The Gāyatra and Ascension to Heaven
(Jaiminiya-Upaniṣad-Brāhmaṇa 1, 1-7; 3, 11-14)

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1. The Jaiminiya-Upaniṣad-Brāhmaṇa specially deals with the unexpressed chant of the gāyatra-sāman.¹ This chant is traditionally called the bodiless gāyatra, because its main part (udgīthā) is sung without the body (i.e. the verse) but with the repeated monosyllables instead, thus: o vā o vā o vā/ hum bhā/o vā/. The JUB attaches to it this philosophical significance: by reason of its bodilessness, it makes a person for whom it is sung go beyond the mortality of his corporeal existence and attain the immortality in the heavenly world. Among the passages of the bodiless gāyatra, the two sections JUB 1, 1-7 and 3, 11-14 deserve to receive special attention in that they describe the whole process of leading a person to the heavenly world and thereby show us the characteristics of the ascension theories propounded by this proto-Upanishadic text.

2. The structural analysis of these two sections brings out the interesting fact that there is a striking parallelism between them and they conceal the bodiless gāyatra under their structures. Every paragraph orderly corresponds to each of the three divisions of its main part, thus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1,1,1–2,2</th>
<th>3,11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Om)</td>
<td>(Vāc)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o vā</td>
<td>fire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o vā</td>
<td>wind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o vā</td>
<td>sun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,2,3–7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>correct way of singing the gāyatra</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,3,1–2</td>
<td>3,12,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>He ascends the three worlds</td>
<td>He acquires the three worlds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>by three pairs of Om and Vāc.</td>
<td>by means of the three āvṛts.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Gayatra and Ascension to Heaven (M. Fujii)

1, 3, 3-4
hum bhä Death goes after him. He kills it by the hiṅkāra.
1, 3, 5-8
o vā By uttering Om, he is released through the sun.
1, 4
hum bhä hiṅkāra=“him bhä”
o vā ...........
1, 5, 1-3
dialogue with the deity (sun)
“You did bad things”
“You are the doer of my deeds”
1, 5, 4-6, 6
Sun is the door to immortality.
1, 7
quotation of RV 1, 164, 45

3, 12, 2-3
Death goes after him. He drives it away by the hiṅkāra.

1, 3, 12, 2-3
..............
3, 12, 4-13, 6
hiṅkāra=“hum bhä” etc.
3, 13, 7-13
By means of Om, the udgāṭr sends the sacrificer to the sun.
3, 14, 1-5 (=JB 1, 18: 9, 19-25)
question by the deity (sun) and correct answer
“Who are you?” “Ka (who) am I”
3, 14, 6-12
By means of Om, he sends the sacrificer to the sun. By means of Vāc, he gives him the moon.

The ascension processes told by these two sections are almost the same, but at the same time a fundamental difference is seen in the basic ideas on which these theories were constructed. In brief, the speculation of 1, 1-7 is based on a ritual symbolism of the Soma sacrifices, while that of 3, 11-14 was developed from the idea of the journey to the other world after death.

3. That the ritual concerned in 1,1-7 is the bahispavamāna is proved by the two sentences: 1, 5, 5 “Where this cātvāla pit was dug, precisely there is the opening of the sky” and 1, 5, 6 “Thus, when the bahispavamāna is being chanted, he should lift up (udgrhṇīt) in his mind”. The bahispavamāna ‘the outdoor laud for the purified (soma)’ is the first laud of the Soma sacrifices. As its name states, this laud is chanted not in the sadas hut where the chanter priests chant the other lauds, but outdoors near the cātvāla pit. According to JB 1, 87; PB 6, 7, 24; SB 4, 2, 5, 5; 9, this hole dug outside the sacrificial place is symbolically identified with the sun and it is thought that therefrom the sacrificer is carried to the heavenly world. The enigmatic sentence 1, 5, 5 states this very identity of the cātvāla pit and the sun as the entrance to the heavenly world. The latter
sentence 1, 5, 6, which was interpreted incorrectly by H. Oertel and W. B. Bollee, seems to reflect a ritual act at the bahispavamana. JB 1, 89 prescribes the acts to be performed by the priests after the bahispavamana, thus: “After the chant, they walk upwards (i.e. northwards). Thereby they make the sacrificer go to the heavenly world. They lift up (udgrhaṇa) their arms. Thereby they jointly place the sacrificer in the heavenly world.” On account of the same context, the word udgrhaṇyāt in 1, 5, 6 should be understood in the same meaning, though the object to be lifted up in the mind may be the sacrificer himself. The whole set of acts at the bahispavamana, beginning with the creeping to the south of the cātuṣṭala pit and ending with the bestriding of the boundary of the sacrificial place, shows that this opening ritual symbolizes the procession to the heavenly world which is represented by the sacrificial place. The ascension theory of 1,1-7 is undoubtedly based on this ritual symbolism. But it is not likely that this theory should have been developed directly from the Brāhmaṇical speculations on the bahispavamana ritual. In the Brāhmaṇa passages the sacrificer goes to the heavenly world with the guarantee that he will not be separated from this world, while 1, 1-7 states the one-way journey to the heavenly world to attain eternal life there. It seems that the bahispavamana serves as the ritual setting and framework of speculation but the ascension itself is understood here in the same way as in 3, 11-14.

4. Unlike 1,1-7, 3,11-14 does not contain any references to a special ritual. Here the ascension theory was constructed upon the combination of the two ideas, i.e., the three worlds and the three sets of “death” and “birth” (going into and out of the three abnormal states in a life: birth, ritual, death). In consequence of the combination of these spatial and temporal ideas, the theory covers a person’s whole life from the first “death” (the union of the emitted seed and lifebreath) up to the last “birth” (the birth in the heavenly world). By singing the first three repetitions of o vā, the udgātr acquires the three worlds and ensures the sacrificer’s three “deaths” and “births”, especially his last “birth” by giving him the world where he will be born after his death. In contrast with the vagueness of 1, 1-7, it is clear here that the sacrificer goes to the heavenly world after his death. What is noteworthy is that this ascension after death is
considered to be the process of birth in the heavenly world. And so the abrupt question by the sun “Who are you?” 3, 14, 1 must be addressed to the very person that is in the process of this rebirth. Its connection with birth is also suggested by the interesting fact that similar questions are prescribed by the Grhya-sūtras at both of the two birth ceremonies, i.e., the ceremony for a newborn child (jātakarman) and the initiation of a student (upanayana). Although the passage beginning with this question (3, 14, 1–5) occurs also in JB 1, 18, which seems nearer to the original context of this passage because the atman mentioned here is not touched anywhere else in 3, 11–14,8 it perfectly fits the present context, also. For the remaining sentences 3, 14, 6 ff. aptly lay stress on the birth motif by saying that the sacrificer who is reborn drinks as his food the essence of his good deeds stored up in the moon, just as a newborn child drinks milk stored up in the breasts of the mother.9

2) “he should take up [the cup] with the mind” (JAOS 16, 1894, p. 85).
3) “he should lengthen this in his mind” (Śaḍviṁśa-Brāhmaṇa, 1956, p. 43).
5) Cf. JB 1, 86; 87 and the formulas “Don’t cut (me) off from the heavenly world!” “Nor from this world!” JSS 1, 11: (Gastra) 14, 3–5 (Shastri) 39, 18.
6) The sun and its rays told in 1, 3, 5–6; 6, 2 are depicted in the same way for a dying person in AĀ 3, 2, 4; ŠĀ 8, 7; BĀU 5, 5, 2; 5, 15, 1; ChU 8, 6, 5.
7) All Śūtras prescribe the questions at the upanayana, only Sāmavedic Śūtras at the jātakarman. Cf. also SB 11, 5, 4, 1 (on upanayana).
8) JB 1, 17–18 says that one produces his second atman in the sun by offering the agnihotra and he is united with it after death if he correctly answers the question “Who are you?”