

On the Symbol Concept of the Vedic Ritualists

ASKO PARPOLA

In his methodologically remarkable studies of the Ndembu ritual, Victor W. Turner has gained important insights from the native terminology and exegesis of this Zambian people¹. Naturally, the said materials are most relevant for the analysis of the Ndembu ritual. But, as the wide acknowledgement of Turner's work² concretely shows, they are of considerable interest from the crosscultural perspective as well.

Different peoples have in their cultural and linguistic systems created individual conceptual categories which best fit their varying needs and surroundings, thus defining and interpreting the world in different ways³. While developing universal theories it is useful to take into account as many as possible independent systems of classification, for they can open up new perspectives and refine prevalent concepts. A striking example is supplied by the ancient Indian grammarians who, in spite of their exclusive preoccupation with Sanskrit, have given a lot of stimulation to modern general linguistics⁴.

The aim of the present paper is to contribute to the general study of the "ritual symbol", "the smallest unit of ritual which still retains the specific properties of ritual behavior"⁵, by drawing attention to, and sketching in basic outline, some central concepts held in this regard by the Vedic ritualists⁶.

The Vedic Brāhmaṇa texts, composed around 1000–600 B.C., expound the esoteric meaning of the sacrifices which at the time were at the very centre of the cultural activity in the heart of North India. They are complemented by the slightly later Śrauta and Gṛhya Sūtras (ca. 700–200 B.C.), in which this extremely complicated ritual is systematically described⁷. The import-

¹ Cf. especially Turner 1967, 19 ff., 48 ff.; 1969, 1 ff.

² Cf. e.g. Middleton 507.

³ Cf. e.g. Werner 537 ff.

⁴ Cf. Collinder 1 ff.; Staal xi ff.

⁵ Turner 1967, 19. Since the religious ritual is a communication system, its minimal unit could be called "sign" in accordance with the general theory of semiotics, "symbol" being just one of the subclasses of "sign", cf. Sebeok 244 ff. In the widely adopted ter-

minology of Pike, 54 ff., the basic unit of any purposeful human behaviour is "eme".

⁶ The reader who wants to pursue the theme further is referred above all to the studies of Oldenberg 1919, 1 ff.; Schayer 1925, 259 ff.; and to the works of Gonda cited in the bibliography.

⁷ For the Vedic texts cf. Gonda 1975, 1 ff.; 1977, 465 ff. For a synopsis of the Vedic ritual, cf. Gonda 1960, 104 ff., and for a more detailed account, Hillebrandt 1 ff.

ance of the vast, homogenous, spontaneous and direct documentation thereby supplied for the general study of the religious ritual was fully realized by Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss: they took it as the basic foundation of their classic study of the nature and function of the sacrifice⁸.

By about 1000 B.C., when the redaction of the R̥gveda, the oldest Indian text known to us, was completed, a fundamental change in the religious attitude of the Vedic Aryans had already taken place. This happened most probably as a result of their assimilation with the earlier inhabitants of their new domain in India, the Dāsas⁹. Submission to almighty gods, who are worshipped with reverence and honoured with sacrifices in the old hymns of the R̥gveda, had given way before a new kind of ritual, mechanistic and magical in its character. The sacrifice now enabled man to control the universe independently of the gods, who were largely reduced to the subordinate position of powers that could be manipulated at his will by an expert ritualist¹⁰.

As told in innumerable myths in the Brāhmaṇa texts, it is the sacrifice that the gods have to thank for their exalted position¹¹. The very creation of the world was the primeval sacrifice¹². Sacrifice in its various forms not only is able to grant man all his wishes but to redeem him from death¹³. It also supports the entire universe, since “this all indeed results from [or: corresponds to, follows: *anu*] the sacrifice” (ŚB 3,6,3,1). Thus, for instance, the Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa declares (2,3,1,5): “And when he offers in the morning before sun-rise, then he produces that (sun-child) and, having become a light, it rises shining. But, assuredly, it would not rise, were he not to make that offering: this is why he performs that offering.”¹⁴

Although the Vedic ritual in its classical form as represented by the Brāhmaṇa texts is not “magic” in the sociological sense of the word, since it is not directed against the society and its order¹⁵, the principle underlying the Vedic ritual is the basic law of magic: *similia similibus*¹⁶. Magical equations, which are the most characteristic feature of the Brāhmaṇa texts, are established between the controlling ritual and the earthly, cosmic or mythical phenomena to be controlled¹⁷. The identifications are exploited by the manipulation of the ritual symbols. The Brāhmaṇa texts consistently

⁸ Cf. Hubert 7f., 19.

⁹ Cf. Parpola 1976, 21 ff.

¹⁰ Cf. Gonda 1960, 108 ff., 105.

¹¹ Cf. Lévi 41 ff.

¹² Cf. ib. 13 ff.

¹³ Cf. Gonda 1975, 339f.; Oldenberg 1919, 149 ff.

¹⁴ The Vedic texts are generally quoted in standard translations (the ŚB in Eggeling's version, etc., cf. the bibliography), but in a few cases I have taken the liberty of making slight modifications, such as e.g. adding the

Sanskrit text in parentheses. Some translations, notably those of the MS and the KS, are my own.

¹⁵ Cf. Gonda 1965, 26; Durkheim 42 ff.; Diehl 13 ff.

¹⁶ Cf. Gonda 1960, 177; Frazer 14 ff.

¹⁷ The equations are often expressly considered at three levels (e.g. in ŚB 10,2,6,16), *adhidevatam* “with regard to the deities”, *adhyātmanam* “with regard to self”, and *adhiyajñam* “with regard to the sacrifice”. Cf. Oldenberg 1919, 57f.; Schayer 1925, 286 f.

emphasize that knowledge of the secret identity gives the knower power over the entities concerned. These magic identifications are the central object of the “pre-scientific science” (as it has been aptly called by Hermann Oldenberg) of the Vedic ritualists. It is the nature of these equations on which our attention shall be focused in the following¹⁸.

In their earliest accessible form the ritualistic identifications are found in the *yajus* formulae. These are generally muttered by the *adhvaryu*, the chief of the priests responsible for the actual sacrificial operations. Characteristically, they are not, as a rule, addressed to gods but to sacrificial offerings or utensils¹⁹. Not infrequently the *yajus* is twofold, consisting, first, of the name or epithet of the object, which reveals its secret nature, and, second, of a request activating the inherent power. The sacrificial fire, for instance, is addressed with this formula (cf. *ĀpŚS* 3,7,6): “Guardian of life art thou, o Agni; guard my life!” (TS 1,1,13 i)²⁰. It is apparent from this that a thing which is or represents a certain power is expected to give or diffuse it²¹.

In the explanatory prose passages attached to the *yajus* formulae or to other liturgical elements, that is, in the *brāhmaṇas* in the more restricted sense of the word²², the identifications are usually stated with an almost mathematical brevity. A nominal sentence may consist of nothing else but the words for the two entities thus equated. But it is also usual to add an emphatic particle, such as *vai*, *eva* or *vāva*, after the more important part, the predicate noun, which occupies the stressed position at the beginning of the sentence, as it does in the *yajus* formulae. For instance, *brahma kṛṣṇājīnam* “the black (antelope’s) hide (is) Brahma” (TS 5,1,10,4); *asau* (scil. *dyauh*) *kṛṣṇājīnam* “the black (antelope’s) hide (is) yonder (sky)” (KS 19,4; KapS 30,2); *iyam* (scil. *pṛthivī*) *vai kṛṣṇājīnam* “the black (antelope’s) hide verily (is) this (earth)” (TS 5,1,4,3; ŚB 6,4,1,9)²³. Emphasis can also be given by adding a relative and a correlative particle in front of the two parts (*yad . . . tad . . .* “it is the . . . that is . . .”), or by other means²⁴.

While translating such nominal sentences it is customary to add the copula (“is” or “are”)²⁵. This is entirely justified by the express use of the verb *as-* ‘to be’ in parallel equations occurring in *yajus* formulae and in mythical narratives (cf. e.g. *eṣa ha vāva saṃvatsaraḥ prajāpatiḥ āsa* “Verily, Prajāpati was this year” in JB 3,375)²⁶. But what is actually implied?

¹⁸ For the identifications, cf. especially Oldenberg 1919, 110 ff.; Schayer 1925, 267 ff.; Mylius 1968, 267 ff.; 1976, 145 ff.; Gonda 1975, 372 ff.

¹⁹ Cf. Gonda 1975, 332 ff.

²⁰ Cf. Oldenberg 1917, 2 ff.; Gonda 1975, 332 ff.

²¹ Cf. Gonda 1957, 32, 58 ff.

²² Cf. ib. 340 ff.

²³ The best classified collection of equations

in the *Brāhmaṇa* texts is Vishva Bandhū 1 ff. (in Sanskrit only); a representative collection from the *Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā* (in German) is given by Schroeder 128 ff. For a content analysis cf. Mylius 1968, 267 ff.; 1976, 145 ff.

²⁴ For a linguistic analysis of the nominal sentences cf. Gren-Eklund, Gunilla, 1 ff.

²⁵ Cf. ib. 15 ff.

²⁶ Cf. JB 2,393 *prajāpatiḥ eva saṃvatsaraḥ* “the year (is) Prajāpati”.

Should the verb “to be” be taken in the sense of literal identity? Or should one rather replace it by expressions such as “is a kind of”, “stands for”, “represents”, “symbolizes”? I do not think that a single answer is admissible. It is a short step from symbolization to identification, and this makes it often difficult to find out what has been in the mind of the ancient ritualists²⁷. It is pertinent to remember that the Christian theologians have not been able to agree whether the bread and wine of the holy communion only symbolize or in actual fact are the body and blood of Jesus²⁸.

In the Vedic religion the temporal factor has to be taken into consideration in this connection. By the close of the seventh century B.C., approximately, the concept of individuality started being abandoned: one was recognized in all and all in one²⁹. The development of this pantheistic world view is intimately connected with the process of “internalization” or “mentalization” of the ritual. In the *prāṇāgnihotra* sacrifice, the concrete ritual acts are replaced by corresponding psychic acts taking place in the mind of the sacrificer³⁰. This leads to the change of the *kārmamārga* into the *jñānamārga*, where the mere knowledge of the magical identities is sufficient: ritual technology becomes contemplative mysticism³¹.

The exact sense of the magic equations in the Brāhmaṇa texts can be best studied by analysing parallel expressions. Thus it can be noted that instead of identifications, comparisons formed with the particle *yathā* or *iva* “as, like” can occur. The expression *māma iva hī prajāpatiḥ* “for Prajāpāti is like the mind” (TS 2,5,11,5) is exactly paralleled by the straight identification *mano hi prajāpatiḥ* “for the Prajāpāti is the mind” (SVidhB 1,1,1)³².

A term used for the other component of the equation is *prati-mā*, literally “counter-measure” and more freely “copy, image, symbol”. Let us take for an example the equation of the creator god Prajāpāti with the sacrificial year. This magic identity is usually expressed in the Brāhmaṇa texts with a nominal sentence of the usual kind²⁶. But in ŚB 11,1,6,13 the year is said to be the *pratimā* of Prajāpāti. The text runs as follows: “Prajāpāti be-thought himself, ‘Verily, I have created here a counterpart of myself, to wit, the year’; whence they say, ‘Prajāpāti is the year’; for he created it to be a counterpart of himself: inasmuch as *saṃvatsara* ‘year’ as well as *Prajāpati* consist of four syllables, thereby it [i.e. the year] is a counterpart of him.”³³

One of the best clues to the meaning that the Vedic ritualists themselves attached to the identifications is supplied by the term *rupa*³⁴. This term

²⁷ Cf. Schroeder 127 ff.; Oldenberg 1919, 120 ff.; also O’Flaherty, Wendy, 34.

²⁸ Cf. Oldenberg 1915, 18.

²⁹ Cf. Schroeder 130; Oldenberg 1915, 35 ff.

³⁰ Cf. Bodewitz 211 ff.

³¹ Cf. Schayer 1925 a, 61.

³² Cf. Oldenberg 1919, 115; Schayer 1925, 299 (: *upamā*).

³³ Cf. Oldenberg 1919, 114 f.; Schayer 1925, 275; Silburn, Lilian, 50.

³⁴ For the term *rupa* cf. especially Oldenberg 1919, 102 ff., 114; Schayer 1925, 276; Gonda 1957, 97 ff.; Silburn, Lilian, 58 f., 84 f.

forms an exact counterpart to the identifications in sentences like the following. On the one hand the texts say *brahma kṛṣṇājīnam* “the black (antelope’s) hide (is) the brahma” (TS 5,1,10,4), on the other *etad vai brahmaṇo rūpaṃ yat kṛṣṇājīnam* (KS 19,4) or *brahmaṇa [°no vā TB] etad rūpaṃ yat kṛṣṇājīnam* (TS 5,4,4,4; TB 2,7,1,4) “the black (antelope’s) hide (is) a *rūpa* of the brahma”. There seems to be no real difference in meaning between these two kinds of expression³⁵.

In contexts like the above one, the word *rūpa* is translated as “Erscheinungsform” or “Gestalt” by Oldenberg³⁴, as “form” or “type” by Eggeling³⁶, as “characteristic mark” or “feature” or “nature” by Caland³⁷, as “manifestation” or “representation” by Gonda³⁴, and as “symbol” by Keith³⁸, Renou³⁹ and Silburn³⁴. Monier-Williams’s dictionary⁴⁰ records among others the following meanings of this word as being valid for the Vedic language: “any outward appearance or phenomenon or colour, form, shape, figure; nature, character, peculiarity, feature, mark, sign, symptom”. Macdonell’s dictionary⁴¹ gives in addition the meanings “likeness, image, reflexion; indication, token, symbol, manifestation”. The central meaning is “form, shape”. In the classical Sanskrit, the derivative *rūpa-ka* has, as an adjective, the signification “designating figuratively”, and as a technical term of the poetics, “metaphor” as well as “drama”. The corresponding denominative verb *rūpayati* of the post-Vedic language means “to give form to, represent, act on the stage, represent in pantomime, notify by a gesture”^{40–41}.

It will be clear from the following passages that the word *rūpa* is used in the Brāhmaṇa texts in a meaning fairly close to our “symbol”. In the Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa (2,1,6) we read:

“He who desires nutritious food and he who desires prosperity should make his sacrificial post of bilva wood. Year by year, the bilva tree is fruitful; therefore it is a *rūpa* of nutritious food. Up to the root, it is beset all along with branches; therefore it is (a *rūpa*) of prosperity. He prospers in offspring and cattle who knowing thus makes the sacrificial post of bilva wood. Now as to (his using) bilva wood, they say about bilva that ‘(it is) light’; a light he becomes among his own people, the chief of his own people he becomes, who knows thus.”⁴²

The archaic *mahāvratā* rite is connected with a turning point of the sun’s course and marks the end of the old year and the beginning of the new. It is celebrated with many characteristic ritual acts. One is described in the Kaṭha-Saṃhitā (34,5: 39,3–6), one of our oldest sources here, as follows: “An Āryan and a Śūdra [i.e. a member of the darkhued servile class] fight

³⁵ Cf. Oldenberg 1919, 108 n. 4.

³⁶ Cf. Eggeling 3, 360 (on ŚB 7,3,2,16); 5,125 (on ŚB 11,7,4,4).

³⁷ Cf. Caland 1931, 83 (on PB 5,5,21), 127 (on PB 6,9,25).

³⁸ Cf. Keith 135 (on AB 2,1,6).

³⁹ Cf. Renou 1954, 73.

⁴⁰ Cf. Monier-Williams 885 f.

⁴¹ Cf. Macdonell 257.

⁴² Cf. Keith 134; Gonda 1957, 97.

for a hide by pulling it in different directions. The gods and demons, forsooth, fought for the sun by pulling it in different directions. The gods won it. He makes the Aryan class [literally, the Aryan colour] to win; it is himself that he makes to win. The Aryan should be inside the sacred space, the Śūdra outside the sacred space. The hide should be white (and) circular, (as) a *rūpa* of the sun [*śvetaṃ carma parimaṇḍalaṃ syād, ādityasya rūpaṃ*].” In the corresponding passage of the Pañcaviṃśa-Brāhmaṇa (5,5,14–17) based on the KS⁴³ the last sentence reads: “The hide is circular; it is the sun whose *rūpa* is thereby made [in this hide (comm.)] [*parimaṇḍalaṃ carma bhavaty, ādityasya tad rūpaṃ kriyate, scil. asmin carmaṇi*].” The mediaeval commentator, Sāyaṇa, explains: “It was namely for the sun that the fight of the gods was made in ancient times; this has been told [scil. above in the text]. For that very reason this hide is a counterfeit of the sun.” The gloss here is *prati-rūpaka*, literally, “having counterform”.

Some other passages are very instructive with regard to the instrumental function of the *rūpa*. This function is, of course, one of the basic characteristics of ritual symbols in general⁴⁴. When the sacred fires are established a second time (which may happen, for instance, if the year following the first establishment has been unlucky, if one has lost a son, etc., cf. ĀpŚS 5,26,3), the gifts to the priests include, according to MS 1,7,2: 110,12 ff., a cloth that has been mended by sewing it up again, an ox that has been let loose a second time, and a chariot that has been repaired again. This is explained in the text as follows: “Verily, these (gifts) are *rūpas* of the renewed foundation (of the sacred fires) [*etāni vai punarādheyasya rūpāni*]. He obtains it after having reached its *rūpas* [*rūpāṇy evāsyāptvāvarunddhe*].” The parallel passage in KS 8,15: 98,19ff. has for the last sentence this: “It is by means of the *rūpas* that he perfects that (renewed foundation of the fires) [*rūpair evainat samardhayati*].”

The here used verb *sam-ṛdh-* which in the causative has the meaning “to perfect, make complete”, occurs even elsewhere in connection with the word *rūpa*. Commenting upon the relation between the ritual formula and the corresponding sacrificial act which is somehow illustrated by the formula, the Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa (1,4,9) says: “That, indeed, is perfect in the sacrifice which is perfect in *rūpa* [or: abundantly furnished with *rūpa*] [*etad vai yajñasya samṛddhaṃ yad rūpasamṛddham*].”⁴⁵ Similarly it is said a little later in the same text (1,19,6): “what in the sacrifice is con-formable (to it) that is perfect [*yad yajñe ḅhirūpaṃ tat samṛddham*].”

The term *sam-ṛddha* “completed, perfect” is nearly synonymous with *sarva* “whole, complete, entire”. In ŚB 5,1,4,5 the verb *samardhayati* “makes to attain or succeed fully, completes, perfects” is followed by the

⁴³ Cf. Parpola 1968, 81, 85 ff., 93 f.

⁴⁵ Cf. Oldenberg 1919, 245.

⁴⁴ Cf. e.g. Turner 1967, 32, 37; Diehl 22 ff.

synonymous expression *kṛtsnaṃ karoti* “makes (the object) whole”⁴⁶. The word *samṛddha* qualifies the term *rūpa* in ŚB 6,4,4,17, where the plants are said to have their “perfect form” when they are blossoming and full-berried. Similarly in ŚB 6,5,1,10 the woman has her “perfect form” when she is fair-knotted, fair-braided, fair-locked; by pronouncing the formula where the goddess Sinīvalī is addressed as such a woman with beautiful hair, he thus makes her perfect (*smardhayaty evainām etat*)⁴⁷. The Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa (3,115) explains that water is placed close by while the chanter priests sing the mahānāmni stanzas in order to make the sacrificial song complete (*sāmnas sarvatvāya*), “for verily, water is the complete manifestation [*sarvaṃ rūpam*] of the mahānāmni stanzas”⁴⁸.

The importance placed on the abundance of symbolic manifestation apparent from the above quotations is connected with the central position occupied by the idea of integrity and wholeness in the Vedic thought. It is the state of not being defective or ill: Sanskrit *sarva* is etymologically the same word as Latin *salvus*⁴⁹. The Chāndogya-Upaniṣad (7,26,2) states that “he who (truly) sees does not see death, nor illness nor any distress; he who (truly) sees sees the All [i.e., wholeness, completeness, integrity], he reaches [or: obtains] the All in all respects [or: entirely].”⁵⁰ *Idaṃ sarvaṃ* “all this” means “the complete universe”, which is very frequently identified with Prajāpati or Brahma⁵⁰. In ŚB 10,4,3,3–8 the gods are trying to attain immortality by performing sacrificial rites. They do not, however, succeed until Prajāpati intervenes and says to them: “Ye do not lay down [or: put on me] all my forms [*na vai me sarvāṇi rūpāṇy upadhattha*]; ye either make (me) too large or leave (me) defective: therefore ye do not become immortal.” The sacrifice is the counterpart of Prajāpati; it is the counterpart of the universe or “this all”, which means “integrity”, “being whole” and thus “being safe from illness and death”, i.e. “immortality”; and this sacrifice-Prajāpati-immortality cannot be reached except by making it complete, by perfecting it⁵¹.

Further insight into the nature of the *rūpa* concept and Prajāpati’s completeness is provided by two passages of the Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa. In 6,5,3,6–7 we read: “He makes these (bricks) from (clay) prepared with prayer, the other from (clay) prepared without prayer; for these are defined, the others undefined; these are limited (in number), the others unlimited. 7. That Agni [i.e., the fire altar built of these bricks] is Prajāpati; but Prajāpati is both of this, defined [*nirukta*] and undefined [*anirukta*], limited [*parimita*] and unlimited [*aparimita*]: thus when he makes (bricks) from (clay) prepared with prayer, he thereby makes up that form [*rūpa*] of his [i.e. Prajāpati’s] which is defined and limited; and when he makes up

⁴⁶ Cf. Gonda 1955, 55.

⁴⁷ Cf. Oldenberg 1919, 106 n. 2.

⁴⁸ Cf. Gonda 1957, 99.

⁴⁹ Cf. id. 1955, 67f.

⁵⁰ Cf. ib. 62f.

⁵¹ Cf. Silburn, Lilian, 58f.

them from (clay) prepared without prayer, he thereby makes up that form of his which is undefined and unlimited. Verily, then, whosoever knowing this does it in this way, makes up the whole and complete Prajāpati.” The passage 7,2,4,29–30 is otherwise identical, but the actions done with and without a prayer differ: instead of making bricks, one yokes oxen, ploughs furrows, etc. Moreover, there is an important addition at the end: “The outer forms [*bāhyāni rūpāṇi*] are defined, and the inner ones [*antarāṇi*] are undefined; and Agni is the same as an animal: hence the outer forms of the animal are defined, the inner ones undefined.”

The term *nir-ukta*, which in the above quoted translation by J. Eggeling has been rendered “defined”, literally means “expressly stated”, “clearly or distinctly uttered”. In the Vedic ritual it refers to hymns and formulae recited in a loud voice (*uccaiḥ*); or to sacrificial songs sung according to the original, intelligible syllables; or to formulae which contain (to use a term of the slightly later Śrautasūtra period) a *liṅga*, that is, a “characteristic element” such as the name of a specific deity. *Nir-ukta*, in other words, explicitly states the meaning. It thus corresponds to another important term often used in the Brāhmaṇas, namely, *praty-akṣa* “that which is before the eyes, visible, perceptible, manifest, open, plain”.

The opposite term *a-nir-ukta*, literally “that which is not expressly stated or distinctly uttered”, refers in the ritual to “inaudibly, silently” (*upāṃśu, tūṣṇīm*) or “mentally” (*manasā*) uttered stanzas and formulae; or to songs based on unintelligible syllables substituted for the original, meaningful text; or to formulae without a *liṅga*. *Anirukta* corresponds to the term *paro-’kṣa* “that which is beyond the sight, invisible, inperceivable, cryptic, mystical”.

Nirukta is thus everything that has a definite outline or shape or structure, while *anirukta* goes beyond all such defined things and is needed to complete and perfect them. For the whole (*sarva*) transcends all (*viśva*), its elements. According to AB 2,31,5, there must be, at the end of the audible recitations or the explicit lauds, a silent praise (*tūṣṇīm-śamsa*), which perfects (*saṃ-sthā-*) the sacrifice⁵².

The terms *praty-akṣa* and *paro-’kṣa* occur also in the magical equations. A noteworthy passage is PB 22,10,3–4: “What presents itself in a visible way to men (presents itself) in a cryptical way to the gods, and what (presents itself) in a cryptical way to men (presents itself) in a visible way to the gods. 4. The *viśvajit* (rite) is, in a cryptical way, the (*mahā*)*vrata* (rite); in a visible way he, by means of this (rite) obtains food [*vrata*].”⁵³ The here stated opposition is resorted to when secret connections are established through etymologies which do not entirely fit the observable facts. Thus the Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka-Upaniṣad (4,2,2) says: “*Indha* ‘kindler’ by name is

⁵² For this discussion of the terms *nirukta*, *anirukta*, etc., cf. Renou 1954, 68 ff. ⁵³ Cf. Caṇḍāṇḍ 579.

this person here in the right eye. Him, verily, who is that *Indha* people call *Indra*, cryptically, for the gods are fond of the cryptic, as it were, and dislike the evident." It can be seen from this that the secret, speculative knowledge was highly appreciated, and the value of the empirical knowledge correspondingly underestimated⁵⁴.

The terms *pratyakṣa* and *paro-ḥkṣa* refer to the eye (*akṣa*) and the sight. In the philosophy of the Upaniṣads (cf. e.g. BĀU 3,2,5; 3,9,20), the *rūpa* or "form, shape" is the object of the sight, just as the sound is the object of hearing. Already the Ṛgveda-Saṃhitā (6,47,18) says of Indra that "this is his *rūpa* for looking at [*tād asya rūpam praticākṣaṇāya*]". In RS 1,164,44 it is said of the wind that only its swiftness is seen, not its *rūpa* (*dhṛājir ekasya dadṛṣe nā rūpam*). The Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa (11,8,3,8) states that "he [i.e., the sun] took to himself the wind's form [*rūpa*]; whence people hear it, as it were, shaking, but do not see it; and verily, he who knows this, takes away the form of his spiteful enemy."⁵⁵ The wind and the bodily breaths are among the principal things called *anirukta* in the Brāhmaṇa texts along with mind, yonder world (of heaven), the whole, *brahman* (m. & n.), and Prajāpati. The wind is according to KB 19,2 a perceptible (*pratyakṣam*) *rūpa* of Prajāpati⁵⁶.

That the Vedic term *par excellence* for "symbol" should be specifically connected with the sense of sight is not surprising. Turner, for example, reports that "in discussing their symbols with Ndembu, one finds them constantly using the term *ku-solola* 'to make visible' or 'to reveal'"⁵⁷. Such modern terms as "hierophany", "kratophany" and "theophany" applied to religious symbols i.a. by Mircea Eliade⁵⁸ are derived from the Greek verb *phainō* "to bring to light, cause to appear", hence "manifest, reveal, make known, disclose"⁵⁹, which also primarily refers to visible manifestations⁶⁰.

A particularly interesting distinction made by the Vedic ritualists is that between the "outer" (*bāhya*) and "inner" (*antara*) forms. Modern semiotics defines "symbols" as signs which have no denotata in the phenomenal world but in the mind only⁶¹. The distinction between extensional and intensional is, however, in semiotics limited to the denotatum⁶¹, while the Vedic ritualists have extended it even to the "form" of the sign. (We may note here in passing also the exact coincidence of the Vedic term *rūpa* as "form" with the terminology of modern linguistics and semiotics.) Not only the object symbolized by the symbol but even the form of the symbol itself is unextensional, at least in such cases as that exemplified by the prescription of the Āśvalāyana-Śrautasūtra (2,3,19): "He should always mentally think upon Prajāpati whenever a silent oblation is performed." Cf.

⁵⁴ Cf. Oldenberg 1919, 221 ff.

⁵⁵ Cf. ib. 104.

⁵⁶ Cf. Renou 1954, 74 f.

⁵⁷ Turner 1967, 48.

⁵⁸ Cf. Eliade 437.

⁵⁹ Cf. Liddell 1912 f.

⁶⁰ Cf. Walde 1, 454 f.

⁶¹ Cf. Sebeok 246 f.

also ŚB 1,6,3,27: “What is (uttered) inaudibly that is the *rūpa* of Prajāpati.”

The basic model of thought underlying the use of the term *rūpa* is, as has been pointed out by Hermann Oldenberg, the distinction between a Platonic sort of idea and its physical manifestations⁶². The latter may be quite numerous, and we have seen above the importance placed on representing a manyformed being symbolically as completely as possible. One method often resorted to in order to do this in the Vedic ritual is to enumerate all the names of the multisided being concerned. Thus we meet with long lists of “wind names”, “horse names”, “snake names”, not to mention the *śata-rudriya* (cf. TS 2,4,9,1; ĀpŚS 20,5,9; 20,11,1; ŚB 7,4,1,25 ff.; VS 16, etc.)⁶³.

Already in the ṚS (3,38,7; 7,103,6; 10,169,2) the term *rūpa* occurs in connection with the term *nāma* “name”⁶⁴. In Buddhism, *nāma-rūpau* “name and form” stands for the concept of “individuality” or for “individual being”, since these immaterial and material principles make up the individual and distinguish it from other individuals⁶⁵. That similar views were prevalent in the Brāhmaṇa period can be seen from the myth explaining the structuring of the chaotic universe, told thus in the Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa (2,2,7,1): “Prajāpati created the beings. Once created, they were joined closely together [*sam-ā-śliṣṭa-*, apparently as an undifferentiated mass, chaos being inherent in the creative act]. He entered them with the form [*rūpa*]. Therefore they say, ‘Prajāpati, verily, is the form’ [*rūpaṃ vai prajāpatir iti*]. He entered them with the name [*nāman*]. Therefore they say: ‘Prajāpati, verily, is the name.’”⁶⁶

The close relation between the concepts of name and form in the Vedic thought is also illustrated by a well known myth related in ŚB 6,1,3,7 ff. Agni or Fire was born as a boy [*kumāra*] to the creator god Prajāpati. He cried, because he had no name as yet and was therefore not freed from evil. The text continues: “10. He (Prajāpati) said to him, ‘Thou art Rudra’. And because he gave him that name [*tan nāma*], Agni became such-like [or: that form, *tad-rūpam*], for Rudra is Agni: because he cried [*rud-*], therefore he is Rudra.” The text goes on to describe how Prajāpati on Agni’s request gives him seven other names, and each time the relation of the name to his corresponding form is explained⁶⁷.

The very next chapter in the same text is interesting here for several reasons. It shows how a godly power is able to adopt new *rūpas* at will, and particularly *rūpas* or forms that at the first sight are perplexing and obscure. It also gives a concrete example of the logic and criteria applied by the Vedic ritualists for the discovery or identification of such a secret *rūpa*. (The Vedic exegete is here represented by the mythical archetype of the

⁶² Cf. Oldenberg 1919, 106 f.

⁶³ Cf. ib. 104.

⁶⁴ Cf. ib. 102 f.

⁶⁵ Cf. Rhys-Davids 350 a.

⁶⁶ Cf. Silburn, Lilian, 58.

⁶⁷ Cf. Oldenberg 1919, 103 f.

brahmanical offer priest, the creator god Prajāpati.) In ŚB 6,2,1 we read: "1. Prajāpati set his mind upon Agni's forms. He searched for that boy who had entered into the (aforesaid different) forms. Agni became aware of it—'Surely, Father Prajāpati is searching for me: well, then, let me be suchlike [*tad-rūpam*] that he knows me not.' 2. He saw those five animals, —the man, the horse, the bull, the ram, and the he-goat. Inasmuch as he saw [*paś-*] them, they are (called sacrificial) animals [*paśu*]. 3. He entered into those five animals; he became those five animals. But Prajāpati still searched for him. 4. He saw those five animals . . . 5. He considered, 'They are Agni: I will fit them unto mine own self [or: I will make them part of mine own self, *imān evātmānam abhisamskaravai*]. Even as Agni, when kindled, glares, so their eye glares; even as Agni's smoke rises upwards, so vapour rises from them; even as Agni consumes what is put in him, so they devour; even as Agni's ashes fall down, so do their faeces: they are indeed Agni . . . 6. . . . He slaughtered them.'⁶⁸

As noted above, the *rūpa* or form is the object of the sight. The perception of a secret *rūpa* is however conceived as a mental activity. ŚB 11,2,3,6 states that "it is by mind that one knows 'This is form'". Yet, as the above quoted myth shows, this perception is thought of as a sort of vision, for the Brāhmaṇa texts use the verb *paś-* "to see" of the discovery of secret forms and connections. Vision was considered as the most reliable source of knowledge, as can be seen from ŚB 1,3,1,27: "for the eye is indeed the truth. If, therefore, two persons were to come disputing with each other and saying, 'I have seen it!' 'I have heard it!' we should believe him who said, 'I have seen it!' and not the other." It is understandable that the Chāndogya-Upaniṣad (8,12,5) calls the mind (*manas*) the "divine eye" (*daivam cakṣus*). Asceticism and sacrifice can give the gods and the sages the superhuman ability to see the secret and powerful realities such as holy texts, rituals and identities, which, though existing, are closed from the eyes of the mere mortals (cf. e.g. TS 5,3,5,4)⁶⁹.

In the famous creation hymn of the Ṛgveda (10,129,4) the "heart" (*hṛd*) is spoken of as the place where the sages discovered the secret connection⁷⁰. "Heart" takes the place of "mind" as the instrument of conceiving the forms also in the following discussion between Śākalya and Yājñavalkya recorded in BĀU 3,9,19–20: " 'Since you know the quarters of heaven together with their gods and their bases, what divinity have you in this eastern quarter?' 'The sun.' 'That sun—on what is it based?' 'On the eye.' 'And on what is the eye based? [*kasmin nu cakṣuḥ pratiṣṭhitam iti*] 'On appearances, for with eye one sees appearances [*rūpeṣv iti cakṣuṣā hi rūpāni paśyati*].' 'And on what are appearances based?' 'On the heart', he said, 'for with the heart one knows appearances [*hṛdayena hi rūpāni jānāti*], for

⁶⁸ Cf. ib. 108.

⁶⁹ Cf. ib. 222 ff.; Gonda 1963, 27 ff. For the eye as truth cf. also KS 8,3; MS 1,8,1; 3,6,3;

Śb 4,2,1,26; AB 1,6.

⁷⁰ Cf. also Gonda 1963, 63.

on the heart alone appearances are based.' 'Quite so, Yājñavalkya.'"⁷¹ This passage introduces us to a term important for the understanding of the magic identifications, namely *pratiṣṭhā* "firm foundation, ground, basis, support", and the corresponding verb which consists of the preverb *prati* "towards, against, upon" and the root *sthā-* "to stand, stay"; the latter is often used in the causative, with the meaning "to make stand firmly, establish"⁷². The word *pratiṣṭhā* is among other things used for the home or native country of a person in the sense of a reliable place where he gets support, where he is free from danger, and to which he always naturally resorts as his own⁷³.

The Vedic man appreciated *pratiṣṭhā* "foundation" as a benefit and a source of welfare. It was a possession that he sought to acquire for himself by ritual means. He also resorted to the sacrifice when he wished to deprive his enemy of food and foundation, for this meant destruction⁷⁴. Ritual was likewise the instrument to provide the powerful potencies of the universe with strong resting places: it was necessary to prevent them from wandering about arbitrarily (which would mean infringement of the cosmic norms and cause of dangerous disorder), and this could be done by "establishing" them "on their proper places" where they naturally belong. The sacrificial acts, which were supposed to be connected with the cosmic processes, could be used to produce any desired "establishment" of a given person or object⁷⁵.

The knowledge of its foundation thus provides the means for the attainment of the desired object⁷⁶. It is for this reason that Naciketas asks in the *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad* (1,14): "How can the infinite world be attained and what is its foundation (*pratiṣṭhā*)?"⁷⁷ An answer to a somewhat similar problem is attempted in AS 17,1,19, where the sage says: "In the non-existent (*asat*) is the existent (*sat*) established (*pratiṣṭhitam*); in the existent is being (*bhūtā*) established; being is set in what is to be; what is to be is established in being." Here being and what is to be are said to be established in one another, as indissolubly co-existent⁷⁸. In the creation hymn RS 1,129 this relation is expressed in a different way (verse 4): "the sages have found in their heart the *bandhu* of the existent in the non-existent."⁷⁹

The word *bandhu* literally means "bond" and is etymologically of the same origin as this English word. In the Brāhmaṇa texts it denotes above all the mysterious connection or relation between the entities of this world and the transcendental "ideal" entities of the divine world, which are the foundation and origin of the perceptible things⁸⁰. As Oldenberg has put it,

⁷¹ Cf. Hume 123; Gonda 1954, 24. According to TB 3,10,8,5, "the eye is based on the heart" (*caṅsur hṛdaye pratiṣṭhitam*).

⁷² Cf. Gonda 1954, 1f.

⁷³ Cf. ib. 6f. For the related concepts of *āyatana* and *yoni* ("womb"), which cannot be discussed here, cf. ib. 7,10; id. 1969, 1ff.; Schayer 1925, 279f.

⁷⁴ Cf. Gonda 1954, 13ff.

⁷⁵ Cf. ib. 4,7,11f., 18,20.

⁷⁶ Cf. ib. 17,30.

⁷⁷ Cf. ib. 25.

⁷⁸ Cf. ib. 27f., 24; Whitney 810.

⁷⁹ Cf. Gonda 1965, 29; id. 1966, 689.

⁸⁰ Cf. ib. 689; id. 1965, 1ff.

the knowledge of the Brāhmaṇas is above all knowledge about the *bandhus*⁸¹. We cannot fully understand the nature of the Vedic identifications if we do not take into consideration this term and its connotations⁸². The most important of the latter are its non-technical meanings “kinship tie, connection in blood or through marriage” and hence “relation, relative”. In the archaic societies with blood-revenge, levirate marriage etc., “relationship” is much more than the state of having genealogical or other relations to another person; it is “a form of existence in its own right, from which one cannot release oneself”, communion in the truest sense of the term, including an intense consciousness of unity. Gonda, from whom I have quoted the preceding sentence, is certainly right in seeing this meaning in the word *bandhu* used of a mystical identity in ŚB 2,1,4,17 *eṣa hy evānaḍuho bandhuḥ* “for that (fire) is a relation of the ox”⁸³.

This passage and interpretation makes it perfectly clear what is meant in ŚB 13,8,4,6, where the ox is said to be *āgneya* “of Agni’s nature or descent”. That the derivative adjective, normally used in patronyms, is here really used to express a magical equation, is secured by the parallel—also to the preceding quotation with *bandhu*—in ŚB 7,3,2,1, where the mystic identification has the normal form of a nominal sentence with a predicate noun: *agnir eṣa yad anaḍvān* “the ox (is) Agni”⁸⁴.

Bibliography

- ALB The Adyar library bulletin
 AAU Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis. Uppsala
 BI Bibliotheca Indica. Calcutta
 DRT Disputationes Rheno-Traiectinae. The Hague
 HIL A history of Indian literature
 HM A handbook of method in cultural anthropology. Ed. R. Naroll, R. Cohen. New York
 HOS Harvard Oriental series. Cambridge
 IS Indische Studien. Berlin
 VIS Vishweshwarananda Indological series. Hoshiarpur

A. Vedic texts

For translations see B under the name mentioned here in parentheses

- AB *Aitareya-Brāhmaṇa*. Ed. T. Aufrecht. Bonn 1879. (See Keith.)
 ĀpŚŚ *Āpastamba-Śrauta-Sūtra*. Ed. R. Garbe 1–3. BI 92, 1882 ff.
 AS *Atharvaveda-Saṃhitā*. Ed. D. Sātvalekar. Pardi 1957. (See Whitney.)
 ĀśvŚŚ *Āśvalāyana-Śrauta-Sūtra*. Ed. R. Vidyāratna. BI 49, 1874.

⁸¹ Cf. Oldenberg 1919, 4; Gonda 1965, 3.

⁸² For *bandhu* and the closely related term *ni-dāna*, which cannot be discussed here, cf. especially Gonda 1965, 1 ff.; Gonda 1969, 63 ff.; Renou 1946, 55 ff. Cf. also Oldenberg 1919, 117; Schayer 1925, 276 f.

⁸³ Cf. Gonda 1965, 22 f.

⁸⁴ Cf. ib. 22; Oldenberg 1919, 115 f.; Schayer 1925, 298 f.—For the evidence presented as grounds for the identifications by the Vedic ritualists cf. Oldenberg 1919, 118 ff.; Schayer 1925, 288 ff.

- BĀU *Bṛhad-Āraṇyaka-Upaniṣad*. Ed. J. Śāstrī, *Upaniṣatsaṅgrahah*. Delhi 1970.
(See Hume.)
- ChU *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad*. (As BĀU.)
- JB *Jaiminīya-Brāhmaṇa*. Ed. Raghu Vira, Lokesh Chandra. Sarasvati Vihara Series 31. Nagpur 1954.
- KapS *Kapīṣṭhala-Kaṭha-Saṃhitā*. Ed. Raghu Vira. Delhi 1968.
- KB *Kauṣītaki-Brāhmaṇa*. Ed. S. Sarma. Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland. Supplementband 9,1. Wiesbaden 1968. (See Keith.)
- KS *Kaṭha-Saṃhitā (Kāṭhaka)*. Ed. L. v. Schroeder 1–3. Wiesbaden 1970 ff.
- KU *Kaṭha-Upaniṣad*. (As BĀU.)
- MS *Maitrāyaṇī Saṃhitā*. (As KS.)
- PB *Pañcaviṃśa-Brāhmaṇa (Tāṇḍya-Mahā-Brāhmaṇa)*. Ed. with Sāyaṇa's commentary C. Śāstrī 1–2. The Kashi Sanskrit series 105. Benares 1935 f. (See Caland.)
- RS *Rgveda-Saṃhitā*. Ed. T. Aufrecht 1–2. IS 6–7, 1861 ff.
- ŚB *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* (in the Mādhyandina recension). Ed. A. Weber. London 1855. (See Eggeling.)
- SVIDhB *Sāma-Vidhāna-Brāhmaṇa*. Ed. R. Sharma. Kendriya Sanskrit Vidyapeetha Series 1. Tirupati 1964.
- TB *Taittirīya-Brāhmaṇa*. Ed. N. Goḍbole 1–3. Ānandāśrama-saṃskṛtagranthāvali 37. Poona 1898.
- TS *Taittirīya-Saṃhitā*. Ed. A. Weber 1–2. IS 11–12. Berlin 1871 f.
- VS *Vājasaneyi-Saṃhitā* (in the Mādhyandina recension). Ed. A. Weber. London 1852.

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