

Chapter - IV

PRAJĀPATI IN THE ĀRANYAKA LITERATURE

In the *Āranyaka* literature, Prajāpati is identified with Ātman and Brahman. The identification of Prajāpati with Ātman and Brahman in the Āranyakas leads to the concept of Prajāpati's identification with the Ultimate Reality as depicted in the Upaniṣadic literature. Prajāpati is the Self (*Ātman*), he is Brahman, Indra, all the gods, the five elements, earth, air, ether, water etc.¹ He is also stated as *anirukta*, i.e. undefined in the *Aitareya Āranyaka*.² In this context, Sāyaṇa interprets this word thus – '*prajāpatiḥ prajāpālako jagadīśvaraḥ, sa cānirukta īśvarasya karmaṇī padehābhāvenendradivanniṣkṛṣya mūrtervaktumaśakyatvāt*'.³ He is also described as a man having twenty five elements, ten fingers, ten toes, two legs, two arms and the soul is the twenty fifth.⁴ Prajāpati is identified with Hirṇyagarbha Brahman, Katama, Svayambhū, *Samvatsara* etc.⁵ He is also identified with *Yajña*, Viṣṇu, Vaṣatkāra,

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1. eṣa brahmaīṣa indra eṣa prajāpatirete sarve devā imāni ca pañca
mahābhūtāni pṛthivī vāyurākāśa āpo.../ A.Ā., 2.6.1
 2. anirukto vai prajāpatiḥ/ Ibid., 1.2.2
 3. Sāyaṇa, Ibid.
 4. tāstriḥ prathamayā triruttamayā pañcaviṃśatirbhavanti pañcaviṃśa ātmā
pañcaviṃśaḥ prajāpatirdaśa hastyā aṅgulayo daśa pādyā dvā ūrū dvau bāhū
ātmaiva pañcaviṃśa/ Ibid., 1.1.4
 5. brahmā viśvaḥ katamaḥ svayambhūḥ prajāpatiḥ samvatsara iti/
T.Ā., 10.63.1

Rudra and Brahman.⁶

In the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, the creation of the universe has been explained properly and it describes Prajāpati as the creator. It states that, in the beginning of creation, there existed nothing but a sea of water, in which Prajāpati was alone, produced from a blue lotus. His mind grew up for the aspiration of the creation and generation. He wearied himself and performed fervid devotion (*tapas*). By the performance of fervid devotion, Prajāpati's body trembled. From the flesh of this body three sages were produced. The nails of Prajāpati appeared as Vaikhānasa sage, the hair appeared as Vāḷakhilya and the liquid portion of his body became a tortoise.⁷ It is also stated that Prajāpati was first born from *ṛta*, i.e. *parabrahman*. He created all the creatures and the directions; and he himself entered into his creation.⁸ In this context Sāyaṇa explains the nature of Prajāpati thus—*'ṛtasya satyasya parabrahmaṇaḥ sakāśātprathamutpannaḥ prajāpatirlokānbhūrādīnvidhāya bhūtāni prāṇinaśca vidhāya prācyādyā mukhyadiśa āgneyyādyā vidiśaśca vidhāyā'tmanā svakīyena samyakpraviveśa'*.⁹ Prajāpati is *Daśahotṛ* and all this

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6. tvaṁ yajñastvaṁ viṣṇustvaṁ vaśatkārastvaṁ rudrastvaṁ brahmā tvaṁ
prajāpatiḥ/ Ibid., 10.31.1
7. āpo vā idamāsantsalilameva/ sa prajāpatirekaḥ puṣkarparṇe samabhavat/
tasyāntarmanasi kāmāḥ samavartata/ idaṁ srjeyamiti sa
tapo'tapyata/ sa tapastaptvā/ śarīramadhūnuta/ tasya yanmāmsamāsīt/
tato'runāḥ ketavo vātarasānā ṛṣaya udatiṣṭhan/ ye nakhāḥ, te vaikhānasāḥ/
ye vālāḥ/ te vāḷakhilyāḥ/ yo rasah/ so'pām/ Ibid., 1. 23. 1-2
8. prajāpatiḥ prathamajā ṛtasya/ ātmanā'tmānamabhisamviveśeti/
Ibid., 1.23.9
9. Sāyaṇa, Ibid.

belongs to him.¹⁰ Prajāpati created the beings¹¹ and he moves in the womb of *brahmāṇḍa* and manifests himself in various forms, i.e. immovable, movable etc.¹² Gods considered him as *kāmadhenu* and squeeze out milk.¹³ Sāyaṇa comments thus- ‘*purā kadāciddevāḥ sarve prajāpatiṁ kāmadhenuṁ kṛtvā śukraṁ payaḥ pravargyarūpaṁ kṣīraṁ dugdhavantaḥ.*’¹⁴ This signifies that he can bestow everything to the mankind.

The great Prajāpati is regarded as the *Ukthaśāstra* of the Vedas.¹⁵ He is also stated to have created the *Mahāvratā* and the *Niṣkevalya śāstra*, the essence of the Vedas.¹⁶ It is also described that Prajāpati is the *saṁvatsara* and his soul (*ātman*) is said to be the Mahāvratā rite.¹⁷ Prajāpati, the year, after creating creatures, burst. He put himself together by the metres. Because he put himself together

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| 10. | prajāpatirdaśahotā/ sa idaṁ sarvam/ | Ibid., 3.7.4 |
| 11. | rucitadvai prajāpatiḥ prajā asṛjat/ | Ibid., 5.6.11 |
| 12. | prajāpatiścarati garbhe antaḥ/ ajāyamāno bahudhā vijāyate/ tasya dhīrāḥ
parijānanti yonim/ | Ibid., 3.13.1 |
| 13. | prajāpatiṁ vai devāḥ śukraṁ payo’ durhan/ | Ibid., 5.10.1 |
| 14. | Sāyaṇa, Ibid. | |
| 15. | puruṣa evaokthamayameva mahānprajāpatirhamukthamasmīti vidyāt/ | A.Ā., 2.1.2 |
| 16. (a) | prajāpatiridaṁ brahma vedānāṁ sarje rasam/ | Ibid., 5.3.2 |
| | (b) purā prajāpatirvedānāṁ rasam sārabhūtamidaṁ brahma prouḍham
mahāvratam niṣkevalyam vā sṛṣṭavān/ | Sāyaṇa, Ibid. |
| 17. | prajāpatirvai saṁvatsarstasyaiṣa ātmā yanmahābratam/ | Sān.Ā., 1.1 |

by means of the metres, therefore the Vedic text is called the *Samhitā*.¹⁸ It is also noted that the gods are the seed of Prajāpati.¹⁹ He is Vāmadeva,²⁰ Viśvakarman,²¹ Dhātṛ, and Vidhātṛ.²² He is also spoken as Brahmā Svayambhū.²³

The *Aitareya Āraṇyaka* holds that Prajāpati uttered the first word consisting of one syllable or two, viz. *tata* or *tāta*.²⁴ Sāyaṇa explains that this word was uttered by Prajāpati for his first-created son Hirṇyagarbha. When he first spoke he uttered the word of one or two syllables, *tata* or *tāta* just like a child.²⁵ In this context, A.B. Keith rightly observes that '*tad*' is the first word of the first stanza of the first hymn of the *Niṣkevalya Śastra* (R.V., 10.120.1). He holds

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18. prajāpatiḥ prajāḥ sṛṣṭvā vyasraṁsata samvatsaraḥ sa
cchandobhirātmānaṁ samadadhādyacchanobhirātmānaṁ
samadadhāttasmātsamhitā/ A.Ā., 3.2.6
19. prajāpate reto devā/ Ibid., 2.1.3
20. prajāpatirvai vāmadeva/ Sān.Ā., 1.2
21. prajāpatirviśvakarmā/ Ibid., 2.17
22. dhātā vidhātā paramota saṁdrk prajāpatiḥ parameṣṭho suvarcāḥ/
Ibid., 12.4
23. prajāpatirbrahmaṇo brahmā svayambhūḥ/ Ibid., 15.1
24. prajāpatiḥ prathamāṁ vācaṁ vyāharadekākṣaradvayakṣarāṁ tateti tāteti/
A.Ā., 1.3.3
25. sa prajāpatirjagadīśvaraḥ prathamataḥ sṛṣṭaṁ hirṇyagarbhaṁ
putramabhilakṣyoḥ pātyostasminyathoktaṁ pitṛvācakaṁ śabdadvayaṁ
prayuktavān/ ata evedānimtana api stanamdhayaṁ putraṁ
pitṛvācakaśabdenopalālayanti/ yadvā prajāpatirhirṇyagarbhaḥ prathamāṁ
bhāśāmabhyasyatta teti vā tateti vā vācaṁ vyāharati/ Sāyaṇa, Ibid.

that the first uttered word is *tad* (*tat tad iti*), Sāyaṇa takes it as a repetition. Max Muller seems to regard the two alternatives as *tat* and *tata* or *tāta*. This of course is the usual signification of *ekākṣara* and *dvyākṣara*, but Sāyaṇa refers these words to the quantity of the first and second syllables in *tata* and *tāta* respectively. Sāyaṇa is probably right in thinking *tat* and *tāta* similar enough for the purpose here in view. This passage, indeed, seems to be a deliberate and somewhat elaborate variant of the older legend preserved in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*.²⁶ In the relevant passage of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, it is stated that Prajāpati, when he first spoke, uttered *bhūh*, *bhuvah* and *svah*, which are words of one and two syllables respectively.²⁷ Thus, Prajāpati is the creator of the speech also.

Thus, it is found that Prajāpati is extolled as the creator as well as the all-pervading god in the *Āraṇyakas* also.

26. Ś.B., 11.1.6

27. cf. Keith, A.B., *The Aitareya Āraṇyaka*, p. 181, Notes 1-4