिरसं भगवन्तं पिप्पलादमपृच्छत् । दिव्ये ब्रह्मपुरे संप्रतिष्ठिता भवन्ति कथं सृजन्ति कस्यैष महिमा बभूव ह्येष महिमा बभूव क एषः । Here sage Śaunaka is referred as Mahāśāla, i.e. having extensive residential hall, i.e. providing in his household maintenance and shelter to many people. And in the last verse (16) of Parabrahmopaniṣad sage Śaunaka states to resort to the inner power for obtaining Mokṣa : बहिः प्रपञ्चशिखोपवीतित्वमनादृत्य प्रणवहंसशिखोपवीतित्वमवलम्ब्य मोक्षसाधनं कुर्यादित्याह भगवाञ्छौनक इत्युपनिषत् ॥१६॥

The second Maṇḍala of the RV is traditionally ascribed to the authorship of Ṛṭsamada. Cf. Sāyaṇa Bhāṣya, (RV, VSM, vol. I, page 1) : तथा चानुक्रमणिका - य अङ्गिरसः शौनहोत्रो भूत्वा भार्गवः शौनकोऽभवत् स गृत्समदो द्वितीयं मण्डलमपश्यत् - इति । Cf. also Ārṣānukramaṇī ed. by Mitra and published with the Bṛhaddevatā in Bibliotheca Indica, 1892, page 245 :

ऋषिर्गृत्समदो नाम विज्ञेयः स च शौनकः ।

औरसः शुनहोत्रस्य शुनकस्यैव कृत्रिमः ॥

तस्मादाङ्गिरसः पूर्वं पश्चात्स भृगुतां गतः ।

We find a reference to Śaunaka in the Satiation-list<sup>2</sup> given in the

<sup>1</sup> Shende N. J. — The Religion and Philosophy of Atharvaveda, page 238.

<sup>2</sup> Āśv. Gr. Sūtra-IV-7.14

that on some other occasion he entered into a discussion with Yājñavalkya in which he was defeated."

### PIPPALĀDA

Pippalāda means one who lives eating the fruits of Peepul tree (पिप्पल + अद) - पिप्पलं अति सः पिप्पलादः ।

In Parabrahma Upaniṣad (1), Pippalāda is portrayed as a sage who answers of Sage Śaunaka question pertaining to this body, and His glory : ॐ शौनको ह वै महाशालोऽङ्गिरसं भगवन्तं पिप्पलादमपृच्छत् । दिव्ये ब्रह्मपुरे संप्रतिष्ठिता भवन्ति कथं सृजन्ति कस्यैष महिमा बभूव यो ह्येष महिमा बभूव क एषः । Of the ten major Upaniṣads the Praśnopaniṣad comprises the six discourses of the great Ṛṣi Pippalāda who is mentioned as a philosopher and who is approached by sages like Sukeśā-Bhāradvāja, Śaibya Satyakāma, Sauryāyaṇi-Gārgya, Kauśalya Āśvalāyana, Bhārgava-Vaidarbhi and Kabandhin Kātyāyana etc. for obtaining knowledge of Brahman who approached him to know various aspects of life. Pippalāda made a synthesis of the six psycho-metaphysical questions put to him by the said six sages.

Pippalāda is a psycho-metaphysician of repute and was an exponent of the doctrine of Rayi and Prāṇa, the notion of a duality of Primary existences (Praśna-1.3 to 13). He is also well-known for the doctrines of the supremacy of vital breath above the senses. He also taught the importance of the meditation on Om for realising the all pervading Puruṣa.

While in Atharvaśikhā Upaniṣad (1), sage Pippalāda of Aṅgira family and Sanatkumāra asks Lord Atharvan : what should be meditated first, what is meditation, who is the meditator and what should be the goal of meditation? : ॐ पिप्पलादोऽङ्गिराः सनत्कुमारश्चाथर्वाणं भगवन्तं पप्रच्छ भगवन्किमादौ प्रयुक्तं ध्यानं ध्यायितव्यं किं तद्भ्यानं को वा ध्याता कश्चिद्ध्येय इति । Here sage Pippalāda is the one who asks the question, while in Parabrahma Upaniṣad (1), he is portrayed as the one who is the Lord, who has answers to all the questions.

It seems that Pippalāda who is referred in the Parabrahma Upaniṣad is the ancient sage who is erudite and learned. While the Pippalāda who is referred in the Atharvaśikhā Upaniṣad seems to be a descendent of Pippalāda family and of a later date as he himself is inquisitive about the knowledge of Brahman. He was a great sage who was the first compiler of Atharvaveda and the disciple of Devadarśa (Vedasparśa) of the Atharvan-Śiṣyaparamparā (lineage) of Vyāsa.

Āśvalāyana Gr̥hyasūtra, which consists of names of as many as thirty two teachers like Sumantu, Jaimini, Vaiśampāyana, Paila etc. Śaunaka's place in this list is last but one, for the last place is assigned to Āśvalāyana himself.

Dr. Narendra Nath Sharma<sup>1</sup> states : "Now if this Śaunaka is identified with the author of Bṛhaddevatā, we have ample sources to prove that he lived between 500-350 BC. For in the Bṛhaddevatā he often mentions Yāska (500 BC) and his Nirukta and ignores Kātyāyana (350 BC) and his Sarvānukramaṇi altogether. On the strength of this evidence alone he can be placed between 500-350 BC. Macdonell (Introduction to Bṛhaddevatā-xxiii-xiv) holds that Bṛhaddevatā is the work of a teacher of Śaunaka school and not of Śaunaka himself."

In the Bṛhad Upaniṣad (II.5.20; IV.5.26) and Ch. Upa. (I.9.3; IV.3.4.7), he is referred to as an Ācārya (preceptor).

There are number of works ascribed to him : Ṛkprātiśākhya, Ṛgveda Chandānukramaṇī, Ṛgveda Ṛṣyānukramaṇī, Ṛgveda Anuvākānukramaṇī, Ṛgveda Sūktānukramaṇī, Ṛgveda Kathānukramaṇī, Ṛgveda Pādavidhāna, Bṛhaddevatā, Śaunaka Smṛti, Caraṇa-vyūha, Ṛgvidhāna, Śaunaka Gr̥hyasūtra, Śaunaka Gr̥hyapariśiṣṭa, etc.

### JĀBĀLA

Sage Jābāla was a philosopher and son of a maid-servant Jabālā. The legend about his birth is found in Chāndogya Upaniṣad (IV.1-5). He went to sage Gautama Hārīdrumata for his studies where he was asked about his Gotra. He told the truth that he did not know anything about his father and he knows only his mother's name. Being impressed by his truthful speech, sage Gautama initiated him into the vow of Brahmacarya (Upanayana Saṁskāra) : तं होवाच नैतद्ब्राह्मणो विवकुर्मर्हति समिधं सोम्याऽऽहरोप त्वा नेष्ये न सत्यादगा इति ॥४.४.५॥ Hence he came to be known as Satyakāma Jābāla.

He is several times referred to in Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, and Bṛhad Upaniṣad<sup>2</sup> etc. In the Bṛhad Upaniṣad we find that Satyakāma once became the teacher of Janaka, the emperor of Videha, to whom he

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नोद्धरेत्प्रथमं पात्रं पितृणामर्घ्यपातितम् ।

आवृतास्तत्र तिष्ठन्ति पितरः शौनकोऽब्रवीत् ॥

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Sharma Narendra Nath — Āśvalāyana Gr̥hyasūtram, Introduction, page xiii-xiv; Pub.-Eastern Book Linkers, Delhi, 1976, First Edition.

<sup>2</sup> Bṛhad. Upa.-IV.1.6; VI.3.11,12; Chā. Upa.-IV.4.1-4; V.2.3; IV.5.6,7,8,9,10; Praśna Upa.-I.1; V.1; Maitreyī Upa.-VI.5,38

imparted the doctrine that Manas (mind) is Brahman (Br. Upa.-IV.1.6). Further more we find that Jānakī, the son of Āyāsthūṇa was one of the teachers of Satyakāma to whom he imparted the doctrine of mantha received from its originator Uddālaka Āruṇi through a series of teachers and pupils (Br. Upa.-VI.3.12).

In the Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa he is mentioned as an erudite personage, well versed in Vedas :

जाबालो याजलिः पैलः करथोऽगस्त्य एव च ।

एते वेदाङ्गवेदज्ञाः षोडशव्याधिनाशकाः ॥ ब्रह्मवैवर्त-१.१६.१४ ॥

ऋष्यशृङ्गो भरद्वाजश्चास्तोको देवलस्तथा ।

जैगीषव्योऽथ जाबालिर्यद्धृत्वा सर्वपूजितः ॥ ब्रह्मवैवर्त-२.४.७० ॥

### SAMVARTAKA

He is referred to in the *Atharvaśikhopaniṣad* (1) in the context of the concept of 'Omkāra'. यावसानेऽस्य चतुर्थ्यर्धमात्रा सा लुप्तमकारः सोथर्वणैर्मन्त्रैरथर्ववेद संवर्तकोऽग्निर्मरुत एकऋषि रुचिरा भास्वती स्वभा ।

In the *Jābālopaniṣad* (6), he is referred to as one of the Paramahamsas : तत्र परमहंसा नाम संवर्तकारुणिश्चेतकेतुदुर्वासऋषिनिदाघजडभरतदत्तात्रेयरैवतकप्रभृतयो . . . ।

In *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* (VIII.15.26 and XII.4.9), *Samvarttaḥ* or Samvarttaka is referred as Agni :

दहन्निव दिशो दिग्भिः संवर्त्ताग्निरिवोत्थितः ।

ततः संवर्तको वह्निः सङ्कर्षणसुखोत्थितः ।

दहत्यनिलवेगोत्थः शून्यान् भूविवरानथ ॥

In *Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa* (CXXX.11), *Samvarttaḥ* is referred as a *Muniviśeṣaḥ* (a particular kind of sage) :

ऋत्विक् तस्य तु संवर्त्तो बभूवाङ्गिरसः सुतः ।

भ्राता बृहस्पतेर्विप्र महात्मा तपसां निधिः ॥

अयं हि धर्मशास्त्रप्रयोजकानामन्यतमः ॥

### DURVĀSĀ

Durvāsā is referred to as one of the *Paramahamsas* in the *Jābālopaniṣad* (6) : तत्र परमहंसा नाम संवर्तकारुणिश्चेतकेतुदुर्वास . . . परित्यज्यात्मानमन्विच्छेत् ।

We find his reference in RV-VII.1.19 :

मा नो अग्रेऽवीरते परा दा दुर्वाससेऽमतये मा नो अस्यै ॥

In *Purāṇas*, he is known as the son of sage Atri and brother of Dattātreyā (c. 2600 BC) (*Brahma*-117.2; *Agni*-20.12)

There are three stories related to his birth viz., He was one of the mind-born sons of Brahmā; He was one of the sons among the three sons of Atri and Anasūyā (*Bhā*.-IV.1; *Viṣṇu*-I.25); He was one of the incarnations of God Śaṅkara (*Mār*k.-XVII.9.11; *Viṣṇu*-I.9.2). He is a sage whose nature is wrathful (*Mār*k. Pu.-XVII-9.16; *Viṣṇu Pu*.-I.9.4.6). Gajendragadkar<sup>1</sup> in his introduction to the text of *Abhijñānaśākuntalam* states : “Durvāsā is fiery tempered unable to brook even for a moment what he considers an insult to his greatness, impetuous in his manners and crooked by nature. Durvāsā represents the discipline of *Brahmacarya*. If mistake is committed, whether consciously or unconsciously, punishment is bound to follow. There is no scope for forgiveness.”

The sage is said to be the author of *Āryādviśatī*, *Devīmāhīmāstotra*, *Paraśivamahimāstora*, *Lalitāstavaratna* etc.

### NIDĀGHA

In *Jābālopaniṣad* (6) Nidāgha is referred to as one of the *Paramahansa* : तत्र परमहंसा नाम संवर्तकारुणिश्चेतकेतुदुर्वासक्रभुनिदाघ . . . परित्यज्यात्मानमन्विच्छेत् ।

In *Annapūrṇopaniṣad* (1) Nidāgha is mentioned as *Yogīndra* - best among the Yogis. He bows down to *Rbhu* – the best among the knowers of Brahman and inquires about the entity of *Ātman* :

निदाघ नाम योगीन्द्र ऋभुं ब्रह्मविदां वरम् ।

प्रणम्यदण्डवद्भूमावुत्थाय स पुनर्मुनिः ॥१॥

तां मे ब्रूहि महाविद्यां मोक्षसाम्राज्यदायिनीम् ।

निदाघ त्वं कृतार्थोऽसि शृणु विद्यां सनातनीम् ॥

Sage Nidāgha requests Rbhu to preach *Brahmavidyā*. In the second *Adhyāya* (1) Nidāgha asks about attachment and *Mokṣa*. Answering all the queries of Nidāgha, sage Rbhu explains to him about the four states of consciousness (III.13) (viz. Jāgrat (Waking), Svapna (Dreaming), Suṣupta (Dreamless sleep) and Turīya) and about Jīvanmukta (IV.18). Highlighting on detachment (V.7), Rbhu tells Nidāgha to be in unison with the Supreme Being i.e. attaining Mokṣa.)

सैवाहमिति निश्चित्य निदाघ कृतकृत्यवान् ।

न भूतं न भविष्यच्च चिन्तयामि कदाचन ॥५.५७॥

<sup>1</sup> Gajendragadkar A. B. — *Abhijñānaśākuntalam*, Introduction, pages li-lui.

According to *Nārada Purāṇa* also (I.49), Nidāgha was the son of sage Pulatsya and disciple of sage Ṛbhu, the son of Brahmā.

### JADABHARATA

Jaḍabharata is mentioned as one of the *Paramahamṣas* in the *Jābālopaniṣad* (6) : तत्र परमहंसा नाम संवर्तकारुणिश्चेतकेतुदुर्वासक्रभुनिदाघजडभरत . . . परित्यज्यात्मानमन्विच्छेत् ।

He was a great Yogi and a meritorious royal sage (Rājārṣi) and the eldest son of Ṛṣabhadeva (the son of the king of *Ajanābhavarśa* i.e. *Bharatavarśa*) and Jayantī (daughter of Indra), as stated in various *Purāṇas* like *Bhā.*-V.4.9; *Vāyu*-XXXIII.52; *Brahmāṇḍa*-II.14.62; *Līṅga*-I.47.24 and *Viṣṇu*-II.1.32. He is referred to as a generous king who looked after the welfare of his subjects very nicely. Different legends about his births are found in *Purāṇas* like *Bhāgavata* (V.7.14) and *Viṣṇu* (II.13-16). In his first birth he was a celibate performing penance in the hermitage of sage Pulaha. His second birth was of a deer, due to his extreme attachment with a deer in the first birth, while in the third birth he was born in a Brahmin family of *Āṅgirā* race. Here he was known as Jaḍa-Bharata. as he behaved like an idiot, foolish, blind and deaf fellow, to be away from this mortal illusory world and contemplated in solitude. तत्रापि स्वजनसङ्गाच्च भृशमुद्विजमानो भगवतः कर्मबन्धविध्वंसनश्रवणस्मरणगुणविवरण-चरणारविन्दयुगलं मनसा विदधदात्मनः प्रतिधातमाशङ्कमानो भगवदनुग्रहेणानुस्मृतस्वपूर्वजन्मावलि-रात्मानमुन्मत्तजडान्धवधिरस्वरूपेण दर्शयामास लोकस्य ।भा.पु.-५.९.३ ॥

Due to his indifferent attitude towards all he came to be known as Jaḍabharata.

### RAIVATAKA

Raivataka is mentioned as one of the *Paramahamṣas* in *Jābālopaniṣad* (6) : तत्र परमहंसा नाम संवर्तकारुणिश्चेतकेतुदुर्वासक्रभुनिदाघजडभरतदत्तात्रेयरैवतकप्रभृतयोऽव्यक्तलिङ्गा . . . । He is referred to as a sage in *MBh.* (II.5.11) :

नारदः सुमहातेजा ऋषिणः सहितस्तदा ।

पारिजातेन राजेन्द्र रैवतेन च धामता ॥

We find reference to 'Raivata' in *Devi-Bhāgavata* (X.8) where he is considered to be the best *Ācārya* of *Dharmaśāstra* who reformed the Varna system of people by continuously practicing or chanting the seed syllables (*Bīja-mantras*).

### KAUNḌINYA

The etymology of the word Kaunḍinya is as follows : कुण्डिनस्य स्वनामख्यातमुनिविशेषस्य गोत्रापत्यं इति । गगदित्वात् यञ् । कुण्डिनमुनिपुत्रः ।

In *Annapūrṇopaniṣad* (III.3), when sage Nidāgha asks Ṛbhu about the *Jīvanmuktas*. Sage Ṛbhu mentions the names of two great sages viz., Māṇḍavya and Kaunḍinya, who were *Jīvanmuktas* :

विदेहमुक्तेः किं रूपं तद्वान्को वा महामुनिः ।

कं योगं समुपस्थाय प्राप्तवान्परमं पदम् ॥३.३१॥

सुमेरोर्वसुधापीठे माण्डव्यो नाम वै मुनिः ।

कौण्डिन्यात्तत्त्वमास्थाय जीवन्मुक्तोऽभवत्पुरा ॥३.३२॥

In *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (II.6.1; IV.6.1) he is mentioned as disciple of Śaṇḍilya. His pupil is *Kauśika*.

He is born of *Kuṇḍina* family (MBh.-S.-IV.14).

Kuṇḍina muni was one of the seven seers (*Mantradṛṣṭā*) of Vasiṣṭha's race (*Matsya-Adhyāya*-144).

### MĀNḌAVYA

Sage Nidāgha is asking Ṛbhu, about the form of *Jīvanmukta* and by what means *Jīvanmukti* can be attained. At that time Ṛbhu mentions the names of two great sages who were *Jīvanmuktas* viz., Māṇḍavya and Kaunḍinya (*Annapūrṇopaniṣad*-III.3).

विदेहमुक्तेः किं रूपं तद्वान्को वा महामुनिः ।

कं योगं समुपस्थाय प्राप्तवान्परमं पदम् ॥३.३१॥

सुमेरोर्वसुधापीठे माण्डव्यो नाम वै मुनिः ।

कौण्डिन्यात्तत्त्वमास्थाय जीवन्मुक्तोऽभवत्पुरा ॥३.३२॥

As stated by Derāsarī,<sup>1</sup> he was a *Brahmarṣi*, who had pierced a nail to an insect in his childhood. The king was apprehensive of his being thief and he was going to be hanged. At that time he thought – ‘Due to which fault of mine I am sentenced to death?’ So he went to Yama with his subtle body and asked him the reason for his Capital Punishment. Yama informed him about his deeds. He asked whether a person who does any action when ignorant does contain any merit or demerit?, if not then why he was punished? He cursed Yama to take birth on earth for 100 years in

<sup>1</sup> Derāsarī Dāhyābhāi — Paurāṇika Kathā Koṣa, page 397

*Śūdra Yoni*. So Yama took birth as Vidura (MBh. Ādi-ch.-1.7-1.8). Later on the real thief was caught and Māṇḍavya was proved to be innocent. He was then respected and sent back. But a little nail (*Śūla*) was left in his body. It was then removed by that king but then also he came to be known as 'Aṇimāṇḍavya'.

Thus it is observed that sages like Atharvan, Aṅgiras, Bhṛgu, Āruṇī and Śaunaka are referred to in both the Vedic as well as Upaniṣadic literature. While sages Atri, Janaka and Duryāsā are found in all the three viz. Vedic, Upaniṣadic and Purāṇic literature. Moreover, sages like Yājñavalkya, Āśvalāyana, Śvetaketu, Raivataka and Māṇḍavya are referred to only in the Upaniṣads. While references to the sages like Jābāla, Saṁvartaka, Nidāgha, Jaḍabharata and Kauṇḍinya are found in Upaniṣadic as well as Purāṇic literature.

### GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

In the minor *Upaniṣads* studied by me there are references to some Indian cities and towns like *Avimukta* (*Kāśī*) [*Jābāla Upaniṣad* and *Kaivalya Upaniṣad*], *Kurukṣetra* (*Jābāla Upaniṣad*), *Gokula* (*Kṛṣṇa Upaniṣad*) and *Vṛndāvana* (*Kṛṣṇa Upaniṣad*), which exist even today the mountain Sumeru is also mentioned in the *Annappūrṇā Upa.* (III.2).

### **AVIMUKTA / KĀŚĪ / VĀRĀNASĪ :**

In the *Jābāla Upaniṣad*, the word *Avimukta* is said to be an abode of Ātmā and the two rivers Varāṇā and Nāsī are described not as geographical rivers, but as the mystical veins in the human body, which purify the sense-objects : सोऽविमुक्त उपास्यो य एषोऽनन्तोऽव्यक्त आत्मा सोऽविमुक्ते प्रतिष्ठित इति । सोऽविमुक्तः कस्मिन्प्रतिष्ठित इति वरणायां नास्यां च मध्ये प्रतिष्ठित इति । का वै वरणां का च नासीति सर्वानिन्द्रियकृतान्दोषान्वारयतीति तेन वरणा भवति सर्वानिन्द्रियकृतान्पापान्नाशयतीति तेन नासी भवतीति ।

The term *Avimukta* is also found in *Kaivalyopaniṣad-Khaṇḍa-II*. "Here it is used as a synonym of Lord Śiva" states Swāmī Mādhavānanda<sup>1</sup> : यः शतरुद्रीयमधीते सोऽग्निपूतो भवति सुरापानात्पूतो भवति ब्रह्महत्यात्पूतो भवति कृत्याकृत्यात्पूतो भवति तस्मादविमुक्तमाश्रितो भवति ।

The name *Avimukta* is generally been explained as derived from the negative participle 'na' (for which 'a' is substituted) and *Vimukta* (forsaken). It means that the Holy place is so called because it was never abandoned by Śiva (sometimes both Śiva and his consort) (*Skanda Purāṇa*,

<sup>1</sup> Swāmī Mādhavānanda — Minor Upaniṣads, page 81



*Kāśī khaṇḍa* XXVI.27 and *Matsya purāṇa*-CLXXX.54). The *Liṅga Purāṇa* suggests another derivation (*Liṅga Purāṇa-Pūrvārdha* - XCII.143) 'Avi' means 'sin' and *mukta* means 'released', hence *Avimukta* means that Holy place which is devoid of sin or evil objects.

The *Skanda Purāṇa* – *Kāśī khaṇḍa* states that if a man after reaching the great cemetery i.e. Avimukta, dies there, he has never again to lie in the cemetery (i.e. he is not born again) :

महाश्मशानमासाद्य यदि दैवद्विपद्यते ।

पुनः श्मशानशयनं न क्वापि लभते पुमान् ॥स्कन्दपुराण-३१.१३०॥

अविमुक्तं परं क्षेत्रं जन्तूनां मुक्तिदं सदा ।लिङ्गपुराण-पूर्वार्ध-९१.७५॥

सेवेतं सततं धीमान् विशेषान्मरणान्तिके ॥लिङ्गपुराण-पूर्वार्ध-९१.७६॥

The *Matsya Purāṇa* (CLXXX.47) and *Liṅga Purāṇa* (*Pūrvārdha*-XCII.38; CLXXX.56-57) contain many striking passages about the unique greatness of Banaras : "Vārāṇasī is always the secret place; which is always the cause of *Mokṣa* for all beings. All the sins that a man may have accumulated in thousands of past lives are destroyed the moment one enters *Avimukta*".

इदं गुह्यतमं क्षेत्रं सदा वाराणसी मम ।

सर्वेषामेव भूतानां हेतुर्मोक्षस्य सर्वदा ॥मत्स्य-१८०.४७, लिङ्ग-पूर्वार्ध-९२.३८॥

प्रयागे च भवेन्मोक्ष इह वा मत्परिग्रहात् ।

प्रयागादपि तीर्थाग्न्यादियमेव महत् स्मृतम् ॥मत्स्य-१८०.५६, ५७॥

जन्मान्तरसहस्रेण यत्पापं पूर्वसञ्चितम् ।

अविमुक्तं प्रविष्टस्य तत्सर्वं व्रजति क्षयम् ॥मत्स्य-१८०.१७, पद्म-१.३३.१७॥

Banaras has been known for centuries under various names like Vārāṇasī, Kāśī, Avimukta, Ānandakānana and Śmaśāna or Mahāśmaśāna.

In *Viṣṇu-purāṇa*<sup>1</sup> (V.34), the names Kāśī, Vārāṇasī and *Avimukta* are used as synonyms.

Kāśī is derived from the root  $\sqrt{kaś}$  'to shine' or 'to look brilliant or beautiful'. The *Skanda Purāṇa* (XXVI.67; XXX.5) says that the city of Kāśī became famous by that name because it sheds light on (the way to) *Nirvāṇa* (final release) or because that indescribable refulgence viz. God Śiva shines forth there. According to the *Harivaṁśa Purāṇa*, the dynasty ruling in Banaras was founded by Purūravas, one of the grandsons of

<sup>1</sup> Upreti Thanesh Chandra — *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*-Vil. I.

Manu. The seventh king in the genealogical list is Kaśa, after whom the district or kingdom of Kāśī came to be named<sup>1</sup>, whose dynasty later produced the famous king Divodāsa of Kāśī. The *Kāśī Khaṇḍa* (XXVI.67) explains काशते इति काशी – because that light, which is God Śiva, shines (*Kāśate*) here.

Kāśī is the largest unit—a symbolic circle with a radius of five *Krośas* or about ten miles. This Vārāṇasī is, roughly, the urban city today, from the Varāṇā to the Asi rivers. *Avimukta* is a still smaller unit and the *Āntargṛha* or “Inner sanctum” is smaller still including only the dense centre of the city surrounding the Viśvanātha temple, states Diana L. Eck.<sup>2</sup>

In the *Atharvaveda* we find a mention of Kāśī :

गंधारिभ्यो मृजवद्भ्यः काशीभ्यो मगधेभ्यः ।

प्रेष्यजनमिव शेवधिं तक्मानं परिदक्षसि ॥ अथर्ववेद-५.२२.१४ ॥

In several other *Purāṇas*, Kāśī or Vārāṇasī has been lauded and described at great length.<sup>3</sup> The *Kāśī khaṇḍa* alone has about 15000 verses on Banaras and its sub-*tīrthas*. It is stated in *Padmapurāṇa*<sup>4</sup> and *Matsya Purāṇa*<sup>5</sup> (CLXXXII.8; CLXXXIII.77,78) that a person achieves emancipation if he dies in Kāśī :

प्राणप्रयाणावसरे ये काश्यां संगता जनाः ।

ये वा काशीति भाषन्ते ते वा विष्णुपरायणाः ॥

Vārāṇasī is situated between the Varāṇā river, which flows into the Ganges on the north, and the Asi river, which joins the Ganges on the South, Vārāṇasī stretches along the river between the two. And in the *Kūrma purāṇa* (I.31.63), we find it simply put: “Vārāṇasī is the city between the Vārāṇā and the Asi”. Diana L. Eck<sup>6</sup> opines : “It is likely, however, that the city did not receive its name from these two rivers, but

<sup>1</sup> Altekar A. S. — History of Benares, page 9.

<sup>2</sup> Eck Diana — Banaras : City of Lights, page 25 (ftn)

<sup>3</sup> Vide Matsya-CLXXX.185 (verses 411), Kūrma-I.31.35 (verses 226), Liṅga Purāṇa (Pūrva-bhāga-XCII (verses 190), Padma Purāṇa (Ādi khaṇḍa 33-37, verses 170), Agni Purāṇa-112, Skanda Purāṇa, Kāśī khaṇḍa VI, Nāradiya Purāṇa (Uttara Ch. 48-51) Bhāgavata purāṇa (X-66-10,12)

<sup>4</sup> According to Padma-purāṇa (V.58), “The Varāṇā and the Asi are two rivers, set there by gods. Between them is a holy land (Kṣetra) and there is none more excellent on earth.”

<sup>5</sup> The Matsya-purāṇa also mentions the Varāṇasī River as having a confluence with the Ganges (CLXXXIII.73) and as constituting one of the boundaries of Vārāṇasī (CLXXXIII.61.2).”

<sup>6</sup> op.cit. — page 26

rather from the single river that bordered it on the north, known to early literature as the Varāṇasī River, not the Varāṇā. When the rivers of Indra are named in the MBh. (VI.10.30), the Vārāṇasī is among them.

Thus the name Vārāṇasī is derived in several *Purāṇas*<sup>1</sup> from the names of two streams Varāṇā (modern Barṇā) and Asī, refer to the northern and southern boundaries of the city.

In the *Vāmana-purāṇa*<sup>2</sup> (II.26.9), the two rivers are said to originate from the body of the primordial person, *Puruṣa*, at the beginning of time. The Varāṇā issued from the right foot of the cosmic giant and the Asī issued from its left foot. "The tract of land lying between them is the best place of pilgrimage in the three worlds and is potent enough to destroy all sins. Its peer does not exist in heaven, earth and the netherworld."

According to Dr. A. B. Keith<sup>3</sup> Vārāṇasī is named on the river Varāṇavatī mentioned in AV (IV.7.1) वारिदं वारयातै वारणावत्यामधि । तत्रामृतस्यासिकं तेना ते वारये विषम् ॥ अथर्ववेद-४.७.१ ॥

Vārāṇasī and the rivers are explained from mystical point of view. For e.g. *Skanda Purāṇa*, *Kāśī khaṇḍa* (V.25) says that Asī is the *Idā-Nāḍī*, Varāṇā is the *Pingalā-Nāḍī*, *Avimukta* is *Suṣumṇā* and Vārāṇasī is all the three:

सहोवाचेति जाबालिरारुणेऽसिडा मता ।

वरणा पिङ्गला नाडी तदन्तस्त्वविमुक्तकम् ॥

सा सुषुम्णा परा नाडी त्रयं वाराणसी त्वसौ । स्कन्द.काशी-५.२५, नारदीय(उ)-४७.२२, २३।

The names most frequently used in the *Purāṇas* are Vārāṇasī and *Avimukta*. Aśvaghoṣa in his *Buddhacaritam* (XV.101) seems to identify Vārāṇasī with Kāśī.

Thus, from the context of the term '*Avimukta*' as found in the *Jābāla Upaniṣad*, it is clear that '*Avimukta*' is referred as a holy place which destroys the sins of people. Moreover, the place i.e. the junction of the eyebrows, is considered to be the best place for meditation. Hence I think that the connection of this place with the rivers Varāṇā and Nāsī and in turn with the three *Nāḍīs* viz. *Idā*, *Pingalā* and *Suṣumṇā* is correct. So by meditating on *Avimukta* i.e. God Śiva (the Supreme Reality) a person is freed from the cycle of birth and death and attains liberation.

<sup>1</sup> Agnipurāṇa-3520, Padmapurāṇa-V.58, Ādiparva -33.49, Kūrmapurāṇa-I.31.63; Bhāgavata Purāṇa-X.66.42

<sup>2</sup> Gupta A. S. — The Vāmana Purāṇa with English Translation.

<sup>3</sup> Keith A. B. — Vedic Index-Part I, page 154.

According to Baiḍyanath Saraswati, "Although the earliest descriptions of the city may be traced back to the late Vedic times (1400-1000 BC), as one of the first Aryan settlements in the middle Gangetic valley, Kāśī was referred to in various Sanskrit texts.<sup>1</sup> From such numerous references in particularly all the important scriptures of the Hindus it seems that Kāśī remained a city of distinction even in ancient times."

### KURUKṢETRA :

In the *Jābāla Upaniṣad* (first *Khaṇḍa*) importance of Kurukṣetra is highlighted :

अविमुक्तं वै कुरुक्षेत्रं देवानां देवयजनं सर्वेषां भूतानां ब्रह्मसदनम् । तस्माद्यत्र क्वचन गच्छति  
तदेव मन्येत तदविमुक्तमेव . . . ॥१॥

It is considered as a place of sacrifice and as an abode of God. Whosoever obtains or attains it is freed from this mortal *Samsāra* i.e. is liberated.

It is spoken of as '*Dharmakṣetra*' in the opening verse of the *Bhagavadgītā*<sup>2</sup>.

Lokmanya Balgangadhar Tilak<sup>3</sup> in *Gītā Rahasya* rightly states : "Kurukṣetra is an open space of ground surrounding the city of Hastināpura. The present city of Delhi stands on this field. *Kuru*, the common ancestor of the *Kauravas* and the *Pāṇḍavas*, was ploughing this field laboriously by his own hands. That is why it is called '*Kṣetra*' (or field). It is said in the *Bhārata*, that, when Indra thereafter gave to *Kuru* the blessing that all those who would die on that field in war or while performing religious austerities, would obtain Heaven. *Kuru* stopped ploughing the field. (*Mahābhārata-Śalya*-53) As a result of this blessing, this field came to be called '*Dharmakṣetra*' or 'sacred ground'. There is also a story that *Paraśurāma* killed all the *Kṣatriyas* on twenty-one successive occasions on this field and in that way offered a pious oblation to the manes of his deceased ancestors (made a *Pitṛ-tarpana*); and there have been big wars, even in modern times, on this field."

<sup>1</sup> Such as Jābālopaniṣad of the YV, Śāṅkha Smṛti, Parsara Smṛti, the MBh., the Rāmāyaṇa, the Bhāgavata, the Devi Bhāgavata, the Śiva Purāṇa, the Liṅga Purāṇa, the Brahmaparivarta Purāṇa, the Nārādīya Purāṇa, the Padma Purāṇa, the Vāmana Purāṇa, the Agni Purāṇa, the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, the Vāyu Purāṇa, the Saura Purāṇa, the Bhaviṣya Purāṇa and the most important, the Skanda Purāṇa, in which the 4<sup>th</sup> Khaṇḍa the Kāśī Khaṇḍa.

<sup>2</sup> धर्मक्षेत्रे कुरुक्षेत्रे समवेता युयुत्सवः ।

मामकाः पाण्डवाश्चैव किमकुर्वत सञ्जयः ॥भ.गी.-१.१॥

<sup>3</sup> Tilak Bal Gangadhar — *Gītā Rahasya*, page 852.

N. L. Dey<sup>1</sup> and D. P. Derasari<sup>2</sup> in their Geographical dictionary of Ancient and Medieval India state that “Kurukṣetra is called Thāneśwara. The district formerly included Sonapat, Amin, Karnal and Panipat and was situated between the Sarasvatī on the North and the Drṣadvatī on the South. (*Mahābhārata*, *Vanaparva*, Ch. 83).

The importance of Kurukṣetra is found in the *Purāṇas* like *Vāmana*. According to the *Vāmana Purāṇa* (XXII.47), *Kuruṅjāṅgala* is the country between the Sarasvatī and Drṣadvatī, while *Manu* (II.17.18) defines *Brahmāvarta* as the country created by God between the two divine rivers Sarasvatī and Drṣadvatī, states that *Brahmarṣi deśa* which is slightly less (in holiness) than *Brahmāvarta* comprises Kurukṣetra, the countries of Matsya, Pāñcāla and Śūrasena :

सरस्वती दृष्टव्योर्देवनद्योर्यदन्तरम् ।  
तं देवनिर्मितं देशं ब्रह्मावर्तं प्रचक्षते ॥मनुस्मृति-१.१७॥

### GOKULA

It is a word in neuter gender meaning herd of cows.

Gokula is referred to in *Kṛṣṇopaniṣad* as equivalent to *Vaikuṇṭha*, the Supreme Abode of God Kṛṣṇa :

गोकुलं वनवैकुण्ठं तपसास्तत्र ते द्रुमाः ।  
लोभक्रोधादयो दैत्याः कलिकालस्तिरस्कृतः ॥९॥

Similar reference is found in *Aṇubhāṣya* on *Brahmasūtra* – तानि परे तथा ह्याह १४.२.१५, where Viṭṭhaleśajī (1515-1594 AD), the second son of Vallabhācārya (1473-1525 AD) mentions Gokula as even surpassing *Vaikuṇṭha* : उक्तानि वस्तूनि परे प्रकृतिकालाद्यतीते वैकुण्ठादप्युत्कृष्टे श्रीगोकुल एव सन्तीति शेषः । *Aṇubhāṣya* (IV.4.20). It is a place in Mathurā where God Kṛṣṇa used to reside, as is stated in *Śrīmadbhāgavatam* :

कालेन वज्रतालपेन गोकुले रामकेशवौ ।  
जानुभ्यां सह पाणिभ्यां रिङ्गमाणौ विजहतुः ॥भा.पु.-१०.८.२१॥  
अथ कृष्णः परिवृतो ज्ञातिभिर्मुदितात्मभिः ।  
अनुगीयमानो न्यविशद् व्रजं गोकुलमण्डितम् ॥भाग.पु.-१०.१८.१॥

<sup>1</sup> Dey N. L. — Geographical Dictionary of Ancient and Medieval India, page 110; Pub.— Oriental Books Reprint Corporation, Third Edition, 1971.

<sup>2</sup> Derasari D. P. — Bhaugolika Kośa, page 49,50.

There are numerous references to Gokula in Bhāgavata Purāṇa.<sup>1</sup>

As stated by N. L. Dey<sup>2</sup> it is known by three names : (1) Gokula, (2) Vraja and (3) Mahāvana.

“It is six miles South-West of Mathurā across the Yamunā, where Kṛṣṇa was reared up by Nanda during his infancy. The name of Vraja was extended to Vṛndāvana and the neighbouring villages the scene of Kṛṣṇa's early life.” states Dr. N. L. Dey<sup>3</sup>.

Gokula is a place, where Kṛṣṇa was reared up by Nanda, the foster-father of Kṛṣṇa, who moved from Gokula to Vṛndāvana to escape molestations from the myrmidons of Kāṁsa (*Ādi Parva*-ch.3).

### VRNDĀVANA

Vṛndāvana is referred in *Kṛṣṇopaniṣad* while eulogizing Kṛṣṇa playing with the *Gopīs* in Vṛndāvana :

स्तुवते सततं यस्तु सोऽवतीर्णो महीतले ।  
वने वृन्दावने क्रीडन्गोपगोपीसुरैः सह ॥७॥

Similar references are found in *Bhāgavata-purāṇam* :

एव स भगवान् कृष्णो वृन्दावन चरः क्वचित् ।  
ययौ राममृते राजन् कालिन्दी सखिभिर्वृतः ॥१०.१५.४०॥  
स च वृन्दावनगुणैर्वसन्त इव लक्षितः ।  
यत्रास्ते भगवान् साक्षाद् रामेण सह केशवः ॥१०.१८.३॥

There are several other references of Vṛndāvana in Bhāgavata Purāṇa.<sup>4</sup>

The Etymology of the word Vṛndāvana is found in the *Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa* as follows :

वृन्दा यत्र तपस्तेपे तत्तु वृन्दावनं स्मृतम् ।  
वृन्दयाऽत्र कृता क्रीडा तेन वा मुनिपुङ्गव ॥ब्रह्मवैवर्त-श्रीकृष्णजन्मखण्ड-१७.२०४॥  
तस्याश्च तपसः स्थानं तदिदं च तपोधन ।  
तेन वृन्दावनं नाम प्रवदन्ति मनीषिणः ॥ब्रह्मवैवर्त-श्रीकृष्णजन्मखण्ड-१७.२१२॥

<sup>1</sup> Bhāg. Purāṇa— X<sup>th</sup> Skandha – 2.7; 5.19,31, 32; 6.6; 7.21; 8.21,26;13.41;16.23; 18.1; 25.13; 26.19, 28; 3.5, 6; 37.3; 38.1, 24; 39.12; 44.24, 27; 46.7; 47.52, 54; 65.1; XII.12.27

<sup>2</sup> Dey N. L. — Geographical Dictionary of Ancient and Medieval India, page 234.

<sup>3</sup> ibid

<sup>4</sup> X<sup>th</sup> Skanda – 11.28, 35, 36; 12.18; 14.59; 15.1, 19, 47; 18.3; 21.5, 10, 20; 22.29; 30.24; 46.18; 47.43.

राधाषोडशनाम्नाञ्च वृन्दानाम श्रुतौ श्रुतम् ।

तस्याः क्रीडावनं रम्यं तेन वृन्दावनं स्मृतम् ॥ ब्रह्मवैवर्त-श्रीकृष्णजन्मखण्ड-१७.२१४ ॥

गोलोके प्रीतये तस्याः कृष्णेन निर्मितं पुरा ।

क्रीडार्थं भुवि तत्राम्ना ननं वृन्दावनं स्मृतम् ॥ ब्रह्मवैवर्त-श्रीकृष्णजन्मखण्ड-१७.२१५ ॥

Vṛndāvana is the pleasure grove where God Kṛṣṇa played the divine-sport with *Vṛndā* identified with a *Gopī* (cowherdess), *Tulasī* (a basil-plant) and Rādhā respectively in the above text.

Vṛndāvana is in the district of Mathurā, where Kṛṣṇa showed to the world examples of transcendental love through the *Gopīs*.

The Nidhuvana and Nikuñjavana, the celebrated bowers of love, Pulina, the place of *Rāsamaṇḍala*, the *Vastraharaṇa-ghāṭa*, the *Kālīya-dāha-ghāṭa*, all situated in Vṛndāvana, were the scenes of Kṛṣṇa's love and adventures. Vṛndāvana appears to have attained celebrity at the time of Kālidāsa (*Raghuvamśa*-VI.50).

### SUMERU

We find the reference to Sumeru mountain in the Annapūrṇopaniṣad (III.2) as the seat of a sage named Māṇḍavya : सुमेरोर्वसुधापीठे माण्डव्यो नाम वै मुनिः । कौण्डिन्यात्तत्त्वमास्थाय जीवन्मुक्तोऽभवत्पुरा ॥ Sumeru means the sacred mountain Meru i.e. mountain Rudra-Himālaya in Garwal, where the river Ganges has got its source. It is near Badarikāśrama. The Kedāranātha mountain is traditionally known as the original Sumeru.

### Conclusion :

Although these texts of minor Upaniṣads are the philosophical texts, we find the reference to the sacred places like Vārāṇasī, Kurukṣetra, Gokula and Vṛndāvana, which are well known since hundreds of years and which are frequently mentioned in the ancient Sanskrit texts. Moreover the places Vārāṇasī and Kurukṣetra are pointed out earlier by the Purāṇas as centre of pilgrimage considered to bestow Mokṣa (Salvation) to a person as stated in Jābāla and Kaivalya Upaniṣads. While the places Gokula and Vṛndāvana, holy due to the then presence of Śrī Kṛṣṇa are given the same importance even today. As in Kṛṣṇopaniṣad these places are glorified also in Purāṇas like Harivamśa, Bhāgavata, Matsya, Brahmavaivarta, etc.

Hence the holy as well as prominent places referred to in these minor Upaniṣads are well-known from spiritual as well as geographical point of view.

