

The discourse of the sage Garga is quoted in the Bṛhatsamhitā, the Atharvavedaparīśiṣṭa and Purāṇas. He authored the Gargasamhitā, which is cited in the Adbhutasāgara and the Adbhutadarpaṇa belonging to the Nibandhasūtras. The text plays an important role in the history of Indian literature. There exists a group of manuscripts entitled Gargasamhitā. What are described in these manuscripts are regarded as older than the texts that quote the Gargasamhitā, and it is possible that contents of the manuscripts are the original source of the quoted material. Despite this, very few studies have been conducted on the text and the complete text is yet to be published. At present we have only a partially revised edition of the Gargasamhitā, ‘the Yugapurāṇa’ — edited by Jayasval and Mitchiner et al.

As far as the literary work of divination is concerned, Varāhamihira composed the Bṛhatsamhitā in the sixth century. On the other hand, the Atharvavedaparīśiṣṭa contains some descriptions of divination similar to those in the Bṛhatsamhitā. It is essential that an investigation be conducted into identifying the text in which these descriptions were originally offered. Therefore, we need to study the depictions of Garga — both in the works mentioned above as well as in the text itself — in order to consider the significance of the text in the wider context of the history of Indian literature.

In this presentation, I will focus on the Chapter 39 — Utpāta-lakṣana (the characteristic of omens) — of the Gargasamhitā manuscripts. This chapter is significant because it lists a variety of omens, which concerns the causes of these omens and also outlines the rites that was believed to control their effects. I made a comparative study of the various parallel passages of the Chapter 39 and the other texts, including the Bṛhatsamhitā, the Atharvavedaparīśiṣṭa, Purāṇas, the Adbhutasāgara and the Adbhutadarpaṇa. This comparison will enable us to clarify how the authors of these texts interpreted the causes of omens. The Utpāta-lakṣana has been seen as a text that deals solely with divination; indeed, until now the majority of scholars assumed that the works of this kind generally bears only one theme. In fact, the Chapter 39 of the Gargasamhitā and many of the parallel chapters in other texts describe a variety of themes, including the divination as well. This presentation will attempt to elucidate several aspects and themes related to Dharma literature, rites and scientific knowledge, aside from divination.