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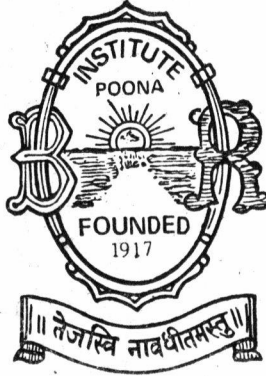
[ PARTS I-IV

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1997

# THE MOKṢOPĀYA PROJECT

By

WALTER SLAJE

1. Among the many and valuable intellectual treasures which India has built up, one literary monument may in more than only one regard be considered as remarkable in terms of the history of ideas. At least since the end of the first millennium A. D. the extraordinarily high esteem of this monument is still lasting. First of all its appearance in size is impressive. Because of its approximately 32,000 *śloka*s it is even more voluminous than the *Rāmāyaṇa*, and this by 8,000 *śloka*s. Secondly, it promises – when properly studied – to cause an insight into existence as it really is. This insight, which of course must be caused already during lifetime, and which is regarded as the final release from bondage, is spoken of as being brought about by reasonable argument (*yukti*) and reflection (*vicāra*). To achieve this goal, on the level of speech it teaches by means of ornate poetry, employing witty and vivid similes (*upamā*) as well as parabolic stories (*ākhyāna*). Thus the remark of the famous German Indologist Helmuth von Glasenapp, on the work under consideration, which has generally become known by the title of ‘*Yogavāsiṣṭha*’, a title by which it has also several times been printed, was “probably the greatest philosophical poetic work of all times,”<sup>1</sup> does not lack justification. Finally, the work under consideration may be regarded as remarkable by the fact, that neither the historiography of Indian literature nor that of Indian philosophy has yet succeeded in categorizing it in a satisfying manner. I for one tend to surmise that the exclusion of the ‘*Yogavāsiṣṭha*’ from recent literary histories<sup>2</sup> could – if at all – only be explained by an inability to convincingly classify the text. I feel quite confident that therefore the plan of a critical edition would – even considering only a few of the characteristics just mentioned – basically be agreed upon.

2. When I had for the first time collected the manuscript material for the purpose of preparing such a critical edition, a meticulous perusal disclosed a rather unexpected result, namely the existence of a particular strand of its textual transmission, completely independent of the printed text of the vulgate

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<sup>1</sup> Glasenapp 1953 / 54 : 35 : “vielleicht ... das größte philosophisch Kunstgedicht aller Zeiten ...”

<sup>2</sup> Compare e. g. Mylius 1988.  
27 [ Annals [ BORI ]

and obviously preserving an early state of textual development. Since the evidence proving this very strand as factual has already been provided elsewhere,<sup>3</sup> I confine myself to deal here only shortly with its most outstanding and distinguishing features, before I shall turn to the planned edition as such.

From the point of view of contents as well as from that of mere formal criteria, the transmission of 'Yogavāsiṣṭha' manuscripts divides itself into two separate main strands. One of these is – in terms of textual history – closely connected with the region of Kashmir, where, as obvious by geographical,<sup>4</sup> botanical and climatic<sup>5</sup> as well as by historical<sup>6</sup> references, the text must either have been produced or must at least have received the earliest shape that can be recognized at present. The Kashmirian sources mention or quote the text by the title of *Mokṣopāya* or *Mokṣopāya-Śāstra*. This title agrees with the one in the oldest layers of the text when speaking of itself. Due to textual developments the designation of *Mahārāmāyaṇa* occurs in more recent layers, but the title of *Yogavāsiṣṭha* is nowhere to be found. This latter title, which is apparently a very late one testified to by colophons of only a small number of manuscripts, has nonetheless become the common name by which the work is generally known and spoken of. The strand under consideration is transmitted by a group of closely related manuscripts. The *mūla*-text is either commented upon by Bhāskarakaṇṭha (Mokṣopāya-Ṭikā) or else left uncommented. According to the Kashmirian script mainly though not exclusively used I call this strand – by admittedly simplifying<sup>7</sup> – the Ś[āradā] transmission or Kashmir version.

The second group of closely connected manuscripts is commented upon by Ānandabodhendrasarasvatī (*Vāsiṣṭhatātparyaprakāśa*). This very ver-

<sup>3</sup> Slaje 1994: 71–97.

<sup>4</sup> *mahācīna, valmikopari vihāra, kapilamūrdhaja bhikṣu, etc.*

<sup>5</sup> *bhūrjatvac, himakaṇa, prāleya, pāṣāṇatām gataṁ jalam, etc.*

<sup>6</sup> King Yaśaskaradeva, reigned 939–948. For all of the above mentioned examples as well as for further evidence cp. Slaje 1994: 172–176.

<sup>7</sup> Though I agree with Grünendahl's (1993) criticism of the 'Schriftartenprämissen', I hesitate to accept its general application to all sorts of texts. Grünendahl developed his arguments by textual criticism of the epics, targeting on the principles Sukthankar adhered to as an editor of the Poona Critical Edition of the Mahābhārata in particular. His results, however, should be limited to those texts that evolved in more than only one region, as it was normally the case with the so-called epic-purāṇic 'literatures'. The history of texts with a regional place of origin, texts which began to wander only after having been basically shaped, can successfully be investigated by according their manuscript tradition of local scripts the appropriate attention, since the place of origin must necessarily be connected with the textual development. The manuscripts may then be revealing with regard to transmissional mistakes.

sion was first spread throughout India and gained later in its printed form (N/Ed) renown also in other countries. With reference to the mainly used pan-Indian script of these manuscripts I call it – again by simplifying – the N[āgarī] transmission or vulgate. These two groups can clearly be distinguished.

2.1. As to the mere *formal* differences, group N is characterized by an introductory frame-story<sup>8</sup> unknown to group Ś, and by a dichotomy of the Nirvāṇaprakaraṇa (*pūrvāuttarārdha*) produced by a contamination with an abstract version of the Yogavāsiṣṭha, the so-called Laghu-Yogavāsiṣṭha<sup>9</sup>. Here again the Ś-group, which transmits the Nirvāṇa-Prakaraṇa as a single and undivided one, demonstrably represents an earlier and therefore more original version.

2.2. As regards the *variant readings*, we observe first of all.

2.2.1. again *formal criteria* that allow drawing a clear line of distinction between the two groups, since a great number of particularities such as common omissions, readings and arrangements occur exclusively in only one of them respectively.

2.2.2. Turning to the *character of the variants* of the vulgate, two major types of changes with reference to the Kashmir version can be discriminated, scribal and other non-intentional mistakes on the one hand and wilful modifications on the other.

2.2.2.1. Among the vulgate's errors and mistakes of the *non-intentional type*, frequent misinterpretations of characters originally written in Śāradā script and misinterpretations due to a scribe's or redactor's consideration of the very narrowest context only and their disregard for the larger context, the understanding of which could have been secured by a living tradition, are striking.

<sup>8</sup> N/Ed I, 1 (Sutīksṇa – Agastī, Kāruṇya – Agniveśya, 'Devadūta' – Suruci, Vālmiki – Ariṣṭanemi). The evidence given in Slaje (1994: 71 f; 102 ff) was recently corroborated by manuscript No. d. 568 (8) of the Chandra Shum Shere Collection (Bodleian Library), Oxford (Brockington 1990, No. 185), which I consulted in summer 1995. It exhibits the secondary character of the frame-story under consideration by a colophon. The numbering of the single *sargas* starts with only the second *sarga*, thus counted as *prathama*. The first *sarga* containing the frame-story (N/Ed I, 1), however, is merely called the *kathānubandhaḥ sargaḥ* and is left unnumbered. This is a clear instance where it can be perceived, that and how the transmission was gradually contaminated by the frame-story. I am indebted to Prof. Alexis Sanderson (Oxford) for getting me access to the manuscripts of the Bodleian Library, and to the Austrian Academy of Sciences (Vienna) for financial support.

<sup>9</sup> Cp. Slaje 1994 : 118 ff.

2. 2. 2. 2. Among the more important *wilful changes* of the vulgate the following deserve enumeration : The accretion of frames with an ' orthodox ', brāhmaṇical touch ; the insertion of *sargaṣ* stressing *rāma-bhakti* ; contrary to the spirit of the original ; attempts to reinterpret passages that were originally conceived of as anti-vedic and anti-ritualistic ; the change or even complete deletion of Buddhist terms or text-pieces ; changing of numerous plural forms of nouns and verbs pointing to public ' sermons ' of the originator of the Mokṣopāya. They occur in the singular in the vulgate, obviously in order to adapt them to a younger and fictitiously created layer of the text, namely the dialogue between ' Vasiṣṭha ' and ' Rāma ' ; finally, an attempt to ' vedānticize ' the text, which – though it does teach monism (*advaita*) – has nothing in common with the particularities of Śaṅkara's Vedānta, but indeed very much with Gauḍapāda's Kārikās and the Laṅkāvatārasūtra of the Mahāyāna. Though changes of this kind are likely to have been introduced by several phases of deliberate redactions, many of them may also gradually have found their way into the vulgate in the course of the text transmission in the hands and mouths of pious Śaṁnyāsins, who most probably were convinced of their interpretation as a correct understanding. Thus they might already have paved the way for Vidyāraṇya's peculiar presentation of the Yogavāsiṣṭha,<sup>10</sup> who incorporated it in his Jīvanmuktiveka. As far as can be judged by now, the very first deliberate<sup>11</sup> inclusion of the ' Vasiṣṭha-Rāma-Saṁvāda ' into the corpus of systematic Advaita-Vedānta works goes to his credit accordingly. By Vidyāraṇya's treatment the YV was thus made acceptable for the followers of Śaṅkara's ' orthodox ' Advaita-Vedānta. It should be pointed out that the above-mentioned criteria of differentiation are absolutely characteristic of the respective strands, since they occur either all together in one or are all together absent in the other.

2. 3. The Kashmirian philosopher Bhāskarakaṅṭha was acquainted with the Śāradā version of the ' Mokṣopāya '. In the introductory part of his commentary he points out the exegetical tradition of his family he adhered to.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, and since the development of the text also points to

<sup>10</sup> The matter will be treated in W. Slaje, *On changing other's ideas ; the case of Vidyāraṇya* (forthcoming.)

<sup>11</sup> Apart from the many text-pieces of course, which were taken from the Yogavāsiṣṭha to make up large parts of numerous Sāṁnyāya-Vedānta-Upaniṣads. Cp. Sprockhoff 1963 : 191 ff; 1976 : 17 ; 312-377.

<sup>12</sup> MṬ (I), introductory verse 8 ; *svataḥsiddhāl labdham paramagahanam yat svajanakūd rahasyam ... | tad etat sarveṣu prakāṣayitum evātra vihito mayā-sau udyogo, na nijadhiṣaṇākhyāpanadhiyā ||*

Kashmir as the place of its origin and early history, the Śāradā version will attract our attention not without justification.

As a result of the contrastive investigation of the variant readings' character keeping the two strands apart, it has become clear that the Kashmir version as we have it now still represents a particular state of textual development that can safely be regarded as *earlier* than that of the vulgate's present version. This is because the Kashmir version did in fact escape all attempts of reworking as they are – as shown above – typical of the vulgate. That, however, does not mean we have to regard the vulgate as inferior in every respect. Apart from the fact that the vulgate thus testifies to events in the history of Indian ideas, and probably even to powerful changes the work had been adapted to, one should keep in mind that both versions nevertheless must have had a common textual ancestor. Therefore, all of the vulgate's variants that cannot be explained as being 'tendentious' in terms of what has been said above, must – considering the principles of textual criticism dealing with conflated transmissions – equally be regarded as possibly original.

I do suppose that what has been pointed out in the foregoing will be sufficiently convincing that a critical edition of the Kashmirian Mokṣopāya is indeed worthy of being established. Such an edition would represent a preliminary stage to a critical edition of the received text in its oldest form. This one, however, can only be finally established when a critical edition of the vulgate, the 'Yogavāsiṣṭha', will be as well at our disposal.

### Plan of the edition

3. Applying the above-mentioned criteria to distinguish both of the strands, it is possible to assign a number of manuscripts to the Śāradā version.

3.1. A few remarks about the more important ones : Complete manuscripts which contain the whole text of all the six Prakaraṇas are rare. Only two are presently known to me. One (Ś1) of them has been published as a facsimile edition by Lokesh Chandra (Delhi 1984). It consists of a collection of parts of originally different manuscripts copied by several scribes, one day put together as a 'complete' text. The second (Ś3), of the Sri Pratap Singh Library in Srinagar, was used by me as a microfilm.<sup>13</sup> It is dated

<sup>13</sup> Microfilm No Di804 ; F66 at the Indological Institute of Bonn University. Cp. Eimer 1988 : 156.

Laukikasanivāt 43 and Saṁivāt 1924 [= AD 1867] and was copied by Rāma-candra Bhaṭṭāraka.

The rest of the manuscripts of the Śāradā version are incomplete. They cover only parts of the whole text or of single Prakaraṇas.<sup>14</sup>

3.2. Bhāskaraṅṭha's Mokṣopāyaṭikā belongs to the most important textual testimonia, since he transmits the *mūla*-text in the *pratīkas* of his commentary. His Ṭikā has unluckily been preserved only for the first two (Vairāgya- and Mumukṣu-) and for about sixteen *sargas* of the third (Utpatti-) Prakaraṇa.<sup>15</sup> The rest seems irretrievably lost. These folios are presently kept at the Banāras Hindu University Library. It is a likely supposition that they are the very folios the existence of which was reported by K. C. Pandey in the 1930s, when he visited Kashmir, as still in the possession of Bhāskara's direct descendants.<sup>16</sup> Due to the Kashmirian exegesis' great importance for the editorial work on the complete text, the critical edition of Bhāskara's Ṭikā, whose fidelity to traditional exegesis can be demonstrated,<sup>17</sup> was tackled first of all. This edition together with a planned index of the Ṭikā's *pratīkas* will also be helpful for the criticism of all of those Prakaraṇas, where the immediate commentary has been lost but cognate topics have been treated.

3.3. As to the *mūla*-text of the Mokṣopāya itself, the preparation of its critical edition was started with the 6th, the Nirvāṇa-Prakaraṇa, and with the hitherto still unpublished and therefore unknown 'apocryphical' Khila-Prakaraṇa, a kind of an appendix to the Nirvāṇa-Prakaraṇa contained only in the Śāradā version. Against a possible objection to thus having put the cart before the horse, several reasons may justify this procedure: By approximately 15,000 *ślokas* the Nirvāṇa-Prakaraṇa comes to half of the entire work. It is as large as the first five Prakaraṇas taken together. The vulgate (N/Ed) divides the Nirvāṇa-Prakaraṇ into two separate halves by two spurious *sargas* (N/Ed VI 127-128), the *pūrya*- and *uttarārdhas*. The

<sup>14</sup> For a rough overview cp. the diagram in the appendix, which, however, does not show the exact degree of the single *Sargas*' covering.

<sup>15</sup> Cp. MT (I), MṬ (II), MṬ (III).

<sup>16</sup> Pandey 1963 : 265. The credit for decisive help to publish the remaining parts of the Ṭikā goes to Dr. Bettina Bäumer (Varanasi), Prof. Dr. R. R. Pandey (Varanasi), Prof. Alexis Sanderson (Oxford) and Prof. Dr. Albrecht Wezler (Hamburg).

<sup>17</sup> For example with regard to the question of the relative importance of 'fate' (*daiva*) and 'human effort' (*paurya*). The Mokṣopāya's uncompromising preference for human effort is commented without bias - contrary to Bhāskara's personal opinion as expressed in a text of his own, the Cittānubodhaśāstra. Cp. MṬ (II), Introduction, p. 14, n. 2.



second of these was – due to a wrong judgement – always regarded as a late and secondary layer and has therefore been largely excluded from philological investigations. The Kashmir version, however, proves an original and comparatively coherent character of one single Nirvāṇa-Prakarāṇa. It has preserved the full text of 35 *sargas* treating of the seven *yoga-* or *jñāna-bhūmis*. They have never been printed before and therefore could never before been given any attention on the side of scholars, who were always puzzled by the recensions of the *bhūmis* as contained in N/Ed.<sup>18</sup> My own investigations have – besides – resulted in a picture that presents us with a comparatively original character of the Nirvāṇa-Prakarāṇa. Therefore the part corresponding with the Nāgarī version's *uttarārḍha*, which escaped the widely spread influence of the vulgate redactors, is of special interest. The edition of this Prakaraṇa will largely provide new textual material that was hitherto unknown and neglected, and it will also provide a better state of sources for early Advaita philosophy influenced by Mahāyāna Buddhism, which has not been influenced by Śāṅkara's Advaita-Vedānta.

3.3.1. The edition of this Prakaraṇa can presently (1996) be based upon four manuscripts (Ś1, Ś3, Ś5, N14).<sup>19</sup> All the 374 *sargas* of the Nirvāṇa-prakarāṇa have been transcribed from Ms Ś1 by using WordPerfect 5.1. Approximately two thirds (200 *sargas*) of the variants of the remaining three manuscripts have by now been recorded as well.

3.3.2. The work on the 'apocryphical' Khila-Prakarāṇa,<sup>20</sup> based on three manuscripts (Ś3, Ś5, N15), has reached an advanced editorial state. The Khilaprakarāṇa consists of 14 *sargas* with altogether 593 *ślokas*. It contains no Ākhyānas. The elaborate kāvya style and the witty use of *upamās* typically of the main part of the Mokṣopāya are – strikingly enough – also missing. The composition of the Khilas as such point, however, to a particular tradition which must – at least for a certain period – have continued as a living one. Its contents presents us with nothing entirely new. Particular topics, such as the consciousness of the dead, their connection with the living and so on, are, however, discussed with preference. Polemics against the belief in the *śruti* are frequent and remarkable. They testify to close linkings with the original thought of the Mokṣopāya as preserved in its Kashmirian version.

<sup>18</sup> Cp. Sprockhoff 1970 : 137 ff (n. 20 with further references.)

<sup>19</sup> Of them, Ś5 contains only the Nirvāṇa- and Khila-Prakarāṇas. N14, a Nāgarī manuscript from Nepal, is of a fragmentary character, encompassing 81 *sargas* of the Ś-version.

<sup>20</sup> Otherwise also called the *nānāpraśnāḥ* in the colophons.

3.4. Though nothing can yet be definitely said with regard to the mutual relationship of the manuscripts – the variants within the Kashmir version have still to be investigated as to their particular own character, – their conflated nature can doubtlessly be taken for sure. It must, however, be borne in mind that no one of them contains even traces of the tendentious variants that characterize the vulgate version. It follows from that, that though a common archetype must have existed as the ancestor of both the versions, the later layers produced by the redactors of the vulgate version did not feed back into the strand of the Kashmir version with its markedly conservative text preservation. Viewed from an historical-philological angle, the vulgate version can be judged as valuable as a document of change in terms of the history of ideas, a change becoming visible through the variants reflecting particularly new ‘guiding ideas.’ The Kashmir version, however, will be helpful to get at least one step closer to the original intention and language of the ‘originator’ of the Mokṣopāya. As such it will present us with an indispensable source for future research.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> I should like to express my deep gratitude to the Austrian Academy of Sciences (Vienna) which through the *Austrian Project of Advanced Research and Technology* (APART) generously granted financial support for the work hitherto done.

## APPENDICES

### I. Mūla text and Khilas

The known Mokṣopāya manuscripts of the Kashmir version according to their covering to single Prakaraṇas.

#### Sigla :

Ś1 Complete. Facsimile edition by L. Chandra, New Delhi 1984 : described in Slaje 1994 : 38f.

Ś3 Complete. Sri Pratap Singh Library, Srinagar : Slaje 1994 : 39f.

Ś5 Incomplete. Bodleian Library, Oxford : Slaje 1994 : 41 with further references.

N6 Incomplete. BORI, Poona : Slaje 1994 : 33 with further references.

N8 Incomplete. BORI, Poona : Slaje 1994 : 33 with further references.

N10 Incomplete. National Archives Nepal, Kathmandu/Orientabteilung der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin : Slaje 1994 : 34.

N14 Incomplete. National Archives Nepal, Kathmandu/Orientabteilung der Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin ( NGMPP – B 72/10 [= A 899/10 ] ). 'Sammelhandschrift' of very poor scribal quality by three different scribes, put together wrongly. Only 81 *sargas* of the Nirvāṇaparakaraṇa ( VI 158–239 ; ~ N/Ed, VI, *uttarārḍha*, 1–81 ), i. e. the part of "scribe I", represent the Kashmir version.

N15 Incomplete. BORI, Poona : Descriptive Catalogue of Manuscripts in the Government Library, Vol. 9, Part II. Poona 1955, No 775 ( Viśrāma II / 24 ).

Numbers with question marks refer to the ( Viśrāma II ) numbers of the BORI ( Descriptive Catalogue of Manuscripts in the Government Library, Vol. 9, Part II. Poona 1955 ). The exact filiation of these manuscripts has yet to be investigated.

## Prakarāṇa

1st	Ś1	Ś3	N8	N10	217(?)							
2nd	Ś1	Ś3	N8	N10		N6						
3rd	Ś1	Ś3	N8	N10			232(?)	224(?)				
4th	Ś1	Ś3	N8	N10			232(?)	224(?)	225(?)			
5th	Ś1	Ś3	N8	N10								
6th	Ś1	Ś3								Ś5	N14	N15
Khila		Ś3								Ś5		N15

## II. Bhāskarakaṇṭha's Mokṣopāya-Tīkā

Ś4 Incomplete. Banaras Hindu University Library, Varanasi, Slaje 1994 : 40f.

N11 Incomplete. Banaras Hindu University Library, Varanasi, Slaje 1994 : 34ff.

N12 Incomplete. Banaras Hindu University Library, Varanasi, Slaje 1994 : 36ff.

N13 Incomplete. Banaras Hindu University Library, Varanasi, Slaje 1994 : 38.

## Prakarāṇa

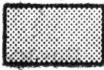
1st	Ś4	N 11		
2nd			N 12	
3rd			N 12	N 13

## III. Synopsis of the present state of the edition

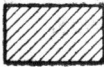
Prakaraṇa Sarga Śloka *Tīkā*

1st	32	~ 1.200	MT (I)
2nd	20	~ 800	MT (II)
3rd	*122	~ 5.000	MT (III)
4th	*62	~ 2.500	
5th	*93	~ 4.200	
6th	374	~ 15.000	
Khitas	14	~ 600	

Legend : \* = According to the vulgate (N). Exact numbers of Ś not yet ascertained.



= already published



= under preparation

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