Chapter–VIII

CONCLUSION

In the earlier chapters, we have concentrated on a survey of the great god Prajāpati, his prominence from the Vedic to the Purānic literature. Prajāpati is extolled as one of the prominent gods in the Vedic literature as a creator and sustainer of this universe. He is recognized as the distinct god mainly in the Brāhmaṇa literature. In the Epics and Purāṇas, the deity has come to be designated as Brahmā and thus Prajāpati, whose position Brahmā usurps in the post-Vedic period is highly acclaimed as a supreme god.

Yāska, in his Nirukta, has given the etymological meaning of the term ‘Prajāpati’ as the protector or supporter of the creatures. According to him Prajāpati is—‘prajānāṁ pātā vā pālayitā vā’ (Nir., 10.42). The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa states that the word Prajāpati means productiveness (Ś.B., 5.1.3.10). The Gopatha Brāhmaṇa also explains the term Prajāpati as the creator and the protector of the progeny (G.B., 1.1.4). The Vāyu Purāṇa also explains the term as the protector of the creatures (V.P., 1.6.40). Sāyaṇa, in his commentary, explains the term Prajāpati as the protector of the creatures by his own power (R.V., 4.53.2). According to Mahīdhara, Prajāpati is the protector and generator of the creatures (V.S., 8.10). Śaṅkarācārya construes the term Prajāpati as the protector of the subjects (Chā.U., 1.12.5).
According to A.B. Keith, 'Prajāpati is even slighter figure than Viśvakarman in the Rgveda, and his name as a distinct deity occurs only four times, one late hymn being given to him (R.V., 10.121, 85.43,169.4, 184.1). In that hymn (R.V., 10.121), however, in an appended verse his supremacy is clearly asserted, and in more effective manner than in the older hymns. He is there said to have created and established the heaven and the earth. The name, Prajāpati, means lord of offspring, and is applied once in the Rgveda to Savitṛ, who is described as the Prajāpati of the world, and the supporter of heaven, and also to Soma as compared with Tvaṣṭṛ and Indra. In the Atharvaveda and the other texts of the later literature his connection with offspring is regularly referred to. But Prajāpati is essentially in the later Samhitās and Brāhmaṇas regarded as the chief of the gods, and in special the father god, who produces everything, who is the father of the gods and also of the Asuras. Prajāpati is the hero of the cosmogonic myths of the whole of the Brāhmaṇa period; he creates the worlds, the Vedas and the castes'.

A.A. Macdonell observes that, there are many passages in the Brāhmaṇas where Prajāpati is recognized as the chief god (Ś.B., 11.1.6.14; 2.4.4.1; T.B., 8.1.3.4. etc.) and in the Āśvalāyana Gṛhyasūtra (3.4), he is identified with Brahmā. Prajāpati also occurs in the Rgveda as an epithet of Savitṛ (4.53.2) and as also of Soma (9.5.9). In one hymn Prajāpati bears the title 'Hiranyagarbha', the

Germ of Gold (10.121.1). Hiraṇyagarbha is alluded to in the *Atharvaveda* (4.2.8) where it is stated that the waters produced an embryo, which as it was born, was enveloped in a golden covering. His position is definitely identified with that of Prajāpati in the *Taittirīya Samhitā*, and in the post-Vedic literature he is chiefly a designation of personal Brahmā.²

The *Brhaddevatā* rightly remarks 'Both of what is not and what is, this source is really Prajāpati, as being this eternal Brahma which is at once imperishable (*aksaram*) and the object of speech (*vācyam*)'.³ In the present context, A.A. Macdonell remarks thus: 'Prajāpati is a form of the supreme Brahma, which alone is eternal (*nitya*) and, though transcending thought and speech, can be directly expressed (*vācyā*) in the Vedāntist formula'.⁴

The concept of Prajāpati as an 'all creating', 'Lord of creatures' is arising in the form of various aspects in the *Samhitā* literature. In the *Rgveda*, Prajāpati is invoked as a distinct deity only in a few passages. Prajāpati appears as an epithet of Savītr (*R.V.*, 4.53.2) and Soma (Ibid., 9.5.9) in the *Rgveda*. In a hymn of the *Rgveda* (10.121), Prajāpati is invoked as a creator of the heaven and the earth, of the waters and of all that lives. Prajāpati was born as the lord of all that exists, the one king of all that breathes and moves. He is the one god above the gods. All beings and the gods follow his ordinances. He

---

3. asatasca satascaiva yonireshā prajāpatiḥ/
   yadayaksaratā ca vācyārāṃ ca yathaitadvratmaśāśvatam // B.D., 1.62
established the heaven and the earth; and he embraced with his arms the whole world and the creatures. In the hymn, the deity is directly named as Hirañyagarbha, yet the hymn ends with a prayer to Prajāpati (R.V., 10.121.10). It is worth noting in this context that Hirañyagarbha has become an appellation of Brahmā in the later period.

In the Vājasaneyī Samhitā, he is invoked as the god before whom nothing was born (V.S., 23.63) and he has pervaded the entire universe as the Supreme Soul (Ibid., 8.36). Prajāpati is the lord of the world and he is earnestly prayed to protect all the living creatures (Ibid., 18.44). The Taittirīya Samhitā declares that all the gods are Prajāpati (T.S., 2.1.4.3) and he is the creator (Ibid., 2.1.1.4). Prajāpati is Hirañyagarbha (Ibid., 5.5.1.2) and he is unlimited (Ibid., 1.1.7.3). He created the fire and he became desirous of supremacy (Ibid., 5.7.6.6). Prajāpati also created the various sacrifices (Ibid., 1.6.9.1) and he assigned the sacrifices to the gods (Ibid., 2.1.4.3).

In the Atharvaveda, he is closely connected with the generative power and gift of progeny (A.V., 6.11.2). He is stated to act in unison with progeny (Ibid., 2.34.4) and he bestows pleasure to his devotees (Ibid., 3.15.6). He maintains all the worlds (Ibid., 10.7.7), the highest, lowest and middlemost all the worlds are created by him (Ibid., 10.7.8). Prajāpati is said to have formed thirty-three worlds (Ibid., 11.3.52) and he is identified with Prāṇa (Ibid., 11.4.2). In the Sāmaveda also, Prajāpati is extolled as Parameśṭhin and it is stated that he abides in the highest region (S.V., 6.2.3.1). Thus, the greatness of Prajāpati is extolled in the Samhitā literature.
In the entire Brāhmaṇa literature, Prajāpati is referred to as the creator, supporter or preserver of these worlds. In the Brāhmaṇa literature, Prajāpati is said to be the alone in the beginning and he wanted to become many in order to attain magnitude (Ś.B., 2.2.4.1). Prajāpati represents productiveness (Ibid., 5.1.3.9) and he produced all the creatures (Ibid., 7.1.2.1). He is the breath and everything here is after Prajāpati (Ibid., 4.5.5.13). He is all the beings (T.B., 2.1.9.3). He assuredly is the Brahman, for Prajāpati is of the nature of Brahman (Ś.B., 13.6.2.8). He is stated as the Self (Ibid., 4.5.9.2) and he is this universe (Ibid., 10.2.3.18). Prajāpati is said to practise severe penance and the whole creation along with the gods, Vedas, metres, sacrifices etc., was born of that penance. Prajāpati is presented as creating the earth, the firmament and the sky by uttering bhūḥ, bhuvah and svah respectively (Ibid., 1.1.6.3). Having assumed the form of a tortoise Prajāpati created the living beings (Ibid., 7.5.1.5). It is also stated that Prajāpati assumed the form of a Boar and lifted up the earth which remained plunged in water (T.B., 1.1.3.5-6). Thus, some of the incarnations of Viṣṇu are being shared by Prajāpati in the Brāhmaṇas.

The creative procedure of Prajāpati is also associated with some sacrifices or some sacrificial rites. He created the creatures by the Agniṣṭoma (J.B., 1.68), Atirātra (T.M.B., 4.1.7), Sākamedha (T.B., 1.6.8.1), Vaiśvadeva ṣastra (Ibid., 1.6.2.1) etc. Prajāpati is often described as the supporter and the preserver of the universe (Ś.B., 6.8.1.14). He is stated as the lord of world (Ibid., 9.4.1.16) and Dhātṛ (Ibid., 9.5.1.35). Prajāpati freed all creatures from evil,
even from Death, therefore, he is identified as Life (Ibid., 8.4.1.4). He is both father and mother (Ibid., 5.1.5.26) and he is regarded as gopā (T.B., 3.7.7.2). Prajāpati is also depicted as the annihilator of this universe (Ś.B., 5.1.3.13.) and he is exclaimed as anta, i.e. Death (Ibid., 5.1.3.13).

Prajāpati is intimately connected with various sacrificial rites and he is identified with the sacrifice (Ibid., 4.3.4.3). He is regarded as Prātaranuvāka (J.B., 2.37) and Viśvajit sacrifice (K.B., 25.11). The Rājasūya, the Vājapeya, the Aśvamedha, the Darśapūrṇamaśa sacrifice etc., are created by Prajāpati. It is stated that the Vājapeya was kept reserved for himself by Prajāpati and he gave a share to the gods only when they requested him (T.B., 1.3.2.5). Prajāpati created the Aśvamedha sacrifice and he is identified with this sacrifice (Ś.B., 12.4.2.1). The Agnihotra is sacred to god Prajāpati (Ibid., 12.4.2.1) and by this sacrifice, Prajāpati created the beings (J.B., 1.67). Prajāpati is regarded as the Soma sacrifice and he is the king Soma (Ś.B., 12.6.1.1). By means of the four parts of the Cāturmāsya sacrifices, Prajāpati fashioned for himself a body (Ibid., 11.5.2.1-6). He is associated with the Mahāvrata sacrifice also (G.B., 1.4.10).

Prajāpati’s relationship with the various Vedic gods is also broadly discussed in the Brāhmaṇa literature. He is stated as all the gods (T.B., 3.3.7.3) and he is the father of gods (Ibid., 3.9.22.1). Prajāpati is identified with Agni and it is said that while Prajāpati was creating the living beings, he created Agni also (Ś.B., 2.3.3.18). Prajāpati is also none other than Indra (T.B., 1.2.2.5). Indra is said to
have obtained śakvari sāman from Prajāpati in order to kill Vṛtra (T.M.B., 13.4.1). Vāyu is clearly the form of Prajāpati (K.B., 19.2) and Prajāpati is Vāc (T.B., 1.3.4.5). Prajāpati is described as the consort of goddess Uṣas (Ś.B., 6.1.3.7). The obnoxious Purāṇic account of Prajāpati’s desire for his own daughter and the ultimate incest with the punishment awarded to Prajāpati is well-rooted in the Vedic texts (Mai.S., 4.2.12). Prajāpati also acts as an arbitrator in order to settle the disputes which are found mentioned in the Brāhmaṇas (Ś.B., 4.1.3.14). Another important aspect of Prajāpati, as noticed in the Brāhmaṇas is that he is described as Kāla or Time (Ibid., 1.6.3.35).

In the Āranyaka literature also, Prajāpati is depicted as the creator of the world (T.Ā., 1.23.1-2). It is also described that Prajāpati uttered the first word, consisting of one syllable or two, viz. tata or tāta (A.Ā., 1.3.3). He is also recognized as Brahmā, Katama, Svayambhū, Saṁvatsara, Āditya, Hiraṇyagarbha etc., (T.Ā., 10.63.1) in the Āranyaka literature. Thus, Prajapati’s supreme position is extolled in the Āranyakas also.

Prajāpati holds an exalted position in the Upaniṣadic literature. The Upaniṣads identify Prajāpati as Brahman, the Ultimate Reality (Mait. U., 2.6). He is Saguna Brahman, identified with the whole creation (Br. U., 5.3.1) as well as the Nirguna Brahman, the Unmanifest Reality, one without the second (Chā. U., 2.22.1). Prajāpati brooded on the world. From him thus brooded upon, the three-fold knowledge issued forth (Ibid., 2.23.2). Prajāpati is described as the year, month, day and night, food etc., in the Praśna Upaniṣad
Prajāpati is the father of gods, men and Asuras are his offspring. (Br.U., 5.2.1). Prājāpati is the creator and he protects all creatures. All the creative activities are attributed to Prājāpati.

The Vedic Prājāpati has merged into a new appellation with his power and activities, namely Brahmā in the Purānic literature. But, a study of the chronological development of the concept of Brahmā clearly shows that Brahmā emerged with all the attributes of Prājāpati in the Vedic literature itself. The concept of Brahmā seems to have gone through various stages of development. It arises from the abstract concept brahman. The term brahman in neuter means a hymn or prayer (R.V., 10.50.4), while brahman is masculine means composer or reciter of the hymn (Ibid., 1.80.1). In the later period when the functions of sacrifices became complicated, the term came to denote a priest with his special duties (T.S., 1.1.7.1). The term also means a sacrifice (Pra.U., 2.6) or the Supreme Being, the Prime Cause of the universe, dealt with in the Upaniṣads. The Atharvaveda refers to Brahmā as the first born amongst all beings (A.V., 19.22.21) and he is invoked in the sacrifices for the attainment of the knowledge of the Vedas (Ibid., 19.43.8). The functions of some other Vedic gods like Brahmaṇaspati, Bṛhaspati, Viśvakarman, Tvaṣṭṛ etc., are found similar to those of Brahmā in the later period and therefore these gods are taken into account as the antecedents of Brahmā, i.e. the Vedic prototypes of Purānic Brahmā. Thus, the emergence of Brahmā can be traced in the Vedic literature itself.

Brahmā is extolled mainly as the creator and as a preserver also in the Purāṇas. He is said to have manifested himself as
Brahma, Visnu and Rudra while creating, preserving and destroying respectively, the universe (Märk. P., 43.1-22). As a creator god, he created the worlds and he knows past, present and future (Br.P., 122.53). His supreme position is acknowledged as the self-existent god. In the Mārkaṇḍeya Purāṇa, Brahma is identified with the Brahman of the Upaniṣads. He is described as unborn (Aja), Unchanging (Avyaya), the resort (Āśraya), the highest abode (Paramapada) etc. (Märk.P., 45.27-28). He is the first creator and the fashioner of all things. The Brahma Purāṇa states him as the self-created Svayambhū and Hiranyagarbha (1.37.40). His different epithets, viz. Ādideva, Jagadyoni, Jagatpati (Ibid, 26.31), Prajāpati (M.P., 3.33), Aja, Lokakartr (Pd.P., 5.35.163) etc., also manifest his greatness. Brahmā’s Boar incarnation also signifies that Prajāpati is associated with the creation and preservation of this universe.

In conclusion, it is found that amongst all the Vedic gods Prajāpati is the prominent one in the Vedic literature. He is the god who has the greatest number of functional similarities with Brahmā in the later period. Brahmā’s emergence with the attributes of Prajāpati is noticeable in the Vedic literature itself. But, Brahmā, the first member of the Hindu Triad is most prominent as a creator god in the Purāṇic literature. Prajāpati rarely appears as an independent god in the Purāṇas, where his name is one of Brahmā’s most frequent epithets. All the aspects of Brahmā, treated in the Purāṇas reveal the fact that Purāṇic Brahmā is none other than Prajāpati, extolled in the Vedas.

* * *

* * *