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GOTRA AND PRAVARA IN VEDIC LITERATURE*

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A comprehensive history of *gotra* and *pravara* has yet to be written. The mass of material on this subject to be digested and reduced to order is so vast and bewildering that the learned author of the *Pravara-mañjarī* (p. 72, ed. by Chensalrao) remarks in despair 'Here, in the parts of *sūtras* that have been quoted there is a great divergence in the order of the texts of the several *sūtrakāras*, this being specially so in the text of the *Āsvalāyanasūtra*. Thus, though divergence is thus clearly established yet following the order of the text of the majority of writers such as Baudhāyana, Āpastamba, Kātyāyana we shall declare the rules about marriage or no marriage'¹ and again (p. 134) 'Here in this section on the *pravara*, *mānava*, the opinions of the *sūtrakāras* appear to be extremely incomprehensible owing to inconsistencies in the

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¹ अत्रोदाहृतेषु सूत्रकाण्डेषु सूत्रकाराणां पाठक्रमव्यत्यासो महानस्ति विशेषतश्चाश्वलायन-सूत्रपाठे । ... एवं भेदे लिङ्गे सत्यपि बौधायनापरतम्बकात्यायनादीनां बहूनां पाठक्रमानुसारेण विवाहाविवाहौ वक्ष्यामः ।

earlier and later portions (of the same author) and the mutual contradictions of the authors.'¹

Gotra entered into numerous daily practices of the ancient Aryans in India and it was of supreme importance in several fundamental matters. Only a few examples of both kinds may be stated here from the sūtra literature alone.

(1) In marriage the bride and bridegroom had to be of different gotra's. *Vide* Gobhila-gr̥ III.4. 3-5, Hiraṇyakeśi-gr̥ I.19.2, Āp. Dh. S. II.5.11.15. In offering *lājas* into fire at the time of marriage, gotra made a difference; two offerings were to be made by all except Jāmadagnyas, who had to make three; *vide* Āś. Gr̥. S. I.7.8. According to Gobhila-gr̥ II.3.13 the bride after being shown the pole-star was to bow to her *guru* (husband acc. to the com.) after repeating her gotra.

(2) In inheritance, the wealth of one dying without issue went to men of his own gotra, as said in Gautama Dh. S. 28.19.

(3) In śrāddha the brāhmaṇas to be invited should not belong as far as possible to the same gotra as that of the person inviting; *vide* Āp. Dh. S. II.7.17.4, Gautama Dh. S. 15.20, Vaikhānasa-smārtasūtra 4.3.

(4) In *pārvaṇa sthālīpāka* and other *pākayajñas*, all were to cut off oblations from the middle and the fore half of the *havis*, but for Jāmadagnyas (who are *pañcāvattins*) they were to be cut off from the middle, the fore part and the hind part. *Vide* Āś. Gr̥. S. I. 10. 18-19. The same holds good as to śrauta rites also; *vide* Mānavasrauta I.3.2.5.

(5) In the two *ājyabhāgas* clarified ghee was to be taken four times for all, but five times for Bhṛguḥ; *vide* Khādiragr̥hya II.1.17, Gobhila-Gr̥. I.8.4.

(6) In offering water to a *preta* (person recently dead) his gotra and name were to be repeated (Āś. Gr̥. 4.4.10).

(7) In the *caula* (tonsure) ceremony of a boy tufts of hair were to be left in accordance with the particular gotra and the immemorial practice of the family (of the boy's father); *vide* Khādira-gr̥. II.3.30 'yathā-gotra-kulakalpam'.

¹ अत्र हि ज्ञानवे प्रवरकाण्डे सूत्रकाराणामभिप्रायाः पूर्वापरविरोधात् परस्परविरोधाच्चात्यन्तदूरवबोधो इवावभाति ।

The above examples will make it clear that the system of gotra was closely intertwined with numerous rites in the family. This presupposes that it must have been a growth of ages. The general conception is that it denotes descendants who trace descent in an unbroken male line from a common ancestor. The Baudhāyana-śrauta (Pravarādhyāya, B.I. edition, vol. III, p. 467) says 'the seven sages are Viśvāmitra, Jamadagni, Bharadvāja, Gautama, Atri, Vasistha and Kaśyapa; the issue of these seven sages together with Agastya as the eighth constitute gotra.'¹ The same work says in the same place that there are thousands, ten thousands and *arbudās* (crores) of gotras, but the *pravaras* of these gotras are only 49. The Pravaramañjarī (Chensalrao, p. 2) has a verse which says that the gotras number three crores and therefore it is most difficult to comprehend them. The view put forward by the Baudhāyana-śrauta-sūtra that the most ancient gotras are only eight and that the descendants or issue of these eight sages constitute gotra was well-known to Patañjali. Patañjali also mentions that there were 88,000 sages.² The Āpastamba Dh. S. (II. 9. 23.3-4) quotes two verses from a Purāṇa, wherein the fate of 88,000 sages who desired offspring and 88,000 sages who did not desire offspring is referred to. Pāṇini defines gotra in a more restricted way for grammatical purposes as 'apatyam pautra-prabhṛti gotram' (IV. I. 162). But even Pāṇini employs the word gotra in this restricted sense only in *apatyādihikāra*, but elsewhere he uses the word gotra in the popular sense as comprehending all the descendants of a common ancestor. *Vide* Kāśikā on Pāṇini IV. 2.39 and IV. 3.80. The Mahābhārata Śāntiparva (chap. 297 verses 17-18, Bombay ed.) says rather abruptly that there were only four original gotras, *viz.*, Aṅgiras, Kaśyapa, Vasistha and Bhṛgu. This dictum of the great epic has probably no solid ancient tradition behind it and seems to me to be a later imaginative guess. The Matsya, Agni and other Purāṇas give elaborate and conflicting accounts about gotras and

1 विश्वामित्रो जमदग्निर्भरद्राजोथ गौतमः । अत्रिर्वसिष्ठः कश्यप इत्येते सप्त ऋषयः ॥ तेषां सप्तर्षीणामगस्त्याष्टमानां यदपत्यं तत्रोद्गम्यते ।

2 अष्टाशीतिः सहस्राणि ऊर्ध्वरेतसामृषीणां वभूवुस्तत्रागस्त्याष्टमैर्ऋषिभिः प्रजनोऽभ्युपगतः । तत्रभवतां यदपत्यं तानि गोत्राणि अतो न्ये गोत्रावयवाः । [महाभाष्य ed. by Kielhorn, vol. II, p. 233 on 'गोत्रावयवान्' पा. IV. 1. 79.]

pravaras. Therefore it is necessary to go far behind the sūtras and the purāṇas in order to understand the origin and development of the system of gotra and pravara and to make a detailed study of vedic literature. In the following pages an humble attempt is made in that direction.

First I shall take the word gotra for treatment.

In the Ṛgveda the word gotra occurs several times. But in most cases, if not in all, where it is employed, it appears to be used in a totally different sense from the present sense of the word gotra. In a few verses the word *gotra* means 'cowstall' or 'herd of cows.' Ṛg. I.51.3 'thou hast disclosed the cowstall to the Aṅgirasas and thou that findest (all) ways (discovered a way) for Atri (confined) in a hundred doors';¹ Ṛg. III. 39.4 'the glorious Indra, endowed with marvellous power, laid bare for these (Aṅgirasas) the cowstall that had been strongly guarded';² Ṛg. X. 120.8 'he (Indra) rules over the great self-luminous herd of cattle and threw open all the doors.'³ Vide also Ṛg. II.17.1; III. 30.21; III. 43.7; IX. 86.23; X. 48.2. In all these the word gotra has almost the same sense as *goṣṭha* or *vraja* both of which occur in the Ṛgveda (VI. 28.1 and X. 97.8 have *goṣṭha* and IV. 20.8, VI. 73.3 and VII. 27.1 have *vraja*). By a natural metaphor gotra came to mean a cloud (in which waters are pent up as in a cowpen) or cloud demon and also a mountain range or peak which conceals water-yielding clouds. Ṛg. II. 23.3 'O Bṛhaspati, (thou mountest the car) that is terrible, that subdues foes, that kills demons, that pierces the clouds and finds light';⁴ Ṛg. IV. 16.8 'when praised by the Aṅgirasas, thou, a leader, layst open for us plentiful wealth after shattering the cows.' Ṛg. X. 103.7 (=Tai. S. IV. 6.4.2, Atharva V. 2.8 and Vāj. S. 17.39) 'the warrior Indra, who plunges with might towards the clouds, merciless and with a hundred furies.' Vide also Ṛg. VI. 17.2; X. 103.6. In some of these verses it is possible to take gotra in the sense of fort. It is difficult to say what gotra means in Ṛg. VIII. 63.5 'the singers have quickly

¹ त्वं गोत्रमाङ्कुरोभ्योऽवृणोःरपोत्तत्रये शतदुरेषु गातुवित् । ऋ. I. 51.3

² इन्द्र एषां वृद्धिता माहिनावानुद्रोत्राणि समृजे दंसनावान् । ऋ. III.39.4

³ महो गोत्रस्य क्षयति स्वराजो दुरश्च विश्वा अवृणोदप स्वाः । ऋ. X. 120.8

⁴ बृहस्पते भीममभिन्नदंभन् रक्षोहर्णं गोत्रभिदं स्वर्विदम् । ऋ. II 23.3

praised thee, O Indra, for the gift of gotra' ¹ (which Sāyaṇa renders as 'dhana' here). In some cases gotra simply means 'assemblage' (samūha); Ṛg. II. 23.18 'for thy glory, Oh Aṅgiras (Bṛhaspati here) the mountain split itself when thou laidest bare the herd of kine'; ² Ṛg. VI. 65.5 'Oh Dawn, that lingerest on the mountains, the Aṅgirasas do declare that the herds of kine are thine.' ³

From this last sense of 'an assemblage or group' the transition to the meaning of 'a group of persons' is both easy and quick. Though there is no positive use of the word gotra in the Ṛgveda in the sense of 'descendants of a common ancestor,' it will be plain from the remarks to be made later on that the conception underlying the idea of gotra was quite familiar even in the age of the Ṛgveda. There are other words in the Ṛgveda which are used in two senses, e.g., the word 'Yuga' (which means a yoke in Ṛg. X. 101.3, and 'a long period of time' in Ṛg. I. 192. 11; I. 158.6, VII. 9.4; III. 26.3; X. 94.2 and other places). The argument from silence cannot reasonably be pushed so far as to assert that the word *gotra* had *not* come to mean in the Ṛgvedic age 'a group of men.'

In the Atharva-veda V. 21.3 we read 'made of forest tree, brought together with ruddy kine, *belonging to all the families*, speak thou alarm for our enemies, being smeared with sacrificial butter' ⁴ (Whitney). Here clearly the word 'gotra' which is seen in the form 'viśvagotryaḥ' means 'a group of men connected together' (by blood). In the Kauśika-sūtra (IV. 2) while describing Darśa-Paurṇamāsa a Vedic mantra is quoted 'Oh Soma, do thou who art divine and supervisest men, show to us easy paths, mayst thou lead towards us as towards wise men our gotra; thou sendest towards us speech that is fond of us.' Here gotra seems beyond doubt to mean 'a group of persons.'

In the Taittiriya-Saṁhitā several passages show that descendants of great sages like Vasiṣṭha were called after the names of

¹ श्वानमर्का अनूषतेन्द्र गोत्रस्य दावने । ऋ. VIII. 63-5

² तव श्रिये व्यजिहीत पर्वता गवां गोत्रमुदसृजो यदङ्गिरः । ऋ. II. 23-18

³ इदा हि त उषो अद्रिसानो गोत्रा गवामङ्गिरसो गृणन्ति । ऋ. VI. 65-5

⁴ वानस्पत्यः संभृत उल्लियाभेर्विश्वगोत्र्यः । प्र त्राममभिन्नयो वदाज्येनाभिघारितः ॥ अथर्ववेद V. 21-3.

those sages. In Tai. S.I.8.18.1 it is said 'the Hotṛ is a Bhārgava.' The com. explains that in the model sacrifice the Hotṛ may be the descendant of anybody, but in the Rājasūya which is a modification the hotṛ must be a descendant of Bhṛgu. It is quite possible that descent was traced through teacher and pupil as well as by blood through father and son. But in those days there being no numerous occupations, the son would learn from his father the sacred lore of the latter. In Tai. S. III.5.2.1 the story is told that Vasiṣṭha learnt from Indra certain formulas called *stomabhāgas* and that in the Jyotiṣoma the Brahmā priest must be a Vāsiṣṭha. In Tai. S. VII. I.9.1, we read¹ 'Jamadagni, desirous of prosperity, offered the *catūrātra* (four nights' rite); he prospered as to the (well-known) *poṣas* (modes of prosperity, e.g., progeny, cattle, etc.); therefore one does not know (or find) two Jāmadagnyas (in succession) who are poor (or grey-haired).' From this passage it is clear that in the times of the Tai. S. Jamadagni was a very ancient sage, that several generations of Jamadagni's descendants had passed away by that time, that they were all known as Jamadagnis and that no two descendants of Jamadagni were found to be poor (or grey-haired) in succession.

In the Maitrāyaṇi Saṁhitā (III. 8.9) we read " 'thou art a cover for all people ' ; with these words he sets up a roof, for they proceed gotra by gotra." ² This passage is supposed to indicate that each gotra had its own special rites and formulae (*vide* Hasting's Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics, under *gotra*).

In numerous *mantras* of the Ṛgveda the descendants of well-known sages are denoted by the use of the plural form of the names of the sages. For example, Ṛg. X. 66.14 'the Vasiṣṭhas have raised their voices like their father, praying like the sage to the gods for their welfare' ³; Ṛg. VI. 36.5 'May I not be deprived of the cow that yields bright (milk), wise one (Indra), inspire the Aṅgirasas with prayer.' Here in the preceding verse the Bharadvājas are named and they appear to be referred to

¹ जमदग्निः पुष्टिकामश्चतूरात्रेणायजत स एतान्पोषानपुव्यत्तरमात् पलितौ जामदग्नियौ न सञ्जानाते। तै. सं. VII. 1:9:1

² विश्वजनस्य छायासीति छदिरभिनिदधाति गोत्राश्रोत्राद्धि प्रसर्पन्ति ।

³ वसिष्ठासः पितृवद्वाचमकत देवौ ईळाना ऋषिवत्स्वस्त्ये । ऋ. X. 66:14

as Aṅgirasas in this verse. According to the Āśvalāyana-sūtra, Bharadvāja is a gotra falling under the Aṅgirogaṇa. Ṛg. VIII.69.8 'Oh Priyamedhas, worship, worship, worship (Indra); and may the sons worship, worship the bold one (Indra) as a city (or fort)'. Here 'sons' being specially mentioned, it has to be supposed that 'Priyamedhas' includes remoter descendants of Priyamedha than sons.

Turning to the Brāhmaṇa Literature there are ample indications that the priestly families had become grouped into several groups named after their (real or supposed) founders and that they differed in matters of details of worship according to the group they belonged to.

The Taittirīya-brāhmaṇa (I. 1.4.8) prescribes that the consecration (*ādhāna*) of the sacred Vedic fires is to be performed for Bhṛgu and Aṅgirasas with the Mantra 'bhṛgūṇām-tvā-ṅgirasām vratapate vratenādadhāmi,' that for the other Brāhmaṇa groups with the mantra 'ādityānām tvā devanām vratapate, etc.'; the same brāhmaṇa further prescribes separate mantras for a king, for a kṣtriya who is not a king, for a vaiśya and for a *rathakāra* (carpenter). The Taittirīya-brāhmaṇa again (II.2.3.7) refers to the 'Āṅgirasī prajā' (people of the Aṅgiras group) by saying 'therefore the Āṅgirasa people carry the oblation to the Ādityas (meditating on them) as sitting among the metres.' The Tāṇḍyamahā-brāhmaṇa ¹ (18.2.12) prescribes that the *camasa* (cup) made of *ulumbāra* was to be given (as *dakṣiṇā*) to a sagotra brāhmaṇa in order that the drinking of soma may not become fruitless. The Śāṅkhāyana-brāhmaṇa ² (25.15) lays down that one who has performed the Viśvajit sacrifice (in which a man was to give in gift everything of his) should stay for a year with a brāhmaṇa having the same gotra as his. The Jaiminīya-Upaniṣad-brāhmaṇa (III.3.4) says "He asks him when he approaches 'who art thou?'; he announces whatever he may be by name or by gotra." The Aitareya-brāhmaṇa contains several very interesting passages on the question of gotra. In the Dvādaśāha before the *dikṣū* a

¹ समोत्राय ब्रह्मणे देयः सोमपीथस्याव्यपोहाय । ताण्ड्य 18.2.12

² ब्राह्मणे समानगोत्रे बसेद्यत्समाने गोत्रेऽत्रायं तस्योपास्यै संवत्सरं चरेदधः संवेद्य । कौषीतकि मा. 25.15

prājāpatya paśu was to be offered. The Aitareya-brāhmaṇa (Haug's ed. IV. 26 and 19.4. Ānandāśrama ed.) prescribes that the Āpṛī verses which are ascribed to Jamadagni, (*i.e.*, Ṛgveda X. 110.1-11) are to be recited over the immolation of the animal. Then a question is raised as to why the Āpṛī verses ascribed to Jamadagni are to be recited by all in this prājāpatya paśu, when in the case of other paśus, the Āpṛī verses respectively ascribed to the several sages are to be recited for the respective descendants of those sages. In the section dealing with Aitaśāpralāpa there is a story of Aitaśā and his son Abhyagni and the Aitareya (VI 33=30.7) ends the story by saying 'therefore they say that the Aitaśāyanas Abhyagnis are the most sinful of the Aurvas.' The same story occurs in the Kauṣītaki-brāhmaṇa where it is said 'The Aitaśāyanas being of noble birth became the lowest among Bhṛḡus, as they were cursed by their father.' The Aitaśāyanas are a sub-section of the great Bhṛḡugana, according to Baud. In the story of Śunaḥśepa we are told that Śunaḥśepa, when he was accepted as a son by Viśvāmitra, came to be called Devarāta and that the Kāpileyas and Bābhṛavas were affiliated to Devarāta (VII. 17=33.5).¹ According to the Āp. śrauta-sūtra and Satyāśāḍha, Devarāta and Babhru are sections of Viśvāmitra gotra. The Aitareya contains a gāthā which is interesting and shows that the gotra relationship was by birth and that all descendants went by the name of the founder of the gotra 'thou art known as a sage, a son of Ajigarta and as an Āṅgīrasa by birth; therefore, Oh sage, do not go away from the line (thread) of your grand-father, return to me.'² It is further said that the names of some of Viśvāmitra's younger sons were Madhucchandasa, Ṛṣabha, Reṇu, and Aṣṭaka. These (except Ṛṣabha) are either sub-divisions of Viśvāmitra gotra or pravara of some sub-divisions of that gotra according to the sūtras. It is further to be noted that as Gāthina was the father of Viśvāmitra and Kuṣika was his grand-father he addresses his sons as 'Gāthināḥ' and also as 'Kuśikāḥ.' We are further told that the founder of Ajigarta's family was Jahnu.

¹ स ह देवरातो वैश्वामित्र आस । तस्यैते कापिल्यवाभ्रवाः । ऐ. ब्रा. VII-17

² आगिरसो जन्मनासि आजीगर्तः भूतः कविः । ऋषे पतामहात्तन्तोर्माप गाः पुनरोहि माम् । ऐ. ब्रा. VII. 17.

In the story of Rāma Mārgaveya (Ait. Br. VII. 27=35.1) we are told that Asitamṛgas were a section of the Kaśyapas. According to the Āśvalāyana-śrauta Asita is one of three pravara-ṛṣis of Kaśyapa-gotra. In the story of Hariścandra we are told (Aitareya-br. VII. 16) 'his *hotṛ* priest was Viśvūmitra, *adhvaryu* was Jamadagni, Vasiṣṭha was Brahmā priest and Ayāsyā was the *Udgātṛ*'. We saw above that the Brahmā was to be Vasiṣṭha according to the Tai. S. Ayāsyā is a sub-division of Aṅgiro-gaṇa.

In the Taittiriya Āraṇyaka (II. 6) there is a verse 'Do undertake (works) with clarified butter ; do persist in (what is undertaken) ; you two guard the path common (to you both) ; whatever *pūrta* (charitable acts) you have done and whatever you have served into fire, Oh husband and wife, you two should persist in it for that *gotra* (for all persons of that gotra to which you belong).'¹

In the famous story of Satyakāma Jābāla in the Chāndogyopaniṣad (IV. 4) the teacher asks him what his gotra is. As the boy's mother was not able to tell him his gotra he truthfully tells the teacher that he does not know it and the teacher styles him Jābāla, after his mother Jabālā. Many inferences have been drawn from this story, one being that a teacher could give a fanciful gotra to a student (*vide* Hasting's Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics, Vol. V, p. 354). It has to be borne in mind that Satyakāma Jābāla is mentioned as a very ancient sage in the Aitareya-brāhmaṇa, which quotes his view on the Vyāhṛtis in the coronation ceremony (Aitareya-br. VIII. 7=37.2). Instead of holding on the strength of a single story found in the Chāndogyā that a teacher could give any gotra name to a pupil, it is rather more reasonable to hold that the story in the Chāndogyā is no more than an ancient attempt to give an etymology of the word Jābāla as a gotra.² Such etymologies occur very frequently in the Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads ; *vide* etymology of Aṅgiras in the Aitareya-brāhmaṇa III.34 and of Atri in Bṛhadāraṇyaka II.2.4. The Gobhilagrhya-sūtra (II.10.22-25) says that in Upanayana the ācārya asks the

¹⁰ आरभेथामनु संरभेथां समानं पन्थानवथो घृतेन । यद्रां पूर्तं परिधिष्टं यदन्नो तस्मै गोत्रायेह जायापती संरभेथाम् ॥ ते. आ. II 6. Compare अथर्ववेद VI. 122-3

¹¹ In *Ephigraphia Indica* vol. XI, p. 93, the donoe in a charter of महाभनगुप्त I is a ब्राह्मण विष्णुशर्मन् of जाबालगोत्र and वाजसनेयशाखा.

boy his name in the words 'what is your name,' that the ācārya gives him a name derived from a *devatā* or from a nakṣatra for the purpose that the boy may use it at the time of bowing at his teacher's feet and that according to some writers also a name depending on the boy's *gotra* may be given (for the same purpose). This shows that the teacher was to ask the boy's *gotra* and to order him to use his *gotra* name (such as Śāṅḍilya) at the time of *abhivādana*. We are told in the sūtras that at Nāmakaṛaṇa the boy was named after a deity (such as Haradatta, Rudradatta) or after a nakṣatra (such as Puṣya-mitra, &c.). In the Upaniṣads several *gotras* are named incidentally. For example, in Praśna Upaniṣad I.1 we have persons of Bhāradvāja, Gārgya, Āśvalāyana, Bhārgava and Kātyāyana *gotras*; in the Chāndogya V. 14.1 and V. 16.1 Indradyumna Bhāllaveya and Buḍila Āśvatarāśvi are both addressed as Vaiyāghrapadya and Uddālaka Āruṇi as Gautama; in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka (II. 2.4) Gautama and Bharadvāja, Viśvāmitra and Jamadagni, Vasiṣṭha and Kaśyapa are mentioned in pairs.

The result of the preceding discussion may be summarised thus. The word *gotra* is used in the Ṛgveda in the sense of a 'cowstall' or 'herd of cows' and sometimes in the sense of a cloud or mountain and possibly in the sense of 'a group or assemblage of persons' and that the descendants of great sages like Vasiṣṭha had come to be called collectively by the plural of the word denoting the ancestor. In the Tai. S. persons descended from a common ancestor appear to be grouped separately where it is said that the *hotṛ* must be a Bhārgava or that the Brahmā must be a Vasiṣṭha, that in the Atharvaveda and Maitrāyaṇi Saṁhitā, the word *gotra* appears to be used in the modern sense. In the Tāṇḍya and other Brāhmaṇas words like *Sagotra* occur in the modern sense and several prominent *gaṇas* like the Bhṛgu and Āṅgirasas with their divisions and sub-divisions are specifically referred to. For example, the Aitaśāyanas are referred to as a section of the Bhṛgu, Kāpileyas and Bābhruvas as sub-sections of Viśvāmitra-gaṇa. In the Upaniṣads before a brahmacāri was accepted as a pupil he was asked his *gotra*. The question whether the *gotra* system had so far been extended as to apply to marriages cannot be answered with as much confidence as could have been

wished. The Vedic literature of the Saṁhitās and Brāhmaṇas being concerned with the solemn śrauta sacrifices had no occasion to refer to the prohibition of marriage in the same gotra. But when the texts are so particular as to lay down that a man should stay with his *sagotra* after performing Viśvajit it appears to be a natural extension of the same feeling that he should be called upon to choose a wife from another group. The prohibition of *sagotra* marriage in the sūtra age was absolute and such a rule must have grown up only during the lapse of centuries. Therefore we shall not be far wrong if we suppose that during the Brāhmaṇa period at least restrictions as to gotra in marriage were prevalent.

The conception of *pravara* is closely interwoven with that of gotra from very ancient times. Apart from employment in invoking Agni in Vedic rites it entered in numerous ways into several domestic ceremonies and practices even according to the gṛhya and dharma sūtras. To take a few examples :—

(1) As a general rule, a bride was to be chosen whose father's pravara was not the same as the bridegroom's; Mānavagṛhya I. 7-8, Vārāhagṛhya 9, Gautama-dharmasūtra IV. 2.

(2) In Upanayana the *mekhalā* (girdle) was to have one, three or five knots according to the number of pravaraṅṣis. Vide Śāṅkhāyana-gṛhya II. 2 (and com. thereon), Kāṭhaka-gṛhya 41.13 (and com. of Devapāla and Brahmabala thereon), Manu II. 43.

(3) From Śāṅkhāyanagṛhya II. 2 (where there is a dialogue between the ācārya and the boy whose upanayana is to be performed) it appears that the ācārya was required to have the same pravara as the boy.

(4) In the Cūḍā-karma, the number of tufts of hair left on the head depended upon the pravaras. Vide Āp. Gṛ. S. VI. 16.6.

Pravara literally means 'choice' or 'invokation' (prārthanā). As it was usual to invoke Agni to carry the offerings of a sacrificer to the gods by taking the names of the illustrious ṛṣi-ancestors who in former times had invoked Agni, the word *pravara* came to denote one or more illustrious ancestors of a sacrificer. A synonym of *pravara* is *ārṣeya*. It was laid down that the *pravara* of the several