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Vedic Text-critical Studies

(A Summary¹)

1. It is being now generally believed that the Vedic text-critical studies which began over a century ago, have been completed.

2. The above belief seems to be statistically strengthened by the fact that out of 10,000 entries as made, in all, in the Vedic Bibliographies of Renou and Dandekar, only 400 relate to the text-editions that have appeared after 1930.

3. The still crying need, however, of Vedic scholarship is the reorientation and further persistent pursuance of text-critical studies in this field.

4. For the phenomenon of phonetic change, accompanied by a number of other accentuating factors, has worked, through the ages, a veritable havoc with the Vedic texts.

5. It might be illustrated by citing here just one text², namely, *Atharvaveda* (Śaunaka) V, 1, 5 which reads as under:

Tād ū śu te mahāt prthujman námaḥ kavīḥ kāvyeṇā kṛṇomi
Yāt samyāñcāv abhiyántāv abhi ksām átrā mahī ródhacakre vāvṛdhéte

The parallel reading of *Atharvaveda* (Paippalāda, ms.) VI, 2,5 is as follows:

Tad ū śu ta mahā prathūryasaṁnamaḥ kavīḥ kāvyeṇā kṛṇomi
Yat samyāñcobhyañco yakṣādāmaivoda cakrā vavardhā

This verse has been previously translated, thrice, into Hindi, twice, into German and, twice, into English, but without much success. Indeed, Whitney, among the seven translators, has frankly admitted that he has not been able to understand it at all.

¹ The writer regrets that, owing to serious illness, he has not been able to complete this paper and, in consequence, seeks just to associate himself with the present Commemoration Volume through this summary of the same.

² For many more Vedic texts of this type, the reader might turn to the writer's Presidential Address to the XV All-India Oriental Conference (Vedic Section) as published in the Proceedings of the said Conference and, also, to the critical apparatus attached to the seven volumes, as issued so far, of his 15-Volume *Vedic Word-Concordance*.

On the basis of detailed text-critical examination, aided by proper consideration of traditional record of context and metre, of the two recensions of the verse, it is proposed to read and render it as under:

Tát ū śú te mahát prthūrjasman-n ámah, kavīḥ kāvyenā kṛṇomi
Yát samāñjāv abhyāñjāv abhī yakṣāv, átrā mahī vródhaskre vāvrdhyéte

“(O Varuṇa) of great might, I, a singer, sing profusely, through (my) song, verily, of that great (deed of) valour of thine (which manifests itself in)

That here do shine forth for ever the (two) luminaries, very brilliant and all round refulgent, in front of the heaven and the earth that accommodate (all beings)”.

6. The following special points relevant to the above reconstruction and interpretation might be noted here:

(I) Metrical scheme (=Puro-br̥hatī): 12+8 : 11+11.

(II) In *a*, the pronoun *tát* is in apposition to the noun *ámas*- (not *námas*- as given by Pa d a p ā ṭ ṭ h a and followed by all previous writers).

(III) In *b*, the verb *kṛṇomi* belongs to √ *kṛ* ‘praise’ (and not ‘do’ as understood so far).

(IV) *Yát*, which is correlated to *tát*, heads a subordinate noun clause formed by *c* and *d*, indicating the content of *ámas* — which is the object of praise.

(V) *Yakṣáu* — (‘the shining ones’ refers to the sun and the moon and is derived from √ *yaj* ‘shine’. The two masculine adjectives in *c* (being the despair of previous writers) concord with this word.

(VI) *mahī* is dual (not sing. as taken by others) and indicates ‘the heaven and the earth’ (not the latter alone as understood by others).

(VII) **vródhas* — (in **vródhas-kra-*) means (and is etymologically related to) ‘abode’.

(VIII) *vāvrdhyéte* is a frequentative verb from √ **vr̥dh* ‘shine’.

7. In view of what has been said above and elsewhere as under reference above, the recensional readings as pertaining to each Vedic text, in the first instance, and, then, the same as pertaining to all the Vedic and sub-Vedic texts, taken together, should be treated as so many time-worn manuscripts and effaced inscriptions, first to be deciphered and, then, to be text-critically studied towards what should really be the First Critical Edition of the Vedic text-tradition.

8. It is necessary to invite the immediate attention of the scholars interested in this task ahead to the following two pre-requisites:

(a) That recent text-publications have generally paid scant attention to proper evaluation of Vedic accent materially detracts from their value to text-critical research. The existence of different systems of accentography makes it very difficult to institute comparative textual study in the ac-

cent-perspective. It might partly explain why basic Vedic text-criticism has made little further progress after the publication of Oldenberg's *Rgveda-Noten* in 1909. The uniform system of Vedic accentography as devised for and advantageously employed in the writer's *Vedic Word-Concordance* is commended for adoption in future Vedic text-publications in Devanāgarī script³.

- (b) The difficulty in having at one's beck and call every piece of previous contribution on the subject of one's study is responsible for much overlapping and, consequently, loss of time and energy. It is, therefore, imperative that all centres of Indological study and research might pool their resources towards producing in Sanskrit as well as English a complete digest of modern Indological studies and researches which might have been carried out in different languages during the past two centuries or so.

9. So far, by fancying the routine liturgical recitals of the Vedic texts not to have been subject to the universal and inexorable law of change, we have taken every text at its face value and published it as such, thereby, unwittingly though, laying the foundation of our work in Indology on quicksands in place of rock.

³ See this uniform system of Vedic accentography described, in detail, in the writer's said *Vedic Word-Concordance*, Vol. I (Pt. I), pp. LXIII—LXXVI.

