

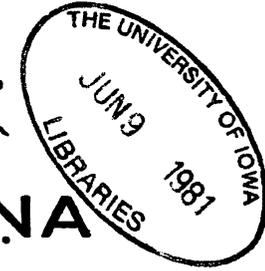
there are some adaptations in Hindi of this *Mahātmya*, the last aspect of this work which never stopped changing along the centuries. From this point of view we can say that Gayā is a little image of India which is said to be always unchangeable and really referring to the most ancient traditions, but which one sees changing every day and which, like all the other countries, never stopped evolving.

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Notes and Comments

A WRONG RENDERING OF THE WORD मुख्यात्मन्
(IN VIṢṆU-PURĀṆA 3.17.29) BY WILSON

While eulogizing Viṣṇu the Viṣṇupurāṇa says :

यज्ञाङ्गभूतं यद् रूपं जगतः सिद्धिसाधनम् ।
वृक्षादिभेदैर्यद्भेदि तस्मै मुख्यात्मने नमः ॥ (3.17.29)

Wilson translates this verse as : 'Glory to thee who art that chief spirit which is diversified in the vegetable world, and which, as the essence of sacrifice, is the instrument of accomplishing the perfection of the universe.'¹

The translator has rendered the expression मुख्यात्मन् by 'chief spirit', which according to us is wrong as the following consideration would show. The import of the word as given by the commentator Śrīdhara² seems to be original. It is to be noted that Wilson, who often follows the commentator, did not adduce any reason for not following the view of the commentator.

(A) If मुख्यात्मन् is taken in the sense of 'chief spirit' there does not seem any relevance in saying that the chief spirit has subdivisions like trees (*vrkṣa*) etc. As the word मुख्यात्मन् must be taken as a descriptive name, the state of being *mukhyātman* is to be directly and intimately connected with the vegetable world. No such connection is found to exist between 'the character of being chief spirit' and 'the vegetable world'. One can easily understand that there is no significance in saying that Viṣṇu is known as the chief spirit on account of His being diversified in the vegetable world.

(B) The word *mukhyātman* may be analysed either as an example of the Karmadhāraya compound or as an example of the Bahuvrīhi compound. Thus the expression would mean either 'ātman who is *mukhya* (chief)' or 'one whose *ātman* (essence) is '*mukhya*'. Both of these meanings have no logical connection with वृक्षादिभेद.

The foregoing discussion shows that in the present context the word *mukhya* cannot be taken in its usual sense of 'chief'. It must be taken in a technical sense—a sense which should be in conso-

1. The Viṣṇu Purāṇa, translated by H. H. Wilson, p. 269, published by Punthi Pustaka, Calcutta 1961.
2. मुख्यात्मने = वृक्षात्मने.

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nance with the remaining part of the verse and which must have been known to the purāṇic authors.

A perusal of the Purāṇas reveals that the word *mukhya* has a technical sense, namely 'the plant world'. It is the only sense which renders the verse intelligible. The word in this sense has been repeatedly used in the Purāṇic Chapters on creation (vide Vāyu-p. 6.38-40; Brahmaṇḍa-p. 1.5. 33-34; Kūrma-p. 1.7.3-5). The Viṣṇupurāṇa, for example, after describing the characteristics of plants, says मुख्या नगा यतश्चोक्ता मुख्यसर्गस्ततस्त्वयम् (1.5.7) i.e. since the *nagās* (i. e. the vegetable world; naga meaning one that cannot move) are called *mukhyas* their creation is called *mukhyasarga*.

As to the reason for giving the name *mukhya* to the plant world it is said that since the plants are created at first (i. e. before the appearance of human and other beings) they are called *mukhya*.³

It is to be noted in this connection that a host of verses in Itihāsa-Purāṇa literature clearly speak of the subdivisions of plants and that a few of such Purāṇic passages mention वृक्ष (trees) in the first place, vide Bhīṣma parva 4.14.⁴

The above consideration clearly shows that Wilson's rendering of the expressing *mukhyātman* is wrong and that the expression must be taken in the sense of स्थावरात्मन् (or उद्भिज्जात्मन्). The commentator Śrīdhara has noted a variant reading as वृक्षादिभेदैः षड्भेदि in the place of वृक्षादिभेदैर्यद्भेदि. As the sixfold division of plants is also stated in the Purāṇas (vide Bhāgavata 3.10.19) this variant deserves consideration.

It is a pity that such a significant word as मुख्यात्मन् is not read in the Dictionary by Sir Monier Williams.

—Jyotirmayee Bhattacharya

3. मुखमिव प्रथमं ब्रह्मणः सर्गो भवतीति मुख्या नगाः स्थावराः (Śrīdhara's comm. on Viṣṇu-p. I. 5.7; मुखमिव प्रथमं कृतः (Śrīdhara's comm. on Bhāg. 3.10.18). The word *mukhya* is derived from the word मुख according to the Pāṇinian Sūtra शाखादिभ्यो यः (5.3.103). The Gaṇaratna-mahodadhī (3.190) observes : मुखमिव मुख्यः, यथा मुखं हस्तपादादिभ्योऽवयवेभ्यः प्रथमम् अवलोक्यते, तथाऽन्योऽप्येवमुच्यते.
4. उद्भिज्जाः स्थावराः प्रोक्तास्तेषां पञ्चैव जातयः । वृक्षगुल्मलतावलयस्त्वक् सारास्तृणजातयः ॥ (भीष्मपर्व 4.14). The त्वक्सारः are said to be the same as the तृणजाति; (vide the comm. by Nīlakaṇṭha).