

GLORIFICATION OF THE VRĀTYA WITH REFERENCE TO THE ATHARVAVEDA**Hiten Barman** - Research Scholar, Department of Sanskrit, Assam University, SilcharE-Mail: hitenbarman6@gmail.com*Key Words: Vrātya, Atharvaveda, Mahadeva, Prajāpati.***Introduction:**

The glorification of the *Vrātya* remains to be the main theme of the *Atharvaveda*. It describes the *Vrātyas* as the lord of all the Gods¹ or cosmic powers who generate² and maintain this world. He is the supreme person as it were. *Vrātya* was there in the creation. He is not originated by any agency, spiritual human or divine. He stirred about. He impels *Prajāpati*,³ the source of all creatures to action. *Prajāpati*, the lord of creatures saw gold in himself.⁴ Thus he started the act of creation of all creatures. *Prajāpati*, at he first creation of *Ṛta* (the supreme being), created all the universes, all the creatures and all space, out of the material provided by the primordial waters, or by their fundamental nature in the form of the tortoise. And, having generated all things out of himself, he himself enters into all things. In other words, he becomes the spirit of all the worlds, all the beings, and of all space. The universe is but a production of *Prajāpati*. The *Āraṇyaka* passage adds that by ‘entering’ is meant pervasion and accommodation. He pervades over all things, in the sense that he obtains all these things, and he accommodates all these things in himself so that they are all restrained by him, and nothing over reaches him. The created universe does not exhaust him; in fact, he transcends it and abides in his own nature. This aspect of *Prajāpati* is known as *Puruṣa*.⁵

Vrātya urged *Prajāpati* to create of all beings. He created that. This may be the golden egg.⁶ That became one, unique, great, chief, *Brahmaṇa*, fervor and truth. From that *Vrātya* was born.⁷ Thus *Vrātya* though existed in the beginning of creation, through the gold (or golden egg) of *Prajāpati* along with *Brahmaṇa* was born. He became great. He became the great god *Mahādeva*.⁸ He encompassed the lordship of the gods and himself became *Īśāna* (the lord).⁹ He became the sole *Vrātya*. He took the bow of *Indra* for himself. Its interior was blue and back red. With blue he envelops his detested rivals and with the red he pierces the men who hate him.¹⁰ *Vrātya* thus became the highest *Brahmaṇa*, *Mahādeva*,

¹ ‘*Sa devānāmīśām paryait sa īśāno-abhavat*’, *AV. XV.1.5*

² ‘*Tat prājanayat*’, *Ibid. XV.1.2*

³ ‘*Vrātya āsīdīyamāna eva sa prajāpatiṁ samairayet*’. *Ibid. XV.1.1*

⁴ ‘*sa prajāpatiḥ suvarṇamātmannapaśyat tat prājanayat*’, *Ibid. XV.1.2*

⁵ ‘*virādagre samabhad virājo adhi pūruṣaḥ*’, *AV. XIX.6.9.*

⁶ *Ibid. XV.1.1-2*

⁷ ‘*tadekamabhavat tallalāmabhavat tanmahadabhavat tajjyeṣṭhamabhavat tad brahmābhavat tat tpo-abhavat tat satyamabhavat tena prājāyata*’, *Ibid. XV.1.3*

⁸ ‘*so-avardhat sa mahānabhavat sa mahādevo-abhavat*’, *Ibid. XV.1.4*

⁹ ‘*Sa devānāmīśām paryait sa īśāno-abhavat*’, *AV. XV.1.5*

¹⁰ ‘*sa ekavrātyo-abhavat sa dhanurādatta tadevendradhamuḥ*’, *Ibid. XV.1.6*

‘*nīlamasyodaram lohitaṁ prṣṭham*’, *Ibid. XV.1.7*

‘*nīlenaivāpriyam bhātṛvyam prorṇoti lohiteṇa dviṣntam vidhyātī*

Īsāna and the sole *Vrātya*. He took the bow of *Indra*. Thus he combines in himself *Brahmaṇa*, *Mahādeva*, and *Indra*.¹¹

Seat of *Vrātya*:

The ascetic *Vrātya* used to stand for one full year. The Gods said to him why do you stand in this way.¹² He said let them bring for me a proper seat.¹³ They brought a seat for that *Vrātya*. Of that seat, the summer and spring were its two feet; both the autumn and rainy seasons were the other two feet. *Bṛhat* and *Rathantara* were the two length-wise bars. *Yañyāñiya* and *Vāmadevya* were the two diagonal bars. The *Ṛk-Mantras* are strings tied at the top and the *Yajus* are the strings at the bottom. The *Veda* is the cushion, the *Brāhmaṇa* is the pillow. The *sāman* chant is the seat; the *Uthgītha* chant is the support. The ascetic *Vrātya* takes that seat. And then all the living beings sat near him.¹⁴ All beings who know this; have the capacity to seat near him.¹⁵

Cosmic effects of the movement of *Vrātya*:

When *Vrātya* moves towards Eastern region, he becomes enriched with the might of the *Maruts*, he makes the mind the eater of food, and moves forward. He who knows thus, he eats the food becoming the eater or enjoyer of food with mind.¹⁶

When *Vrātya* moves towards the southern region, he becomes *Indra* and, makes strength the eater of food, and moves forward. He who knows thus will eat the food with the strength of the eater of food.¹⁷

When *Vrātya* moves towards Western region, he becomes the king *Varuṇa* making the water itself as the source of food, and moves forward. He knows thus, will eat his food, thus the water is the source of food.¹⁸

brahmavādinooṃvadanti, *Ibid.* XV.1.8

¹¹ Singh, Nagendra Kumar, *The Vedic Mythology*, APH Publishing Corporations, Delhi, 1997

¹² *'saṃ saṃvatsaramūrdhvo-atīṣṭhat taṃ devā abruvan vrātya kim nu tiṣṭasītti*, *Ibid.* XV.3.1

¹³ *'so-abravīdāsandīm me saṃ bharantviti*, *Ibid.* XV.3.2

¹⁴ *AV.* XV.3.2-10

¹⁵ *'viśvānyevāsya bhūtānyupasado bhavanti ya evaṃ veda*, *Ibid.* XV.3.11

¹⁶ *'sa yat prācīm diśamanu vyacalanmārutam śardho bhūtvānuvya calanmano-annādam kṛtvā*, *Ibid.* XV.14.1

'manasānnādenannamatti ya evaṃ veda, *Ibid.* XV.14.2

¹⁷ *'sa yat dakṣiṇām diśamanu vyacaladindro bhūtvānuvyacalad balamannādam kṛtvā*, *AV.* XV.14.3

'balenānnādenānnamatti ya evaṃ veda, *Ibid.* XV.14.4

¹⁸ *'sa yat pratīcīm diśamanu vyacalad varuṇo rājā bhūtvānuvyacaladpo-annādīh kṛtvā*, *Ibid.* XV.14.5

'adbhirannādibhirannamatti ya evaṃ veda, *Ibid.* XV.14.6

When *Vrātya* moves towards the Northern region, he becomes the king *Soma*, worshiped by the seven *Ṛṣis*, making the offering as the source of food. He knows thus eats his food in the same way as the food-eater accepts the offering.¹⁹

The divine *Vrātya*:

The sense organs of *Vrātya* such as eye, ear etc. are the different deities. **The *Atharvaveda* describes Virāṭ figure of *Vrātya*. The right eye of *Vrātya* is the Sun and left is the Moon. His right ear is Agni and left is *Pavamāna*. His nostrils are day and night. His head and skull are *Diti* and *Aditi*. Year is his head. By day he is turned to the east and by night to the west.**²⁰

Vrātya's *Prāṇas*, *Apānas* and *Vyānas* are seven each.²¹ Each of them is identified with some deity. His seven *Prāṇas* are Agni, the sun, the moon, *Pavamāna*, the water, the animals, and all subjects.²² His seven *Apānas* are identified with seven sacrificial details. They are *Paurṇamāsī*, *Aṣṭka*, *Amāvasyā*, *Śraddhā*, *Dīkṣā*, *Yajña* and *Dakṣiṇā*.²³ His seven *Vyānas* are earth, sky, heaven, lunar mansion, seasons, groups of seasons and year.²⁴ The gods go about with the same purpose. The seasons go after the year and *Vrātya*.²⁵

¹⁹ 'sa yadudīcīm diśamanu vyacalat somo rājā bhūtvānuvyacalat saptarṣibhirhuta

āhutumannadīm

kṛtvā', *Ibid.* XV.14.7

'āhutyānnādyānnamatti ya evaṁ veda', *Ibid.* XV.14.8.

²⁰ *AV.* XV.18.1-5

²¹ 'tasya vrātyasya

sapta prāṇāḥ saptāpānāḥ sapta vyānāḥ', *Ibid.* XV.15.2

²² '...prathamah prāṇa ūrdhvo nāmāyaṁ so agniḥ', *Ibid.* XV.15.3

'...dvitīyah prāṇah paudho nāmāsau sa ādityah', *Ibid.* XV.15.4

'...tṛtīyah prāṇo3bhyū dho nāmāsau sa candramāḥ', *Ibid.* XV.15.5

'...caturthah prāṇo vibhūrnāmāyaṁ sa pavamānah', *Ibid.* XV.15.6

'...pañcamah prāṇo yonirnāma tā imā āpaḥ', *Ibid.* XV.15.7

'...ṣaṣṭhah prāṇah priyo nāma tai me paśavaḥ', *Ibid.* XV.15.8

'...saptamah prāṇo-aparimito nāma tā imāḥ prajāḥ', *Ibid.* XV.15.9

²³ 'pratho-aprānah sā pauṇamāsī', *AV.* XV.16.1

'dvitīyo-aprānah sāṣṭakā', *Ibid.* XV.16.2

'tṛtīyo-apānah sāmāvāsyā', *Ibid.* XV.16.3

'caturtho-apānaā sā śraddhā', *Ibid.* XV.16.4

'pañcamo-apānah sā dīkṣā', *Ibid.* XV.16.5

'ṣaṣṭho-apānah sa yajñah', *Ibid.* XV.16.6

'saptamo-apānastā imā dakṣiṇā', *Ibid.* XV.16.7

²⁴ *Ibid.* XV.17.1-7

²⁵ *Ibid.* XV.17.8-9

Months and Chants as attendants and guardians:

For him (*Vrātya*) in the eastern region, they made the two spring months as guardians, and *Bṛhat* and *Rathantara* chants his two attendants. The two spring months guard in the eastern region, and *Bṛhat* and *Rathantara* chants are his attendants, the man who possesses this knowledge.²⁶ For *Vrātya*, from the southern region, they made the two summer months guardians, and *Yajñāyajñīya* and *Vāmadevya* are the two attendants. The two summer months guard in the southern region, *Yajñāyajñīya* and *Vāmadevya* attend on him, thus it is known.²⁷ For *Vrātya* from the western region, they made the two rainy months as guardians, and *Vairūpa* and *Vairāja* chants as the attendants. The two rainy months guard him in the western region, and *Vairūpa* and *Vairāja* chants are attendants, so it is known.²⁸ For him, in the northern region, they made the two autumn months as guardians, and *Śyaita* and *Naudhsa* attendants. The two autumn months guard him in the northern region, *Śyaita* and *Naudhsa* attend him who known thus.²⁹ For him, from the fixed (*dhruva*) region, they made the two winter months guardians, and the earth and fire as attendants. The two winter months guard in the fixed region, and the earth and fire attend, him who knows thus.³⁰ For him in the upward region, the two cool months were made the guardians; the heaven and *Āditya* serve him. The cool months guard in the upward region. The heaven and *Āditya* serve him, thus it is known.³¹

Gods as attendants of *Vrātya*:

For *Vrātya*, from the intermediate part of the eastern region, they made the archer *Bhava* as the attendant. The archer serves the attendant in the intermediate part of the eastern region; neither *Sarva* nor *Bhava* nor *Īśāna* serves him who possesses this knowledge, or his cattle, or his Kinsman. They made the archer *Sarva* as the attendant for the intermediate part of the southern region. The archer *Sarva* attends him in the intermediate part of the southern region; neither *Sarva* nor *Bhava* nor *Īśāna* serves him who possesses this knowledge, or his cattle, or his Kinsman.

They made the archer *Paśupati* as the attendant for the intermediate part of the western region. The archer *Paśupati* attends him in the intermediate part of the western region; neither *Sarva* nor *Bhava* nor *Īśāna* serves him who possesses this knowledge, or his cattle, or his Kinsman. They made the archer the formidable god as the attendant for the intermediate part of the northern region. The archer the formidable god, attends him in the intermediate part of the northern region; neither *Sarva* nor *Bhava* nor *Īśāna* serves him who possesses this knowledge, or his cattle, or his Kinsman. They made the archer *Rudra* as the attendant for the intermediate part of the fixed (*dhruva*) region. The archer *Rudra* attends him in the intermediate part of the fixed (*dhruva*) region; neither *Sarva* nor *Bhava* nor *Īśāna* serves him who possesses this knowledge, or his cattle, or his Kinsman. They made the archer *Mahādeva* as the attendant for the intermediate part of the upward region. The archer *Mhādeva* attends him in the intermediate part of the upward region; neither *Sarva* nor *Bhava* nor *Īśāna* serves him who possesses this knowledge, or his cattle, or his Kinsman. They made the archer *Īśāna* as the attendant in all the

²⁶ *Ibid.XV.4.1-3*

²⁷ *AV.XV.4.4-6*

²⁸ *Ibid.XV.4.7-9*

²⁹ *Ibid.XV.4.10-12*

³⁰ *Ibid.XV.4.13-15*

³¹ *AV.XV.4.16-18*

intermediate parts. *Īśāna*, the archer stands serving him in all the intermediate parts; neither *Sarva* nor *Bhava* nor *Īśāna* serves him who possesses this knowledge, or his cattle, or his Kinsman.³²

Vrātya and Ocean:

Vrātya with his greatness, becoming agile went to the end of earth. It becomes the ocean. *Prajāpati*, *Parameṣṭhi*, father, grandfather, water and faith (*Śraddhā*) becoming rain, stayed with him. The water, faith and rain approach him who possesses this knowledge. Faith and sacrifice and the world, having become food and nourishment, turned toward him. Faith, sacrifice, the world, food and nourishment approach him who possesses this knowledge.³³

The powers following the roaming Vrātya:

He (*Vrātya*) moved out toward the fixed (*dhruva*) region. Earth and Agni and herbs and trees and shrubs and plants followed him. He who possesses this knowledge becomes the dear home of earth and Agni and herbs and trees and shrubs and plants.³⁴ He moved toward the upward region, after him moved out both right and truth and sun and moon and asterisms. Verily both of right and of truth and of sun and of moon and of asterisms does he become the dear abode who knows thus.³⁵ He moved towards the supreme region. The *Ṛk*-verses, the chants, the *Yajus* verses and the *Brahma* followed him. Know that he becomes the dear abode of the *Ṛk*-verses, the chants, the *Yajus* verses and the *Brahma*.³⁶ He moved toward the realm of the vast. Following him moved *Itihāsa*, *Purāṇa*, *Gāthā* and *Nārāśamsī*. Know that he has become the beloved abode of *Itihāsa*, *Purāṇa*, *Gāthā* and *Nārāśamsī*.³⁷ He moved to the distant region. The *Āhavanīya*, *Gārhapatya* and *Dakṣiṇa Agni-s*, *Yajña*, *Yajamāna* and cattle followed him. Know that he has become that beloved abode, for *Āhavanīya*, *Gārhapatya* and *Dakṣiṇa Agni-s*, *Yajña*, *Yajamāna* and cattle.³⁸ He moved to the un-indicated region. He was followed by the seasons and those associated with seasons, the worlds and these belong to the worlds, the months, half-months and day and night. Know that he has become the beloved abode, of the seasons, of those associated with seasons, the worlds and those belonging to the world, the months, half-months, days and nights.³⁹ He moved towards an unreturned region. He thought that he would not return from it. *Diti*, *Aditi*, *Īḍā*, and *Indrānī* followed him. Know that he was the beloved abode for *Diti*, *Aditi*, *Īḍā*, and *Indrānī*.⁴⁰ He moved out toward the regions; along with him moved *Virāt*, and all the gods and all the deities. Know that he has become the

³² *AV.XV.5*

³³ *AV.XV.7*

³⁴ *Ibid.XV.6.1-3*

³⁵ *Ibid.XV.6.4-6*

³⁶ *AV.XV.6.7-9*

³⁷ *Ibid.XV.6.10-12*

³⁸ 'sa paramām diśamanu vyacalat', *Ibid.XV.6.13*

'tamāhavanīyaśca gārhapatyaśca dakṣiṇāgniśca yajñaśca yajamānaśca

Paśavaścānuvyacalan', *Ibid.XV.6.14*

'āhavanīyasya ca vai sa gārhapatyaśca ca dakṣiṇāgneśca yajñasya ca

Yajamānasya ca paśūnām ca priyaṁ dhāma bhavati ya evaṁ veda', *Ibid.XV.6.15*

³⁹ *AV.XV.6.16-18*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.XV.6.19-21*

beloved abode of *Virāt*, and all the gods and all the deities.⁴¹ He moved to all the intermediate regions. *Prajāpati*, *Parameṣṭhi*, the father, the grandfather, moved with him. Know that he has become the beloved abode of *Prajāpati*, *Parameṣṭhi*, the father, the grandfather.⁴²

In the *Atharvaveda* the term *Vrātya* is used not in the sense of ‘One who has not performed his *Upanayana*’ but its employed in the sense of the highest *Brahmaṇa*. The highest *Brahmaṇa* is conceived and glorious as the *Vrātya* both as divine *Vrātya*, recognized with the great God or *Mahādeva*, the Lord *Īśāna* or *Rudra* and his prototype, the earthly *Vrātya*.

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⁴¹ *Ibid.*XV.6.22-23

⁴² ‘*sa sarvānantardeśānanu vyacalat*’, *Ibid.* XV.6.24

‘*taṁ prajāpatiśca parameṣṭhī ca pitā ca pitāmahaścānuvyacalan*’, *Ibid.*XV.6.25

‘*prajāpateśca vai sa parameṣṭhinaśca pituśca pitāmahasya ca priyam dhāma*

bhavati ya evaṁ veda’, *Ibid.*XV.6.26