ODES OF RENUNCIATION

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In the rite of renunciation (sannyāsa) as described in the dharma-
sāstric texts and in special handbooks (paddhati) there is little room for
spontaneity or emotional outbursts, even though the event is charged
with emotion both for the renouncer-to-be and for his family, relations,
and friends. Following the ritual custom, the actions, words, and gestures,
as well as the material employed in this rite are determined by the authori-
tative texts. No extemporaneous innovations are permitted.

There are, however, instances within the ritual itself which manifest
flashes of emotion and allow us to penetrate the façade and get a glimpse
of the feelings of the participants.

One such instance is when the renouncer-to-be takes leave of his
family as he departs from home never to return. Though the occasion is,
humanly speaking, a sad one — in fact, the renouncer-to-be as well as his
relations are instructed not to cry — nevertheless, true to the spirit of
detachment inculcated in the texts, his words are cold and harsh: na
me kaviceṁ nāham kayucit — ‘No one belongs to me, nor do I belong to
anyone.’ The same theme is amplified in a more prosaic address re-
corded elsewhere:

samsārasya pāram ahaṁ gantukāmo 'smi | mayā sarveṣām mamātā
tyaktā putraīṣayā vittaīṣayā lokāṣayā ca tyaktā | yugnādhīr
manopari mamātā na kartaryā | vighno na vidheyaḥ ||

‘I am desirous of going to the yonder shore of (the river of) samsāra. I
have given up the spirit of possessiveness with regard to every-
thing. I have abandoned the desire for sons, the desire for wealth,
and the desire for the worlds. You should not cause (me) any hind-
rance.’

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1 For a description of the rite of renunciation, see D. H. Sharma, Contributions to the History of Brahmanical Asceticism (Poona Oriental Series, No. 64; Poona: Oriental Book Agency, 1939), pp. 49—62.
2 Yp 16.7, Sp 1 f. 13a. The same theme is taken up below at v. 15.
3 Cf. Sp 1 f. 13a, Psv 4 f. 4b, Samp 5 f. 5a.
4 A common expression meaning liberation (mokṣa).
5 Cf. Brhadāraṇyaka Up. 3. 5. 1.
A more explicit revelation of these sentiments is found in three groups of verses which the renouncer chants at three of the most important moments in the rite of renunciation. Although not spontaneous outpourings, these verses reflect the state of mind of a person at the moment when he leaves home, family, and security behind and plunges headlong into the unknown — a life without ties and security, at the mercy of others’ generosity.

These verses do not occur in the Dharmaśāstras or the Śaṃnyāsa Upaniṣads, which contain the oldest descriptions of the rite that we possess. At what period they found their way into the ritual of renunciation is hard to determine. However, they are evidently much older than the works in which they occur, since only verses and formulæ of proven antiquity could have conceivably been introduced into the ritual.

The following are the sources from which these verses are gathered, together with the manuscripts and editions used and their abbreviations:


I

The nineteen verses of the first group are recited by the renouncer-to-be after he has given the gift of safety to all creatures (abhayaḍakṣīṇā) and just prior to the recital of the praiṣa.

They are found in the following works: Psv ff. 4 b—5 a; Samp ff. 5 a—b; Sdp f. 7 a; Sp1 ff. 13 b—14 a; Sp2 ff. 19 a—20 a. The Ypra (21.110—113) gives only vv. 9, 12, and 13 a—b, where they are to be recited immediately after the abhayadhakṣīṇā, which is performed here after the praiṣa.

A point to be noted in connection with this first group is that, according to the instructions given in our sources, these verses are to be recited by the renouncer-to-be. However, a glance at the text shows that there are sections in it with the verb in the first person where the renouncer is speaking, while other sections contain injunctions directed at him. This makes us surmise that these verses first belonged to a work composed in verse detailing the rite of renunciation. At a later period all these verses, containing both what had to be recited by the renouncer and the author's instructions regarding the ritual performance, were assimilated into the rite and their original context lost sight of. Thus we have the anomaly of the renouncer giving instructions to himself as to what he should do

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6 The rite of abhayadakṣīṇā consists of pouring water from the cupped hands into water saying: abhayam sarvabhūtebhya mattaḥ svāhā — 'I give safety to all creatures, svāhā'

7 This is the focal point of the entire rite and consists of the formula: sanpanyastam mayā — 'I have renounced', which is recited first softly, then in a moderate voice, and lastly aloud. This constitutes the actual entry into sanpanyāsa.
next. In the translation we have put the words which were originally to have been recited by the renouncer-to-be within quotation marks. As found in our sources, however, these as well as the other sections are to be recited by him.

There are two important themes running through these verses. First, in words that sometimes break into poetry but are always charged with emotion, the renouncer-to-be announces that he is renouncing everything and everyone. He neither has any belongings nor does he belong to anyone. He is alone. However, through the knowledge that all beings ultimately rest in the self, he realizes that although he has nothing yet he does possess everything (v. 13). The second theme is that of non-injury (ahimsā), ritualized in the abhayadakṣiṇā. Already alone and helpless, this makes him defenseless against enemies, both men and animals. This theme will be taken up in the second group of verses, which is a hymn of supplication to Viṣṇu.

1. yatkiṃcid bandhanaṁ karma kṛtam ajñānato māyā |
pramādāsya padopothāṁ tat sarvāṁ saṃtyajāmy āham ||

2. tyaktasavaro viśuddhātmā gatasnehaḥ śubhāsuḥbhāḥ |
kāmabhogādikāṁ sarvāṁ tyaktāṁ caivaṁ udāharet ||

3. eṣa tyakṣāmy āham sarvāṁ kāmabhogasukhādikām |
śokāṁ toṣaṁ vivādaṁ ca gandhamālyāvaneśpanam ||

4. bhūṣaṇaṁ nartanaṁ geyān ṅā ṅān ēva ca |
namaskāraṁ japaṁ homaṁ yās ca nityakriyā mama ||

5. nityaṁ naimittikāṁ kāmyaṁ varpakhāsināramāś ca ye |
guṇadharmāś ca yekecic chubhāsubhupalāni ca ||

6. karaṇaṁ kāryakartaṁ kartarāṁ karaṇaṁ saha |
sarvaṁ eva parityajya buddhyādiśṭhīramānasaḥ ||

7. utmānaṁ sarvabhūtaśaṁ sarvabhūtaṁ cātmāni |
caturvidhāsa sannātāṁ bhūtagrāmāsya niśepaḥ ||

8. kṛtaṁ ca kāritaṁ caiva īpitaṁ cānumoditaṁ |
saṃcintya sarvabhūtebhya dadyād abhayadakṣiṇām ||

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9. padbhyaṁ karābhyaṁ viharana nāhaṁ vākkāyaṁ mānasaiḥ
   karīgye prāśyāṁ prāśyāṁ prāśyāṁ suñto nivāhyāṁ
10. dehe jade'ṇbhe bhumau sthāvarā jaṅgamāś ca ye
    pāśyanteṣu ye ca śṛṣṭavatiṣeṣaḥ ca ye
11. lomavaśṭrādhiḥśyeṣu ṣayaneṣu āsaneṣu ye
    te svapantvā hūṃ hūṃ hūṃ hūṃ hūṃ hūṃ vinā
12. dataveṣam sarvābhūteshuḥ sarvābhāvayadakṣiṇām
    karoṣu mātreyatiṣe ca praṇāyārdhiṃ ca samsthitaḥ
13. tato vicitrayed dhīmān sarvam ātmani samsthitaṃ
    ko 'sti me kaś ca me nāti śuddha eko 'ham acyutaḥ
14. samsthīdīṣṭaṁ ṛṣayaṁ ṛṣayaṁ ṛṣayaṁ ṛṣayaṁ ṛṣayaṁ ṛṣayaṁ
    brāhmaṇānāmbuṣitena sīca māṁ vākyavāśiṇāḥ
15. na me 'sti bāṇdhavaḥ kaścīn nukteṭhānām parāvaḥ
    manāṁśeṣaḥ paro bandhur ārddhāvāḥ prāṭhātā ṛgataḥ
16. indrīyair viśayaiḥ sarvair madhyāyantāraḥ bhūṭhitaḥ
    visveviṣṇo 'ham ātmiva sarvajāh sarvātomukhaḥ
17. tvaktabhīr abhayaḥ datāv sarvajānām ajaṁ ātivām
    vyaktāyantām param śuddham satyam nīcchitaḥ tatvātāḥ
18. etān prāśīn brūvan śuddho diśā caiva vākṣyokanān
19. ādityacandrāv analo 'nilaś ca dyayur bhūmīr āpo hṛdayaṁ
    manaḥ ca
    ahaṁ ca rātri ca ubhe ca saṃdhye dharmo hi jānati nārasya
    vṛttam

Translation

1. 'Whatsoever deed leading to bondage that I have committed un-
   aware, all that, the consequence of negligence and sloth, do I totally
   renounce.'

10 'ṇbhe : Sp1 Sp2 vased. -sāmpuṭe : Psv samṣpute. śṛṣṭavatiṣeṣaḥkāś :
   Psv śṛṣṭavatiṣeṣaḥkāś. Sp1 Sp2 om. v. 10e—d. 11 lo-
   ma- : Samp bhāva. Sdip leṣa. ye : Sdip ca. svapantu : Samp svayaṁbhū. su-
   khaṁ mato : Sp1 sukha mado-, Sp2 sukha 'stu, Psv sukhamanto. 12 da-
13 samsthitaṃ : Psv samsthitaḥ. ko 'sti ... śuddha : Samp na kaścīn me
   na kasyamaḥ buddhir. 14 -āditya- : Samp adīha. 'haṁ viplūṣṭo : Sp1 Psv
   tviplūṣṭo, Sp2 tviplūṣṭo corrected to 'haṁ viplūṣṭo, Samp 'haṁ viplūṣṭo.
   -mānaḥ : Sp1 mānasaiḥ, Psv mānasam. 15 'sti bāṇdhavaḥ kaścīn : Samp
   syur bāṇdhavaḥ koścīn. 'graṭaḥ : Samp yataḥ. 16 sarvair : Sp1 Sp2 sarva.
   -antar- : Psv anta.-sthitaḥ : Psv sthitoḥ. 'ham ātmiva : Sp1 Sp2 Psv mahātvā
   vai. 18 brūvan : Sp2 cāhravaṇ. avālokanān : Psv avālokasya. 19 hi :
   Psv vi-. manaḥ : Samp yamaḥ.
2. Having abandoned all, pure in heart, unattached, and equal in weal and woe, let him thus proclaim: 'Every desire, enjoyment, and the like have I also renounced.
3. Everything shall I renounce — desire, enjoyment, and the like, grief and joy, disputes, scents, garlands, and the anointing of the body,
4. adornment, dancing and singing, the giving and the acceptance (of gifts), paying homage (to men), the muttering of prayers, oblations, and the rites that are obligatory on me,
5. the obligatory (rites), as well as the occasional and the optional, the states of life, the duties of class and rank, and both the pleasant and the unpleasant fruits (of action).'
6. Having abandoned all — the means of action and the authorship of the act, the agent together with the instruments — his mind controlled by wisdom,
7. (seeing) the self as abiding in all beings and all beings within the self, free of longing towards the four kinds of living beings*, and with a calm spirit,
8. let him reflect on what he has done and what he has made (others) do, on what he has desired and what he has rejoiced at, and then grant the gift of safety to all creatures:
9. 'Wandering about, I shall not cause harm to living beings with my hands or feet, with my speech, body, or mind; may living beings be free from fear.
10. The immobile and the mobile (creatures living) on the body, in water, in the air, and on land, those that (live) between rocks, and those that are let loose by phlegm,
11. those (that live) in the hair, clothes, and the like, in grain, and in beds and seats — may they go to sleep and wake therefrom at ease without any fear of me.'
12. Having thus given the gift of safety to all creatures everywhere, compassionate and of a friendly disposition, steadfast in the increase of wisdom,
13. let the wise man consider everything as abiding in the self: 'Who belongs to me? Who, indeed, belongs not to me? — I, who am pure, one, and imperishable,
14. I am burnt by the sun of samsāra, scorched in both body and mind; sprinkle me with the water of (thine) speech, cooled by the water of the knowledge of Brahman.

* Viviparous (jāraśyuja), oviparous (aṇḍaja), produced by sweat (veṣeṣa), and produced through germination (udaḥṣija).
15. No kinsman have I, besides the self — the highest and the lower as well; above and below, behind and in front, the self alone is my highest kin.

16. By reason of the organs and all their objects, abiding in the middle and at the end, within as well as without, the Supreme Lord am I, the self indeed, all-knowing and facing every side.¹

17. Discarding fear, having granted (the gift of) safety and truly ascertained the Lord — all-knowing and unborn, manifest as well as unmanifest, supreme, pure, and true —,

18. being (himself) pure, reciting these praṇās⁸ and gazing at the quarters,

[he should pray:]

19. „Sun and Moon, Fire and Wind, Heaven and Earth, Water, Heart, and Mind, Day and Night, and both the samdhyaś (i. e. dawn and dusk) [be my witness]¹⁰; for Dharma knows the conduct of man.“

II

The second group of five verses is ascribed to Yama, the author of a smṛti, in all our sources. Unlike in the first group, here it is clear that the first half-verse is the injunction of Yama, while the rest are to be recited by the renouncer. They are recited during the interval between the proclamation of the praṇā and his approaching the guru for instruction.

These verses are found in the following works: Sdip ff. 7a—b; Sp¹ f. 15a; Sp² ff. 21b—22a; Ydhs pp. 16—17. The Samp (f. 7b) does not give these verses but instructs the neophyte to set his thoughts on Viṣṇu (viṣṇusmaranā) while he is on his way to the guru.

We find here the prayer of a man without friend or helper, without any defense against enemies. That he has abandoned all (saṃnyāstam me) is almost a refrain. He has vowed never to injure any living being (v. 23). Not able to protect himself and without a protector on earth, he now turns to the divine protector, Viṣṇu.

¹ This may refer to the praṇā formula — cf. above, fn 7. It is, however, more likely that here the word praṇā is used in a looser sense to mean the preceding verses, especially because of the use of the plural.

¹⁰ These deities are invoked as witnesses of his renunciation. In the sources immediately after this verse it is said: adityacandrādīn sarvān devān karmasāksaṁva niścintā gurudān brāhmaṇān saṃnyāsasāksitaṁ na dhyāyati — ‘He should recollect all the gods, such as Sun and Moon, and all the witnesses of ritual acts, brāhmaṇas such as the guru, as witnesses of his renunciation.’ Cf. Sp¹ f. 13a—b, Sp² f. 20a—b, Psv f. 5a—b.
tato viṣṇuprārthanāprakāram āha yamah:
20. datvā tojānjalim vipro bhaktiṣa samprārthayed dharim | sarvadevaṃke toye tojāhutim aham hare |
21. datvā sarvaivaṇāṃ tyaktvā yuṣmaccharanaṃ āgataḥ | trāki māṃ sarvalokeṣa gatir anyā na vidyate |
22. sannyaṣṭam me jagannātha pāhi māṃ madhusūdana | trāki māṃ sarvalokeṣa vāsudeva sanātana |
23. sannyaṣṭam me jagadṣmati pundarikāṣa mokṣada | aham sarvābhayaṃ datvā bhūtānāṃ paramekṣa |
24. yuṣmaccharanaṃ āpannam trāki māṃ puruṣottama |

Translation

20—21. The twice-born should offer water from his cupped hands and devoutly supplicate Hari (Viṣṇu): „I have made an offering of water into water, which contains the nature of all the gods, abandoned all desires, and have come to thee, O Hari, for refuge. Protect me, O Lord of all the worlds; no other way can I see!

22. I have renounced, O Lord of the world; protect me, Madhusūdana! Guard me, O Vāsudeva, O Lord of all the worlds, the Eternal!

23—24. I have renounced, O Fountain of the world, O Lotus-eyed, O Dispenser of Freedom! I have given safety to all beings, O Lord Supreme, and have come to thee for refuge; protect me, O Puruṣottama!"

III

The first five verses of this group, together with the introductory address in prose, are found in the following works: Psv f. 6a; Samp f. 7b; Sdip f. 7b; Sp1 ff. 15b—16a; Sp2 ff. 23a—23b. After reciting the above hymn to Viṣṇu, the neophyte stands before the guru, greets him in the customary manner, and recites these verses. Thereafter, he grasps the feet of the guru and recites the formula: yo brahmaṇam ... (Śvetāśvatara Up. 6. 18), after which most texts instruct him to say: adhihi bhagavo brahma — ‘Your Reverence, teach me Brahman’ (Taittirīya Up. 3. 1. 1;

20 hare : Sp1 Sp2 kare. 21 sarvalokeṣa : Sdip sarvasarveṣa.
cf. Ypna 21. 131—136). In Sp1 (f. 16a) and Sp2 (f. 24a), however, before reciting the latter he is instructed to recite vv. 31 and 32 as given below. The former is very similar to v. 14 but fits this context better, and v. 32 is the same as v. 15.

These seven verses bring to the fore the primary purpose of renunciation, viz. liberation (mokṣa). The words of supplication directed here at the guru are strikingly similar to those addressed earlier to Viṣṇu. Often the very same expressions are used, e. g. v. 21c-d and v. 26c-d. The concerns expressed, however, are different. The great danger from which the guru is asked to deliver him is samsāra itself and its cause, ignorance, which are compared to the scorching sun (v. 14), a burning fire (vv. 28, 31), and a black serpent (v. 30). The guru is able to save the neophyte from much greater a peril than Viṣṇu.

Another point to be noted here is that v. 27, although in the present context it is used to praise the guru, is elsewhere cited as a locus classicus with reference to the qualities that one should look for in a guru (cf. Sp1 f. 1 b; Sp2 f. 1 b).

25. śrīguru bhagavanasmāt ghorāt samuddhara | asakrdgarbha-
jonam jayamravarādyapārasamsārād atmajñānena māṇ mārya ||
26. bhūtānam abhayam datvā yuṣmabharanam āgataḥ |
trāki mān yoginām iṣa nāyagā trādāsti me prabhō ||
27. niḥssphāḥ sarvatahasāntaḥ sarvavādyavīśāradaḥ | sarvasyayānsamchedṭanālāsoga gururād ayaḥ ||
28. trayaśaḥ bho jagannāthah guruh samsāravahiniḥ |
dāghāḥ māṇ bāmadeśāḥ ca te māṁ ahaṁ saranāgataḥ ||
29. adyaṇprabhāti bhūtāni na hiṃsāyāni kacācana |
mahāvartaṇaḥ kariṣṭāmi karmaṇā manasā girā ||
30. avidyākrṣyasarpeta daśtām tadvāpiṣṭitamin |
suvikṣāyantapānena samjñāya punar mṛtama ||
31. samājñānāmbrāmāsām viṇaṣṭadehamānānaṃ |
brahmajñānāmbāvātānaḥ sīcaḥ māṁ vākyavārinā ||
32. na me 'sti bāndhaḥakāscin muktavāmānaṃ parāvaram |
manāmānācāra paro bandhur śrīdhiśvāhāḥ prasthato 'graṭaḥ ||
Translation

25. 'Venerable Master, Lord, lift me up from this dreadful (state). Rescue me from this unbounded cycle of existence subject to repeated birth, old age, death, and the like by (impacting) the knowledge of the self.

26. I have given safety to living beings and have come to thee for refuge. Protect me, O Lord of yogins; no other protector, Lord, do I have.

27. Without longing, calm in every way, an expert in every lore, the eradicator of all doubts, without a trace of indolence — thou art a king among teachers!

28. Master, thou Lord of the world, protect me, Sir, who am scorched by the fire of samsāra and bitten by (the snake of) time; I have come to thee for refuge!

29. From today onwards I shall never injure any living being. I shall perform the Great Vow in mind, speech, and in deed.

30. I am bitten by the black serpent of ignorance and tormented by its poison. Bring me, who am dead, back to life with that drink of immortality — thine own words!

31. I am consumed by the fire of samsāra, ruined in both body and mind. Sprinkle me with the water of (thine) speech, cooled by the water of the knowledge of Brahman.

32. No kinsman have I, besides the self — the highest and the lower as well; above and below, behind and in front, the self alone is my highest kin.'