THE CHRONOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE CONCEPT OF BRAHMĀ

The Vedic Prajāpati has merged into a new appellation ‘Brahmā’ with his powers and activities which is noticeable in the Purāṇic literature. In the Ṛgvedic age Prajāpati is described as a minor deity. But in the Yajurveda and the Atharvaveda, and regularly in the Brāhmaṇas, he is recognized as the chief and the father of all gods. We have already discussed in the earlier chapters that he is celebrated in the Vedas as the creator of heaven and earth, of the waters and all that lives. He is one, who is born as the god above all the gods, whose ordinances all the gods and beings follow, who embraces with his arms the whole world with all creatures. In the later literature, Prajāpati is chiefly a designation of god Brahmā. In place of this chief god of the later Vedic mythology, the philosophy of the Upaniṣads puts in the impersonal Brahman, the universal Soul or the Absolute. When the post-Brāhmaṇical age of rationalism ushered in and the cult of sacrifice were underrated the worship of Prajāpati gradually declined. But the theists coined a new name for him and called him Brahmā, first of the later trinity, viz. Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śiva.

Brahmā with all the attributes of Prajāpati seems to emerge as a concrete deity in the Vedic literature itself. A study of the
chronological development of the concept of Brahmā throughout the Vedic literature will prove the matter. The concept of god Brahmā rises from the abstract concept brahman. The term brahman in the neuter means a hymn or prayer, while brahman in masculine means composer or reciter of the hymn.\(^1\) In the later period when the functions of sacrifices became complicated, the term denoted a priest with his special duties. Thus Brahmā means composer or reciter of a hymn, or Brahmā, the priest; and again Brahman in neuter means sacrifice,\(^2\) or Supreme Being signifying the prime cause of the universe.

Brahmā, the first member of Hindu triad is primarily regarded as a creator god. The iconographical features of the god represented by the sacrificial implements and other objects associated with the Vedic sacrificial cult introduce him as a priest; still, if the concept of creation is identified with that sacrifice, then, he is associated with the creation process. It has been noted that in the Vedic period sacrifice is conceived to be an act of creation, i.e. the creation of the universe.

The iconographic features of the god Brahmā, with aksāmālā, kamaṇḍalu, sruk, sruva, ājyasthāli, kuśa-grass etc., as his emblems, padma or hamisa as his mounts, Sāvitrī or Sarasvatī and Gāyatrī as his consorts and with four heads representing four Vedas, probably represent the Vedic sacrificial priests and the concept of the god of Vedic origin. Many of the Vedic gods who are his antecedents have also contributed to the growth of his concept.

\(^1\) (a) bhuvastvamindra brahmaṇa mahān bhuvo viśveṣu savanesu yajñiyah/ R.V., 10.50.4
(b) itthā hi soma inmade brahma cakāra vardhanam/ Ibid., 1.80.1
\(^2\) brahma vai yajña/ A.B., 7.22
Regarding the chronological development of the concept of Brahmā from the earliest Vedic literature, S.P. Basu observes: ‘The popularity of the sacrificial cult and such powerful position of the sacrificial priestly class of the Vedic society, the Vedic ṛṣis frantically searched for a presiding deity of the sacrifice for their religion which was based on these sacrificial activities. Consequently the Vedic ṛṣis had conceived Agni as most important god for their sacrifice who played the prime role in their rituals. Next they felt Vāc, i.e. their vocal sound through which they chanted the sacrificial hymns, as most important. But the Vedic ṛṣis were not satisfied until they were successful in finding out one abstract presiding deity for their sacrifices in Brahmaṇaspati. The import of the word, ‘Brahman’ being the sacrifice in its neuter form, in Brahmaṇaspati they appeared to have their desired deity. At last they got the concept of ‘Bṛhaspati’ which etymologically signifies a representative deity or lord of a large section of the priestly class. Finally the Vedic section of the Indian population found out their well-searched deity in the term, ‘Brahmā’, the masculine form of the word, Brahmān, signifying the superintending priest in the period of triple Vedas and denoting perhaps the god Brahmā in the Atharvaveda in addition to its original import. It is Brahmā through which the whole priestly class has been represented and often has been equated with Bṛhaspati who becomes their counterpart in heaven. Thus after deification of this priestly class, Brahmā, the god emerges as a most concrete one, perhaps right in the Atharvavedic period. In the later Vedic period when the Aryans were more acquainted with greater part of India and became more
acculturated after their contact with the pre-Aryan settlements of India, the Vedic people discovered their creator god, Prajāpāti who in the Brāhmaṇīc period became identified and merged with Brahmā.\(^3\)

There are however, several gods in the Vedic mythology who are depicted to have performed functions identical to those of Brahmā in the Epic and Purāṇic mythology. These Vedic antecedent gods, involved in the gradual development of the concept of Brahmā from the Vedic Sarīhitās to the Epic-Purāṇic literature are marked as follows: Brahmaṇāspaṭi,\(^4\) Bṛhaspaṭi,\(^5\) Prajāpāti,\(^6\) Tvaṣṭṛ,\(^7\) Viśvakarman\(^8\) etc. A study of the functional similarities of these gods will obviously be of help in understanding their role in mythology, a role which is pre-eminently directed towards the creation and preservation of the triple world.

**BRAHMĀ AND HIS ANTECEDENTS IN THE SAMHITĀ AND BRĀHMAṆA**

In the *Rgveda*, many of the priests are introduced as being identified with Agni, and likewise Brahmā priest also is identified with Agni and Brahmaṇāspaṭi.\(^9\) He is also described as a

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4. R.V., 1.18; 1.40; 2.23,24
5. R.V., 1.105; 1.161; 6.76; 7.97; 10.71; 10.82; 10.97; A.V.,4.1; 11.10; 12.4
6. R.V.,10.121
7. Ibid., 1.85; 3.54
8. R.V., 10.85, 170; V.S., 12.61
9. tavāgne hotram tava potramṛtvīyam tava neṣṭraṁ tvamagnidṛtyataḥ /
tava prasāstraṁ tvamadhvarṇīyasi brahmā cāsi gṛhapatīṣc aśo dame //
tvamagnā indro vṛṣabhaḥ satāmasi tvam viṣṇurūrūgāyo namasyah /
tvam brahmā rayivid brahmaṇājspate tvam vidhartaḥ sacase purandhyā //
R.V., 2.1.2-3
charioteer.  

Atri and Arigiras who are mentioned as the mind-born sons of Brahmā in the Epic-Purāṇic period are referred to as Brahmā priests in the *Rgveda*. The professional character of the priests, especially of Brahmā, has been developed in the *Rgveda* itself. It is stated thus: ‘Be not, O lord of riches (Indra) sluggish like Brahmā. Be exhilarated by libation mixed with milk’. It also says- ‘Various are thoughts and endeavours of different men. The carpenter seeks something broken, the doctor a patient, Brahmā some one to offer libation’.

The power of Brahmā priest is also clearly mentioned in the *Rgvedic hymns* as- ‘The king overcomes all hostile powers in force and valour who maintains Brhaspati in aboundance, who praises and magnifies as (a daily) enjoying the first distinction. He dwells prosperous in his own place, to him the earth always yields her increase, to him the people bow down of themselves, - that king in whose house Brahmā walks first. Unrivalled, he conquers the riches

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10.  
dīrghatamā māmateyo jujurvān daśame yuge/  
apāmarthāṁ yatīnāṁ brahmā bhavati sārathīḥ//  
Ibid., 1.158.6

11.  
grāvṇo brahmā yuyujānaḥ saparyan kiriṇā devāṁ namasopāṣikṣan /  
atriḥ sūryasya divi caksurādhāt svarvāṇorapa māyā aghuḥśat //  
Ibid., 5.40.8

12.  
mo śu brahmeva tandrayurhuvō vājānāṁ pate/  
matsvā sutasya gomataḥ//  
Ibid., 8.92.30

13.  
nānānāṁ vā u no dhiyo vi vratāṁ janānāṁ/ takṣā riṣṭāṁ rutarś bhīṣag brahmā  
sunvantamicchatindrāyendo pari srava//  
Ibid., 9.112.1
both of his enemies and his kinsmen— the gods preserve the king who bestows wealth on the Brāhmaṇas who ask his assistance.\textsuperscript{14}

The deification of Brahmā priest seems to be suggested first in the \textit{Ṛgveda}. In a verse of the \textit{Ṛgveda}, it is stated thus: ‘Let us proclaim the name of butter; let us at this sacrifice hold it in mind with prostrations. May Brahmā hear the praise which is chanted. The four-horned bright-coloured has sent this forth’.\textsuperscript{15} In this context, Sāyaṇa explains the word ‘Brahmā’ as—\textit{‘brahmā parivrddho devah’}.\textsuperscript{16} In yet another verse of the \textit{Ṛgveda}, the deification of Brahmā priest has been referred to—‘Soma, resounding, overflows the filter, he who is Brahmā among gods, a leader among poets, a \textit{ṛṣi} among the wise, a buffalo among wild-beasts, a falcon among kites, an axe among the woods’.\textsuperscript{17} Here, Soma is compared with the help of metaphor to a species of its corresponding genus, and hence Brahmā may be taken as a defined species of its generic term, gods (\textit{devānām}). In this regard,

\begin{itemize}
\item[14.] sa id rājā pratijanyaṇi viśvā śuṣmeṇa tāsthāvabhi viṁyeṇa / bṛhaspatim yah subhṛtaṁ bibharti valguyati vandate pūrvabhājam // sa it kṣetī sudhiṭa okasi sve tasmā iḷā pīnvate viṣvādānim / tasmai viśāḥ svayameva namante yasmin brahmā rājani pūrva eti // apratīto jayati saṁ dhanāṇi pratijanyāṇyā yata yā sajanyā / avasyave yo varivaḥ kṛṇoti brahmaṇe rājā tamavanti devāḥ //
\hspace{1.5em}Ibid., 4.50.7-9

\item[15.] vayariṁ nāma pra bravāma gṛhasyaṁ smin yajie dhārayāṁ namobhiḥ / upa brahmā śṛṇavacchasyamāṇaṁ catuḥśrīgo vamīd gaura etat //
\hspace{1.5em}Ibid., 4.58.2

\item[16.] Sāyaṇa, Ibid.

\item[17.] brahmā devānāṁ padavīḥ kavināmṛśirvprāṇāṁ mahiṣo mṛgaṇam / śyeno grdhrāṇāṁ svadhitirvanāṁ somah pavīramatī eti rebhan //
\hspace{1.5em}Ibid., 9.96.6
\end{itemize}
we have to follow the comments of Sāyaṇa on the words ‘brahmā devānām’. He explains—‘soma evamrūpo bhavatil devānām stotrakārīnāṁ rtvijām brahmā brahmākhyārtviksthāniyo bhavatil yadvāl devānām dyotamānānāṁ indrādīnāṁ brahmā rājā bhavati’.

In the Taittirīya Samhītā, Bhṛhaspati is described as Brahmā. Here, Bhṛhaspati being identified with Brahmā is introduced as upholder of sacrifice. The Atharvaveda establishes the relation between the Supreme Being Brahman and Brahmā. Brahmā has been introduced directly as Parameśṭhin, an appellation of Brahmā in the Purāṇic literature. Brahmā is also described in the Atharvaveda as coupled with Brahman, the Supreme Soul, Dhātṛ, Prajāpati and other gods. In this context the relation between the Supreme Brahman and Brahmā, appears to be like that of transcendental and temporal one. The verse states: ‘May a prosperous journey be granted to me by Brahman, the Supreme Being, Prajāpati, Dhātṛ, the Lokas, the Vedas, the seven Rṣis and the Fire; may Indra grant me happiness, may Brahmā grant me happiness.’ Sāyaṇa in his commentary explains thus:

18. Sāyaṇa, Ibid.
19. brahma vai devānāṁ bhṛhasatirbrahmanaiva yajñāṁ samdāhāti vicchinnāṁ yajñāṁ dadhatvityaha/ T.S., 2.2.9.1
20. yatra devā brahmaṉavido brahmaṁ jyeṣṭhamuṇāsate / you vai tāṁ vidyāt pratyakṣaṁ sa brahmā veditā syāt // A.V., 10.7.24
21. idam yat parameṣṭhināṁ mano vāṁ brahmaṁsaṁsitam / yenaṁ sa ṣaṁjñāṁ tenaṁ sāṁtiṁ naḥ // Ibid., 19.9.4
22. brahma praṇāpatisvādā lokā vedāḥ saptaṁṣaṅgaṁ yagnāṁ / tair me ṛṣaṁ svastanayam āndro me śarma yacchatu brahmā me śarma yacchatu // Ibid., 19.9.12
'brahma saccidanandalaksanam param brahmā prajāpatiḥ
prajānāṁ pālakaḥ dhātā caturmukho brahmā...brahmā śarman
sukham yacchatu prayacchatu'.

The seven Rṣis who in the Epic-Purāṇic period are depicted as Brahmā’s mind-born sons, are also associated with him in the verse under discussion. The juxtaposition of Brahmā, Prajāpati and Dhātṛ probably signifies their identification with each other. Prajāpati and Dhātṛ are the epithets of Brahmā mentioned in the Purāṇic literature.

The Atharvaveda refers to Brahmā as the first-born amongst all beings. This idea has been further developed in the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad where he is said to be born the first among gods. Thus, Brahmā as the seniormost god emerges in the Atharvaveda itself. He also appears as a concrete deity who is invoked in the sacrifices for the attainment of the knowledge of the Vedas.

The Taittirīya Āraṇyaka identifies Brahmā as Prajāpati, who is also stated as Katamahā, Svayambhū and Saṁvatsara.

23. Sāyaṇa, Ibid.
24. ye tannāmasahasreṇa stavantyarkaṁ prajāpate/
teśāṁ bhavati kiṁ punyarī gatiśca paranēśvara // Br.P., 31.28
25. aham dhata vidhata casvayambhuh pmpitamahah/
mayyeva sarīnstitaṁ viśvarīn brahmāham viśvatomukhaḥ // K.P., 1.9.20
26. bhūtānāṁ brhmā prathamota jajīte tenārhati brahmaṇā spardhitum kaḥ /
A.V. 19.22.21
27. brahmā devānāṁ prathamāṁ sambabhūva/
Mu. U., 1.1
28. yatra brahmavido yānti dikṣayā tapasā saha /
brahmā mā tatra nayatu brahmā brahma dadhātu me // A.V. 19.43.8
29. brahmāṇāḥ brahmā viśvāḥ katamassvayambhūḥ praṇāpattissarīvaṁkathāsara iti/
T.A., 6.63
Bhaṭṭabhaṭskara comments on the relevant passage thus – ‘brahmā nāma viśvāḥ viśvāṇḍaśarīraḥ katamaḥ aṣakyanirdhāraṇaḥ svaṃyambhiḥ svaṃyameva bhavati/ param brahma tadeva prajāpatiḥ prajānām pātā utpādyaitā saṃvatsaraḥ saṃyagvasantyanena bhūtānīti/ evamguṇo brahmā’. 30 In another context of this text, Bhaṭṭabhaṭskara also interprets the term Brahmā as Hiranyagarbha, Prajāpati, Paramātman. 31

In the Satarudriya text of the Maitrāyani Sāṁhitā, reference is made to the god Brahmā along with some other Purānic divinities and their Gāyatrī mantras. While mentioning the Gāyatrī mantras, the Satarudriya text gives a list of some Purānic deities. These gods are – Puruṣa-Mahādeva (Rudra), Girīsūṭa (Gaurī), Kumāra-Kārtikeya (Skanda), Karaṭa Hastimukha (Dantin or Gaṇeṣa), Caturmukha-Padmāsanā (Brahmā), Keśava-Nārāyaṇa (Viṣṇu) etc. 32 Here, we find the iconographic traits regarding Brahmā as having four heads and a lotus seat. The Taatirīya Āraṇyaka also in way of presenting the Gāyatrī mantras of each deity gives a list of twelve divinities like –

30. Bhaṭṭabhaṭskara, Ibid.,
31. brahmā hiranyagarbhaḥ/ prajāpatiḥ paramātma/

Bhaṭṭabhaṭskara, Ibid., 6.33

32. tatpuruṣāya vidmahe mahādevāya dhīmahi/ tanno rudraḥ pracodayāt// tadtadgāṅgaucaḥya vidmahe girīsūṭāya dhīmahi/ tanno gaurī pracodayāt// tatkaraṭāya vidmahe hastimukhāya dhīmahi/ tanno dantī pracodayāt// taccaturmukhāya vidmahe padmāsaṇāya dhīmahi/ tanno brahmā pracodayāt// tat keśavāya vidmahe nārāyaṇāya dhīmahi/ tanno viṣṇuḥ pracodayāt//
Mai. S., 2.9.3-8
Puruṣa- Sahasrākṣa- Mahādeva- Rudra; Puruṣa- Mahādeva- Rudra, Puruṣa- Vakratuṇḍa- Dantin, Puruṣa- Cakratuṇḍa- Nandin, Puruṣa- Mahāsenā- Ṣanmukha (Kārttikeya), Puruṣa- Suvarṇapakṣa- Garuḍa, Vedātman- Hiraṇyagarbha- Brahmā, Nārāyaṇa- Vāsudeva- Viṣṇu, Vajranakha- Tikṣṇadarāṅgra- Narasimha, Bhāskara- Mahādyutikara- Āditya, Vaiśvānara- Lalola- Agni, and Kātyāyana- Kaṇyākumāri- Durgi. The text, here, identifies Brahmā with Vedātman and Hiraṇyagarbha. So far as the word ‘Vedātman’ is concerned, S. P. Basu observes that Vedātman is a descriptive epithet of Brahmā and it perhaps signifies that Brahmā is the manifestation of Brahman, who is the transcendental Supreme Being on one hand and which denotes Vedas on the other hand.

In order to explain the gradual development of the concept of Brahmā, we have to discuss the characteristic features of the antecedent gods of Brahmā as developed in the *Samhītā* period. The first important Vedic prototype of Purāṇic Brahmā is Brahmanaspati. The word Brahmanaspati as the etymology implies, signifies that he is lord or presiding deity of the Vedic sacrifices. In the Rgvedic hymns, Brahmanaspati has been invoked to present the sacrificer to the gods. In yet another hymn, Brahmanaspati is invoked as the creator of the universe. He is referred to as uttering mantras or charms in which

33. TĀ., 10.1.5-7
34. cf. Basu, S. P., op. cit., p.31
35. somāṇarī śvāraṇāṁ kṛuhi brahmaṇaspati/
   kakṣīvantāṁ ya auśijaṁ // R.V., 1.18.1
36. brahmaṇaspatīretā saṁ karmāra ivādhamat/
   devānāṁ pūrveya yuge saṭāḥ sadajāyata // Ibid., 10.72.2
the gods dwell; he also helps the sacrificer in all his endeavours. Here, it is, probably, an effort for equating the priest with Brahmaṇaśpati, the presiding deity of the sacrifices. He is also invoked as Brahmā priest who is ‘rayivid’. Brahmanaspati, the presiding deity of the sacrifices cast down the things which were unshaken, penetrated the mountain which was full of riches. It is recorded that Tvaṣṭṛ created Brahmanaspati as the Supreme entity above all creatures. He is also said to have shaped all these created being like a blacksmith. Thus, Brahmanaspati is entrusted with the act of creation like other creator gods, viz. Prajāpati, Viśvakarman, Hiraṇyagarbha in the Vedic period and Brahmā in the Purāṇic period.

Bṛhaspati also appears as the Vedic prototype of the Purānic Brahmā. Many scholars have supported the view that Bṛhaspati is the forerunner, or at least a prototype of Brahmā. The consensus seems to be that Bṛhaspati is an apotheosis of Brāhmaṇa priest and as such is Brahmā’s prototype. In the Rgveda, Bṛhaspati sometimes comes out as an almost concrete person. Here, he is presented as a concrete

37. Ibid., 1.40.5-8
38. tvam brahmā rayivid brahmaṇaspatē / Ibid., 2.1.3
39. prácyāvayadacyutā brahmaṇaspatirā cāviśad vasumantarā vi parvatam / Ibid., 2.24.2
40. viśvebhyo hi tvā bhuvanebhyaspari tvāṣṭājanat sāmnah sāmnah kaviḥ / Ibid., 2.23.17
41. brahmanaspatireta sārin karmārah īvādhamat / Ibid., 10.72.2
42. cf. Macdonell, A.A., Vedic Mythology, p.104
43. hamsairiva sakhibhirvāvādadbhirasmanmayāni nahanā vyasyan/ bṛhaspatirabhikanikradadgā uta prāṣṭouducca vidvāri agayat //
R.V., 10.67.3
human priest singing with his friends that cry like goose. The etymology of the word Bṛhaspati implies that he is the lord of number of priests signifying the whole priestly class. In some hymns Bṛhaspati has been equated with Brāhmaṇaspati, who is also called Gaṇapati. In the Saṁhitās and the Brāhmaṇas the epithet Brahman is often used to Bṛhaspati. The word Brahman, which in the Brāhmaṇas can be rendered as ‘prayer’ or ‘hymn’, seems to denote the Brāhmaṇa priest when used for Bṛhaspati. If the Brāhmaṇa is the one who possesses the Brahman, then Bṛhaspati through his identity with him is the apotheosis of the power of the Brāhmaṇas, and by extension of the whole class. His knowledge and control of the Brahman is indicated by his alternative name Brahmaṇaspati as well as by epithets such as ‘progenitor of all prayers’. His lordship over prayer and his wisdom are stressed in the Rgveda, because prayer as invocation is one of the most important ways to gain the favour of the gods. Each of these is also characteristics of the Brāhmaṇa and Bṛhaspati is praised as the Brāhmaṇa of the gods.

44. gaṇāṇāṁ tvā gaṇapatirn havāmahe kavinā kavināmupamamāravastamam/ jyeṣṭhārājanī brahmaṇāṁ brahmaṇaspatanā naḥ śrīvannūtibhiḥ sid sādamam/ T.S., 2.23.1

45. (a). brahma vai devāṁ bṛhaspatiḥ / T.S., 2.2.9.1
   (b). brahma vai bṛhaspatirete vai brahmaṇā pacyante / Ś.B., 5.1.4.14

46. sa vā eṣa brahmaṇāṁyaiva yajñāḥ/ yyadenena bṛhaspatiraya jata brahma hi bṛhaspatir brahma hi brahmaṇāḥ / Ibid., 5.1.1.11

47. usrā īva sūryo jyotiṣā maho viśveśaṁjjanītā brahmaṇāmasi / R.V., 2.23.2

48. bṛhaspatete apa tāṁ vartayā pathāṁ suṅgaḥ no asyai devavitaye kṛdhi / Ibid., 2.23.7
In the *Rgveda*, it is stated that Brhaspati destroyed enemy, cities; and won wealth.⁴⁹ He is also depicted as *anarvāna*, the irresistible.⁵⁰ He created the Sun⁵¹ and is invoked to get rid of evil and danger and to bring peace and prosperity.⁵² He is praised as the producer of all plants.⁵³ He is also eulogised as the supreme principle in the *Rgveda.*⁵⁴

In the *Atharvaveda*, Brhaspati has been called *Atharvan*, who is the father and friend of the gods and who is the creator of all and to whom oblation should be offered.⁵⁵ It may be mentioned here that *Atharvan* is a designation of a particular priest. He is also invoked as an *Āṅgirasa.*⁵⁶ While enumerating six quarters and their regents, it is mentioned in the *Atharvaveda* that the upper direction belongs to Brhaspati.⁵⁷ The *Taittirīya Samhitā* also states that Brhaspati is the

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49. ghnaṁ vṛitrāṁ vi puro dardarīti jayaṁchaṁtrūramitran pṛṣṭa saṁhan / 
   brhaspatīḥ samajyad vasūni maho vrajān gomato deva esa //  
   Ibid., 6.73.2

50. śucikrandaṁ yajataṁ pastyānāṁ brhaspatimanarvānāṁ huvema /  
   Ibid., 7.97.5

51. brhaspatirūpasārisṁ sūryam gāmarkaṁ viveda stanayanniva dyouḥ /  
   Ibid., 10.67.5

52. brhaspate prathamaṁ vāco agraṁ yat prairata nāmadhayaṁ dadhānāḥ/ 
   yadeśāṁ śṛṣṭhaṁ yadari pramāśīt preṇā tadeśāṁ nihitaṁ guhāvīḥ //  
   Ibid., 10.71.1

53. yā oṣadhiḥ somarājhaṁviṣṭhitāḥ pṛthvīmanu / 
   brhaspatiprasūta asaiy saṁ datta vīryam //  
   Ibid., 10.97.19

54. Ibid., 10.71

55. yo' tharvāṆāṁ pitararāṁ devabandhūṁ brhaspatirṁ namasāva ca gacchat/ 
   tvāṁ viśveśarṁ janitā yathāśaḥ kavirdevo na dabhāyat svadhāvān// A.V., 4.1.7

56. brhaspatirāṅgirasa ṛṣayo brahmasamāśītāḥ /  
   Ibid., 11.10.10

57. ubhe nabhāsi ubhayāṁśca lokān ye yajvanāṁabhijitāḥ svargāḥ /  
   Ibid., 12.3.6
regent of the upper direction.\(^{58}\) This upper quarter perhaps ultimately becomes *Brahmaloka* in Hindu mythology and thus Brahman and Brhaspati are identified in the Brāhmaṇas.\(^{59}\)

In the *Taittirīya Samhitā*, Brhaspati has been described as the chief priest of all gods,\(^{60}\) and it is also stated that the sacrificer offers an oblation to Brhaspati in the house of the Brahman priest, the sacrificial fee being a white-backed animal.\(^{61}\) He is the lord of speech,\(^{62}\) priest of the gods\(^{63}\) and is the god’s chief priest.\(^{64}\) The *Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa* also states that Brhaspati was the priest of the gods.\(^{65}\) The *Tāṇḍya Mahābrāhmaṇa* also declares Brhaspati as the priest of gods.\(^{66}\) He desired to become the divine priest and became so through the *Brhaspatīsava*.\(^{67}\) The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* identifies

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58. (a) *adhipatī namāsi brhaṭi diktasyāste brhaspatiradhipatiḥ*
   
   T.S., 5.5.10.2

   (b) *brhaṭi ārdhvā dik*
   
   Bhattabhāskara, Ibid.

59. *brahma vai brhaspatirbrahmaṇaivaśvainām tadbhisajyatī*  
   
   A.B., 1.21

60. *brahma vai devānāṁ brhaspatirbrahmaṇaivaśvaiṁ yajñamavarundhē*
   
   T.S., 1.2.2.1

61. *bārhaspatyāṁ carum nirvapati brahmaṇo gṛhe śitipṛṣṭho daksinā*
   
   Ibid., 1.8.9.1

62. *brhaspataye vācaspataye naivāram*  
   
   Ibid., 1.8.10.1

63. *bārhaspatyo brāhmaṇe devatayā*  
   
   Mai.S., 2.5.7

64. *brahma vai devānāṁ brhaspatiḥ*
   
   T.S., 2.2.9.1

65. *brhaspatir devānāṁ purohita āsīt*  
   
   J.B., 1.125

66. *brhaspatirakāmayaṁ devānāṁ purodhāṁ gaccheyamiti*
   
   T.M.B., 19.17.8

67. *sa eṣā brhaspatisavo brhaspatirakāmayaṁ devānāṁ purodhāṁ gaccheyamiti*  
   
   Ibid., 17.11.4
Bṛhaspati as Brahman and sacrifice—‘Bṛhaspati is Brahman’, 68 ‘the Brahman is the sacrifice’. 69 Dhaṭṛ is an appellation of Bṛhaspati 70 and he belongs to the upper region. 71 According to the Gopatha Brāhmaṇa, Bṛhaspati is Āṅgirasa, the Brahman priest of the gods. 72

The Atharvaveda states that creation is accomplished by Bṛhaspati and he is regarded as the creator of this universe. 73 This aspect of Bṛhaspati as creator becomes clear from Sāyaṇa’s commentary of the relevant passage. 74

Another important Vedic prototype of Purāṇic Brahmā is Prajāpati, the lord of creatures. If Bṛhaspati or Brahmaṇaspati is considered as the first Vedic prototype of Epic-Purāṇic Brahmā in his priestly aspect, then Brahmā’s second prototype in the Vedic period in his aspect of creation is Prajāpati. Of all the gods, prominent in the Vedic literature, it is this god who has the greatest number of functional similarities with Brahmā. Prajāpati is the protagonist in most of the

68. brahma vai bṛhaspatiḥ/ Ś.B., 5.3.2.7
69. brahma hi yajñaḥ/ Ibid., 5.3.2.4
70. deva dhātāḥ susāvitramadyāsminyajñe yajamāṇāyāsuvavasvendraya deverbhyoyuhutāhavīḥ/ T.M.B., 21.10.16
71. Ś.B., 5.5.1.12
72. bṛhaspatirbrahmeti bṛhaspatirvā āṅgiraso devānāṁ brahmā/ G.B., 2.1.1
73. ajātā āsanṛtavo’tho dhātā bṛhaspatiḥ/ A.V., 11.8.5
    indrāgni ašvinā tarhi kaṁ te jyeṣṭhamupāsata //
74. api ca dhātā etatsarjfiśakaḥ aditeḥ putraḥ/ bṛhaspatiḥ bṛhatāṁ devānām paṭih suraguruḥ/ indrāgni/ aśvinā/... ete saḍ devāḥ... svotpatyartharāṁ kāraṇabhūtaṁ janayitāram abhyarthayante /
    Sāyaṇa, Ibid.
cosmogonic myths found in the Brāhmaṇas. He rarely appears as an independent god in the epics and the Purāṇas, where his name is one of Brahmā’s most frequent epithets.

In the earlier parts of the Ṛgveda, Prajāpati is used as an appellation of Savitṛ and Indra. In the later period Brahmā has acquired an aspect of Savitṛ and Sāvitri has become his wife. In the Ṛgveda, the Brahmā priest has been identified with Agni, and the conception of the Brahmā priest being identified with Agni, has a great deal of influence over the idea of identification of Brahmā and Prajāpati. In the tenth maṇḍala of the Ṛgveda, Prajāpati appears as an independent deity who bestows progeny and cattle.

In the Hiranyagarbhasūkta of the Ṛgveda (10.121), Prajāpati becomes an epithet of Hiranyagarbha. Though Hiranyagarbha is directly named, yet Sāyaṇa identifies ‘Ka’ with Prajāpati in the last phrase of the hymn. Hiranyagarbha has become an appellation of Brahmā in the Purānic period. In the Vājasaneyi Saṁhitā, it is stated that ‘Prajāpati moves within the womb, the wise behold his womb. In

75. divo dhartā bhuvanasya prajāpatiḥ… savitā sumnamukthyaṃ / R.V., 4.53.2
76. indurindro vṛṣā hariḥ pavamānaḥ prajāpatiḥ / Ibid., 9.5.9
77. brahmā viśvaṁ vinirmāya sāvitryāṁ varayoṣīti / cakāra vīryādhānāṁ ca kāmukhyāṁ kāmuko yathā // Br.V.P., 1.8.1
78. asādi vṛto vahnirājagāvanāgnirbrahmā nṛṣadane vidhartā / R.V., 7.7.5
79. ā naḥ prajāṁ janayatu prajāpatirājārasāya samanaktvamā / Ibid., 10.85.43
80. brahmā hiranyagarbhā'ya maṇḍajātaścaturmukhaḥ / Pd.P., 5.14.88
him all the worlds stands'.  

Here, he is not born. He is yet to be born in many shapes. The various aspects, viz. Aja, Svaayambhū, Dhātṛ, Sraṣṭṛ etc., probably have been attributed here to Prajāpati, which are also epithets of Brahmā. In the *Atharvaveda*, Prajāpati is said to have formed thirty-three worlds out of oblation of boiled rice. This aspect of the power of creation in Prajāpati has been entrusted to Brahmā which is his prominent character in the Purāṇas. It is also said in the *Vājasaneyī Samhitā* that before Prajāpati nothing was born, who pervades the whole world. This verse implies the aspect of first born and vastness of Prajāpati. Brahmā is also conceived as the first born and the aspect of his vastness is implied in the etymology of his name, Brahmā which is discussed in the earlier chapter.

In the *Taittirīya Samhitā*, there is a description of Prajāpati as producing the Vedas, stoma, metres and different casts etc. The Purāṇic literature has introduced Brahmā as the producer of the Vedas and all others through his four mouths. In the *Rgveda* he is invoked

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81. *prajāpatiścarati garbhe antar ajāyamāno bahudhā vijāyate/*  V.S., 31.19
82. *aharī dhātā vidhātā ca sayambhūḥ prapitāmahaḥ/*  K.P., 1.9.20
83. *etasmād vā odanāt trayāṁśrīśatarī lokān niramimīta prajayatiḥ/  A.V., 11.3.52
84. *yasmājātāṁ na purā kīṁcan aiva yaḥ ābabhūva bhuvanāṁ viśvā/*  V.S., 32.5
85. *vide Chapter-V, fn. 5,6
86. *prajāpatirākāmaya pra jāyeyeti sa mukhatastrīvatari niramimīta
tamagnirdevataṁ nvasṛjyata gāyatrī chando rathantarīṁ sāma
brāhmaṇo manusyānām/*  T.S., 7.1.1.4
87. *rgvedaḥ pūrvavadānaṁ yajurvedastu dakṣīṇam/
paścímaṁ sāmavedaṁ syādātharvaṇamathottaram//
ye vedāste mukhā jñeyaścaturas bāhavo diśaḥ/*  V.D.P., 46.8-9
to bring children in a hymn celebrating the marriage of Sūrya and Sūryā. In the cosmogony of the Brāhmaṇas, Prajāpati is the progenitor of this universe and it is a recurrent feature in these texts. He is often referred to as progenitor (*prajanayitṛ*). The cosmic dimension of his power of creation is indicated by his epithet ‘progenitor of the earth’ (*janitā prthivyai*). This has led to call him the father of creatures and of his representation of the fecundity of the sacrifice. His epithets like Pīṭ, Sraṣṭṛ etc., disclose the identity of Prajāpati as Brahmā in the later period.

According to the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* and the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, Prajāpati is the father of gods, the progenitor of men and the lord of world. He is called ‘a friend’ and ‘the protector of the world.’ Again in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, it is stated that there was only one god, the self-created Prajāpati in the beginning. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* states that Prajāpati is said to be alone in the

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88. ā naḥ prajāṁ janayatu prajāpatirājarasāya samanaktvāryamā /
R.V., 10.85.83

89. (a). prajāpatiḥ sa prajanayitā /
Ś.B., 8.4.3.20
(b). prajāpatiḥ prajā āsrjata /
T.M.B., 16.4.1
(c). prajāpatirakāmayata bahu syāma prajāyeyeti / Ibid., 6.1.1

90. prajāpatirvai prthiayai janitā /
Ibid., 7.3.1.20

91. imamarthamṛṣivarāḥ papracchūḥ pitarāṁ dvijāḥ /
Br.P., 26.35

92. bhūtēsvarāḥ surādhyaksāḥ sarvātmā sarvabhāvāṇaḥ /
sarvaḥ sarvahāri ca sraṣṭā ca gururavyayāḥ //
Pd.P., 5.35.169

93. T.B., 2.8.1.3; J.B., 3.135

94. T.B., 3.7.7.2

95. J.B., 3.341
beginning \textsuperscript{96} and he is the supporter of the universe.\textsuperscript{97} The gods and the Asuras, sprang from Prajāpati.\textsuperscript{98} Thus, it is seen how Prajāpati has been delineated in the Brāhmaṇas as the prototype of Brahmā’s different appellations, viz. Pitāmaha, Sraṣṭṛ, Dhāṛ, Svayambhū etc.

Prajāpati has been presented as springing out of an egg generated by the primeval waters.\textsuperscript{99} In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, Prajāpati has been identified with the universe as the source out of which the creation is evolved\textsuperscript{100} and he is identified with the sacrifice also.\textsuperscript{101}

The myth of Prajāpati’s incest with his own daughter Uṣas is probably the germ of Brahmā’s incest with his daughter in the Purāṇic period. Prajāpati had changed into a stag in order to have intercourse with his daughter Uṣas, who had taken the form of a doe. The gods caught hold of him with an arrow. Rudra did this but Prajāpati had already spilt his semen which turned into a lake. The gods sacrificed it.\textsuperscript{102} Brahmā’s incest with his daughter is also a remarkable myth in the Purāṇic literature.\textsuperscript{103}

\textsuperscript{96} Š.B., 2.2.4.1
\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., 6.8.1.41
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid., 1.2.5.1
\textsuperscript{99} \textit{āpo ha vai idam agre āsit salilam evāsa ... puruṣāḥ samabhavat sa prajāpatīḥ/}
\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., 11.1.6.1
\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 2.2.4.1
\textsuperscript{102} prajāpatirvai svāṁ duhitaramabhyaḥdhyaddhibhūtambhyait taṁ devā apaśyanakṛtaṁ vai prajāpatiḥ karoti/ \textit{A.B., 3.33}
\textsuperscript{103} vācāṁ duhitariṁ tanvaṁ śvayambhūḥaratiṁ manah/ akāmāṁ cakame kṣattaṁ sakāma iti naḥ śrutam \textit{Bhg. P., 3.12.28}
Another cosmogonic myth in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa attributes the creation of the periods of time and of good and evil to Prajāpati.¹⁰⁴ This myth narrates Prajāpati’s birth from a golden egg floating in the primeval waters. He created the earth, atmosphere and sky by uttering their names. After he had created the seasons in the same way, he created the gods and demons. The narrative ends with the creation of the year and various gods, wherein an attempt has been made to account for the origin of good and evil. The triad of gods, light and goodness is opposed to demons, evil and darkness, an opposition which recurs continually in the epics and Purāṇas. The substance of this myth is found in many versions of the Purānic cosmogony. Where it does occur it forms part of the detailed enumerations of groups of being created during the ‘re-creation’ (pratisarga).¹⁰⁵

Another function of the creator is the creation of the Vedas, which as a body of knowledge are supposed to constitute the theoretical basis of the order in society and the cosmos. The functions of the varṇas and the roles of gods, demons, men and animals are laid down in, and sanctioned by the Vedas. Prajāpati creates them and uses them to further his own creation.¹⁰⁶ Functionally, the Vedas and the Vāc are the same. Vāc is the ritual formula, so important in performance of the sacrifice. The source of such formulae is the Vedas. Prajāpati himself is the sacrifice. Thus, the account contained in this passage is inherent in the union

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¹⁰⁴. Ś.B., 11.1.6.1-17
¹⁰⁵. Märk. P., 43
¹⁰⁶. Ś.B., 6.1.1-2
of ritual formulae and the sacrifice. In the Purānic pratisarga accounts Brahmā achieves the creation with the support of the Vedas and the sacrifice. At the beginning of the Kalpa he awoke from the sleep that he had during the period of dissolution.\(^{107}\)

The Vedic Tvaṣṭr is another constituent unit of the Purānic Brahmā, because this Vedic god definitely belongs to the group of creator gods. He is often portrayed as the creator and creates the world in a varied ways. He is also deeply involved with male and female fertility. Tvaṣṭr imparts generative power and bestows offspring.\(^{108}\) He develops the semen in the womb and gives shapes to all forms, human and animal.\(^{109}\) The Ṣatapatha Brāhmaṇa also associates him with fertility and conceives him as god of progeny.\(^{110}\) According to the Atharvaveda, Tvaṣṭr created the bride and bridegroom presumably for ensuring the continuity of the species.\(^{111}\) The continuity of the species is well protected and it is one of the important functions of the Purānic Brahmā.

Tvaṣṭr is the first being to appear before the creation begins. This is indicated by his epithets agraja, i.e. belonging to the beginning

\(^{107}\) pāḍmāvasānasamaye niśāsuptotthitah prabhuh/ ... rūpaṁ kṛtvā vivesāpsu sarvagah savasambhavah // Märk. P., 44.3-8

\(^{108}\) tannasturipamadbhutaṁ puru vāram purutmanā/ tvaṣṭā poṣāya visyatu rāye nābhā no asmayuh // R.V., 1.142.10

\(^{109}\) tvaṣṭā rūpaṁ hi prabhuḥ paśūn viśvāntsamanaste/ İbid., 1.188.9

\(^{110}\) tvaṣṭā vai siktaṁ reto vikaroti / Ś.B., 1.9.2.10

\(^{111}\) tvaṣṭā jāyāṁ ajanayat tvaṣṭā asyai tvāṁ patim / A.V., 6.78.3
of the creation; and puroyāvan, i.e. going ahead. His cosmogonic role implied by such epithets is described in only a few Vedic hymns but it reveals the fact quite distinctly. In one passage, he is said to have ‘produced (jajāna) the entire universe’, while it is added therein that he also nourished the creatures. He created heaven and earth and he adorned all beings with forms.

His role as creator is comprehensible from the fact that he was recognized as the father figure. Two epithets – pitṛ (father) and janitṛ (progenitor), testify to this fact. Since Tvaṣṭṛ created heaven and earth he can be considered as their father. In their own turn they are the parents of the gods. Thus in line of descent, their father Tvaṣṭṛ, is the grandfather of the gods whom they create. The one fundamental similarity is that like Tvaṣṭṛ, Brahmā is a grandfather (pitāmaha) who is portrayed as commencing the process of creation and leaving its completion to somebody else, usually his sons. In the

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112. tvāṣṭāraṁgraṇāṁ gopāṁ puṇyārāṇāṁ ṣuṣṭe
    indurindro viṣā harīḥ pavamānāḥ prajāpati //
    R.V., 9.5.9
113. devastvāṣτā savitā viśvarūpāḥ pūpoṣa prajāḥ purudhā jajāna/
    imā ca viśvā bhuvanāṇaṁya mahad devāṇāmasurātvamakam //
    Ibid., 3.55.19
114. ya ime dyāvāpṛthivī janitri rūpārāpiṁśadvāhanāni viśvā/
    Ibid., 10.110.9
115. uta mātā bhṛhaddvā śṛṇuṭa nastvāṣṭā devēbhījanibhiḥ pitā vacaḥ/
    Ibid., 10.64.10
116. grabhe nu nou janitā daṁpati kardevastvaṣṭā savitā viśvarūpāḥ/
    Ibid., 10.10.5
117. pra dyāvā yajñaiḥ pṛthivī rtāvṛdhā mahī suṣe vidatheṣu pracetasa/
    devebhīrye devaputre sudamāsasteṭhā dhiyā vāryāṇi prabhūṣataḥ //
    Ibid., 1.159.1
cosmogonic myths, where Brahmā is the grandfather, it is usual for him to emit from himself mind-born sons (mānasa-putra) who are called ‘lords of creation’ (Prajāpatis). 118

The Vedic god Viśvakarman is also one of the antecedents of Brahmā. Viśvakarman is identified with all-embracing Prajāpati, who is the precursor of Epic-Purānic Brahmā. 119 According to the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, Prajāpati becomes Viśvakarman after creation of the universe. 120 He is stated as the preserver of the universe also. 121 In the Rgvedic hymn, he is invoked as the lord of sense-organs and of creation; he is called Dhātṛ and Vidhātṛ and is identified with the Supreme Spirit. 122 With these aspects he may be regarded as the precursor of Epic-Purānic Brahmā, who is also extolled as Dhātṛ and Vidhātṛ. Viśvakarman is presented as all-seeing god having faces, arms and feet on all sides and blowing with his arms and wings when producing the heaven and the earth in the Rgveda. 123 The description of Viśvakarman as a creator god having faces all sides in this hymn is definitely a prototype of the Epic-Purānic god, Brahmā, with four faces on four sides.

118. M.P., 171.20-28
119. (a). prajāpatiḥ viśvakarmā vimañcatau / V.S., 12.61
   (b). prajāpatirvai viśvakarmā / Ś.B., 8.2.1.10
120. prajāpaṭiḥ prajā srṣṭvā viśvakarmabhavat / A.B., 4.22
121. saṁkṛtirviśvakarmā / T.B., 1.1.1.5
122. R.V., 10.82
123. kim svid-āsid adhiṣṭhānam — ārambhanaṁ katamat svit kathā āṣit /
   yoto bhūmiṁ janayan viśvakarmā vi dyāmouṁonmahinā viśvacaksāḥ //
   viśvataścaksuruta viśvatomukho viśvatobāhuruta viśvataspāt/
   saṁ bāhubhyāṁ dhamati saṁ patarair dyāvā dhūmī janayaṁ devaḥ ekaḥ //
   Ibid., 10.81.2-3
There are other prominent gods also like Puruṣa, Hiranyagarbha, Virāj, Skambha, Paramesṭhin etc., which led to the development of the concept of Brahmā in the later literature.

CONCEPT OF BRAHMĀ IN THE UPAŅIṢADS

The Upaniṣads represent the quintessence of the wisdom that is embedded in the Vedas, those marvellous records of the spiritual experience of men. They treat not of secular knowledge, which any science can teach, but of Brahmavidyā, the knowledge of Brahmān, the Ultimate Reality of the universe. In the early Vedic period, the seers searched for one single principle of creation, and thereby they perceived the hymns like Puruṣasūkta, Hiranyagarbhāsūkta, Nāsadiyaśūkta etc. The Nāsadiyaśūkta finally refers to the single principle of creation as the Supreme or Highest Being – ‘From what source this creation arose and whether anyone made it or not. He who in the highest heaven is its ruler, he knows, or even he does not know’. In the Vājasaneyī Samhitā, it is thus queried and answered:

124. Ibid., 10.90
125. Ibid., 10.121
126. A.V., 8.10.; 11.8
127. Ibid., 10.7
128. Ibid., 15.7
130. R.V, 10.90
131. Ibid., 10.121
132. Ibid., 10.129
133. iyam visṛṣṭiḥ yathā ābadhūva yadi dadhe yadi vai na /
yo asyādhyakṣaḥ parame vyomaṁ sa aṅga veda yadi vai na veda //
Ibid., 10.129.7
‘What light is equal to the Sun? What lake is equal to the sea? ……
Brahman is a light equal to the Sun; the sky is a lake equal to the sea.’

The *Atharvaveda* has clearly introduced the forms of Brahman and he has been identified as supreme ubiquity of Brahmā. The concept of Brahman is invested with three guṇas or qualities. Thus the Atharvavedic concept of Brahman is not nebulous rather has a definite shape.

After the *Saṁhitā* period, the concept of Brahman has been developed in the *Brāhmaṇa* literature. In the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, Brahman is introduced as pervading the entire universe. This idea is developed in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* also. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, Brahman is stated as existing in the past and future and also is represented as imperishable. This concept is developed in the *Kaṭhopaniṣad* – ‘*etaddhyevākṣaram brahma etaddhyevākṣaram param*’. According to the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, Brahman is Sayambhū, i.e. self-existent. By performing tapas and sacrificing

134. kim svit sûrya samam jyotīḥ kim samudrasamaṁ sarāḥ // … brahma sûryasamaṁ jyotir dyauḥ samudrasamaṁ sarāḥ // V.S., 23.47-48
135. yatra ādityaśca rudrāśca vasavaśca samāhitāḥ bhūtaṁ ca yatra bhavyaṁ ca sarve lokāḥ pratiṣṭitāḥ skambhaṁ tair bruhi katamaḥ svideva saḥ / A.V., 10.7.22
136. puṇḍarīkaṁ navadvāraṁ tribhīrghuṇāibhirāvrtam / tasmin yad yakṣamātmanvat tad vai brahmavid vidoḥ // Ibid., 10.8.43
137. brahma viśvamidam jagat / T.B., 2.8.8.9
138. sarvaṁ khalvidam brahma tajjalāniti / Chā.U., 3.14.1
139. bhutaṁ bhaviṣyat prastaumi mahad brahmaikam aksaram / Š.B., 10.4.1.9
140. K.U., 1.2.16
himself, he pervades in everything.\textsuperscript{141}

Thus, a positive background for the Upaniṣadic speculation about Brahma has been well set in the Saṁhitās and the Brāhmaṇas. It is stated in the Upaniṣads that Brahmā is created by Brahmā, the Supreme Being. The Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad has presented the concept of Nirguṇa Brahman, i.e. transcendental Supreme Being and Saguna Brahman, i.e. his manifested form and also their relation. It shows how Brahmā has become one of the manifested forms of Brahmā being invested with three guṇas and as one having knowledge of him as the source of the Vedas and immortality.\textsuperscript{142} This Upaniṣad also declares Brahmā as the first created entity of the Supreme Being.\textsuperscript{143} It is thus noticed that according to the Upaniṣadic conception, Brahmā was first created by the Supreme Being and as such handed over the Vedas to him because of his (Brahmā’s) seniormost position.

The Munḍaka Upaniṣad also introduces Brahmā as the deity, first born among the gods and presiding over the knowledge of Vedas. He is the creator of the universe and preserver of the world. He revealed to his eldest son Atharvan, the knowledge of Brahmā, the

\begin{align*}
\text{141. } & \text{brahma vai svayambhū tapo’tapayata tad aikṣata/ na vai tapasyānantyārāṁ asti hanta aham bhūteśvātmānāṁ jhuvāni bhūtāni ca ātmāni iti/ tat sarveṣāṁ bhūteśvātmānāṁ hutvā bhūtāni ca ātmāni sarveśāṁ bhūtānāṁ śraisthyāṁ svārājyaṁ ādhipatyam paryait/} \\
& \text{Ś.B., 13.7.1.1} \\
\text{142. } & \text{Śvet. U., 5.4-7} \\
\text{143. } & \text{yo brahmānaṁ vidadhāti pūrvaṁ yo vai vedāṁśca prahiṇoti tasmai/} \\
& \text{Ibid., 6.18}
\end{align*}
basis of all learning.\textsuperscript{144}

According to the \textit{Chāndogyas Upaniṣad}, the sacred knowledge of the Supreme Being was declared to Prajāpati by Brahmā, Prajāpati declared it to Manu and Manu to his descendants.\textsuperscript{145} Śaṅkarācārya, in his commentary explains that Brahmā Hiranyagarbha or the Supreme Lord, Parameśvara through his instrumentality declared it to Prajāpati Kaśyapa; he to his son Manu, Manu to his descendants.\textsuperscript{146} The same \textit{Upaniṣad} also states that – ‘Brahmā Hiranyagarbha declared the \textit{Madhuvidyā} to Prajāpati Virāj, he to Manu and Manu declared it to his descendants Ikṣvāku and the rest.’\textsuperscript{147} In these two passages of the \textit{Chāndogya Upaniṣad}, Brahmā is mentioned as a distinct deity from Prajāpati. However Śaṅkarācārya identifies Prajāpati with Virāj and Kaśyapa.\textsuperscript{148} Thus, we have found that in the period of \textit{Chāndogya Upaniṣad} Brahmā has been fully deified.

In the \textit{Kauśītaki Brāhmaṇa Upaniṣad}, there is a description of \textit{Aparājīta} temple where the gatekeepers are Indra and Prajāpati.

\textsuperscript{144} brahma devānāṁ prathamaḥ sambabhūva viśvasya kartā bhuvanasya goptaḥ/ sa brahma-vidyāṁ sarvavidyā-pratiśṭhāṁ atharvāya yevaṣṭhapatrāya práha//
\hspace{1cm} Mu. U., 1.1.1-5

\textsuperscript{145} tad ha etad brahmā praṇāpataya uvāca praṇāpatir manave manuḥ praṇābhyāḥ/
\hspace{1cm} Chā. U., 8.15.1

\textsuperscript{146} brahmā hiranyagarbhaḥ parameśvaro vā tad-dvāreṇa praṇāpataye kaśyapāya uvāca/ asāvapi manave svatutrāya/ manuḥ praṇābhyāḥ/
\hspace{1cm} Śaṅkara, Ibid.

\textsuperscript{147} brahmā hiranyagarbho virāje praṇāpataye uvāca so'pi manave / manu ikṣvākvyābhyāḥ praṇābhyāḥ provāca / Śaṅkara on Chā. U., 3.11.4

\textsuperscript{148} (a). brahmā hiranyagarbho virāje praṇāpataye /
(b). praṇāpataye kaśyapāya / Śaṅkara on Chā. U., 3.11.4; 8.15.1
Inside the temple there is an assembly hall, in which concrete Brahmā has been introduced as a speaker, who speaks like a human being. The concept of Brahmā as presented in the relevant text reveals that Prajāpati has not yet been identified with Brahmā and he is a distinct personality though he is nearer to Brahmā enjoying an equal status with Indra and serving as doorkeeper of the temple in which Brahmā resides.

In the same *Upaniṣad*, Prajāpati having five faces has been introduced in connection with the eulogy of Soma. It states that –

'Soma is the wise, five-faced Prajāpati. Brahmā is his one mouth. The king is one mouth of Soma. The hawk is his another mouth; the fire is his another mouth. The fifth mouth is all the creatures.'

The depiction of Prajāpati with the five-faced, one, may lead to the concept of Brahmā with five heads. The reference to the four heads of Brahmā in the *Śatarudriya* text of the *Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā* which is noted earlier, already suggests the identification of Prajāpati with Brahmā.

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149. āgacchatyaparājitamāyatanam taṁ brahmatejāḥ prāviśati sa āgacchatindraprajāpatiḥ dvāragapou .... tasmin brahmāste tamithamvit pādēnaivāgra ārohati taṁ brahmāha kośīti taṁ pratibruyāt /

K.U.B., 1.5

150. soma rājāsi vicakṣaṇaḥ pañcamukhoḥ si prajāpatiḥ/ brahmaṁstāta ekaṁ mukham/ ..... rāja ta ekaṁ mukham/ ..... śyenasta ekaṁ mukham .... agnista ekaṁ .... sarvāṇi bhūtānityeva pañcamāṁ mukham /

K.U., 2.9

151. vide, fn. 32
Thus, in the Upaniṣads, Brahmā appears as a seniormost god having knowledge of Brahman and handing over this knowledge to the sages through their respective pupils. The Upaniṣads depict Brahmā as possessing a vast knowledge of the four Vedas and disseminating this knowledge to his disciples. We have noticed in the *Atharvaveda* also where god Brahmā is approached by human priests for knowledge of the sacred lores.\(^\text{152}\) In the post-Vedic period Brahmā is extolled mainly as the creator god who is already been referred to in the *Mundaka Upaniṣad*.\(^\text{153}\)

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152. brāhmaṁ mā tatra nayatu brahma brahma dadhātu me/ A.V., 19.43.8
153. brahmaivedāṁ viśvamidaṁ variṣṭham/ Mu.U., 2.2.11

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