

## BOOK REVIEW

Madhavi Bhaskar Kolhatkar, *Surā: The liquor and the Vedic sacrifice* (with a Foreword by Dr. C.G. Kashikar). Reconstructing Indian History and Culture, No. 18, New Delhi: D.K. Printworld (P) Ltd., 1999, xiv + 218 pp. Bibliography, Glossary, Sanskrit Index, General Index, Rs. 280.

*Surā* is a kind of beer, prepared by the fermentation of different grain varieties, especially sprouted paddy, barley, parched rice, etc. In contrast with *soma*, the juice extracted from *soma*-stalks, *surā* is condemned in Vedic literature. It is associated with wrath, dice, etc. and regarded as the root of various offenses and sins. *Soma* is truth, prosperity and light, while *surā* is untruth, misery and darkness. Nevertheless, despite such condemnation, *surā* is used in Vedic rituals such as *vājapeya*, *rājasūya*, *punarabhiseka*, etc. But it is only in the *sautrāmanī* sacrifice that *surā* is consumed by the sacrificer and also sometimes by the priests.

This *sautrāmanī* is one of the *havis*-sacrifices, i.e. a Śrauta sacrifice in which oblations are made of milk, curds, ghee, clarified butter or of grain varieties such as paddy, barley, etc. Sometimes an animal is slaughtered as an oblation. Another of the Śrauta sacrifices is called the *soma*-sacrifice in which the main oblation is *soma* itself. The *sautrāmanī* has two forms: *caraka* and *kaukili*. The former is not an independent sacrifice and is performed after the *rājasūya* and also the *agnicayana*. It is occasionally performed for one who vomited *soma* (*somavāmin*) or for one who is extremely sanctified by *soma* (*somātipūta*). The latter, on the contrary, is an independent sacrifice and is regarded as obligatory (*nitya*). Incidentally (*naimittika*) it is performed for a *somavāmin* or a *somātipūta*. It is prescribed also for the fulfillment of certain desires (*kāmya*).

What is most interesting is that the *sautrāmanī*, though a *havis*-sacrifice, contains similar elements as those of the *soma*-sacrifice like *avabhrta*, the singing of the *sāman*, etc. So the ritual of the *sautrāmanī* is compared to that of the *soma*-sacrifice. It is no less than a form of the *soma*-sacrifice itself.

### CONTENT OF THE BOOK

Introduction: In addition to the general explanation of the *sautrāmanī* sacrifice mentioned above, the author explores the possible origin and nature of this sacrifice, trying to solve the hitherto-answered questions: How did *surā* come to be accepted in the Śrauta ritual, despite of its condemnation in Vedic literature? Why is the *sautrāmanī* performed after the *rājasūya*? Is there any linkage between the *sautrāmanī* and the *punarabhiseka*, both of which contain the *surā* ritual? What is the exact relation between the *agnicayana* and the *sautrāmanī*? Why is it performed as a cure rite for a *somavāmin* or a *somātipūta*? What is the purpose of the myths that tell about the primeval performance of the *sautrāmanī*?

To give answers to those questions and a full description of this sacrifice, the author looks into not only the Śrauta Sūtras but also the Samhitās and the Brāhmaṇas.

#### PART I:

Chapter 1: The Place of the *sautrāmanī* in Vedic Ritual. The *sautrāmanī*,

derived from the word *sutrāman*, an epithet of Indra, is the rite performed for Sutrāman Indra. The word *sutrāman* means ‘one who protects well’, but in the mythological context, it means ‘one who is protected well’. Comparing its two forms: *caraka* and *kaukili*, the former is more brief and concise than the latter, and hence, is the primary form. The *caraka* is performed after the *rājasūya* or the *agnicayana* as a curing and a redressing rite.

Chapter 2: *Rājasūya* and *Sautrāmaṇī*. The *rājasūya* is a *soma*-sacrifice and is to be performed by a *ksatriya* king. The sacrificer, however, becomes deprived of his strength and vigour, performing this sacrifice. Referring to this sacrifice described in *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* 33-39, we can notice that the rite before and after the sacrifice is of great significance. It is called *iṣṭāpūrtasyāparijyāni* offerings (the absence of the destruction of the fruit acquired by the duties and the benevolent acts) or *ajītapunarvanya* offerings (the means for getting back what is lost). When such offerings are performed before consecration (*dikṣā*), one recites the verse to acquire the holy power (*brahma*). Conversely, when the sacrifice is over, one recites the verse to regain lordly power (*ksatra*). This means that a *ksatriya* sacrificer puts aside his lordly power and acquires the holy power before the consecration. He should become temporarily a *brāhmaṇa*. After the sacrifice, he regains his own quality, lordly power.

Chapter 3: The *Punarabhiṣeka* and the *Sautrāmaṇī*. The *punarabhiṣeka* is the unction rite after the *rājasūya*. It is intended for redressing the sacrificer, namely for bringing lordship (*ksatriyatva*) back to him. Besides the use of *surā*, there are some important similarities between the *punarabhiṣeka* and the *sautrāmaṇī*. By comparing these two, it becomes evident that the former is the precursor of the latter, in other words, the latter is modelled on the former.

Chapter 4: *Sautrāmaṇī* as a Medicinal Rite. The *sautrāmaṇī* is performed for the *somavāmin* or the *somātipūta* too. This sacrifice is performed to restore strength and vigour in one who becomes deprived of them. The vomiting of *soma* is caused by a breach of taboo and exorcism. So the Vedic hierarchical religion adopted the *surā*-rite that was originally one of the folklore medicinal rites, in which *surā* was used as a remedy for vomiting and evacuation.

Chapter 5: Relationship between the *Agnicayana* and the *Sautrāmaṇī*. The relationship between the *agnicayana* and the *sautrāmaṇī* varies according to the text. In the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*, the *caraka sautrāmaṇī* is connected with the *agnicayana*. The unction rite (*abhiṣeka*) in the *agnicayana* is compared with that in the *rājasūya*. That *sautrāmaṇī* is also prescribed after the *agnicayana* as the case of the *rājasūya*. On the other hand, the *Kātyāyaṇī* (of the White *Yajurveda*, along with the *Vaitāsū* (which belongs to the *Atharvaveda* but is influenced by the White *Yajurveda*) connects the *kaukili sautrāmaṇī* with the *agnicayana*. The reason may be that the *Kātyāyaṇī* was deeply influenced by the *Mīmāṃsā* school. According to this school, the *sautrāmaṇī* is part of the *agnicayana* and it is to be performed at its own proper time after the *soma*-sacrifice, of which the *agnicayana* forms a part.

Chapter 6: Primordial Myths in connection with the *Sautrāmaṇī*. The study of the myths concerning the struggle between Indra and Viśvarūpa, reveals to us not

only the historical event of the struggle for power and supremacy between the *ksatriya* caste and the *brāhmaṇa* caste, but also the reason why the *brāhmaṇas* did not allow the *ksatriyas* to drink *soma*-juice in the sacrifice. On the basis of the myth, the *brāhmaṇas* invented a taboo that nobody, who is not invited to the sacrifice, should partake of the *soma*-juice; if he did so, he would be deprived of his faculties. Such a mythological background explains clearly why the *ksatriya* sacrificer needs to drink *surā* at the end of the sacrifice.

#### PART II:

Chapter 7: The Ritual of the Caraka Sautrāmaṇī. The ritual of the *caraka sautrāmaṇī* is described in the ten steps. These are; (1) the preparatory rites to be performed three days before the actual performance of the sacrifice, (2) the preparatory rites to be performed on the day of the offerings, (3) the offering of animals, (4) filling the cups with *surā* for the deities, (5) the preparation of cakes, (6) the offering of *surā*, (7) the disposal of the remaining *surā*, (8) the trickling of *surā* on the southern fire, (9) the remaining animal-sacrifice and the offering of cakes, (10) the *avabhrta* bath.

Chapter 8: Preparation of Surā. Preparation of *surā* is described in two headings: the *caraka* and the *kaukili* and in three steps. These steps are; (1) the buying of ingredients, (2) the mixing of the ingredients, and (3) the purification of *surā*. The *surā* was prepared only through fermentation and did not undergo the process of distillation.

Chapter 9: The Ritual of the Kaukili Sautrāmaṇī. The main framework of the *kaukili* is similar to that of the *caraka*. It takes four days. Animal-offerings and the offerings of milk and *surā* are also performed in the *kaukili*. The *kaukili*, more laborious and more elaborate than the *caraka*, is described in twelve steps.

Chapter 10: The Abhiṣeka of the Sacrificer. The purpose of the sanctificatory bath (*abhiṣeka*) is to restore to the sacrificer the strength and power, etc. which have gone away from him. According to the texts of the White *Yajurveda*, the ritual sequence of this bath in the *kaukili* proceeds as follows. The steps are; (1) placement of a stool (*āsandī*), (2) the sacrificer's sitting upon the stool, (3) the offering of the animal fat, (4) the *abhiṣeka*, (5) the rite of lifting the sacrificer, (6) the sacrificer's getting down from the stool and (7) the singing of the *sāman*. Regarding the procedure mentioned above, the Black *Yajurveda* omits steps No. 5 and No. 7. Apart from the difference of the verses to be recited, the *MānŚS* (the Black *Yajurveda*) mentions that the sacrificer is anointed with milk, whereas in other texts (the White *Yajurveda*) he is anointed with animal fat.

Chapter 11: The Difference between the Caraka Sautrāmaṇī and the Kaukili Sautrāmaṇī. The main difference between the *caraka* and the *kaukili* is that several rites not seen in the *caraka*, the primary form of the rite, are added in the *kaukili*, the later form. In the *kaukili*, there is a considerable difference between that of the White *Yajurveda* tradition and the Black *Yajurveda* tradition. Remarkably different is the procedure of the *MānŚS*. On the preparation of the *surā*, the *Brāhmaṇa* texts seem to have the intention of establishing similarity between *surā* with *soma*-juice and the *surā*-ritual with the *soma*-ritual.

Conclusion: There are three stages to the *sautrāmaṇī*. The first stage is seen in

the *Samhitā* and the *Brāhmaṇa* texts. Here the *surā* was introduced in the Vedic hierarchical tradition, and then became glorified and elevated. It was compared with *soma*. The *punarabhiseka* comes first as the precursor of the *sautrāmaṇī*. Then the *sautrāmaṇī* was applied also for the *somavāmin* and *somātipūta*. It was also done after the *agnicayana*. The social background is the elevation of the *ksatriya* caste in the sacrifice. He was entitled to perform a sacrifice. Nevertheless, several restrictions were still imposed on him. He had to become a *brāhmaṇa* during the sacrifice, putting aside his own quality. He was denied a share of the sacrificial *soma*-drink. So in order to get back his quality, the *surā* was given to him and then it was considered to be the *soma*-drink for the *ksatriya* sacrificer.

The second stage is seen in the *Śrauta Sūtra* texts. Those restrictions were not observed strictly. As the result, the *sautrāmaṇī* lost its own original importance, namely the use of *surā*. Sometimes milk was introduced along with the *surā* or as its substitute.

The third stage is seen in the manual texts (*prayoga*). Here the real significance of the sacrifice has totally disappeared. Animal offerings have vanished and milk offerings have been introduced as the substitute of the *surā*, because the *surā* is prohibited in the *kali* age. Only the name of this sacrifice remains but the contents of the offering have totally changed.

#### COMMENT

This book is praiseworthy for two points; first the author makes clear the origin of this sacrifice along with the social background and vivifies the boring procedure of this sacrifice. The second point is that the author analyzes the myths regarding Indra and Viśvarūpa and assumes the social change of the *ksatriya* caste in the ancient time. This is owing to the author's bright talent and endeavor to pay attention to the importance of the *Brāhmaṇa* texts and to study them deeply. As the author mentions in the conclusion, the ritual procedures of the *Sūtra* texts should be studied with the help both of their explanations in the *Brāhmaṇa* texts and of the philosophical discussion in the *Mīmāṃsā* texts. The aphorism like “*codako hi prayogavacanād balavattarah*” (*Śabarabhaṣya ad Mīmāṃsā Sūtra* 5.1.18) is indispensable for the study of rituals. So the author has explored a beneficial method of studying how the ritual procedures in the *Sūtra* texts should be dealt with.

However I would like to indicate several points in order to improve this book and make it more interesting to many readers. The first point is that several Sanskrit terms are not explained in detail. As stated in this book (p. 92), the procedure of the animal-sacrifice of the *sautrāmaṇī* is similar to that of the *nirūḍhapaśubandha*, the independent animal sacrifice. On the other hand, the animal sacrifice as a constituent part of the *soma*-sacrifice, is called *sauṃika*. In the ritual of the *sautrāmaṇī*, several priests are described such as *pratiprasthātr*, *adhvaryu*, *agnīdhara*, the Brahman priest, *maitrāvaraṇa* and *hotṛ*. But it is not clearly explained how many priests are needed for this sacrifice. According to Kane's *History of Dharmaśāstra* (Vol. II, p. 981, fn. 2228), in *agnihotra* only *adhvaryu* is required; in the *agnyādheya*, *darśapūrṇamāsa* and another *iṣṭis* four

priests are required such as *adhvaryu*, *agnidhara*, *hotṛ* and *brahman*; in the *cāturmāṣya* five are required, the above four and *pratiprasthāṭṛ*; in the animal sacrifice a sixth is added namely *maitrāvaraṇa*. In the *soma*-sacrifice all sixteen are required. Furthermore their functions are not explained in this book. Usually in the animal sacrifice, the *pratiprasthāṭṛ* is an assistant of the *adhvaryu* and the *maitrāvaraṇa* is an assistant of the *hotṛ*. There are also several Sanskrit terms not explained in the glossary, concerning the animal sacrifice such as *sviṣṭakṛt* offerings (208-11), *īdā* (1064-8), *anūyāja* (1057), *sāmidhenī* verses (1048-9), *prayāja* (1057), *narāśaṁsa* (1118), *tanūnapāṭ* (1118), *ājyabhāga* (207, 1060), *vṛtraghna* (1060), *sānnāya* (1019), *sūktavāka* (1072-4), *nigada* (983-4), *śamyuvāka* (1075), *patnīsamayāja* (1076-7), *manotā*-offerings (1128), *śamitṛ* (1119), etc. I indicate the page of the second volume of Kane's book in brackets. Furthermore, several Sanskrit terms like *anvāram-bhanīyā iṣṭi* (1010), *vaśat-kāra* (1058), etc. require explanation.

The second point is that there are several passages that are difficult to understand. On the passage 'if it is not possible to hire a *brāhmaṇa*, the *adhvaryu* pours the remnants of *surā* on the ant-hill-earth' (p. 104), why does he pour the remnants on the ant-hill-earth? How can this earth substitute for a *brāhmaṇa*? And 'the eleven-animal-sacrifice' (p. 158) is beyond of my knowledge. It needs some explanation.

The third point concerns the Vedic verses. The author does her best to translate the Vedic verses. The translation is useful for understanding the background of the ritual process. The meaning of the Vedic verse to be recited at each step of the ritual must be connected with that step. In later literature like *Purāṇas*, etc. some Vedic verses became stereotyped and not directly related with the ritual process but in the *Śrauta Sūtras* or the *Brāhmaṇas*, the Vedic verses are closely connected with the rituals. However, to my regret, the mantra "vāyuḥ pūtaḥ pavitrena pratyāñ somo 'tidrutah / indrasya yujyah sakhaḥ /" (pp. 124, 131) is not translated. This mantra is important to understand why it is imperfect (*vyrddha*) and to be recited only for the purification of the one who is excessively purged by *soma*. The mantra becomes slightly modified from 'pratyāñ' to 'prāñ' for the one who vomited *soma*. So it seems to be indispensable to translate the mantra and explain why it is imperfect and slightly modified. Moreover there are many Vedic verses without English translation in the rituals of the *caraka* (chapter 7), the *kaukili* (chapter 9) and the *abhiṣeka* (chapter 10). A glossary of the Vedic verses with translations would be more profitable to the readers.

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