

On the different options in Blades for cutting the *Darbha* grass

One of the *vedāṅgas*, viz. *Śrauta sūtras* deal with the *Śrauta* sacrifices. Many of them begin the description of the *Haviryajñas* with the basic form of these sacrifices, the *Darśa-pūrṇamāsa* sacrifice.

Cutting the *darbha* grass and scattering it on the *vedi* is one of the important rites in this sacrifice. Three types of blades are referred to in these *Śrauta sūtras*, viz. *asīda* (sickle), *aśva-parśu* (rib of a horse) and *anaḍut-parśu* (rib of a bull) for cutting the *darbha* grass.

It may be noted that Baudhāyana, the author of one of the earliest *Śrauta sūtras*, mentions only two options- the sickle and the rib of a horse. Āpastamba (probably later than Baudhāyana) however, mentions all the three options as mentioned above as the blades for cutting the *darbha* grass.

It is interesting to note that the archaeological evidence suggests that the bones of a bull were used more commonly for making the tools and weapons in ancient India. The bones of a horse were introduced later for this purpose. However, textual references suggest that the ribs of horse must have been commonly used as blade for cutting the grass for sacrificial purpose. The bull-rib came into use later. This may be the reason why Āpastamba states that the bull-rib should be lifted *amantraka* (without reciting any mantra) and the other options *samantraka* (with the recitation of a mantra).

The present paper aims to survey the *Śrauta sūtras* to record the options of blades mentioned in them, and to see whether these options were mere regional variations or an invention of new tool in the sacrificial use.

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