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"RUDRA IN THE BRĀHMAṆA LITERATURE"

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ABSTRACT

Vedas are the store house of knowledge. The word Veda comes from the root vid to know, with the suffix ac or ghañ. Manu says in his book Manusmṛti that the Veda is the source of dharmas or religion (Manusmṛti, 2.6). There are four Vedas in number namely the Ṛgveda, the Yajurveda, the Atharvaveda and the Sāmaveda. Each Veda has been classified into four sub-divisions—the Saṁhitās, the Brāhmaṇas, the Āraṇyakas and the Upaniṣads. The word Brāhmaṇais derived from the root bṛh. Brāhmaṇas are written in prose style. They deal in ritualistic performances, theological matters and various sacrificial rites, along with explanation of the mantras. Mention of many gods and goddesses is found in the Brāhmaṇa literature. Among the various gods and goddesses, this paper is an attempt to highlight the characteristic features of Rudra, his origin and stories related to Rudraas reflected in the Brāhmaṇa literature.

Methodology : In this paper, mainly analytical method is used. Descriptive method is also used in some places.)

Introduction :

In the *Ṛgveda*, Rudra is depicted as a minor god but in the Yajurvedic as well as Atharvavedic period, his position had developed. In the Brāhmaṇic literature, Rudra is considered distinctly as a major god. Hence it seems that Gradual development of Rudra's personality started in the Brāhmaṇic period.

Origin of Rudra

In the *ŚatapathaBrāhmaṇa*, the story of Rudra's origin and at the same time identifies with Agni is alluded to.

According to this *Brāhmaṇa*, when Prajāpati intended upon creation, he created respectively the water, foam, clay, sand, *śarkarā* and then the earth. After creating the earth, Prajāpati spread it out and it became *prithivī*. On this earth the beings and the lord of beings consecrated themselves for a year. The lord of beings was the master of the house and Uṣas was his wife. The beings were called the

season and the lord of beings was the year. Then the beings and lord of beings made Uṣas pregnant. Afterwards a boy was born in a year. As soon as the boy was born, he started crying. Seeing him crying Prajāpati asked the boy about the reason of his crying. Then that boy replied that no name has been given to him. The boy asked Prajāpati for a name. Then Prajāpati gave him the name of *Rudra*. Because he cried, therefore he is Rudra. As soon as Prajāpati gave him that name, Agni became his form. For Rudra is Agni. There is also a mention of Agni's crying in the *Taittirīya Saṁhitā*.¹ The boy again said that he want to be greater than one who does not exist. Prajāpati named him as *Śarva*.

In this way, the boy came to Prajāpati again six more times asking for names to be greater than the one who does not exist. Then the names *Paśupati*, *Ugra*, *Aśani*, *Bhava*, *Mahādeva* and *Īśāna* are bestowed to him successively. Since Prajāpati gave the name *Śarva* to him (the boy), the waters became his form. For *Śarva* is water. Similarly *Paśupati* is plants, *Ugra* is wind, *Aśani* is lightning, *Bhava* is parjanya, *Mahādeva* is moon and Prajāpati, *Īśāna* is the sun.² Here, in this *Brāhmaṇa*, these are the eight forms of Rudra. Similarly in the Purāṇic literature, these eight names are used for lord Śiva.³

P.M. Rath says that “Each of these names successively possess higher power as it appears from the text that each time the boy becomes dissatisfied by declaring ‘surely, I am mightier than that; give me yet a name!’ This is suggestive of Rudra’s pining for supremacy.”⁴

The *ŚatapathaBrāhmaṇa* of the *ŚuklaYajurveda* makes another statement regarding the birth of Rudra and a different etymology for the *Śatarudriya*.

According to the *ŚatapathaBrāhmaṇa*, Rudra is said to be born from Prajāpati. The *ŚatapathaBrāhmaṇa* prescribes that when Prajāpati desired to create progeny, all the gods left him. Manu did not leave him. He became Rudra with a hundred heads, a thousand eyes and a hundred quivers. That Rudra, with his bow strung and his arrows fitted to the string. The other gods were afraid of him. The gods told Prajāpati that they were afraid of him because he might hurt them. Then Prajāpati asked those gods to collect food for him (Rudra) and appeased him with that food. Thereafter the gods collected food for Rudra. That food was *Śatarudriya* offering and appeased him therewith.⁵

In the *KauśitakīBrāhmaṇa*, the story regarding the birth of Rudra is described in a slightly different manner. The story is described below— being eager of progeny, Prajāpati performed austerity. When he performed austerity, five children, viz. Agni, Vāyu, Āditya, Candramas and Uṣas were born. Prajāpati told them to perform austerity. Uṣas, the daughter of Prajāpati appeared before them in the form of an *apsarā*. Then they attracted towards Uṣas and they poured out seed, which was collected in a golden spoon made by Prajāpati. From this collected seed a deity was born who has thousand eyes, thousand feet and thousand arrows. After being born the deity came to Prajāpati and asked for a name. Thereafter Prajāpati bestowed a name to him, i.e. *Bhava*. *Bhava* represents water. In this way, the newly born being came to Prajāpati again seven more times seeking another name. The names were given by Prajāpati to him as *Śarva*, which is fire, *Paśupati* is air, *Ugra* is plants and trees, *Mahādeva* represents the sun, *Rudra* represents moon, *Īśāna* represents food and then *Aśani* represents Indra.⁶

Different names are ascribed to Rudra. These different epithets represent

different aspects of cosmic world. These numerous names of Rudra reveal the prominence of his personality than others.

Rudra as piercer of Prajāpati

In the *AitareyaBrāhmaṇa*, it is said that once Prajāpati attracted to his daughter, Uṣas or sky and desired her as his wife. Prajāpati transformed himself into a kind of deer. Then he approached her in the form of a deer. In order to prevent the illicit deed of Prajāpati, the gods wishing to punish him concentrated their dreaded forms in one place. Out of which, a god named Rudra was emerged. The gods told him (Rudra) to pierce Prajāpati. Then god Rudra asked for a boon from the gods to be the lord of animals. He was rewarded with the boon from the gods and pierced Prajāpati with an arrow. Being pierced Prajāpati flew upwards and became a constellation called *Mṛga*, Rudra who pierced Prajāpati called *Mṛgavyādha* and Prajāpati's daughter became *rohiṇī*.⁷ In the Purāṇic literature, Lord Śiva is also known as *Mṛgavyādha*.⁸

Rudra as Paśupati

In the *SatapathaBrāhmaṇa*, Rudra is frequently addressed as the lord of animals or *Paśupati*.⁹ In the context of Somakrayaṇavidhi of the Jyotiṣtoma sacrifice, the soma-cow (the cow which is given for the purchase of soma plant) is addressed as Rudrā.¹⁰ In the same context, Rudra is invoked for the safety of the soma-cow.¹¹ The colour of the soma-cow is mentioned as brown with red-brown eyes.¹²

In the Indraturīya sacrifice, a yoke trained cow is offered to Indra. This cow is an appropriate fee for this offering because this cow includes the nature of all gods. That cow has Agni's nature because her shoulder is fire-burnt. She is of Varuṇa's nature because being a female she improperly draws the cart. She has Rudra's nature as she is a cow and she is of Indra's nature as the sour curds which are offered to Indra made from her milk.¹³

In the context of Dākṣiṇāhoma, four kinds of sacrificial gifts are given to the priest. The first one is gold, second one cow, third cloth and forth horse. The second sacrificial gift, i.e. cow is given to Rudra or Hotṛ priest.¹⁴

In the context of the Sviṣṭakṛt rite of the Aśvamedha sacrifice, the Sviṣṭakṛt is said to be Rudra. *Gomṛgakaṇṭha* is offered in this sacrifice. Here, it is said that where this oblation is offered with *gomṛgakaṇṭha*, in that place Rudra does not injure the cattle.¹⁵

Rudra as Hotṛ and Pratihartṛ priest

A reference has been found where Rudra is identified with Hotṛ priest.¹⁶ Sāyaṇācārya interprets the passage as— '*tām*' *gāmprajāpatirhotṛbhūtāya* '*rudrāya*' '*adadāt*' *tasmādhoregām dadādityarthaḥ*.¹⁷ The *GopathaBrāhmaṇa* describes in the context of sacrificial gift that Rudra is Pratihartṛ.¹⁸

Īśāna and Om sound

In the context of the origin of Omkāra, Prajāpati said that the third *mātrā* of Omkāra is mentioned as belonging to the deity of Īśāna. The colour of this god is *kapila* or tawny. One who meditates about him daily gets the domain of god Īśāna.¹⁹

Triṣṭubh and Rudras

In the *GopathaBrāhmaṇa*, Triṣṭubh metre is portrayed as the wife of Rudras. This identification may be done on the basis of their similarities of number. Rudra are of eleven in number and Triṣṭubh metre also includes eleven syllables in each

pāda.²⁰ The definition of Triṣṭubh metre is depicted in the *R̥gvedaprātiśākhya* thus—

catuṣcatvāriṃṣattriṣṭuvakṣarāṇīcatuṣpadā |
*ekādaśākṣaraihpādaiḥ ||*²¹

It means Triṣṭubh metre includes twenty-four syllables and four *pādas*. Each *pāda* consists of eleven syllables.

Rudra and Prajāpati

The *ŚatapathaBrāhmaṇa* identified Rudra with Manyu. This *Brāhmaṇa* mentions that when Prajāpati had become disjointed, the deities left him. At that time, only one god named Manyu did not leave him (Prajāpati). Prajāpati cried his tears that fell down settled on Manyu. Then Manyu became the hundred-headed, thousand-eyed and hundred-quivered Rudra. And the other drops that fell down became innumerable as they spread throughout these worlds. Since they originated from crying, they were called Rudras. That hundred-headed, thousand-eyed, hundred-quivered Rudra, with his bow and arrow ready to shoot, generated fear among gods, while he was searching for food.²² This reference brings forth Rudra's dreadful or terrible nature.

Rudra and Ambikā

A reference has been found in the context of the Tryambaka offering of the *ŚatapathaBrāhmaṇa*, where Ambikā is said to be Rudra's sister. A share is offered to Rudra and he (Rudra) is invoked to accept his share along with Ambikā, Rudra's sister.²³ In the *TaittirīyaBrāhmaṇa*, autumn season is identified with Ambikā. Ambikā is Rudra's *śahacārīṇī*. Rudra kills the creatures along with Ambikā.²⁴ In the *Vājasaneyisaṃhitā*, Mahīdhara remarks that Ambikā kills her enemies by taking the form of autumn and spreading fever, etc. diseases.²⁵ Here, Ambikā is delineated with Rudra as a ferocious deity. Her dreaded form is reflected very clearly.

Rudra in the TaittirīyaBrāhmaṇa

In the *TaittirīyaBrāhmaṇa*, Rudra is said to be *PaśunāmPati*²⁶ as well as the slayer of animals— *rudro 'syapaśūnghātukaḥ syāt*.²⁷ Rudra is called *Agnisviṣṭakṛt*. The cattle are protected from Rudra with *gomṛgakaṇṭha* oblation.²⁸ A reference has been found where Rudra is described as *Bhūtānāmadhipati* and *TanticaroVṛṣā*. Here, Rudra is supplicated not to harm their animals.²⁹ In the word *bhūtānāmadhipati*, Bhaṭṭabhāskaramiśra comments that Rudra is the lord of beings. In connection with the word *tanticarovṛṣā*, he gives two types of meanings. First one is one who resides in the *yajña* and the second meaning is one who moves near the cord of animals or cattle.³⁰

There is a reference in the *TaittirīyaBrāhmaṇa*, where Rudra is connected with Mr̥tyu.³¹ Bhaṭṭabhāskaramiśra explains the relevant passage thus— *hutaśeṣabhāgo hi sviṣṭakṛdādirūporudrah | yatparaṃnāmatasmai hutamitidarśanāt | yameṣṭamitivacanātyamādevatatopidūrāttāvatyo 'yammr̥tyuprakāraḥ tamavayajate nāśayati*.³²

Rudra's close relation to cow has been found very clearly through a Brāhmaṇic passage. Here, it is said that cow is the proper sacrificial gift or *dakṣiṇā* of Rudra.³³ Rudra is delineated as the slayer of calf if the calf drinks milk from his mother after the *saṅgava* period (ten nights from the birth of a calf).³⁴ In this connection, Bhaṭṭabhāskaramiśra comments that—
...vatsamsamsṛṣṭadhayamhomārthenadugdhenasamsṛṣṭampibantamdaśarātrādūr

*hvamapikṛtsnapāyinaṃrudroghātukaḥhantukāmaḥ syāt.*³⁵

Conclusion

From the above discussion it can be concluded that Rudra occupied a prominent position in the Brāhmaṇic period. His gradual development slowly came into light in this period. In the *ŚatapathaBrāhmaṇa*, Rudra is frequently addressed as the lord of animals. Many interesting references have been found in the Brāhmaṇas, about the origin of Rudra, his relation to Agni, Prajāpati, Ambikā, Hotṛ and Pratihartṛ priest etc. From this, it seems that Rudra became more prominent in the Brāhmaṇic period.

Endnotes:

1. *TaittirīyaSamhitā*, 1.5.1.1
2. *ŚatapathaBrāhmaṇa*, 6.1.3.7-17
3. *ŚivaMahāpurāṇa*, 3.2.3
4. Vide, Rath, P.M., *Rudra-Śiva in the Vedas*, p.65
5. *ŚatapathaBrāhmaṇa*, 9.1.1.6-7
6. *KauṣītakiBrāhmaṇa*, 6.1-9
7. *AitareyaBrāhmaṇa.*, 13.9.33
8. *ŚivaMahāpurāṇa*, 4.35.11
9. *ŚatapathaBrāhmaṇa*, 1.7.3.8; 5.3.3.7
10. *savāivācaevārūpeṇānunikrāmativasvyasyāditirasyādityāsirudrā'sicandrāsivas vīhyeṣādītirhyeṣādityāhyeṣārudrā...* || Ibid., 3.3.1.2
11. *...rudrastvāvartayatuapraṇāśayaitadāharudraṃ hi nātīpaśavaḥ...* || Ibid., 3.2.4.20
12. *sāyābabhruḥpiṅgākṣīsāsomakrayaṇī* | Ibid., 3.3.1.13
13. *...tasyaisaivānaḍuhīvahalādakṣiṇā | sā hi vahanāgneyī | agnidagdhamivahyasyaivahambhavati | athayatastrīsatīvahatiadharmeṇa | tadasyaivārūṇamrūpaṃ | athayadgauḥ, tenaraurdṛī | athayadasyā'aindraṃdadhi, tenaindraiṣā hi vā'etatsarvaṃvyaśnutetasṃmādeṣaivānaḍuhīvahalādakṣiṇā* | Ibid., 5.2.4.13
14. *catasrovaidakṣiṇāḥ...athagauḥ | prāṇamevaitayātmanastrāyateprāṇo hi gaurannaṃ hi... rudrāyahotre'dadāt* || Ibid., 4.3.4.25
15. *gomṛgakaṇṭhenaprathamāmāhutimjuhoti / paśavovaigomṛgārudraḥsviṣṭakṛtpaśūnevarudrādantardadhātitaṃmādyatraiṣā'sva medha'hutirhūyatenatrarudraḥpaśūnabhimanyate* || Ibid., 13.3.4.3
16. *...prāṇo hi gauḥ | annaṃ hi gauḥ | annaṃ hi prāṇaḥtāmruadrāyahotre'dadāt* || Ibid., 4.3.4.25
17. Sāyaṇa, Ibid.
18. *antataḥpratihartrēdeyaṃ, raudrovaipratihartrā...* | *GopathaBrāhmaṇa*, 2.3.19
19. *...yāsātrīyāmātraisānadevatyākāpilāvarṇena* | Ibid., 1.1.25
20. *...pathyāpūṣṇapatnī, gayatrīvasūnāmpatnī, triṣṭubrudrāṇāmpatnī...* || Ibid., 2.2.9
21. *Ṛgvedaprātisākhya*, 16.64
22. *ŚatapathaBrāhmaṇa*, 9.1.1.6-7
23. *eṣaterudrabhāgaḥsahasvasrāmbikayātāmjuṣasvasvāhetyambikā ha vaināmāsyasvasā...* || Ibid., 2.6.2.9
24. *eṣaterudrabhāgassahasvasrā'mbikayetyāha | śaradvāasyāmbikāsvasā |*

tayāvāeṣahinasti...||

TaittirīyaBrāhmaṇa, 1.6.10.75

25. *sācāmbikāśaradrūpaṃprāpyajarādīkamutpādyatamvirodhinamhanti |*

Mahīdhara on *Vājasaneyisaṃhitā*, 3.57

26. *marutogaṇānāmpatayaḥ| rudrapaśūnām pate | TaittirīyaBrāhmaṇa*, 3.11.4.2

27. *Ibid.*, 3.7.2.6

28. *gomṛgakaṇṭhenaprathamāhutimjuhoti | rudro'gniḥsviṣṭakṛt |*
rudrādevaprajāantardadhāti | athoyatraiṣā'hutirhūyate |
natastrarudrahprajāḥbhimanyate || Ibid., 3.9.11.3

29. *yobhūtānāmadhipatiḥ | rudrastanticaravrṣā | pasunas mākamāhimsīḥ | Ibid.*, 3.3.2.10

30. *yobhūtānāmadhipatiḥsvāmīrudraḥntanticaraḥntananīyahyājñāḥntantiḥ |*
yadvāpaśūnāmbandhanarajjuśreṇītantih 'vāktantiḥ' itiśruteḥ,
bacanābhivikalpikayāpaśavobadhyante | tatrayaścaratisatanticaraḥvrṣā...|
Bhaṭṭabhāskaramiśra, *Ibid.*

31. *udaṅparetyāgnīddhrejuhoti |*
eṣāvairudrasyadik...tasmai hutamasīyameṣṭamasītyāha |
yamādevasyamṛtyumavayajate || T.B., 1.7.8.41

32. Bhaṭṭabhāskaramiśra, *Ibid.*

33. *rudrāyagāmītyāha | raudrīvaigauḥ | svayaivaināmdevatayāpratigrhṇāti | T.B.*, 2.2.5.29

34. *āsaṅgavammātrāsahacarati | vārevṛtamhyasya |*
tasmādvathsamsamśṛṣṭadhayamrudroghātukaḥ | Ibid., 2.1.1.3

35. Bhaṭṭabhāskaramiśra, *Ibid.*

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