

Śāstrārambha

Inquiries into the Preamble in Sanskrit

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2008

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden

ISSN 0567-4980
ISBN 978-3-447-05645-8

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Preamble

This is a book about beginnings. Beginning a book on beginnings is a somewhat difficult beginning, *śāstrārambham ārabdhuṃ suduṣkaram*, as it were. Pre-modern Sanskrit writers more often than not begin their works traditionally by paying obeisance (*namaskriyā*), or with blessings (*āśīrvāda*) taking the form of auspicious verses (*maṅgala*), whereupon subject matter (*vastunirdeśa*) and purpose (*prayojana*) are indicated, typically in the sequence just mentioned.

A European tradition of prefacing introductions to scholarly works has also developed. It displays comparable elements – at least to a certain extent – but usually in reverse order.

We habitually commence by first stating subject matter, purpose and background: introductions to a given body of traditional knowledge (*śāstra-* or *bhāṣya-ārambhas*), or to works of literature (*kāvya-ārambha*), frequently contain pithy systematic reflections on the nature, purpose and various other aspects of the respective work to be commenced. Thus they may constitute a promising, if not challenging, research subject as a category of literature in its own right. But neither as regards content nor with regard to the typological point of view have *ārambhas* ever received the scholarly attention they deserve. The present volume contains a collection of 10 articles as the outcome of a topic-related *Śāstrārambha* panel organised by the undersigned at the 13th *World Sanskrit Conference*, held in Edinburgh in July 2006. The resulting papers now assembled here focus on a variety of aspects of prolegomena composed in Sanskrit by examining them in their different systemic and systematic contexts, also by highlighting and investigating features which may be regarded as general characteristics of a Sanskrit ‘prolegomenon’ in terms of essential elements and structure. Extending beyond *śāstra* in its narrower sense as bodies of (philosophical) knowledge (*darśana*), some of the articles concern themselves with the Sanskrit preamble to different categories such as Vedic exegesis, poetics, poetry and historiography.

Following an inevitable allusion to the hardships which beset them in writing their book, modern occidental authors are wont to close their introductory remarks by expressing their gratitude to all those,

without whose substantial support their work would undoubtedly never have seen the light of publication. This kind of *namaskriyā* is not entirely out of place also in the present case:

Professors JOHN BROCKINGTON and PAUL DUNDAS, the organisers of the Edinburgh *World Sanskrit Conference*, have consented to publish the panel proceedings *hors série*, so to say, in the series *Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes*, whose editor, Professor FLORIAN C. REITER, has been kind enough to accept them on very favourable terms. Panellists and other contributors won for this volume from outside the *Śāstrārambha* panel have managed to submit their papers in an exemplary manner on time and so have – in their joint effort – helped to bring this publication to fruition in good time. Apart from my indebtedness to all of them I am particularly beholden to Professor EDWIN GEROW for – in his own words – “donning his editorial robes again” in favour of selected articles and for honouring this volume by prefacing it. ANDREAS POHLUS has rendered outstanding services to this book with the professional layout and with his painstaking preparation of the index.

As a Western equivalent of the Sanskrit benediction (*maṅgala*), exponents of a secular tradition, with which the philological method is inextricably linked, naturally lack a befitting deity (except, perhaps, for Sarasvatī). And so, instead of failing abysmally in an attempt to compose an ornate invocation, I prefer to express prosaically my modest hope that the present volume will be given a friendly reception and that its readers, in assessing its significance, will take into consideration that this is a first effort to tackle the Sanskrit preamble *per se*. May it therefore be gently acknowledged as what it actually is, only a beginning.

Walter Slaje

Halle (Saale), August 2007

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος¹

Edwin Gerow (Portland)

The following essays illustrate, among their many other qualities, the remarkable range of meanings that may be attributed to the Sanskrit tag *śāstrārambha*, ‘beginning of *śāstra*’ (and I dare not even translate this last term, for fear of excluding several exciting avenues of enquiry). There are beginnings in time, in place, of form or feeling (“structures” or “occasions”), beginnings that lead to profitable or reasonable conclusions (“problems” or “principles”), beginnings that are ends (in several senses), and beginnings that turn out to be more or less than what they seem to be – or just themselves (“Ding an sich”). All these ambiguities are exploited and examined in the papers that follow this beginning, as we will see.

The Indian scholarly tradition (since this is one “place” these beginnings all share) has established four marks or signs of a good beginning that one should look for in a text purporting to instruct (and this is one of the senses of *śāstra*): that the text should have a clearly defined subject matter (*viśaya*), that the text itself should pertain profitably to that subject matter (*sambandha*), that its audience be one that can reasonably be expected to profit from whatever instruction the text may impart (*adhikārin*), and that its purpose (or the purpose that is implicit in its instruction) be realizable (*prayojana*).² We might translate these four qualities of a good beginning into Aristotelian “causes”, as those concerning the text’s matter, its form, its agent, and its final cause. Absent any one of these, the “thing” — the instruction (a second sense of *śāstra*) — cannot properly be said to exist, and therefore has no beginning, just as a carpenter, if he lacks wood, or the notion of a bed, or his tools, or a client who wishes to sleep,

- 1 John 1.1. — though the standard King James translation, “In the beginning was the word,” somewhat alters the suitability of the invocation.
- 2 One of the most succinct accounts of this foursome may be found in the *Vedāntasāra* of Sadānanda (ed. M. Hiriyanna [P.O.S. 14], p. 1 [commentary, p. 20; translation, p. 45]).

makes no bed. Of the following papers, GARY TUBB's most explicitly treats of these four *anubandhas*, or "expository marks" (to take the word in its Pāṇinian sense), but only to show how ambiguously they have applied in the Indian learned tradition or *śāstra* (here we meet the term in yet another sense) that has the least claim to "authority" – poetics, the study of literature (*alaṅkāraśāstra*). And so, poetics have argued about their *prayojana* (which turns out to be any *prayojana* among the usual four), the agent of their craft (is he the poet or the reader, or perhaps even the patron?), their subject matter (what is *kāvya*?), and their own relevance (as evidenced in the inconclusive number of theoretical approaches to the subject that have been adumbrated). TUBB's paper thus elegantly accounts for the evident fluidity of the poetic tradition, taken as a whole, for it was never successful in identifying its own reference points – a weakness finally recognized (oh irony!) as the tradition comes to a close in the "conclusory" work of the last "great" theorist, Jagannātha, who claimed to have imparted to poetics the qualities of a *śāstra*. And what might they then be? It is clear from TUBB's paper that the resolution of ambiguities related to the four "indices" of beginning must in that task – paradoxically – be paramount; furthermore, that Jagannātha, for better or worse, has had the "last word", for his work was so formulated as to "put an end to history" – the "history" of that search for beginnings that TUBB sketches here.³

Several of the papers employ the notion of "beginnings" in the resolution of other kinds of problems. PHILIPP MAAS, for instance, surveys discrepant *maṅgala* verses as a means of establishing a proper stemma for manuscripts of an important early commentary on Patañjali's *Yogaśāstra*, which issue bears on the text of the *Yogaśāstra* itself, of which the commentary permits a partial reconstruction. PIOTR BALCEROWICZ, similarly, utilizes *maṅgala* verses found at the begin-

- 3 As a kind of confirmation of TUBB's thesis, I might point to one of my own articles, on the curriculum now in place in one important Sanskrit college, that of Mysore, which suggests that a suitably fundamental rôle is now accorded to the *alaṅkāraśāstra*, in the sense that its teaching constitutes the quasi-entirety of the initial and intermediate levels of instruction, into which such other elements of the other *śāstras* have been integrated as suits the needs of that instruction – enough Pāṇini, for example, as to follow Mallinātha's commentaries. ("Primary Education in Sanskrit: Methods and Goals" [Presidential Address]. *JAOS* 122: 661-90.)

ning of certain philosophical Jaina texts as a means of establishing relations of influence with respect to certain approximately contemporaneous Buddhist texts. Often, such verses imply an audience – Jaina laymen or Jaina saints (or even gods), the elect of believers or the wider universe of nay-sayers – and this last is particularly helpful in reconstructing interconfessional influences.

WALTER SLAJE examines the initial verses of the *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* with a view ultimately of clarifying the genre to which the text properly belongs – and comes to the insightful conclusion that the traditional notion of *kāvya* itself is a more useful way of appreciating the structure and reception of the text than is the (inevitably) Western notion of “history”. And, of course, Kalhaṇa’s work isn’t a very “good” history, when viewed in that light – as several recent historians have also concluded; SLAJE’s analysis serves thus as a useful corrective to the over-zealous use of certain Western cultural “absolutes” in judging Indian achievements.

As a matter of *fact*, the *maṅgala* verse (or verses) – a kind of benediction invoking success in the enterprise about to be undertaken – has come to be the expected “beginning” of any Indian text. But CHRISTOPHER MINKOWSKI, looking at this beginning in a chronological way, establishes that such has not always been the case. He proposes a very plausible etiology for the “invention” of the *maṅgala* verse(s) and situates the beginning of that beginning in the early first millennium A.D. MINKOWSKI adduces such factors as the burgeoning *bhakti* movements and the “personalization” of authorship thereto attendant as possible influences. A most interesting aspect of this essay is its discussion of later attempts (after the *maṅgala* has become canonical) to “supply” them for earlier texts that were not so provided, which include various explanations of “first” words as inherently “auspicious” – such as the *atha* which begins the *Brahmasūtrāṅgi*.

GIULIANO BOCCALI rings a variation on this theme, looking now at the evolution of the *maṅgala* verse itself across one genre of Indian composition, “court epics,” (Daṇḍin’s *sargabandha*) that find their sources in the two great epics. He discovers an increasing stylization in the formulation of the invocation itself, which is lacking (or present in freer variation) in the older examples of the genre, such as

Kālidāsa's two epics. The *maṅgala* itself, in other words, can be made the subject of a history.

Of course, the question of “beginnings” strikes the Western reader as inherently historical, temporal, and this perspective is freely exploited in these essays. JOHANNES BRONKHORST broadens the perspective somewhat by asking a question that evokes an Indian sense of a “beginning”, which, naturally, precludes a strictly historical approach: what was, in fact, the “beginning of the *śāstra*” (literally, *śāstrārambha*, in Śaṅkara's own words) that Śaṅkara so cogently commented upon in his famous *Bhāṣya*? In other words, what did Śaṅkara consider the beginning of *his* text? We return, in a sense, to the *atha* mentioned earlier, which is indeed the initial word of the *Brahmasūtrāṇi* as we now have them (*athāto brahmajijñāsā*, VS 1.1.1), which many have taken to imply that (at least in Bādarāyaṇa's view) study of the Vedānta texts presupposed earlier study of materials relating to the *karmakāṇḍa* (viz., the Pūrvamīmāṃsā) – just as the study of the *karmakāṇḍa* presumed a prior study of the Veda itself (*athāto dharmajijñāsā*, PMS 1.1.1). If so, then Śaṅkara's *śāstrārambha* is perhaps inclusive of the entire Mīmāṃsā. Involved is the larger question, of course, of whether these two *sūtra* collections were, before Śaṅkara effectively split them, taken as one larger unity. BRONKHORST argues, against this plausible view, that such “evidence” is untrustworthy and that the question remains open.

The final three papers examine broader aspects of the notion of beginning and exploit other senses than the strictly temporal or local. JAN HOUBEN looks at a certain class of late philosophical texts that attempt to arrange or rationalize the various philosophical systems (or *śāstras*) themselves – that take, in other words, a global view of the Indian scholarly universe – best known through the late Vedāntin work, the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, or “Compendium of all ‘perspectives’”. An earlier example is a Jaina work, the *Dvādaśāranayacakra*, or “Wheel of reasonings composed of twelve spokes”, which must be reconstituted through its commentary by Simhasūri. But it is the *form* here that permits a beginning, for (in both cases), the arrangement of systems is not that of a compendium, per se, each enjoying a relative autonomy, but is inherent to the systems themselves: in the more obvious case of the *Sarvadarśanasamgraha*, the arrangement follows rigorously from the systems' relative distances from Advaita Vedānta,

and so, taken seriatim, each system constitutes a “beginning” with respect to the system that follows (and corrects) it, until we reach the culmination of all systems, Advaita, which needs no correction. The Jaina work is not different in principle, but the arrangement itself follows from the Jaina doctrine of *syādvāda*, where each system is reduced to a “perspective” that completes the perspective of those systems introduced in tandem with it. The categories of analysis, however, though mostly borrowed from Pāṇinian grammar, do not allow for any overall architectonic: the “spokes” together constitute the wheel, which is a kind of “universe of discourse” that can be seen only when all “perspectives” are specified.

MARCUS SCHMÜCKER adopts a similar “dialogic” model in order to examine the question of the teacher-student dialectic itself, where the “problem” (hence the “beginning” of the teaching) is taken to be the paradoxical absence of a “truth” (in the mind of the student) that is absolutely omni-present (and which need not therefore be “taught”). We engage here a problem of philosophical beginnings that seeks to put into question the existential condition of the student himself, his naive postulate of mental and sensory independence, and must do this by and through means anchored in the student’s world of (false) experience. The very ground of the *śāstra*, which seeks to remove the student’s aporia, is thus rendered dubious. SCHMÜCKER here discusses the various strategies adopted in philosophical Vedānta to deal with this paradox, most of which repose on the ex cathedra notion of the *vedāntāḥi* (plural) (which are themselves the *śāstrāṇi* par excellence, a fourth sense of the term), namely, the selected, ipso facto authoritative, sayings (*vedavākyaṇi*) drawn from the timeless Veda that are sufficient to provoke a rupture with the “normal” world. Once the world is seen as merely a “problem,” the solution (as in any system of dialectic thought) becomes inescapable.

And finally, SILVIA D’INTINO addresses, in the only contribution devoted to the Veda per se, the issue of whether *mantras* (phrases drawn from the older *sūkta* compositions and uttered at crucial junctures in the later elaborate sacrifices) have meaning or not, that is, whether an understanding of their meaning was seen as a *precondition* of their effective utterance. The notion of “beginning” here assumes its full philosophical dress of “principle” – for the question amply debated in the ritual tradition itself (here ably summarized

by D'INTINO) has to do with the presuppositions themselves of successful ritual activity: must one understand the Vedic phrase in order for it to be ritually effective, or is its mere pronunciation enough? The answer, of course, is clearly stated in the canonical systems of thought founded on the Veda: an understanding *is* essential. The authoritative accounts of the great Mīmāṃsakas Śābara and Kumārila leave no doubt on the matter, for, of course, the very rationale of Mīmāṃsā itself is at issue.

Returning to the theme of the four *anubandhas*, or indices of a good beginning, with which this Preface began, we might close by suggesting that the same four may present a further way of understanding the relations among the papers presented here. A number of papers examine the *actual* beginning (or what came to be seen as the obligatory beginning) of Indian compositions (a feature they share with Indian performance in general), namely the *maṅgala* verse or *incipit*: here we seem to encounter the *viśaya*, or material, required of this essay collection, which like any material cause is not necessarily specific to the form it assumes in the present case (MINKOWSKI, BOCCALI, BRONKHORST). That specific form is taken up in at least one paper – TUBB'S – whereby the text itself is seen as assuming a shape in response to the needs of composition itself (*sambandha*). The understanding of beginnings as tools in the resolution of other kinds of problems is characteristic of a number of papers (MAAS, BALCEROWICZ, SLAJE), and so, places the emphasis on an audience (*adhikārin*) external to the narrow topic of beginnings, or at least an audience the author judges to be interested in other kinds of problems than the form and matter of literature – manuscript editing, history of ideas, theories of genre, for example. Finally, the question of textual purpose (*prayojana*) serves as the focus of organization of a number of papers (HOUBEN, SCHMÜCKER, D'INTINO), which deal with such matters as the *raison d'être* of the text itself, as a self-justifying exercise of uplift or as inherently meaningful, and therefore necessarily effective, expression. In this way, the various papers, in their diversity itself, can be seen as contributing, schematically, to a complete undertaking, which otherwise would be shorn of an essential limb. This is not to say that many other perspectives might not have been taken up and explored under these rubrics, but that the volume itself gives evidence of a thorough exploitation of the possibilities inherent in the enterprise.

If such a rich variety of issues can be evoked by eliciting the ambiguities of a single pregnant phrase, *śāstrārambha*, what might not one accomplish by taking up, perhaps in a second volume, other such “clearly meaningful” terms, such as *siddhānta*?

Edwin Gerow

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