

# Notes on the Bhadra-sūkta, a hymn for felicity to the Vedic pantheon

Bhārgavaḥ

## 1 Introduction

Several sub-schools of the Taittirīya school of the Kṛṣṇayajurveda possess their own collections of mantra-s distinct from their saṃhitā-s known as the mantra-pāṭha-s. These include mantra-s that are often found in other traditions but not in their own saṃhitā or brāhmaṇa. Additionally, they also include some mantra-s which are unique to these mantra-pāṭha-s. For example the famous Yajurvedic version of the Śrīsūkta is found in the mantra-pāṭha of Bodhāyana. However, most practitioners in South India do not correctly use the accents of this sūkta and seem to be unaware that the KYV version of this sūkta occurs in this text. The mantra-pāṭha-s of the Āpastamba, Bodhāyana, Vaikhānasa and Hiraṇyakeśin sub-schools have come down to us. The mantra-s in them are typically deployed in gṛhya rituals directed by instructions from their gṛhyasūtra-s. However, the Vaikhānasa-mantra-pāṭha is distinctive in having a late terminal part that is used in the iconic worship of Viṣṇu by the Vaikhānasa-s. The Hiraṇyakeśi-mantra-pāṭha has a ṛk-saṃhitā as part of it and is used by the Hiraṇyakeśin-s of Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu in their rituals to this date. In some ways this is reminiscent of the hautra-pariśiṣṭha of the Āpastamba-s that is used by Yajurvedin-s to supplement the role normally performed by the Ṛgvedin hotṛ.

Other than these mantra-pāṭha-s of the KYV, we also have comparable supplementary mantra-collections among the Sāmavedin-s in their Mantrabrāhmaṇa and the famous khila of the RV. Further, beyond the Taittirīya school, the Kaṭha school, which was once widespread in the northern parts of the subcontinent like Kashmir and the Panjab, had its own mantra-pāṭha that went along with their gṛhyasūtra, namely that of Laugākṣi. While the original form of this mantra-pāṭha does not survive to my knowledge, a version of it with accretions of tāntrika and paurānika material used in smārta practice by the brāhmaṇa-s of Kashmir and some of their counterparts in Himachal Pradesh has come down to us. This text was published by

the Kashmirian brāhmaṇa-s Keśava Bhaṭṭa and Kāśīnātha-śarman in the first half of the 1900s. I had earlier examined a defective version of this text but thanks to the massive text-scanning effort of the eGangotri Trust of the texts at the Kashmir Research Institute, Srinagar we can now examine a better version of this text.

The melding of t̄antrika and vaidika tradition found in this Kashmirian text has a long history in Hindu tradition. Indeed, as we have pointed out before<sup>1</sup>, a small mantra-saṃhitā comparable to the mantra-pāṭha-s is found preserved in the śākta-purāṇa, the Devī-purāṇa, which might preserve a distinct vaidika tradition. Similarly, the Āṅgirasakalpa of the Paippalāda school of the Atharvaveda preserves a combined mantra-deployment of Paippalāda AV mantra-s along with t̄antrika-vidyā-s. With regard to the AV tradition one may also point to the Tripurārṇava-tantra, an authoritative mūla-tantra of the Śrīkula tradition. The 20<sup>th</sup> taraṅga of this text preserves a combined t̄antrika-vaidika mantra-deployment for the Indramahotsva (the great festival of Indra) which associates itself the AV. This association is likely genuine for the AV is the one vaidika tradition that has clear injunctions for the Indramahotsva in its pariśiṣṭha-s. This section of the Tripurārṇava-tantra specifies several vaidika mantra-s that are to be used in the worship of Indra and other deva-s, which are combined with the worship of the Bhairava of the Śrīkula tradition under the t̄antrika scheme.

Our Kashmirian text associated with the Kaṭha school, like other mantra-pāṭha-s, has some unique Vedic material. One such is the Bhadrasūkta which is the topic of this note. This sūkta of 21 ṛk-s is to our knowledge not found in any other saṃhitā. It is mostly comprised of regular jagati-s (12-12-12-12), with the last ṛk being a triṣṭubh (11-11-11-11). There may be some hypermetrical verses like ṛk-16 (12-12-12-13). The sūkta has a form rather similar to the RV7.35 of Vasiṣṭha Maitrāvaruṇi. Like that one it is a vaiśvadeva-sūkta, which invokes the entire pantheon for luck or felicity. In RV7.35 the word for luck or felicity is the indeclinable śam. In our sūkta the word bhadra is used instead. It is used as an adjective that declines as the deity being invoked with the dative pronoun naḥ (“for us”) being used just like in RV7.35. Hence, in this sūkta we translate bhadra as auspicious (or can be taken in the sense of the deity being luck-granting). This word bhadra is also found in multiple ṛk-s of another famous vaiśvadeva-sūkta, RV1.89 of Gotama Rāhūgaṇa, in an equivalent sense (ā no bhadraḥ; devānām bhadra sumatir ṛjūyatām; bhadraṃ karṇebhiḥ śṛṇuyāma devā bhadram paśyemākṣabhir yajatrāḥ). More generally, the pattern of the repetitions of bhadra is seen on multiple occasions in the RV albeit not in vaiśvadeva-sūkta-s (e.g. RV8.62 of Pragātha Kāṇva) and also in the AV

<sup>1</sup><https://manasataramgini.wordpress.com/2010/06/25/the-mantra-samhita-of-the-devi-purana/>

saṃhitā-s. A ṛk of Sobhari Kāṇva (RV8.19.19) also uses the word bhadrā repeated in a sense similar to this sūkta:

bhadro no agnir āhuto bhadrā rātiḥ subhaga bhadro adhvaraḥ | bhadrā uta praśas-tayaḥ ||

For us auspicious Agni when he is made an offering, the auspicious gift, the auspicious ritual, you the giver of good luck, [for us] auspicious hymns of praise.

Another comparable word is svasti (“well-being”) used in a similar sense by the Atri-s in their vaiśvadeva-sūkta, RV5.51.11-15 and also by Gotama Rāhūgaṇa in RV1.89. Indeed, in the Kashmirian tradition the Bhadrāsūkta is used on conjunction with RV1.89 and RV5.51.11-15. This style continues into the epic period where we observe Kausalyā confer a blessing on Rāma using a comparable incantation with svasti ( in R2.25).

The pantheon of the Bhadrāsūkta is entirely Vedic with no paurāṇika features. This squarely places the sūkta within the classic vaidika tradition and it was perhaps even originally attached to some now lost saṃhitā. However, in ṛk-2 we encounter the god Prajāpati. He is not found in the comparable RV7.35 or other core RV vaiśvadeva-sūkta-s. He appears to have entered the Vedic tradition relatively late from a para-Vedic tradition<sup>2</sup>. His position in the sūkta suggests that he has not superseded the old aindra system as it happened in the even later Vedic layers. In this regard his position is comparable to that found in the camaka-praśna of the Yajurveda tradition. This suggests that the sūkta indeed belongs to a comparable relative temporal layer and was a relatively late composition with the Vedic tradition, perhaps consciously mirroring the RV7.35 and RV1.89. The final ṛk has the refrain: “tanno mitro varuṇo mā mahantām aditiḥ sindhuḥ pṛthivī uta dyauḥ” (Mitra and Varuṇa, Aditi, the river, the Earth and also Heaven should grant this to us), which is characteristic of the Kutsa-s of the RV (e.g. RV1.94). Kutsa also has a certain predilection for composing low complexity sūkta-s, which is also seen rather plainly in this one. Importantly, his two vaiśvadeva-sūkta-s, RV1.105 and RV1.106, have characteristic low-complexity style with repetition. Notably, his sūkta to the Sun (RV1.115) uses the word bhadrā repeatedly as in this sūkta. Together, these indicate that the composer of the Bhadrāsūkta was a member of the Kautsa clan.

Some notable features of the Bhadrāsūkta are:

1. Venas is implored to be ever-desirous (uśan...sadā) of the worshiper. This furnishes a link between Venas and the later name of Venus in Sanskrit tradition, Uśanas. Thus, it further strengthens the identification of Venas with Venus and suggests an early IE origin for this planetary name.

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<sup>2</sup>Note the presence of a comparable deity among the Greeks in the form of Phanes or Protogonos

2. Mātariśvan is explicitly identified with Vāyu in this sūkta. In the RV Mātariśvan is often mentioned as bringing Agni to the Bhārgava-s and humans at large (evidently from Vivasvat). In RV3.29.11 Viśvāmitra clarifies this identification by stating: “mātariśvā yad amimīta mātari vātasya sargo abhavat sarīmaṇi ||”: [He is called] Mātariśvan when he measures out [the space] in his mother; he became the rush of the wind in flowing out. Thus, we translate Mātariśvan as “he who grows in his mother” meaning “he who grows in the world-womb.
3. In ṛk-10 we seen an invocation of various physiological processes. This is unique for a vaiśvadeva-sūkta and not seen in RV sūkta-s of this type. In this regard it has a flavor more typical of the AV.
4. In ṛk-s 11-14 we encounter a great diversity of devatā-dvandva-s, which is unprecedented in any other vaiśvadeva-sūkta elsewhere in the śruti.

The emended text of the sūkta is presented below with an approximate translation.

## 2 Bhadrasūkta: text

भद्रो नो अग्निः सुहवो विभावसुर् भद्र इन्द्रः पुरुहूतः पुरुष्टुतः ।  
भद्रः सूर्य उरुचक्षा उरुव्यचा भद्रश् चन्द्रमाः समिथेषु जागृविः ॥१॥

For us the auspicious Agni, well-invoked and abounding in light, the auspicious Indra much-invoked and much-hymned; the auspicious Sun, wide-seeing and wide-ranging, the auspicious Moon keeping an eye [on us] in the battle.

भद्रः प्रजा अजनयन्नः प्रजापतिर् भद्रः सोमः पवमनो वृषा हरिः ।  
भद्रस् त्वष्टा विदधद् रूपाण्य् अद्भुतो भद्रो नो धाता वरिवस्यतु प्रजाः ॥२॥

For us the auspicious Prajāpati [who] progeny-generated, the auspicious Soma, the purified one <sup>3</sup> and the manly yellow one; the auspicious Tvaṣṭṛ giving wondrous forms [to things]. May the auspicious Dhātṛ show favor to [our] progeny.

भद्रस् तार्क्ष्यः सुप्रजस्त्वाय नो महौ अरिष्टनेमिः पृतना युधा जयन् ।  
भद्रो वायुर् मातरिश्वा नियुत्पतिर् वेनो गयस्फान उशन् सदा ऽस्तु नः ॥३॥

For us the auspicious Tārṣya Ariṣṭanemi for the sake of good progeny and for conquering the hostile army by means of battle; the auspicious Vāyu, expanding within the world-womb<sup>4</sup>, the lord of the team of horses. May Venus, the wealth-increaser,

<sup>3</sup>Emended pāvamāna to pavamāna

<sup>4</sup>Mātariśvan: literally growing within the mother: the mother implies the world-womb or the world-hemisphere

be always desirous of us.

भद्रो मित्रो वरुणो रुद्र इद् वृधा भद्रो ऽहिर्बुध्न्यो भुवनस्य रक्षिता ।  
भद्रो नो वास्तोष्पतिर् अस्त्वं अमीवहा भद्रः क्षेत्रस्य पतिर् विचर्षणिः ॥४॥

For us the auspicious Mitra and Varuṇa, and Rudra verily with augmentation, and Ahirbudhnya the protector of the universe; the auspicious guardian of the home-  
stead: may he be the destroyer of illness and the auspicious guardian of the field,  
ever-full of activity.

भद्रो विभुर् विश्वकर्मा बृहस्पतिर् भद्रो द्विषस्तपनो ब्रह्मणस्पतिः ।  
भद्रः सुपर्णो अरुणो मरुत्-सखा भद्रो नो वातो अभिवातु भेषजी ॥५॥

For us the mighty, all-maker Bṛhaspati, the auspicious foe-scorcher and lord of the  
ritual; the auspicious falcon, reddish-brown and the friend of the Marut-s<sup>5</sup>. May the  
auspicious Vāta<sup>6</sup> blow medicines towards us.

भद्रो दधिक्रा वृषभः कनिक्रदद् भद्रः पर्जन्यो बहुधा विराजति ।  
भद्रा सरस्वाँ उत नः सरस्वती भद्रो वशी भद्र इन्द्रः पुरुरवः ॥६॥

For us the auspicious [horse] Dadhikra, the neighing stallion, the auspicious Par-  
janya [who] manifoldly shines forth; the auspicious Sarasvat and also Sarasvatī, the  
auspicious cow and the auspicious Indra, the loud-roarer.

भद्रो नः पूषा सविता यमो भगो भद्रो ऽग्रज एकपाद् अर्यमा मनुः ।  
भद्रो विष्णुर् उरुगायो वृषा हरिर् भद्रो विवस्वाँ अभिवातु नस्त्मना ॥७॥

For us the auspicious Pūṣaṅ, Savitr, Yama and Bhaga, and the auspicious first-born  
Ekapāt, Aryaman and Manu; the auspicious Viṣṇu, the wide-strider and the manly  
lion. May indeed the auspicious Vivasvat blow towards us.

भद्रा गायत्री ककुब् उष्णिहा विराड् भद्रानुष्टुप् बृहती पङ्क्तिर् अस्तु नः ।  
भद्रा नस् त्रिष्टुब् जगती पुरुप्रिया भद्रातिच्छान्दा बहुधा विभूवरी ॥८॥

For us the auspicious Gāyatrī, Kakubh, Uṣṇihā<sup>7</sup> and Virāṭ. May Anuṣṭubh, Bṛhatī,  
Paṅkti each be auspicious to us. For us the auspicious Triṣṭubh, the much-loved  
Jagati<sup>8</sup> and the auspicious long meters manifold and of many treasures.

<sup>5</sup>Later tradition clarifies him to be the charioteer of the Sun

<sup>6</sup>The wind deity

<sup>7</sup>Another form of Uṣṇih meter

<sup>8</sup>The composer seems to indicate his love for the Jagati, the meter in which he has composed  
most of the sūkta

भद्रा नो राकानुमतिः कुहूः सुहृद् भद्रा सिनीवाल्स्य अदितिर् मही ध्रुवा ।

भद्रा नो द्यौर् अन्तरिक्षं मयस्करं भद्रो ऽश्वो दक्षस्तनयाय नस् तुजे ॥९॥

For us the the auspicious Rākā, Anumati and friendly Kuhū, auspicious Sinivālī, Aditi, and the firm Earth goddess. For us the auspicious Heaven goddess, the atmosphere giving pleasure, the auspicious horse, and Dakṣa for extending for us [our] lineage.

भद्रो नः प्राणः सुमनाः सुवागसद् भद्रो अपानः सतनुः सहात्मना ।

भद्रं चक्षुर् भद्रम् इच्छोत्रम् अस्तु नो भद्रं न आयुः शरदो असच्छताम् ॥१०॥

For us the auspicious life-process with a good mind and good speech unmanifest, the auspicious excretory process with the body and the consciousness; indeed may the vision be auspicious and hearing be auspicious for us. For us the auspicious life with autumns, a 100 yet to manifest.

भद्रेन्द्राग्नी नो भवताम् ऋतावृधा भद्रा नो मित्रावरुणा धृतव्रता ।

भद्राश्विना नो भवतां नवेदसा भद्रा द्यावा-पृथिवी विश्व-शंभुवा ॥११॥

For us the auspicious Indra and Agni fostering the Law; for us the auspicious Mitra and Varuṇa maintaining the Laws. May the two auspicious Aśvin-s be cognizant [of us]. For us the auspicious Heaven and Earth benevolent to all.

भद्रा न इन्द्रावरुणा रिशादसा भद्रा न इन्द्रा भवतां बृहस्पती ।

भद्रेन्द्राविष्णु सवनेषु यावृधा भद्रेन्द्रासोमा युधि दस्यु-हन्तमा ॥१२॥

For us the auspicious Indra and Varuṇa, devourers of foes. May Indra and Bṛhaspati be auspicious to us. [For us] auspicious Indra and Viṣṇu who augment [us] during the soma libations. May the auspicious Indra and Soma slay the dasyu in battle.

भद्राग्नाविष्णु विदधस्य प्रसाधना भद्रा नो ऽग्नीन्द्रा वृषभा-दिवस्पती ।

भद्रा नो अग्नीवरुणा प्रचेतसा भद्राग्नीषोमा भवतां नवेदसा ॥१३॥

For us the auspicious Agni and Viṣṇu, the ornaments of the gift-distribution. For us the auspicious Agni and Indra, the bulls, the lords of heaven. For us the auspicious Agni and Varuṇa, the ever-mindful ones. May the auspicious Agni and Soma be cognizant of us.

भद्रा सूर्या-चन्द्रमसा कविक्रतू भद्रा सोमा भवतां पूषणा नः ।

भद्रेन्द्रावायु पृतनासु-सासही भद्रा सूर्याग्नी अजिता धनञ्जया ॥१४॥

For us the auspicious Sun and Moon, the two full of insight. May Soma and Pūṣaṇ be auspicious. [For us] the auspicious Indra and Vayu conquering in battle and the

auspicious Sūrya and Agni unconquered and winning wealth.

भद्रा नः सन्तु वसवो वसुप्रजा भद्रा रुद्रा वृत्रहणा पुरन्धरा ।  
भद्रा आदित्याः सुपसः सुनीतयो भद्रा राजानो मरुतो विरप्शिनः ॥१५॥

May the auspicious Vasu-s be wealth and progeny [giving]. For us the auspicious Rudra-s who slay Vṛtra and smash the [hostile] forts and the auspicious Āditya-s, well-seeing and well-guiding, and the auspicious kings, the Marut-s, the exuberant ones<sup>9</sup>.

भद्रा न ऊमा सुहवाः शतश्रियो विश्वेदेवा मनवश् चर्षणीधृतः ।  
भद्राः साध्या अभिभवः सूरचक्षसो भद्रा नः सन्त्वं ऋभवो रत्न-धातमाः ॥१६॥

For us the auspicious helper-[gods], well-invoked and with a 100 riches, all the gods and the Manu-s, supporters of the folks. For us the auspicious Sādhyā-s, the over-powerers, radiant as the Sun. May the auspicious Ṛbhū-s be gem-givers for us.

भद्राः सर्वे वाजिनो वाजसातयो भद्रा ऋषयः पितरो गभस्तयः ।  
भद्रा भृगवो ऽङ्गिरसः सुदानवो भद्रा गन्धर्वाप्सरसः सुदंससः ॥१७॥

Auspicious the racers, winners of booty; auspicious the sages, [our] ancestors, the sun-beams. Auspicious the Bhṛgu-s and Aṅgiras-es, the liberal givers; auspicious the Gandharva-s and Apsaras-es, the powerful ones<sup>10</sup>.

भद्रा आपः शुचयो विश्वभृत्तमा भद्राः शिवा यक्ष्मनुदो न ओषधीः ।  
भद्रा गावः सुरभयो वयोवृधो भद्रा योषा उशतीर् देवपत्यः ॥१८॥

For us the auspicious waters, pure and the foremost supporters of all, the auspicious, benign, disease-repulsing herbs; the auspicious cows, charming and invigorating, the auspicious nymphs and loving wives of the gods.

भद्राणि सामानि सदा भवन्तु नो भद्रा अथर्वाण ऋचो यजूषि नः ।  
भद्रा नक्षत्राणि शिवानि विश्वा भद्रा आशा अहुताः सन्तु नो हृदि ॥१९॥

May the Saman-s forever be auspicious to us. For us the Atharvaṇ spells, the ṛk-s and the yajuṣ-es. May the auspicious asterisms [be] all benign and [may the] directions, the coordinate lines be auspicious at their conjunction.

संवत्सरा न ऋतवो मयोभुवो यो वा आयुवाः सुसराण्य् उत क्षपाः ।  
मुहूर्ताः काष्ठाः प्रदिशो दिशश् च सदा भद्रा सन्तु द्विपदे शं चतुष्पदे ॥२०॥

<sup>9</sup>Emended virapsin to virapśin keeping with the form found in the RV

<sup>10</sup>Emended sudamśas to sudamsas

The years [of the 5 year cycle] and the seasons be gladdening to us, be they productive, easy-going or drought-ridden. May the muhūrta (=48 minutes)-s and kaṣṭa (=3.2 seconds)-s, the directions and the inter-directions be ever-auspicious and [may there be] welfare for the bipeds and quadrupeds.

भद्रं पश्येम प्रचरेम भद्रं भद्रं वदेम शृणुयाम भद्रम् ।  
तन्नो मित्रो वरुणो मा महन्ताम् अदितिः सिन्धुः पृथिवी उत द्यौः ॥२१॥

May we see auspiciousness. May we perform auspiciousness. May we speak auspiciousness. May we hear auspiciousness. Mitra and Varuṇa, Aditi, the river, the Earth and also Heaven should grant this to us.