CHAPTER IV

FEMALE DEITIES IN THE YAJurveda Samhita
We have already studied the problem of different female deities in the Rgveda. In this chapter it is proposed to deal with the concept of female deities, the changes introduced and the conceptual development as detailed in the Yajurveda samhitā.

It is a well known fact that the major portion of the Yajurveda Samhitā is in prose form. No hymn has been specially assigned to one particular deity, as is the case in the Rgveda and the Atharvaveda. The deities are, mostly, invoked jointly. It is seldom that we come across any deity mentioned separately. It shows that the vedic seers esteemed all the deities equally. Subsequently it is extremely difficult to analyse the attributes of an individual deity. The Yajurveda mainly describes the sacrificial performance. Hence all the deities dealt with in this samhitā are connected with the sacrifice. The materials connected with the sacrifice, are deified. Some sacrificial objects like ukha are called after the names of different deities.

1. "Ayucita yomiraditya Ṛṣnasindarṣyāḥ samahansa
Rūṣe te granthām granthātā....."
The treatment of the deities of Yajurveda lacks in personal attributes and epithets, or any kind of individual emphasis. So the task of collecting ideas and conceptions about them is rather a very tough one. There is not any hard and fast way to show that this particular portion is devoted to a particular deity. It is the sacrifice which attains this kind of treatment to its side.

The deities are not always invoked or praised in the sacrificial formulae of the Yajurveda but in the most diverse ways sacrificial utensils and sacrificial acts are brought into relation to deities. Thus, for example, the priest binds with a rope the sacrificer's wife who takes part in the sacrifice, saying, "A girdle thou art for Aditi". The riddles equally form an important part of the worship of the gods as the prayers and sacrificial formulae. The term "worship of the gods" expresses inadequately the purpose of the prayers and formulae of the sacrifices. The majority of the sacrificial ceremonies, as also the yajus formulae do not aim at worshipping the gods, but at influencing them, at compelling them to fulfil the wishes of the sacrificer. The gods wish to be not only fed, but entertained as well. The vedic texts very frequently assure us that the gods take a particular pleasure in the

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mysterious and enigmatic.

The five samhitas of the Yajurveda viz (1) Katha, (2) Kathaka, (3) Kapisthala Katha, (4) Maitrayani (5) Taittiriya, most agree with the subject matter.

The female deities of the Yajurveda samhitā are the same as in the Rgveda, except for the appearance of the deity, Virāj and the disappearance of the deity Sraddha. Moreover some of the important deities like Uṣas of the Rgveda lose their significance in the Yajurveda, only Sarasvatī and Prthivi become nucleus of attraction.

PRTHIVĪ

Prthivi has been frequently lauded in the Yajurveda. In the Rgveda, the attributes and characteristics of this deity are general but in the Yajurveda we find the incidents to explain her origin various forms and characteristics.

To start with Indra cut off the head of Viśvarūpa the son of Tvastr. He seized with his hand the guilt of slaying him and bore it for a year. He appealed to Earth to share one third of his guilt. She, in return, chose a boon

saying, "I deem that I shall be overcome through digging. Let me not overcome by that." She is granted a boon by Indra by which the dugout portion of earth grows up again before a year. When granted the boon, the earth took one third of his guilt. That guilt became a natural fissure on earth. This incident explains her characteristic that the dug out portion of the earth grows up again.

Another incident relating to the slaying of Vṛtra by Indra is mentioned in the Yajurveda. In the course of the fight, when Indra was about to kill Vṛtra with his bolt, Sky and Earth intervened and said, "Hurl it not, he rests in us two". The sky chose the boon to be adorned with the Nakṣatras and Earth desired variegated forms. (Citra vihitāhamitī). These boons were granted. The second characteristic of Earth is variagatedness.

The third incident explains the growth of plants and trees on Earth as the result of her observing the rites during the thirty nights.

The fourth incident throws light on the origin of the Earth in the Yajurveda. It is traced from the union of the

4. Taittirīya Saṃhitā, II.5.1.
5. Ibid, II.5.2
6. Ibid, VII.4.3
wives of Varuna and Agni.

The incident relates that the waters are the wives of Varuna. Agni longed for them and had union with them. One seed of Agni was transformed as Earth while the second as Sky.

A study of these four incidents occurring on the sacrificial occasion, proves that the Earth originated as a result of the efforts of the gods. Mitra and Rudra are also mentioned as her creators.

Apart from the sacrificial treatment of the deities, the Yajurveda also provides their descriptive account. Earth's description has been done in the following words:

"Baṣīttha parvatānām śvidram bibharṣi Prthivī pra yā Bhumi Pravatvati mahā Jinosi mahini Stomasastva vicarini prati stobhayaktubhib, ora yā vajam na heśantam persumasyasyarjuni ! !"

In the Yajurveda samhitā, the earth is prayed not to harm the worshipper in the battlefield. She is a good protector. She is the realm of the holy order. It is further believed that the crops prosper due to the joint

7. Taittiriya Samhita, V.5.4
8. Suklayajurveda, XI.53, Kaipsthala Samhita,XXX.4 and Suklayajurveda,XI.54.
effort of Heaven and Earth. The Parjanya showers rains and plants spring up on this earth. Thus a person should offer oblations to sky and Earth for the prosperity of his cultivation.

We have observed the earth was created by the gods, on the other hand we found that she has been called on Prathama, the first born one in the Yajurveda. This contradictory statement can be explained in the following three ways:-

i. She has been dealt with differently, in the five Samhitas.

ii. She is Prathamā in the sense that she was born first of all the earthly objects.

iii. The third explanation is in the form of her worship as the sacrificial altar. Thus she is Prathama because the altar is constructed, first of all, sharing the sacrificial performance.

She is the cause of happiness, syenā, she is Bhavāṅkṣarā (one who does not bring any trouble) and Nivesānā (well-established) wide and shelter giving. She is requested to be firm in the battle field, to overcome the enemies and to increase the prosperity.

10. Sukla Yajurveda, III. 5.
11. Ibid, XXV.2.
12. Ibid, XXXV.2.
It is clearly mentioned in the Yajurveda that the gods rejoiced on the earth. She brings nectar when she comes to the worshiper. She has been identified with Pūṣan.

Viṣṇu takes all the good things from the earth and distributes them among his worshippers. The earth and Heaven are great on account of their depth and breadth respectively. The edibles existed due to her magnanimity. She fills in the regions and quarters with various entities. She is the wife of Asura as she possesses great power. The Earth and Heaven are called Svaraj, and Viraj. The Earth, in the company of Heaven and other gods, is requested to protect the sacrificer and make the sacrifices fruitful. The sacrificial rituals of the Yajurveda samhitā include the offering of different birds to different deities. The birds for the Earth are the Saka, and the two heifers. These birds should be of auspicious marks. These gods are goddesses as mentioned above, have been connected with the sacrificial objects, viz. the skin of a black antelope.

15. Ibid. V.6.21
16. Prati tvā Prthivyā vetu. I.1.5; MS, I.1.6; Kapisthala Samhitā, I.1.5.

प्रति त्वा पृथ्विः वै ज्ञातिर्भक्षणमिसि।
Skull (kapāla) has been requested to make the earth firm. Ukha made of clay, has been addressed as Prthivi.

Earth also represents in the yaṣurveda the sacrificial altar. Devayajani, the place of the sacrifice, is compared to Prthivi.

It is pleaded to be careful towards Prthivi and not to harm her. Arsrū is an evil spirit smitten away from the earth. The Taittirīya samhitā refers to the three forms of the earth. T.S.II.1.11. Earth is also identified with Aditi in many places in the yaṣurveda. The repetition of the phrase 'Adityastvopasthe sādayām' for the various objects in the sacrificial rites explains the use of Aditi in the sense of Prthivi. It occurs in connection with the placing of the objects on two sacrificial ground. In the Gavamayana sacrifice also, the word Aditi has been used for Prthivi. "The cup of Aditi is drawn, Aditi is this Earth." It is interesting to note that inspite of their identification, they have been

17. Suklayajurveda I.2.
18. Idayastva pade vayam nabha prthivya Adhi.
   Ibid, XXXIV.15.
19. Prthivi devayajanyosadhyastr mulem ma hinsīsa
   Taittirīya Samhitā, IV.1.13
20. Ibid, VII.5.4
Aditi is the supporter of the Earth, who is identified with her in TS. II.2.6

In this way she accepts the offering of the sacrificer, passes on the offerings to other deities and is considered as the priest, Hotri. As the results of the prayers of a priest go to the yajamana, similarly the results of the sacrifices performed on the earth are achieved by the yajamana.

In the yajurveda, the offerings are named after the qualities of the deity i.e. the offering citra is named after the variegated quality of the earth. According to the Taittiriya Samhita, one should offer citra offering for cattle.

Prthivi is also identified with yama. This identification is based on the similarity in the function of yama and Earth who are equally responsible for the death of the beings. Yama is lord of Death. The death occurs on Earth and in that way she is identified with yama.

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22. Taittiriya Upanishad, 29.4.5.5
In the soma sacrifice, the Earth is associated with light.

"Yunajmi te Prthivim Jyotisa saha ".

Thus we conclude that the Earth is an important sacrificial deity in the yajurveda. She is connected with most of the sacrifices viz. Soma sacrifice, Darşapūrna Sacrifice etc.

No other veda represents Prthivī so closely connected with sacrifice as this veda does. In the Rgveda the invocation of Prithivi was limited to the Prayers and praises while in the yajurveda she is one of the most important factors of the sacrifices.

Sarasvatī

Sarasvatī is also connected with many sacrifices in the yajurveda. In the Rgveda and yajurveda, she has, often been invoked in the company of Iḍā and Bhāratī. In the vājapoya Sacrifice, the anointing of the horse is connected with Sarasvatī. In the Ásvamedha sacrifice, the oblations are offered to various deities including Sarasvatī. The oblation is offered with the recitals of the following incantations:-
In Daśapeya, an oblation is offered to Sarasvatī, with the epithet sūrta, the truthful speech. At the time of offering oblation to her, the sacrificial fee is regarded as the calf. When oblations are offered to her and her husband Sarasvat, the sacrificial fee is regarded as a pair of oxen.

In the yajurveda, Sarasvatī is connected with Soma sacrifices to obtain perfection in witchcraft. In the paurṇamāsa sacrifice the oblations are offered to sarasvatī and sarasvat to dispel the enemies. Sarasvatī is also considered as the new moon night. (Amāvāsyā vai Sarasvatī). She brings prosperity to the sacrificer.

In the horse sacrifice, the tip of the tongue of the horse is offered to Sarasvatī. This is probably due to her being the goddess of speech and learning. Besides the tip of the tongue, she is also offered the rib of the horse. The other animals to be offered to Sarasvatī are the

2. Ibid. II.2.9.
3. Ibid, II.5.4.
white Starling and the ewe.

In the Sautrāmaṇī sacrifice Sarasvatī in the form of a cow, is said to have milked soma. In this sacrifice she is prominent as Aśvinī. She brings madhu and makes Indra endowed with lustre. Indra is further, made stronger by Sarasvatī and, Aśvinī. She fulfils the desires of the worshippers, like other vedic gods Indra, Heaven and Earth.

She helps the worshippers in the company of the Rudras. She is the impeller of righteousness and inspirer of devotions. She establishes the sacrifice. She is the maiden of the lightning. She is of varied aspects. She is compared to the wife of a hero.

She along with other goddesses, gives uninjured protection and unsurpassable guardianship, to the worshipper. She is requested to protect during the night. She is possessed of food (vājīnivatī). She purifies and illuminate the whole universe by her intellect. She possesses

5. Taittirīya Śamhitā, V.5.12.
6. Ibid, V.5.22
7. Naitarāyaṇī Śamhitā, III.11.3.
8. Taittirīya Śamhitā,IV.1.11
tremendous strength. She is the wife of Aśvins in the yajurveda while in the Rg.veda Sūryā is the wife of Aśvins. She is the goddess of speech. She is prayed to be bountiful to the worshippers. The lost power of speech can be regained through the offering of an ewe to Sarasvatī. She bestows speech after the proper offerings. She helps in the perfection of the witchcraft. During the sacrificial performances, the incantations should be uttered distinctly; otherwise there is the danger of the destruction of the sacrificer. It emphasizes the importance of her worship. Sarasvatī, the goddess of speech, can alone bestow and develop the faculty of discrimination of the sacrificer which leads to the completion of the sacrifices through correct pronunciation of the incantations.

Sarasvatī as a river goddess, has been mentioned very rarely. The only example of sarasvatī as the river goddess is available in the yajurveda, where she forms five rivers.

9. MR HI. 10.6
10. TS.II.1.2.
11. Suklayajurveda,XXXIV.11.
Thus the concept of Sarasvatī in the yajurveda is also connected with sacrifices, in a number of ways. Apart from her sacrificial character, she is represented as the goddess of speech. She has been completely identified with vak whereas in the Rgveda it was incomplete. Only one perspective of Sarasvatī, as a river deity, is rare in this veda. It is very rarely that Sarasvatī is represented as a river goddess in the yajurveda, while in the Rgveda she has been often called as a river goddess.

Aditi

Aditi, an abstract deity, is also treated as a sacrificial deity in the Yajurveda, preserving her abstract character. In the Aśvamedha sacrifice, the oblations are given to Aditi. The skin of a black deer is called as the skin of Aditi and the sacrificial animal is identified with her.

In the soma sacrifice, the opening and the concluding oblations belong to Aditi, on account of her choosing the boon at the time of distributing the soma among

2. Taittiriya Samhita,I.1.5, M.S.I.1.6; Kapisthala Samhita, I.1.5.
3. T.S.I.2.4; MS.I.2.4.
the gods. These two oblations are called Prayaniya and udayaniya. Aditi won soma with sixteen syllables. The straw of the sacrifice has been addressed as the girdle of Aditi.

In the Rajasuya sacrifice, the oblations are offered to Aditi to be victorious in a battle. While dealing with the deity Prithivi, we have clearly pointed out her identification with Aditi in the yajurveda. In the Rajasuya sacrifice, her identification with Prthivi becomes more clear. It is said "Aditi is this Earth, verily she confirms the kingdom for the person who is being expelled".

She has been called as the supporter of the Earth.

She is also represented as the cause of the birth of Soma and Varuna. She is the protector of Nitra. Mitra and Varuna are requested to mount on the chariot to behold Aditi and Diti. Sayana interprets that Mitra and Varuna are the right and left hands of the warrior and Aditi and Diti the armies of the warrior and the enemies. Protection and sinlessness are also sought from Aditi. Like a mother she protects

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4. T.S. VI. 4. 7.
5. T.S. VI. 1. 5
6. Ibid. I. 7. 11.
7. Ibid. I. 1. 2
8. TS. II. 3. 1
the worshipper from calamities. She guards from tribulation. Aditi is prayed to be free from the guilts towards her in order to perform the sacrifice in a perfect way. The Aditya is also requested to free the worshipper from the guilts toward Aditi. She is identified with Aditya, being herself one of the nine Adityas. She is the mighty mother of the righteous and the spouse of holy order. She is powerful and unagoing. She is the proprietor of the sky, supporter of the Earth and ruler of the universe. She is all-pervading. She is auspicious and bestows prosperity on the worshippers. It is only in the yajurveda Samhita, where Aditi has been referred to as the wife of the Viṣṇu.

The above study of Aditi presents her as an abstract female deity who has close connection with many sacrifices. She is the proprietor of her worshippers and is magnified as an important female deity in the yajurveda Samhita.

Usas

It is strange to note that usas has lost her original importance of the Rgveda in the yajurveda. There are only a few references about her and they do not throw sufficient light on her concept in the yajurveda. Here she is invoked mostly in the company of Night. Contrary to

10. TS, I.5.3.
the usual practice of the female deities of this veda, usas is not connected with sacrifices. The offerings of birds and other sacrificial rites are absent in the case of usas. Her characteristics are generally similar to those mentioned in the Rgveda.

She appears, first of all, in the morning. She is compared to a new bride. She is charming, wise, unagoing and adorned with light or fire. As the wife of the sun, she uses the light as her banner. Usas is conceived as many in number. The dawns follow the path of Rta. The various stages of the arrival of usas has also been analysed in the yajurveda. Usas in the company of night is the creator of the might of Indra. On her appearance the sacrificers start to perform the sacrifices. She is possessed of many forms and appears with bright rays. Being unagoing, she brings old age to the beings. She is the leader of the seasons and the days. In the sacrifice, some bricks are addressed as dawn-bricks. It is said that he who puts down the dawn bricks, smites away the darkness. As vājīnvatī she is requested to bring the sun so that the worshippers might see the prosperity abounding in sons and grandsons. The dawns are said to be possessed of horses, cows, sons and clarifies butter.

1. TS. IV. 3. 11
Consequently, uṣas of the yajurveda is very close to her concept as depicted in the Rgveda. Mostly her traits of brightness, first appearance, immortality and protection coincide in both the Vedas.

Rātri

The female deity night of the yajurveda samhitā is the creation of the gods. Mitra and varuṇa are considered as the cause of the day and night. In the later period the day was regarded as belonging to the gods and the night to the Asuras. It is on account of the Asuras' taking shelter in the darkness of the night after stealing the wealth of the gods. Rātri is designated as "Āgnayī" because the fire shines more brightly during the night. She covers all the regions with her lustre and darkness. Her splendours are also various. She is Piśāṅgīlā.

Her invocation in the company of uṣas follows the concept of night as depicted in the Rgveda. Both are prayed to invite Indra in the sacrifice. Both are invited to take their seats on the sacrificial ground. Both are great heavenly maidens, adorned with ornaments and possessed of pure lustre. They sleep very close to each other.

2. Taittiriya Samhita, I.5.7, 'Ratrirvai citravasuh'.
other. They are approached for the protection of the sacrifices and offerings. In the Asvamedha sacrifice, the head of the sacrificial horse is considered as the dawn and the winking of the eyes of the horse is regarded as day and night.

There are five forms of night, distinctly mentioned in the yajurveda:-

i. Pauranamāsi
ii. Amāvāsyā
iii. Sinivali
iv. Rākā
v. Kuhū
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The oblations are offered to the Rākā, Sinīvalī and Kuhū forms of night for the purpose of getting children. The Rākā form of night bestows the child, the Sinīvalī form protects and the Kuhū form puts the power of speaking.

According to the views of A. A. Macdonell and A. B. Keith, a personification of the various phases of the moon is presented in the following four names of night:-

i. Sinīvalī, the day before new moon.

3. Suklayajurveda, XXXIV.32.
ii. Kuhū, also called Gunjū, the new moon day.

iii. Anumati, the day before full moon.

iv. Rāka, the day of new moon.

The importance of the new and full moon days is seen in the Dārśa-Pūrnamāsa or festivals of the new and full moon days respectively.

Sinīvāḷī is represented as fashioning the pan for the Darśapūrnamāsa sacrifice. Her head hair and locks are bright. Her braids are long, hands and fingers are fair. She is identified with speech and approached to acquire perfection of speech. An oblation is offered to Sinīvāḷī in the citra offering for the said purpose. Likewise, oblations are offered to her to get the children after the soma sacrifice. She is the sister and mother of many gods and finally enjoys the status of a queen in this veda.

Rākā is the deity who grants offspring, fortune, prosperity and request of the sacrificer. She is requested to provide a praiseworthy hero, to bestow fortune and manifold prosperity on the worshipper. By nature she immediately becomes pleased by the invocations.

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5. TS. IV. 1. 5.

6. TS. III. 3. 11.
Kuhū is also a goddess of offspring. Being connected with the speaking power of the child, she is requested to endow the child with the skill of oratory and thus glorify the worshipper. She is represented as the wife of the gods and personified immortality. It is she who grants good fortune and wisdom to the sacrifier.

The study of night in the yajurveda samhita equally emphasizes her importance in connection with the sacrificial performances. It also deals with the dark aspect of night due to her association with Asuras and darkness. The co-invocation of Night and usas follows the line of the Rgveda Samhita.

Anumati

While Rāka gives offspring, Sīrīvālī produces and Kuhū puts speech in it; but the approval of the offspring is under the jurisdiction of Anumati. Thus she is an important goddess connected with offspring. Besides this trait, she is connected with inspiration and is begged for the same. She also grants long life. She also ordains wealth for the worshipper. The worshipper is afraid of her as due to her displeasure he may meet with the misfortune of not begetting children. So she is also offered oblations in the new and full moon sacrifices. The birds to be offered to her are kyayi, kuntaru. She accepts the oblations and thus gives joy

1. TS. III. 3. 11.
2. Ibid, V. 5. 12.
to the worshippers by giving them protection and offspring.

**Nirrti**

In the yajurveda Samhita, the evil spirit, Nirrti is besought to be away from the sacrificer so that she might not bring any impediment during the sacrifice. The worshippers pray to her to let loose her bond as strong as iron. She is the goddess who binds all the beings. The propitiation with offerings makes these bindings loose. She is also connected with noose. Through the sacrifices she is removed far off from the human beings. The Garhapatya fire is prayed to dispel the darkness of Nirrti and to bring the worshippers the light of the gods. For the neglected wife, Nirrti is offered an oblation to free the wife from her clutches. The animals to be offered to Nirrti are the pigeon, the owl and the nare. She is connected with the fire-pan. The offering of the burnt food always belongs to Nirrti. It is believed that for the perfection of the sacrifice, one should never offer burnt food to any other god, otherwise it would automatically go to Nirrti and she, on her part, will bring troubles to the sacrificer.

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1. TS. V.2.4
2. Ibid, 1.8.9.
On the other hand, Nirrti is praised in many places in the yajurveda. Her lustre is unconquerable. As Savitr is true to his laws, in the same way Nirrti is true to her path. She knows all the beings and keeps watch over them. Finally, she is the abode of riches.

The real form of Nirrti is black, but she is said to possess many other forms. The weapon is addressed to hold her tightly so that she may not trouble the people and they may be free from the sins. She follows the dark and evil path of the thieves and robbers. The recitation of the relevant incantations can keep her under control as a father controls his son.

Thus the treatment of Nirrti in the yajurveda is a contradictory one. On the one hand she is praised, while on the other hand she is asked to run away from the sacrifice.

The Wives of Gods

The treatment of the female deities as the wives of the gods is seen very rarely in the yajurveda. They are invoked in connection with the placing of the pan on the Earth.

3. T.S.IV.2.5.
4. T.S.IV.2.5; Kātha Saṁhitā, 38.13.
5. Tattīrīyā Saṁhitā, IV.1.6
Among them, some references are available for Indrani. Indrani of the Rgveda Samhita maintains her importance. She accepts some new traits in this veda. Her association with the sacrifices is one of these new traits. Kirṣā and the three goats with dewlaps are offered to Indrāṇī. She considers herself fortunate with an immortal husband. This is her unique privilege. Another new aspect of her personality is in the form of a goddess of an arrow. She always keeps the arrows of the sacrificer sharp.

Coming to the sacrificial objects regarded as female deities, we have already mentioned a few in the course of discussion over other deities. These contain not much from the point of view of subject matter. In fact, they are invoked during the sacrifice, to be helpful to the worshipper in the perfection of the sacrifice. The examples of ukhā, sacrificial altar etc. have been already mentioned while dealing with other deities.

Apart from these there are some other deified objects. The brick has been addressed as a goddess and is prayed to help the sacrificer for offering the oblations.

6. Taītṛīryā Śāṁhitā, II.2.8.
7. Ibid, IV.2.9
Durva, the auspicious grass used in the sacrifice is also deified. She is offered an oblation. As Durva comes out in thousand sprouts on earth, so she is called as the one extending in hundred or thousand and make the worshipper prosper in innumerable ways.

In the Darśapārṇa sacrifice in the rite called 'dohana', the vessels, while milking the cows, have been addressed as Earth and all-supporting.

The sacrificial waters have been addressed as mothers and goddesses. They purify the sacrificer. In the Rgveda also the waters have been propitiated, but the difference in the two lies in the fact that one is the ordinary water and the other is the sacrificial water.

The plants, which have also been addressed as mothers and goddesses, are requested to destroy any kind of defilement. They are called as possessing flowers, fragrance and fruits. The main purpose of invoking them is to be safe from any kind of evil during the sacrifice.

8. Taittirīyā Śaṁhitā, IV.2.9.
9. Ibid, I.1.3.
11. Kapisthala Katha, I.25;
Taittirīyā Śaṁhitā, IV.2.6.
Thus these deifications of the sacrificial objects are not important individually, but from the point of view of the yajurvedic thought its study is essential as it is a new creation in the yajurveda.