

# Satapatha Brahmanam

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## Abstract

A study on Brahmana of the Shukla Yajurveda. The study is on identifying the source and evolution of present-day Hindu religious Practices.

**Keywords:** Vedic Thought, Belief Systems of Hinduism

## Foreword

Vedic literature forms the basic source to know about the Aryan India. Each Veda consists of four parts namely the Samhita, the Brahmana, the Aranyaka and the Upanishads. Each Veda has one or more Brahmanas associated with it. Each Brahmana is followed by a particular Shakha or the people following a Vedic school of thought. It is unfortunate that much of the Brahmanical literature has been lost or destroyed and so became extinct. Now, we are left with less than twenty Brahmanas only. As per scholars, the Brahmanical period is presumed to be between 900 BCE to 700 BCE. It almost co-exists with the period of Zoroastrianism which flourished in Persia between 1500 BCE TO 1000 BCE and the period of the Goutama Buddha who lived between 563 BCE TO 483 BCE and that of the Mahaveer of Jainism who lived between 540 BCE to 468 BCE. As such, we cannot rule out the possibility of the contemporary religious thought on the Brahmanical literature and vice versa. As per scholars, the Brahmanical period is presumed to be between 900 BCE to 700 BCE.

Along with the Samhita and Aranyakas, the Brahmana texts of the Vedas, provide us crucial historical and religious information about the evolution of various Vedic rituals, their procedural details and philosophical thought of that time. The Brahmins give us the information of the transition period, the period between the early Vedic period and the later Brahmanical period. The Brahmins give interpretation to Samhita and application of the Vedic verses in performing the various sacrifices. The Satapatha Brahmana gives us the detailed information of fire rituals, Soma rituals, Pashubandha and Asvamedha sacrifices etc. The Brahmana literature acts as a link between the Samhita part and the Aranyaka and Upanishadic parts. Philosophical and spiritual enquiries emerge from the Brahmanas and find their depths in Aranyakas and Upanishads. Thus, the Brahmana literature forms the basis for emergence of deeper philosophical thought. The intention of the author is to throw some light on the much ignored Brahmanical literature and the Vedic religion.

The intention of the author is to introduce the much unexplored and ignored parts of Vedic literature to the current day readers so that we can trace back the foot prints of our culture at the times of Vedic Hinduism. Hope, the readers will appreciate my attempt.

## An introduction to Yajurveda and Brahmana literature of the Vedas

“Gadyatmakam Yajuh.”- Yajurveda is mostly in prose form. “Yajur Yajateh”- It is about how to perform the Vedic sacrifice. Yajurveda is the prescribed manual for the chief priest, Adhvaryu as it gives the

details of the way of performing the yajna, the Vedic sacrifice. While the Rigveda comprises of hymns in praise of the deities, the Yajurveda introduces certain philosophical doctrines also. In Yajurveda, we also see the ritualistic symbolism and foundations of the later Hindu mythology. Yajurveda discusses about the concepts like Prana and Manas with respect to the individual and also the cosmos. Yajurveda consists of two parts namely, the Krishna Yajurveda and the Shukla Yajurveda.

Krishna Yajurveda is an ancient version belonging to Brahma school. Here, we see an inter mix of verse and prose, of mantra and Brahmana together without much distinction. Shukla Yajurveda is a later refined version belonging to the school of Aditya. In Shukla Yajurveda, we see a clear distinction between the mantra and Brahmana parts.

Seer Vaishampayana taught the Yajurveda to Yajnavalkya along with some other pupils. On a certain occasion, Vaishampayana became furious about Yajnavalkya and asked him to give back the knowledge that was imparted by him. Yajnavalkya, without any hesitation, by the power of his austerities, vomited the knowledge in the form of Tejas (brilliant light). On seeing this, seer Vaishampayana ordered the other pupils to protect the knowledge so that it would be preserved for the posterity. This is the knowledge passed down from his master Shri Krishna Dwaipayana and it is very much required for conducting the Vedic sacrifices. So, it is to be protected. Assuming the forms of Tittiri birds, his other pupils swallowed the Tejas came out from Yajnavalkya. Thus, the knowledge is saved and it is called Taittiriya Samhita as protected by the Tittiri birds. It is also called the Krishna (black) Yajurveda because, it was the knowledge passed down by Shri Krishna Dwaipayana, the Vyasa. Originally, the Krishna Yajurveda had 86 recessions but due to the socio political changes over centuries, we are left with only four recessions. The Taittiriya Brahmana, Charaka -Kathaka Brahmana and Kapisthala -Katha Brahmanas are associated with the Krishna Yajurveda.

On losing the knowledge, Yajnavalkya repented and he decided to get back the knowledge. He observed severe penance for the grace of the Sun god and with his blessings; he could get back the knowledge that was lost by him. The Sun god taught him the knowledge of the Yajurveda in the form of a Vaji, the horse. It is known as the Shukla (white) Yajurveda as taught by the brilliant Sun god and alternatively as Vajasaneya Samhita as the Sun god taught the knowledge in the form of Vaji, the horse. Krishna Yajurveda has two recessions namely Madhyandina Shakha and Kanva Shakha. This part of Yajurveda originally had 16 recessions. But, only two recessions are available as on date. It is our responsibility to protect and preserve even the left over knowledge. It is the only source to learn about our ancient folks, their thought patterns and belief systems. Satapatha Brrhama belongs to the Shukla Yajurveda.

### **The Satapatha Brahmana**

The Brahmana literature provides an explanation and commentary on the mantras of the Vedas. They give the details of the ritualistic practices associated with the followers of the respective branch. The Satapatha Brahmana also provides explanations and instructions for conducting various Vedic rituals, construction of the altars for holy fire, the deities to be invoked, the material needed, the metres and verses to be recited at various steps and the offerings to be made etc. It is divided into hundred chapters and so the name Satapatha Brahmana. This Brahmana is meant for those, who follow the Shukla Yajurveda path.

The Satapatha Brahmana introduces some philosophical concepts. It tries to provide an insight into the nature of the creation, the role of the Vedic sacrifices for attaining long life, progeny, wealth, glory and for overcoming the foes and evil forces. It also explains the philosophical meaning of the rituals

and their link to higher cosmic structures like heaven, the ultimate reality and the spiritual goals like attaining heaven or the status of gods or immortality. The Satapatha Brahmana lays the foundation for various puranic legends, the concepts of the ancient Hindu mythology, and incarnations of lord Vishnu. We see the origins of ancient myths and legends, such as the story of Manu and the flood, and the origin of various Puranic avatars especially the Koorma and Matsya. But, the Satapatha Brahmana did not mention them as incarnations of lord Vishnu. I personally feel that this text might have been contributed to the later evolution of puranic and Vaishnavite thought in India which may be thought to be the modern Hinduism.

Apart from its descriptions of ritualistic practice, the Satapatha Brahmana reveals some concepts of geometry especially with respect to the construction of the fire altars and astronomy and astrology of the Vedic times. In short, the Shatapatha Brahmana is a vital text for understanding Vedic rituals, philosophical ideas of the Vedic periods, and the basis for development of later Hindu thought. It provides valuable insights into the history, mythology, and scientific knowledge of the Vedic period. This book explores selective topics only and wherever the process of a particular Havan is described in detail; I confined my subject to the core content rather than detailed procedures mentioned as the detailed process of yajna is not relevant to the common reader. However, every care has been taken that no core subject will be left out.

### **Purification process of sacrificial oblations**

#### **(1st Kanda, 1<sup>st</sup> Adhyaya, 4th Brahmana)**

As per the oblations offered, the Srauta sacrifices can be classified into two broader categories. Sacrifices where in 1) offerings of ghee, milk, rice, barley, etc., are made and 2) offerings of libations of Soma are made. The pashubandha, or animal-sacrifice, is added as a third division. We may observe primitive thinking patterns on one side and some higher understanding on the other. The Brahmana literature primarily focuses on how a sacrifice is to be performed and how the deities are to be invoked and appeased through offerings.

Satapatha Brahmana says that, once, the sacrifice escaped the gods. It transformed into a black antelope and roamed about. The gods how ever found it and stripped its skin and brought the skin with them. Its white and black hairs represent the Rics and the Samas. The brown and the yellow ones, on the other hand, represent the Yajus. So, the skin of black Antelope represents the triple science, the completeness. So, the sacrifice is performed on the black antelope skin. The skin of the black antelope may be regarded as one of the symbols of Brahmanical worship. Manu says that the area that lies between the mountain ranges of the Himalayas and the Vindhyas, from the eastern to the western ocean is known as Aaryavarta, the land of the Aryans. We find the black antelope in this region only. So this land is suitable for sacrifice. The area that lies beyond is the country of the Mlecchas or the barbarians. This explanation clearly indicates the boundaries of Aryavarta

The skin of the black Antelope is used for husking and bruising the rice on, so that nothing of the oblations may get spilt and even if any grain should now be spilt on it, it would still remain securely established in the sacrifice. The sacrificer shakes it with recitations of so that it is shaken off to drive away the Raakshas and the evil. So, the priest repels from it the evil spirits. While shaking, he holds it apart from the vessels to ensure that no impure matter will touch the sacred vessels. He spreads the skin on the ground with the hairy side upwards, and with its neck-part turned to the west. Then, he recites the verses which mean, “You are the skin of Aditi. Let Aditi acknowledge you” Aditi is this earth, and

whatever is on her, that serves as a skin to her. The priest establishes a mutual understanding between Aditi and the black antelope skin thinking that 'they will not hurt each other.' While it is still being held down with his left hand, he takes the mortar with his right hand, fearing lest the evil spirits, the Raakṣas, might rush in there in the meantime. He puts the mortar on it, reciting verses which mean that "You are the wooden stone Adri" You are the broad-bottomed stone (gravan). Here, the priest prepares the oblation by means of the mortar and pestle, and the large and small mill-stones. He recites the verses that mean "Let Aditi's skin acknowledge or accept you" so; the priest establishes a mutual understanding between the mortar and the black antelope skin.

The priest then pours the two portions of rice from the winnowing basket into the mortar. He recites the verses which mean that "You are the body of Agni, You will release the speech." The rice being the material for sacrifice becomes Agni's body. At this time, the priest releases the speech which he restrained so far. So, he says that the Agni will release the speech. Should he, utter any word, he has to recite some Ṛc or Yajus addressed to Vishnu who sanctifies the ritual and the sacrificer overcomes the shortcomings. The priest recites verses which mean that "For the pleasure of the gods I seize you," because the offered material is taken with the intention that it shall make the gods pleased.

The priest now takes the pestle and thrusts it down reciting a request verse; to prepare the oblation for the gods. The mortar (Ulukhala) and pestle (musala) are to be made of very hard wood like varana wood (Crataegia Roxburghii), or the mortar of palasa wood (Butea Frondosa), and the pestle of Khadira wood (Acacia Catechu). The mortar is to be of the height of the knee, and the pestle of three aratnis (cubits) long. They should be made of Palaasha wood. If not, they may be of Vikantaka wood (Flacourtia Sapida). If we are unable to procure them from Vikantaka wood, they may be of Kaarshmarya wood (Gmelina Arborea) or Bilva (Aegle Marmelos), or of Khadira (Acacia Catechu), or of Udumbara wood (Ficus Glomerata). These are the prescribed trees suitable for sacrificial purposes.

He then calls the Havishkrit, preparer of the sacrificial food. Now there are four different forms of this call. It is "come hither (ehi)" in the case of a Brahman. It is "approach (agahi)" in case of a member of military caste. It is "hasten hither (adrava)" in the case of a Vaishya. It is "run hither (adhava)" in case of a Shudra. It shows clearly, the Varna system had a specified gradation and honour in the society. Varnas assumed differential treatments. It is the wife of the sacrifice or some priest will respond to this call to act as Havishkrit. At the time when the Adhyaryu, the chief priest executing the performance of sacrifices, calls the Havishkrit, one of the priests beats the two mill-stones. The reason is explained as follows.

Manu was in possession of a bull. Its roar is destroying the Asuras, demons and foes. Then they discussed among themselves that this bull inflicts evil upon us. How can we destroy him? Then the Kilaata and Aakuli, the two priests of the Asuras went to Manu and said, "Manu, We will perform sacrifice for you" He said, "with what?" They said "With this bull" He said "Let it be" On the bull being killed the voice went out of him and it entered into Manaavi, the wife of Manu. When they heard her speak, the Asuras and Raakṣas were continually being crushed. They discussed among themselves and felt that by the sacrifice of the bull, we seem to have encountered still greater evil, for the human voice speaks more clearly than a sound of bull. Kilaata and Aakuli, again went to Manu and said, "Manu. We will perform sacrifice for you" He said, "with what?" They said, "With your wife" He said, "let it be." On her being killed, the voice went from her and entered into the sacrificial vessels and so the two asura priests failed to expel the asura killing voice. This same Asura-killing, foe-killing voice sounds forth from the millstones when they are beaten with the wedge. So, the priests produce this discordant noise

on this present occasion. The priest beats the mill-stones with the wedge, with the recitation of verses which mean that O wedge; you are the honey-tongued cock (Kukkuta). The bull is honey-tongued for gods and it is poison-tongued for the Asuras. The priest says, “what you were for the gods, you be, that for us”

Thereafter, the Adhvaryu takes the winnowing basket and pours out the threshed rice from the mortar into the winnowing basket, saying “May the rain-grown acknowledge or accept you” By these verses, he establishes an understanding between the threshed grains and the winnowing basket, in the hope 'that they will not injure each other.' He now winnows the rice, saying “Cleared off is the Raakṣas! Cleared off are the evil-doers” The husks which have fallen on the ground, he throws away saying “Expelled are the Raakṣas and the evil spirits”.

He then separates the husked grains from the unhusked, saying “May the wind separate you” Now, the husked rice are dropped into a pot saying “May the divine Savita, the golden-handed, receive you with a flawless hand” and “May the grains be well received” the priest then cleans them thrice, for threefold is the sacrifice. Here, some clean them with the formula “for the gods get clean, for the gods get clean” But, here when this oblation is intended for some particular deity, the priest or Havishkrit shall do it silently. . If we were to say, “For the gods get clean”, we are making it one intended for all the deities. It would thereby raise a quarrel among the deities.

It is evident from the above explanation that every act intended for Havan is treated with utmost sincerity and sacredness. Sacrifice is not a routine activity but every routine activity in the process of sacrifice is done with a divine touch and serene hearts for the gods are personifications of serenity and sacredness.

### **The spread of Brahmanical culture towards the Indo-Gangetic plains**

#### **(1<sup>st</sup> Kanda, 4<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya, 1<sup>st</sup> Brahmana)**

Videha is another name of the kingdom Mithila. Videha Mathava was the son of king, Mathu. He was living on the banks of the holy river Saraswati with his philosophical preceptor Goutama Rahugana, the son of Goutama. As per Satapatha Brahmana, Mathava Videha migrated to Mithila along with his preceptor and established the kingdom of Videha. Maathava, the Videha, was at that time on the river Sarasvati. One day, he saw Agni burning along the earth towards the eastern direction. Goutama Rahugana and the Videha Mathava followed after Agni as he was burning along. He burnt over and dried up all the rivers along its way eastwards. Now, Agni reached a river Sadaanira. It flows from the northern Himalayan Mountains. On reaching the Sadaanira, Agni stopped burning over. As the area thereafter was not sanctified by Agni, Videha and Goutama did not cross it. So, in former times, the brahmanical culture spread from Saraswati to Sadaanira. Here, Videha Maathava had established his kingdom Videha. The land east of the Sadaanira was much uncultivated, very marshy. Because it had not been sanctified by Agni Vaishvaanara, the brahmanical culture did not spread eastwards of Sadaanira. However, in the later times Brahmins made Agni to sanctify the land through sacrifices. Maathava, the Videha, then said to Agni, 'Where am I to abide?' Agni said, 'To the east of this river be your abode. This river forms the boundary of the Kosala and Videha. Satapatha Brahmana here clearly indicates the spread of Brahmanical culture from the banks of holy Saraswati towards the Indo-Gangetic plains.

Linguistically, Satapatha Brahmana belongs to the later Brahmana period. As per scholars, the time period of Satapatha Brahmana is between 1000 to 800 BCE. The initial Aryan settlements are on the



banks of the Indus-Sarasvati and from there, we see the spread of Brahmanical or Vedic culture spreading in all directions. Here, from the Brahmana, we may infer that the spread of Vedic culture occurred during this period towards the Indo-Gangetic plains. As per Rig-Veda, Aryans do not seem nomadic people migrated from elsewhere. The Indus-Sarasvati civilization is seen initially on either side of the Sarasvati River. The areas from Iran or even far on the west side of the river to the Rajasthan and Gujarat on the west side of Sarasvati, the civilization seems to cover a wide area of the golden crescent. We, see the spread of Aryan civilization in more details in the Dasharajna war of Rig-Veda Samhita. I feel the spread of this Aryan civilization happened from the Sarasvati River area to the other parts. There may be a mix of migrating tribes and conflicts with aborigines of other areas at the time of the expansion of the culture. We cannot rely upon the Aryan invasion theory or Aryan influx into India. We have to assume that there had been mix of people due to the two way migration from Brahnavarta towards Central Asia and from the Central Asia to Brahnavarta. The internal migration of Vedic people is also seen here; in this Brahmana towards the Indo-Gangetic plains and towards eastern sea of India. More detailed analysis of expansion of the Vedic culture will be discussed in my coming book “The Rig-Vedic tribes and an expansion of the Vedic culture”

### **Why oblations are offered to Prajapati in a low voice**

#### **(1<sup>st</sup> Kanda, 4<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya, 5<sup>th</sup> Brahmana)**

A dispute once took place between mind and speech as to which was superior. Both claimed their superiority over the other. Mind told the speech that it was the better because the other one cannot come out unless it is understood by mind. In response, the speech said that it was the better one because even if mind makes something known, it cannot communicate on its own. Without speech, the communication becomes incomplete. Both went to Prajapati for an appeal. Considering the arguments of both the mind and speech, Prajapati, decided in favour of the mind, saying speech is an imitator of the mind and an imitator is always inferior. Then the speech (Vac, feminine) being thus denied, was dismayed. With discontent, she told Prajapati, “I will never be your oblation-bearer” Hence whatever is performed for Prajapati at sacrifice, that is performed in a low voice.

### **Speech the sacred Writ decides the Superiority of Devas over Asuras**

#### **(1<sup>st</sup> Kanda, 5<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya, 4<sup>th</sup> Brahmana)**

The gods and the Asuras, both sprung from Prajapati. They were contending for superiority. With might and fight they failed to overcome the other. The Asuras said, “As we failed by might, let us try to overcome one another by speech, by the sacred writ (Brahman)” Those who cannot follow up our uttered speech by making up a pair, they shall be treated as defeated and shall lose everything for the opponents. It is agreed upon. The gods selected Indra as the representative for the fight of speech. The dialogue began, Indra said, “One (eka, masculine, unus)” for me. The Asuras then said, ‘One (ekaa, feminine, una) for us. Thus the pair was made. The dialogue is balanced. Indra said, “Two (dvau, masculine, duo) for me” The Asuras said, “Two (dve, feminine, duae) for us” and thus found a pair. Again, the dialogue is balanced. Indra said, “Three (Trayah, masculine) for me” The Asuras said, “Three (tisrah, feminine) for us” and thus found a pair. The dialogue remained inconclusive. Again, Indra said, “Four (catvaarah, masculine) for me” The Asuras said, “Four (catasrah, feminine) for us” and thus found a pair. No winner is decided yet in this dialogue. Indra said, “Five (pancha, masculine and Feminine, quinque) for me” Then the Asuras could not find any pair, for after numeral four there is no

pair, as Pancha is both masculine and feminine. Speech decided the winner. So, the gods won everything from the Asuras, and their rivals are stripped off.

### **The Seasons are offered a share in Sacrifice**

#### **(1<sup>st</sup> Kanda, 5<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya, 1<sup>st</sup> Brahmana)**

The seasons asked for a share in the sacrifice along with the gods. The gods were reluctant to the request. Then, the seasons went to the Asuras, the enemies of the gods. Because of the support of the seasons, the Asuras became successful in reaping and threshing the grains ahead of gods. This caused anxiety to the gods. They understood that it happened so because of the desertion of the seasons from them. They then decided to invite the seasons, but how? They made up their minds to offer the oblations to seasons, first in the sacrifice. Agni then asked, “But so far, you used to offer oblations to me first, in the sacrifice. What will be my position if you offer the oblations to seasons first?” The gods said, “We will not disturb you”. In inviting the seasons, the gods, did not disturb Agni from his place. So, Agni is immutable. On assuring so, the gods requested Agni, “Go and invite the seasons here.” Agni went to them and said, “O Seasons, I have obtained for you, a share in the sacrifice among gods.” They asked Agni, “in which form do we receive our share?” He replied, “You will be offered prayer first in the sacrifice. The seasons said to Agni, “we permit you a share along with us in the sacrifice as you have obtained it for us.” Whosoever knows that Agni is thus allowed to a share in the sacrifice along with the seasons, he is allowed to participate in all auspicious rites and for him, Agni and the seasons, themselves will ripen the plants and bless him with food. Thus, the seasons find a place alongside gods in the oblations of a sacrifice.

Here, the Brahmana means that the Agni is the yonder sun who is the negotiator with seasons of the year. It is the Sun, who causes the seasons. The Sun along with the seasons cause the formation of the year and the year is Prajapati and also the sacrifice. Prajapati is the altar and Agni is the deity on it. Together, they make the sacrifice complete. They are inseparable. As part of a year, seasons are bound to have a share in the sacrifice for the sacrifice is Prajapati. The Sun is the negotiator here as he is the fire of heavens and due to him the cycle of seasons emerges and so they are one with the yonder Sun. It is the reason that the seasons share the oblations along with Agni. By this narrative, the Brahmana brings out the nexus of Agni, the Sun and Prajapati, the sacrificial altar. Together, they make the seasons and the year. The seasons help the cropping and supply of food required for the sacrifice. As such, seasons deserve a share in the sacrifice as they are instrumental in producing food for humans and gods as well. The Brahmana recognizes everything here in this universe as a dynamic conscious entity. Nothing in this universe is static and inert.

### **The Sacrifice reinvented by Rishis**

#### **(1<sup>st</sup> Kanda, 6<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya, 2<sup>nd</sup> Brahmana)**

By performing the sacrifice, gods made the conquest of the heaven. They thought “How can we keep this celestial region unattainable by others?” They then sipped the sap of the sacrifice, as bees would suck out honey. They drained the sacrifice and effaced the traces of it with the sacrificial post known as Yupa pillar. Because, it was effaced by gods (Ayopayam), it is called Yupa. Then, they concealed themselves. Now sacrifice is not seen and the way to heaven disappeared. The Rishis heard about it, and started searching for the sacrifice. They went on praising and invoking the sacrifice observing penance. It is by their penance that seers attracted the sacrifice. They came upon searching and found the

sacrificial cake which was transformed into a tortoise and was creeping around. They saw it and thought that it must be the sacrificial cake.

Then, they said, “Stand still for the Asvins”. “Stand still for Sarasvati” “Stand still for Indra”. The tortoise did not stop but kept on crawling. Then, they said, “Stand still for Agni.” Now, it stopped. As it had stopped for Agni, the Rishis enveloped it in fire and they offered it up entirely as an oblation to the gods. Then the sacrifice pleased and appeared before the seers. They could produce it and they could spread it by the tradition of teacher to disciple and by the father to his son, when he becomes a Brahmachari on initiation. Thus, the sacrifice concealed by gods was reinvented by Rishis by penance. The mankind could attain the celestial regions of heaven with the help of the sacrifice. Agni is also referred to as Havyavahana, one who carries the offerings to Gods, converting the essence of oblations into Amrita or nectar. He carries the offerings to the gods and establishes communication between gods and humans. In absence Agni, all activities cease to exist. He is the performer, “Hotaram”. This is the reason that the tortoise, the sacrificial cake had stopped for Agni.

Symbolically, as per the Vedic tradition, the tortoise represents support, stability and longevity of Pranic force. So, it is said that the sacrificial cake turned as tortoise and crawling there searching the holy fire. Tortoise and the food both represent Prajapati, the fire altar and so, he is searching for his companion Agni so that the sacrifice becomes complete and meaningful. Sacrifice is the foundation of the universe and it associated with earth, water and cycle of time. So, the seers had to search for it. The food offered in Agni as an oblation supports the Prana of the gods. As such, the food offering in the holy fire of sacrifice is the source of entire creation and its existence as it supports all gods. Hence, the sacrificial cake turned as tortoise was searching for the sacrifice. It had stopped for Agni, when they said; “Stand still for Agni.” While it did not stop for others as it is intended for Agni only.

### **Agni, Indra and Soma, the triple aspect of a deity**

#### **(1<sup>st</sup> Kanda, 6th Adhyaya, 1<sup>st</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> Brahmana)**

Tvashtṛa had a three-headed and six-eyed son. He had three mouths. His name was Viswaroopa. One of his mouths was Soma-drinking, one spirit-drinking, and the other is for all other kinds of food. Indra hated him and cut off his heads. Now from the mouth which was Soma-drinking, a hazel-cock (francolin partridge, a heavy bodied ground dwelling bird) sprang forth. This is in brownish colour as the king Soma is brown. From the mouth that was spirit-drinking, a sparrow sprang, which sounds as if stammering because one who has drunk spirit, talks as if he is a stammered. Then from the mouth dedicated to other kinds of food, a partridge sprang. It is much variegated in colours. On its wings, there were butter-drops in one place and honey drops in another place. Tvaṣṭṛa became furious at Indra killing his son “Viswaroopa.” He performed a Soma Havan barring Indra any sacrificial offering. Indra though not invoked or uninvited, went there and consumed the pure Soma which was kept in Soma-Graha, a sacrificial vessel. The Soma however, did not go well with him. He could not digest it and it started flowing out from all the openings of the body of Indra. He pleaded the gods to cure him and was healed by the gods at Isti called Sautraamaṇi.

Tvaṣṭṛa was furious about Indra for tasting the Soma when he is not invoked for it. He felt that the Soma was desecrated and left the sacrifice. He turned the Soma-Graha into the fire, saying, “Grow thou, having Indra for thy foe.” The moment the Soma reached the fire, it developed and became possessed of Agni and Soma. Since, it was developed while rolling onwards (vṛit); it became Vrtra, the coiled. Since he sprang forth footless, he was a serpent. The Danu and Danvi duo received him like mother and



father. So, he is called Daanava. As Tvaṣṭra said, “Grow thou, having Indra for thy foe”, he was slayed by Indra. Had he said, “Grow thou, the foe (slayer) of Indra,” Vṛitra would have slain Indra. According to Taittiriya Samhita, the fault committed by Tvaṣṭra consisted in his faulty accentuation of the compound “indrassatru” in his formula. What he intended to say was that Agni, on drinking the Soma, should grow strong so as to be “the foe slayer of Indra,” and the compound should therefore have been accented on the second member, i.e. indrassatru (the foe of Indra). But by accenting it on the first member, indra-satru, he made it “having Indra for his foe slayer”. Agni, the fire, on the Soma being poured into it, rose up spirited as if to execute Tvaṣṭra's order. But, they immediately relapsed into inertness on hearing the wrong pronunciation of the mantra. Here, the Brahmana lays emphasis on accentuation of the Vedic mantra. It is utmost important that the mantra is properly uttered else, it cannot yield the required result and the danger of happening contrary will also persist. Vedic mantra is not always a prayer, it is an order too.

As Tvaṣṭra said, “Grow thou”, Vṛitra grew enormously forcing back both the western ocean and the eastern ocean. His requirement of food is also in the proportion of his expansion. In the fore-noon the gods offered him food, at mid-day, men offered him, and in the after-noon, he was offered food by Pitris, the fathers.

While Indra was moving on in pursuit of Vṛitra, he saw the Agni and Soma alongside Vṛitra. He told them, “O’ Agni and Soma, You both belong to me and I belong to you.” why do you support Vṛitra against me? “Come over to me.” They asked Indra, “What would be our reward in that case?” He offered them the cake on eleven potsherds (Ekadasha kapala Purodasha). This is the reason why there is a cake on eleven potsherds for Agni and Soma. On this offering, they went over to Indra extending their support to him and on this Indra regained all his power and prosperity i.e., the gods, all the sciences, all glory and all nourishment.. By offering the cake with eleven potsherds to Agni and Soma, Indra regained his lost glory. This is the significance of the full-moon offering, the Darshapoornamaasa. He who, knowing this, performs the full-moon offering, attains the same state of prosperity, becomes endowed with glory. He also becomes such a great consumer of food, like Vṛitra.

Now Vṛitra, on being left by Agni and Soma, lay contracted like leather. Then, Indra rushed to slay him. Vṛitra said, “Do not hurl your thunderbolt at me.” You are now what I was before. I.e. my power and prosperity have now transferred to you because of Agni and Soma. “Only cut me into two. But do not annihilate me” Then Indra said, “Be it, But you shall be my food.” Vṛitra accepted. Indra cut Vṛitra into two. From the part of his Soma nature, moon has emerged. From that part, which was demoniacal, the Kshudha (Hunger) has emerged and entered into the bellies of all creatures. So, it is said that Vṛitra was then a consumer of food, and Vṛitra is so now also. Whenever the moon waxes fuller, it fills the world with Amrita or Soma that sustains the lives of beings, trees, creepers and herbs etc. They get all nourishment due to the rays of moon. And whenever the creatures crave for food, the Kshudha (Hunger) is the Vṛitra, the belly which needs gratification. The Agni and Soma both asked, ““what share shall be ours?” The gods said, 'Who ever be the deity for whose appeasement the sacrifice is being performed and for whomsoever the sacrificial oblations are offered in sacrifice, Agni and Soma shall be offered first, some clarified butter.” It is for this reason. Whenever, the priests take out the sacrificial food for any deity, they, in the first place offer two butter-portions to Agni and Soma.

Agni then said, “In me they shall sacrifice for all of you, and I will give you a share in me” Because of this, all sacrificial offerings are made to Agni and Agni passes on the respective shares to the gods. For this reason, it is said that Agni is the integration of all the deities. Soma then said, “To me they shall

offer up and I will give you a share in me.” For this reason the priests offer up Soma to all the gods. So, it is said that the Soma is the integration of all the deities. And further, since all the gods were abiding Indra and Indra as their chief or Sreshta, it is said that Indra is the summation of all the deities. Thus any deity worshipped has three aspects i.e. of Agni, Soma and Indra in his or her expression.

To which god, do the butter portions belong? Some seers are of the opinion that it is Prajapati. The reason being the Prajapati, by offering himself as a Pashu in the sacrifice, created the cosmos, structures and inhabitants. In Vedic rituals like Agnichayana, the ritual of fire altar and Vajapeya, the sacrificer tries to connect with the spiritual wholeness of Prajapati. The Havis is drenched with butter and is made into two parts and the priests offer them to Prajapati. The two butter portions are called Ajyabhaga.

### **Establishing the Prana, The Poornima Vrat, fasting on a full moon day**

Prajaapati after creating the living beings relaxed his joints (parvan). Since Prajapati is the year, his joints are the two junctions of day and night (i.e. the, twilights), the full moon and new moon, and the beginnings of the seasons. He was unable to rise with his relaxed joints. Then the gods cured him by means of offering the Havis. By means of the Agnihotra they healed that joint which consists of the two junctions of day and night. By means of the full-moon and the new-moon sacrifice they healed that joint which consists of the full moon and new moon and by means of the three Caturmasyas (seasonal offerings) they healed that joint which consists of the beginnings of the seasons. With his joints thus healed Prajapati betook himself to the food. He who, knowing this, enters upon the fast at the very time of full moon, helps heal Prajapati's joints at the proper time, and Prajapati favours such person who observes the penance. It means that the fasting on these full moon days helps our Prana to get firmly established and activated and gain strength to win over any disease. It is the Poornima Vrat and strengthens the Pranic force, says the Brahmana.

### **Ajya Bhaga, the eyes of the sacrifice**

The two butter-portions offered to Agni and Soma are said to be the eyes of the sacrifice. It is the reason why these oblations are offered before the Havis. Some people offer Agni's butter-portion in the north-eastern part of the fire, and Soma's butter-portion in the south-eastern part. The sacrificial food, Havis represents the body of the sacrifice. When the oblations are offered before the Havis, it represents the front side of the body and so the priest places the eyes in the front, their proper place. Let him rather make the offerings in that part of the fire, where the fiercest blaze is present. It is only by placing the oblations in blazing fires, they are successfully offered.

The priest shall first recite a Ric verse as an Anuvakya or invitation. By recitation of Anuvakya, the deity will preside over there. Then the priest recites a Yajus, an offering prayer. By reciting a Yajus, the offering prayer, the deity is offered havis and gets pleased. Unless this is done, it shall be understood that the eyes of the sacrifice are not protected. It is as if the eyes are placed without any protection. Recitation of Rik and Yajus make the eyes of the sacrifice with protective layer as if they are placed in a protective cage of bones and what is anticipated will be fulfilled. He, who knows that the two butter portions are the eyes of the sacrifice and Havis as its body and the Rik and the Yajus are the protecting bone cage of the eyes of the sacrifice, he remains endowed not only with proper eyesight till old age here on earth but, he will be blessed with the divine eye sight required for yonder worlds.

### Importance of the Moon Sacrifice

#### (1<sup>st</sup> Kanda, 6<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya, 4<sup>th</sup> Brahmana)

When, Indra had hurled his thunderbolt at Vritra, he could not understand what happened and feared that he had not brought down Vritra. Indra concealed himself and went away. The gods understood that Vritra had been slain. But, Indra was seen concealed himself. Agni from the deities, Seer Hiranyastupa from the Rishis, and the Brihati from the Chandas (the metres), set about searching for Indra. Agni discovered Indra and stayed as his guest a day and night. Indra is the Vasu of gods as he is their great possession and their hero. The day, on which the Indra and Agni were together, the gods called it as Amavasya (dwelling together). Gods offered the sacrificial food “Havis”, the rice-cake on twelve potsherds (Dwadasha kapala Purodasha) for Indra and Agni, together. This is the reason why there is the offering of a rice-cake on twelve potsherds for Indra and Agni.

Indra said to the gods, “When I had hurled the thunderbolt targeting at Vritra, I was terrified and I am much emaciated and my energies are dissipated.” So, this cake does not help me regain my energy. I need something that satiates my hunger and makes me energetic. The gods accepted. The gods thought nothing else but Soma would serve the purpose and prepared the Soma for Indra. King Soma, the food of the gods, is no other than the moon. When, the moon is not seen that night either in the east or in the west, and then he visits the earth by entering into the waters and plants. By this, the waters and plants on earth gain the life supporting nature. Moon is masculine here and the waters and plants are feminine. Moon is the food of gods and he is their treasure. Since, on that night moon dwells in earth together with waters and plants and so, that night of new moon is called Amaavasya (the dwelling together).

On preparing the Soma, gods gave it to Indra and his hunger was satiated. But it did not go well with him and Indra asked gods to devise a way by which he can digest the Soma so that it will make him replete with energy. They made it agree with Indra by mixing it with boiled milk. So the Soma being mixed with boiled milk loses its intoxication but, becomes strong. So, by the libation of Soma, Indra regained his lost energy. It is the reason why the libation of sweet and sour milk is offered to Indra at the new moon sacrifice. It overpowers the evil and blesses the sacrificer with the wealth of cattle and offspring. But, the person who has not performed the Soma sacrifice shall not offer Soma libation. Vritra indeed is the moon, food of gods. During the night of Amavasya, when moon is not seen either in the east or in the west, it is said that Indra completely destroys him. It means that by new moon sacrifice, the sacrificer totally becomes victorious by overcoming all the evil with no remnants of it left out.

Some people enter into fasting when they still see the moon, on the fourteenth day of the half-month because he will not rise on the following day. Food is in store in heavens and Soma enters water and plants on earth for future vegetation, the source of Yajna so that there will be unfailing food available to gods. On the Amavasya day, as Soma is not seen in heavens, the sacrificer does not offer it to gods but he offers milk which is called Saannaayya. It becomes the Soma on that day for gods in yonder heavens.

The cows, on the previous day to the new moon, eat plants only and drink water only. It will not have the touch of Soma. So, the milk offered on the day before new moon is not imbued with Soma. On the Amavasya day, the performer of the Saannaayya causes the moon to be reproduced from the libations and offers it to gods. By doing so, he makes the moon become visible in the western sky again on the following day. Thus during the night of new moon; food moves away from the gods and comes to this earth. The gods are desirous as to how the food might come back to them. For this the gods depend on the performer. He prepares the libation of sweet and sour milk (saannaayya) and so the gods are satiated.

The Sun, who burns in yonder skies, is Indra, and that moon, the food of gods is Vritra. But why they are hostile to each other? It is because at the night after Amavasya, moon rises. Then he starts growing up and he becomes fully grown by Pournima, the day when the Sun and the moon are at 180 degrees to each other. Moon swims towards Sun and enters into his open mouth on the day of Amavasya. On the day of Amavasya, the Sun and moon are together. Having swallowed the moon, the sun rise, but the moon is not seen either in the east or in the west on that day. Vritra, the moon is annihilated but the sacrificer makes him rise again so that the food is secured.

One, who knows this and performs this sacrifice, he only exists and his enemies will perish. Having sucked him empty, Sun throws him out and so the moon is seen again. He again increases to serve that Sun as food. This phenomenon continues eternally. One who knows it and performs this sacrifice, he thrives on and his enemies will keep on losing to him. The Rig-Veda refers to Vritra in many ways. Some times as an Asura, sometimes as a dragon, sometimes as a dark cloud and sometimes as food. Always Vritra is on losing side and Indra being victorious. Satapatha Brahmana is here giving a new presentation of Vritra as the Moon.

### **The Brahmabhaga and Rudrabhaga of the sacrificial offering (1<sup>st</sup> Kanda, 7<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya, 4<sup>th</sup> Brahmana)**

Prajapati conceived a passion for his own daughter, either the Sky or the Dawn. Stories having allegorical representations shall not be misunderstood applying it to human relations. He united with her. Such a behavior towards his own daughter and who is the sister of gods is felt unpardonable. It is a sin and Prajapati is to be punished. But, who can punish the Prajapati? Gods approached Rudra, the terrific god and ruler of the cattle and wild beasts. They requested him to punish Prajapati for his wrong behavior. Rudra accepted and pierced Prajapati with a triple arrow. Prajapati was affixed to the sky (Milky Way galaxy) and the points of triple arrow are the three stars in Orion belt. More detailed presentation of it will be given in my coming book "Rig-Vedic Astronomy and the star constellations" According to the Aitareya Brahmana, the story goes with a minute difference. To punish Prajapati, the gods created a deity Bhutavat, composed of a dreadful form. This god pierced the Prajapati with his triple arrow and affixed him to the sky. On executing the punishment; he asked the gods for a boon that he should henceforth be the ruler of the cattle and wild beasts. Thus, did he become Pashupati. It is evident that the Vedic gods are not competent enough to give punishment to Prajapati. By this time, Rudra was not being offered any share in Vedic sacrifices. The Vedic gods are afraid of the Rudra, the terrific god as he imposes pain and suffering. They thought that Rudra is the appropriate one to execute punishment on Prajapati and approached him with a request to punish Prajapati. We may understand that by the time of this Brahmana, Rudra though a Vedic deity was still not assimilated into the Vedic worship on par with other gods. But, he is recognized as a powerful deity. As per the Brahmana, Rudra or Bhutavat is by his act of punishing Prajapati, sought the position of the ruler of the cattle and wild beasts. This may be treated as the entry of Pashupati, Shiva into the Vedic tradition of worship but, we still see the differential treatment of Rudra from other gods in the Vedic pantheon. Whenever, they offered oblations to Rudra i.e. the Rudrabhaga, they placed it at the centre of the four corners of a road saying that it is there he roams about and the priests after submitting the offering to Rudra, touch water for purification while that is not the practice in respect of other gods. Rudra was not offered oblations in fire on par with other Vedic gods. This differential treatment is seen abolished later and we see that Rudra is also offered oblations on par with other gods in the Asvamedha sacrifice. This part of

Brahmana might have formed the basis for the later evolved Puranic tales of Shiva removing the head of Brahma and Prajapati Daksha's enmity with lord Shiva and rejecting him a share in the sacrifice which led to the destruction of it by lord Veerabhadra. It seems that there had been a difference of opinion among the seers as to accepting Rudra or Pashupati for a share in Vedic sacrifice. In Daksha's sacrifice, Daksha and his Adhwaryu Bhrigu opposed a share to Shiva while other seers tried to convince Daksha and Bhrigu about it. This indifference towards accepting Shiva as a Vedic God had been continued and it is seen even in the present day Brahmanical worship. Certain Brahmanical sects like Vaidika Smarta, Smarta Shaiva accept Shiva as the supreme god while the sects of Brahmanical Vaishnavism oppose to it. Pashupati is clearly a pre-Vedic deity and it seems the Vedic cult in the initial periods treated him as Anarya but, afterwards they embraced him into the Vedic pantheon. It seems that the Vedic Rudra and Pre-Vedic Pashupati were fused together in the form of lord Shiva. Unlike Rudra and Pashupati, lord Shiva is seen both in Shanta and Ghora aspects and his scope widens beyond all other gods.

When the Prajapati embraced his daughter, uniting with her, he dropped his seed on the earth. Prajapati is the progenitor of all and his first creation is the Vac, the speech expressed in Chandas (Vedic meters) on which the cosmic vibration resonates. The first creation, the Vac (speech) is in the form of the primordial sound Pranava (AUM). The seed of Prajapati has become the chant Uktha which is one of the twenty six Vedic meters and it is called Agnimaaruta. The gods caused the seed to spring. According to Aitareya Brahmana, Agni Vaisvanara, aided by the Maruts, stirred the seed and from it sprang the Aditya (the sun) and, Bhrigu. The coals (angara) remaining behind after the creation of Agnimaaruta, Aditya and Bhrigu, became the Angirasa, and Brihaspati. Then the remaining coal dust, the burnt earth and ashes were changed into various kinds of animals. The passion of Prajapati for his daughter may be interpreted as the relation between Prajapati and Aditi (the undivided eternity). Prajapati is the root matrix and Aditi is his power or force. Aditi is the first dimension that emerged from Prajapati. Hence allegorically, she becomes his daughter. From this undivided eternity sprang the creation through his will or Iccha Shakti "Bahusyam Prajaya Iti." The Prajapati's seed through Aditi is the cause for creation of the Aditya (the Sun and radiance) and Bhrigu (the fire and power). These two are the essentials of any sacrifice. As Prajapati is the sacrifice, Aditya and Bhrigu have become his sons. It represents the celestial creation. Later, the sacrifice further gave birth to various beings and animals and thus the relation between Prajapati and Aditi cannot be understood in terms of human relations.

When the anger of the gods subsided, they cured Prajapati by cutting out that part of his body, where Rudra had pierced his triple arrow. Gods wanted to save Prajapati as he is the sacrifice and they get food only through sacrificial offerings. They discussed among themselves that though the small portion that is cut out from the body of Prajapati, it is also a part of sacrifice and so by any means, it shall not be lost. They took it to Bhaga. They offered it to him. As soon as Bhaga looked at it, it had burnt out his eyes. So, it is said that Bhaga is blind. They took it to Pushan. When Pushan tried to taste it, his teeth got damaged. Hence it is said that the Pushan is toothless. It is this reason why the priests prepare a mess of boiled rice called Charu for Pushan. Pushan devours or swallows the Charu, though he is toothless. Then, they took it to Brihaspati. Brihaspati rushed to Savita for his influence as Savita is the impeller of all the gods, "Savita sarvatra Prasavita." Then the cut out portion has become pacified. Brihaspati says that at the impulse of Savitha, I could receive you with the arms of Ashwins and with the hands of Pushan. When the priest cuts off the fore-portion of the sacrificial offering, Prasitra, symbolically in the sacrifice, he cuts out what is the injured part of Prajapati. This belongs to Rudra as a pierced part by



triple arrow of Rudra. It is Rudrabhaga. After cutting the Rudrabhaga, he touches water as it is a means of purification.

The story differs as per Kaushitaki Brahmana. After the Pushan, the gods took the cutout portion of Prajapati and then to Indra and Indra appeased it with Brahmana verses (Vedic mantra). From there onwards, the prayer in taking the Prasitra (the fore portion of the offering belonging to Brahma), Indra is Brahma. He averts the evil effects of the act connected with Rudra, 'the terrible god'. Prasitrahara is the pan used to place the Brahma's portion. The Brahma's regular portion (Brahmabhaga) of the sacrificial food is cut, like the Prasitra or fore-portion which, he receives as the representative of Bṛihaspati. Here, both the Rudrabhaga and Brahmabhaga are offered to Bṛihaspati only. Rudra in real terms is not offered his share but his share is given to Indra or Bṛihaspati to ward off the evil effects of Rudra. From these two variations, we may infer that there had been a difference of opinion among the seers in accepting Rudra on par with other Vedic deities. The Brahma sits south of the sacrifice, as its guardian. By the Brahmabhaga offering, he obtains his own share; and henceforth watches what remains incomplete of the sacrifice. The priest prays, "May the Bṛihaspati, who is the Brahma, spread the sacrifice and may he, restore the sacrifice uninjured?" Thus he restores the sacrifice unimpaired without losing the cut out portions of Prajapati, the sacrifice. Hence the sacrifice is protected intact. It seems the content of it might have been further elaborated in the later Puranic tale of restoring the sacrifice of Prajapati Daksha by Lord Brahma. It seems that thereafter, the practice of offering a share to lord Shiva in Vedic sacrifices has become in vogue on par with other Vedic Deities. But, the two different opinions about it are still seen among the different Brahmin sects even in the present times.

### **Ida, the sacrificial offering**

#### **(1st Kanda, 8<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya, 1<sup>st</sup> Brahmana)**

On a fine dawn while Manu was in his sacrificial bathe, a fish came into his hands. It asked Manu to protect him and promised that in turn it will save him from the trouble of a coming great flood that will carry away all the creatures. Manu asked the fish how it could save him. It said as long as the fishes are small, they are under threat from many creatures. It said, "You can keep me in a jar. When I grow, you may place me in a pond and if I outgrow, take me to the sea because by that time, I will be beyond any threat." Manu obliged. Soon, it turned into a large fish. Manu took it to the sea. It said that, in such a year, on such a day, there will be great flood of end times called Pralaya and "You can call me for help on that day. Start preparing a large ship. I will save you from the great flood." Then it entered into the ocean. Manu started preparing the ship. Soon the expected day had arrived. When the flood had risen, he entered into the boat and invoked the fish. It came to him and Manu tied the rope of the ship to its horn tightly. The fish took him safely to the northern mountain. The place seems secured and then it said, "Manu, I saved you. You may fasten the ship to a strong tree on the mountain Meru. As the waters recede, you may gradually descend to the plains." The flood swept away all these creatures, and Manu alone remained. This sort of flood myths, we see in the mythologies of all the religions and ancient cultures across the globe.

Now Manu needs offspring to multiply the mankind. He started observing austerities and performing penance. He performed a Paaka-Yajna (Yajna wherein food offerings are made). He offered up in the waters clarified butter, sour milk and curds. From the waters, a woman was produced in a year. Mitra and Varuna met her. They asked her, "Are you Manu's daughter?" She replied in the positive. They brought her to Manu. Manu asked who she was. She replied "your daughter." Then Manu

asked, “O, illustrious one, how did you become my daughter?” She replied through the offerings of butter, milk and curds to the waters, he had begotten her as a blessing. She said, “Make use of me in the sacrifice. You will become rich in offspring and cattle.” Manu made use of her as a blessing between the fore-offerings and after-offerings i.e., at the middle of the sacrifice. Manu could generate his race. This daughter of Manu is called the Ida. It is the sacrificial food cooked in Ghee. She is also described as instructor of Manu. She is called Ghritapadi as butter gathered in her footprints. As per Krishna Yajurveda Samhita, Ida represents the cow produced by the deities Mitra and Varuna. Ida blesses the mankind with cattle and offspring.

The five cuttings of the ida consist of the upastaraṇa or under layer of butter in the idapaatri, of two cuttings of each of the havis (sacrificial food) from their southern and central parts respectively and of two drippings (abhighaaraṇa) of butter, as in the case of the svistakrit havan.

### **Asterisms for setting up holy fires for Havan**

**(2<sup>nd</sup> Kanda, 1<sup>st</sup> Adyaya, 2<sup>nd</sup> Brahmana)**

#### **Krittikas**

It is said that we may set up the holy fires under the Krittikas as Kṛttikas are Agni's asterism. Other lunar asterisms consist of one, two, three stars, but, the Kṛttikas are six. So, they represent abundance. Hence the Kṛttikas are also called Bahulas, the numerous, the abundance. So, one who sets his holy fires in this asterism obtains abundance. Further, Krittikas do not move away from the eastern quarter, while the other asterisms do move from there. So, it blesses us with stability. This is the reason that we may set up holy fires under the Kṛttikas.

It is also argued that one should not set up the fires under the Kṛttikas. Krittikas are the wives of the seven great seers, Saptarshis and precluded from intercourse with their husbands. The seven seers rise in the north, and the Kṛttikas rise in the east. It is felt as a misfortune for one to be precluded from intercourse with his wife. So, one who wants progeny, should not set up his holy fires under the Kṛttikas. In spite of it, it is suggested that one may set up his fires under the Kṛttikas as Agni is their mate. For this reason we may set up the holy fires under the Kṛttikas. This concept of the Brahmana might have been the source of the later mythological story of Agni's desire for the wives of Saptarshis and his wife Swaha, satisfying him in the form of the wives of Saptarshis.

#### **Rohini**

For the asterism of Rohini, Prajapati is the ruler. He represents progeny. One who desires progeny shall set up his holy fires under Rohini. Prajapati is like a red (Kapila) cow and so the cow-like nature of Rohini. As per Taittiriya Brahmana, Prajapati created Agni under the asterism of Rohini. So, the gods then set up their fire under the same asterism. It blesses us to be rich in cattle and offspring. So, we can set up holy fires under Rohini.

#### **Mṛigaseersha**

Mṛigaseersha is the head of Prajapati. As head, it indicates the excellence. One, who wants to become an excellent leader or head of the community, shall set up his holy fire under Mṛigaseersha. Some people argue that we should not set up the fires under Mṛigaseersha as the sacrificial fire is the body of Prajapati and when Rudra pierced him with the three-knotted arrow, he abandoned that body. So the abandoned body is unholy and lifeless. Therefore we should not set up holy fires under Mṛigaseersha.

However, the body of Prajapati, is neither a relic nor unholy. So, we may set up holy fires under Mṛigasirsha. However, it is said that by setting up the holy fires under Mṛigaseersha, One should perform

Punaraadheya under the Punarvasu.

### **Phalgunis**

The Phalgunis are Indra's asterisms. Indra is the deity of the sacrifice. Agnyaadheya, setting of holy fires is therefore related to Indra. So, one can set up the fires under the Purva-Phalgunis. Thereby, one achieves success through sacrifice. One can also set them up under the Uttara-Phalgunis. One achieves a progressive (uttaravat) improvement through the sacrifice.

### **Hasta**

We can set up the holy fires under the asterism Hasta. Whatever be the wish that will be fulfilled. Whatever, that is offered with the hand that will return back in multifold as a blessing. It offers protection and prosperity.

### **Chitra**

Both the gods and the asuras are offspring of Prajapati. Each of them claimed for superiority over the other. They were desirous of rising to yonder worlds, the sky and heavens. Asuras then started constructing a fire altar called Rauhina, which means that is fit for ascending to, as Aaruh means ascend to the sky. Indra, in the guise of a Brahmana presented there with an intention to disturb the act of Asuras. He thought that if their attempt is not foiled; they will succeed and attain the heavens. He approached the asuras as if he was helping them in the construction of fire altar. He would put up a brick in the construction and later at the time the altar is about to complete, he would take back the brick saying, "I will take back this brick as it belongs to me". The fire altar then used to collapse and their attempt is thus foiled. He collected these bricks and converted them into thunderbolts and with these he split the necks of Asuras. The Gods praised Indra for his deed of slaying the enemies saying Chitram (wonderful). Hence, the wonderful nature of this asterism is called Chitratvam. So, by setting up holy fires under Chitra, one would definitely win over his enemies. A Kshtriya, who wants to vanquish his opponents, should especially take advantage of this asterism.

### **Sun is the essence of all the Asterisms**

The Nakshatras used to have different powers (Kshatras). But as soon as the Sun rose, he had taken away (Ada) their energies and power. So, he is called Aditya, one who had devoured the powers of all the asterisms. Then the Gods said that those Kshatras, which are the centres of power, are now with no power as Aditya had consumed all their powers. So, they called the asterisms as Nakshatra. As such, one need not be desirous of having a Nakshatra under which he would set up his fires. Sun is the essence of all the asterisms. So, by the rising and setting of the Sun, one can obtain the benefits of whatever asterism, he might desire. So, it is said that let us take the Sun alone for the Nakshatra. As per Taittiriya Brahmana, the Purva Phalguni is the asterism of Aryaman, and the Uttara Phalguni is that of Bhaga. Though, both these asterisms are recommended for the agnyadheya, the Purva Phalguni is rejected as unsuitable. The Asvalayana Sutras say that both the Hasta and Citra also are to be omitted. But, the asterisms Vishakha and Uttara Bhadrpada are permitted.

The tenth mandala of Rig-Veda speaks of the star constellations and various celestial configurations like galaxies and Vishnunabhi, the centre of the entire universe around which everything revolves. It speaks about the Polar star called Dhruva and the Great Bear, Ursa Major or Saptarshi Mandala. But, we do not see any specific reference to the predictive astrology. Contrary to it, Satapatha Brahmana, here speaks of the benefits that will arise from establishing the holy fires under different asterisms. The holy fires are to be established under the asterisms mentioned in accordance with the benefits anticipated. We may treat it as a foundation to the concept of development of Predictive astrology. It may be noted that the

Brahmana is not speaking anything about the planets and their impact on the events to occur, though it refers to Rahu as the darkness that enshrouds the Sun and Agni and Indra saving him from the shackles of dark Rahu. The concepts of predictive astrology may be ancient but the acceptance of it is specifically seen here in the form of stellar astrology. The Vedic predictive astrology seems to lay more emphasis on asterisms rather than the planets.

### **Seasons and the setting up of the holy Fires**

#### **(2<sup>nd</sup> Kanda, 1<sup>st</sup> Adhyaya, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brahmana)**

The three seasons namely spring, summer, and the rainy season represent the gods. The other three seasons namely autumn, winter, and the dewy season represent the Pitris i.e. the fathers. Likewise in time, the half-moon in which the moon increases, Shukla Paksha, represents the gods. The half-moon in which the moon decreases represents the Pitris i.e. fathers. The day represents the gods, and the night represents the Pitris. The forenoon represents the gods and the afternoon the Pitris. He, who invokes them accordingly, as the gods and Pitris; they will comply the invocation and render their blessings. It is to be noted that the Veda recognizes every entity in the creation as a conscious body.

When the Sun moves northwards, it is Uttarayana, he moves among the gods. During that period, he protects the gods. When he moves southwards, it is Dakshinayana, then he moves among the Pitris, then he protects the fathers. One who sets up the holy fires when the Sun is moving in Uttarayana, for him, the gods will dispel all his evil or sins as the Sun is on their side. The gods are immortal and so one who sets up his fires during this period; he will attain immortality and full length of mortal life. One who sets up his holy fires when the Sun is moving in Dakshinayana, he cannot drive away the evil or sins totally from him as the Pitris have not yet totally dispelled the evil from them. As the Pitris are mortal, one who sets his holy fires too cannot be immortal. So, he cannot enjoy the full stretch of mortal life.

Satapatha Brahmana says that the spring is the priesthood, summer is the nobility, and rainy season is the common man. A Brahmin therefore should set up his fires in the spring season as the spring is the priesthood. Any person, who desires to attain holy lustre (Brahmavarchas), let him set up his holy fires in spring. A Kshatriya should set up his fires in summer as the summer is the nobility. Those who desire to attain power and prosperity; they shall set up their fires in summer. One who desire to be rich in progeny and cattle, he shall set up his fires in the rainy season.

However, some sages opine that both the Uttarayana and Dakshinayana have the evil dispelled from them because the Sun is the dispeller of their evil or sin as he is the divine radiance, life giver and the soul of the universe. As soon as he rises, he dispels the evil from both of these seasons automatically. One should therefore set up his fires at any time, when he intends to call upon the sacrifice and the deities. As a mortal, he shall not postpone it.

### **The food offerings to the Pitris, the fathers**

#### **(2<sup>nd</sup> Kanda, 4<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya, 2<sup>nd</sup> Brahmana)**

The gods, bending their right knee and wearing the sacrificial cord (Yajnopaveeta) as garland approached Prajapati. They asked him to teach them the way, they had to live. Prajapati replied, "The sacrifice shall be your food, immortality or nectar shall be your drink and the Sun shall be your light." Then the Pitris or fathers approached the Prajapati, wearing the sacrificial cord (Yajnopaveetham) on the right shoulder, and bending the left knee. They too asked him to teach the way they have to live. Prajapati said, "Your food shall be once monthly, Svadha shall be your swiftness of thought and the

Moon shall be your light.” Then the humans approached Prajapati asking the same question. They approached him wearing the sacrificial cord on the left shoulder and bending their bodies. Prajapati told humans, “You shall eat twice a day in the evening and in the morning, you shall be mortal with clan continuing with offspring and the terrestrial fire or Agni shall be your light.” Then the beasts approached the Prajapati. They are offered free choice and so, whenever they find anything, whether in season or out of season, they shall eat it. Later, the Asuras approached Prajapati. He gave them the darkness (Tamas) and illusion (Maya). There were no restrictions as to what they should eat but they were not granted any light. Neither the gods, nor the fathers, nor beasts, nor asuras shall transgress this ordinance. Hence, we are supposed to take food only twice a day, in the morning and in the evening so that the lustre shall remain. Any excess will be poisonous.

The lustre belongs to him who presents food to the fathers once a month, on the day of Amavasya. But, this is the day on which the Soma (the Moon) is absent in heavens and we have to offer food to the gods through the new moon sacrifice on the same day. Then, how can we offer the food it to Pitris? The forenoon belongs to the gods, the mid-day to men and the afternoon to the fathers. Therefore we have to present food to the Pitris in the afternoon only. For this reason, in the Pitrukaryas (ceremonies to fathers), we offer Pindapradan to Pitris after 12 noon only.

The sacrificer or priest, while seated behind the Garhapatya fire, with his face turned toward the south and with the sacrificial cord on his right shoulder, shall take the material for the offering and then he shall rise from there and thresh the rice while standing north of the Dashina fire, facing the south. He shall clean it only once as the Pitris have passed away once for all. He shall then boil it. Standing on the Dakṣiṇa fire, the sacrificer shall pour some clarified butter on it. For the gods, we pour the offering into the fire, for men we take the food off the fire and for Pitris, we pour the ghee on the food while the food stands on the fire. After removing it from the fire, the priest offers the gods, two libations in the fire. It is done so, so that the gods remain established in his sacrificial fires and for performing the new-moon and full-moon sacrifice, the householder has to resort to the gods. Now, the sacrificer is engaged in a sacrifice to the fathers. Hence he first propitiates the gods, and being permitted by the gods, he presents the food to the Pitris. Hence, the sacrificer offers to the gods, two libations in the fire. He offers them to both the Agni and Soma. It is because the Agni has a share in every offering and Soma is sacred both to gods and the fathers. This is why the sacrificer offers libations both to Agni and Soma.

The sacrificer then puts the pot-ladle on the fire, that being in lieu of the Sviṣṭakṛit. It is primarily used for stirring and serving ingredients during sacrificial offerings and also it plays a crucial role in the sacrifice by offering portions of food. Thereupon he draws with the wooden sword, one line south of the Dakṣiṇa fire that is in lieu of the altar. Only one line is drawn, because the Pitris have passed away once for all. Then, the sacrificer lays down a firebrand at the farther south end of the line. If one presents food without this firebrand, it would be tampered by the Asuras and Rakshas. It is prayed that the Agni may expel all the Asuras and Rakshas roaming around there at the sacrifice. Thus, they are driven away from the place of the ceremony.

The sacrificer then takes the water-pitcher and makes the fathers to wash themselves. First, the father of the sacrificer is called upon with name, then the grandfather and the great grandfather along with their names. Now the stalks of sacrificial grass are severed with one stroke, and cut off near the root, for the top belongs to the gods, the middle part to men, and the root-part to the fathers. And with one stroke they are severed, because the fathers have passed away once for all.



The sacrificer spreads them along the line with their tops towards the south. Thereon he presents to the fathers the three round cakes of rice, one for the father of the sacrificer, one to his grandfather and the other to his great grandfather. He then prays, "Here, O fathers, food is presented to you. You come here like bulls; enjoy the respective share offered to each of you." Now, they arrive and enjoy their respective share.

Then the sacrificer takes the water-pitcher and makes the Pitris wash their hand and legs, by invoking their names respectively. He then pulls down the tuck of the sacrificer's garment and performs obeisance, his submission. The tuck is sacred to the fathers, therefore he performs obeisance to them after pulling down the tuck. Now obeisance means worship, an act of special respect. Hence, the performer thereby renders them worthy of worship. Six times he performs obeisance, for there are six seasons, and the fathers are the seasons. After the cakes have been put back in the dish containing the remains of boiled rice, the sacrificer smells at the rice as this smelling is the share of the sacrificer. The stalks of sacrificial grass cut with one stroke he puts on the fire and he also again throws away the firebrand.

As per Kanva recession, the wife of sacrificer, if desirous of a son, eats the middle cake with the prayer, "Bestow offspring on me, O fathers, a boy crowned with lotuses, there may be a man here," and the other two cakes are thrown into the water or fire or eaten by a priest.

### **The Triambaka offerings**

#### **(2<sup>nd</sup> Kanda 6<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya 2<sup>nd</sup> Brahmana)**

By offering oblations in the sacrifice, the gods could slew Vritra. The arrows thrown by Vritra, while they were engaged in war with him lay stricken in their bodies. To remove them from their bodies, they performed the Triambaka sacrifice. Thus, they could remove the stricken arrows. So, by performing the Triambaka offerings, the sacrificer will not suffer from any arrow of misfortune, disease or blemish. Neither the men belonging to the sacrificer will face such a suffering as Rudra is the arrow and by the Triambaka offerings, the sacrificer delivers the power of Rudra on his descendants and followers. In this sacrifice, there will be as many cakes as the number of descendants exceeded by one.

The sacrificer, when seated behind Garhapatya, facing north, will take out the rice for those cakes. He rises and threshes the rice, facing the north direction. He places the two mill-stones on the black antelope skin inclining towards the north and puts the potsherds on the north side of the Garhapatya fire because the northern quarter is the direction of Rudra. The cakes are the Havis and they will be consecrated with ghee. Rudra would desire the cattle of the sacrificer, if he were not to anoint the cakes. The cakes are removed from the potsherds into one dish, and taken a fire-brand from the Dakshinagni. The sacrificer walks towards the northern quarter. He offers it on a cross-road, as it is on such road, Rudra roams and haunts. The sacrificer offers it with the central leaflet of a palasa-leaf as the palasa-leaf is the Brahmin (priesthood). He takes a cutting from the northern part of all the cakes. It is Rudrabhaga. In Triambaka sacrifice, an additional cake is offered. But, from that additional cake, no piece is cut. It remains as a whole.

It is offered with the prayer, "This is thy share, O Rudra, kindly accept it together with your sister Ambika." Because this share belongs to Rudra, conjointly with a woman, these oblations are called Tryambakaḥ. By this oblation, sacrificer delivers the power of Rudra to his descendants. Taittiriya Brahmana identifies the sister of Rudra with the autumn season, wherein the god Rudra won't hunt. The sacrificer buries the additional cake in a small mound saying, "This is thy share, O Rudra and the mouse

is your victim". It means that the sacrificer assigns to Rudra, only one animal i.e. the mouse as the victim and so Rudra cannot injure any other animal. Further, the sacrificer buries the cake concealed. It represents the embryos of the posterity yet to come into life. So by this offering, the sacrificer delivers the power of Rudra on descendants yet to born in his family also. Taittiriya Brahmana suggests naming the victim to indicate the one the Sacrificer hates; thereby he delivers the enemy over to Rudra as a victim. If he hates no one, let him say, "The mouse is thy victim." Then the sacrificer turns to the fire and says that the divine Tryambaka, on being satisfied may make the sacrificer richer and prosperous. He recites the Triambaka Yajamaha mantra seeking the blessings of Triambaka Rudra.

The Sacrificer now takes those remains of the cakes into his joined palms and throws them upwards higher than a cow can reach. Thereby the sacrificer cuts out Rudra's arrows from the bodies of his men in a manner that gods removed the stricken arrows of Vritra from their bodies. If they fail to catch them, they touch those that have fallen to the ground. Thereby they make them medicine. Then the sacrificer packs them into two net-work baskets and tied them to the two ends of either a bamboo staff or the beam of a balance. He steps aside towards the north and if he meets with a tree or a boundary or an ant-hill, he fastens them there saying, "These, O Rudra, are thy provisions. By accepting these, please depart beyond the mountain Mujavat. Let your bow be let loose and kept not in use so that it will not hurt us." Mujavat is a peak of Himalayan mountain where the Soma is found. The sacrificer then turns to the right and returns to the Uttaravedi, without looking back. Uttaravedi is special type of fire altar used in Agnichayana. It is usually in a hawk's shape. Having returned to Uttaravedi, the sacrificer touches water as an act of purification. Then, he shaves his hair and beard, and takes up the fire of the Uttaravedi and changing his place to the ordinary sacrificial ground he performs the full-moon sacrifice on that fire. Ongoing home, he churns out the fire and performs the full-moon offerings. Thus, by the Triambaka offerings, one removes the evil, sins and blemishes not only from himself but also from those of his followers and the offspring yet to join their families.

### **The Trayee, the triple science of Veda (Ric, Yajus and Sama) (4<sup>th</sup> Kanda 6<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya 7<sup>th</sup> Brahmana)**

The Rics are said to be this earth because it is on this earth that we sing them. The Rics are also the speech because we utter them in communication. The Yajus are the air and the Samas are the sky. By the Ric one conquers this earth, by the Yajus the air, and by the Sama the sky. So, one should perfect all the three sciences to conquer the entire world. This triple science is the thousand fold progeny of Vac, the speech. The Rics and Samas are Indra. So, Indra obtained two thirds of it. Yajus are Vishnu. So, Vishnu obtained one thirds of it. Sadas or vedic assembly is Indra. For this reason, in a Sadas, the learned recite the Rics and Samas to glorify Indra. By means of Yajus, they invoke Vishnu in the sacrifice.

In a Sadas, Sama the male longs for the Ric, the female. From that fire of desire, Indra was produced. He is the lord of both Ric and Sama. For this reason, the seers call Indra as the fire that burns the skies as the Rik represents earthly fire and Sama represents the heavenly fire (Sun). So, he is the overlord of these two regions. In the Havirdhana (place of sacrifice), Soma, the male longs for water, the female. From that desire, the moon was produced. Moon or Soma is food for the Sun. Similarly, from the Ric and Sama, the sacrificer is produced and from water and Soma, produced the food for him.

The gods realized their wishes and desired objects by observing the Trayee, the three sciences namely Ric, Yajus and Sama. The Yajus fulfilled most of their wishes. It seemed as if Yajus, the air world were completely got emptied due to its excessive use. By excessive use of it by the gods, for fulfilling their

desires, the air world has become inferior to the earth and heaven. The gods thought of how they could make the Yajus, the air world again filled with power so that it will become equal to the other two worlds, as before.

The Rics and Samas are speech, and the Yajus are the mind. They performed Yajna in a low voice, and thereby strengthened the air world. The air-world was one again become equal to the other two worlds. Thus, it is said that one who performs the Yajus, in a low voice strengthens them and who performs them in a loud voice weakens them. It is so because the Yajus is the mind and it is inaudible and indefinable. For performing the Ric and Sama, speech is the requirement. But, for Yajus, it is the mind. The speech emerges, expresses itself primarily and also it is conceived by the mind only. Adhvaryu, the mind, walks in the front impelling and guiding the thoughts and actions lest we should not perform any activity. So is the lord Vishnu, the lord of Yajus. He impels all the other. One who knows this, he stands in front through his prosperity and glory.

The Rics and the Samas are speech, and the Yajus are the mind and they complement each other. We know about Speech as it is an expressed one and so we know about it. But, we do not know anything about the mind what it thinks of as it is abstract and not seen unless it is expressed. So is lord Vishnu.

The gods requested the goddess speech to go forward and make them known everything that they have to do. She asked what her reward would be. Gods offered that whatever offered in sacrifice with Svaha but without Vashat, that should be her share. She then went forward and made them known what to do. Thus the mind and speech complement themselves in the sacrifice. The Trayee, the triple science is the summation of both the speech and mind. So, there is a need for perfection of speech and clear mind as well and a balance of these two without any excessive use or misuse of it for material gains. This applies not only to the Vedic sacrifice, but also in any planned human action as the Veda recognizes every action as a part of the sacrifice of human life.

### **Pashubandha , the animal sacrifice to Prajapati**

#### **(4<sup>th</sup> Kanda 6<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya 8<sup>th</sup> Brahmana)**

Grihapati means the house holder. House holder's fire is called Garhapatya. Dakshinagni is the fire altar on the south and Ahavaniya is the fire altar situated on the eastern side and designated for making the offerings to the gods. Pashubandha is an animal sacrifice to consecrate ourselves. Those who intend to consecrate themselves, let them first decide the time and place of the sacrifice. For constructing the fire-altar, they take up their ordinary sacrificial fires on churning-sticks and they go together to the place where they decided to perform the animal sacrifice to Prajapati. They churn the fire, put fire-wood on and take out the Ahavaniya fire and perform the animal offering to Prajapati. Then, they have to perform the consecration ceremony.

If the consecration happens to fall on another day especially when the sacrifice extends more than a day, then on the day of consecration, the Grihapati churns his fire first in the centre of the hall. One half of the performers settle down south to him and one half, north to him. After churning the fires, they put on fire-wood; they take one fire-brand each from their fires and go together to the Grihapati's Garhapatya fire. Having taken out the Ahavaniya from the Grihapati's Garhapatya, they perform the consecration-ceremony. There is only Ahavaniya, but different Garhapatyas, during the consecration and the Upasads (ceremonies).

There is another way. On the day of the consecration-ceremony, the Grihapati churns the fires first, and then the others churn, seated around him. They throw each of their fires produced on the Garhapatya of

Grihapati. Having taken out the Ahavaniya from the Grihapati's Garhapatya, they perform the diksha, the consecration. Theirs is the same Ahavaniya and the same Garhapatya during the consecration and the Upasads.

There is a third way also. They commune among themselves while the Grihapati is churning-sticks that, "Let the fire produced, be that our common fire" "Whatever is gained by this animal sacrifice, be that ours in common." "In common be our good work. Whosoever shall do evil, be that his alone." Having thus spoken, the Grihapati first takes up the fire on the churning-sticks and takes it up for the others, or they will take it up for themselves. They go together to the place where they intend to perform the animal offering to Prajapati. Having churned the fire and put on fire-wood, they take out the Ahavaniya and perform that animal offering to Prajapati.

Then, they will collect the Soma-plants. The Grihapati raises the Garhapatya fire and on the Upavasatha (fasting) day, he raises the dhishnya (designated individual fire altars) fires for the others. At the time of the Vaisarjina (closing or immersion) offerings, the wives come forward together and the sacrificer abandons the other Garhapatya fires. As soon as the Vaisarjina offering has been performed, King Soma leads forward. The Agnidhriya fire is taken up on the support. The performers take one fire-brand each from the fire at the entrance of the hall. Agnidhriya is one of the three priests accompanying the Brahma (the chief priest). His role is to protect the holy fires. They disperse to their several dhishnya fires. Yajnavalkya says, "They, who do so, slay the evil and slay the foes with those fire-brands." The reason for having different dhishnyas is that there would be wider space for moving about as they have different Purodhas (the offering cakes) i.e. the more sacrificial food for completeness of the ceremony. By performing the sacrificial session the gods quickly drive out evil, and the sacrificer gains the supreme authority which the gods hold.

The hall with the roof-beams running from south to north is a human practice. There is one Ahavaniya, and different Garhapatyas. On the Grihapati's Garhapatya they perform the Patnisamyajas (offering to gods along with their wives) with the tail of the victim, and the others sit offering the ghee. The hall with the roof-beams running from west to east is for gods. There are the same Ahavaniya, the same Garhapatya, and the same Agnidhriya. The sacrificial session becomes successful on the Soma-sacrifice even for one day. The head of the victim will have to be put in the bottom layer of the fire-altar, to impart stability to the altar. In the Sattra Yajnas, there are usually twelve days for the diksha and for the upasads. It is Dvadasaha (Twelve day ritual).

### **The Atiratra and the Subrahmanya litany (4<sup>th</sup> Kanda, 6<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya, 9<sup>th</sup> Brahmana)**

Once, the gods were in a sacrificial session. They were thinking, "May we attain excellence; may we be glorious, may we enjoy good food." At this moment, the food so gained, wished to skip away from them. They offered the two oblations in the Garhapatya fire. Garhapatya being a house, a place of comfort, they could thereby secure the food in the house. The food, gained by them, did not depart. In a like manner, the performers of Satra Yajna started thinking, "May we attain excellence, may we be glorious, may we enjoy good food." But, the food, so gained wanted to move away from them. Then, they offered the two oblations in the Garhapatya and they secured the food and the food so gained, did not then depart. In the same manner, the food designated for offering, wishes to go away from the sacrificer, thinking, "it gives me fear that how the sacrificer would deal with me?" The sacrificer, first eats a very little from the further back end of it and thereby, he pacifies its fear. The food thought that it

was safe. Thus it becomes attached to him and so the sacrificer remains dearer to food and an enjoyer of it. In the afternoon, the performers having come together and touched the water for purification, the sacrificer offers two oblations saying "Here is your joy. Here is your stability", he addresses the cattle and so the performers secure cattle for themselves. He offers the second oblation, letting the sucking calf to the mother. It means letting the fire go to the earth. The fire sucking the water of the earth causes rain and in turn the growth of plants and the wealth of cattle will grow, they secure cattle for themselves.

Those, who participate in a sacrificial session become indeed the light, they become immortal. They ascend to the sky. They attain the gods and enjoy heaven and bliss. As a snake frees itself from its skin, so do, the performers free themselves from all the sins. They recite the aticchanda verse in this context. Aticchanda is the essence of all the metres. Protected by all the metres, the performers win over the evil or sins.

They sit down by their several dhishnya-fires. Now, the essence of Vac (speech) wished to desert the gods and it tried to creep away along the earth. Her essence is the plants and trees. By means of Sama verses, they could get it back to them. They chant verses of the queen of serpents as the queen of serpents is this earth and they obtain everything through her. The Hota then recites the four-Hota formulas. The Adhvarya responds by saying, "These sacrificers have prospered. Happiness has accrued unto them." Thereupon they utter the Brahmodya (a dialogue). They sit touching the Udumbara post; for strength is food, and the Udumbara tree is strength. They restrain their speech. Thus, they strengthened themselves, they perform the Atiratra.

When the Sun has set, they go out of the Sadas (assembly) eastward, and sit down behind the Ahavaniya, in front of the Havirdhana (place of offering) shed. The Pratiprastata (one who presents the counter argument) carries the Vasativari water. With the prayers seeking the blessings of gods and with auspicious verses conferring the fulfillment of the desire for which the sacrifice is performed, they release their speech. Thereupon the Gṛihapati, or whomsoever the Gṛihapati may call upon, recites the Subrahmanya litany. Litany is a recurring formula of the Vedic verses. According to Katyayana, it is the reciter of the Subrahmanya litany, who, having said 'O Subrahmanya, invite me thereto' puts sticks on the fire. By Atiratra sacrifices, one attains the yonder heavens being invited by Subrahmanya, the Indra for whom the sacrifice was conducted.

### **The Vajapeya sacrifice, a path of ascending to the heavens**

#### **(5<sup>th</sup> Kanda, 1<sup>st</sup> Adhyaya, 1<sup>st</sup> Brahmana)**

Once, the Asuras inquired, "To whom, shall we make offering?" May be due to their arrogance, they offered it into their own mouths. Arrogance is the cause for downfall and ruin. With arrogance, one cannot ascend to heavens. So, they obtained nothing. On the other hand, the gods made offerings to one another. Looking at it, the Prajapati gave himself to the gods and so, the gods obtained the sacrifice which is their food. Now, the question is to which god among them, the sacrifice shall belong? They arranged a race for it and it is decided that whoever wins the race, to him the sacrifice shall belong.

Brihaspati went to Savita immediately and asked the Savita to impel the sacrifice for him. Savita impelled it for Brihaspati and thus he won the sacrifice. The sacrifice, Prajapati is the lord of all beings as he is the progenitor. Thus, Brahhaspati ascended to the yonder region, the heaven and it now belongs to Brihaspati. Thus, those who used to offer the Vajapeya, ascend to the upper region. From there, Aupaavi Janasruteya descended. There onwards, all the human beings started expanding on earth. Indra offered the Vajapeya and won Prajapati. He ascended to the upper region. The Vajapeya is the Brahma's own



sacrifice as Bṛihaspati, the lord of prayer had performed it. Bṛihaspati is the Brahma. The Brahmana (Vedic Mantra) is also the Brahma. Indra, the king of gods performed the Vajapeya. He attained Brahma.

Rajasuya belongs to the king or Rajan. By performing the Rajasuya, one becomes the king. Brahmana is unsuited for kingship as, he is supposed to perform the higher sacrifice, the Vajapeya. For him the goal is superior, the heaven. But, the king, by performing the Vajapeya, becomes emperor, the king of kings.

### **Vessels (Grahas or Cups) used in Vajapeya sacrifice**

#### **(5<sup>th</sup> Kanda, 1<sup>st</sup> Adhyaya, 2<sup>nd</sup> Brahman)**

First the Adhvaryu draws the Amshu Graha." Amshu" refers to the offering made to the priests conducting the ceremony. Amshu Graha is the vessel used for this purpose. After that he draws the Agnishtoma cups namely Upamshu, Antaryama, Aindravayava, Mitravayava, Ashvina, Shukra, Manthi and Agrayana. He then draws the Prashtyas, the three atigrahyas for the gods Agni, Indra and Surya. He then draws the Shodasi graha. (Shodasi refers to one of the soma sacrifices, Shodasi graha is a vessel used in Soma Sacrifice). Then, he draws the five Vajapeya cups. These cups are handleless and so require support. These cups are filled with libations for sacrificial offer.

"You, the firm-seated, the man-seated, the mind-seated, you are taken with a support. Be agreeable to Indra. This is your womb (place)." Saying this, the Adhvaryu deposits the libation into the first cup. The sacrificer wins the earth thereby with the first cup.

"You, the water-seated, the ghee-seated, the ether-seated, you are taken with a support. Be agreeable to Indra. This is your womb (place)," saying so, the Adhvaryu deposits the Soma into the second cup. He wins the air and thereby wins the world of air with the second cup.

"You, the earth-seated, the air-seated, the sky-seated, the god-seated, the heaven-seated, you are taken with a support. Be agreeable to Indra. This is your womb (place)," saying this, the Adhvaryu deposits the Soma into the third cup. He wins the heaven, the yonder world of gods with the third cup.

"You, the waters' invigorating essence contained in the Sun, You are taken with a support, be agreeable to Indra. This is your womb (place)," saying this, the Adhvaryu deposits the Soma into the fourth cup. It is the essence of the waters that purifies the wind contained in the Sun. It radiates with his rays. It is the purity that is attained by the sacrificer with the fourth cup.

"You cups, of strengthening libations, inspiring the sage with thought, I have gathered you the essence, Soma. You are taken with a support. Be agreeable to Indra. This is your womb (place)." Thereby the sacrificer attains the Soma.

Prajapati is the year, and there are five seasons in the year and thus with the help of the five Vajapeya cups, the sacrificer wins Prajapati.

Vedas refer to three types of libations Soma, Sura and Parisrut. The Adhvaryu then draws seventeen other cups of Soma, and the Neṣṭa, seventeen cups of Sura the spirituous liquor. The Soma is truth, prosperity, light. The Sura is the opposite of it i.e. the untruth, misery and darkness. These are offered to Prajapati as he is everything here. By offering so, the sacrificer wins the Soma and also he wins over the Sura. So, there are thirty-four cups. It is said that thirty-three are for gods, for they are thirty three and the left over is for Prajapati. In addition the Brahmana speaks of immature spiritual liquor called Parisrut. It is neither Soma nor Sura.

On the preceding day of the sacrifice, the performers prepare two earth-mounds, to deposit the cups of Soma and Sura separately. When they take the Vasativari water into the Havirdhana shed by the front

door, the Neṣṭa takes in the Parisrut-liquor by the back door. From the south they bring in the drinking vessels. The Adhvaryu, seated in front, with his face turned towards the west, draws the cups of Soma. The Neṣṭa, seated behind, with his face turned towards the east, draws the cups of Sura. The Adhvaryu draws a cup of Soma, then the Neṣṭa, a cup of Sura. The Adhvaryu draws another cup of Soma and the Neṣṭa another cup of Sura. The process will continue. Neither does the Adhvaryu hold the Soma-cup towards the back, nor the Neṣṭa the Sura-cup towards the front because they should not mix light and the darkness. The Adhvaryu holds the Soma-cup just over, and the Neṣṭa the Sura-cup just below saying, “United you are, unite me with happiness. Separated you are, keep me away from the evil” They deposit the two cups each time on the mounds prepared. Thereupon the Adhvaryu draws the Madhu-graha (honey-cup) in a golden vessel, and deposits it in the middle of the Soma-grahas. He then draws the vessels Ukthya and Dhruva. At the last chant of the evening Soma pressing feast, Adhvaryu would pour into the Soma-Grahas one by one. They make the offering and then they drink them. At the midday-Soma pressing, the Neṣṭa draws the honey-cup, and the cups of Sura. Then, it is performed so with other vessels, i.e. The Upamsu, Antaryama, the Aindravayava, Maitravaruna, Asvina, the Shukra, Manthin and the Agrayana.

The principal formulas used in making oblations are computed as consisting together of seventeen syllables. The Vajapeya consists of seventeen stotras, the Saptadasha-stoma, or seventeen-versed hymn. The Bahiṣpavamana-stotra of the ordinary Agniṣṭoma, which is recited in the trivrit-stoma, consisting of three triplets or nine verses is made in the Vajapeya to consist of seventeen verses, by the insertion of eight verses between the second and third triplets of trivrit stoma. The last chant at the evening feast of the Vajapeya sacrifice is the so called Vajapeya-sama, or Brihat-stotra in the Saptadasha-stoma.

### **Agnistoma and the animal Sacrifices**

#### **(5<sup>th</sup> Kanda, 1<sup>st</sup> Adhyaya, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brahmana)**

Agnistoma is the fundamental form of Soma sacrifices. The sacrificer seizes a victim for Agni, for the Agniṣṭoma is Agni. By doing so, the sacrificer wins Agni. At the time of reciting the Ukthas (Hymns of prayer), the sacrificer, seizes one for Indra and Agni together because, the hymn Uktha relates to Indra and Agni. By this act, the sacrificer wins Indra and Agni. For the Shodasi, the goddess of the creeper Soma, the sacrificer seizes a victim for Indra, because Shodasi is Indra. The sacrificer wins Indra thereby. For the Saptadasha Stotra, The sacrificer seizes a victim for Saraswati. Though, it is not an overnight performance, it is performed like the night performance. By this offering, he wins the night. Thereupon he seizes a spotted sterile cow that cannot breed for the victorious Maruts. The spotted sterile cow represents the earth. All the food with roots and without the roots is established on earth. The Maruts are the peasants. If he cannot obtain a spotted sterile cow, any other sterile cow will suffice. When the Hota recites after the Mahendra libation, then let them proceed with the offering of her omentum (fold of peritoneum supporting the abdominal structures). Indra thereby, puts his strength into the sacrificer and the sacrificer is the Indra now. Contrary to the later Hindu belief, Cow is here offered as a sacrificial animal for appeasing Indra.

He then seizes seventeen victims for Prajapati. They are all hornless, all dark-grey, all uncastrated (whose testicles are not removed) males. They are hornless because it represents man and man is nearest to Prajapati. They are all dark-grey, due to the mix of their light colored hair and the dark coloured hair. It represents a productive pair because Prajapati represents productiveness. They are all males because,

male means productiveness. There by the sacrificer gains Prajapati. Some seize the last victim for Vac (the Speech) so that, the sacrificer wins the speech.

### **The creation of worlds by Prajapati and the role of Agni**

#### **(6<sup>th</sup> Kanda, 1<sup>st</sup> Adhyaya, 2<sup>nd</sup> Brahmana)**

Prajapati wanted to multiply himself and reproduce. In the form of Agni, he entered into the earth. Then an egg arose. He touched it and said, “Let it grow and increase in number.” The embryo which was inside the egg was created as Vayu, the wind. The egg white had become the birds. And the liquid which was adhering to the shell became the dust particles or sun-motes. The shell formed the air.

Vayu entered into the airs. An egg arose. Prajapati touched it and said, “May it reproduce.” From the egg, the yonder Sun was created and the liquid portion of it became the sunbeams. The shell became the sky.

The Sun entered into the Sky. An egg arose. Prajapai touched it and said, “Bear your seed.” From it the moon was created, for moon is the seed. The tear of the egg became the stars. And the liquid portion of it which was adhering to the shell became the intermediate regions. The shell became the three worlds.

After creating the worlds, Prajapati thought, “May I create such creatures as shall be mine in these worlds.” By his mind (manas), he entered into the Vac, the speech. He became pregnant with eight drops and the eight Vasus have come into existence. He placed them on earth. By his mind (manas), he entered into the Vac, the speech. He became pregnant with eleven drops and the eleven Rudras have come. He placed them in the mid-region. By his mind (manas), he entered into the Vac, the speech. He became pregnant with twelve drops. The twelve Adityas have come. He placed them in the sky. By his mind (Manas), he entered into the Vac, the speech. He became pregnant and all the gods emerged. He placed them in all the quarters. Having created all, Prajapati established himself on the earth. The plants were ripened into food for him and he enjoyed it and became pregnant. From the upper vital airs he created the gods, and from the lower vital airs he created the mortal creatures. Thus, the Prajapati created everything that exists on earth.

Having created so, he relaxed. He, being relaxed, the vital air went out from his within. As the vital airs had gone out, the gods left him. Prajapati requested Agni to restore him. He asked, “What is my reward for restoring you? The performers shall call me after you in the sacrifice.” Prajapati consented. Then, Agni restored him. The five body parts of Prajapati i.e. hair, skin, flesh, bone and marrow are the five layers of the fire altar (Chiti). It is said so because Prajapati is the sacrifice. As Prajapati is the year, the five body parts represent the five seasons of the year. As Prajapati is the Vayu that blows in the Sun, the five body parts also represent the five vital airs or Prana. The fire that is laid down on the fire altar is the Sun, the same Agni who had restored the Prajapati. Thus, we call on Agni after Prajapati in consonance with his promise to Agni, at the time of restoring him. The gods healed Prajapati by offering the oblations in Agni. So, Agni is also called as Prajapati. The oblations they offer into fire are called “ista” and the sacrifice is called “isti.” The fire is established on the altar made of baked bricks. So, the baked bricks are called istaka. What was offered is “ista” and “ka” means happiness. As you offer so you attain. It is the happiness that is offered as istaka and what we attain is the thousandfold happiness. So they are calls istakas. This earth is four-cornered, for the quarters are her corners: hence the bricks are four-cornered.

**Rudra, Kumara, Agni and Gayathri****(6<sup>th</sup> Kanda, 1<sup>st</sup> Adhyaya, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brahmana)**

In the beginning there was none existed other than Prajapati. He desired to reproduce. He practiced austerity (Tapasya). From the latent heat of austerity, waters were created. The waters asked Prajapati, "What shall we do?" Prajapati told them to practice austerity. From the heat of the austerity, foam is created. Then the foam asked the Prajapati, "What is my role?" He told him to observe the austerity. From the heat of the austerity, the clay is produced. The clay then asked Prajapati, "What shall I do?" He replied that it should practice the austerity. Then the sand is produced. The sand asked Prajapati, "What is my role?" Then, Prajapati replied that it should practice austerity. Then the pebble came. The process continued and there is the emergence of stone, metal, ore, and the gold. From the celestial flow, the mono syllable (akshara) emerged and it had flown in eight paths resulting in the emergence of octosyllabic Gayathri. It means all the penance or austerities converge in the Vedic metre Gayatri.

Then it came, the "Bhu", the foundation or the earth. Prajapati spread it out and it had become Prithvi. This is the foundation and resting place. Now emerged are the seasons, year, Ushas (the dawn of divine luminosity) and the creatures. All the creatures and the lord of beings have laid seed into the Ushas. A boy, Kumara was born. He cried loudly. Prajapati asked him, "My boy, why do you cry?" He said, "I am not guarded against evil. I have no name given to me. Give me a name." Hence one should give a name to the boy that is born, for thereby one frees him from evil. Even a second name and a third name, for thereby those free him from evil time and again. Even now, at Namakarana sanskara (ceremony of naming a child), three names are given to the child.

Rud, means to cry. So, Prajapati named the boy as Rudra, the deity of fire or Agni. The boy said, "I am mightier than Agni, give me yet another name." Prajapati said, "You are "Sharva" the waters. The boy said, "I am mightier than waters, give me another name". Prajapati called him "Pashupati", the deity of cattle and plants." Still another name, "the boy asked. Prajapati named him Ugra, the deity of winds, Vayu. The boy is not satisfied and Prajapati named him "Bhava", the name of rain god or Parjanya. The boy said, "I am mightier than all the deities I am named after so far, give me another name." Prajapati named him "Ashani", the lightening and then named him "Mahadeva," the great lord and finally as "Ishana", the ruler. It is the name of the Sun god. The boy is now satisfied. The above stated are the eight forms of Agni. Kumara (the boy) is the ninth. As there are eight forms of Agni, Gayatri consisting of eight syllables represents the eight forms of Agni. For this reason, it is said that Agni is Gayatri. Kumara assumed all these eight forms. In the later Puranic literature, Shiva is said to possess these eight forms (Ashta Murthi).

**Sun, the gold plate in heaven****(6<sup>th</sup> Kanda, 7<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya, 1<sup>st</sup> Brahmana)**

Gold is divine radiance of light and immortality. Gold represents the truth. Gold plate is round and the Sun disc is also round in shape. Sun is the yonder fire. Twelve months, five seasons and three worlds make twenty. The Sun is the twenty first (Ekavimshat). These are his rays that arc outside. The gold plate can sustain the fire, Agni. The gold plate represents the truth by which the gods carried the fire seed with them. This means the truth is the basis that sustains all the energy. The gold plate represents the source which possesses the fire seed within. Gods placed it in the heaven as otherwise, the Asuras may destroy it. Now, this gold plate, the fire of heavens is the Sun, who cannot be approached by

darkness or evil. It is their protector. Aitareya Brahmana identifies the Sun with the Ekavimsha or Vishuvat day, the central day of the year, on which the gods raised the Sun up to the heavens.

The black antelope skin is the sacrifice, and the sacrifice can sustain Agni. The hair of the black antelope skin represents the Chandas, the Vedic metres. The Chandas are possessed with energies and capable of sustaining and carrying the fire, Agni like the gold plate, the Sun. The white and black hairs on the skin are the Rics and Samas. The sacrificer wears the gold plate over the navel, for the gold plate is yonder Sun. Below the navel is the seed, the power of procreation. The gold plate represents the fire or vital energy. If held below the navel, it may burn up the seed, the power of procreation.

### **The Three strides of lord Vishnu**

#### **(6<sup>th</sup> Kanda, 7<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya, 2<sup>nd</sup>& 4<sup>th</sup> Brahmana)**

For the sake of gods, the Sun, in the form of Viṣṇu, strode through the three worlds, Prithvi, Antariksha and Dyu-loka. Viṣṇu is this sacrifice. In the form of Viṣṇu, he strides the three worlds. Viṣṇu's outstepping is Vikramaṇa, Viṣṇu's outstep is Vikranta, and Viṣṇu's step is Kranta. These are the three strides which conquered the three worlds. Having ascended these worlds, he is high above everything and became the supreme.

He mounts on the Gayatri metre and strides along the earth. He stretches forward his right foot and strides. He raises the fire upwards and he ascends upwards. Thereby, he crossed the prithvi, the terrestrial world. He mounts on the Jagati metre and he stretches his foot forward and strides. He raises the fire still further upwards and ascends. He crossed the Antariksha. Then, he mounts on the Anushtubh and strides along the quarters. He does not stretch forward his foot, thinking that if he does so, he will lose the worlds. He raises the fire right up and ascends to the supreme position. He crossed the Dyu loka. Gayathri, Jagati and Anushtubh are the three strides of lord Vishnu. As per the Brahmana, the Sun is Vishnu. Gayathri, Jagati and Anushtubh are the three worlds that are conquered by lord Vishnu and thereby he is established himself in the highest abode. By Vishnu's strides Prajapati created the worlds, the air, the sky, the regions, wealth, the day, night, the bright fortnights, the dark fortnights, months, seasons, the year and everything that exists in this world. The three strides of lord Vishnu represent the upward ascent towards the supreme abode. This description of Satapatha Brahmana seems to be the basis for the later Puranic story of Vatu Vamana conquering the three worlds by his three strides on becoming Trivikrama. The story is made more organized without losing the core content. As the Brahmana also says that these three strides are Vikramaṇa, Vikranta and Kranta, the Puranic name Trivikrama also seems to be justified. Brahmana recognizes Surya as the heavenly Agni. It recognizes Surya as Indra in the context of full-moon and new-moon sacrifices. Here, it recognizes Surya as Vishnu. It is evident that the deities are all attributes and forces of the supreme Purusha. They are dynamic and sometimes, we see them fused together like Agni -Vishnu, Mitra -Varuna, Indra -Agni etc.

### **Sacrifice, the source of food for gods & Agni, the carrier of food**

#### **(7<sup>th</sup> Kanda, 1<sup>st</sup> Adhyaya, 2<sup>nd</sup> Brahmana & 7<sup>th</sup> Kanda, 5<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya, 1<sup>st</sup> Brahmana)**

Prajapati, on completing the creation, relaxed and at that moment, the vital airs went out of him. He fell down and from him, the food flowed out. Gods thought, this is the foundation of life, let us save it and the Prajapati also as he is our father and the very foundation of food. They told Agni, "We will restore Prajapati in you." Agni asked what would be his reward for it. The gods said, "Prajapati is the sacrifice



and so he is our food. We take the food through our mouth. So, O'Agni, we will make you the mouth of all of us." He accepted. Therefore the gods receive the food through Agni. Whoever, be the deity, the offerings are made into Agni and he in turn he passes on the essence to the deity. Thus, Agni had become "Havyavahana, the carrier of food to the gods."

The gods offered Prajapati into the holy fire; and the fire rose over him. Now, the vital airs which had gone out from Prajapati had come back and the gods put it into his body. The gods then, put the food that was flown out back into him. Prajapati stood upright. This terrestrial world is the foundation and the terrestrial fire is Prajapati's downward vital air. The air is his body, and the sky is his head; the sun and the moon are his eyes. When the fire-pan lies empty before being heated, it is like Prajapati without vital air. The sacrificer heats it on the fire in a manner similar to the gods heating up the Prajapati. When the fire rises over it, it is as if establishing the vital airs back into Prajapati. By putting the fire on the gold plate, he gets back his vigour and when the kindling-sticks are placed and fire is established on it, the food flown out is put back into Prajapati and he stands straight upwards. When the Prajapati is restored, sacrifice is restored and food is restored. The terrestrial fire is his Garhapatya fire of Prajapati. The sky is his Ahavaniya fire and the internal space between Ahavaniya and Garhapatya is the air world. It is the Agnidhriya fire of Prajapati.

Next, it is regarding the laying of bricks for the altar. The brick, Koorma (tortoise) means life-sap of the worlds. It flowed away from them when plunged into the waters. As far as the life-sap extends, so far the body extends. So, the tortoise here represents the worlds and expansion of the universe. The lower shell of it is the terrestrial world and the upper shell of it is the sky. The sacrificer anoints it with sour curds, honey, and ghee. Sour curds are the life-sap of this earth, ghee is that of the air, and honey is that of sky. Thus the life sap is supplied to the offerings. The word "Koorma" is derived from "akarot", that which caused the creation. This is known as Kashyapa, the Prajapati and so, all beings are said to be the descendants of Kashyapa.

The Koorma is the Sun and so this brick is laid down in front of altar with the head towards the west. It is so because; the Sun is placed in the east and moves towards west. Koorma is masculine and it is placed on the right side of the As Adadha, a ritual element. Asadha is female. Asadha is called as the Mahishi, the consecrated queen and hence being on the right side of her is placed the Koorma. Agni is the first born of the sacrifice. He is established first, by metres (Chandas) namely the Gayatri, the Trishtubh and the Anustubh. One, knowing this shall offer the oblations in the sacrifice to the gods. One should offer the oblations for the Agni, who is the self-ruler and the ruler of all. By doing so, the performer obtains essence of Prana (life force), strength, glory and offspring. Agni is Saraswata. Saraswat, the masculine is the mind and Saraswati, the feminine is the speech. Agni is the consummation of these two. As a result, the performer is blessed with sound mind and sweet speech.

The Agni is an animal of the sacrifice. The naturally-perforated brick is his lower vital air, the dviju brick is the hip, the two retahsic (bricks arranged uniquely in the central area of the altar) are the ribs, the vishvajyotis brick is the breast-bone, the two seasonal ones are the back, the asadha is the neck, the Koorma is the head. Now, the Agni, the yonder Sun is placed in the east. The fire-pan is the belly, the mortar is the womb. The pestle is the Sishna. He places it to the right, for the male lies on the right side of the female. The food there present for the consecrated animal is the durva -brick. Thus, in parallel to the creation, the altar and Agni are laid down. The construction of the altar with specific bricks and layers holds symbolic meaning, invoking deities and representing cosmic elements. It represents the

Prajapati and his power, Agni together or it is the Agni and Vishnu duo as Vishnu is the yajna and Agni is the power of it.

### **The seers as various organs of sacrifice**

#### **(8<sup>th</sup> Kanda)**

8<sup>th</sup> Kanda of Satapatha Brahmana presents us the detailed explanation of various materials like the bricks, vessels, gods and metres etc., as the parts of the sacrifice. In one word, the entire universe is treated as the Mahavedi (Chief Altar) with various deities forming the fire altar and the established fire on it. The offerings are made with reciting various formulas and metres representing the cosmic forces. We may treat that the Yajna is treated as a replica of the act of creation and making a balance between the dynamics of cosmic forces. As, it is mentioned with such an enormous details of ritualistic guidelines and processes, I feel that it is not intended for common reader. It is more useful to the priestly community who are involved in conducting the sacrifices. So, I confine my presentation to the esoterical application of the Vedic seers representing the organs of the sacrifice only.

The seer Vasishta is the breath of the sacrifice. It is the chief Pranvic force which always abides with the living beings. The seer Bharadwaja is the mind of the sacrifice. “Bharati” is that which possesses. It is the subjective identity of the being and “vaja” means the food. This subjective identity makes us experience the creation and so the mind through it subordinate senses, enjoys the creation and so mind is the relisher of the creation. So, the world becomes the food for mind. So, it is said that Bharadwaja is the mind of the sacrifice. The seer Jamadagni is the eye of the sacrifice. That which sees and causes thinking is the eye, the consciousness. Seer Vishwamitra is the ear of it as he is the most attentive friend of all. Seer Vishwakarma is the architect and worker. He is the celestial craftsman of everything. He is the speech of the sacrifice which makes things happen in this world. By performing the yajna, we attain the food, comfort, glory, protection and continuity of the clan. Thus, Brahmana describes all seers as representatives of the various organs of the sacrifice.

Like this, the seers, the metres, the verses of triple sciences, the materials used, the offerings made, the deities invoked, the priests employed and the cosmic forces praised, all form part of the sacrifice. It is the source of creation, the sustainer of it. Sacrifice is the integration of all forms of worship, applied knowledge, penance and everything.

### **The Shatarudriya offerings**

#### **(9<sup>th</sup> Kanda, 1<sup>st</sup> Adhyaya, 1<sup>st</sup> Brahmana)**

There is a ceremony which consists of 425 oblations to Rudra, the god of fearful aspects of life and nature. It is conducted with appropriate formulas addressed to the various forms of Rudra and his associates. This ceremony and the recitation of the formulas are meant to appease the wrath of the terrible god. These formulas are known as Shatha Rudriyam. On performing the Satarudriya offering, the Agni is completely transformed into the terrifying deity Rudra. Upon him the gods bestowed immortality. He stood there flaming and longing for food. When Prajapati had become disjointed, all the deities except Manyu (God of the wrath) departed from him. Then the Prajapati cried, and his tears fell down on Manyu and some droplets spilt down. By the touch of Prajapati's tears, Manyu became the hundred-headed (Satha Rudra), thousand-eyed (Sahasraksha), and hundred-quivered (Shatadhanva) Rudra. And the other drops that fell down, turned into the countless forms of Rudras. Krishna Yajur

Veda says, “Sahasrani Sahasrasho ye Rudrah.” That hundred-headed, thousand-eyed, hundred-quivered Rudra, with his bow strung, and an arrow affixed to it is targeting for food. It caused fear among gods. They asked the Prajapati for help. He told them to gather food for Rudra so that he would be appeased. They gathered the food and the Satarudriya offering was performed to Rudra and thereby he was appeased and his countless forms spread over the three regions of the world, are also appeased. The appeased Rudra now unstrings the bow and his arrow is withdrawn back into Ishudhi, the carrier of arrows attached to his shoulder. Now, the gods felt secured.

For the Rudras dwelling in the sky, rain is their arrows. With heavy rain, they cause pain to those, whom they wish to injure. To appease them reverence is made to the Rudras dwelling in the sky. For the Rudra dwelling in the mid region, winds are their arrows. With strong winds, they pose losses on those whom, they want to affect. To appease them, reverence is made to the Rudras dwelling in the mid region. For Rudras dwelling on earth, food is their arrows. By food due to its non-availability or contamination, they hurt those, whom they want to hurt. To appease them, reverence is made to the Rudras dwelling on earth. Reverence is also made to the Rudras dwelling in all directions and then the performer, whomsoever he hates, casts them into the jaws of the dreadful Rudra so that he can have a safe, secured and peaceful life. It seems by the time of the Yajurveda or later Rig-Veda period, Rudra settled in Brahmanical culture on par with other Vedic deities and it seems, he commanded even a superior position.

### **Agni, the omniscient lord**

#### **(10<sup>th</sup> Kanda, 3<sup>rd</sup> Adhyaya, 2<sup>nd</sup> Brahmanas)**

Here is the description of the body parts of the fire altar. These body parts of the fire altar also refer to the deity being invoked into the holy fire and for whom the oblations are made. Each body part is associated with a metre and at least one deity. The metre Gayathri and the deity Agni are the head of the fire-altar. The metre Ushnic and the deity Savitha are its neck. The metre Brihati and the deity Brihaspati are its spine. The Brihat Sama and Rathantara Sama with deities' earth and heaven are the wings of fire altar. The metre Trishtubh and the deity Indra are its waist. The metre Jagati and the deity Aditya are its hips. The Aticchnda metre and the deity Prajapati are the vital airs of the fire altar. The metre Yajnayajniya and the deity Vaishvanara are the downward vital airs. The metre Anushtubh and the deities Vishvedevas are the thighs of fire altar. The meter Pankti and the deities Maruts are its knees. The metre Dwipada and the deity Vishnu are its feet. The metre Vichanda and deity Vayu are the vital airs of fire altar. The waters are the redundant parts of it. This is the body of the fire altar and so is the case with the deity who enters into it on invocation for sacrificial performances. Thus, the fire altar for sacrifice seems to be the embodiment of the triple sciences of the Veda and its knowledge along with the radiance and power of all the deities.

Dhira Sataparneya once approached Mahashala Jabala. Jabala asked Sataparneya, what he knew before coming to him. Sataparneya replied that he knew Agni. Jabala asked, “what was the Agni that you know?” Sataparneya replied Agni, the speech. One who knows that Agni is the speech, he becomes eloquent and speech will never fail him. Jabala asked what else he knew. Sataparneya replied that he knew Agni, the eye or the vision. One who knows that Agni is the eye, the seer of all, for him the eyes and the vision of truth will never fail him. Jabala again asked what he knew before coming to him. Sataparneya replied that he knew Agni, the mind. One, who knows that Agni is the mind, he remains pure and thoughtful and mind will never fail him, Jabala repeated the same question. Sataparneya replied

that he knew Agni, the ear. One, who knows that Agni is the ear; he always hears the divine and the sacred. His ears will never fail him. The same question was repeated again by the seer Jabala. Sataparneya replied that he knew the Agni, who is the omniscient. On hearing this, Jabala stepped down to Sataparneya and pleaded, O'great saint, "Teach me that Agni". Sataparneya explained that Agni is the breath, the life force (Prana). He is the source for subjective identity and objective perception. When one sleeps, the speech, vision, mind and the audibility of sound are withdrawn from the body into Agni which is the life force and on his awakening, they are again passed onto the body through the Agni. The speech is Agni himself and the eyes are the yonder Sun. The mind is the moon. The ears are the directions and the breath is the wind that blows in our bodies. When the sun sets, he enters into the wind, and so does the moon. Prana holds both the Sun (soul) and Moon (mind). The directions or the quarters are established in the wind, and from the wind they issue again. One, who knows this knowledge and passes away from this world, he passes into the fire by his speech, into the sun by his eye, into the moon by his mind, into the quarters by his ear, and into the wind by his breath and rests there. One, who knows Agni, becomes Agni. Agni is the essence of everything.

### **Immortality of Gods and Humans (10<sup>th</sup> Kanda, 4<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brahmana)**

Prajapati is the year. The year is the terminator of life or the year represents the death. Because of its days and nights, it eats away the life of mortal beings. Due to death, the gods were afraid of Prajapati as it is due to him; they reach the end of their life and die. For attaining immortality, they performed the sacrificial rites of Agnihotra, the new-moon and full-moon sacrifices, the seasonal offerings, the animal sacrifice, and the Soma-sacrifice etc. But they did not attain immortality. They also built a fire-altar and laid down unlimited enclosing-stones, unlimited Yajushmati bricks, unlimited Lokamparana bricks. They laid down to the day i.e. 360 bricks for attaining the immortality. But they did not attain immortality. They were observing penance for achieving it.

They approached the Prajapati seeking guidance for attaining the immortality. He told them to lay down three hundred and sixty enclosing-stones, three hundred and sixty Yajushmati bricks and another thirty-six and to lay down ten thousand and eight hundred of Lokamparana bricks and by constructing the altar like this, you will be laying down all my forms onto it and it blesses you with immortality. Then, death spoke to gods, "By this you all become immortal. Then what about my food and what would be my share?" Then gods assured the death that from there onwards no one shall be immortal with the body. The body is your share. It is your food. Only when you have taken that body as your share, one can become immortal. Humans can become immortal either through knowledge or through holy deeds only. It is the fire-altar that is the knowledge, and it is the fire-altar that is the holy deed.

The Yajushmati bricks with special formulas, the grass-bunch, the four clod-bricks, the lotus-leaf, the gold plate and man, the two spoons, the naturally-perforated brick, the durva-brick, the one divyajus, two retasic, a vishvajyotis, two seasonal ones, an asadha, the tortoise, the mortar and pestle, the fire-pan, the five victims' heads, fifteen apasyas, five chandasyas, fifty pranabhrits--these ninety-eight are in the first layer of the altar. Five aswinis, two seasonal ones, five vaishvadevas, five pranabhrits, five apasyas, nineteen vayasyas--these forty-one are in the second layer. The naturally-perforated one, five regional ones, a vishvajyotis, four seasonal ones, ten pranabhrits, thirty-six chandasyas, fourteen valakhilyas--these seventy-one are in the third layer. First eighteen, then twelve, then seventeen--these forty-seven are in the fourth layer. Five asapatnas, forty virajs, twenty-nine stomabhagas, five nakasads,

five panchachudas, thirty-one chandasyas, eight of the Garhapatya hearth, eight of the Punasciti, two seasonal ones, a vishvajyotis, a vikarni, a naturally-perforated one, the variegated stone, the fire which is placed on the altar--these one hundred and thirty-eight are in the fifth layer.

These all make three hundred and ninety-five. There are three hundred and sixty of them, for there are three hundred and sixty days in the year. The thirty-six additional are the days of twenty-four half-moons and twelve months. The Lokamparana space-filling bricks represent the number of muhurtas in a year. There are ten thousand and eight hundred muhurtas in a year. Of these, twenty-one are laid down in the Garhapatya altar, seventy-eight in the Dhişnya-hearths, and the others in the Ahavaniya. Thus, by constructing the altars and offering the oblations, gods attained immortality.

But the same is conferred on humans only after death and in the form of knowledge or in the form of holy deeds only. Thus, the Brahmana says that while gods attained immortality with their bodies humans are allowed it through their knowledge and holy deeds. As per the boon granted to the death by gods, humans cannot attain the heaven with body as body is assigned as a share to death. They attain immortality only after they leave this physical body. The knowledge mentioned is the knowledge of the Veda and the Vedic sacrifice and the holy deeds are the deeds associated with satisfying the deities through sacrifice and service to nature and beings.

### **Prana as the holy fire and body as the fire altar**

#### **(10<sup>th</sup> Kanda, 3<sup>rd</sup> Adhyaya, 4<sup>th</sup> Brahmana)**

Shvetaketu Aruneya, grandson of Aruna Aupaveshi was about to offer a sacrifice. His father asked, "Whom did you choose as the priest to officiate the sacrifice". He replied that it is the Vaisvavasavya. Then, he asked the priest, Vaisvavasavya, "Do you know the four great ones? Do you know the four great things? Do you know the four great rites? Do you know the four great Ka (Prajapati)? Do you know the four flames?" Acharya replied in the affirmative. Then, he asked, "Do you know the Arka? Do you know the two Arka leaves? Do you know the two Arka flowers? Do you know the two pods of Arka? Do you know the Arka grains? Do you know the bulge of Arka? Do you know the root of Arka?" Then, Acharya replied in the negative and he pleaded Aruna Aupaveshi, for imparting that knowledge to him.

Aruna said that the great one is Agni and great things of Agni are the plants and trees as they are his food. It is by burning the wood that the fire on altar shines brilliant. The great one is Vayu and great things of Vayu are waters for they are his food. It is the Vayu that takes waters into the mid region, the wind world and through him, the clouds are formed, scattered and the water reaches earth again by rain. The great one is Aditya and the great thing of Aditya is his food and companion, the moon. Moon is Amrita, Soma, the food of gods. It is due to the movement of the Sun, time is formed consisting of the days, nights, fortnights, months, seasons and the year. Moon is offered to the Sun on Amavasya day as food and disappears on that night and he rises again on the next day, grows and again falls into the mouth of the Sun god as food. So, the time cycle continues eternally. The great one is Man, and the great thing of Man is the cattle, for the cattle is his food for sacrifice. Man conducts the sacrifice and through the sacrifice, the gods are offered food and get themselves satisfied. Agni provides the energy, Vayu provides the rain, Aditya provides the time continuum and the Man, by pleasing the gods with sacrifice sustains a balance of the creation. The four great ones are conducting their respective four great rites without fail. The creation sustains by these four great ones. So, these four are the forms of Ka, the Brahma or Prajapati. Veda says, "Ka Brahma Prajapati" These are the four forms of Ka, the Prajapati and



these are the four flames of the cosmos for they keep on energizing the creation. The creation now thus becomes a sacrifice or yajna.

Arka means a plant. It also means a flame. It represents the man, the living flame. Symbolically it is presented here that Arka leaves are the ears of man, flowers are his eyes, pod leaves are his nostrils, the two coops are his lips, arka-grains are his teeth, the bulge is his tongue and the root is his food. So, the holy fire Agni is the man and his body is the altar. Who knows that Agni or Arka as a man himself, he remains established in that holy fire, the active place of all the deities. It seems that this concept of understanding the Prana as the holy fire and the body as the fire altar might have given birth to the concept of considering the body as the residing place of the deity in the later forms of worship. “Deho devalaya prokto, jeevo devah sanatanah.

### **The indistinct recitation of Yajus and distinct results of it (10<sup>th</sup> Kanda, 3<sup>rd</sup> Adhyaya, 5<sup>th</sup> Brahmana)**

Brahman is the greatest and there is nothing greater than him. Brahman has nothing prior and posterior to him. He is both un-manifest and manifest. Prana is the Vayu, the vital airs. It does not seem to be manifest but, it does. Priyavrata Rouhinayana said, “O’ blowing wind (Prana), joy is your soul. You are here and you are there. You are omnipresent. As such, one who desires to invoke blessing from gods, let him approach them with a pleasant and pious heart and say,” O’ gods, fulfill my wish.” He, who knows this, attains fulfillment and contentment. The Yajus is pronounced in a lower tone and indistinctly as the Yajus is the breath (Prana in this body), and the breath operates from a silent abode. So, the Adhvaryu pronounces the Yajus indistinctly. The manifestation of deity is also indistinct and not visible to the naked eye. But, the result is distinct.

The Adhvaryu draws a cup of Soma reciting the Yajus in a lower tone. But when it is drawn and deposited, it becomes manifest and distinct. He silently builds the altar for holy fire muttering the Yajus but, on completion, it manifests. He takes out the material for preparation of the oblations with a low tone recitation of Yajus but, when it is readily cooked and prepared for offering, it becomes manifest. Whatever that is performed silently, on completion of it, there will be manifestation of the result. The result is evident and distinct. The Yajus is recited in a lowered tone as it is Prana which is indistinct but, the fulfillment of desire will be distinct. One who knows the secret manifestation of Yajus and the deities invoked, he attains the fulfillment and gains reputation and glory.

### **Agni Vaishvanara as the Purusha (10<sup>th</sup> Kanda, 6<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya, 1<sup>st</sup> Brahmana)**

Once, at the house of Aruna Aupaveshi, Satyayajna Paulushi, Mahashala Jabala, Buḍila Asvatarasvi, Indradyumna Bhallaveya and Jana Sarkarakshya assembled and they discussed about the Agni Vaishvanara. They did not come to a point as conclusion. They approached the Acharya, Asvapati Kaikeya who is said to have a perfect knowledge about the Agni Vaisvanara. Asvapati Kaikeya asked Aruna Aupaveshi. “O’ Goutama, Whom do you know as Vaishvanara” He replied, “O’ lord, I know Vaishvanara as the foundation.” Acharya told, “As you know the Vaishvanara as the foundation (Pratishta), you are established (Pratishtita) with offspring and cattle. But, this is only partial knowledge. This is only the feet of the Vaisvanara.”

Acharya then asked Satyayajna Paulushi, “O’ Prachinayogya, what do you know about the Vaisvanara?” He replied, Bhagavan, I know him as wealth. Asvapati Kaikeya told, “As you know the

Vaishvanara as wealth, you will be established with wealth and prosperity. But, this knowledge is again not integral. This is only the bladder of the Vaisvanara.”

Then, the Acharya turned to Mahashala Jabala and asked the same question. He replied that he knows the Vaishvanara as multitude and plentiful. Ashvapati Kaikeya told him that as he knows Vaishvanara as multitude and plentiful. Acharya told, “As you know the Agni Vaishvanara as multitude and plentiful, you are established with plentiful of offspring and cattle. But, this knowledge is also incomplete. It is only the trunk of the Vaishvanara.”

Acharya then asked Budila Asvatarasvi,” O’ Vaiyaghrapada, what do you know about the Agni Vaishvanara?” He said that he knew that Vaishvanara is of diverse courses. Acharya said that as he knows the Vaishvanara as of diverse courses, he will be established with countless chariots. But, this is again partial truth as it is only the breath of Vaishvanara.

Then, the Acharya asked Indradyumna Bhallaveya, “O’ my son, what do you know about the Vaisvanara?” He replied that he knows the Vaishvanara as the Soma. Acharya said, O’ Bhallaveya, as you know the Vaishvanara as the Soma, you will attain long life. But, this knowledge is also not integral and complete. It is only the eyes of Vaishvanara.”

Now, Acharya Asvapati Kaikeya asked Jana Sarkarakshya, “O, Sayavasa, what is your knowledge of Vaisvanara?” He said, “O’ great seer, I know Vaishvanara as all surpassing and superior.” Acharya said,” as you know the Vaishvanara as all surpassing, you will be pre-eminent among your equals. But, this is only the head of Vaishvanara and so this knowledge is also not complete and conclusive in full.”

Then, Acharya Asvapati Kaikeya pointed to his head and said that it is the Vaishvanara, the Pre-eminent and superior. He pointed to his eyes and said that it is the Vaishvanara, the splendor of Soma. He pointed at his nostrils and said that it is the Vaishvanara, the diverse courses. He pointed at the space in the mouth and said that it is the Vaishvanara, the plentitude. He pointed at the waters in the mouth and said that this is the Vaishvanara, the wealth. He pointed to his chin and said that this is the Vaishvanara, the foundation or Pratishta. He explained that the Agni Vaishvanara shall not be perceived as a fragmented truth. He is the summation of all the gods and the embodiment of true knowledge. He is no other than Purusha. Fragmented and prismatic knowledge confers partial truth only. Any partial truth may be misleading. One who attains the fullness or absolute; he can only realize the real nature of Agni Vaishwanara. He is the consummation of all gods.

### **Self as Purusha, the teaching of seer Sandilya (10<sup>th</sup> Kanda, 6<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brahmana)**

Seer Sandilya says that one should meditate on the true Brahman who is the Self or Purusha. How great a person be, he is bound to depart from this world and on passing away, he enters the yonder world. Self is made up of intelligence, endowed with a body of spirit, the source of light, and with an ethereal nature. In reality the self is a ray of divine consciousness that pervades in a limited being. Though it seems limited and confined to limited body, It is as swift as thought, pervades the whole universe. The supreme Purusha, in the form of self, resides in our hearts as a light, which is as small as a grain of rice. It is the light by the presence of which everything becomes evident and one is said to be alive. On passing away, one should obtain this golden Purusha. The concept of Purusha is elaborately discussed in the tenth mandala of the Rig-Veda. It seems that the seer Sandilya might have been inspired by the Purusha Sookta as the proposed concept is similar though the Satapatha Brahmana is not referring to it in specific. As per the Purush Sookta, Purush is the supreme conscious being that pervades everything

and everywhere. He is the source of all creation and the sustainer of it. The entire creation is seen as his divine reflection. He is the transcendent and imminent reality. The individual self is tiny part of the Purusha while the Purusha is a fathomless ocean of consciousness. The Sookta says that one, who realizes the Purusha, establishes in him, the eternal, undelaying reality. Sandilya's Purusha also seems the same.

### **Sri, the goddess of beauty ,prosperity and abundance (11<sup>th</sup> Kanda, 4<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brahmana)**

Prajapati became ignited due to his concentrated devotion in creating the living beings. Out of his power and heat of austerity and of devotion, a beautiful and resplendent lady emerged. She is "Sri." She is beautiful and had enormous wealth. Gods were perplexed and their minds are focused on the shining deity. They said to Prajapati, "Let us kill her and take all the wealth and belongings from her." Prajapati replied that, Sri is a woman and so she cannot be killed. Gods decided to take her belongings and leave her alive.

Agni then took her food, Soma, her royal power, Varuna, her universal sovereignty, Mitra, her noble rank, Indra her power, Brihaspati, her holy lustre, Savita, her dominion, Pushan, her wealth, Saraswati, her prosperity, and Tvashtara, her beautiful forms. Sri complained to Prajapati that the gods have taken all her belongings. Prajapati asked, "Do you want to get them back?" She replied in the affirmative. Prajapati advised her to perform a sacrifice to get back what is taken away by gods.

Sri performed the sacrifice with ten sacrificial dishes. She offered a cake on eight potsherds for Agni, libations for Soma, a cake on ten pots herds to Varuna, libations for Mitra, a cake on eleven potsherds for Indra, libations for Brihaspati, a cake on twelve or eight potsherds for Savita, libations for Pushan and Saraswati and a cake on ten potsherds for Tvashtara.

Agni on accepting the oblations departed and restored her food. Soma, on accepting the oblations departed and restored her royal power. Varuna on accepting the oblations departed and restored her universal sovereignty. Mitra on accepting the oblations departed and restored her nobility. Indra on accepting the oblations departed and restored her power. Brihaspati on accepting the oblations departed and restored her lustre. Savita on accepting her oblations departed and restored her kingdom. Pushan on accepting her oblations departed and restored her wealth. Saraswati on accepting her oblations departed and restored her prosperity. Tvashtara on accepting her oblations departed and restored her beauty. Thus, whatever that is taken away by gods had come back to "Sri".

These are the ten offerings through which the ten deities are appeased. Viraj is a specific poetic meter in which each verse contains four lines and each line contains ten syllables. Each syllable represents a deity and as a whole it represents the goddess Sri. Viraj also means the shining one and the deity Sri is also an embodiment of beauty and radiance. With the ten offerings, the ten deities are appeased and Sri got back all her attributes and beauty. Indeed, she is the essence of all the ten deities. During this sacrifice, fifteen kindling verses are recited in a low tone. There are five fore-offerings, three after-offerings, and one Samistayajus. The verse recited while offering the butter portions contain the word "affluence". It is through Agni, the performer seeks the deity "Sri", wealth and removal of troubles. While offering the svistakrit for Soma, the two verses recited contain the word "thousand" seeking the thousand fold benefits of wealth, offspring and affluences. Gotama Rahugana discovered this sacrifice. It was passed on to Janaka of Videha. It reached the sage Yajnavalkya through the Sun god. One, who knows this

truth, and performs the sacrifice as performed by Sri, he becomes freed from all bondages and the repeated cycle of births and deaths.

The Sri of the Satapatha Brahmana seems to be the deity of the Rig-Vedic Sri or Lakshmi. Though not clearly evident, the fifteen verses might be the fifteen Rics of Sri Sookta (Panchadasha Rics). The goddess Sri appears in several Vedic hymns as the personification of auspicious and royal qualities. Sri Sukta fuses together the goddess Sri and Goddess Lakshmi. Sri is associated with Agni, the god of fire. The concept of Lakshmi as Vishnu's consort may be a later Vedic development. Sri Sookta represents her as glorious, ornamented, royal, and lustrous as gold and as radiant as fire, moon, and the sun. She is the bestower of fame, bounty and abundance in the form of gold, cattle, horses and food. She is pleaded to remove misfortune, hunger, thirst and poverty. Sri is praised to bestow upon the performer, the wealth of offspring, cattle and abundant harvest. Sri of Satapatha Brahmana seems to be the Sri or Lakshmi of Rig-Vedic Sri Sookta. The sacrifice discovered by Gautama Rahugana might be the Sri Sookta Havan and seems to be endorsed by Janaka of Videha and the seer Yajnavalkya.

### **The story of Pururava becoming a Gandharva (11<sup>th</sup> Kanda, 5<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya, 1<sup>st</sup> Brahmana)**

Urvashi loved Pururava, the son of Ida. When she wedded him, she said, "you should not force me against my will and let me not see you naked as it is the way a woman shall behave." She spent with him a long time. Gandharvas the natural companions of Apsarasas, observed this and they wanted to devise a plan so that Urvashi will come back to them. They took away one of the lambs tied to her cart. Urvashi screamed for help. Pururava in a hurry, without fully putting on garments chased after them. It was night and by the time he was about to put on the garments, Gandharvas produced a flash of lightning and Urvashi saw him naked and she vanished immediately. Pururava was depressed at her vanishing and he searched for her all over Kurukshetra. He was walking on the banks of a lotus-lake called Anyatahplaksha. He saw the nymphs swimming there in the form of swans. Urvashi was among them and she recognized Pururava and told her companions that it is this person that she had dwelt with. The nymphs along with Urvashi decided to appear before him.

Pururava, on seeing Urvashi turned happy and requested her to speak. She said, "What concern do I have to speak with you? I am like the wind, you cannot catch me. Go back to your home." Pururava, with a broken heart expressed his wish to embrace the death. Urvashi said, "Purarava, do not take a hasty decision. There is no friendship with women. Their hearts are like hyenas. Return home."

Pururava expressed his thirst and his intense love for her. He elaborated his position. She felt pity on Pururava and asked him to come to the same place on the last night of the year. She said, "I will stay with you for that night and the son born will be yours. The discourse between Pururava and Urvashi recorded in fifteen verses has been handed down to us by the Bahvrchas in the Rig-Veda. Pururava attended there on the last night of the year. There stood a golden palace. He was taken in. They spent together and a boy emerged as his son as for gods, it is manasa srishti. Then, Urvashi told him that the Gandharvas were willing to grant him a boon. She suggested Pururava that he should ask for a place among the Gandharvas when they express him to grant aboon. The next morning when the Gandharvas expressed their willingness to grant him a boon, he asked for a place among them.

They said that there is no holy form of fire on earth for performing the sacrifice that could fulfill his wish. They put a holy fire into a pan, and gave it to him saying, "By sacrificing with this fire, you will become one of us." He took the fire and his boy. He deposited the fire in the forest, and went to his

home with the boy alone. He came back to the place where he had deposited the holy fire given by Gandharvas. To his shock, It had disappeared. In the place of fire he had deposited, there was an Asvattha tree and in the place of pan he had deposited, there was a shami tree. He went back to the Gandharvas and explained what had happened.

They said, 'Cook for a whole year a mess of rice sufficient for four persons. Take each time three logs from this Asvattha tree, anoint them with ghee, and put them on the fire with the offering verses; the fire which shall result therefrom would be the required fire. They also said, "Make yourself an upper arani of Asvattha wood and a lower arani of Shami wood and the fire generated there from would be the required fire. They also said," Make yourself an upper arani of Asvattha wood and lower arani of Asvattha wood, the fire generated therefrom would also be the required fire. Pururava then made himself an upper arani of Asvattha wood and a lower arani of Asvattha wood and performed the sacrifice with the fire generated there from and became one of the Gandharvas. Thus, he remained as a companion of Urvashi forever. The Brahmana says that the fire generated by all means is not the same; there is a specific way of igniting it with the help of wood of different trees. Depending on the purpose, there would be a specific way of generating the holy fire as stated in the case of Puroorava.

### **Upanayana and the Brahmachari (Vatu)**

#### **(11<sup>th</sup> Kanda, 5<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya, 4<sup>th</sup> Brahmana)**

The seeker of Brahman and Vedic knowledge, who is a boy approaches the Acharya and says," 'O' great master, I have come to you for Brahmacharya. Let me be a Brahmachari (student of Vedic studies and follower of the path to realize the divinity).The teacher asks, "What (ka) is your name?" The Veda says, "Ka brahma Prajapati." Thus, the teacher assigns him first to Prajapati, the progenitor. He then takes the right hand of the boy and says that the boy is the disciple of Indra and Agni. By doing so, the teacher assigns the boy to the most powerful deities Indra and Agni. Then the Acharya accepts the boy as his student. At first, the boy will be made the subject of Brahma, and then he is assigned as a student to the great deities Indra and Agni. Afterwards, the Acharya becomes the worldly master. Acharya then commits the boy to the waters, plants, heaven and earth i.e. to the entire universe. Later, he commits the boy to all the living beings, human and celestial. Now, the boy is the subject of Prajapati, Indra, Agni, the entire universe and all the beings of it. He is assigned to the totality and totality thus descends on him. The universe shall not cause any harm to the boy as he is a student of Brahman and neither the boy does cause any harm to the creation. The all-pervading Brahman shall protect him and the boy shall see the Brahman in all aspects of the life and creation from that moment.

At this stage, Acharya says, "You are a Brahmachari." He asks the Brahmachari to perform Achamana i.e. to sip water reciting the holy names of Brahman. Water is ambrosia. The boy is now purified. Now the Acharya asks the boy to put the fuel on holy fire and says," enkindle your mind with fire, the holy lustre." Again the master asks the boy to perform Achamana. Acharya thus, encloses the boy with ambrosia on either side so that he will be firmly established in immortality. Then the boy will be initiated into the holy Gayatri verse. By laying the right hand on the student, Acharya becomes in union with the boy, in the name of Brahman and teaches the holy Gatatri verse. Now, the boy is born as Brahmana. For this reason, Brahmana on Upanayana, is also called a Dvija, the twice born. Deities are divine beings. They are not born from womb. They are born from the holy fire of yajna, austerities and the recitation of Vedic verses. It is the Vedic metres that form the realms of gods. Brahmachari should focus on the birth of divinity in him.it is the opening of higher dimensions for him. It is the very purpose



of Brahmacharya. He is dedicated for the purpose of Vedic learning and observing penance as per the instructions of the teacher. He should protect his Retas, as it turns into divine Tejas and helps him open the gates of lustrous divine realms and which only bestows the supreme knowledge and which unfolds the Truth (Satyam).

### **The Shata Atiratram, session of a hundred Atiratra sacrifices.**

#### **(11<sup>th</sup> Kanda, 5<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya, 5<sup>th</sup> Brahmana)**

When the gods were ascending to the heavens, Asuras enveloped them with the darkness of evil. The Asuras felt that there was no sacrificial session that could dispel the darkness that they created and so, the gods cannot ascend to the heavens. However, the gods performed a hundred day session of Agnistoma sacrifice and by that they could dispel the darkness to a distance that one could see while he was sitting. Later, they performed a hundred day session of Ukthya and thereby, they could dispel the darkness to a distance that one could see while he was standing. The darkness is not totally dispelled. They approached Prajapati and asked for his help in finding the way to heavens. He said, “You have performed the sessions of hundred Agnistoma and Ukhthya, which do not contain the Soma rites. Now, you perform the hundred Atiratras. There by you can dispel the darkness totally and find the way to heavens.” Atiratra is one of the seven Soma sacrifices. By, observing a session of hundred Atiratras, gods could dispel the evil of darkness completely and find the way to heavens.

The Brahmana says that the session of hundred Atiratras dispels all the evil from human beings and one, who performs the hundred Atiratras, definitely ascends to the heavens.

### **The Pancha Yajnas**

#### **(11<sup>th</sup> Kanda, 5<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya, 6<sup>th</sup> Brahmana)**

There are five great sacrifices that are to be performed every day. They are the sacrifice to beings, the sacrifice to men, the sacrifice to the Fathers, the sacrifice to the gods, and the sacrifice to the Brahman. Bhuta yajna or sacrifice to beings consists of offering food to the creatures and birds. Atithi yajna or sacrifice to men consists of serving the guests. Pitru yajna or sacrifice to fathers consists of offering water oblations and also the oblations in fire to fathers with Svadhakara. Deva yajna or sacrifice to gods consists of offering fire oblations to gods with Swahakara. Brahma yajna or sacrifice to Brahma is observing penance, austerities and studying the Veda

The Rics are milk-offerings to the gods. One, who recites and studies the Rics every day, satisfies the gods with milk-offerings and obtains security of possession by the auspicious blessings of gods. There will be continuous flow of ghee and honey for his fathers.

The Yajus are ghee-offerings to the gods. One, who recites and studies the Yajus every day, satisfies the gods with ghee-offerings and he obtains security of possession by the auspicious blessings of gods. There will be continuous flow of ghee and honey for his fathers.

The Samas are Soma-offerings to the gods. One, who recites and studies the Samas every day, satisfies the gods with Soma-offerings and he obtains security of possession by the auspicious blessings of gods. There will be continuous flow of ghee and honey for his fathers.

The texts of the Atharvangirasa are fat-offerings to the gods. One, who recites and studies these texts every day, he satisfies the gods with fat-offerings and obtains security of possession by the auspicious blessings of gods. There will be continuous flow of ghee and honey for his fathers.

The precepts (Vedangas), the sciences (Philosophical texts), the dialogue (Discourses), the traditional myths and legends (Itihasa), and the Narashamsi Gathas (teachings by way of storytelling) are honey-offerings to the gods. One, who studies these texts every day, he satisfies the gods with honey-offerings and obtains security of possession by the auspicious blessings of gods. There will be continuous flow of ghee and honey for his fathers.

Sacrifice to the Brahman consists of the four Vaṣaṭ-calls, when the wind blows, when it lightens, when it thunders, and when it rumbles, one should certainly study Adhiyitaiva formulas, so as not to lose his Vaṣaṭ-calls. He is freed from recurring death and attains the Brahman. In case, he is unable to study, he should at least read a single divine word. Thus, the Brahmana speaks of the Pancha yajnas. Here, the Brahmana also refers to the Gathas, which are not regarded on par with Vedic mantras.

### **Agnihotra and the importance of the two libations**

#### **(11<sup>th</sup> Kanda, 6<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya, 2<sup>nd</sup> Brahmana)**

Janaka of Videha once happened to meet some travelling Brahmanas, Svetaketu Aruneya, Somashushma Satyayajni and Yajnavalkya. He enquired the Brahmanas as to how each of them perform Agnihotra. Svetaketu replied that he is making offerings in two fires one into the other. Janaka asked how he was doing it. Svetaketu replied that Aditya and Agni are the two fires. He said, “Aditya is the fire of heaven. I make offering to Aditya in Agni in the evening. Agni is the terrestrial fire. To him I make offerings in Aditya in the morning.” The king asked what would be the benefit in performing the Agnihotra in this way. Svetaketu replied that one, who performs the Agnihotra in this way; he becomes endowed with never-failing prosperity and glory. He attains the fellowship of the deities Agni and Aditya in afterlife. Somashushma Satyayajni said, “O king, I make offering to light in light.” Janaka asked how he was doing it. Somashushma said, “Aditya is the light of heaven. I make offerings to him in another light, the Agni in the evening. Agni is the terrestrial light. To him I make offering in Aditya in the morning.” ‘Then, the king asked what would be the benefit in doing so. Somashushma replied, one who observes the Agnihotra like this, attains divine radiance, prosperity and glory. He attains the fellowship of these deities in afterlife.

Then Yājñavalkya said, “When I take out the fire from the Garhapatya, it is the Agnihotra itself. When Aditya sets, all the gods follow him. When they see the fire taken out by me, they turn back. When I cleanse the sacrificial vessels, and deposit them on the Vedi, and milk the Agnihotra cow, I appease them.” The king said, “O’ Yajnavalkya, you know the Agnihotra well. If you are aware of the uprising, progress, support, contentment, return and the renascent world of those two libations of the Agnihotra, I will give you hundred cows.” The king mounted his car and drove away.

They thought that this person is a Rajanya and he outtalked us. Yajnavalkya, mounting his car, drove after the king and he overtook him. The king asked him whether it was to know the Agnihotra that Yajnavalkya had driven after him so quick. Yajnavalkya asked the king about the two libations of Agnihotra.

The king said that those two libations, when offered, rise upwards. They enter the air. The air is their offering-fire and the wind their fuel. The sun-motes are their libation. Thus, they satiate the air, and rise upwards from there. Then, they enter the sky. The sky is their offering-fire and the sun their fuel, and the moon their libation. They satiate the sky and return from there. On return, they enter the earth, and make it their offering-fire and the terrestrial fire their fuel, and the herbs are their libation. They satiate the earth and rise upwards therefrom. They enter man. Mouth is their offering-fire and his tongue their fuel,

and food their libation. They satiate man. They rise upwards from there. They enter woman. They make her lap their offering-fire and her womb the fuel. The seed is their libation. They satiate woman. The son who is born therefrom is the renascent world. This is the greatness of Agnihotra and the importance of the two libations. Yajnavalkya was pleased and granted the king a boon. Thereafter, Janaka became a Brahmana. As per the Brahmana, in Vedic times, it seems that the Varna system is not so rigid stratification of society. It is the Guna and Karma that ultimately decides the Varna. One can move on to the higher Varna in hierarchy provided the essentials for it are satisfied. For this reason, we cannot equate the Varna system with the present day caste system nor do we find the roots of present caste system in the Vedic Varna system. The socio-political conditions that led to the present day caste system are to be studied separately.

### **Yajnavalkya and Shakalya disposition**

#### **(11<sup>th</sup> Kanda, 6<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brahmana)**

Janaka of Videha performed a great sacrifice. He distributed numerous gifts to the priests. He set apart a thousand cows, and declared that he, who is the most learned among the assembly of the Brahmanas, shall drive away the cows. Yajnavalkya responded to it and asked his students to drive away the cows to his ashram. Then, the Brahmanas were filled with envy and hatred seeing the confidence of Yajnavalkya and they asked Shakalya to oppose the act of Yajnavalkya, thinking that they themselves are better learned. Shakalya, filled with envy and hatred at the support of other Brahmanas, decided to challenge Yajnavalkya and asked him, "How many gods are there, Yajnavalkya?" He replied, "It is Three thousand three, three hundred three, thirty three, three, two, one and a half and finally one." Shakalya asked, "Who are the Three thousand three and Three hundred three gods?" Yajnavalkya replied that they are the numerous powers of gods. Shakalya, then asked, "Who are those thirty three gods?" Yajnavalkya replied that the eight Vasus, eleven Rudras and the twelve Adityas with Prajapati and Indra make thirty three. Then Shakalya asked, "Who are the eight Vasus?" Yajnavalkya replied that they are Prithvi, Agni, Vayu, Prana, Heaven, Aditya, Moon and the Stars. The universe abides by these eight things and so they are Vasus. Then Shakalya asked, "Who are the Rudras?" Yajnavalkya replied these are the ten vital airs in this body, the self being the eleventh. If they leave the body, they cause us cry (Rud) with grief and so they are the eleven Rudras. Then, Shakalya asked, "Yajnavalkya, who are the Adityas?" Yajnavalkya replied that they are the twelve months of the year for they pass while laying hold on or capturing (ada) everything here. Time takes away everything in creation. So, they are the Adityas. Then, Shakalya asked, "Who are Indra and Prajapati?" Yajnavalkya replied that Indra is the thunder, the enormous divine energy which drives away evil or darkness and Prajapati is the sacrifice that is the source of all the creation and its sustenance.

Shakalya, then asked, "Who are those three gods?" Yajnavalkya said that these are the three worlds and the traids in our experience, the perceiver, the perceived and the perception. As all the gods are contained therein, these are the three gods. Shakalya, later asked, "Who are the two gods?" Yajnavalkya replied that it is food and breath (Prana). Without these two, the beings do not exist i.e. the Prana does cease. Then, he asked, "Who is the one and a half?" Yajnavalkya replied that it is the Vayu (also called as Adhyardha in Veda) who blows here and in the lower half of the mid-region. Shakalya asked, "Who is the one god?" Yajnavalkya replied that it is the Breath (Prana), the source of existence and identity of an individual. Once, the Prana ceases, the subjective identity ceases. So, it is the only god.

Yajnavalkya then said, “Shakalya, now you have questioned me enough, everything even beyond the deity. I explained how one world is woven and re woven on another making up the numbers. Everything stems from and multiplies in Prajapati. No question shall be asked beyond the Prajapati as he is Swatantra and Aprameya. You have gone on questioning me beyond the Prajapati which is against the principles of any disputation. It is as good as questioning Prajapati which results in disbelief. As a learned Brahmana, your questioning beyond the Prajapati is unpardonable. A Brahmana should be established in Brahman but not in hatred or envy. It is as a consequence, you shall die on such and such a day and not even your bones shall reach your home.” Shakalya died and robbers carried off his bones, assuming them for something else. Any disputation with a realized soul (brahmavid) shall never be an ego-centric argument driven by proud and arrogance. Such a disputation will result in unwanted happenings and disturbs the very foundation of Brahmanatva (Living as a Brahmana). A realized soul shall be approached and disputation with such a person shall be submissive with an intention of enlightenment and attaining realization only.

### **Sautramani, the sura sacrifice for appeasing Indra (12<sup>th</sup> Kanda, 7<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya, 1<sup>st</sup> Brahmana)**

Sautramani is a very specific Vedic sacrifice. Indra slew Visvaroopas, son of Twashtara. Twashtara, on seeing his son dead, had become furious and driven Indra out from there. He wanted to perform witchery on Indra and prepared the Soma juice. He withheld Indra from the sacrifice and he made the Soma prohibited for Indra. Indra, though uninvited, drank the Soma-juice and so, the sacrifice was desecrated. The Soma did not go well with Indra. He could not digest it and his vital powers started flowing out from every limb of his body. He lost the energy and power.

His fiery spirit flowed from the eyes and it turned into a grey he-goat. The power flowed from his eyelashes turned into wheat. The power that flowed from his tears had become the kuvala-fruit. The vital energy that flowed from his nostrils became the ram. The vital power flowed from the phlegm became the Indra-grain and the moisture there became badara-fruit. The vital power flowed from his mouth became the bull and the foam there turned into barley and from the moisture of the mouth became the karkandhu-fruit. From the energy that flowed from his ears, three animals, horse, mule (an animal in between horse and ass) and ass had come. From his breasts, bright sap flowed and it turned into milk. From his heart, his courage flowed and turned into an eagle. From his navel his life breath flowed and became lead. From his seed gold has come out, from his generative organs, the Parisrut (raw liquor or immature liquor) had come and from the fire of his hips the surd, matured liquor had generated. From his urine, his vigour flowed out and became the wolf, from his intestines his fury flowed and it became tiger, from his blood, his might flowed out and it became the lion. From his hair his thought flowed out and it became millet. From his skin, his honour flowed, and it had turned into the asvattha tree (ficus religiosa). From his flesh, his force flowed out and it turned into the Udumbara tree (ficus glomerata). From his bones his sweet drink flowed, and turned into the nyagrodha tree (ficus indica). From his marrow, the Soma juice flowed and it became the rice. In this way all his vital powers had flown out and he became dissipated.

At this movement came the Asura Namuchi, He thought that all the energies of Indra had been dissipated. He wanted to seize all the vital powers of Indra. By taking the Sura liquor, he had seized all the energies of Indra. Indra lost all his energies and he was laid there dissolved. The gods saw Indra and they wanted to cure him. They asked Asvins for their help. They replied, “Let there be a reward for us.”

Gods said, “The he-goat (male goat) shall be your reward.” They accepted and so he-goat has become sacred to the two Asvins.

The gods requested Sarasvati, “O’ Sarasvati. You are the healing medicine. Please heal Indra.” She replied,” ‘Let there be a reward for me.” The gods said, “The ram (male sheep) shall be your reward.” She accepted and so, the ram became sacred to Sarasvati. (Sheep and goat are different species. Goat has hair but the ram has wool).

The gods said, “Now also, there is enough power in Indra as that of the divine bull. The bull shall belong to him.” and so, the bull became sacred to Indra. But in later periods the Bull had become sacred to lord Shiva.

The two Asvins and Sarasvati, took out the vital power from Namuci and restored them to Indra and saved him from evil. They said, “We have saved him from evil and so he should be the savior of good (sutrata). For this reason, the sacrifice performed for appeasing Indra seeking protection and prosperity is called Sautramani. In this yajna, the he-goat is offered to Asvins and a ram to Sarasvati. The Sura liquor is offered to Indra in this sacrifice. It saves the performer or yajamana from death, and repels the evil. The sacrifice consists of thirty-three dakshinas (presents to the priests), as thirty-three were the gods who healed Indra from the witchery of Twashtra and saved him. Dakshinas are the healing medicines in this sacrifice and Dakshinas are the boon bestowers even in the current day ceremonies also.

### **Indra slaying the Namuchi**

#### **(12<sup>th</sup> Kanda, 7<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya, 3<sup>rd</sup> Brahmana)**

By means of the Sura-liquor Namuchi could seize the vital powers of Indra. At this moment, Indra requested Namuchi not to seize his vital powers and also Indra had sworn to Namuchi that he would not slay him either in day or night, either with staff or bow, either with the palm of his hand or fist, either with dry or moist. Even after granting all these boons, Namuchi had seized the vital powers of Indra. Such is the nature of Asuras, the evil forces. Gods approached Asvins and Sarasvati for help. The Asvins and Sarasvati poured out foam of water on the Vajra (the thunderbolt) weapon of Indra. It is neither dry nor moist. When the night was about to close and the Sun is about to rise, Indra struck off the head of Namuci. The Vajra is neither a staff nor a bow and the time just before dawn is neither day nor night, the foam is neither moist nor dry, he used neither his palm nor his fist. Thus, Indra could slay Namuchi, without disturbing the boons granted to him and could regain all the vital powers, he had lost. Thus, it is said that one, who had enemies has to perform the Sautramani sacrifice to gain victory over them or to eradicate them permanently.

The two liquids, Soma, the drink of immortality and Sura (matured liquor), a drink prepared by adding some sweet and flavoured ingredients to Soma are offered in the sacrifice. Soma is made from the juice of the holy creeper. It is pure and satiates the gods. Sura is prepared by adding sweet and some ingredients of flavour and intoxication. By doing so, the sacrificer is making the immortal with the immortal; the honeyed with honeyed and thereby bestows energy and fortifies his Prana, the life force. Soma satiates the nobility and the Sura, the peasantry. He first, offers Soma to the gods and then the Sura to Rudra, the terrific lord of cattle and wild beasts. Thus, the performer makes the peasantry obedient to the nobility. Soma is for the Satvic deities and Sura for the fiery and cruel.

The cups of Sura-liquor, the performer mixes with hairs of the wild beasts. Thereby, he puts into the Sura what belongs to Rudra. On drinking Sura, one turns violent and thus he, directs Rudra's shaft on



wild animals only and ensures security to the domestic animals. With two eagle-feathers, the Adhvaryu and Pratiprasthata will purify the Sacrificer. He touches the cups of milk as milk is Soma and says,” ‘Uniting you are, unite me with happiness. Thereby he gains peace and happiness. “Then, he touches the cups of Sura and says,” With disuniting you are, keep me away from evil” Alternatively it is said, by touching the cups of Soma and Sura, the performer will say,” Uniting you are, unite me with happiness.” And on disuniting them he will say,” Disuniting you are, keep me away from evil” Thus, he becomes freed from all evils.

### **Kings who performed the Asvamedha Sacrifice and reference to Gathas (13<sup>th</sup> Kanda, 5<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya, 4<sup>th</sup> Brahmana)**

This part of the Satapatha Brahmana, for the first time, refers to the texts known as Gathas in a detailed manner. The Brahmana describes the different arrangements of chants of the Asvamedha sacrifice, performed by various kings. The Brahmana, while mentioning the names and details of kings makes a reference to the Gathas. The term "Gatha" in the context of Rig-Veda refers to a song or verse. While the term appears in the Rigveda, it is often associated with non-Vedic religious texts, especially the Gathas in the Avesta, which are hymns attributed to the Prophet Zoroaster. We also see Gathas in Buddhist and Jain literature. These are written in Prakrit and Pali languages. The Gathas are not considered Vedic mantras, but, some kind of honour is definitely bestowed on them during the time period of this Brahmana. Pali and Prakrit, both belong to the Indo-Aryan language family. Pali is a standardized dialect and primarily associated with the Theravada Buddhist principle. On the other hand, Prakrit encompasses a broader range of vernacular languages spoken in ancient India. According to some scholars, Pali is a mix of several Prakrit dialects like Magadhi, Sauraseni, Maharashtri and Gandhari and it is a partially sanskritized one. Various kings performed this sacrifice and there are various arrangements of chants mentioned. The details are not being given here. We will confine only to the honour bestowed on this sacrifice by the kingly community.

Indrota Daivapa performed this sacrifice for the king Janamejaya Parikshita. By performing it, Parikshita extinguished all evils. The Gatha sings that Janamejaya offered the gods a black-spotted, grain-eating horse, adorned with a golden ornaments and garlands. Atnara's son Kausalya Para Hairanyanabha had performed the sacrifice and given away huge lands to the priests and Brahmanas in gift. King Purukutsa Aikavaka had performed the sacrifice. The Ayogava king; Marutta Avikshita had performed the sacrifice. By this sacrifice, it is said that Maruts have become his guards; Agni has become his manager and the Vishwedevas, his counselors. The Panchala king Kravya had performed this sacrifice. He gave away huge number of cattle and the Brahmanas of every corner of Panchala had distributed them among themselves. The king of Matsya, Dhvasan Dvaitavana had performed the sacrifice and he sacrificed fourteen horses for appeasing Indra and became victorious in the battle. Bharata Daushyanti had seized the sacrificial horse of Satvats. He performed the sacrifice and offered seventy eight horses on the banks of Yamuna and fifty five on the banks of Ganga for appeasing Indra. It was at Kanvas Ashram, the Apsara Sakuntala conceived Bharata. Bharata on conquering the whole earth performed the Asvamedha sacrifice at the place of his birth, the Ashrama of Kanva. He offered a thousand horses to appease Indra. Thus, Bharata had become the greatest among all the Panchajanas (Five great tribes of Vedic period). King Saudyumni, performed this sacrifice offering thirty three horses for Indra. Rishabha Yajnatura, king of the Shviknas, performed sacrifice and distributed huge offering gifts to Brahmanas. Sona Satrasaha, the Panchala king, performed this sacrifice. He offered Soma to Indra and satiated the

Brahmanas with wealth. Shatanika Satrajita performed the sacrifice after seizing or taking away the white sacrificial horse of Dhratarashtas.

It seems that the story of Bharata son of Shakuntala and Dushyanta is known during this period through Gathas. This Bharata seems to be of Bharata clan of the Rig-Veda, the clan of Divodas who fought the Dashrajna war and turned victorious with the help of Vasishtha. The story might have been adopted into Puranic literature and later the poet Kalidasa based on it had composed the great literary work, "Abhijnana Shakuntalam." As the Brahmana refers to Gathas, we have to presume that the Gathas, though not treated on par with the Vedic mantras, were bestowed with certain honour and were recited like the Puranic study in those times. We may have to infer that the stories prevalent in Gathas during this period might have been given the shape of Puranas and Itihasas at later times. Bharatas are definitely a Vedic clan and as per the Rig-Veda, they conquered the Purus and established their rule along the Indus-Sarasvati. It seems they have expanded eastwards and the lands of Brahmvarta and Aryavarta might have come under their rule as the land of Bharatas, the Bharata Varsha, the name of our country.

### **The Sarvamedha, Sacrifice of all (13<sup>th</sup> Kanda, 7<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya, 1<sup>st</sup> Brahmana)**

Brahman, the self-existent was performing austerities. He observed that there is no perpetuity in austerities. He offered his own soul in the creatures and the souls of all creatures in himself and thus, he ensured the perpetuity of sacrifice. The Brahmana refers that the cycle of creation is the perpetual sacrifice. The Sacrificer, by offering all sacrificial essences in the Sarvamedha, encompasses all beings attains the supremacy, sovereignty, and lordship.

Sarvamedha is a ten-day Soma sacrifice. Like Purushamedha, it is also performed with Viraj, the Vedic metre of ten syllables. It drives away all evils. It is the essence of all the sacrifices. On the first day Agnistut Agnishtoma is performed for appeasing Agni, On the second day Indrastut Ukthya is performed for appeasing Indra and on the third day, Suryastut Ukthya is performed for appeasing Surya, on the fourth day, Vaishvadeva, the Soma sacrifice is performed to appease Vishvedevas and on the fifth day the Asvamedha is performed, on sixth day Paurushamedhika is performed, on the seventh day the Aptoryama, the soma sacrifice is performed, on the eighth day Trinava shtoma is performed, on the ninth day Trayastrimsa Stoma and on the tenth day Vishvajit Atiratra are performed as part of Sarvamedha.

Vishvakarma Bhauvana once performed this sacrifice, and having performed it he overpassed all beings, and became everything here. It was Kashyapa who officiated in his sacrifice and the king gave away the earth to Kashyapa. On this occasion, the earth said, "O king, no mortal can give me away. The earth will sink into the waters and your promise to Kashyapa would be in vain."

### **The Purushamedha or the Sacrifice of self (13<sup>th</sup> Kanda, 6<sup>th</sup> Adhyaya, 1<sup>st</sup> Brahmana)**

Purusha Narayana desired to overpass all beings and become everything in this universe. He beheld the five-day sacrificial performance, the Purushamedha. One, who knowing this, performs the Purushamedha, he will overpass all beings, and become everything in this universe i.e. Narayana. There are twenty-three Dikshas, twelve Upasads, and five Sutyas (Soma days) in this sacrifice. This is a forty-day sacrifice or alternatively observed as a five day sacrifice. The forty day sacrifice represents the metre Viraj as Viraj consists of forty syllables, four quadrants of ten syllables each. The performer, by

observing the sacrifice with Viraj, creates Purusha from it and Purusha is everything here. By this sacrifice, the performer attains all worlds. By the first ten days, he attains the terrestrial world. By the next ten days, he attains the world of Vayu, the air. By later ten days, he attains the Antariksha, the sky and by the last ten days, he attains the fourth region, the mother of all the three worlds. By this sacrifice, one attains the entire universe and becomes established in Purusha, the Narayana.

On the Upavasata (fasting) day and on Sutyā (Soma days) days, there are eleven offerings sacred to Agni and Soma. The Vedic metre, Trishtubh consists of eleven syllables. It is the thunderbolt of Indra which repels the evil. Thus, the Upavasata wards off all evil. This may be the reason for observing fasting on Ekadashi (Eleventh day) in every fortnight. The worlds, the seasons and the self of the sacrificer are passed into Purushamedha for attaining everything in this universe, the Narayana. Purushamedha is the sacrifice of inner self to the Purusha. One, who sacrifices the inner self, turns into the Purusha, the Narayana. Thus, Purushamedha is everything, the highest sacrifice.