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## A study of various exegesis of a few gāṛtsamada hymns

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### Introduction

The Vedas are ancient texts that are sacred in India and renowned through the world. They are namely the *R̥k-*, the *Yajur-* in two recensions: the *Śukla* and the *Kṛṣṇa*, the *Sāman-*, and the *Atharva-*. The *R̥g-veda* has been given the first place among the others in order of respect and importance.

There have been two available branches of the *R̥g-veda*: *Śākala* and *Bāṣkala*. The most acclaimed critical edition of the *R̥g-veda* (VSM, Pune) is based on the *Śākala* branch. There are ten chapters (*maṇḍalas*) in the *Śākala Saṃhitā*, of which the first and the tenth *maṇḍalas*, according to the scholars, are of later origin in comparison to the rest of it. The intermediate six *maṇḍalas* (viz. the second to seventh *maṇḍala*) are called the Family *maṇḍalas*. The second *maṇḍala* is ascribed to *r̥ṣi* Gṛtsamada. The account regarding Gṛtsamada's genealogy varies in the story mentioned by Sāyaṇa quoting the *Anukramaṇī* from that narrated by the *Viṣṇu-purāṇa*. Sāyaṇa in his introduction to this *maṇḍala* said that according to the *Anukramaṇī* Gṛtsamada was the son of Śunahotra of Āṅgirasas family. He was arrested by the Asuras while performing a sacrifice. He was, however, released by Indra at whose bidding he became Gṛtsamada, the son of Śunaka of Bhṛgu family. The *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* (4.8.1), however, describes Gṛtsamada as the son of Śunahotra and the father of Śunaka or Śaunaka.

The second *maṇḍala* of *R̥g-veda*, therefore, almost entirely belongs to an individual seer, viz. Gṛtsamada, except hymns four to seven ascribed to Somāhuti Bhārgava, and again hymns twenty seven to thirty belonging to Kūrma Gṛtsamada, who, according to tradition, was the son of Gṛtsamada. As V.G. Rahurkar (1964: 8) observes that "only two individual seers, apart from Gṛtsamada himself are traditionally mentioned as having been responsible for the *sūktas* in this *maṇḍala*. Out of the forty-three *sūktas* thirty-five are traditionally ascribed to Gṛtsamada. Hymns four to seven belong to Somāhuti Bhārgava...Hymns twenty seven to thirty belong to Kūrma Gṛtsamada." the second *maṇḍala* being the first family *maṇḍala* according to the arrangement of the *R̥g-veda*, has a special importance. Apart from this, this *maṇḍala* has an archaic style and was composed in a very early phase of Vedic literature.

The verses of this *maṇḍala* are interpreted variously by the eastern interpreters and modern scholars. Some major differences between the interpretations of traditional commentators and those offered by the modern scholars on the exposition of a few hymns of the second *maṇḍala* of the *R̥g-veda* are pointed out in this article where the differences of interpretation have been shown of RV 2.1.1; 2.11.14; 2.13.03, in which dissimilarities are found in respective commentaries on one or more words. The dissimilarities of interpretations are being elaborated below:

### 2.1.1

In the first stanza of the very first hymn of this *maṇḍala* Gṛtsamada mentions the various sources of Agni. The meaning of the stanza is as follows:

You, Agni, (are born) throughout the days, you who are eager to blaze here; you (are born) from the waters, you from the stone, you from the trees, you from the plants, you, men-lord of men, are born blazing. [Translation by Jamison and Brereton 2014: 1. 401]. According to Sāyaṇa the word *dyubhiḥ* at line a means "for the day of sacrifice or with the day of sacrifice" but Veikaṭamādhava explains it as "from the heaven" and to support his view he quotes RV 10.45.01<sup>1</sup>.

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1 "divaspari prathamam jajñe" (RV10.45.01)

According to Griffith here the word means “through the days”. Sāyaṇa interprets the word *āśuśukṣaṇi* again at line a as “shining all around or who shines quickly and then serves or who gives pain to the enemies”. The last option is also attested by Veṅkatamādhava. According to Griffith it means “shining”. In *Nirukta* [6.1]<sup>2</sup> Yāska interprets this word in detail: “The words *āśu* and *śu* are two synonyms of quick. *Ḳṣaṇi*, the latter part (of *āśu- śu-ḳṣaṇi*), is derived from (the root) *ḳṣana-* (to injure): it quickly injures, or procures (*sanoti*) with its flames. *Śuk* is derived from (the root) *śuc-* (to shine). Or the nominative has been used for the ablative; this is shown by the context. The former part (of *āśuśukṣaṇi*) i.e. the letter *ā*, is a preposition; the latter is formed from the desiderative of the causative of (the root) *śuc*, i.e. desirous of kindling quickly.” [Translation by Lakshman Sarup 2009: 2.89]

The last word *śuci* at line d of this stanza means “pure”. There is not much dissension among the interpreters about its meaning, though Sāyaṇa suggests another meaning for this word, i.e. *ādityarūpaḥ*: seems as Āditya.

### 2.11.14

#### This stanza means

Grant us peaceful dwelling. Grant us alliance. Grant us a Marutian warrior band, o Indra. And they who jointly are finding exhilaration- (those) Winds drink the first offering. [Translation by Jamison and Brereton 2014: 1.415].

The word *śardhaḥ* is exclaimed by Sāyaṇa as strength. Veṅkata interpreted it as speed or rapidity whereas Griffith narrated it as company. According to Sāyaṇa the word *sajośasaḥ* means with pleasure but Veṅkata explained it as coming together or associated. According to Griffith the word *sajośasaḥ* is an adjective of *vāyavaḥ* and this word means whose minds accord with the mind of Marutas. So the opinion of Veṅkata and Griffith are near about the same about the meaning of this. They both denoting togetherness of action or mind by the meaning of this word but the view of Sāyaṇa is completely different from the two of them in this context. The word *vayavaḥ* is exclaimed as *vayus* by the both interpreters Griffith and Veṅkata. But Sāyaṇa narrated two different meanings. According to him this word means either the *Vayus* who are the first drinker of *somā* or the goers towards sacrifice. Sāyaṇa interpreted the word *agranītim* as the soma which is offered first. In Griffith’s view also it means the first libation whereas Veṅkata narrated it differently. According to him it means the front or van of an army. The prefix *pra* and the verb *pānti* are also narrated differently by Veṅkata. In his opinion *pānti* has come from the root *pā* which means to protect and *pra-pānti* means protect excessively or with excellence but Sāyaṇa and Griffith they both think that the verb *pānti* is coming from the root *pā* which means to drink. So according to Sāyaṇa it means drink excessively or with excellence and according to Griffith it means to drink. He didn’t explain the meaning of the prefix *pra* separately.

### 2.13.03

This hymn is important as it denotes the duties of *hotṛ*, *adhvaryu* and *brahman* and among the hymns of the second *maṇḍala* of *Ṛgveda* here one gets the earliest mention of the

duties of the three chief priests. The meaning of the verse is as follows:

One [=the Hotṛ] accompanies what he gives with his speech. Another [=the Adhvaryu] hastens at his work, changing the forms (of the soma). He [=soma] withstands all the blows of another [=the pressing stone]. You, the one who did these things first, are worthy of hymns. [Translation after Jamison and Brereton 2014:1. 418]

The word “*ekaḥ*” is interpreted differently by the interpreters. According to Sāyaṇa at a the word “*ekaḥ*” denotes the *hotṛ* priest who utters the *yājyā* and *puronuvākyā* mantras while oblation is offered. At line b the same word indicates the *adhvaryu* priest and at c the word in genitive (*ekasya*) is interpreted as “of the *adhvaryu* priest”. In this stanza the verb *titikṣate* indicates the action of the *brahman* priest. The verb means “to rule over”. Therefore according to Sāyaṇa the line means “the *brahman* priest rules over the works done by *adhvaryu* by performing *prāyaścitta*. Veṅkatamādhava, however, explained the word “*ekaḥ*” somewhat differently. According to him the word *ekaḥ* at a means “someone generous” and at b it means “someone else who is a hunter” and at c the genitive of the same stem (*ekasya*) means “of someone other” and the verb *titikṣate* stands for “endures”. Veṅkatamādhava takes the word in the following meaning: someone calmly endures every (adverse) thing for the fear of the world beyond death and for the lack of strength. Griffith does not offer a much detailed explanation of this line. According to him the word *ekaḥ* means priest at a and at b as well as at c it means “someone else” and the verb *titikṣate* means “to correct”. Griffith explained translated the line thus: “The third corrects the imperfections left by each”. It is quite evident now that the interpretation of the word “*ekaḥ*” in this stanza makes a big difference in the meaning or narration of the three scholars. By his interpretation Sāyaṇa shows that this stanza enumerates the functions of all the three main priests of the sacrifice. But according to Veṅkatamādhava this stanza gives an account of the functions of a generous yet hunting at the same time a calm person. The interpretation of Griffith is partly supported by the exegesis of Sāyaṇa and partly that of Veṅkatamādhava.

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2 “*tvam āśuśukṣaṇiḥ | āśu iti ca śu iti ca kṣipranāmanī bhavataḥ | kṣaṇir uttarah | kṣaṇoteḥ | āśu śucā kṣaṇoṅīti vā | sanoṅīti vā | śuk śocateḥ | pañcamy arthe vā prathamā | tathā hi vākyasamyogaḥ | ā ity ākāra upasargaḥ purastāt | cikīrṣitaja uttarah | āśuśocayīṣur iti | śucih śocateḥ | jvalatikarmaṇah | ayam apītarah śucir etasmā eva | niḥśiktam asmāt pāpakam iti nairuktāḥ | (NR 06.01)*

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