PRESCRIPTIONS AND APŪRVA

The Bhāṭṭa and the Prabhākara stands have a deep import on the general understanding of the Veda. The Bhāṭṭas organise the Vedic text around the prescription and describe the latter as the dynamic, centripetal element within the text. By contrast, the Prabhākaras see the more elusive 'thing to be done' (kārya), which is unprecedented through any other means of knowledge (apūrva), as the meaning of the Veda. This leads them to further questions about the relationship between kārya and action (as seen above, chapter 3), between kārya and result, and between kārya and the content of the Vedic text (see supra, § 4.5.3).

5.1. PRESCRIPTIONS ACCORDING TO THE BHĀṬṬAS (TR IV 5)

The Mimāṃsākas’ need for ordered structures is also expressed with regard to prescriptions. Structuring the prescriptive component of a text allows one to better understand the text’s hierarchical links. For instance, principal prescriptions (such as “The one who is desirous of heaven should sacrifice with the New and Full Moon Sacrifices,” mentioned above) are to be distinguished from subordinate ones (such as the ones enjoining fore-sacrifices or prescribing the ritual substances).

Since the Veda is authorless, the only possible perspectives on the text are the text’s inner perspective and the hearer’s perspective. Accordingly, at least two classificatory groups of prescriptions are possible.

The first perspective can be divided into:

– originative prescription (utpattividhi)
– application prescription (vīniyogavidhi)
– responsibility prescription (adhikāravidhi)
– promoting (or performance) prescription (prayogavidhi)

(the last two members are frequently inverted, see infra § 5.1.1.2)

The second one can be divided into:

– prescription having an unprecedented [content] (apūrvavidhi)
– restrictive prescription (niyamavidhi)
– excluding prescription (parisaṅkhya vidhi)
The first classification group expresses the role of each prescription and defines it in Mīmāṃsā terminology “according to its own nature” (śvarūpā-bhidhāna). The second conforms to the role of a prescription within a text from the point of view of the hearer. If it conveys something utterly new for the hearer, then it is an apiśravavidhi. If it conveys something partly new, it is a restrictive prescription. If it looks like a positive injunction but is instead to be interpreted as a prohibition, it is an excluding prescription. The latter case is one Mīmāṃsā authors generally try to avoid.

Still, these classifications are not mutually exclusive and in general they complement each other. They originated historically in different contexts and cover different concerns.

Further kinds of prescriptions are named in Mīmāṃsā texts, and some works also present a full-fledged classification of them. For instance, in TR IV 4.2.4 a phalavākya (‘[prescriptive] sentence about the result’) is mentioned and assumed to be self-evident, since it is not further explained. By contrast, at the beginning of his Mīmāṃsāparibhāṣā, Kṛṣṇa Yajvan describes the prescription about the result (phalavākya) in its relation to the prescription about the origination of the ritual act (karmotpattivākya).

5.1.1. Classification According to the Prescriptions’ Role

5.1.1.1. History

Śābara frequently refers to originative and promoting prescriptions. ‘Originative prescriptions’ have the same meaning they will have in later Mīmāṃsā. The ‘promoting prescription’, by contrast, has the meaning (no longer the only one in later Mīmāṃsā) of “prescription about the performance” and defines the principal prescription together with its auxiliaries. Śābara usually labels these prescriptions ‘statement’ (vacana) or ‘sentence’ (vākyya) and never mentions a full-fledged classification of prescriptive passages. ‘Application’ (vinīyoga) and ‘responsibility’ (adhiṣṭāna) are frequent terms, but never used in order to label a distinct prescription. Through Śābara, one can infer that Jaimini also knew an originative prescription (see, e.g., the latter’s mention of utpatti in MS 4.3.28), but this is only speculation.

For Kumārila’s position, see infra, § 5.1.1.9 and § 5.1.2.1.

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1 tatra yena vākyenaṁ karṇaṁ kartavyam iti bodhyate tat karmotpattivākyam. yathā agnihotram jujhotīti. [...] utpannasya karmanāḥ phalākāṅkṣāyāṁ phalesambhāndhabodhāvādhiḥ phalavidhiḥ, yathā agnihotram jujhoti svargakāma iti. atra yah svargam kāmāyate sa tattādhanatvenāgnihotranāmaṁ homāṁ bhāvayet ity agnihotrayātpannasya karmaṁ phalesambhāndho bodhyata iti phalavākyam idam. (Krṣṇayajvan 1998, pp. 1–2)