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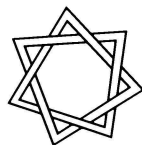
TEXT AND ITS CULTURAL INTERPRETATION

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ON THE TERM *ITIHĀSA* AND THE PROBLEM
OF THE STRUCTURE OF THE *MAHĀBHĀRATA* TEXT

In modern dictionaries the word *itihāsa* is defined as "narrative, legend, history". Lexicographers usually suggest the simple etymology: *iti ha āsa* "thus, truly, it was". By Kṣirasvāmin (the 11th century) it is said: *"iti ha āsīd yatreti itihāsaḥ, itir evamarthe, haḥ kilarthe"* [1].

What attracts our attention to the term *itihāsa* is its meaning as it was really understood by an educated person in Ancient India. Unfortunately, the available reference-books and special works do not clear up this problem [2]. It seems to me, however, that Ancient Indian scholarly texts may help us to establish quite reliably the principle special meanings of the word *itihāsa* being actual for the educated people of Ancient India.

Thus, in *AK* it is said: *"itihāsaḥ purāvṛttam"* ("[The word] *itihāsa* indicates some event which took place in the ancient times"). Maheśvara in his comments on *AK* explains the meaning of *purāvṛtta* through *pūrvacarita* — "deeds of the ancient, deeds of the ancestors". In the same way it was explained by Kṣirasvāmin. It is clear in this case that the event, which had taken place in the past, the deed of the forefathers described by the word *itihāsa*, was accepted as a real event (*iti ha āsa* — thus, truly, it was) [3]. So, we can define the f i r s t m e a n i n g of the word *itihāsa*: some event which took place in the ancient times, a deed performed by the ancestors, some "historical" fact which is beyond doubt.

Patañjali, however, is stating in *Mbh* that *itihāsa* belongs to the sphere subject to the Word. He says: *"...mahān hi śabdasya prayoga-viṣayaḥ. Sapta-dvīpā vasumatī trayo lokāś-catvāro vedāḥ sāṅgāḥ ...vākovākyam itihāsaḥ purā-ṇam vaidyakam ity-etāvān śabdasya prayoga-viṣayaḥ"* ("Wide is the sphere where the word is used. [This is] Earth with seven continents, [all] the three worlds, the four *Vedas* with *vedāṅgās*, dialectics, *itihāsa, purāṇa,* medication — so wide is the sphere where the word is used") [4]. This passage makes us think that *itihāsa* is not just some "historical" fact, but also some text. But what kind of text? Kaiyata in his comments on the passage from Patañjali cited above is answering this question in the following way: *"pūrvacarita-saṃkīrtanam itihāsaḥ"* ("*itihāsa* is a complete (*saṃ-*), or adequate, narrative (*kīrtana*) about the deeds of

the ancestors") [5]. This definition is confirmed by Śaṅkara, who illustrates it with the legend of Urvaśī and Purūravas [6]. It gives us the right to establish the s e c - o n d m e a n i n g of the word *itihāsa*: an adequate description of the events which took place in the ancient times, or of the deeds performed by the ancestors. If these events or deeds were believed to be authentic, as something which took place in reality, then, obviously, the descriptions adequate to these "historical" facts were treated as doubtless and authentic.

It is noteworthy that we find in Maheśvara's work an etymological explanation different from *iti ha āsa*, which, for some reason, has never been taken into account by scholars. He says: *"itihāsaḥ itiheti pāramparyopadeśe' vyayaṃ tad aste' smin. āsa upaveṣaṇe adhikaraṇe ghañ"* ("[the compound] *itihāsa* [consists of two words. The first one] — *itiha* — unchangeable, indeclinable word (*avya-yam*). [It is used to indicate] what is present (*tad aste' smin*) in traditional knowledge (*pāramparyopadeśe*). [The meaning of the second one] — *āsa* — [is equal to] *upaveṣaṇe* [which means "in its place". It is known that] the meaning of the location [is produced by the affix] *ghañ* (= *a*)") [7].

The explanations provided by Maheśvara also, in their turn, require comments. Maheśvara divided the compound *itihāsa* into *itiha* and *āsa*, where *itiha* is an indeclinable word formed by two parts (*iti* + *ha*), which indicates the contents of traditional knowledge, while *āsa* = place, *i. e.* it is a noun formed from the stem *as* by the formative affix *a* (Pāṇini is indicating it with the coding word *ghañ*). According to *P,* III, 3, 121, the affix *ghañ* forms masculine nouns from stems ending in consonants, which indicate location (or instrument). Meanwhile the initial (or the first) vowel of the stem is elevated to the highest degree (*vṛddhi*): *as* (= to be, take place, be located) + *a* (*ghañ*) = *āsa* (= place). This very procedure was meant by Maheśvara when he was citing Jayāditya: *"...adhikaraṇe ghañ..."* [8]. In this way, according to Maheśvara, *itiha* + *āsa* — (initially) — is a definitive compound of the *bahuvrīhi* type, meaning "[that] which is present in traditional knowledge". It is not that Maheśvara is inventing anything. He is basing upon the

authority of Amarasiṃha. In *AK* it is said: *"param-paryopadeśe syād aitihyam itiha avyayam"* ("*aitihya* or *itiha* [is that what is] present (*syād = tad aste' smin*) in traditional knowledge (*pāramparyopadeśe*). [*Itiha*] is an indeclinable word (*avyayam*)"). Maheśvara is developing this definition given by Amarasiṃha in the following way: *"aitihyam itiha dvayaṃ pāramparyeṇa loka-paramparayā ya upadeśas tasmin. itihetyavyayam itiheti nipātasamudāyas tatrabhavam aitihyam"* ("*aitihya* and *itiha* — both [these words mean] knowledge (*upadeśas*) subsequently transferred as a heritage (*pāramparyeṇa*) through a number of generations (*lokaparamparayā*), [that] what (*ya*) [is present] in it (*tasmin*). [The word] *itiha* — an indeclinable word. *Itiha* — [it is] a combination of particles (*nipātasamudāyas*). [The word] *aitihya* is a derivative (*tatrabhavam*) [from *itiha* and is of an equal meaning]") [9].

In the second passage of his comments Maheśvara is actually giving the explanation of Jayāditya on *P*, V, 4, 23. In this *sūtra* Pāṇini states that with the help of the secondary (*taddhita*) formative affix *ñya* (*= ya*) it is possible to form from a number of words, *itiha* among them, derivative names retaining the original meaning. The initial (or the first) vowel is elevated to the highest stage (*vṛddhi*). In this way *itiha* + *ya* = *aitihya*. Jayāditya says: *"anantādibhyaḥ svārthe ñyaḥ pratyayo bhavati itiha aitihyam. nipātasamudāyo' yam upadeśapāramparye vartate..."* ("[To form derivative names from words] *ananta*, etc., preserving their original meaning (*svārthe*) there is [affix] *ñya*. [Thus, for example], *itiha* + [*ñya*] = *aitihyam*. [*Itiha*] is (*ayam*) a combination of particles (*nipātasamudāyo*), [and this combination means that, what] is present (*vartate*) in traditional knowledge (*upadeśapāramparye*)") [10].

Let us turn now to the word *upadeśa*. In *AK* there is no special entry on it. Its primary meaning is "training, discipline, education". The context of the definitions given by Amarasiṃha, Jayāditya and Maheśvara leaves, however, no doubt that in these texts *upadeśa* is identified with that traditional knowledge which was transferred from a teacher to his pupil. There is a wonderful saying by Vācaspatimiśra on this account: *"upadiśyate' nenetyupadeśo vākya-jñānam tad-artha-jñānaṃ vā abhidhīyate tatra vākya-jñāna-pramāṇya-pakṣe tad-artha-jñānaṃ phalam"*, ("*upadeśa* [is a saying] by which means (*anena*) the transmission of knowledge (*upadiśyate*) is realised; [by this word] is indicated (*abhidhīyate*) both the knowledge of the saying (= *vākya-jñānaṃ* = of its verbal side), as well as the understanding of its meaning (= *tadartha-jñānaṃ* = of its sense). There [in *NS* 1, 1, 7] the cognition (*jñāna*) of the saying [is considered] as the source of right knowledge (*vākya-jñāna-pramāṇya-pakṣe*), and the understanding of its meaning as the [ultimate] result [of the act of comprehending]") [11].

We may assume, evidently, that *itihāsa = pāramparyopadeśa* = traditional knowledge accumulated through ages, transferred from generation to generation, from a teacher to his pupil, strictly safeguarded from corruption and losses. This is the t h i r d   m e a n i n g of the word *itihāsa*.

The authority of traditional knowledge is so high in a traditional society that Ancient Indian scholarship elevates it to the rank of an authentic source of cognition of the truth, *i. e. itiha = aitihya = itihāsa = pāramparyopadeśa =*

āptopadeśa = śabda = pramāṇa [12]. This is the f o u r t h m e a n i n g of the word *itihāsa*.

The exclusive part of traditional knowledge in Ancient India, methods of its preservation, the reproduction of traditional personality are discussed in all details in one of the last works by V. S. Sementsov [13].

The reasons we have presented above are expressively confirmed by Kauṭilya: *"sāmargyajurvedas trayas-trayī, atharvavedetihāsa vedau ca vedāḥ"* ("The three *Vedas* — *Rig, Yajur* and *Sāma* [are usually called] *trayī* (the Trinity). [Besides *trayī* there are also] *Atharvaveda* and *Itihāsaveda*. [These are] also Vedas") [14]. Consequently, the whole bulk of texts coming under the term *itihāsa* was considered by Ancient Indian scholarship (personified by Kauṭilya) to be equal in authority to the sacred texts of the *Vedas*. It is necessary to take into account that the four *Vedas* enumerated by Kauṭilya present distinct codes of texts. Apparently, the *Itihāsaveda*, placed by Kauṭilya in the same row with the four traditional Vedic codes, appeared before him as a definite collection of texts, as a stable code [15].

What kind of texts might this code include? Kauṭilya gives the answer to this question. The list of these texts is given in the chapter, where Kauṭilya is surveying the circle of knowledge the future ruler is supposed to master. Just in this passage Kauṭilya reveals the contents of the *Itihāsaveda*, which should be thoroughly studied by any warrior, statesman or ruler, who wants to be sure of himself and to be able not to lose his way in various practical activities. Kauṭilya says: *"pūrvam ahar-bhāgaṃ hasty-aśva-ratha-praharaṇa-vidyāsu vinayaṃ gacchet. paścimam itihāsa-śravaṇe. purāṇam itivṛttam ākhyāyikodāharaṇaṃ dharmaśāstram arthaśāstram ceti itihāsaḥ"* ("The first part of the day [prince] should spend exercising his skill in driving an elephant, a horse, a chariot, and his skill in arms. The rest [of the day let him spend] listening to *Itihāsa*. [Tales] of the deeds of the forefathers (*purāṇam itivṛttam*), narratives containing [instructive] examples (*ākhyāyikodāharaṇam*), instructions (*śāstram*) in the customs and [secular and religious] laws, in managing a household and ruling a State — [all this] is *Itihāsa*") [16].

This text is very important and noteworthy, as it reveals the traditional notion concerning the principal contents of the traditional knowledge which was actual for a *kṣatriya* and a ruler, a layman and a prince. The comprehension of this passage from Kauṭilya suggested here is different from those so far known (cf., for instance, Shamasastri: *"Purāṇa, Itivṛtta* (history), *Ākhyāyikā* (tales), *Udāharaṇa* (illustrative stories), *Dharmaśāstra* and *Arthaśāstra* are (known by the name) *Itihāsa*" [17]; Oldenburg: *"Itihāsa* — is: *Purāṇas, Itivṛtta, Ākhyāyikā, Udāharaṇa, Dharmaśāstra* and *Arthaśāstra"* [18]; Kangle: "The *Purāṇas, Itivṛtta, Ākhyāyikā, Udāharaṇa, Dharmaśāstra* and *Arthaśāstra,* — these constitute *Itihāsa"* [19]).

These "translations" are practically identical, not counting the explanations in brackets provided by Shamasastri. The translators evaded the necessity of explaining the terms they dealt with by giving them in transliteration, so the word *itihāsa* received no explanation. They took the word *purāṇa* for a noun, but it could be an adjective as well — "old, ancient". If we assume that the word *purāṇa* appears here as a term defining a special class of early medieval literary works (or some distinct work of this class) most expressively represented by the eighteen great *purāṇas*, this suggestion would be incorrect: in the 1st century A.D.

Kauṭilya could not be familiar with the works, of which the earliest one, as most scholars think, appeared only in the 3d century A.D. [20]. We find the word *purāṇa*, indicating some narrative, in the Vedic texts, in the early *Upaniṣads* and in the *Mbh*, but it is never mentioned there as a part of *itihāsa*, as something belonging to *itihāsa*. On the contrary, in these texts the word *purāṇa* often appears side by side with the term *itihāsa*, indicating some kind of narrative close to *itihāsa* but at the same time distinct from it [21]. So, to provide an adequate reading of the word *purāṇa* in the given text, we have only to accept its adjective meaning: *purāṇa = purā = pūrva* = "old, ancient". It is evident that the word *purāṇa* appears here as a definition to *itivṛttam*. Itivṛtta literally means something "which happened (*vṛtta*, cf. *iti ha āsa*) in this way (*iti*)", *i. e.* some event, action or deed accepted as real. In this way *purāṇam itivṛttam* = some event which really took place in ancient times. It is easy to notice that *purāṇam itivṛttam* of Kauṭilya = *purāvṛttam* of Amarasiṃha = *pūrvacaritam* of Kaiyata and Maheśvara = events which took place in the ancient times, the deeds of the ancestors. Let us go back now to what, according to Kauṭilya, a prince should listen to in the second half of the day. *Purāṇam itivṛttam* is present in this list. But it must be some text, if it is possible to listen to it. It means that *purāṇam itivṛttam* in Kauṭilya's definition = [a narrative] about the events which actually took place in the ancient times, about the deeds of the ancestors, *i. e.* that which Kaiyata called *pūrvacaritasaṃkīrtanam*.

Let us consider now the composite *ākhyāyikodāharaṇam*. In the translations cited above it is understood as a compound word of the *dvandva* type, a simple enumeration of the components making it: *ākhyāyikā, udāharaṇa*. In this case, however, *ākhyāyikā* and *udāharaṇa* taken separately, in their meaning, correspondingly, "story", "narrative" and "example", look as if accidental, unjustified in the context of Kauṭilya's definition. This is, however, not the only possible way of reading this compound. It could be read also as a compound of the *karmadhāraya* type: *ākhyāyikodāharaṇa = ākhyāyikā — udāharaṇa* = story-example = narrative-instruction, *i. e.* some narrative containing guidance, instruction. Hence from "narratives containing [instructive] examples" — the experience of the past generations significant and important for the education of the future ruler.

In the compound words *dharmaśāstra* and *arthaśāstra* the word *śāstra* implicitly retaining its meaning "knowledge", "science", nevertheless appears here also in its original meaning: *śāstra = upadeśa* = instruction, since the whole passage from *AŚ* cited above is concerned with the process of educating a young man. In the Ancient Indian tradition this process implied the word addressed by a teacher to his pupil.

If we look carefully at the definition given by Kauṭilya, it is easy to discover there all the four meanings of the word *itihāsa* enumerated above: 1) *purāṇam itivṛttam = purāvṛttam = pūrvacaritam*; 2) *pūrvacarita-saṃkīrtanam*; 3) *pāramparyopadeśa*; 4) *pramāṇa* (= the source of right knowledge for the future ruler). We may assume, apparently, that Ancient and Medieval India, at least during the time between Kauṭilya and Maheśvara, preserved a clear and uniform notion of *itihāsa* as of a certain stable code of texts in which the historical experience of the ancestors (taken in a wide sense) had been recorded — literary, aesthetic, ideological, social, political, etc.

What is left now, is to discover this code in the literary heritage of Ancient India. To avoid possible mistakes one should enquire first, in which of the ancient code of texts the stories of the deeds of the ancestors — *kṣatriyas* and *brahmans*, of the great victories and defeats of heroes and warriors, of ascetic practice of the saints, about the inhabitants of the three worlds are represented most fully? Which collection of ancient texts includes, besides the stories of the past, plenty of information on the customs and law, on household matters and economy, social predestination of people and people's estates, royal power and statesmanship, moral duty and salvation, on the ways of investigating and comprehending the world? Which collection of ancient texts, besides the *Vedas*, was so much respected in India that its authority was thought to be equal to that of the *Vedas*? Finally, was there in the cultural heritage of Ancient India any code most fully corresponding to the notion of the Ancient Indians about traditional knowledge with all the richness and variety of its contents, with close connection and unity of its parts, to the notion of *Itihāsa*, of *Itihāsaveda*? As soon as we put the question in that way, the answer comes on itself. Definitely, there is such a code present in all its variety, richness and unity both of form and contents — it is the great *Mahābhārata*, which has no equals. It was correctly perceived by the brilliant Indian scholar P. V. Kane when considering the definition of Kauṭilya cited above (though in no connection with the synonymic link provided by Amarasiṃha-Maheśvara: *itiha = aitihya = pāramparyopadeśa = itihāsa): "It appears that Kauṭilya meant by "itihāsa" a "Mahābhārata" more or less very like the extent one, which describes itself as the best of itihāsas, as a Dharmaśāstra, Arthaśāstra, Kāmaśāstra and as Kārṣṇaveda" [22].

We find one more confirmation of all said above in Maheśvara's comments on "itihāsaḥ purāvṛttam" of Amarasiṃha. He wrote: "purāvṛttam dve pūrvacaritasya Mahābhāratādeḥ" ("[The word] purāvṛtta has two [meanings]: 1) deeds of the ancestors; 2) Mahābhārata — [the narrative on the deeds of the ancestors] which has no equals") [23]. "...Has no equals..." — it corresponds in the text to ādi. In this case it is impossible to take ādi for the usual "etc., and so on" in translations. First of all, there is really nothing equal to Mahābhārata neither in India nor in the whole culture of the world. Next, Maheśvara is speaking about two meanings only, not more. In this case we should understand ādi as prathama = incomparable, having no equals (which, in fact, is true) [24]. It could have been assumed, of course, that Mahābhāratādeḥ was just some particular case of purāvṛtta (= deeds of the ancestors), i. e. "the great [battle] of the descendants of Bharata". But in this case the statement of Maheśvara about the two meanings of the word purāvṛtta becomes senseless — it would have been easier to say then purāvṛttam pūrvacaritasya Mahābhārateti. M. Monyer-Williams, in complete conformity with Maheśvara, writes in his dictionary, that purāvṛtta can mean both some event which took place in the past and a story about that event. M. Winternitz, considering the meaning of the word Mahābhārata, writes that it presents an abbreviation of Mahābhāratākhyāna [25]. P. A. Grintser in his fundamental monograph on the Indian Epic mentions that the majority of scholars admit that in Sanskrit texts the word Mahābhārata appears only as the name of the great epic poem of Ancient India [26]. Finally, let us remember

that *itihāsa* = *purāvṛtta* = *pūrvacarita*, but also = *pūrvacaritasaṃkīrtana*.

All this is quite enough to recognise that *itiha* = *aitihya* = *pāramparyopadeśa* = *itihāsa* = *Mahābhārata*. Thus we get the f i f t h   m e a n i n g   of the word *itihāsa* — *Mahābhārata*.

To define the collection of traditional texts distinct from *itihāsa* (= *Mahābhārata*) the Indian tradition used the term *aitihya* (deriving from the same source as *itihāsa*, from *itiha*). *CS* says: "...*aitihyam nāma āptopadeśo vedādi*" ("...the word (*nāma*) *aitihya* [indicates] knowledge narrated by the authority (*āpta*), the *Veda*s, etc.") [27]. Then Cakrapāṇidatta comments on this: "*alaukikāptopadeśa aitihya-padenocyate ity-āha vedādir iti*" ("the word *aitihya* indicates knowledge coming from a non-worldly authority. [In *CS*] it is said: "The *Vedas*, etc."") [28]. Then he explains: "*āptopadeśa-śabdas-tu dvividhaḥ paramāptabrahmādi-praṇītas tathā laukikāptapraṇītaś ca. "aitihya" śabdena paramāpta-praṇito' varuddhaḥ laukikāpta-praṇitaś ca śabdaikadeśarūpaḥ satyaprakāra-vihito jñeyaḥ*" ("The word *āptopadeśa* [has] two [meanings]: [knowledge] given by the supreme authority (*paramāptapraṇīta*), by Brahma and other [gods]; knowledge coming from a worldly authority (*laukikāptapraṇīta*). It should be taken into account (*jñeyaḥ*), that the word *aitihya* embraces (*avaruddhaḥ*) both [knowledge] given by the supreme authority and by the worldly authority. [Each of these kinds of knowledge] has its distinct degree of truthfulness (*satya-prakāra-vihito*), presenting the part of the meaning of one and the same word (*śabdaikadeśarūpaḥ*) — [*aitihya*]) [29]. The combination *brahmādi* can be explained as *brahma-ādi* and transferred as *vedādi*. It appears rather tempting because of the words cited above: "*alaukikāptopadeśa ... vedādir iti*". However, *brahmādi* can be read also as *brahmā-ādi*, where Brahman is the God-Creator. We prefer the last reading, because in the context of Cakrapāṇidatta's comments there is an obvious opposition: *alaukika* — *laukika* (unworldly — worldly), or *apauruṣeya* — *pauruṣeya* (divine — human). In *Suśrutasaṃhitā* we find: "*athātas tantra-yuktim adhyāyam vyākhyāsyāmaḥ yathovāca bhagavān dhanvantariḥ (suśrutāya)*" ("Further we shall narrate the chapter on *Tantra-yukti*, as it was told [to Suśruta] by Lord Dhanvantari") [30].

Now we must say some words on the "authenticity" of traditional knowledge. Traditional mentality accepts traditional knowledge (*aitihya*, *itihāsa*) without any doubt. According to Cakrapāṇidatta, this knowledge has the status of truthfulness (*satyaprakāravihita*). *CS* defines the word *satya* in the following way: "*satyo nāma yathābhūtaḥ santyāyurvedopadeśāḥ...*" ("the word *satya* [indicates something] adequate to the reality, [for example] the instructions (knowledge) which are present in the *Āyurveda* (*i. e.* in medical texts)") [31]. In this way *aitihya*, taken as a whole, has the status of the source of right knowledge in the same way as *itihāsa* (*Mahābhārata*). *CS* testifies: "...*hetur nāmopalabdhikāraṇam tatpratyakṣamanumānamaitihyamaupamyam ity-ebhir hetubhir yad upalabdhyate tat tattvam*" ("...the word *hetu* [here indicates] the source of knowledge (*upalabdhikāraṇam*). Namely (= *tat*), direct perception (*pratyakṣam*), inference (*anumānam*), traditional knowledge (*aitihyam*), assimilation (*aupamyam*). [The knowledge] which is developed (*upalabdhyate*) due to these mentioned above (*ityebhir*) sources of knowledge (*hetubhir*) — it (*tat*) [this knowledge] is authentic

(*tattvam*)") [32]. In this case *hetu* = *pramāṇa* = the source of right knowledge. The context leaves no place for doubts. *Aupamya* = assimilation [33]. By the way, in the history of the Ancient Indian theory of knowledge the text cited here is probably the earliest we know. Evidently, to define the source of right knowledge (as well as certain definite sources of knowledge) *CS* is using terms (*hetu*, *parīkṣā*, *aitihya*, *aupamya*) which stand much closer to the beginnings of Indian epistemology, of which no texts have survived to the present day [34].

S. Dasgupta, noticing that "*CS* is describing *aitihya* as *aptōpadeśa*" (= *pramāṇa*) expressed his doubt in connection with such identification: "...ordinarily *aitihya* is considered in Indian philosophy as being "tradition" or long-standing popular belief, different from *āptopadeśa*" [35].

However, the texts (*CS*, *AK*, Maheśvara, Cakrapāṇidatta), as we have seen already, testify that *aitihya* is not only "long-standing popular belief", but "traditional knowledge" taken as a whole. So, *aitihya* (= *āptopadeśa* = *śabda*) = *pramāṇa*. It naturally fits the context of Ancient Indian epistemology at the early stage of its development. Later, in the works of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, which represent the further stages, it naturally disappears with the same ease as an archaic relic [36].

Now it seems proper to sum up our most important observations. The term *itihāsa* can stand for: 1) a real or supposedly real historical fact; 2) a complete and adequate description of this historical fact, *i. e.* something accepted as a historical narrative; 3) traditional knowledge accumulated and preserved by a number of generations; 4) a source of right knowledge; 5) *Mahābhārata* as the treasury and the source of right knowledge. All these meanings are organically connected. It is easy to notice it, if we look at them carefully. The first and the second meanings of *itihāsa* are willingly accepted by scholars and rise no objections. In the texts *itihāsa* most frequently occurs under these very meanings. The application of the term to *Mahābhārata* is also not alien to sanskritologists, moreover that the epic often defines itself in this way [37]. More embarrassing and unexpected is the other synonymic chain: *itihāsa* = *itiha* = *aitihya* = *pāramparyopadeśa* = *Mahābhārata*, naturally resulting from what has been considered above. This unexpectedness, however, is only superficial. Why, after all, should we doubt the etymology suggested by Maheśvara: *itihāsa* = *itiha* + *āsa*, where *itiha* = *aitihya*, and *āsa* = *upaveṣaṇa*? Why *itihāsa* = *iti ha āsīd* is acceptable, and *itiha* + *āsa* is not? Maheśvara was basing upon the opinions of outstanding ancient authorities like Pāṇini, Amarasiṃha, Jayāditya. Their testimony is confirmed by Caraka, Kauṭilya and Cakrapāṇidatta. Should we admit that all these scholars dared to put forward ideas contradicting all cultural achievements of their time? Did not the definition of *Mahābhārata* as the "Encyclopaedia of Ancient Indian culture" become a common phrase in Indology? So the idea of *itihāsa*, of *Mahābhārata*, as the receptacle and treasury of traditional knowledge, should not be taken just for some unjustified invention of Maheśvara. On the opposite, the etymology presented by Maheśvara developed upon long-standing traditional views on *Mahābhārata*. It gives a well-founded philological explanation of these traditional views. In this way the only really surprising thing left is that two and a half millennia ago *Mahābhārata* was accepted by the Ancient Indians as the store of traditional knowledge addressed to a layman, *i. e.* as *itihāsa*. At the same time it was

not denied the title of *ākhyāna*, and its artistic form was also recognised [38].

European science which rightfully estimated *Mahābhārata* as an epic, *ākhyāna*, has been long rejecting its other nature — that of *itihāsa*, the embodiment of traditional knowledge. Meanwhile the Indians, the creators and "consumers" of the epic, were in no way worried by the diversity of its nature. The presence in the poem of text dealing with political doctrines or with salvation appeared to them as natural as tales of battles and human passions.

In our view all great epic cycles of the world born in the artistic form had, from the very beginning, and for a long time preserved one more function — that of the treasury of traditional knowledge. Only the Ancient Indians, with their usual consistency, developed the potential of knowledge inherent in the epic towards its logical conclusion, creating this enormous and unique epic structure.

Not only story-tellers and singers, *kṣatriyas-sūtas,* took part in its creation, but, so to say, the very heroes of the epic — brahmans, divine sages those to whom belonged the place of honour in the Indian Pantheon, tutors of the gods and demons, those who accumulated and preserved knowledge. It is known, they are the honourable personages of the epic along with warriors, the Pāṇḍavas and the Kauravas. Word and knowledge were their weapons; their main actions were their sayings containing traditional knowledge and instructions (*upadeśa*). There is no wonder then, that knowledge and instructions occupy so much place in *Mahābhārata*. It was present there from the very beginning, so right were those Russian investigators of *Mahābhārata*, not only methodologically but also historically, who recognised the organic unity of its heroic and didactic natures [39].

Abbreviations

AD — Cakrapāṇidatta, *Āyurveda-Dīpikā*, see *CS*.

AK — Amarasiṃha, *Nāmaliṅgānuśāsana (Amarakośa) with the Commentary of Maheshvara Amarakośaviveka*, ed. V. Jhalakikar (Bombay, 1907).

AKU — Kṣirasvāmin, *Amarakośa-Udghātana. The Nāmaliṅgānuśāsana (Amarakośa) of Amarasiṃha*, ed. K. G. Oka (Poona, 1913).

AŚ — *Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya*, revised and edited by R. Shama Sastri (Mysore, 1919); *Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra*, translated by R. Shama Sastri (Mysore, 1929); *The Kauṭiliya Arthaśāstra*. Part 2, English translation by R. P. Kangle (Bombay, 1963); *Arthashastra ili Nauka politiki*, perevod s sanskrita. Izdanie podgotovil V. I. Kal'ianov ("*Arthaśāstra* or the Science of Politics". Translation from Sanskrit. Ed. V. I. Kalyanov) (Moscow—Leningrad, 1959).

CS — *The Charakasaṃhitā by Agnivesha with the Āyurveda-Dīpikā Commentary by Chakrapāṇi Dutta*, ed. V. K. Dātar (Bombay, 1922).

Kāśikā — *A Commentary on Pāṇini's Grammatical Aphorisms by Pandit Vāmana and Jayāditya*, ed. Bāla Śastri (Benares, 1898).

Mbh — *The Vyākaraṇa-Mahābhāṣya of Patañjali*, ed. F. Kielhorn (Bombay, 1880), i.

NS — Gautama, *Nyāya-sūtras*, ed. B. D. Basu (Allahabad, 1913).

P — Pāṇini, *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, edited and translated by Sh. Ch. Vasu (Allahabad, 1891—1898).

Notes

1. *AKU,* 28. II.

2. A. A. Macdonell and A. B. Keith, *Vedic Index* (Delhi, 1958); R. N. Saletore, *Encyclopedia of Indian Culture* (Delhi, 1989), ii; F. E. Pargiter, *Ancient Indian Historical Tradition* (London, 1928), pp. 34—6; P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmashastra* (Poona, 1962), v, pt. 2, pp. 815—9.

3. *AK*, 1, 6, 4; 35, 13—14; *AKU*, 28.12.

4. *Mbh*, 9.20—23.

5. *Patañjali's Vyākaraṇa-Mahābhaṣya with Kaiyata's Pradīpa and Nāgeśa's Uddyota*, ed. S. D. Kudala (Bombay, 1917), i, 65.9—10.

6. *The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad with the Commentary of Śaṅkara Ācārya (Śaṅkarabhāṣya)*... (Calcutta, 1849), 456.1—3.

7. *AK*, 1, 6, 4; 35.13—14.

8. *Kāśikā*, 220.14.

9. *AK*, II, 7, 12; 169.2—3, cf. Keshava (17th cent.): "*pāramparyopadeśa syād aitihyam itiha avyayam*", see Keśawa, *Kalpadrukośa* (Baroda, 1928), i, 76, 68.

10. *Kāśikā*, 462.4—6.

11. Vācaspatimiśra, *Nyāya-vārttika-tātparyaṭīkā*, ed. G. Sh. Tailanga (Benares, 1919), 135.23—24.

12. *CS*, III, 8, 6 (25, 33); *NS*, I, I, 7; Vācaspatimiśra, *op. cit.*, 135.23—24.

13. V. S. Sementsov, "Problema transliatsii traditsionnoĭ kul'tury na primere sud'by "Bhagavadgity"" ("The problem of transmission of traditional culture: the example of "Bhagavadgītā"), *Vostok-Zapad* (Moscow, 1988), pp. 5—32.

14. *AŚ*, 7.7, cf. *AŚ*, Shamasastri (English translation), p. 6; *AŚ*, Oldenburg (Russian translation), p. 17; *AŚ*, Kangle (English translation), p. 8. Śāntiparva is calling *Mahābhārata*, in the name of Vaiśampāyana, the fifth *Veda*.

15. Kane, *op. cit.*, p. 819.

16. *AŚ*, 10.13—15.

17. *AŚ*, Shamasastri (English translation), p. 10.

18. *AŚ*, Oldenburg (Russian translation), p. 20.

19. *AŚ*, Kangle (English translation), p. 12.

20. Kane, *op. cit.*, p. 161; S. G. Kantawala, "Purāṇas and Dharmaśāstra: some observations", *Prof. J. H. Dave Felicitation Volume. Bhāratīya Vidyā* (Bombay, 1987), XLV—XLVII, Nos. 1—4, p. 34; cf. L. Rocher, *The Purāṇas* (Wiesbaden, 1986), pp. 100—3.

21. Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad, II, 4, 10; Chāndogya Upaniṣad, VII, 1—2 in *The Upaniṣads*, ed. V. P. Vaidya (Bombay, 1922); *Mbh*, i, 9.20—23; P. A. Grintser, *Drevneindiĭskiĭ epos* (Ancient Indian Epic) (Moscow, 1974), pp. 22—3, 33; Rocher, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

22. Kane, *op. cit.*, p. 819; see also "Mahābhārata" on itself, I, I, 15—26; 1, 2, 31—32 in *Mahābhārata*, the critical edition (Poona, 1933), i; see also D. Schlingloff, "Fragmente einer Palmblatthandschriften philosophischen Inhalts aus Ostturkistan", *Festschrift für Erich Frauwallner* (Wien, 1968), pp. 323—7. This fragment, dating to the beginning of A.D., contains the oldest known mention of Śāntiparva, the 12th book of *Mahābhārata*, the most theoretical and philosophical.

23. *AK*, 1, 6, 4; 35.14, cf. Keśava: "*itihāsaḥ purāvṛttam ākhyānaṃ bhāratādikam*". See Keśava, *Kalpadrukośa*, i, 444, 53.

24. *AK*, III, I, 80; 270.4—5.

25. M. Winternitz, *The History of Indian Literature* (Calcutta, 1963), i, pt. II, p. 278.

26. Grintser, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

27. *CS*, III, 8, 6 (33).

28. AD, 264.13.

29. AD, 264.20—22.

30. *The Sushrutasaṃhitā of Sushruta with the Nibandhasaṅgraha Commentary of Śrī Dalhanācārya*, ed. J. T. Ācārya (Bombay, 1915), 65. 1—2.

31. *CS*, III, 8, 6 (30).

32. *CS*, III, 8, 6 (33).

33. *CS*, III, 8, 6 (34). On *upamāna*-identification see Annaṃbhaṭṭa, *Tarka-saṅgraha. Tarka-Dīpikā*, translation from Sanskrit and commentary by E. P. Ostrovskaya (Moscow, 1989), pp. 174—5.

34. *CS*, I, II, 17; III, 8, 6 (25).

35. S. N. Dasgupta, *History of Indian Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1932), ii, pp. 375—6.

36. Diṅnāga, *Nyāyamukha*, English translation from Chinese by G. Tucci (Heidelberg, 1930), p. 50; Dharmakīrti, *Nyāyabindu* (Petrograd, 1918), I, 2—3. — Bibliotheca Buddhica, vol. VII; Th. Stcherbatsky, *Buddhist Logic* (Leningrad, 1932), i, p. 72; E. N. Těmkin, *Mirovozzrenie Bhamahi* (Bhāmaha's Thought) (Moscow, 1975), pp. 41—2.

37. Grintser, *op. cit.*, p. 322.

38. *Mahābhārata*. The Critical Edition, i; I, 2, 235—241.

39. Grintser, *op. cit.*, p. 330; Ya. V. Vasil'kov, *Nekotorye problemy izucheniya "Mahabharaty"* (Some Problems of the Study of *Mahābhārata*) (Leningrad, 1974), pp. 16—7; S. L. Neveleva, *"Mahabharata". Izuchenie drevneindiĭskogo eposa* (*Mahābhārata*. The Study of the Ancient Indian Epic) (Moscow, 1991), pp. 6—23.