Visvāmitra in the Kalpasūtras

Dr. Umesh Chandra Sharma, M. A., Ph. D.,
Senior Research Fellow, Centre of Advanced Study
in Sanskrit, University of Poona.

Poona—7.

The Śūtras, as it is quite natural, generally provide important data about the gotra and pravara system among the Viśvāmitras. They have devoted a considerably large portion for the Viśvāmitras who occupy a significant place in our national and cultural history.

The ŚŚŚ, however, appear to be an exception in this connection. It devotes a major portion to the legend of Śunaśēpepa’s sacrifice and the important role played by Viśvāmitra in it.¹ The narration runs parallel to that of the AB. The language and the style are also the same. It is certainly a repetition from the latter except minor verbal differences here and there which are of no importance. Viśvāmitra officiated as a Hotr priest in the said sacrifice (where Śunaśēpepa was offered as a victim), Jamadagni, Vasiṣṭha and Ayāsyaa being the other prominent priests. Śunaśēpepa could not be sacrificed partly due to good offices of Viśvāmitra. He adopted him as his own son and accorded to him the highest place among his sons. He was called Devarāta after this and became a famous Kuśika.

The Śūtras deal in detail with the gotra and the pravara systems of the family of the Viśvāmitras. These are as follows—

1. The Kuśikas² have three ṛṣi-pravaras—Vaiśvāmitra, Daivarāta and Audala.³
2. Viśvāmitra, Devaśravas and Devataras—these are Śraumata—Kāma-

---

1. ŚŚŚ XV. 17-57. Cf. also AB VII. 13-18.
2. According to the BauŚŚ(p) 31, the following are mentioned as the Kuśikas—Kuśikas, Pāṇajāŋghas, Vāraṇyas, Audaris, Māṇis, Brhadagnis, Ālavis, Āghaṭṭis, Āpadyapas, Antakas, Kāmantakas, Vāṣpakis, Cikitas, Lāmakāyanas, Śalaṅkāyanas, Sāṅkāyanas, Laukas, Gauras, Saugantis, Yamadūtas, Anabhimātās, Tārakāyanas, Cauvalas, Jābālis, Yajñavalkyas, Vidāndas. Bhauvanis, Saubabhravis. Aupadahanis, Audumbaris, Bhāriṣṭikis, Śyāmeyas, Caitreya, Śalāvatas, Mayūras, Saumatyas, Citratantus, Manuantus, Mantus, others denoting the word ‘Tantus’ in the end, Bāhṛtvyas, Kalāpas and Utsarīs.

13  इतिहास और पुरातत्त्व : १७
kāyanas. They have the following three rṣi-pravaras—Vaiśvāmitra, Daivaśravas and Daivataras. 3
3. The Katas also have three rṣi-pravaras—Vaiśvāmitra, Kātya and Ātkila. 3
4. The Dhanañjayas have these three rṣi-pravaras—Vaiśvāmitra, Mādhucchandas, and Dhanañjaya.
5. The Aghamarṣaṇa-Kuśikas have the following three rṣi-pravaras—Vaiśvāmitra, Aghamarṣaṇa and Kauśika. 6
6. The Pūraṇa-Vārīdhāpayantas have two rṣi-pravaras—Vaiśvāmitra and Paurana. 6
7. The Ajas also have three rṣi-pravaras—Vaiśvāmitra, Mādhucchandas and Ājya. 7
8. The Aṣṭaka-Lohitas have three rṣi-pravaras—Vaiśvāmitra, Āṣṭaka and Lauhita. 8
9. The Raukṣaka-Raiṇavas have three rṣi-pravaras—Vaiśvāmitra, Raukṣaka and Raiṇava. 9
10. The Indra-Kuśikas also have three rṣi-pravaras—Vaiśvāmitra, Aṅdra and Kauśika. 10
11. The Rauhinās have three rṣi-pravaras—Vaiśvāmitra, Mādhucchandas and Rauhina. 11
12. The Śaṅkāyana also have three rṣi-pravaras—Vaiśvāmitra, Śaṅkāyana and Kauśika. 12

2. Katas, Sairindhas, Karabhas, Vājīyanas, Saiṅhiteyas, Kauṅṭyas, Śaiṅireyas, Audumbarāyanas, Piṅḍagrīvas, Nārāyanas and Nārāṭyas—these are the Katas.
4. The Dhanañjayas are Kāṛiṣis, Āśvavatas, Tulabhyaḥ. Saindhavāyanas, Uṣṭrākṣas and Mahākṣas.
7. BauśS(P) 40, ĀpŚŚ XXIV. 9. 9-10, HṛŚŚ XXI. 3. 12, The ĀśŚS XII. 14. 5 and Daivarāṭa to this list.
9. BauśS(P) 34. According to ĀpŚŚ XXIV. 9. 7-8 and HṛŚŚ XXI. 3. 12, only two are there—Vaiśvāmitra and Āṣṭaka. According to ĀśŚS XII. 14. 4. the three pravaras are Vaiśvāmitra, Mādhucchandas and Āṣṭaka.
10. BauśS(P) 34. According to ĀśŚS XII. 14. 6., the Reṇus have three pravaras—Vaiśvāmitra, Gāhina and Raiṇava.
12. ĀśŚS XII. 14. 4.
13. The Hiranyaretases have three ṛṣi-pravaras—Vaiśvāmitra, Hiraṇya and Retas.¹
14. The Suvarṇaretases also have three ṛṣi-pravaras—Vaiśvāmitra, Sauvarṇa and Retas.²
15. The Kapotaretases have three ṛṣi-pravaras—Vaiśvāmitra Kapota and Retas.³
16. The Ghṛta-kauśikas also have three ṛṣi-pravaras—Vaiśvāmitra, Ghṛta and Kauśika.⁴
17. The Śāṭhara-māṭharas also have three ṛṣi-pravaras—Vaiśvāmitra, Śāṭhara and Māṭhara.⁵
18. The Sāhula-māḥulas have three ṛṣi-pravaras—Vaiśvāmitra, Sāhula and Māḥula.⁶

This is the picture of the pravara system of the Vaiśvāmitra in the Sūtra literature. The Sūtras refer to Vaiśvāmitra in other connections also. In the ĀgGS, he is mentioned among the Saptarṣis, the others being Jamadagni, Bharadvāja, Gautama, Atri, Vasiṣṭha and Kaśyapa. The context is the Adhyāya-Utsarjanam (leave after completion of studies). In this rite seats are prepared by the student for the above-mentioned Ṛṣis⁷

The BauśS refers to the selection of the priests. It enjoins that Adhvaryu priest should be an Āṅgiras, the Brahmā priest should be a Vasiṣṭha, the Hotṛ should be a Vaiśvāmitra and the Udgātṛ should be an Ayāṣya.⁸ Again, in the context of the Ṛṣi-stoma, Viśvāmitra is connected with the seventeenth stoma.⁹

It has been prescribed in the Sūtra texts that a person desiring victory over enemies should perform the rite known as ‘Śaṅjaya’ of Viśvāmitra.¹⁰ It has been stated in the TNB (XXI. 12. 1-4) that Viśvāmitra performed this four-day rite, defeated his rivals with its grace and got kingdom.

The VaiśS mentions that four chief priests should be descendants of Vasiṣṭha, Bhṛgu, Āṅgiras and Ayāṣya respectively, remaining twelve priests can

---

1. Ibid, XII. 14. 6.
2. MāŚS XI. 8. 5. 17.
3. Ibid. XI. 8. 5. 18.
4. Ibid. XI. 8. 5. 19.
5. Ibid. XI. 8. 5. 20.
6. Ibid. XI. 8. 5. 31.
7. Ibid. XI. 8. 5. 22, 23. For the exhaustive list of the prarvaras of the Viśvamitras, see JOHN BROUGH, Early Brahmanical System of Gotra and Pravara. Cambridge, 1953, p. 35.
8. ĀgGS. 1. 2. 2.
10. Ibid XVIII. 22.

इतिहास और पुरातत्त्व : ९९.
be selected from among the Kasyapas, Bharadvajas, Bhrgus Angrases. One authority says that Hotr should be a descendant of Visvamitra.  

A tarpana should be made to Visvamitra after daily bath according to the VaiGS and VaiDS. In connection with the upakara-visarjana, Visvamitra is prayed.

The MiDa mentions that because a Vaisvamitra should necessarily be a Hotr priest, therefore, the descendants of Bhrgu, Sunaka and Vasiṣṭha do not have the right to be appointed as Hotr priests.

Thus, it can be said in conclusion, that the Vaisvamitra family is one of the most important families of ancient India. There were several gotras and pravaras among the Vaisvamitas. It has been prescribed in the Kalpasūtras that a descendant of Vaisvamitra should officiate as Hotr priest in the sacrifices. Some of the gotras and pravaras of Vaisvamitra pravara system are followed among the Brāhmaṇa families of the present day India also. For instance the surname 'Kauśika' is applied by some of north Indian Brāhmaṇas.

Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>Aitareya Brāhmaṇa.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ĀgGS</td>
<td>Āgniṣṭhō Gṛhya Śūtra.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ĀpŚŚ</td>
<td>Āpastamba Śrauta Śūtra.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ĀśŚŚ</td>
<td>Āśvalāyana Śrauta Śūtra.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BauŚŚ</td>
<td>Bauḍhayana Śrauta Śūtra.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BauŚŚ (p)</td>
<td>Bauḍhayana Śrauta Śūtra (pravara-Khaṇḍa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HirŚŚ</td>
<td>Hiranyakeśī Śrauta Śūtra.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MāŚŚ</td>
<td>Mānavā Śrauta Śūtra.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MiDa</td>
<td>Mimāmaśa Darśana.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ŚŚŚ</td>
<td>Śaṅkhāyana Śrauta Śūtra.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TMB</td>
<td>Tanḍya Mahā Brāhmaṇ.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VaiDS</td>
<td>Vaikhānasā Dharma Śūtra.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VaiGS</td>
<td>Vaikhānasā Gṛhya Śūtra.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. ĀpŚŚ. XXII. 20. 2, ĀśŚŚ X. 2. 25, HirŚŚ XVII. 7. 12.
2. VaiŚŚ XII. 1.

* I am grateful to Dr, V. G. Rahurkar, my supervisor, for useful suggestions in writing this paper.