DHARMASKANDHĀH AND BRAHMASAMSTHĀH
A STUDY OF CHĀNDOGYA UPANIŚAD 2.23.1

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This paper undertakes a close reading and analysis of an important upaniṣadic text that has been viewed by both native exeges and modern scholars as the vedic basis for the āśrama system. Challenging the accepted understanding of this passage, the paper offers a new and contextual interpretation. The expression dharmaskandhāh does not mean "branches of dharma" but "persons whose torso is dharma," that is, people who have made dharma the central focus of their lives. Such people, who are subject to rebirth, are contrasted with brahmasamsthaḥ, that is, "a person steadfast in brahman," who attains immortality. The term brahman here, moreover, refers to the syllable om.

I

1.1 Chāndogya Upaniṣad 2.23.1 has been singled out for special attention by Indian theologians and exeges, as well as by modern scholars, because they consider it to be the vedic basis for and the earliest evidence of the central Brahmanical institution of the four āśramas. I give here the Sanskrit text together with Hume’s English translation, marking each phrase with a Roman numeral to facilitate reference to each:

A. trayo dharmaskandhāh
   i. yajña 'dhyayanaṁ dānam iti prathamāh
   ii. tapa eva dvitīyaḥ
   iii. brahmaçarya āçāryakulavāḍī trītya 'yantam ātmānam acāryakule vasādayan
   iv. sarva ete puñyalokā bhavanti
B. brahmāsanvahyati tvatvam eti

1. A. i. There are three branches of duty.
   ii. Sacrifice, study of the Vedas, and almsgiving—that is the first.
   iii. Austerity, indeed, is the second.
   iv. A student of sacred knowledge dwelling in the house of a teacher, settling himself permanently in the house of a teacher, is the third.
   v. All these become possessors of meritorious worlds.

1 I give Hume’s translation because it is representative of how both the native tradition and modern scholarship have, by and large, understood and interpreted this passage. The division of the text represented by letters and Roman numerals, of course, is my own.

B. vi. He who stands firm in Brahma attains immortality.

1.2 Arguing against the position of the “Jaininiyas,” that is, the followers of the Mīmāṁsā tradition, Śaṅkara (in his commentary on the Vedānta Śūtras [VeŚ 3.4.17–20]) cites this passage as the vedic basis for the āśrama system and for the legitimacy of the celibate modes of life, especially that of the wandering ascetic. Commenting on VeŚ 3.4.20, he presents two possible interpretations of our text: A) The three branches of dharma include all four āśramas—the first branch comprises the āśrama of a householder, and the third, that of a vedic student, while the second refers in common to the āśramas of both a forest hermit (vaikhānas) and a wandering ascetic (parivṛtta). According to this hypothesis, the brahmāsanvahyati refers to a person in any of the four āśramas who is firmly established in Brahmā. B) The three branches refer only to the first three āśramas, the second branch comprising only the forest hermit. According to this hypothesis, the brahmāsanvahyati refers to the fourth āśrama, that is, the wandering ascetic. Dismissing the first alternative, Śaṅkara argues in favor of the second and concludes: “Therefore, those who belong to the first three āśramas obtain worlds earned by merit. Only the remaining one, that is, the wandering ascetic, obtains immortality” (tasmat pārve trayo āśramiṇaḥ puñyalokabhājasu pariśīlayamānaḥ parivṛtt evaham evaṁśrītavabhāk).

In the commentary on the CU (2.23.1) ascribed to Śaṅkara, however, the author expresses a very different
view. At the beginning of the commentary (p. 100), he says that the second branch of dharma is "a hermit or a wandering ascetic, although not an ascetic who is established in Brahmā but only one who is established in just the dharma of his āśrama, because the Vedic passage assigns immortality to one who is established in Brahmā" (tāpasāh parīrvṛāḥ vā na brahmaṇaṁ āśramadharmaṁ āśravavāgītā tva amṛtatvāsvaṅgātī dvitiyāḥ dharmakandhāḥ). Later in the commentary, however, he rejects the notion that the second branch could include a wandering ascetic, taking the latter to be simply the brahmaṇaṁ āśramaṁ (p. 103). Although the text is somewhat unclear and Śaṅkara can be seen as contradicting himself, he appears to make a distinction here between a wandering ascetic who belongs to the fourth āśrama (see p. 106 of the commentary) and one who is brahmaṇaṁ āśramaṁ and therefore beyond all āśramas. Indeed, he calls such a person by the technical term atyāśramāḥ (p. 105; see Srockhoff 1981: 82; Olivelle 1993: 222–32). Thus, in his commentary on the CU 2.23.1, Śaṅkara appears to include all four āśramas in the three branches of dharma; in any case, he considers the brahmaṇaṁ āśramaṁ as beyond the four āśramas.

Bhāskara, in his commentary on VeS 3.4.20, cites "the view of some," a view that is identical to Śaṅkara's, and goes on to present a contrary interpretation similar to that of Śaṅkara's opponent. Although he presents the latter as the view of "others," the arguments he puts forward in its favor make it clear that this second view is Bhāskara's own. Here he argues that the "three skandhas" comprise all the āśramas and that the final statement regarding a brahmaṇaṁ āśramaṁ applies to a person in any āśrama. Rāmānuja, in his Bhāya, as well as the Vedāntasūtra (on VeS 3.4.18–19), basically follows Bhāskara's view.

The native tradition, however, is divided on the interpretation of our text. The Mīmāṃsikas object strongly to the opinion of people such as Śaṅkara and claim that at best this passage contains a "reference" to the āśramas and not an injunction establishing them. Indeed, an opinion presented anonymously by Rāmānuja (on VeS 3.4.19), but probably representing the Mīmāṃsikas position, claims that all five virtues listed under the three dharmakandhāḥ—sacrifice, Vedic recitation, gift giving, austerity, and bhāramacaryā—are not to be taken as belonging to the āśrama. Thus, the three would represent three different categories of life, a householder rather than three separate āśramas.

Even though there are differences with regard to specific points, most modern scholars from Max Müller, in his early and influential translation of the CU (SBE I, 1879), and Paul Deussen, in his monumental translation of sixty upaniṣads in 1897, to R. E. Hume (1931) and P. V. Kane (1962–75) have, by and large, disregarded the Mīmāṃsikas views and followed the lead of Śaṅkara in interpreting this passage as a reference to the āśrama system. These scholars, moreover, by and large ignore the problematic status of the brahmaṇaṁ āśramaṁ highlighted by the native interpreters and take the expression as referring simply to the āśrama of a wandering ascetic.

Srockhoff, in many of his writings (principally 1981), has vigorously rejected the view that CU 2.23.1 is a reference to the āśrama system. On the whole, he is right, and I will not repeat all his arguments here. Even though many, including Srockhoff, have referred to and frequently discussed this difficult passage, it has not been subjected to the close reading and analysis that it deserves. That is the aim of this paper.

I.3 The native exegetical tradition and modern scholars alike have focused on phrases ii–iv and vi, considering them to be the most problematic. They have assumed that the meanings of the compounds dharmakandhāḥ and brahmaṇaṁ āśramaṁ are clear and evident, even though the native tradition itself had raised some questions regarding the meaning and reference of brahmaṇaṁ āśramaṁ (see IV.1). This confidence, I believe, is misplaced; the meanings of these compounds, especially of the

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4 I expressed some reservations elsewhere (1993: 109), noting that there is "one aspect of the threefold division that is significant: it presents different duties that a person can follow, at least one of which is a permanent mode of life, as divisions or branches of dharma." This conclusion also will have to be modified somewhat in the light of the present study (see V.3).
former, are far from clear. An adequate understanding of their meanings, I believe, is the key to a proper assessment of the entire passage.

Modern scholars, moreover, have discussed this passage almost exclusively as an independent and self-contained unit. Yet, it is embedded within the second chapter of the CU. In this regard, modern scholarship represents a step backward, because, at least in its interpretation of the compound brahmasamjthah, the native tradition has taken into account its context within the CU. Important light, I believe, can be thrown on the significance of this passage if we study it within the context of the Chândogya discussion on the udgïtha and the såmkha (see IV.2).

II

II.1 Šaṅkara (on CU 2.23.1, p. 100) presents a lucid explanation of the phrase trayo dharmaskandhah: “Its meaning is this: (there are) three — i.e., numbering three — skandhas of dharma, i.e., divisions of dharma” (trayah trisåmyhåha dharmayam skandhah dharma-pravåbhågå ity artha). He thus takes skandha to mean “division” or “classification” (pravåbhåga) and interprets the compound dharmaskandhah as a dependent determinative (tatyprivaśa). Râmânuja is not as explicit, but he too clearly takes skandha to mean a division (våbhåga, on VeS 3.4.19) and the compound as a tatpuraśa.

The received wisdom regarding these two points has never been questioned by modern scholarship. Max Müller (1879) translated the compound as “branches of the law.” This rendering has been followed with remarkable faithfulness by subsequent translators. Even Sprockhoff (1981: 80), who is usually cautious about accepting traditional interpretations, translates the compound “Zweiges des dharma.”

Following this interpretation, both the native commentators and modern scholars have seen the ordinal numbers in phrases ii–iv as referring to these “branches.” Šaṅkara is explicit, attaching the compound dharmaskandhah to each ordinal, e.g., trisåmyah prathamåh dharmaskandhah (“This here is the first branch of dharma”).

But this interpretation runs into a serious problem in phrase v, which begins sarva ete (“all these”). Now, if we were to follow the traditional interpretation to its logical conclusion, “these” should refer back to the “three branches of dharma.” Such an interpretation, however, does not sit well with the context; “branches” cannot come to possess or to attain worlds. All interpreters, ancient and modern alike, therefore, are forced to shift gears here and understand “these” as referring to people following the three branches of dharma. Šaṅkara, as usual, is quite explicit and clear: sarva ete trayo ‘py åśramìñåh yaḥoktāt dharmaṁ puṇyaålokå bhavånti—”All these, i.e., all three åśramas [those belonging to an åśrama], by following the prescribed duties become possessors of worlds earned by merit.” None of these interpreters has noticed or acknowledged this shift from branches to people.8

Now, it is possible to argue that such a shift of reference in phrase v may have been influenced by phrase iv. Whereas in phrases ii and iii the “second” and “third” refer to impersonal acts such as sacrifice and austerity, in phrase iv the “third” is the veda student (brahmåcårin), that is, a person. This shift from acts to a person, one may argue, is carried over into phrase v, where “all these” would refer to people such as a veda student and, by extension, to people who undertake the “first” and the “second” branches of dharma.

Determining a shift here from impersonal branches of dharma to persons who follow those branches is further complicated by the grammatical gender of the Sanskrit term skandha. Although, as we shall see, the term is declined as both a masculine and a neuter noun in the veda literature, in the CU it is clearly masculine. There is, thus, no way to distinguish grammatically a reference to skandha from a reference to a person, such as a veda student.

Nevertheless, I think that the shift from skandha as the referent of the ordinal numbers in phrases ii–iv to persons as the referent of the pronoun “these” (ete) is unjustified. If we read these sentences without an exegetical or theological eye, the natural way to understand them is to see the referents of “first,” “second,” “third” and “these” as the same; and that referent is the original statement: trayo dharmaskandhah. Yet I believe that the natural tendency of both ancient commentators and modern scholars to take “these” as referring to people rather than to impersonal “branches” is correct. If the reference of phrases ii–v is the same, namely, dharmaskandhah, while the reference of phrase v is persons, then I believe that the reference of all these phrases

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8 Kane (1962–75, II: 420–21) circumvents the grammatical problems by appending parenthetical qualifiers to the ordinal numbers: “the first (is constituted by) sacrifice . . . . the second is (constituted by the performance of) tåpas . . . .”
should be persons and we need to rethink the accepted meaning of the compound dharmaskandhā.

II.2 Before dealing with this compound, however, I want to examine briefly the meaning of the term skandha. The term occurs in the Vedic literature both as a masculine noun (skandha) and as a neuter (skāndhās). As a masculine noun the word occurs frequently in the enumeration of the bodily parts of a sacrificial animal.9 Within this context it has been generally translated as “shoulder.” The term probably does not mean shoulder in the strict sense (i.e., anśa) but rather the upper part of the back below the neck and between the shoulders, that is, the upper (in the case of a human) or front (in the case of an animal) back torso of the body.10 That it did not mean “the two shoulders” is confirmed by the curious fact that skandha is used regularly either in the plural or in the singular (e.g., TS 5.7.18.1), whereas all pairs of bodily parts, such as eyes and arms, are given in the dual. The plural is also used when speaking of splitting the skandhās of enemies (AV 6.135.1; 12.11.6), while skandhādhi (also in the plural) is used with reference to the flesh of this area (AV 6.25.3; AB 7.1).

The neuter skāndhās in the Vedic literature invariably refers to the trunk of a tree. Thus the AV (10.7.38), in describing how the gods gathered around the yakṣa, uses the simile of “the branches of a tree gathered around its trunk” (vyṛṣasya skandhaḥ parīta iva sākhat). Where the branches (sākhās) are clearly distinguished from the trunk (skandhās) to which they are attached. Thus, in a hommage to trees the TS (7.3.20) states: vanaspatibhyo svāhā mālebhīyo svāhā tālebhīyo svāhā skandhobhyo svāhā sākhatbhīyo svāhā parṣebhīyo svāhā pusaebhīyo svāhā phalebhīyo svāhā. In this enumeration of the parts of a tree the skandhas (“trunk”) is clearly distinguished from sākha (“branch”). I think that Mayrhofer (1953–76: 506) is simply wrong in taking skandhas to mean “Baumstamm, Zweig / bough, branch of a tree.”11 The RV 1.32.5 that he cites in support clearly refers to trunks rather than to branches of trees: ahaṃ vṛtrām vṛtrataram

12 Cited in MS 4.12.3; TB 2.5.4.3.
13 Geldner’s (1951–57) German translation also takes skandha to mean a tree-trunk: “Indra erschlug den Vytra, den größten Feind, den Schulerlosen (?) mit der Keule, seiner großen Waffe. Wie Baumstämme, die mit der Axt gefällt sind, liegt der Drache platt auf der Erde.”
14 The connection between the neuter and masculine meanings also supports the meaning of tree-trunk; if the neuter meant a branch, one would more clearly see a similarity with the arms rather than with the torso. The various derivatives of the term in other Indo-Aryan languages given by Turner 1966 also support this meaning.
15 Indeed, the coconut tree is called skandhataru. Later Sanskrit regularly uses skandha in connection with carrying a load, a child, or an object such as an ax (see the many examples given in the Petersburg Lexicon, s.v.), but here too the reference is not strictly to the “shoulder” but to the upper body in general, including the shoulder area. Even today people in South Asia carry heavy loads not on the shoulder but on the upper back, which makes the person hunch forward.
II.3 The analysis of the compound dharmaskandhā is complicated by the fact that it is found nowhere else, other than the Buddhist scholastic literature. We have already noted (II.1) that both ancient and modern interpreters of the CU take this compound to be a tapturṣa. This analysis was probably influenced by their assumption that skandha meant branch or division. If we take that term to mean torso or upper body, however, such an analysis of the compound would sound strange; dharma is often depicted as having four legs, but can it have three torsos?

Within the context of the entire passage, it makes much better sense, I believe, to take dharmaskandhā as a possessive or exocentric compound (bahuvrīhi) rather than a tapturṣa. The compound would then mean "those who have dharma for their torso" or "people whose torso is the dharma." The entire phrase can then be translated: "There are three (kinds of) people who have dharma for their torso." Since skandha means the strongest and the most prominent part of the body, the expression refers to people for whom dharma is the most important thing in their life.

Let us see how this interpretation of the compound fits with the immediate context of the passage. Now, the masculine ordinal numbers in phrases ii–iv can refer either to a skandha of dharma (tapturṣa analysis) or to a person whose skandha is or consists of dharma (bahuvrīhi analysis), because the compound is masculine under either analysis. Phrases ii–iv are thus neutral with respect to the two interpretations. Even though phrase iv appears to favor the bahuvrīhi analysis because the "third" is a person, namely a vedic student, naming a person as constituteing a class is, nevertheless, a common phenomenon in Brahmanical literature. Thus, for instance, side by side with the statement: cātvāra āśramaṃ gārhasthyāṃ acāryakulaṃ maunam vānaprasthyām—"There are four āśramas: the householders' state, (residence) at the teacher's house, the muni's state, and the state of a forest hermit" (ApDh 2.2.1), we also have: cātvāra āśramāḥ brahmacārīrghaṣṭavānaprasthānaparārūpaṃ vṛājakāḥ—"There are four āśramas: student, householder, forest hermit, and wandering ascetic" (VaDh 7.1–2).

The context of phrase v, on the other hand, fits much better with the bahuvrīhi analysis than with the tapturṣa. We have already seen the problem that previous commentators and scholars have run into in interpreting sarva ete—"all these"; this expression refers to persons, while, according to the tapturṣa analysis the previous sentences deal with divisions of dharma. According to my interpretation, phrase v states that all the three persons mentioned in phrases i–iv, persons whose skandhā consists of dharma, will obtain worlds earned by merit.

The most important contextual evidence in support of the bahuvrīhi analysis, however, comes from the final phrase. As I have indicated in the transcription of CU 2.23.1 (see L1), it contains basically two sections: A, consisting of phrases i–v; and B, consisting of phrase vi. The final phrase stands in stark contrast to both the opening statement (phrase i) and the concluding statement (phrase vi) of A: the brahmasamsthāḥ is contrasted with the dharmaskandhā, and anmṛtata is contrasted with puyaloka. Now, brahmasamsthāḥ is a tapturṣa compound with an adjective (samskaṭa) as the final member, making the compound adjectival and referring to a person: a brahmasamsthāḥ is a person who is grounded or established in, or devoted to brahman. It would thus be natural that its counterpart in phrase i also refers to persons; contrasting a person established in brahman to divisions or branches of dharma would be highly unusual. The bahuvrīhi analysis of the compound dharmaskandhā provides a much better context for this purpose. The intent of the author is clear and in keeping with similar statements in this and other upāniṣads; persons devoted to activities prescribed by dharma end up in a world subject to rebirth and rebirth, whereas those devoted to what these texts deem as the highest knowledge or truth reach final immortality.

II.4 An examination of similar compounds may give us further insights into the import of dharmaskandhā.

16 See, for example, MBh 3.148.21.
17 "Torso" not only sounds strange but also is not a totally accurate rendering of skandha. I have not been able to find an exact English equivalent referring specifically to the region of the upper back immediately below the neck and between the two shoulders!

18 Some see the brahmasamsthāḥ as contrasted with sarva ete. This is certainly true, but sarva ete itself merely recapitulates the initial dharmaskandhā.
19 See, for example, CU 4.15.5–6; 5.10; BU 6.2.15–16; KSU 1.2–7; MiU 1.2.5–12; PU 1.9–10.
First, we find several parallel expressions in which the first member is dharma and the second is either the body or a prominent part of the body, e.g., dharmanābha ("one whose navel is the dharma"), dharmanītra ("one whose eye is the dharma"), dharmanāga ("one whose body is the dharma"), dharmanīman ("one whose self is the dharma"). We find that such compounds are usually bahuvrhis. The first three of these examples are used as names of people and epithets of Vishnu. The compound dharmanāman ("one whose atman, i.e., the body or the self, is the dharma") occurs in Bhagavad Gītā 9.31.

More significant, however, are the compounds that have -skandha as the final member. Schwarz (1974–78), in his Reverse Index, lists 55 such compounds, if we exclude the five that begin with a particle and six that are strictly Buddhist. Of these I have been able to trace fifty-two (including dharmaskandha), a number that, I believe, is statistically significant. Seventeen of these are names or epithets of people, divine beings, Buddhhas, and Bodhisattvas, and one, Tajiskandha, is a place name. With the possible exception of the last, all are bahuvrhi compounds, and skandha refers to the upper part or torso of their bodies: "one whose torso is consists of..." Nine examples are names of various trees, and these compounds are also bahuvrhis with the meaning "(the trunk) whose trunk is..." Four are bahuvrhis used as names or epithets of various animals, with the meaning "one whose upper body is..." Four are used as epithets of humans; these again are bahuvrhis with the meaning "whose upper body is..." Of the rest, seven are tatpurusa compounds in which skandha has the meaning of a herd, a multitude, or a heap.

It is apparent that most of these compounds are bahuvrhis and that the term skandha regularly means the upper body, the trunk of a tree, or a multitude. Nowhere do we encounter the meaning "division" or "branch" outside the context of a treatise, where the meaning, as we have seen, is probably related to "collection" or "aggregate."

Finally, we have the compound dharmaskandha. It is noteworthy that outside of the CU this compound, to my knowledge, occurs only in Buddhist literature, both Pāli (dhammakṣaṭa) and Sanskrit, where it has several specific and technical meanings. The compound is found both as the title of various texts (Lamotte 1958: 163, 203–6) and as an expression meaning "article or item of doctrine" (Edgerton 1953: s.v.). It is beyond the scope of this paper to study these technical meanings in detail. I think that Edgerton is right in seeing the basic meaning of "mass" or "agglomeration" behind the term skandha in its use within several compounds. So, we have duḥkkhaṃskandha ("entire mass of misery"), referring to life as a whole. This is clearly its meaning in upādiṃskandha, which refers to the five aggregates that form the human person: rūpa, vedanā, saṃjñā, saṃskāra, and viññāna. A similar meaning is found in the several religious agglomerations such as śilaskandha, samādhiṃskandha, prajñāskandha, and vimuktikṣandha. The reference of dharmaskandha varies. Sometimes it refers to the above four religious agglomerations, but more often the reference is to 84,000 topics of dharma (Lamotte 1958: 162–63). These are the distinct points or articles of doctrine that were supposed to have been preached by the Buddha. Here we come closest to the meaning of "division" or "section."

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20 These Buddhist terms will be examined later. The only two compounds ending in -skandha thus included by Schwarz are not nominal compounds: praksandha and vyāskandha.

21 I was unable to trace three others: astisksandha, srastaskandha, and kutrāskandha.

22 Nine are names or epithets of Buddhas or Bodhisattvas: Upacitaksandha, Amitaksandha, Samyottaksandha, Sudhajñānaśūlamabhāsaksandha, Dharmanīmanahāsākṣākṣāsaksandha, Śālendrasaksandha, Ācalaksandha, Mahāreiksandha, and Mārgapatskandha. Names of other beings are: Gajaksandha, Bīṣṇudhanasaksandha, Senasaksandha, Jayaksandha, Tatraskandha, Kapīksandha, Vejīksandha, and Madhusaksandha.

23 They are: dirghaksandha, deṛghaksandha, sthālaksandha, kṛṣṇaksandha, ghanaksandha, kharaksandha, kālaksandha, godhaksandha, and gurusaksandha.

24 They are: dvīṣhaksandha (buffalo), pitaksandha (hawk), prthuksandha (boat), and rājasaksandha (horse).

25 They are: śnāhaksandha ("person with the upper body of a lion"); mahāvyūkasgalaksandha ("one whose neck and upper body are like a mighty tree"); vipalaksandha ("with broad upper body"); and vṛṣṇaksandha ("one with the upper body of a bull").

26 Thus, we have tarumaksandha and hayaksandha ("herd or troop of horses"), suṛaksandha ("class of demons"), kariksandha ("herd of elephants"), pāpaksandha and pravyāksandha ("heap of sins or merits"), and naraṃskandha ("multitude of people"). Of the remaining, three refer to titles or sections of treatises (trikṣandha, śākhaṃskandha, and samkiṃskandha), one refers to the section of a foot between the ankle and the heel (amhrisksandha, i.e., the stem of the foot), one to the trunk of a banana tree (kaḍałitksandha, which is a kind of illusion), and two refer to the regions of the wind (vāyusandha and vaṭāskandha); these probably refer to the area where wind is accumulated and from which it blows.

27 Even here, I would venture to argue that the meaning is rather a collective mass, similar to a division of an army, than a meaning that is synonymous with the normal Sanskrit word for division, namely bhedā.
Even if within this technical Buddhist vocabulary *skandha* may have acquired a meaning of a unit of classification, I think it is highly unlikely that such a meaning can be transferred to the *CU*, which, even if it were not pre-Buddhist, can hardly be expected to share a technical vocabulary with Buddhist scholasticism.

III

III.1 If we accept that the compound *dharmaskandhā* means “persons who have the dharma for their torsos,” then the translation of the phrases ii–iv, which refer back to that compound, would also have to be modified. The ordinal numbers *prathamāḥ, dviṭiyāḥ*, and *triṭiyāḥ* should refer not to impersonal divisions of *dharma* but to the three kinds of people mentioned in phrase i.

Such an interpretation fits nicely with phrase iv, which deals with the vedic student: “The third (kind of person) is a vedic student. . . .” The preceding two phrases, however, pose a problem because they refer to virtues or activities; it is awkward to state, for example, that “the second (kind of person) is austerity.” A possible clue to the interpretation of these two phrases is provided by phrase ii: *yaśo ‘diyayanaṃ dānāṃ iti prathamah.* The *iti* that marks off the three activities, I think, does not merely mark the end of a list but may have a more pregnant meaning. It may indicate the mental attitude of this kind of person; that is, he is devoted to, or thinks highly of, or believes in the efficacy of “sacrifice, vedic recitation, and gift giving.” The *iti* also puts a closure to the list of activities that such a person thinks is important; to put it colloquially, “sacrifice, vedic recitation, and gift giving—that’s it.” This closure is emphasized in phrase iii with the emphatic *eva.* The second kind of person is devoted only to a single activity. It is possible that the *iti* of the preceding phrase marking the mental attitude is understood here also in the manner of an *anuvṛtti* within sūtra literature. Indeed, the sūtra-like brevity of this passage makes such an interpretation plausible.

III.2 Given the sūtra-like brevity of phrases i–iii and even of phrases v and vi, however, the prolixity of phrase iv dealing with the vedic student is somewhat jarring. Böhtlingk (1889: 99), followed by Senart (1930: 28), considers the section after *triṭiyāḥ*, that is, *aityantam ātmānam ācāryakute ‘vasādayan, as a gloss and delegating it to the notes. I think Böhtlingk is right. I would go a step further; *ācāryakulavāsī* does not add any new information to *brahmacārī* but only clarifies its meaning, as a gloss would normally do. We can, thus, see two levels of gloss: an earlier one that glossed *brahmacārī* immediately (that is, before *triṭiyāḥ*) as *ācāryakulavāsī,* and a later gloss that attempted to explain the meaning of the entire passage and, hence, was appended at the end. 28

There are five activities listed in phrases ii–iv as belonging to the *dharmaskandhā*: sacrifice, vedic recitation, giving gifts, austerity, and the life of a vedic student. Now, these are activities that are also mentioned in other upaniṣadic passages as conducive to attaining various worlds after death. In *BU(K) 6.2.16*, three of these activities—sacrifice, gift giving, and austerity (*yaṣṭena dānena tapasā lokāṁ jayantī*)—are engaged in by people destined to rebirth. In the parallel passage in the *CU* (5.10.3) those destined to be reborn engage in giving gifts to priests and offering sacrifices to gods (*iṣṭāpūrte*). Even clearer is *BU(K) 4.4.22*: *tam etam vedānuvacanena brahmaṣṭāḥ vividisānti yaṣṭena dānena tapasānāśakaṇa* (“It is he that brahmans seek to know by means of vedic recitation, sacrifice, gift giving, austerity, and fasting”). The Mādhayandīna version of this passage (*ŚB[M] 14.7.2.24*) reads: *tam etam vedānuvacanena vividisānti brahmācaryena tapasā śraddhāyā yaṣṭenaḥ śraddhāsakṣaṇa eva* (“It is he that they seek to know by means of vedic recitation, vedic studentship, austerity, faith, sacrifice, and fasting”). Here, gift giving is replaced by faith 30 and a new activity, *brahmācarya,* is introduced. 31

In listing these five activities, therefore, the author of *CU* 2.23.1 is not breaking any new ground; these are commonly known and valued activities of virtuous brahmans. The use of the expression *dharmaskandhā,* however, indicates that the three kinds of people listed here gave themselves totally to their respective activities. In other words, we are not dealing here with activities

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28 Unlike Böhtlingk, however, in my recent translation of the upaniṣads (Olivelle 1996) I retain these glosses. The received text contains them, and we do not have the right, I believe, to reject them unless we are engaged in establishing an ur-text.

29 I think *anushakṣaṇa* ("fasting") is merely a gloss on *tapasā.* Śaṅkara, Bhāskara, and Rāmānuja cite this passage as the basis for the statement in *YeS 3.4.26.*

30 I think *śraddhā* in these texts is closely associated with giving gifts and may here be a synonym of *dāna.* See the expression *śraddhādeya* in *CU 4.1.1,* and, of course, the common term *śraddhā* that involves feeding ancestors by means of the gift of food to brahmans. See also *BU 3.9.21; CU 8.8.5; TU 1.11.3.*

31 Similar enumerations of central virtues/activities are found elsewhere: *dāna dāna dayā (BU 5.2.3); tapas, dāna, ārjava, ahimsā, satyavacana (CU 3.17.4).
that people may undertake now and then, or which may be pursued for brief periods of time. The people the CU has in mind are those who have made these activities their “torso,” people who are totally devoted to these activities. This is possibly the reason why someone felt the need to add the second gloss to phrase iv; he wanted the reader to know that the brahmācārin this passage refers to is not a student who may spend a few years with a teacher but one who devotes his entire life to this enterprise. That this was in the mind of native interpreters is evident from Śaṃkara’s comment that one should here understand a naiṣṭhika (i.e., a perpetual student) because “a temporary student does not attain a world earned by merit through vedic studentship, because it is aimed at acquiring facility in private vedic recitation” (upakṣurāgyasya svādiṣṭāya grahapārthatvāt na puṇyakatvān brahmacaryeṇa).

IV

IV.1 We turn finally to the last phrase: brahmānasantryaṁ mṛtyutvam eti—“A person who is steadfast in brahman reaches immortality.” I have already drawn attention to the contrast that the author draws between brahmānasantryaṁ and dharmakṣandhāḥ. In attempting to unravel the meaning of the latter expression, I focused on the second member, -skandha; the meaning of dharma, although not always transparent, is made clear by the activities listed in phrases ii–iv. In exploring the sense of brahmānasantryaṁ, on the other hand, we must focus on the meaning of brahman.

Modern scholars, by and large, have ignored the context of the CU and either explicitly or implicitly taken this term to refer to the ultimate and absolute entity “Brahman,” most using the capital ‘B.’ Senart (1930: 28) translates “qui est établi en brahman,” but his note here is representational of the scholarly consensus: “La connaissance de brahman, l’identification avec brahman donne seule le salut, l’immortalité, le nirvāna.” Sprockhoff (1981: 80) also renders the brahmānasantryaṁ as “Der im Brahman Feststehende” without comment, leading the reader to surmise that he is referring to the absolute Brahman.

In interpreting this expression, the native commentators have actually done a better job than modern scholars by taking into account the context of the first few chapters of the CU within which this passage and this expression are embedded. I will examine these chapters in greater detail later on, but it appears that all native interpreters regarded the central theme of these chapters as the worship of or meditation on the sacred syllable om (praṇava-pāsana). In Śaṃkara’s commentary on CU 2.23.1, both he and his hypothetical opponent (pārvapākṣīn) are in agreement in taking brahmānasantryaṁ as a man who is totally devoted to om (praṇavasevakā). The immortality that such a person attains is called “the result of serving om” (praṇavasevāphala). Bhāskara and Rāmacandra (on VeŚ 3.4.18), likewise, ascribes to the “Jaimitiyas” the view that brahmānasantryaṁ refers to the meditation on brahman by means of om (praṇavena brahmopāsanam). Bhāskara (on VeŚ 3.4.20) presents this also as his own view.34

IV.2 In attempting to define the literary context of a passage such as CU 2.23.1 we face several difficult issues. First, individual sections in the CU, including our passage, are, in all likelihood, not original compositions of the editor who put together the version of the CU we have today. This becomes apparent when we consider the several passages common to the CU and the BU. Should we review this pre-CU literary context in assessing the meaning of our passage? On the one hand, this is impossible, because that context is irretrievably lost; on the other hand, it is unnecessary, because, although interesting and possibly important in itself, our quest, nevertheless, is not for an ur-meaning but for the meaning that the passage assumes within the literary context of the extant CU. What is important here is the intent of the editor, as manifested in the CU itself, in his literary decision to incorporate this passage into the second chapter of the CU.

32 So, Max Müller (1879), Deussen (1897), Hume (1931), and Radhakrishnan (1953). Kane (1962–75, II: 420–21) takes it to mean one “who has knowledge of brahman and holds fast by it.” Böhlting (1891) uses the term “Heilige” without specifying the meaning; the same term is also used under brahmānasantryaṁ in the Petersberg Lexicon. Monier-Williams in his dictionary renders the compound as “wholly devoted to Brahma or sacred knowledge.”

33 Śaṃkara in his commentary on the VeŚ (3.4.18–20), however, does not mention praṇava in discussing brahmānasantryaṁ, and it appears likely that there he takes brahman to mean the absolute. Here again we see a real difference in interpretation between the two texts, leading to doubts about the identity of the authors (see above n. 3).

34 Bhāskara’s (p. 205) explanation of the expression is significant: brahmānasantryaṁ ca brahmanātphocaye sa ca sarvāśāmānāṁ aviśistā | na ca kāvārambandan brahmānicintanam itareṣu aśākyam iti šākyam kartum । “Being established in brahman means grounding in brahman. And we say that it is common to all āśramas, for it is not possible to make the act of reflecting upon brahman carried out with the help of om something that people in other āśramas are unable to do.”
A second issue relates to the very composition of the CU! Now, it is generally accepted that the BU was put together in at least three stages; the three sections comprising chapters 1–2, 3–4, and 5–6, respectively, probably existed as independent texts before they were incorporated into the extant BU.\textsuperscript{35} Whether a similar development took place in the composition of the CU is less clear. Several factors, however, indicate that the first three chapters form a unit distinct from the remaining five. The central focus of this unit is the fivefold sāman chant and its central part, the udgītha,\textsuperscript{36} and in a special way, the identity of the udgītha with the sacred syllable OM. The very terms sāman and udgītha, as well as the syllable OM, almost disappear in the vocabulary of the remaining chapters.\textsuperscript{37} I think it is justifiable to take the first three chapters of the CU as the immediate literary context for interpreting CU 2.23.1. Indeed, this was the context within which the native tradition represented by Śaṅkara, Bhāskara, and Rāmānuja sought to understand this passage. The entire CU, of course, will provide a more extensive context.

IV.3 What, then, is the meaning of brahman in the first three chapters of the CU? The term is used once in the first chapter (CU 1.7.5), twice in the second (CU 2.23.1, 24.1; both in compounds), and twenty-two times in the third.\textsuperscript{38} I will divide these twenty-five occurrences of brahman into three groups: A, brahman as a text or something verbal; B, brahman identified with a particular entity; and C, where the meaning is not altogether clear.

In the two sections CU 1.6 and 7, rc and sāman are identified first with pairs of cosmic entities (adhi-

davitam) and then with pairs of vital human powers (adityātman). In both categories, there is a hierarchical ascent to the highest of each, namely, the sun and the eye, respectively. CU 1.7.5 goes on to identify the "person one sees within the eye" with five types of ritual utterances: rc, sāman, uktha, yajas, and brahman. The first four, it is clear, are intended to form two pairs: rc and sāman (this pair is the focus of the entire passage), uktha (Ṛgvedic recitation) and yajas. So, the basic Vedic formula, that is, the rc, is contrasted to the sāman and the yajas, the two other types of Vedic formulae. The fifth, brahman, is clearly a similar ritual formula, but as the fifth surpasses the other two pairs. What this brahman is, the text does not make immediately clear. The context, however, is the identity between udgītha and OM; this identity is stated boldly at the beginning (CU 1.1.1) and repeated at 1.4.1 and 1.5.1. Indeed, immediately after saying "the udgītha is OM, and OM is the udgītha" (1.5.1), the text identifies OM with the sun. Then, at 1.6.8 the CU connects the person in the sun with the rc and the sāman, and identifies him with the udgītha, that is, with OM. At 1.7.5, the CU identifies the person in the sun with the person in the eye. The person in the sun is first connected with the pair rc–sāman, and then presented as transcending them in its identity with the udgītha. The person in the eye is first connected with two pairs rc–sāman and uktha–yajas, and then presented as transcending them in its identity with the brahman. It appears justifiable, then, to take brahman in CU 1.7.5 as identical with the udgītha, that is, with OM.

Turning now to the third chapter of the CU, in its first eleven sections the sun is compared to a honeycomb. It contains eastern, southern, western, and upper honey cells. Connected with each are bees which gather the honey and a flower from which it is gathered. These bees and flowers are identified with different ritual texts and/or utterances.\textsuperscript{40} The bees are viewed as incubating their respective flowers,\textsuperscript{41} the result is honey, that is, the nectar of the sun. Different classes of deities feed on this nectar, using different mouths. All this is presented in the table on the following page.

The image of a bee within a flower works well as a metaphor for rc, yajas, and sāman, which are discovered within their respective collections, Ṛgveda, Yaśurveda,

\textsuperscript{35} There are several indicators of this development, including the repetition of the episode of Yajñavalkya and his wife, Maityr (BU 2.4 and 4.5) and the genealogies of teachers appended to each of the three sections. So, in the first stage individual passages and episodes were composed; in the second, editors wove them into the three sections; and in the third, the three sections were brought together and possibly changed somewhat to form the BU more or less as we now have it.

\textsuperscript{36} For the five (or sometimes seven) parts of a sāman and the importance of the udgītha, see Kane 1962–75, II:1166–74; Olivelle 1996, note to CU 2.2.1.

\textsuperscript{37} The syllable OM appears only once at CU 8.6.5. Sāman is found at CU 4.17, 2–3, 6 and 7.2 always within the context of the three Vedic texts. Udgītha is completely absent.

\textsuperscript{38} CU 3.5.1, 2; 3.10.1, 3; 3.11.2, 3, 5, 6; 3.12.7; 3.13.6 (twice); 3.14.1, 4; 3.18.1 (twice), 2, 3, 4, 5, 6; 3.19.1, 4. In addition, the masculine brahma is mentioned once at CU 3.11.4 as the original teacher of the doctrine.

\textsuperscript{39} I will examine later (see V.1) the significance of five and other numbers within the first three chapters of the CU.

\textsuperscript{40} For a similar comparison, see TU 2.3.1.

\textsuperscript{41} Bees resting within a flower is like a ben sitting on the eggs. Incubation (tapas) is a common theme in Vedic creation stories.
and Sāmadeva. The metaphor is unclear with reference to atharvāṅgirasa and itihāsapuruṣa, unless this is an indication of an early meaning of itihāsapuruṣa which contained the atharvāṅgirasa formulae. We are, however, most interested in the fifth column, where ādeśa corresponds to the bee, and brahman, to the flower (CU 3.5.1–2). Although here too the metaphor is unclear, we can safely conclude that both ādeśa and brahman are here either texts or verbal expressions. Indeed, after describing the five kinds of “immortal waters” that proceed in the five directions from the five types of incubations, the author states: “These, clearly are the very essence of the essence, for the essences are the Vedas, and these are their essence. These are, moreover, the immortal nectar of nectars, for the nectars are the Vedas, and these are their nectar.” The author thus takes at least five flowers, and possibly also the bees that do the incubating, to be “Vedas.” The fifth flower, that is, brahman, therefore, must also fall within the category “Veda.” The immediate context, however, does not specify that brahman here is om.

The mouth of the Sādhyas, moreover, is also said to be brahman. The meaning here is not altogether clear, but it appears that the Sādhyas do not drink the nectar, which is the essence of brahman, with an external mouth; the mouth and the drink are the same, that is, brahman.

At the conclusion of this section on honey, the CU (3.11.2) cites a verse: “There, surely, it has never set, nor even risen. By this truth, O gods, let me not be stripped of brahman,” and concludes: “When someone knows this very brahmanupaniṣad, for him the sun neither rises nor sets, for him it is always day.” The term upaniṣad here probably means “a hidden teaching” or more precisely “a hidden connection.”

But what is the meaning of brahman? That it refers to a verbal expression is clear both from its earlier use in CU 3.5.1–2 and from the statement that immediately follows at CU 3.11.4, a statement that gives a list of teachers from Brahmā to Uddālaka Aruṇi who taught this brahman and concludes: “So, a father should impart (prabriyāt) this brahman only to his eldest son or to a worthy pupil.” As Thieme (1952: 119, n. 3) has noted, when brahman is the direct object of verbs such as śac, śad, and śbrā, it is not correct even from a grammatical point of view to translate such statements as “speak about brahman.” Here, the father speaks brahman, that is, a particular formulation, just as he would speak or recite a particular rc or sāman.

All this is nothing new; I have merely attempted to show that the evidence of the CU supports the conclusion drawn by Thieme (1952) with reference to the earlier vedic literature that brahman has always a verbal reference and that it means a “formulation of truth (Wahrheitsformulierung).”

B. I now turn to the sentences in which an identity is expressed in the formula: “Brahman is X.” There are nine such statements in the first three chapters of the CU. Now, such statements, where one thing is said to be another, is given the technical term ādeśa, that is, a rule of substitution. That is, when a homology is established by saying, for example, “brahman is the sun” (CU 3.19.1), the sun can be substituted for brahman. The close relationship between ādeśa and brahman is seen in the earlier example where the bee is called ādeśa and the flower, brahman (CU 3.5.1). In these ādeśas also, therefore, brahman refers to a verbal formula. This is made explicit in the parallel drawn between gṛhyāt and brahman at CU 3.12.2 and 7 within their respective ādeśas. In this respect, brahman functions in a manner identical to rc and sāman, which are also used in a variety of ādeśas: "rc is this earth, and sāman is fire."

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(CU 1.6.1).46 The question that is answered in these ādeśas, therefore, is the cosmic or bodily counterparts (bandhā)47 of central elements of the ritual, here ritual utterances that constitute the vedic texts.

C. Among the occurrences of brahmaṇ whose meaning is unclear, I will ignore CU 3.13.6, which speaks of the "couriers of brahmaṇ" (brahmāpuruṣāh). At CU 2.24.1 we have the compound brahmaṇaṁśādhīṣmā. Thieme’s observation noted above (1952: 119, n. 3) and the parallel expression sātvādān make it clear that this compound does not refer to people who discourse on brahmaṇ; they "speak brahmaṇ," which clearly indicates that brahmaṇ must refer to something said, that is, a verbal expression. The final "uncertain" use is in the compound under discussion, namely, brahmaṇaṁśādīṣphatāh.

IV.4 What, then, is the meaning of brahmaṇ in this compound within the context of the first three chapters of the CU? The negative is easier to establish: it is very clear that brahmaṇ here does not mean the absolute Brahman of later doctrines such as Advaita Vedānta. Positively, it is also clear that the term in general refers to some verbal formulation, such as the "formulation of truth" of Thieme.

We have seen that the first three chapters of the CU aim at establishing the identity of udgītha and ōṁ. We have also seen that the term brahmaṇ always refers to some verbal formulation, and that at least in some instances brahmaṇ means ōṁ.48 Are the native commentators right, then, in taking brahmaṇ in the compound brahmaṇaṁśādīṣphatāh as, simply, ōṁ? The answer, I believe, is yes.

This conclusion is supported by the passage (CU 2.23.2–3) that immediately follows it and provides its immediate context:

praṇāpajātā lokān abhyatāpat | tebhyo bhojeśtheḥpyas 
trayi vidyā samprāśrāvavāḥ tām abhyatāpat | tasyābhi- 
taṇāya etāñēaikṣāri samprāśravanta bhir bhuvah 
svaś āśā || 2 || tāṁ abhyatāpat | tebhyo bhojeśtheḥpyā 
ōṁkāraṁ samprāśravavāḥ tad yatāḥ saṁkūtā samvādā pari- 

46 The ādeśas of ōṁ and sāmān are found frequently in the upaniṣads; see CU 1.6.1–5; 1.7.1–4; BU 1.5.5; 5.13.1–3. Similar ādeśas are found with references to other verbal forms in: CU 2.1–21 regarding the parts of a sāmān; CU 3.12 regarding gāyatrī.
47 On this central concern of the vedic thinkers, see Gonda 1965 and Smith 1989.
48 I am, of course, not taking into account here the many places in the later upaniṣads which explicitly identify brahmaṇ with ōṁ; see, for example, TU 1.8.1; KaU 2.15–16; PU 5.2; MaU 1.2.

The syllable ōṁ comes into existence through a process of incubation that gives rise to more and more refined products: from the material worlds emerge the three Vedas, their verbal counterparts; from the three Vedas emerge the three sacred sounds, that also stand for the three worlds; and from these sounds ōṁ comes into being, which is the entire world (sāmān). This passage appears to be a commentary on how a brahmaṇaṁśādīṣphatāh attains immortality; the reason is that ōṁ=brahmaṇ is "all," which in vedic thought is equivalent to immortality.50 The connection between these two sections of CU 2.23 is evident also in the use of the term loka, "world." In 2.23.1 the dharmaṁśādīṣphatā becomes punyaloke, that is, they obtain or possess "worlds earned by merit."51 It is implied that the amṛtatva that a brahmaṇaṁśādīṣphatāh attains is beyond these worlds; compare the "region beyond the sun" that is attained by the twenty-second syllable of the sāmān (CU 2.10.5; below V.1). That loka here refers to the three standard worlds of earth, intermediate region, and sky is clear from the use of the term in 2.23.2. Prajaṇa incites the "worlds" (lokān) and the three Veda sprang from them; clearly, the plural lokān here refers to the three worlds.52 Just as amṛtatva, so ōṁ is the fourth that transcends the three worlds.

49 A more extensive description of this incubation, which, however, stops with the three syllables, is given at CU 4.17.1–7.
50 See Gonda 1955. A more extensive process in the emergence of ōṁ as the quintessence of the essences which are the Vedas is given at CU 1.1.2. At CU 1.1.5–6 ōṁ emerges from the sexual union of ōṁ and sāmān.
51 Loka is also connected with those who return to this world in BU 6.2.16, cited earlier.
52 The connection between the three Vedas and the three worlds and the cosmic occupants of these worlds (Ṛgveda = earth, fire; Yajurveda = intermediate region, wind; Sāmaveda = sky, sun) is established elsewhere as well: CU 4.17.1–3.
Indeed, the syllable om is characterized as “immortal and free from fear/danger” (amṛtam abhayam). The statement at CU 1.4.4–5 in many respects parallels the statement on brahmaṇaṃsthaḥ:

eṣa u svaro yād etad aksāram etad amṛtam abhayam |
tat pravīṣya deva amṛṭaḥ abhayaḥ || 4 || sa ya
etad evaṁ vidvān aksāram praṇautya etad evaṁsvarum amṛtam abhayam pravīṣati |
tat pravīṣya yād-

This syllable—the immortal and the fearless—is that very sound. Upon entering that syllable, the gods became immortal and free from fear. A man who utters this syllable with that knowledge enters this very syllable, the sound that is immortal and free from fear. As the gods became immortal by entering it, so will he.

V

V.1 To understand the entire import of CU 2.23.1, finally, we need to consider the significance of the numerology that permeates the first three chapters of the CU. Our passage establishes, first, a triple category (dharmaṇkaṇḍaḥ) and posits another, brahmaṇaṃsthaḥ, that transcends the three (3 + 1). Upon further analysis, we see that the three actually consists of five, because the first is further subdivided into three. Thus, we get a further grouping of 5 + 1.

Adding one to a pre-existing set, especially to a set of three, to produce a more complete whole and to signal the uniqueness of what is added is a common feature in India (Gonda 1976; Malamood 1982; Olivelle 1993: 107). In the first three chapters of the CU, however, this feature appears as a central theme. I list below fourteen clear examples of this feature in these chapters:

| 1.1.2–3 | om emerges as the eighth, the highest | 7 + 1 |
| 1.6–7 | five homologies of re and sāman, plus “person” | 5 + 1 |
| 1.8–9 | space beyond seven cosmic entities | 7 + 1 |
| 1.12 | twelve stobhas, plus hūṃ as thirteenth and unexplained | 12 + 1 |
| 2.2–7 | five parts of sāman related to 5, and to an additional 1 | 5 + 1 |
| 2.10 | seven-fold sāman consists of 3 × 7, plus 1 (= 22) | 3 × 7 + 1 |
| 2.11–21 | ten types of sāman plus the highest | 2 × 5 + 1 |
| 2.23.1 | three dharmakaṇḍaḥ (= five) plus brahmaṇaṃsthaḥ | 3/5 + 1 |
| 2.23.2–3 | om emerges from three worlds, three Vedas, three syllables | 3 × 3 + 1 |
| 3.1–11 | five quarters, Vedas and nectars, plus zenith/brahman | 5 + 1 |
| 3.13 | five brahmaṇapuroṣaḥ and brahman | 5 + 1 |

The numbers to which 1 is added are, for the most part 3, 5, and 7, or multiples of these. The number 3 corresponds to the three Vedas, to the three worlds, and to the three syllables that stand for the three worlds (bhūḥ, bhūvah, svah). The numbers 5 and 7 correspond to the sāman with five or seven parts; 5, of course, is a number indicating fullness even in other contexts.

In four of these fourteen instances, the additional one is om; in three others it is brahman, which, as we have seen, is often a synonym of om in these chapters. Just as om is called “the quintessence of all essences, the highest, the ultimate, the eighth” (CU 1.1.3), so space, which is also the eighth (CU 1.9.1–2), is called “the most extensive (parovariyas) udgitha, without limit.” As the equivalent of udgitha, space is equal to om; space is also said to be brahman (CU 3.12.7; 3.18.1). In explaining the cosmic equivalences of the five or the seven parts of a sāman, the author inserts an additional explanation that transcends the others. Thus, after relating the fivefold sāman to five cosmic sets of five, he presents a sixth set consisting of the five vital functions (CU 2.7.1–2), calling it “the most extensive” (parovariya-  

34 There are five utterances . . . ; the sacrifice is fivefold, the animal victim is fivefold, the seasons of the year are five: this is the one measure of the sacrificial rite, this is its completion” SB(I) M 1.5.2.16. See, Olivelle 1993: 54.
ye), the same term used to describe the udgīthā that is space. Likewise, after relating the ten types of the fivefold sāman to ten (5 x 2) cosmic, ritual, and bodily sets, the author presents an additional sāman "woven upon the whole (sarvam)" (CU 2.11–21); and here the set of five consists not of five single items as in the preceding but of three items each: triple Veda, triple world, fire-wind-sun; stars-birds-glittering specks; snakes-Gandharvas-ancestors. This last sāman transcends the rest, because through this a person can "become the whole," which is another way of stating that he becomes immortal. In a similar way, the "person in the sun/eye" is the sixth, beyond the five cosmic and bodily equivalencies of rc and sāman (CU 1.6–7), and the knowledge of this permits the priest to obtain all desires through his singing. The "breath in the mouth," likewise, is presented as the sixth beyond the five vital functions (CU 1.2.7–14); the sixth, which is homologized with the udgīthā and the sun (CU 1.3.2), the knowledge of which permits the priest to secure all his desires through his singing.

In all these the added item is the highest and brings the highest reward, often immortality, to the person who knows it. We see this paradigm also in the counting of the syllables of a sevenfold sāman at CU 2.10.1–5. After demonstrating that each of its seven parts contains three syllables and is, therefore, equal to the other parts, the author states that the total syllable count of the sāman is twenty-one. But actually the names for the seven parts contain twenty-two syllables, and he sees in this the secret of transcendence. The twenty-second is beyond the sevenfold sāman: "With twenty-one of those one reaches the sun... With the twenty-second one conquers what is beyond the sun. That is the vault of the sky, a place free from sorrow."

VI 2 Our passage on the dharmaskandhā and brahmasamsthā fits nicely into this paradigm, and this may have been one of the reasons why the editor of the CU included it in this section. The brahmasamsthā is the one added to the prior group of three (if we take the three dharmaskandhā) or five (if we take individual dharmas), and the added one is connected to immortality. The parallel with the passage that follows at CU 2.23.2–3 is clear. As the brahmasamsthā and amṛtatva are the additional categories that transcend the three dharmaskandhā and the three punyalokāh, so om and sarvam are the additional categories that transcend the three sets of three: three worlds, three Vedas, and the three sacred utterances.

VI 1 Let us, finally, return to the question we started with: the connection, if any, between CU 2.23.1 and the āśrama system. The perception of such a connection was grounded in the interpretation of dharmaskandhā as a tatpurṣa compound meaning "branches (divisions) of dharma." We have seen that the preponderance of evidence suggests that this interpretation is wrong. Further, the focus of this passage is not on the three dharmaskandhā but on the final statement about brahmasamsthā, in keeping with the common feature of the first three chapters, whereby one is singled out, generally om, that transcends a prior set, generally a set of three or five. In other words, the intent of the author is not to point out that there are three dharmaskandhā but to show that the brahmasamsthā transcends them and attains immortality. The "three" here, moreover, should not be given undue significance; it is a number we come across repeatedly in the first three chapters.

It is clear, then, that this passage has nothing to do with the later theological construction of the four āśramas. We are thus returning to the position of the Mīmāṃsakas and rejecting the interpretations offered by the Vedāntists (Śaṅkara, Bhāṭṭāraka, Rāmānuja) and most modern scholars. Nevertheless, even though dharmaskandhā does not refer to a division of dharma, paralleling the dharmasya caturtha bhedam ("the fourfold division of dharma") of the BDh 2.11.9, which introduces the four āśramas (Olivelle 1993: 109), I still believe that this enumeration of three kinds of people devoted to dharma, people who select a particular element of dharma to pursue all their lives, is the same type of theological thinking and classification that finally gave birth to the āśrama system.

VI 2 In the light of the above study, I offer this new translation of CU 2.23.1:

A. i. There are three types of persons whose torso is the Law (dharma).
   ii. The first is one who pursues sacrifice, vedic recitation, and gift giving.
   iii. The second is one who is devoted solely to austerity.
   iv. The third is a celibate student of the Veda (living at his teacher's house; that is, a student who settles himself permanently at his teacher's house). 55
   v. All these gain worlds earned by merit.
B. vi. A person who is steadfast in brahman reaches immortality.

55 The section within parentheses probably consists of two later glosses.
ABBREVIATIONS

AA Aitareya Āraṇyaka
ApDh Āpastamba Dharmasāstra
MU Aitareya Upaniṣad
AV Atharva Veda
BDh Baudhāyana Dharmasāstra
BhG Bhagavad Gītā
BU Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad
CU Chāndogya Upaniṣad
IU I Upaniṣad
JB Jaimistīya Brāhmaṇa
JU Jaimistīya Upaniṣad
KaU Katha Upaniṣad
KeU Kena Upaniṣad
KsU Kauśitaki Upaniṣad
MaU Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad
MtU Maitrāyaṇīya (Maitri) Upaniṣad
MuU Mundaka Upaniṣad
PU Pṛṣna Upaniṣad
RV Ṛg Veda
SĀ Śāṅkhyāyaṇa Āraṇyaka
SB(S) Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, Śāṅkya recension.
SB(M) Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, Mādhyamikīya recension.
SBE Sacred Books of the East, Oxford.
ŚU Śvetāṣṭra Upaniṣad
TA Taittirīya Aranyaka
TB Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa
TS Taittirīya Śamhitā
TU Taittirīya Upaniṣad
VaDh Vaiṣṇava Dharmasūtra
VeS Vedānta Sūtra
VS Vaiṣṇavayya Śamhitā of the White Yajurveda

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