

A Note on Śaṃtanu of Ṛgveda 10.98

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The references in RV. 10. 98 to Śaṃtanu have engaged the attention of Vedic scholars since the time of Yāska.¹ The problems raised by this hymn are so complicated that a solution appears well-nigh impossible.

Of all the questions that are raised by RV 10.98, perhaps the most important one is whether the Śaṃtanu mentioned in stanza 1 and 7 of this hymn is the same person as King Śaṃtanu of the Mahābhārata, whose sons were Bhīṣma, Citrāṅgada and Vicitravīrya. If the two are same, then the latest layers of the RV have to be regarded as contiguous to the age of the *events* described in the Great Epic itself.

Unfortunately hardly any evidence touching on this question can be gathered internally from the RV itself. One can, however, in view of this paucity of information, attempt to work backwards, starting from some of the factual statements of the available later sources and, compare the results that the acceptance of those statements would produce with the genealogical information available in the RV itself. The relevant 'factual statements' are the following :

- (1) Epic and Purāṇic information² on the fraternity of Śaṃtanu and Balhika Prātipīya.
- (2) Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (: 12.9.3.3) information on a conflict between Balhika Prātipīya and the Sṛñjaya Duṣṭarītu Paumsāyaṇa who is said to have inherited a principality held by his family for ten generations (: *daśapurusaṃrājya*).
- (3) Epic information³ that Pratīpa was the great-grandson of Parikṣit and that Pratiśravas was the latter's grandson.

1. A. A. Macdonell and A. B. Keith, *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects*, (Indian, edition) Varanasi, 1958, s.v. "Śaṃtanu", A. L. Ludwig, *Der Ṛgveda . . . ins Deutsche übersetzt*, Prag, 1876-1888, III, 192-196; K. F. Geldner, *Der Ṛgveda . . . ins Deutsche übersetzt*, H.O.S. 33-35; introduction to translation of 10.98; J. W. Spellman, "The Legend of Devāpi", *J.R.A.S. (Great Britain)*, 1959, 95 ff.; V. G. Rahukar, "Devāpi and Śmatanu in the Ṛgveda," *P. K. Gode Commemoration Volume*, Poona, 1960, II, 174 ff. etc.

2. See *Vedic Index*, s.v. "Balhika Prātipīya",

3. See *Vedic Index*, s.vv. "Pratīpa", "Prātisatvana" and Parikṣit", Also Heinrich Zimmer, *Altindisches Leben*, Berlin, 1897, p. 131.

- (4) Brāhmaṇa information⁴ that Parikṣit had a son Janamejaya and that the latter had Tura, the son of Kavaṣa as a *purohita*.
 (5) Atharva Veda⁵ information that Parikṣit was a king of the Kurus.

The genealogical evidence of the RV necessarily imposes two restrictions on the arrangement of the above information, i.e., (1) Duṣṭarītu Paumsāyana, the Sṛñjaya, cannot be placed later than the eleventh or twelfth generation after Devavāta, the father of the original Sṛñjaya mentioned in RV 6.27⁶. and (2) Parikṣit as a Kuru king cannot have been much earlier than Kuruśravaṇa⁷, who is the first Ṛgvedic leader to be indicated as the chief of the Kurus, the name Kuru itself as a designation of an Aryan people having come into vogue about this time. (A possible third restriction is that Parikṣit's son Janamejaya, whose *purohita* was Tura, the son of Kavaṣa, cannot be much later than Upamaśravas whose accession was known to Kavaṣa Ailūṣa of RV 10.32 and 10.33. However this consideration would be automatically satisfied when the second restriction mentioned above is imposed.)

If the post-Ṛgvedic information can be logically arranged between these limits imposed by the Ṛgvedic evidence, then it can at least be said that there is a basis to identify the epic Śamtanu with the Śamtanu referred to in RV 10.98.

Since we are on comparatively secure ground at the lower limit, we start by assuming that Duṣṭarītu Paumsāyana, the inheritor of the Sṛñjaya principality through ten ancestors, was the eleventh in succession from Sṛñjaya (of RV 6.27) and the twelfth from Devavāta. When we correlate the genealogical evidence of the RV⁸ and the above information on this basis we get the following sequences:

Ṛgvedic Genealogical Evidence

Evidence on the	1. Devavāta	Devavat		
Kuru Genealogy	2. Sṛñjaya	Vadhryaśva		
from Aitareya and	3. Prastoka	Divodāsa	Sahadeva	
Śatapatha Brāh-	4.	Pijavana	Somaka	Durgaha
maṇas and the Epic	5.	Sudās	Purukutsa
	6.			Trasadasyu
	7.			Trkṣi Trivṛṣan
				- Mitrātithi

4. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, 13.5.4.1 ff.; Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, 7.34, 8.21 etc. See Vedic Index, s.v. "Janamejaya".

5. Atharva Veda, 20.127.7 ff. See Vedic Index, s.v. "Parikṣit",

6. RV 6.27.7; See Vedic Index, s.v. "Sṛñjaya",

7. RV. 10.32.9 and 10.33.4; See Vedic Index, s.v. "Kuruśravaṇa",

8. To be discussed in a forthcoming contribution, *Vedic Ari and Sūri: A Clue to Power Struggle in an Ancient Society*.

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Parikṣit	8.	Tryaruṇa/ Kuruśravaṇa Aśvamedha
Janamejaya	9.	Upamaśravas Pūtakratu
Pratiśravas	10.	Dasyave Vṛka
Pratīpa	11.	
Śaṃtanu/ B. Prātipīya	12. Duṣṭarītu Paumsāyaṇa.	

We thus see that the arrangement of the later information on the basis of the first stipulation of the Ṛgvedic evidence also satisfies the second stipulation that Parikṣit should not be widely separated from the period of Kuruśravaṇa. The two sets of evidence, the Ṛgvedic and the post-Ṛgvedic, are therefore not mutually contradictory so far as they concern Śaṃtanu, *but only if we can overlook the linguistic difficulty involved in regarding Prātipīya as the patronymic derived from Pratīpa.*⁹ The problems regarding Devāpi and his relationship to Śaṃtanu are a different matter.¹⁰

A slight detail that seems to favour the correspondence shown above is the occurrence in these two separate groups of notices of two strikingly similar names in the circles of the Kuru royal families, i.e., Upamaśravas in the Ṛgvedic references and Pratiśravas in the epic references, the two princes being more or less contemporaneous with each other.

Moreover, the correspondence of the two sets of evidence shows that the Ṛgvedic Śaṃtanu, if he is the same as the Śaṃtanu of the Brāhmaṇas, the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas, need not be placed much later than Dasyave Vṛka of the Vālahilya hymns. In other words, he would still not be far outside the late Ṛgvedic age i.e., 10.98 is by no means a spurious hymn. If we were not compelled, by the nature of the available information, to reckon the position of individual leaders in terms of 'generations', it would perhaps be not impossible to regard Śaṃtanu and Dasyave Vṛka as roughly belonging to the same period of time. Such a conclusion, if valid, would be of considerable significance in the study of the tangled chronological issues of the Vedic and Epic periods.

9. See *Vedic Index*, s.v. "Balhika Prātipīya".

10. See *Vedic Index*, s.v. "Devāpi". Rahukar, op. cit., accounts for Devāpi's patronymic *ārṣṭisena* by treating Rṣṭisena as an alternative name of a common ancestor of Devāpi and Śaṃtanu. (Cf. Trasadasyu's patronymics: Gairikṣita and Paurukutsya).

Aulāna of 10.98.11 *d* can be a patronymic derived from the name of another famous ancestor. Cf. Sudās being called Paijavana after Pijavana and *naptar devavataḥ* after Devavant.

The ancestry etc. of Parikṣit is indeterminable beyond the fact of his being a prince of the Kurus.