

The general notion of the Western Scholars and their Indian followers is that the Rishis whose names are mentioned on the Mantras are their composers and devatas are the deities to be worshipped. But this is a very erroneous view. By Rishis are meant, according to all ancient authorities, the seers who made out the secret of the Vedas and propagated them. Yaskacharya, the wellknown philologist and author of the Nirukta says in 1-19.

साक्षात्कृतधर्माण ऋषयो बभूवुस्तेऽसाक्षात्कृतधर्मभ्य
उपदेशेन मन्त्रान् सम्प्रादुः ॥ निरुक्त १ । १८

The original seers were men of realisation who saw or perfectly understood the Dharma. They taught it to those who themselves had not realised it or were not inspired persons.

In Nirukta 2-11 Yaskacharya says :

ऋषयो मन्त्रद्रष्टारः ऋषिदर्शनात्स्तोमान् ददर्शेत्यौपमन्यवः ।
यदेनान् तपस्यमानान् ब्रह्म स्वयम्भू अभ्यानर्षत् तदृषीणा-
मृषित्वमिति विज्ञायते ॥

i. e. The Rishis are seers of the Mantras. The word Rishi means Drashta. Opamanyava Acharya is of opinion that those who by austerities, realised the Vedic hymns were called Rishis”.

The Taittiriya Aranyak (2-9-1) says similarly...

यत् एनान् तपस्यमानान् ब्रह्मस्वयम्भू अभ्यानर्षत् तेऽऋषयोऽभवन्
तदृषीणामृषित्वम् ॥

Those that after tapas or deep meditation realised the secret meaning of the Vedic Mantras, became Rishis by the Grace of the Almighty,

Thus it is evident that the Rishis whose names are found

over the Mantras or the hymns in printed books, were not the authors or the composers of the Mantras, but the seers who made out the Secret meaning of the Mantras and propagated them. Those who have not studied the Vedic Literature deeply, labour under the delusion that the words like Vasistha, Vishvamitra, Bharadvaja, Kanva, Jamadagni etc. that are found in some Vedic verses, stand for the names of the Rishis and therefore, the Vedas can not be believed to be eternal. They were composed by the Rishis in different periods.

In the Meemansa Shastra, Jaimini has raised this question of the historical names found in the Vedas through the aphorisms like अनित्यदर्शनाच्च मीमांसाशास्त्रे-२ and has answered it in परन्तु श्रुति सामान्यमात्रम् ॥ मीमांसा १-३१ ।

i. e. In the Vedas there are no proper nouns denoting the names of certain persons, but only common nouns denoting certain attributes. For instance, the following meanings are given in the Shatapath Brahmana (which is a commentary on the Yajurveda) of some words of this type.

प्राणो वै वसिष्ठ ऋषिः ॥ शतपथ ८ । १ । १ । ६

मनो वै भरद्वाज ऋषिः ॥ शतपथ ८ । १ । १ । ६

श्रोत्रं वै विश्वामित्र ऋषिः ॥ शत० ८ । १ । २ । ६

* प्रजापतिर्वै जमदग्निः ॥ शत० ८ । १ । २ । ३

प्राणो वा अंगिराः ॥ शत० ६ । १ । २ । २८

वाग्वै विश्वकर्मा ऋषिः ॥ ८ । १ । २ । ६

i. e, Prana (Vital Beath) is called Vasishttha Rishi because it is the best. Mind is called Bharadvaja Rishi—the bearer of knowledge. Ear is called Vishvamitra Rishi, because it is friend of all. Eye and the Prajapati (Lord) are called Jama-dagni; Prāna or vital breath is called Angirah. Vak or speech is called Vishva Karma, for it is with its help, that a man is able to do many works by expressing what is to be done.

In the Nighantu—the Vedic Lexicon it is stated...

कण्व इति मेधाविनाम ॥ निघण्टु ३।१५

गृत्स इति मेधाविनाम निघ० ३।१५

ऋभुः इति मेधाविनाम निघ० ३।१५

Kanva does not mean in the Veda name of a particular sage, but a wise man in general. The same is the case with words Gritsa, Vena, Ribhu and others.

यदवः इति मनुष्यनाम निघ० २-३ पूरवः इति मनुष्य नाम निघ० २-३ नहुष इति मनुष्यनाम निघ० २।३ ।

It means that the words नहुषाः यदवः, पूरवः etc. when found in the Vedas, do not stand for any particular persons or they are not proper nouns, but they denote men in general. This cuts at the root of the so-called historical references in the Vedas.

The word अथर्वा (Atharva) is used for a nonviolent Yogi who has steadied his mind, as it is derived from the root थर्व (Tharva) to be un-steady or restless. In the Nighantu we read थर्वतिश्चरतिकर्मा ५-६ ॥

According to Kashakritsna Dhatu Path, the root tharva थर्व means हिंसा or violence थर्व-हिंसायाम् Therefore अथर्वा (Atharva) means a non-violent Yogi. In Kausheetaki Brahmana of the Rigveda 25-2, 26-15 it is stated.

प्रजापतिर्वै वसिष्ठः ॥ कौषीतकी ब्राह्मण २५-२-२६-१५ ।

i. e. वसिष्ठ means God as well as the protector of the people.

In Gopath Brahmana Uttar 3-9 (commentary on the Atharva Veda) it is stated येन श्रेष्ठस्तेन वसिष्ठः ।

i. e. वसिष्ठ (Vasishtha) means the best. In Shatapath 8-1-1-6 it is stated...

यद्वै नु श्रेष्ठस्तेन वसिष्ठः अथोयद् वस्तुतमो भवति तेनो एव

वसिष्ठः (शतपथ ब्राह्मणे ८-१-१-६)

Here also the meaning of the word वसिष्ठ (Vasishtha) has been given as the best or one who bears the attributes of

God to the largest extent.

In the Shatapath Brahman 13-2-2-14 the word जमदग्नि (Jamadagni) has been explained as प्रजापतिर्वै जमदग्निः ऋषिः॥ (शत० १३-२-२-१४) Jamadagni is God or a King who protects his subjects well.

In the Nirukta, the word Jamadagni (जमदग्नि) has been used for a person who performs Yajnas (non-violent sacrifices) properly and keeps in his home fire always burning.

जमदग्निभिराहुतः इति जमदग्नयः प्रजमिताग्नयो वा प्रज्वलिताग्नयो वा । (Nirukta 7-7-24)

The word अत्रि (Atri) which means tongue according to the Shatapath 14-5-2-2 वागेवात्रिर्वाचा ह्यन्नमद्यते अत्तिर्ह वै नामैतद् यदत्रिरिति means also a Sanyasi when it is derived from अत्-सातत्यगमने i.e., he who moves from place to place for preaching Dharma. Hundreds of such passages can be quoted.

So it is wrong to take such words as वशिष्ठ, विश्वामित्र, जमदग्नि, भरद्वाज etc. when they are found in the Vedic Mant-ras, as the names of particular seers. They should be taken as common nouns denoting certain attributes and persons who possess them. It should always be borne in mind that all Vedic words are Yougikas or derivatives as clearly stated by Yaskacharya in Nirukta 1-4-11.

नामानि आख्यातजानि इति नैरुक्तसमयः ॥ निरुक्त १-४-११

i.e. All nouns are derived from verbal roots or dhatus and therefore in Vedas रूढि (rudhi) or arbitrary meanings are never used. They are resolvable to their roots. The Sage Patanjali the distinguished Grammarian, author of the Mahabhashya has said the same thing.

नाम च धातुजमाह निरुक्ते । व्याकरणे शकटस्य च तोकम् ॥

Many grammarians like Shakatayana and others accept the above principle in toto.

Even Prof. Max. Muller had to admit this important principle of the Vedic Terminology willy nilly saying :—

“But there is a Charm in the e primitive strains discoverable in no other class of poetry. Every word retains some-things of its radical meaning; every epithet tells; every thought, inspite of the most intricate and abrupt expressions, is if one disentangles it, true, correct and complete.

(Max Muller's Hisory of Ancient Sanskrit Literature, Page 553)

Insurmountable difficulties in accepting Rishis as Authors or Composers of the Mantras.

1. There are several Mantras whose Rishis are a hundred or more. For instance, in Rig. 66-19 and Sama Veda 627, 1464 we find the following well-known mantra.

अग्न आयूंषि पवस आसुवोर्जमिषं च नः ॥ आरे बाधस्व दुच्छुनाम् ॥

About its Rishis, it is stated शतं वैखानसा ऋषयः ॥ i. e. There are one hundred Banaprasthas as its Rishis. Is it reasonable to believe that one hundred Rishis composed together this short Mantra of 24 letters ? How absurd the idea looks ?

In Rig. 9-11-53 and Sama Veda 653 we find the following Mantra. स नः पवस्व शंगवेशं जनाय शमर्वते । शं राजन्नोषधीभ्यः ॥

About its Rishis also, it is stated शतं वैखानसा ऋषयः i. e. its Rishis are one hundred Banaprasthas. How absurd it is to suppose that one hundred seers composed this short Mantra of about 24 letters ? On the other hand, if we take Rishis to be the seers of the Mantras, who pondered over them and preached to others about it, there is no difficulty at all. In

Rig. 8-34 we find 3 Mantras beginning with एन्द्र याहिहरिभिः about which it is stated वसुरोचिषोऽगिरसः सहस्रसंख्याका ऋषयः

There are one thousand seers as their Rishis. Is it reasonable to believe that one thousand seers assembled to compose these short Mantras ? It is absurd on the very face of it. On the other hand, if we accept the Rishis to be the seers and preachers of the Mantras, there is no difficulty in taking

one thousand or even more seers to be their Rishis.

2, The second insurmountable difficulty in taking the Rishis to be the composers or authors of the Mantras is that there are many Mantras, whose Rishis differ according to different Vedas and in different places of the same Veda. For instance in Rig. 4-54-3 there is the Mantra beginning with चत्वारि शृंगाः its Rishi is Vama Deva in Rigveda, when the same Mantra occurs, in Yaj 1791 its Rishi is not Vama Deva, but Sadhyah !

Have we to suppose that originally Rishi Vama Deva composed the Mantra, but it was stolen away by the Sadhyas who forged their name over it ?

In Rig. 10-152-1 beginning with शास इत्था the Rishi is stated to be Shāsa Bharadvāja शासो भारद्वाजः, but when the same Mantra occurs in Atharva Veda 1-20. 4 its Rishi is not Shāsa Bharadvāja but Atharva.

In Rig. 1-189-1 we find the famous Mantra अग्ने नय सुपथा राये अस्मान् Here its Rishi is Agastya but when the same Mantra occurs in Yajur Veda 40-16. its Rishi is not Agastya but Dadhyananatharvanah. In Rig. 1-115-1 we find the well-known Mantra beginning with चित्रं देवानाम् Its Rishi in Rigveda is Kutsa. In Yajur Veda 13-46 its Rishi is Prajapati and in Atharva Veda 13-2-35 its Rishi is Brahma. In Rig. 8-44-1 we find the Mantra समिधाग्निं दुवस्यत whose Rishi in Rigveda is viroopa and when the same Mantra occurs in Yajurveda 3-1 its Rishi is Agni. Many more instance can be given, but these are sufficient to show the absurdity of the supposition that by Rishis are meant the authors of the Mantras. If this theory of Rishis' authorship of the Mantras is to be accepted, we will have to believe that many Rishis were thieves and given to forgery, who stole away others' compositions and gave them out in their own names. Is such a supposition justifiable in the case of the Rishis whose definition is साक्षात्कृत धर्माणि: who have visibly realised

the Dharma or who in the words of the Upanishads are
संप्राप्यैनम् ऋषयो ज्ञानं तृप्ताः, कृतात्मानो वीतरागाः प्रशान्ताः ॥

ते सर्वगं सर्वतः प्राप्य धीराः, युक्तात्मानः सर्वमेवाविशन्ति ॥ मुण्डक ५-३
“The Rishis were they who having attained the Supreme Soul in knowledge were filled with wisdom and having found Him in Union with the soul were in perfect harmony with the inner self: they having realised Him in the heart were free from all selfish desires, and having experienced Him in all the activities of the world, had attained calmness. The Rishis were they who having reached the supreme God from all sides had found abiding peace, had become united with all, had entered into the life of the Universe.”

(Dr. Rabindra Nath Tagore's Translation in
Sadhana. P. 14)

Can we ever think of accusing such Rishis who were wise men of realisation, with theft and forgery as is to be done if the Rishis are taken as authors of the Mantras?

3. The third insurmountable difficulty in accepting the Rishis as authors of the Mantras is the use of the Superlative degree with the so called names of the Rishis in the following besides many others.

In Rig. 1-48-4 we read :—

अत्राह तत् कएव एषां कएवतमो नाम गृणाति नृणाम् ॥

Rig.

In Rig. 10-115-5 we read स इदग्निः कएवतमः कएव सखायः ॥

48-4.

In Rig. 1-100-4 we find सो अंगिरोभिरंगिरस्तमोऽभूत् ॥

In Rig. 1-107-6 we read त्वं विप्रो भवोऽगिरस्तमः ॥

In Rig. 7-79-3 we read अभूदुषा इन्द्रतमामघोनी अंगिरस्तमा सुकृते
वसूनि ॥

No where the superlative degree is used with the proper nouns. But in the above and many other Mantras, we find adjectives like कएवतमः, अंगिरस्तमः, इन्द्रतमः etc. which are

possible only when all these words like Kanva, Angira and Indra are taken as derivatives meaning.

कएव इति मेधाविनाम (निघ० ६-५) अंगिरा उ ह्यग्निः॥ शत० १-४-१-२५
प्राणो वा अंगिराः ॥ शत० ३-१-२-२८ इन्द्रो वै देवानामोजिष्ठो बलिष्ठः॥
कौषीतकी ६-१४ इदि परमैश्वर्ये ।

a wise man, a knower of the science of agni (fire) and Prāna and the most heroic person etc. Those who desire to study the subject in detail, should study our वेदों का यथार्थ स्वरूप a book of about 550 pages published by the Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, Punjab, Jullundhur at the Gurukula Kangri University Press priced Rs. 6-50.

The Devatas of the Mantras.

What is meant by the devata of a Mantra ? Generally Western Scholars translate the word devata as a deity. But that is misleading and wrong. By devata of Mantra is not meant deity, but the subject matter. In the Sarvanukramani it is stated या तेन उच्यते सा देवता i.e. the subject matter of the Mantra is called देवता Devata. Yaskacharya the famous author of the Nirukta also says the something. यत्काम ऋषिर्यस्यां देवतायामर्थपत्यम् इच्छन् स्तुतिं प्रयुंक्ते तद् दैवतः स मन्त्रो भवति॥ i.e. When God, desiring to impart instruction about a particular object, describes its properties in a Mantra it is said to have that object as its devata. That is why there are many abstract ideas mentioned as devatas. For instance, Shraddha-genuine faith is the devata of Rig. 10-151 धनदानप्रशंसा or praise of charity is the devata of Rig. 10-117 दक्षिणा or largess is the devata of Rig. 10-107 अरण्यानी (dense forest) is the devata of Rig. 10-146 द्यूतनिन्दा or the Censure of Gambling is the devata of Rig. 10-34 ओषधयः or herbs of Rig. 10-101 etc. These are sufficient to show that by devata is meant the subject matter of the mantra and not a deity which is to be worshipped. We have dealt with this subject of devatas also exhaustively in our book वेदों का यथार्थ स्वरूप Chap 4 referred to above which may be studied by those eager to know this and other important subjects regarding the Vedas thoroughly.