

Techniques for the Recitation of Śākalasamhitā Prevalent in Kerala Tradition

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The methods by which the Brahmins in India preserved the Vedic tradition from centuries ago, are worth mentioning. Also the devices they used to transmit these wonderful sacred texts from generation to generation are many, which deserve special study. First of all, the strong belief that the Vedas were Apauruṣeya (not authored by ordinary human beings) and Nitya (eternal), was deep rooted among them. Such strong beliefs were prevalent among the Brahmins, the custodians of Vedas, from very ancient times which helped to preserve the text intact without any change in the Samhitā or Pada or Akṣara or even in its accents while chanting. This is not the peculiarity of the Vedas only, but many of the auxilliary texts of the Vedas like Śikṣās and Prātiśākhya also had these peculiar features.

Oral tradition and book tradition

There are, or there were, two methods of using Vedas in oral chanting which were prevalent from ancient days. They are Svādhyāya and Prayoga, the day to day chanting of Vedas and the Vedic exegesis or Vedavikṛtis. In these two methods also, the above mentioned strong belief of divinity and eternity of Vedas worked well, by which the text or Samhitā and the Mantras, Padas and Pādas in it were used without any change of any kind from very ancient times. In the employment of Vedas (Prayoga) in rituals, especially in Vedic rituals like Yāgas, utmost care was taken to utter the Svaras correctly and it was believed that the

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Mantras will bring in great calamity or the opposite result if the Svaras were uttered in an incorrect way. The famous statement in the *Nirukta* of Yāska:

*mantra hīnaḥ svarato varṇato vā mithyāprayukto na tamarthamāha/
sa vāgvajraḥ yajamānam hinasti yathendraśatruḥ svarato'parādhāt //*

is an example for this.

We have the history of the transmission of canonical texts of different religions all over the world from very ancient times. In none of them, except in the Vedic texts of India, the oral tradition of the transmission of religious texts from generation to generation, is found. We have the canonical texts of Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Jainism transmitted. But the process of transmission had taken place in all of them through Books or in book form, not orally. The *Tripitakas*, the basic canonical texts of Buddhism, were transmitted in book form. We have the reference to these texts of Buddhism in ancient literatures as 'books' (Piṭakapustakeṣu). *The Old Testament* and the *New Testament* of Christians were also transmitted in Book form, not orally. '*Khuran*', the Veda of Muslims, is called 'Kitab' (meaning 'book') and was studied or taught in Book form. All these are the religions of 'Books'. Writing was also common in the transmission of the canonical texts of many of these religions. It is stated in *Khuran* (96,4) that the prophet Mohammed had the divine inspiration from God to use pen (which is referred to by the word 'Kalam' there). Thus Book and Pen were used for transmitting the canonical texts of these religions.

This is not the peculiarities of the religions referred to here as Islam, Christianity, Buddhism and Jainism only. Hellenic or Greek religion also gave importance to book and writing. Same is the case with Alexandria and ancient Egypt also. Actually, it is in Alexandria where the concept of Library, a place where books are collected and stored for the use of everyone, is seen found for

the first time. According to Christianity, the transmission of religious texts included ‘translation’ also. They accepted the ideas or ‘meanings’ of the passages of *Bible* also as ‘divine’ and ‘pure’, not their ‘language’ only as such. As a result, many translations appeared for *Bible* in different languages all over the world and all of them were considered authoritative religious texts. This trait is seen in Buddhism and Jainism also in India. Their original canons were written in Pali and different dialects of Prākṛt. But later, teachers of both the religions began to accept hybrid Sanskrit or pure Sanskrit for their religious texts and in a still later stage, regional languages also, for propagating their religious principles.¹

But the only religion in the world, it can be said, which was not a ‘Book religion’ till very recent times, was Vedic religion in India. The oral tradition was its soul, by which the text of Veda and its different modes of chanting were transmitted without any change from time immemorial.

Vedic tradition and South India

Analysing geographically, one can see that the Vedic tradition in India was strongly preserved more in South India than in North India. Prof. J.F. Staal in his book *Namboodiri Vedic recitation* (pp. 18-20) has stressed this point studying the Vedic tradition of India historically. In North India, Vedic tradition is even now prevailing in Maharashtra, U.P. (Kāśī) and Gujarath. In places like Bengal and Assam, Vedic tradition has become almost extinct. In South India, Rajamahendravara (Rajamundri) in Andhra is a place where Vedic tradition is even now prevailing strongly. In Tamil Nadu and Kerala also, the tradition is alive even now. (In Kerala, Sāma tradition is going to be extinct. Jaiminīya Sāma tradition is followed here. There were 21 families of Namboodiris in Kerala who preserved this tradition. Now only three aged scholars in two families at Pāññāḷ in Thrissur Dt. in Kerala, all aged above eighty, are there who are skilled in chanting all the

modes of Sāma followed in Kerala like Ṛk or Ārcika, Sāma or Grāmageya, Candrāsyāma or Āraṇyaka and Ūha and Ūṣāṇi. The whole tradition of Kerala Jaiminiya Sāma chanting will be extinct after the generation of these scholars, which is not far away, as all of them are, as already said, very old. It is in this context that the School of Vedic studies of Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady, has undertaken and successfully completed the project of the audio cum video documentation of the Sāmaveda tradition of Kerala in 95 hours. The whole matter has been converted into CDs and is available in the Library of Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, for study and references. Also copy of the same will be made available for academic/research institutions for study/research purposes. There are more scholars in *R̥gveda* and *Yajurveda* in Kerala at present. But there is the possibility of vanishing those traditions also in near future, if utmost care is not seriously taken and encouragement is not given for preserving them also). In Karnataka also, in South India, the Vedic tradition is alive now to a great extent.

Kerala Vedic tradition

Vedic tradition became popular in South India (also in Kerala) with the advent of the Aryans to this place. This had begun, according to the historians, in the first centuries of the Christian era itself. By the 6th and 7th centuries A.D., many institutions were established in South to impart Vedic education. Centres of learning called Śālās were started connected with Temples. The Śālās were institutions where the Brāhmin youths were taught a variety of subjects including the Vedas. In addition, the affluent and erudite Brāhmin families established conventions whereby Vedic education was imparted by resident scholars in their own homes. The young men are initiated for Vedic learning under these teachers after their Upanayanam. The training of the course was entirely in the oral

tradition. The initiation and training, both was known as ‘Upadeśam’ or oral advise. The Vedic lessons were imparted as Mantra, again implying the meaning ‘whispered communication’. The imparting of learning of *Ṛgveda*, like that of *Yajus* and *Sāma*, was in this way in Kerala also at that time when the present state of Kerala was not separately identified and was one of the portion of the wide area known as South block or Dakṣiṇāpatha (otherwise South India) at that time. The Śākalasamhitā of *Ṛgveda* is practiced by the Namboothiris of Kerala. For *Yajurveda*, the Namboothiris of Kerala *Yajurveda* tradition follow Taittirīyasamhitā. Jaiminīyaśākhā of *Sāmaveda* is prevalent among the Sāmavedi Namboothiris here.

The learner had to take the initiation by approaching and making obeisance to the teacher. The training was imparted to the disciple sitting with the legs crossed in front of the preceptor. The latter would intone and repeat the texts, again and again till the former was able to repeat it without mistake. These first lessons were called Mutal Muṛa (first exercise). Before going to higher lessons of Vedic chanting, the first lessons covered Samhitā (Caṅgata in Namboothiri dialect) which the learner had to learn by heart to the satisfaction of the Guru.

Accents and peculiarities of pronunciation

Of the greatest importance is that Veda should be recited with the proper intonations like Udātta, Anudātta and Svarita. A strong discipline was followed in Kerala in the teaching of *Ṛgveda*, which is current even now, that the disciple has to move his head in a specific up and down and sideways manner. The Guru catches hold of the tuft of the hair of the disciple’s head and pulls, pushes and moves the head upwards, downwards and sideways to make thorough the movements of the head according to the Svaras and to instill the correlation between the intonation of the sound and the motion. Then, a secondary reinforcement is brought in by making the disciple learn the Mudras to be executed

with the right hand, for each syllable that is uttered in chanting. For example, a gesture with the palm upwards and all the fingers except the thumb folded down accompanies all utterances of short vowels ending in Udātta. There are many such Mudras in use in Kerala in the chanting of *Ṛgveda*, which are distinctive to the region. Also there are some peculiarities in the articulation of certain sounds. For example, the trill ‘r’ was differentiated into ‘black’ and ‘white’ (as they are called in Kerala) as in Durga or Varṣam and Arka or Agra respectively. Another example is the uttering of ‘l’ or ‘t’ that comes in the end of a word: *Āsīl*, *Āsīt*, *Talsavituḥ*, *Tatsavituḥ*, *Yalpatye*, *Yatpatye*.... Here ‘t’ itself will be written there, but the articulation is as ‘l’. In the same way sometimes the letter ‘va’ is pronounced as ‘ba’ as in ‘*Tatsaviturva (ba) reṇyam*’. There are many other subtle peculiarities also in the chanting of *Ṛgveda* in Kerala, which are special features of Kerala *Ṛgvedic* tradition.

Among the *Ṛgvedins* of Kerala, the *Āśvalāyana* and the *Kauṣītaka* branches are differentiated. The *Namboodiris* of Kerala adopt another division of the text of *Ṛgveda*, apart from the conventional classification into *Mṇḍala*, *Anuvāka*, *Sūkta* and *Mantra*, viz. *Aṣṭaka*, *Adhyāya*, *Varga* and *Mantra* or *Ṛk*. They use the colloquial pronunciation for *Aṣṭakam* as *Aṣṭam* and for *Vargam* as *Varkam*.

The entire *Samhitā* portion is taught first and then the *Padapāṭha* (word by word recitation in which the sentences are decomposed into separate words) and *Kramapāṭha* (extension of *Padapāṭha* in which the words are repeated in a particular form) is taught. These three, *Samhitāpāṭha*, *Padapāṭha* and *Kramapāṭha* are called *Prakṛtipāṭha*.

Ṛgvedavikṛtis

In addition to these, there are mnemotechnic modifications of chanting (*Vikṛtipāṭhas*) of *Ṛgveda* also. Here the text of *Padapāṭha* is recited in certain

definite combinations and permutations. These derivatives have been devised to safe - guard the proper form of transmission of these compositions and to minimize the danger of losing the words, syllables and accents from the original text while chanting. They are eight in number:

*jaṭā māḷā śikhā rekhā dhvajo daṇḍo ghano rathāḥ/
aṣṭau vikṛtayaḥ proktāḥ kramapūrvāḥ manīṣibhiḥ//*

Of these several methods, Jaṭā and Rathā are usually practised in Kerala. In all these modes of teaching, the words are repeated in the ascending and descending orders so that the student will be able to recollect the entire script, word by word, at any time. Here the Rathā is not the same one included in the eight Vikṛtis mentioned above. In Kerala tradition of the chanting of *Ṛgveda*, the Vikṛti Daṇḍa is practiced as Rathā. Thus the ceremonial chanting of *Ṛgveda* with the Svaras in Kerala includes Pada and Krama of the text or Samhitā and Jaṭā and Rathā of the eight Vikṛtis. In Karnataka and Tamilnadu in the South, Pada, Krama, Jaṭā and Ghana are more in vogue.

Trissur and Tirunāvāya Maṭhas

In course of time, the teaching of the *Ṛgveda* got localised in the Brahmasvam Mathas at Trissur and Tirunāvāya, where the young men used to join for Vedic learning after completing 'Motalora' and 'Caṅgata' locally. They used to be provided with free accomodation and food. Later on, due to the changes that took place in society as the result of many historic reasons, big Nambothiri families collapsed and facilities for imparting primary lesson of *Ṛgveda* like 'Motalora' and 'Caṅgata' became insufficient in their families. So the entire course was shifted to the Trissur and Tirunāvāya Maṭhas. Though these Maṭhas also had to face the problems that the Namboothiri families faced, still the continuity of Vedic teaching has been maintained in them till very recent times. Now the

schedule in these institutions has been adjusted so that the Namboothiri youths can combine school/college education along with the Veda classes. Some years ago, the Tirunāvāya Brahmasvam Maṭham had to be closed down for want of students. Though much effort was made for restarting Ṛgvedic education there, it did not become fully successful. In Trissur Brahmasvam Maṭham, the continuity of Ṛgvedic education has not been interrupted till the present day. At present there are sufficient students studying *Ṛgveda* in Brahmasvam Maṭham, Trissur.

During the period of Vedic study, the student has to undergo strict austerities. He has to take bath very early in the morning and in the evening, on the days of study and should keep purity, both external and internal, throughout. Besides the normal austerities, some particular vows are also to be undergone by him. Some of them last for one year and in those days, the pupil has to make restriction even in his daily food. All these austerities are common to all the Vedas.

Some special methods for preserving the skill of Ṛgvedic recitation in Kerala - textual and ritual

Whole of the Vedic texts are learned byheart according to the Svaras for years in the young ages by the Nambūtiris of Kerala. After the Prakṛtipāṭhas (Samhitā, Padā, Krama) of *Ṛgveda*, great effort is taken to master Vikṛtipāṭhas also which is same to the respective Pāṭhas of other Vedas also. After thus mastering the chanting of *Ṛgveda*, some special methods are followed in Kerala for continuously preserving this skill throughout in life. These methods are peculiar features of Kerala, not found in other parts of India. They include both textual and ritual methods. There are texts like Tāṇṭam and Sūktaślokaś of this type. Tāṇṭam itself is of many types like Paṭṭarutāṇṭam, Malayālatāṇṭam and Samhitātāṇṭam. All these texts include subtle discussions related to Svaras, Padasandhi and such other aspects usually dealt with in Śikṣās and Prātiśākhya texts. Many kinds of rituals

are also observed for preserving the skill of *Ṛgveda* chanting in Kerala which include Svādhyāya, Sūryanamaskāra, Trīṇī, Muṛajapaṃ, Muṛahomaṃ, Vedalakṣārcana, Trisandhā, Ottūṭṭu and Vāraṃ.

Tāṇṭaṃ

Among the textual devices of this kind, Tāṇṭaṃ is a text of Śikṣā type commonly used by the Ṛgvedins of Kerala. The word Tāṇṭaṃ is derived from the Malayālam word Tāṇṭuka which means ‘to overcome’. Ṛgvedic scholars of Kerala consider the device Tāṇṭaṃ as the technique which help them to cross the sea of doubts regarding Samhitāpāṭha and Padapāṭha of *Ṛgveda*.

Tāṇṭaṃ was an oral preservation technique in ancient times. The text was not printed earlier. Kanippayyur Sankaran Namboothiripad, who was a great scholar in Veda, Jyotiṣa, Vāstuvidyā and other branches of knowledge, collected it and published a book by name *Tāṇṭaṃnaḷ*, from Panchangam Press, Kunnankulam in 1930. The text *Tāṇṭaṃ* is included in Nāgarī script, in the work *Preservation Techniques of the Ṛgveda Chanting of Kerala*, jointly edited by C. M. Neelakandhan and K. A. Ravindran and published from Centre for Vedic Studies, SSUS, Kalady in 2010. This book is divided into five parts according to the subjects. They are, Sandhikaḷ, PaṭṭaruTāṇṭaṃ, Malayāḷa Tāṇṭaṃ, Samhitā Tāṇṭaṃ and Sūktaślokaḷ.

Sandhikaḷ

The first portion of this book deals with the Sandhis in Sanskrit especially in Vedic Sanskrit. These are explained in simple Malayālam language and so the Vedic scholars can understand the Sandhis without the study of Vyākaraṇa or Prātiśākhya texts.

Paṭṭarutāṇṭaṃ

The second part of this book is known as Paṭṭarutāṇṭaṃ. This is considered as the work of a non Kerala Brahmin and so the name Paṭṭarutāṇṭaṃ became

famous (Paṭṭar is a colloquial expression for Iyers, the Brahmins of Tamil Nadu who came and settled in Kerala). The authors of Paṭṭarutāṅṭam are well known Vedic scholars, whose names are recorded as Nāgadeva and Śeṣanārāyaṇa.

The Paṭṭarutāṅṭam is divided into six chapters, Śamānam, Vilaṅghyam, Naparam, Taparam, Avarṇi and Āvarṇī.

Śamānam

Śamānam is the first chapter in Paṭṭarutāṅṭam which is most important. The word Śamānam is derived from the root शम् which means ‘to cure’ or ‘to get relief’. It means that the Śamānam is very helpful to get relief from many doubts regarding the Padapāṭha of Ṛgveda. Nāgadeva is the author of Śamānam and it is written in a prose form.

The significance of all chapters in Paṭṭarutāṅṭam is mentioned in each chapters in the form of Paribhāṣāśloka. The use of Śamānam is explained in this way:-

विसर्जनीय आकारपूर्वको घोषवत्परः ।

व्यञ्जनस्पृक् शसपरो लुप्यते संहिताक्षणे ।।²

The Visarga after ā (आ) will drop when the consonants *ga, gha, ja, da, dha, na, ba, bha, ma, ya, ra, la, va,* and *ha* and the compound letters those have *śa* (श) and *sa* (स) in them in the beginning, come after the Visarga in Samhitā. When doubts come while chanting the Samhitā, whether the Visarga is there or not, this rule comes for help. The portion of a hymn अजोषा वृषभम्³ is an example for such doubts. Here Visarga is not heard or is dropped out. By the above rule one can ascertain that Visarga is there originally because the word अजोषाः is mentioned in Śamāna and the Visarga is dropped because the consonant *va* (व) follows it.

Vilaṅghyam

Vilaṅghyam is the second chapter in Paṭṭarutāṅṭam. It is also the work of

Nāgadeva. This chapter is written in verse and it consists of seventy one Ślokas.

The use of this chapter is mentioned below:

ऋकारे पर आकारः परयोरोदुवर्णयोः ।

ओऔ तावचपरेदैतौ सञ्छत्रो संहितागमे ॥

एतदन्तानि तान्याहुर्विलङ्ख्यानीति वैदिकाः ।⁴

In *R̥gveda Samhitā*, the long vowel *ā* (आ) will become *a* (अ) when the vowel *r* (ऋ) comes after that vowel. The vowels *e* (ए) and *ai* (ऐ) will lose its original form and become *a* (अ) and *ā* (आ) , if the vowels except *a* (अ) come just after that vowels. Visarga after *a* (अ) will drop when the vowels except *a* (अ) comes after the Visarga. In these contexts, *Vilaṅghya* is helpful to clear the doubts regarding the ending of such words. In the example of य ऋतेन,⁵ there is a chance for such a doubt. य ऋतेन can be split as ये + ऋतेन or यः + ऋतेन or या + ऋतेन . In order to know the correct form *Vilaṅghya* can be used.

The Tāṅṭam of *ye* (ये) is mentioned as :-

धातमोऽमि पदं पक्वं मरुतो भिः करिष्यति

चिदास स्याम जन्मानः श्रुताऽधान्न प्रचेतसः ॥

पितरोऽभूतन गृहो बर्हसोऽवति तान् पशुम् ।

पन्थिनोऽभ्यन्तरिक्षेभ्य एतत् पूर्वं य इष्यते ॥

प्र ऋभ्यः प्रयेऽयंस ये यज्ञेन प्रयुञ्जती ।

अयं वामग्निमेषु चाऽध्यायेषु विनर्भवः ॥

कक्षीवन्तं स्कुतः पूर्वं ।⁶

In the places of doubts regarding *ye* (ये) *yah* (यः) or *yā* (या), if the Padas (words) or consonants like धातमः, अमी, पदं, पक्वं, मरुतः, भिः, करिष्यति, चिदास, स्याम, जन्मानः, श्रुतः, अधान्न, प्रचेतसः, पितरः, अभूतन, गृहः, बर्हसः, अवति, तान्, पशुं, पन्थिनः, अभि and अन्तरिक्षेभ्यः comes just before the doubtful word, it should be *ye* (ये). If the doubtful words regarding *ye* (ये) come in the *Adhyāyas* beginning with प्र ऋभ्यः, प्रये, अयं सः, ये

यज्ञेन, प्रयुञ्जति, अयं वां and अग्निं, there also *ye* (ये) should be the form. There are some exceptions in these Adhyāyas. One is that if the words like ऋभवः, कक्षीवन्तं and स्कुतः come just before the doubtful word, *ye* (ये) could not be used. In the example of य ऋतेन, *ye* (ये) is the correct word, because this is a portion in the Adhyāya which is started with ये यज्ञेन।⁷

Napara and Tapara

The third and the fourth chapters in Paṭṭarutāṅṭam are closely related to each other. The third chapter is known as Napara (नपरम्) and the fourth as Tapara (तपरम्). The word Napara means the words ending with the consonant *n* (न्) and Tapara means the words ending with *t* (त्). These two chapters are composed by a learned scholar by name Śeṣanārāyaṇa. In Napara there are 38 Ślokas and Tapara consists of 14 Ślokas.

Śeṣanārāyaṇa explains the use of Napara and Tapara in these Ślokas :

चजयोश्च थकारं तु हित्वा तादिचतुष्टये ।
 मकारे च लकारे च परे सति विकारभाक् ॥
 पदान्तो यो मकारश्च तकारो नपरश्च यः ।
 दृश्यते येषु तौ ज्ञातुं प्रवक्ष्यामि पदान्यहम् ॥⁸

There is a chance for doubt regarding the words which end with *n* (न्) or *t* (त्) or *m* (म्) if they are followed by the consonants like *ca*, *ja*, *ta*, *da*, *dha*, *na*, *ma*, and *la*. In the hymn सन्नः शिशीहि,⁹ the first two words can be split in three ways as - सम् + नः, सन् + नः and सत् + नः। In order to clear such doubts, Napara and Tapara are to be used. Napara denotes the words ending with *n* (न्) and Tapara defines the words ending with *t* (त्) in these contexts.

Avarṇi and Āvarṇi

Avarṇi and Āvarṇi are the last two chapters of Paṭṭarutāṅṭam. Avarṇi

denotes the word which begins with *a* (अ) and in \bar{A} varṇi, the words are listed which begin with \bar{a} (आ) . There are 71 Ślokaś belonging to Avarṇi and \bar{A} varṇi together. The name of the author of these chapters is not mentioned.

The vowel *a* (अ) is dropped when the vowels *e* (ए) and *o* (ओ) come just before those words which begins with *a* (अ)। तेऽवदन्¹⁰ is an example. The doubtful words in Samhitā which begin with *a* (अ) are listed in the chapter Avarṇi. There is another law in Sandhi which deals with the joining of Avarṇas. This law says that when two Avarṇas join together, the result should be longer *a*. It means that one *a* (अ) or \bar{a} (आ) if joined with another *a* (अ) or \bar{a} (आ), the result should be a long \bar{a} (आ). In order to know the beginning of the second one in the combined words, on the basis of the law mentioned above, the Avarṇi or \bar{A} varṇi can be used.

Malayālatāṅṭam

Malayālatāṅṭam is considered as the contribution of a Vedic scholar or some groups of scholars from Kerala. The name of the author of Malayālatāṅṭam is unknown. In Malayālatāṅṭam six important topics are discussed. They are, Akārāntas, Īkārāntapadasūci, Rephas, \bar{A} dyudātta, Antodātta and Pragṛhyas.

Apart from these topics many groups of words are listed postulating the doubts that may arise in each context. They are:

1. Iṭaṅkayyuḷḷa Padaṅṅaḷ (words denoted by additional Mudrās)
2. Kuṛukkiya Padaṅṅaḷ (shortened words)
3. Valiya Oṭikal (words with lengthened split).
4. Orrakaḷ (solitary words)
5. Palavaka (Miscellaneous)

Akārāntas

There are many peculiarities in the usage of Vedic words, which does not

follow the general Sandhi rules in classical Sanskrit. The words which are ending with *a* (अ) are seen as *ā* (आ) in Samhitā. Under this topic of Akārānta, such types of words are listed. Twenty two Ślokas or verses are included in this portion to denote the Padas or words which are ending with *a* (अ).

Īkārāntapadasūci

In Sanskrit the words ending with the vowels *i* (इ) and *ī* (ई) will change into यण् (य), when they join with the vowels except *i* (इ) and *ī* (ई). In these contexts Īkārāntapadasūci is helpful to know the right form of the ending of first word in Sandhis. Under this topic the words which are ending with *ī* (ई) are listed. It is understood that the doubtful words which are not mentioned in this chapter and which come in the above mentioned situations will end with *i* (इ). The word अयुध्वी is mentioned in this chapter as an example and so in the hymn अयुध्व्युत्,¹¹ the word अयुध्वी is to be split as अयुध्वी + उत। Another example is वाग्दन्ती।¹² It denotes that if the word वाक् comes just before the word वदन्ति, it should be chanted as वदन्ती (with ईकारान्त ending). In all other such cases the word वदन्ति is to be used.

Example : वाग्दन्त्यविचेतनानि - वाक् + वदन्ती + अविचेतनानि।

Counter example : वदन्त्योजसः - वदन्ति + ओजसः।¹³

Rephas

The Visarga coming after the vowels except *a* (अ) and *ā* (आ) are dropped and will change into Repha in all Sandhis. But the Visarga or Repha cannot be seen when they join with the compound consonants which start with ś (श्) or s (स)। सीराः पत्रिणी¹⁴ + स्थन is an example. Here it can be split in two ways as पत्रिणी + स्थन and पत्रिणीः + स्थन। When one chants this hymn in Samhitā, he cannot understand whether it is divided as पत्रिणी + स्थन or पत्रिणीः + स्थन. In order to know such words, the Tāṇṭam 'Rephas' are very helpful. In Rephas the word पत्रिणीः is mentioned. So one can understand the Padapāṭha of पत्रिणी स्थन as पत्रिणीः + स्थन।

Ādyudāṭṭa and Antodāṭṭa

In Vedas, the Sandhi is more difficult than in the classical Sanskrit. There are two different types of Sandhis in Vedas. They are Svarasandhi and Akṣarasandhi. All the chapters of Tāṇṭam which are described before are related with the Sandhis of Akṣara. These two chapters deal with the Sandhis of Svāra. In the case of starting with Udāṭṭasvāra, there should be a chance for doubts regarding the first accent. These types of words are listed in the chapter Ādyudāṭṭa. Antodāṭṭa contains those words which are ending with Udāṭṭa when there is chance for doubt to locate the accent there in the end. All these matters are discussed in these chapters.

Pragr̥hyas

In Vedas there are some words ending with \bar{i} (इ) and e (ए)। They are sometimes Pragr̥hyas and sometimes not. *Te* (ते) is an example for such types of words. This chapter discusses about the Pragr̥hyas ending with e (ए) and \bar{i} (इ). These are the main topics in Malayālatāṇṭam.

Iṭaṅkayyul̥ḷa Padaṅṅaḷ

There are some other topics also which are not so important as those mentioned above. Among such topics Iṭaṅkayyul̥ḷa Padaṅṅaḷ is the first one. It is a device to clear the doubts regarding the Hastamudrā. The correct form of some words cannot be understood by the knowledge of normal Svarasandhi, Akṣarasandhi and Hastamudrās of the accent at the end of that word. In such contexts, extra Mudrās are used to denote the correct form of the letter. Such words are known as Iṭaṅkayyul̥ḷa Padaṅṅaḷ.

Kuṛukkiya Padaṅṅaḷ

Kuṛukkiya Padaṅṅaḷ means the group of words which will become short in Padapāṭha. The word पुरुषः in Samhitā is changed as पुरुषः in Padapāṭha.¹⁵ Such words are listed in Kuṛukkiya Padaṅṅaḷ.

Valiya Oṭikaḷ

The word Valiya Oṭikaḷ denotes the compound words in which the first part has the ending with Dīrgha. In some words, there will be chance of doubt regarding the ending of the first part of compound words. The compound word आच्य¹⁶ is an example. It spilled as आ + आच्य . Here the doubt arises whether the first part is pronounced as *a* (अ) or *ā* (आ). In this case the device Valiya Oṭikaḷ helps the scholars to clear the doubt.

Oṛṛakaḷ

The word Oṛṛa means single one or solitary. Some words have some typical characteristics among such group of words. These typical words are listed in alphabetical order in verses. These verses are known as Oṛṛakaḷ.

Palavaka (miscellaneous)

Palavaka denotes various items of this type listed. Under this topic different types of other doubts are cleared related to the topic. Several clarifications are given in this part regarding the chanting of *Ṛgveda*. It is given in the text without any order.

Samhitā Tāṇṭaṇṇaḷ

This portion is used to clear the doubts regarding the Sandhis in Samhitā. According to Vedic scholars it is not so important because they are well versed in the chanting of Samhitā. They consider that the PaṭṭaruTāṇṭaṇṇaḷ and MalayāḷaTāṇṭaṇṇaḷ are more useful than the SamhitāTāṇṭaṇṇaḷ.

Sūktaślokas

Sūktaśloka is a peculiar device used to know the number of Vargas in each Sūkta of *Ṛgveda*. Melputtūr Nārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa is considered as the author of *Sūktaślokas*. It includes nine Ślokas in the Sragdharā metre. The first Śloka

explains the significance and importance of Sūktaśloka in general and the following eight Śloka denote the number of Vargas in each Sūkta using the method of Kaṭapayādi. Each Śloka is devoted to each Aṣṭaka and thus number of Vargas in each Sūkta of whole text of *R̥gveda* are explained.

In *Sūktaśloka* Melputtūr uses the compound consonants in a particular way. It is described in the first Śloka as:-

यूक्ताद्यं तुल्यसूक्तान्युपदिशतु भवेद्वादशेत्तौ क्षकारः
प्रेतिस्याद्विद्विकोत्तौ भवतु च दशसङ्ख्याभिधायी नकारः।¹⁷

It means that the first half of a compound consonant denotes the number of Sūkta and the second half denotes the Vargasaṅkhyā in each Sūktas. The compound consonant क्ष denotes the Sūkta which includes twelve Vargas and प्र denotes two continuous Sūktas containing two Vargas each. The consonant न is used to denote the Sūkta which contains ten vargas and त्त is useful to inform the end of Adhyāyas. *Sūktaśloka* with a detailed commentary in Sanskrit by Dr. K. Vishnu Namboothiri is also included in the above mentioned work *Preservation Techniques of the R̥gveda Chanting of Kerala*.

The study of Vedas with Ṣaḍaṅga is considered as the duty of Brāhmaṇas. The study of Veda with correct Svāra and pronunciation is also essential. The Ṣaḍaṅgas, especially Śikṣā and Chandas, are used to know the correct pronunciation and accent. But it is not easy to study the Vedāṅgas including Śikṣā and Prātiśākhya for all who study Veda to know the correct pronunciation of Veda because much time and deep knowledge in Sanskrit are required for that. So the ancient Vedic scholars of Kerala used some other easy methods for this. These methods or techniques were later compiled in the works *Tāṇṭāṇṇal*. Using such techniques and other devices, the Vedic Scholars preserved the tradition of Veda in Kerala. Because of such hard and dedicated effort the ancient scholars have

indulged in, the present generation is able to know about the Vedas, their chanting and related topics.

Rituals

There are many ritual methods also followed in Kerala for preserving the skill of *Ṛgveda* chanting. Among the Vedic rituals, Yāgas are the most important. In Yāgas many hymns of the three Vedas are used and some other Mantras are also chanted which are not seen in Samhitā texts. These may be the Mantras of some vanished recension of Vedas. Apart from these Yāgas, there are many other rituals, which are more helpful for the preservation of Vedas. Most of them are regional in practice and those followed in Kerala are explained here.

Murajapam, Vāram, Ottūṭṭ, Trisandhā, Murahomam and Lakṣārcanā are the main rituals introduced by ancient scholars for the preservation of Vedas in Kerala. There are some Vedic rituals which are included in the daily duties of Brahmins. Svādhyāya, Sūryanamaskāra and Trīṇi are such type of rituals.

Svādhyāya

Svādhyāya is a daily ritual performed by the Brahmins after completing their primary Vedic education or Samhitā course. It is believed that Svādhyāya is a ritual to be practiced strictly by all who have studied Veda. It is considered as a Brahmajña. The student has to recite a portion of Samhitā every day till the end of the life. This is done by all Vedic scholars. *Ṛgvedic* scholars recite one Sūkta or Anuvāka in the Svādhyāya a day. For Yajurvedins and Sāmavedins, one Oth (chapter) has to be chanted. Related to the chanting there are many ritual performances also.

Sūryanamaskāra

This is a practice helpful for the mental concentration and physical exercise for the Vedic scholars. They chant a certain portion of their own Veda and do the Sūryanamaskāra. The scholars who belong to *Ṛgveda* and Sāmaveda do their

Namaskāra for each Ṛk or hymn and Yajurvedic scholars do five Namaskāras for each Pañcāśat¹⁸ which they call Paññādi in local language.

Trīṇi

This is a rare ritual performed by the Vedic scholars. Only limited number of scholars are able to perform this. Samhitā, Padapāṭha and Kramapāṭha are recited in this ritual. This is more fruitful than the other daily rituals like Namaskāra and Svādhyāya for memorising Vedic chanting. The name Trīṇi is meaningful as the three modes of chanting of Veda (Samhitā, Pada and Krama) are combined in this. Usually one *Ṛgvedasūkta* is chanted in Trīṇi style one day. So it will take about one thousand days for the complete recitation of *Ṛgveda* in this style.

There are some ritual performances which are done in special occasions. Murajapam, Murahomam, Trisandhā, Ottūṭṭ and Vāram are the examples for such type of rituals.

Murajapam¹⁹

It is a ritual performance done related to special occasions. This is performed in big Brahmin households as well as temples. Recitation of the whole Samhitā within a certain period is called as Murajapam. The Vedic scholar who can chant the whole Samhitā with the correct Svāra can only participate in the Murajapam. This is sometimes performed by a single scholar or group of scholars. If one scholar devotes five hours a day for this type of chanting, this will be completed within four days. This is done by group of scholars also with more elaborate Svāra, repeating the Samhitā text in this way many times. In the famous Murajapa festival conducted at Śrī Padmanābhasvāmi temple, Tiruvananthapuram, this ritual used to prolong for fifty-six days. In this festival the Samhitā was chanted seven times by each Vedic scholar devoting eight days for the completion of the recital once.

Murahomam or Samhitāhomam

Samhitāhomam is a Vedic ritual practiced by Ṛgvedic scholars only. It is conducted not only in Kerala but in other states of India also. Samhitā is chanted with Ṛṣi, Chandas and Devatā and ghee is offered in the fire at the end of every hymn with Svāhākāra. Three Vedic scholars use to participate in this ritual. One priest performs the Homa with the recitation of Mantra, the second one does the Anujapa (reciting along with the former) and the third one is called Brahman who takes care of the whole procedure, not to have any mistake.

Vedalakṣārcanā

This is a new Vedic ritual performance that was started by Śrī O.M.C. Narayanan Namboothirippa, a great Vedic scholar, the former president of Vaṭakke Maṭham Brahmasvam (Brahmasvam Maṭham) and the author of *Ṛgvedabhāṣābhāṣyam*. The first Vedalakṣārcana was conducted at Brahmasvam Maṭham, Trissur, in the year 1975. At least ten scholars who can chant the whole Samhitā are needed for a Vedalakṣārcana. This ritual is common now in temples with all three Vedas.

Trisandhā

This is a long-term ritual performance. In order to conduct a Trisandhā, about eight months are necessary. The full-time involvement of twenty or more scholars are needed for this. At least five scholars have to chant the Veda without break. This is conducted only in Sādhyāya days (working days).

In Trisandhā, Samhitā, Pada and Krama are chanted with Svāra. The name Trisandhā is meaningful because all the three styles of chanting are combined here (Samhitā, Pada and Krama). त्रयाणां सन्धा त्रिसन्धा। Teaching and learning method is used in this ritual. One scholar recites the Mantras in the place of the teacher and others repeat them as students. After each Varga, the one who acts as teacher, is

changed. Thus all scholars will come in the position of teacher and student in turn. This is the method of Ṛgvedic Trisandhā. There are two types of Trisandhā among Ṛgvedins - Pādasahitā and Pādarahitā. In Pādasahitā type of Trisandhā, Pādapāṭhā is also chanted. Sāmavedins also have Trisandhā. They chant Ṛk, Sāma, and Ūha in Trisandhā. The last Sāmavedic Trisandhā was held before 70 years at Toṭṭattil Mana, Pāññāl. There is no Sāmavedic scholar now who has participated in that Trisandhā. Trisandhā of Ṛgveda is being conducted at Brahmasvam Maṭham, Trissur now, two months each year.

Ottūṭṭu²⁰

This is a Vedic ritual conducted by the scholars of Yajurveda. This is a ritual performance like Trisandhā conducted every six years at different temples. Samhitā, Pada and Koṭṭu are recited in Ottūṭṭu. Apart from these three, Krama and Śākhā are also included in some places for this ritual. In order to conduct such a ritual, minimum 32 Svādhyāyas (working days) are essential. Now this is a rarely conducted ritual in Kerala.

Vāram

Vāram is considered as a much sacred Vedic ritual performance. This is performed in relation to almost all the rituals mentioned above. During the time of Trisandhā, Vāram is performed on every Ekādaśī day and the days of Anadhyāya (holidays) of each Pakṣa. It is conducted at temples and some Brahmin families related to special occasions also.

This ritual is common to all Vedas. Ṛgvedic scholars chant the Kramapāṭha of continuous ten Mantras, for Vāram. According to the scholars belonging to Yajurveda, Vāram is the recitation of Padapāṭha of continuous 250 Padas (words). Sāmavedic scholars use the Vikṛtipāṭha, Ūha for Vāram. Vedic scholars use a particular method to choose a portion of Veda to chant for Vāram. They use pieces

of stones to decide the particular portion of Veda that is to be chanted for Vāram. This method is known as Kalluvaccu Vāram.²¹ This method is followed by Tamil Brahmins also.

In Kerala, Vāram is used to evaluate the talent of scholars. Mumpilirikkal, one of the great examinations in Kaṭavallūr Anyonyam, is a typical example for this kind of Vāram. Mūṭippacca is a Vikṛti of Kerala tradition. This is reverse chanting of Vāram. In Vāram mistake is not at all allowed. If one makes a mistake, he cannot continue the chanting and it is considered as a sin.

There are several other devices also for the preservation of Vedas. Vedavikṛtis and some other techniques like Tāṅṭam and Pādakkuttu are important among them.

Vedavikṛtis

Vedavikṛtis are one of the important devices followed for the preservation of Vedas. For *Ṛgveda*, there are eight Vedavikṛtis:-

जटा माला शिखा रेखा ध्वजो दण्डो रथो घनः ।

अष्टौ विकृतयः प्रोक्ताः क्रमपूर्वा मनीषिभिः ॥

These Vikṛtipāṭhas help the scholars to reaffirm their knowledge in the chanting of Vedas. Similar Vikṛtipāṭhas are practiced by Yajurvedins and Sāmavedins also.

In Kerala Jaṭā and Ratha are popular Vikṛtis among Ṛgvedins. The famous Vedavikṛti, Daṅḍa is popularly known among Nampūtiris as Ratha. Nampūtiris adopt a particular mode of expansion in Svaras while chanting these Vikṛtipāṭhas which are very distinct from other parts of India. Vikṛtis, especially Ratha is considered as the main scale to evaluate the skill of a Vedic scholar in Kerala. Ghoṣa is a popular Vikṛti practiced by Yajurvedins in Kerala. Ūha and Ūṣāṇi are the famous Vikṛtis of Sāmaveda chanting in Kerala. Besides Ūha and Ūṣāṇi,

Kerala Sāmavedins introduced a new method of chanting, that is known as Vacanam. It has many similarities with the Jaṭā style of Ṛgvedic scholars in Kerala.

Thus there are many textual and ritual methods followed in Kerala for the preservation of the skill of Ṛgvedic recitation.

Kadavallur Anyonyam

There has been friendly rivalry between Trissur and Tirunāvāya Brahmasvam Maṭhas. At Kadavallur Sri Ramaswamy Temple, Kadavallur, Trissur Dt. every year, a competition on the chanting of *Ṛgveda* between the scholars of the two Maṭhas, takes place. The candidates from these two Maṭhas recite *Ṛgveda* in different Vikṛtis and there are judges to evaluate the performances. Titles or honours like Mumpilirikkal (sit in front of the examiners or in front of the presiding deity for the competition), Kaṭannirikkal (sitting in the inner parts of the temple for further, higher tests) and Valiyakaṭannirikkal (more severe tests entering the inner parts of the temple for Vedic examination) were given to the successful candidates. These are the highest titles that a Ṛgvedic scholar gets if he proves to be excellent in different modes of chanting. These titles or honours can be compared to the degrees like M.A., M.Phil and Ph.D of the present day. No such examination is current in Kerala for *Yajurveda* or *Sāmaveda*. No other examination or evaluation method for *Ṛgveda*, or for any other Vedas like these, is prevalent in other parts of India also. Due to the socio-cultural changes that took place in the modern society, this Anyonyam ceremony was also stopped for some years. But now it has been restarted with more pomp and vigour. For the last few years, national level seminars and discussions on different topics connected with Vedas also used to take place on the stage outside the temple on the days of Anyonyam, when the ceremonial Vedic examination goes on inside the temple.

Exact history of Kadavallur Anyonyam is not available. According to the

traditions, this was started in the temple at Mulakunnathukavu near Trissur. There the participants of the Trissur Maṭha always used to get victory because they were getting the blessings of the famous deity of Vadakkunnatha temple at Trissur. Tradition says that the members of the Tirunāvāya Maṭha gradually manipulated the situation and were successful in shifting the venue of Anyonyam to the Kadavallur Sri Ramaswamy temple in course of time.

Anyonyam is now conducted for eight days. Examinations of the two groups of Namboothiris from the eight Aṣṭakas of *Ṛgveda* will be completed in eight days, concentrating on one Aṣṭaka each day in order. Years back, the contest was conducted for sixteen or twenty four days also taking into consideration the number of participants from each Maṭha for the contest as more scholars used to get ready for that in those days. But now, for many years the programme is confined to eight days only. Anyonyam starts on the first day of the Malayalam month Vṛścikam every year (middle of November) and continues for eight consecutive days. This rare ceremonial contest of *Ṛgveda* chanting is a unique feature of the Vedic tradition of Kerala.²²

Mudrā recitation of *Ṛgveda*

Mudrā recitation is a special feature found in Kerala with regard to *Ṛgveda* chanting. Some Mudrās or gestures with fingers and hands are used in the *Ṛgveda* chanting of Kerala which are not found in other parts of India. Also no such specific Mudrās, except some hand movements, are used in the chanting of *Sāma* or *Yajus* in Kerala or in the chanting of any Veda in other parts of India. Scholars of *Ṛgveda* in Kerala who are proficient in Mudrā chanting, are able to communicate the whole of the ten Maṇḍalas of *Ṛgveda* containing more than ten thousand Mantras, with these Mudrās or hand gestures only. These Mudrās do not denote any word or its meaning, but they denote the letters at the end of each word of the

Mantras. Thus they are helpful to understand the Padapāṭha. Mudrās used in Tantra worship to denote the meaning of the words related to the different objects used in Pūjā. Also, Mudrās are used in theatrical art forms like Kūṭiyāṭṭam, Kathakali and Mohiniyāṭṭam to present different words and their meaning. The development of Vedic and Tantric Mudrās as the Mudrās used in theatrical art forms, is a topic much interesting for further study and research. Recently, a small treatise namely *Bahvṛcahastalakṣaṇadīpikā* has been written by Dr. K. V. Vasudevan, a young scholar from Kerala, which describes the Mudrās used in the *Ṛgveda* chanting of Kerala in a lucid way in Sanskrit. The same is included in the work *Preservation Techniques of the Ṛgveda Chanting of Kerala* jointly edited by C. M. Neelakandhan and K. A. Ravindran and published from the Centre for Vedic Studies of Sree Sankaracharya University of Sanskrit, Kalady in 2010.

Musical aspects of Ṛgveda chanting

Though based on the three basic Svaras, Udāṭṭa, Anudāṭṭa and Svarita, the chanting of *Ṛgveda* and *Sāmaveda* followed in Kerala is more musical, elaborate and rhythmic. The chanting of the higher modes of *Ṛgveda* in Kerala, Jaṭā and Ratha and the *Jaiminīyasāma* chanting of the Namboothiris of Kerala are best examples for this. In Jaṭā and Ratha chanting, two scholars of *Ṛgveda* sit face to face in Kukkuṭāsana and chant the Mantras in musical tone with elaborations of different kinds. Two scholars with the same Śruti and harmony of sound is often selected for Jaṭā and Ratha chanting and they chant for about one hour in high pitch and musical tone. The Śruti and musical tone are maintained throughout the chanting without the help of any instruments for the support of Śruti that are usually seen used in classical music concerts and the like. This kind of chanting of Jaṭā and Ratha by two scholars joined together resulting in the experience of the sublimity of rhythm and musical harmony, is a unique feature of the *Ṛgveda*

chanting of Kerala. In the classical art forms of Kerala like Kathakaḷi and Kṛṣṇanāṭṭam, music is provided from the back by two singers. They are called Ponnāni and Śiṅkiṭi, the main singer and the assistant. These singers also, often with the same sweetness of sound and Śruti, while singing, create wonderful experience of music. The performance of the chanting of Jaṭā and Ratha with two scholars often reminds us of the performance of music in Kathakaḷi and Kṛṣṇanāṭṭam by two singers on the stage. These and similar topics related to the Veda recitation of Kerala should be subjected to further careful studies.

Notes

1. For more details of these points vide *Namboodiri Vedic Recitation* by J.F. Staal, Mountain & Co. Netherlands, 1961
2. *Tāṇṭaṅṅaḷ*, Kanippayyur Sankaran Namboothiripad, Panchangam Pustakasala, Kunnamkulam, 1930, p. 4.
3. *Ṛgveda*, I, 9, 4.
4. *Tāṇṭaṅṅaḷ*, p. 12.
5. *Ṛgveda*, X, 62, 3.
6. *Tāṇṭaṅṅaḷ*, pp. 15-16.
7. *Ṛgveda*, X, 62,1.
8. *Tāṇṭaṅṅaḷ*, p. 18.
9. *Ṛgveda*, VII, 4, 16.
10. *Ibid*, X, 109, 1.
11. *Ibid*, X, 108, 5.
12. *Ibid*, VIII, 89, 10.
13. *Ibid*, X, 73, 10.
14. *Ibid*, X, 97, 9.
15. *Ibid*, X, 97, 9.
16. *Ibid*, X, 90, 3.
17. *Tāṇṭaṅṅaḷ*, p. 90.
18. Collection of fifty Padas or words.
19. Mura denotes Samhitā and Japam means recitation. Thus Murajapam is the recitation of Samhitā of Veda.

20. Ottu means Veda, Koṭṭu is an exercise of chanting of *Yajurveda* in Kerala, where four Padas of the Padapāṭha will be chanted by one scholar which will be repeated by others thrice. The word Ottukoṭṭu becomes Ottūṭṭu in colloquial language.
21. Kallu = stone, Vaccu = putting. Thus the term means putting stones and deciding a portion of Veda to be chanted in the ritual of Vāram.
22. For more details about Anyonyam, vide the article 'Kadavallur Anyonyam', Mahākavi Kotungallur Kunjikuttan Tampuran and the article 'Anyonyam - Oru Caritrāvalokam' (Anyonyam - A historical enquiry) by Dr. Mannur Jatavedan Namboothiri, Anyonyam Silver Jubilee Smaranika, Kadavallur Anyonyaparishat, Kadavallur, Trissur Dist, Kerala, Nov. 2014, pp. 154-160 and 161-162.
