CHAPTER II

ORIGIN AND GROWTH OF THE SACRIFICE ACCORDING TO
THE BRAHMAṆA-TEXTS

Introduction:

The BrahmaṆa-texts in their own way, give the origin of a rite or a ritual detail they are describing. Sometimes they describe the origin of the sacrifice in general. The stories describing the origin of the sacrificial rites or sacrifice in general can throw light upon what the BrahmaṆa-texts thought about the origin of the sacrifice.

Prajāpati 'saw' the sacrifice:

The most important source of the sacrifice according to the BrahmaṆa-texts is Prajāpati.¹ Prajāpati is said to have discovered the sacrifice which is threefold and what seven threads thus having twentyone forms (GBI.1.12). He then performed that sacrifice (GB I.1.13). He also saw many particular sacrifices. Thus the origin of Anūḥotra-offerings is told in the following manner - Prajāpati was alone. He wanted to create beings. He practised penance and created fire. But there was no food for the fire. Prajāpati was afraid that the fire would burn him. So he rubbed his hands

¹ cf. Keith, RPV, p.455.
and produced ghee and milk. When he offered the offering into Agni, he was not satisfied. Then Prajāpati rubbed his hands again. Then he remained doubting whether to offer or not. His own mahimā (greatness) told him to offer. As his own (sva) greatness told (āha) he offered with the utterance svāhā. This is the origin of the Agnihotra-offerings, the material of the offerings in the Agnihotra and the sacred utterance, viz., svāhā which is to be uttered at the time of offering (SB II.2.4.1-6; TB II.1.2.1-3).

Prajāpati had various desires at different times and he got those desires fulfilled by seeing various sacrifices and performing them. Thus, for example, he desired to be many, to create and then he saw the sacrifice named Agniṣṭoma and having performed it he created the beings (TMB VI.1.1). Prajāpati desired to obtain Vāja (food, vigour, etc.) and to go to the heavenly world, and then he saw the Vājapeya (TMB XVIII.7.1). Prajāpati created the beings. The beings after being created, did not worship Prajāpati. He desired that they should worship him. He saw the sacrifice named Apaciti and by performing it, obtained the desired worship from the beings (JB II.1000).

Prajāpati also saw some other details of the sacrifice. Thus for example, after having created the beings he thought
himself milked out and emptied out. Then he saw the āpṛī verses as ājya-lauds and by means of them he gratified (āpṛīnāt) himself (TMB XV.8.2). Prajāpati created the beings. But those beings could not give birth to any being. Then Prajāpati saw the sāman named sākamaśva (TMB XX.4.5).

Prajāpati 'gave' the sacrifice:

Prajāpati not only saw the sacrifice or sacrifices and performed them, he also gave the sacrifice to the Gods. (e.g., SVB I.1.1.15; TMB VII.2.1). In ŚB V.1.1.1f; XI.1.8.1f we are told a story of Gods and Asuras struggling. The Asuras were proud and offered in their own mouth. But Gods offered in the mouth of each other. Then Prajāpati gave himself to them. The body itself of Prajāpati was the sacrifice. Elsewhere we are told a story of Prajāpati who was practising penance. At that time his glory (śrī) went away. Gods robbed the glory. She asked how to re-obtain what was robbed off. Prajāpati then told her to re-obtain from the Gods themselves and then she was able to see the offering Mitravindā (ŚB XI.4.3.1ff). Here then we know how the glory of Prajāpati was able to know the Mitravindā offering with the help of Prajāpati. When the Gods were passing upwards the heaven, the Asuras enveloped them in the darkness. The Gods entered upon a sacrificial session of a hundred Agniśtomas and could dispell the darkness as far as one may
see whilst sitting; but the entire darkness was not removed. They then went to Prajāpati and requested him to teach how by dispelling the Asuras and the darkness they would find the world of heaven. Prajāpati then taught them the sacrificial session and corrected their mistakes of a hundred Atirātras. The Gods could then repel the darkness and the Asuras and find the world of heaven (SB XI.5.5.1ff). Here Prajāpati is shown to be removing the mistakes and thus helping the performers. Prajāpati gave the sacrifice named Upahavya to Indra (TMB XVIII.1.9). Similarly he gave the Vṛātyastoma sacrifice to the divine vṛātyas (JB II.221). Prajāpati gave the sāman named kāleya to the Gods (TMB VIII.3.1).

Sometimes Prajāpati is said to have given the sacrifices to the Gods but reserved some sacrifice for himself. Thus he gave all the sacrifices to the Gods but reserved Vājapeya for himself. The Gods then asked for some share in it. He then gave them the Ujjiti offerings (TB I.3.2.5-6). He is also said to have given all the sacrifices to them but reserved the Aśvamedha for himself. When the Gods asked for some share in it, he gave them the Annahomas (SB XIII.2.1.1). Here in these two examples, the origin of Ujjiti offerings and Annahomas is told chiefly and secondarily the origin of sacrifice in general is told and Prajāpati is told to have given the sacrifices. Though he first reserved the Vājapeya or the Aśvamedha he gave some share to Gods afterwards.
Indra 'gave':

Indra has given or taught sacrificial rites. Thus Indra explained the stomabhāgas to Vasīṣṭha (TMB XV.5.24; TB II.2.13). He gave the knowledge of expiations to Vasīṣṭha (ŚB XII.6.1.38ff). He also taught the Uktha to Viśvāmitra (SaṅB I.5.1; cp. JUB III.4.1.1). He told brahman to Vasīṣṭha (SaṅB I.5.1; JUB III.4.1.2 says that Manu has told brahman to Vasīṣṭha).

The activity of Gods in general:

The Gods in general have tried very much in discovering the sacrifice. Gods and Asuras both of them sprung Prajāpati were contending with each other. Both of them were soulless and mortal. Agni alone was immortal. The Gods went on praising and practising austerities hoping to overcome the Asuras. Then they saw the Agnyādheya (ŚB II.2.2.6-9). At another place it is told that the Gods and Asuras born of the same father, i.e., Prajāpati were struggling for obtaining the sacrifice. Then the Gods practised austerities and devised the Agniṣṭoma feast. By means of it they could remove all the Asuras and obtain the entire sacrifice (ŚB IV.2.4.11-12).

In JB II.104 we are told that the Gods desiring to defeat the Asuras found out the Abhibhū sacrifice. JB II.158 gives the origin of the Ṛt apeya sacrifice. Food left the Gods. That food was identical with the soma-āhuti and virāj. They
practised penance and found out the Rātpeya sacrifice which was glorious (vīra).

**Activity of individual Gods:**

Individual gods are also described to have discovered some sacrificial rite. Indra at the beginning, when there was equality among all the beings, desired to be superior and saw the Śoḍasi-graha and drew it for himself (ŚB IV.5.3.1-2). TMB XII.13.1 gives the story differently. "Indra and the Brhat came together. The Brhat surpassed Indra through one of its manifestations. Indra was afraid of this (manifestation), lest it (viz., the Brhat) should overcome him by means of it. He (Indra) said, "Let this be for thee the Śoḍasin-soma-feast". It became the Śoḍasin. TMB XIX.18.2 ascribes the origin of the first Vighana to Indra. Indra desired to kill the evil enemy and then having seen this sacrifice killed him. He also saw the Indrastoma sacrifice for getting supremacy at another time (JB II.139). Indra desirous of lustre (tejas) and desirous of energy (haras) saw the sāman called Harāyana (TMB XIV.9.34). Indra slew the son of Tvāṣṭṛ with three heads. An inauspicious voice addressed him. He resorted for help to Agni. This (God) saw this Agni-laud (Agnistotra) and having assigned it to himself he sacrificed with it on behalf of him (of Indra). By means of it, he drove away his inauspicious voice (TMB XVII.5.1). When there
was equality among the Gods Indra along with Agni and Sūrya desired to get supremacy and saw the Atigrāhya cups (SB IV. 5.4.1-2) and obtained it.

Ṛvaṣṭṛ is said to have beheld the Punarādheya (re-establishment) (SB II.2.3.4.). The All-Gods (Viśvedevāḥ) began to assign a cake to Heaven and Earth (SB II.4.3.8). Savitṛ saw the Sāvitra libations in connection with the Agnicayana (SB VI.3.1.1).

Some sacrificial rites were added through some deity in order to remove some difficulty etc. When sacrifice went away from Gods, the Gods were unable to find it out. The Gods approached Aditi and said, "Through thee let us discern it". She chose a boon, "Let a sacrifice begin from me and end with me". The boon was granted and, therefore, there is a pap to Aditi as introductory offering and a pap to Aditi as concluding offering (AB I.1). The origin of milk-mess at the time of Bahiṣpadavamana is also similar. An Asura woman named Dirghajīvī licked the morning pressing of the Gods. It became then drunk. Gods said to Mitrāvaruṇa to remove the intoxication. They chose a boon of a milkmess at the Bahiṣpadavamana (AB II.22).²

Further development by Gods:

Gods were interested in developing the sacrifice which they obtained either from Prajāpati or from Indra or saw themselves. We have mentioned how some sacrifices or sacrificial details also were discovered by Gods in general or individually. Now let us see how Gods were making efforts in the development of the sacrifice. Many details of the sacrifice were fixed as they proceeded with the performance. Gods and Asuras obtained both kinds of speech - truth and untruth - from Prajāpati. The Gods developed the truth and the Asuras the untruth. Thus the Gods obtained that truth also which was first with the Asuras and the untruth which was with the Gods went to the Asuras. The Gods then desired to spread that truth. They prepared the Consecration offering. The asuras were aware of this and approached to that where the Gods were performing, before the samiṣṭayajus was offered. Therefore, the samiṣṭayajus is not offered at the time of the consecration ceremony. The Gods then offered the opening-offering. The Asuras came there when the Śaṃyos formula had been pronounced. Therefore, that offering is upto śaṃyos formula. Then they performed the guest-offering. The Asuras arrived there when idā was invoked. Therefore, this offering ends with the invocation of idā .... Thus various details were fixed by the Gods as they proceeded (SB IX.5.1.12ff cp. TB I.5.9.1ff). TB II.2.5-6 we get the origin of the
materials (sāmbhārāḥ) of the sacrifice Gods were not able to make the sacrifice firm. Then they collected the sāmbhāras and then their sacrifice was firm. Thus we know how Gods were trying to overcome the difficulties and then how the sacrifice was developing. ŚB VI.2.3.10 tells us that Prajāpati saw the first layer of the fire-altar. Gods saw the second. Indra, Agni and Viśvakarman saw the third layer, the seers the fourth and Parameṣṭhī the fifth. Here we get a clear idea of how sacrifice was in the making, how it was being developed and how various personalities have some share in its development according to the Brahmaṇa-texts.

Sacrifice as 'created':

The Brahmaṇa-texts have no definite position about whether the sacrifice was 'seen' or 'created'. Sometimes they described it as 'seen' and sometimes as 'created'. We have given above some examples of Prajāpati or Gods having seen it. Let us now see some references where the sacrifice is described as 'created'.

TMB VII.6.3 says that Prajāpati has created the sacrifice from the yajñayajñīya saman. ŚB XI.1.8.3 says that after giving himself to the Gods Prajāpati created his counterpart (Pratimā), viz., the sacrifice. Elsewhere we are told that Prajāpati created the Madhyandina savana (OB II.3.23) and Indra is said to have created the third savana (JB I.156).
Praj̧apati created the sacrifice in general according to AB VII.19. It is described how Gods created various sacrificial details. From out of faith the Gods fashioned the consecration, from out of Aditi, the opening offering; from out of Viśnu the guest-offering; from out of the Sun the Pravargya; from out of the svadā the Upasads; from out of Agni and Soma the day of fasting and from out of this world the opening Atirātra. From out of the year (they fashioned) the Caturvimśā day, from out of the priesthood the Abhiplava (saḍaha), from out of the nobility the Prśthya-saḍaha, from out of Agni, the Abhijit, from out of the waters the svarasāman days, from out of the Sun the Viśuvat ... from out of Indra the visvajit ... from out of Mitra and Varuṇa the Go and Āyus, from out of the Viśve devah, the Daśarātra, from out of the regions the Prśthya-saḍaha of the Daśmrātra, from out of these worlds the Chandoma-days. From out of the year (they fashioned) the tenth day; from out of Praj̧apati the Mahāvrata and from out of the world of heaven the Udayaniya Atirātra ... (ŚB XII.1.2.1-3; cp. GB I.4.7). Here the origin of sacrifice or of the sacrificial details is described in the form of creation (by the Gods).

**Mentioning the performance:**

Sometimes the origin of a sacrificial rite is not mentioned in the words meaning that it was 'given' or 'seen'
or 'created'; but only a mention is made about the performance made in the past times. For example, there was once discord among the Gods and in order to remove that discord, Gods performed the Tanūnaptra. (AB I.24; SB III. 4.2.1ff; GB II.2.2). The origin of fast is told by describing the fast of the Gods. The nectar of immortality departed from the Gods. The Gods decided to seek it by toil and penance. They, having become consecrated were living on fast-milk. Then they heard the sound of the nectar. Then they resorted to three teats. Then they became able to see the immortality. Then the Gods resorted to two teats and saw it still nearer. Then they resorted to one teat. The immortality approached to them; but still they were not able to catch hold of it. Then they practised entire abstention from food. On the second day they took hold of the immortality and having pressed soma offered into fire, bestowed immortality upon Agni. Agni is the body of the Gods; therefore, they bestowed immortality upon themselves. The sacrificer also follows what the Gods did and lives accordingly on four, three, two, one teat respectively. Finally he does not take anything at all (SB IX.5.1.1ff). Here the origin of the fast is told in the performance of Gods. The origin of stambayajurharana is told thus. The Gods were desiring to vanquish the Asuras. Agni said to them "By fleeing northwards they escape from us. I will go round the northern side and you will shut them in
from the sacrificial ground and whilst shutting them in we will put them down by these three worlds". It was done in that manner and the Asuras were put down. Now also Agnīdhara goes round to the north. For he is Agni himself. Then the Adhvaryu shuts the grass-bushes and removes them (SB I.2.4. 8ff). Here also the particular manner of stambayajurharana has its origin in the ancient performance.

Origin in the divine imitation:

Sometimes a clear mention is made that some sacrificial detail was performed by the Gods in such and such manner and now also it is to be done in that manner. When soma is brought they should speak inaudibly while bringing him. This is done in imitation of Gods. For soma was previously among the Gandharvas. The Gods and seers meditated upon him. Speech (Vāc) said to them, "The Gandharvas love women. With me as a woman you barter the soma. I shall return, when you need me". With her they bought soma and now also with a cow soma is bought and at the time of bringing soma they speak inaudibly for at that time the speech is with the Gandharvas (AB I.27). The origin of Asapatneṣṭakās is also in the divine imitation. Gods desired to remove all the enemies and removed them by means of these īṣṭakās (bricks). Now also evil is removed by means of them. (SB VIII.5.1.1ff). The Gods decided to support the third pressing with the Ādityas and, therefore,
the third pressing now also begins with Ādityas (AB III.29). Thus many rites have their origin in imitation of Gods. Not only they have their origin there, but it is an essential rule that one should perform the sacrifice in imitation of Gods.  

Origin in past incident:

Some sacrificial rites have their origin in some past incident. There was a disputation between Mind and Speech. Each one of them claimed to be superior. Mind said, "I am better than you. For you do not speak anything that is not understood by me. Thus you are a follower of me". Speech said, "I am better than you; what you know, I make known; I communicate". Then they went to Prajāpati for decision. He decided in the favour of mind and said to speech, "Mind is better than you. For you are an imitator, a follower of Mind. Inferior is he who imitates". Speech then got angry at that time and said, "I shall never be your oblation-bearer". Hence whatever is performed to Prajāpati, it is performed in a low voice (SB I.4.5.8ff). Here this particular manner of offering to Prajāpati is said to be originated in a past incident according to Brāhmaṇas. At the time of killing Vṛtra, Indra promised a cake to Agni and Soma and, therefore,

3 cf. Lévi, La doctrine du sacrifice, p.85.
there is a cake to Agni and Soma in the Darśa and Purnamāsa offerings (ŚB I.6.3.1ff).

The role of seers in obtaining the sacrifice:

The sacrifice and sacrificial rites either obtained from Prajāpati or Indra or seen by the Gods were not easily obtained by men. We know that Gods tried to hide the sacrifice so that men would not know it and having performed them come to heaven. By means of the sacrifice the Gods made the conquest of heaven. When they had conquered, they said, "How may this celestial region be made unattainable by men?"

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. The seers heard this and went on praising and toiling. For by praising and toiling the Gods had attained whatever was to be attained and the seers did in the same manner. The seers came to the place where Gods had sacrificed. There they found the sacrificial cake which had become a tortoise and was creeping about. Then they thought "This must be the sacrifice". They said, "Stand still for Asvins! Stand still for Indra!" but it did not stand still; it crept on. When they said, "Still for Agni!

It then stood still. Having enveloped it in the fire they offered it completely. Then the sacrifice shone forth to them. They produced it and spread it. This sacrifice was
taught by the former to the later. The father teaches it to his son when he is a student (brahmācārin) (SB I.6.2.1ff; cp. AB II.1 which mentions the men along with the seers and does not refer to the story of sacrifice as tortoise and to the spreading of it by seers from generation to generation.)

The story given by SB above is very important for the understanding of the origin of sacrifice. According to it the performance of the sacrifice was previously done by the Gods. Here it is not clearly said how the Gods themselves have obtained it. From other sources we may understand that the sacrifice was obtained from Prajāpati and was further developed by the Gods. Though the Gods tried to hide the sacrifice, the seers could obtain it and they produced it again and spread. Then the sacrifice was taught by the older to the younger and thus it remained continued.

The role of seers is mentioned elsewhere also. The seers along with men went to see where the Gods had offered the omentum of a victim. At that place, they found the victim without omentum and came to understand the importance of the offering of omentum (AB I.13). The seers saw the fourth layer of the fire altar (SB VI.2.3.10). GB I.5.25 says, "The Āngirasas perform all the seven soma-sacrifices, the seven pāka-yajkas and seven haviryajñas - in all
twentyone and the new sacrifices which the seers (ṛṣayāh) create and the sacrifice which are created by ancient seers. This verse is very important for it informs us that the ancient seers have created the sacrifices and the seers still continue to create new sacrifices. The Brāhmaṇa-texts thus maintain that the sacrifice was ever developing and growing and the seers creating the new sacrifices had there played a significant role.

Individual seers have 'seen' many sacrifices. Thus Gautama desired to obtain cattle and saw the sacrifice is now known as the Catustoma of Gautama (JB II.173). Atri desirous of four sons saw the sacrifice called Catūrātra (JB II.281). Jamadagni saw the sacrifice which came to be called Jamadagnya (JB II.284). Vasiṣṭha when his sons were dead saw the Vasiṣṭha sāman and obtained many sons and cattle (JB II.26). Yudhājīva Vaisvāmitra desiring to get firm foundation (pratiṣṭhā) practised penance and saw the sāman which came to be known as Yaudhājaya (JB I.122).

Thus we know how the seers have been connected with the discovery of the sacrifice and its further development.⁴

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⁴ See further also on the role of seers in the discovery of the sacrifice and sacrificial rites cf. Levi, La doctrine du sacrifice, p.148.
The role of man in general:

The man is also told to have originated the sacrifice. Prajāpati in creating living beings created Agni. Agni as soon as born, sought to burn everything here. The creatures tried to crush him. Then Agni went to man and said, "Having reproduced me maintain me in this world, even so will I reproduce and maintain thee in yonder world". The man accepted him and maintained him (ŚB II.3.3.1ff). Here the origin of Agnihotra is said to be in the contract done by the man and Agni.

Concluding remarks:

The variety of stories which try to explain the origin of sacrifice in general or of some particular rites show that there was no definite view held about the origin of the sacrifice during the Brāhmaṇa-period. There are some stories which make us believe that the sacrifice was seen by Prajāpati, some other in which we find him (i.e. Prajāpati) as a creator of the sacrifice or sacrificial rites. There are some other stories where Gods in general or individual are said to have seen or created the sacrifice or sacrificial rite. Again we read that the sacrifice was given by Prajāpati or Indra. Seers either saw the ritual or obtained from Gods and spread it. Man is also at the origin of the rite like Agnihotra.
This will lead to the conclusion that the sacrifice at the
time of the Brāhmaṇa-texts was a well-established institu-
tion and, therefore, the Brāhmaṇa-texts really know very
little about its origin.\footnote{cf. Devasthali, Religion and Mythology of the Brāhmaṇas p.109.} Thus, for example, it is said that
Devabhaṅga Śrautārṣa knew the method of division of the
savitṛya victim. Then somebody other than man Bāhravya (ānyo
manusyebhyah - GB, amanusyah - AB) told it to Girija Bāhravya
and from him it came into vogue among men. Here it is obvious
that the tradition is not clear and, therefore, only an
indefinite mention is made (GB I.3.18; AB VII.1). There are
differences in the stories of origin. In ŚB I.6.2.1ff
mention is made of the sacrifice found in the form of tortoise
and being spread from generation to generation. But AB II.1
which mentions the performance and hiding of the sacrifice
in the same way as ŚB does, mention men also along with the
seers and does not speak about the discovery of sacrifice in
the form of tortoise etc. Thus it can be concluded that the
origin of sacrifice was not definitely known at the time of
the Brāhmaṇa-texts and the sacrifice was already a well-
established institute. Nevertheless, it was a developing
institute. Many sacrificial rites were 'seen' by different
seers etc. and were added. The sacrifice was still growing.
The further details of this growth of the sacrifice will be
seen in the next section.