

# CHAPTER

2

THE AUTHORS: 'ŚAṆKHA AND LIKHITA:  
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The authors of Dharmasūtras are considered to be traditional and hence it becomes very difficult to know about their lives. Dr.A.A.Macdonell says that 'History is a weak point in Sanskrit Literature "- history of Śaṅkha and Likhita being no exception to it. The following are the sources where we find references to them.

Tantravārtika<sup>1</sup> categorically states that Dharmasūtra of Śaṅkha-Likhita was studied by Vājaisaneyins, the followers of the śukla Yajurveda. Pathak Sridhar Shastri also mentions the same opinion.<sup>2</sup>

The Parāśara Smṛti<sup>3</sup> gives the information about the highest authorities of Dharmasūtras of four different Yugas. In Krta, Manu; in Tretā, Gautama; in Dwāpara, Śaṅkha-Likhita and in Kali, Parāśara Smṛtis were the authorities.

According to Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa<sup>4</sup> Śaṅkha and Likhita were the sons of Jaigīṣavya and Ekaparnā.

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1. वसिष्ठं बह्वचैरेव शङ्खलिखितौक्तं च वाजसनेयिभिः।

तन्त्रवार्तिक P. 174.  
2. शङ्खलिखितधर्मसूत्रं शुक्लयजुर्वेदगतशास्त्रानुसारि।

Pathak, Sridharshastri. Lectures on Dharmasāstra, P. 22.

3. कृते तु मानवा धर्मास्त्रेतायां गौतमा मताः।  
द्वापरे शङ्खलिखिताः कलौ पाराशराः स्मृताः॥

Parāśara Smṛti. I. 24.

4. Brahmāṇḍa Purāṇa, 310-21. Quoted by Prācīna caritra-  
Kośa, P. 787.

In Mahābhārata ( Critical Edition ) Śanti parva, Chap.24 contains the story of the two brothers Śaṅkha and Likhita . The purpose of these verses that describe an incident that happened in the Āśrama of Śaṅkha is to elucidate the duties of a King ( Rāja -Dharma).

To the question of Yudhiṣṭhira regarding Karma, Vyāsa quotes the event of these two brothers Śaṅkha and Likhita stayed in their Āśramas and performed penance. Both of them had beautiful gardens, where flowers and fruits were found in abundance. Likhita paid a visit to Śaṅkha's Āśrama during his absence. He plucked and ate a ripe fruit there. Śaṅkha on his return saw this. He naturally questioned him " From where did you get these fruits ? ". Likhita told his elder brother as to how he got them. On a hearing this Śaṅkha-charged him for stealing fruits from his Āśrama. He further asked him to go to the court of King for confession and punishment. Likhita did the same. Following Rājadharmā the King ordered amputation of his arms. After undergoing the punishment Likhita returned to Śaṅkha. Now Śaṅkha asked him to go to Bāhūdā<sup>1</sup> river to perform penance.

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1. The Quot. No.429 of Reconstructed text reads नर्मदाबाहुदासीरे ... The episode of S.L. Narrated in Mbh. refers to Bāhūdā- river. If in above quotation, we interpret the word Bāhūdā as an adjective of the river Narmadā, the authors would have stayed near Narmadā. So Madhya pradeśa might have been the probable native place of the Authors.

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Kane P.V.(History of Dharma, VOL.IV.P.737) gives information about the different opinions on the identification of the river Bāhūdā. He says " BAHUDĀ- ( a river near Saraswatī ) Vāyu purāṇa 88.66 states that Yuvanāśva cursed his wife Gaurī who became Bāhūdā. Amarkośa gives Śaitavāhini as a synonyma of Bāhūdā and Ksirasvāmīn comments that it was brought down by Kārtavīrya (who was called Bāhūdā, one who donated much)".

Purāṇic Enclylopaedia (1979-P-97) mentions Bahudā as a holy bath. It states that if one stays in this place for a night in celibacy and fast, one will get the fruits of performing a sacrifice to Devas (Gods). The modern investigations say that this place is on the bank of the river Dhvata which flows near Avadhī. It is mentioned in Mbh. Śāntiparva Chapter 23 that the hermit Likhita had recovered his lost hand, by bathing in this holy place and giving oblations to his ancestors.

Likhita was ~~granted~~ by the river and he got his arms back. Thereafter he returned to Śaṅkha's Āshrama.

From this story some inferences can be conjectured about two rsis Śaṅkha and Likhita. Śaṅkha was the elder brother of Likhita. Śaṅkha's insistence for bearing the fruits of the mistake that Likhita had committed reveal that Śaṅkha knew Dharmaśāstra. To him every one whosoever he may be must be punished, if one disobeys the law.

The king addressed Likhita by Bhagavāna Brahmarṣi, Viprōrsi, Brāhmaṇarṣabha. This shows what respect he commanded. The reference from Parāśara smṛti that Śaṅkha-Likhita were authorities in Dwāparayuga seems to be correct. After studying the society they framed rules, which became prevalent in that period. The story depicted in the previous paragraph shows the trust and faith that Śaṅkha had in the penence, and that was proved by Likhita's regaining his arms.

The content of the available reconstructed text of Ś.L. shows the deep study of vedas and other śāstras of the authors. They have tried to formulate the best norms and set high values for an ideal society, giving much importance to Āhnikā. Tarpaṇa portion given elaborately by them is not found in Manu and Yājñavalkya smṛtis. Ś.L. hardly differs with dharmasūtras of Gautama and Āpastamba. Śrāddha Śuddhi etc. are also well discussed. In Vyavahāra they describe in brief the duties of the King. But dāyabhāga is their important contribution. In the Prāyaścittādhyāya mahāpātakas, upapātakas and different vratas are treated well.

These two sa<sub>g</sub>es of Ś.L. are depicted as Duṣṭakārmās in Chapter 1 ) of Jaminīya Aśvamedha. Looking to the vast striking differences in the characteristics of these two sages with regard to the earlier referred ones, it may be assumed that Śaṅkha and Likhita of J.A. were different from Śaṅkha and Likhita of the Mahābhārata.