

Chapter III

Yajña: Then and Today

❖ Society and Fire worship

Usually sacrifice are done to gain different gifts, it is said that without a sacrifice nothing can be gained; a person who do not sacrifice won't get any thing neither in this world nor the in the other world, as said in the sanatana dharma. The lord Viṣṇu makes Gārhapatya, Āhavanīya, anvaharya, samidha, sruva, avabhṛtya, avakpani, havyabhaga, havyada and kavyad form of fire.

The fire served the important purpose of the sacrificial religion. Fire was the conveyor of the offerings of the sacrifice to the gods in heaven, thus playing an important role in both Śrauta and smarta ceremonies, in which fire oblations are compulsory.

The Purāṇas also deal with ceremonies, customs and saṁskaras and everyday life in the Indian society. The system of the four varnas had embedded in Indian system in this period such that when the brahmana varṇa's duty and work were written many passages are referred to say that the system extends even to the gods, Agni and Bṛhaspati being the brahmanas among gods, Indra, Varuṇa, Soma and Yama being the Kṣatriyas, Vasus, Rudra, Viśva-devas and Maruts being the Vaiśyas and pūṣan being the sūdra. The Brahma Purāṇa also states that there were four varnas among the gods and adds that the members of all the varnas of gods used to live together. A duty and also the honor of the brahmanas are to preside as priests in the performance of the sacrifice. It finds the brahmanas of Aundradesa god in the

performance of sacrifice and in performing agnihotra, and they are said to worship the smarta Agni.¹

The Brahma Purāṇa also refers to the worship of domestic sacrificial fires, and finds the brahmanas of the Ekamraka-ksetra experts in performing the agnihotra and upasanakriya. A brahmana was supposed to perform the agnihotra.² It was said that by performing the agnikarya span of life increased. Bharadvāja, son of AngirananadanBṛhaspati, performed great sacrifices for king Bharata who had no son. As a result of these sacrifices, he had hundred sons.³

The Purāṇas are not less important than the Epics for the study of the saṁskaras. In the marriage ceremony Brahma Purāṇa refers the following rites agnisthapana and homa. It means setting up the fire and offering a ghee oblation into fire. A vast difference can be observed about the number of ahutis and the mantras to be recited. Having placed a milestone to the west on the fire which is kindledsymbolizing it as the divine witness and sanctifier of the saṁskara, and having deposited a water pot to the north-east of the fire, the bridegroom offers oblations. Another ceremony is agniparinayana, in this bridegroom and bride circumambulate around the fire and water jar reciting the mantra. keeping bridegroom in front the bridegroom walking in front takes the bride round the fire and water jar reciting the mantras. The Brahma Purāṇa states that Śiva and Parvati circumambulated the fire.

In the Rgvedic pantheon, Agni was one of the first three deities, others being Indra and Soma. Due to the gradual decline in the popularity of Vedic sacrificial cult there was an effect on the status of Agni in the hierarchy of gods and in the wake of Pauranic mythology he was downgraded to the office of a lokapala (dikpāla). He

¹ Brahma Puraṇ, Ananda Ashram Press, Pune, 1893, pp. 67-89

²*Ibid*, p. 107-118

³*Ibid*

was regarded as one of the eight guardians of the quarters presiding over South-east which came to be known as agneyi. In the Puranic iconography Agni is usually with flames issuing from his body.

❖ Utility And Need Of Yajña In Present Time

The *Cāturmāsya* Rites

The *Cāturmāsya* is one of the most important sacrificial rites prescribed in the vedas. As the title suggests, it is comprised of four seasonal sacrifices viz *Vaiśvadeva*, *Varuṇapraghasa*, *Śākamedha* and *Sunasiriya*. These sacrifices are named *Parvaṇa* (= section) which means they together are the divisions of a cycle that covers a whole year and each of them is performed at the interval of four months. Thus, a whole year is said to be covered.⁴ (SB II.6.3.1). Each of the *Parvaṇa* starts, respectively on the Full-moon day of the month *Phālguna* (or *Caitra*), *Aṣāḍha* and *Kārtika* (or *Mārgaśīrṣa*). There is no complusion about the performance of the *Sunasiriya*, which is added later on, and which does not fit in the scheme of the ‘four-month’ period.

The three *Parvaṇa* relate to the three seasons, namely *Vasanta* (Spring), *Varṣā* (Rainy season) and *Śarada* (Autumn). The *Sunaśīrīya* has no fixed time to start; and old texts like the *MaitreyaSamhitā* (I.10.1-20)⁵ do not discuss about it. However, the SB says that it may be executed during the four months in between the conclusion of the *Śākamedha* and the start of the next i.e. *Vaiśvadeva*, which marks a fresh cycle. It may be performed just immediately after the ending of the *Śākamedha*

⁴*ŚatapathaBrāhmaṇa* Vol. II, Ed. & Tr. Upādhyāya, GaṅgāPrasāda, The Research Institute of Ancient Scientific Studies, New Delhi, 1967, p. 78

⁵*MaitreyaSamhitā*, Ed. Schroeder, V., Leipzig, 1881, p. 120.

offerings. If the sacrificer wants to perform a Soma-sacrifice (*Agniṣṭoma*), he has to discontinue the *CāturmāsyaParvaṇa* for the next round. In that case, he may perform the *SunaśīrīyaParvaṇa* on the day when the new moon is ‘seen’ previous to the Full-moon day of *Phālguna* –

“पुरस्ततफाल्गुनीयपौर्णमास्यउद्दृष्टतत् ...”⁶

Of these four *Parvaṇa*, the two middle ones, i.e. the *Varuṇapraghasa* and the *Śākamedha* are special, as they require two additional altars. All the four *Parvaṇa* are well fixed in the Vedic ritual tradition, and the rites related with them do not much differ. For all, the common offerings are five – a *Puroḍāśa* on eight pot sherds to Agni; a caru to Soma, a *Puroḍāśa* on twelve or eight pot shreds to Savitr, a caru to Sarasvatī and a caru of soft rice to Pūṣan. These offerings are to be cast in the *Āhavanīya* fire. If we go by the *ŚatapathaBrāhmaṇa*, which deals with these sacrifices in detail, we get to know that there was no “filling up of” (and raising of) the *Uttaravedī* in the *Vaiśvadevaparvaṇa* (II.5.1.18) and also for the last *parvaṇa*, the *Sunaśīrīya* (II.6.3.3), while for the *Varuṇapraghasas*, it is said that there are two additional altars and therefore two fires also (II.5.2.5). There is no indication of the two additional altars and the fires, nor is there any denial for the same in the *Śākamedha*. This would indicate that the prescription of the double altar with the fire holds good also for the *Śākamedhaparvaṇa* as is clear from the *ŚatapathaBrāhmaṇa* and this is the position in the tradition. Thus, in the case of the *Śākamedha*, we have

⁶ . *op cit* 10-11, Upādhyāya, GaṅgāPrasāda, *p*. According to others, it may be performed on the 5th Full-moon after the Sakamedha, which would mean just before the Vaisvadeva, on the same Full-moon day; see Eggeling. 12, p. 384. The idea is that this marks the closure of a cycle.

to understand the ‘follow-up’ (*Anuvṛtti*) of the double altar and fires from the *Varuṇa-praghasah*, that instantly proceed. The pattern would be as follows-

1.	<i>Vaiśvadeva</i>	No filling of the Uttaravedī (i.e. the ‘northern’ altar or ‘raised’ altar’, <i>uttara</i>).
2.	<i>Varuṇapraghasas</i>	Two altars; out of which filling up of the ‘northern’ altar; not of the ‘southern’; and two fires.
3.	<i>Śākamedha</i>	(No special instruction; hence implication of the structure and fires is as above).
4.	<i>Sunaśīrīya</i>	No filling of the <i>Uttaravedī</i> .

But, there is a doubt which remains unclear in the tradition. What is the consequence of the negation of the filling of the *uttaravedi*, in the first and the last *Parvaṇa*? The specific mention of ‘two altars’ at the second *Parvaṇa* (and the third) would specify that there were no two additional altars at the first and the fourth *Parvaṇa*. But, in these, was there at least one that was in addition here to the *Āhavanīya* altar in the usual *Darśapūrṇamāsa* plan? If there was, this was the altar (*vedi*) that is termed ‘*uttara*’ (northern) under the influence of the *Caturamasya* plan, though it was not filled in to make it raised (*uttara*). It is to be remembered, that the usual *Āhavanīya* at the *Darśapūrṇamāsa* had its own altar, called *uttaravedi* (at the eastern limit) as it was ‘filled in’. But, then, if there was at least one additional altar, to differentiate it from the *Darśapūrṇamāsa*, at these two (first and the last) *Parvaṇa*, what was its use, if fire was never carried onto it; for the carrying of fire from the old *Āhavanīya* is

restricted to the two middle *Parvaṇa*. Actually, the position is, that the *Cāturmasyas* were an adaptation (vikṛti) of the Darśapūrṇamāsa. Hence, ordinarily the same altar-plan as at the prakṛti (= Darśapurnamasa) was to be upheld, the variation being only the deities and offerings to suit them. As the middle two *Parvaṇa* were a speciality, only for them a special structure has been mentioned and ordained. The negation of the filling of the uttaravedi at the first and the last *Parvaṇa* does not mean that an altar has to be structured but not filled in. This negation is not a constructive negation (of the type of nisedha) but a sort of an explanation to highlight the construction of the two additional altars only at the middle *Parvaṇa*. These two altars at the middle-*Parvaṇa* are to be constructed (as noted in an earlier chapter) to the east of the original Āhavanīya and fire is to be carried to them (the rite is called pranayana) from the Āhavanīya.⁷ Such pranayana is already recommended in the Darśapūrṇamāsa, where fire from the Gārhapatya altar, is carried to Āhavanīya. Hence, the pranayana at the middle *Parvaṇa* at the *Cāturmāsya*s is a natural process from that at the Darśapūrṇamāsa.

Now here is a point. The SB suggests at one place, that there should be two fires on the two new altars (II.5.2.5); and at another place, in the same context, it speaks of these fires being freshly kindled and then carried instead of simply being carried from the Āhavanīya, after things to be used for offerings are arranged at the two new altars - *asādyahavimsyagnimmanthati; agnimmathitva-anuprahryajuhoti*. II.5.2.19. The text here shows two phases in the word prahr̥tya. One is, that a fresh fire is kindled, may be at the Āhavanīya altar or the Gārhapatya; the aranis heated on it, thus symbolically taking (Prahṛtya) that fire in them; taking the aranis to the new altars and freshly mingling the fire there; or alternatively, churn the fire at the

⁷ According to a variation, fire is carried from the Gārhapatya.

Āhavanīya (or Gārhapatya) and carry it onto the new altars.⁸ According to another method, not mentioned by its Śrautasūtra (KSS V.3.9.4), a portion of the fire is carried from the old fireplace. This is done in either of the two ways- (i) a portion of fire is divided into two and each part is carried and placed at the new altars; or (ii) fire is taken by means of two twigs of firewood.⁹ Along with the fire, water (from the pranita) is also carried. This Śrautasūtra, here, enters into a discussion regarding the context of the rite of praṇayana, whether it is from praṇayana of the Soma-sacrifice, or from the Darśapūrṇamāsa, which also has the praṇayana (on the lines of the Ādhana rite (also in SB XI.5.2.1), where the two middle *Parvaṇa* are called ‘the thighs of the sacrifice’. As a rule, in the Varuṇapraghāsa *Parvaṇa* and also in the Śākamedha, the northern altar is to be filled with pebbles, after earth from the pit (which is made to its north and is called catvala) is deposited on it; to make it raised (uttara). Hence, as noted above, the Uttaravedi in these two *Parvaṇa* is both the ‘northern one’ and the ‘raised one’.

In Varuṇapraghāsa Prajapati is presented a *Puroḍāśa* of eleven potsherds; and Indra and Agni are to be presented a *Puroḍāśa* prepared on twelve pot sherds (symbolically Agni’s 8+Indra’s 4 = 12). There are certain special features. On the northern altar, in a plate filled with pāyasya,¹⁰ a ewe prepared from malt (karambha) is placed; and, on the southern altar, in a plate filled with pāyasya, is placed a ram prepared from karambha. These are to be distinguished with trait marks representing their sex. The ram and the ewe are to be covered with wool (but not from edaka, i.e. a type of wild goat, nor a ram), by sticking it over them (SB II.5.2.15). If that wool be not available, bundle of kuśa grass would do. The two altars are meant for Varuṇa

⁸*op cit*, Upadhyay, G.P., p. 392 & 396

⁹*op cit*, Nityananda, p. 85 *agnipraṇayantiidhmabhyamupayāmya; & sarvaṁvāvibhajyaprakṛtavat.*

¹⁰*op cit*, Upadhyay, G.P., p. 324 where it is said to symbolize the juice of cattle-paśūnām vāesarasoyatpāyasya.

(the Northern one) and the Maruts (the Southern one). On both plates of pāyasya, the fruits of karira (Capparis Aphyulla) are spread out. This is done as a attraction for rain. Though the point of the rain-symbolism is not clearly specified in the SB, it is explained by other texts. Thus MS (I.10.12-13), associates the dates (Kharjurah) and the fruits of Karira, indicating that they are related to Soma, and that Karira-fruits accelerate rain.¹¹ The MS further explains that the ram and ewe, in this ritual are to be essentially made hairy; for only hairy creatures are to be offered in sacrifice. The MS and the TS do not specify where accurately the ram and the ewe are to be placed, as does the SB.¹²

On the day preceding the day of actual sacrifice, vessels (patrani) are to be made from the karambha, their number being equal to the persons in the family, plus one. These karambha-patrani are to be later offered into the southern fire, being placed in a winnowing basket, for warding off all types of sins possibly committed by the family members. The ‘Southern fire’ is the one the newly prepared altar at the south (i.e. daksina-vedi) and not the usual Dakṣiṇāgni, which is also called Anvaharyapācana, and on which the barley for preparing karambha was dehydrated (SB 14). The ram and the ewe, as noted above, have been placed in the pāyasya belonging respectively to the plate of the Maruts (Southern altar in charge of the

¹¹Cf MS I.10.12, where it brings in the myth of Indra being responsible for cutting the heads of the ascetics. – indroyatinsalavrkebhyaḥprayacchat, tesamvaetanisirsaniyatkharijah, somapithovaeso ‘syaudaisadyatkarirani, saumyanivaikarirani . . . yatkariranibhavantivrstyaannadyasyaavaruddhyai . . . (12) kariranibhavantivrstimtaihsantanotitasmattarhibhuyishamvarstimtaihsantanotitasmattarhibhuyisthamvarsa ti; cf. TS. II.4.9, where the juice of the dates is said to have flown up getting turned into karira-fruits. The TB, however does not go into details of the Cāturmasya . This has been a very popular account; cf. also Kāṭhaka Sam. XXXVI.7 for the heads of the yati-s turning into kharjurani; for other details of this account, ib. XXV.6.

¹²*op cit*, Upadhyay, G.P., p. 196 – sauttarasyamevapāyasyāyammesimupadadhati; dakṣiṇasyammesam, “The ewe he places on the southern and the ram on the northern dish of curds”. One feels he could have checked the reading with uttarato hi stripumamsamupaśete which he renders correctly – “since the woman lies on the left (north) side of man” which is a well set expression in the Vedic ritual literature.

pratiprasthatṛ priest) and Varuṇa (Northern altar in charge of the Adhvaryu priest). The position is as follows –

Ram		Ewe	
1.	Southern altar	1.	Northern altar
2.	Pratiprasthatṛ	2.	Adhvaryu
3.	Maruts	3.	Varuṇa

Later, their charge and plates are reversed (ram = northern = Adhvaryu; ewe = Southern- Pratiprasthatṛ). Then with certain details (which are not necessary here), first the ram and then the ewe are offered into the respective fire, with the call ‘Vaṣat’ each time. This is done along with the karira-fruits. This is the procedure generally followed by all texts.¹³

Some points are to be marked. The karambha-partani were offered in the new southern altar. They were placed in the winnowing baskets and were to be offered by both, the sacrifice and his wife, together (cf. MS 11 - stripumsaujuhutah). This seems to be an older practice; but the SB has it that either the sacrificer or his wife offers - (patnijuhoti at 23, while at 25 savaidakṣiṇe’gnaujuhuti). For this the wife is led by her usual path between the fires on the original altar and the Brahman priest. The MS explains the symbolism of the offering of the karambha-patrani and the ram-ewe pair by saying that the patras stand for beasts having two feet

¹³ Kane, op. cit., loc. Cit., p. 1095 has it as, “pots full of karambha” which is not correct; cf. Karka’s com on KSS V.2. karambhodadhnasamyutahsaktavahtanmayanampatranamkaranam. This will show, the vessels are made of Karambha. Kane, obviously, mistakes the meaning of the suffix mayat as pracuryarthe in place of vikararthe.

(dvipadaḥpasavaḥ), while the ram-ewe stand for four-footed beasts, that are to be paired. Thus all types of creatures, in terms of the MS are set free from sin.

Finally there is an offering to Agni called svastikṛt, followed by the final Avabhrtha bath by the sacrificer and his wife. After the bath follows the ritual of fresh shaving and taking back took place to the original place – the pracina-vamśa (i.e. the usual Darśapūrṇamāsa shed) the fires that were brought from them (from the Āhavanīya or the Gārhapatya as the case may be). (This is done by heating the araṇis on the fires on the Uttaravedi). For it is said, he should not perform his daily Agnihotra on the new Uttaravedi of the double altar. So, having gone to the original place he freshly churns the fires, and performs the Full-moon sacrifice (SB II.5.2.48 athakesa-smasruptvasamarohyagni... na hi tad avakalpate yad uttaravedavagnihotramjuhuyat).

This uttaravedi is obviously the new one constructed to the north for the parvan; and the usual Agnihotra offering is to be cast in the Āhavanīya in the Pracinavamsa, which is the usual Darśapūrṇamāsa chamber. The later practice of rubbing each other's back on the part of the sacrificer and his wife at the Avabhrtha is absent here.

Now, the SB (II.5.2.1) a fresh probe in the name 'Varuṇa-praghasaḥ' explains the name by saying that, it is so named as the creatures ate the barley of Varuṇa. Thus, the term praghasaḥ is taken to refer to the creatures, i.e. "those who ate" (pra + ghas + an); but the difficulty is that Varuṇa does not stand as the object (Pan III.2.1 karmanyān). Hence we have to understand 'Varuṇa's barley' in place of Varuṇa (Varuṇasyayavanpraghasaḥ). This sounds queer. It is, hence, clear that this cannot be the original idea in the name. Moreover, the term refers to the remedy for getting the creatures free from the disease (due to sin) contracted by the creatures as they ate Varuṇa's barley. Hence, it cannot go with the creatures. It has to go with the

remedy. It is clearly stated that the creatures lay helpless just breathing out and in. So, by means of this offering (i.e. Varuṇapraghāsah) Prajapati treated them to health (3 ta etenahaviṣaprajāpatirabhisajyat). This corroborates the statement in the KB that the *Cāturmāsyā* offerings are “bhaisajya-*Yajñah*” (V.1). The KB also has it that the creatures ate the barley of Varuṇa; hence he seized them. This is the generally expressed motif. But, the MS has a different note. Though it says that Prajapati cured the creatures with these offerings (MS I.10.10 tabhyobhesajamaicchat), but it has a different account about the name of this parvan. According to it, as the creatures got created by the performance of *Vaiśvadeva*, Varuṇa seized them. Hence, they say that Prajapati (himself) cursed them to be seized by Varuṇa, as they disobeyed Prajapati. Thus, it is said, the father is not to be disobeyed. As Prajapati created the creatures with the *Vaiśvadeva*, the Maruts shook his offerings (havyamvyamathnata); hence, they were created with sin seizing them, To heal them, Prajapati created milk in his own body; with this (milk) offering he sacrificed the sin of the creatures; the Varuṇa-praghasah were the outcome of that very sin. Hence, when one sacrifices with the Varuṇa-praghasas, it is to clear all sin. That Prajapati offered milk created from his own body is associated with the *Vaiśvadevaparvan*; and this detail, having almost the same account, occurs even at the SB (II.5.1.3 saatmanaevagrestanayohpayaapyayayancakre etc.);¹⁴ but the offering of milk here is not associated, as a generator, with the *Varuṇapraghasa* as is the case of the MS. The MS does not specifically mention that the creatures ate the barley of Varuṇa, though it recommends barley as a means (in the form of the offering at the Varuṇa-praghasah) to set the creatures free from the sin, which they incurred by “eating” (jagdhata); but what they ate is not specified (may be, it is the same milk referred to as offering at the *Vaiśvadeva*). As such, it appears that the detail of barley-eating

¹⁴ . This makes Prajapati an androgene, i.e. being of both sexes in one.

causing sin was not an inherent part of the contamination of sin; however, it was a part of a remedy to get free from sin; because, the MS says, “Varuṇa seizes the creatures, but not the sami tree and barley” (loc.cit.12). The mention of the śami tree is significant, as the leaves of this tree figure in the rite along with the figures of the ram and the ewe, as their cover (SB II.5.2.12 Samipalasani); while the fruits of karira are placed on both sides in the Pāyasya. The argument in the texts of MS, SB and others is that the karambha-patras is to be offered, as they represent the progeny (prajah). By offering them in place of the actual prajah of the sacrifice, calling every one’s name (tanivaipratipurūṣam, yāvantogrhyahsyuh) and one more for the yet unborn progeny (yaevasyaprajaajatah), the actual offspring or relations are freed (cf. MS - pratrebhyovaitahprajahvaruṇo’grhnat, yatpatrānipatrebhyaevainaVaruṇanmuñcati).

The patras are clearly the ‘scapegoats’.¹⁵ The SB (loc.cit. 24) clearly says that the creatures are freed by the Maruts (etasyamarutahpapmanamvimathnate); and (hence) the patras are offered in the Southern fire which is the fire in the altar meant for the Maruts in this rite, as against the Northern one for Varuṇa.

The name of the parvan, hence, relates to both Varuṇa and the Maruts. Though there obtains no satisfactory explanation of the name in the texts, we are now in a position to offer one. We have seen that the “eating of Varuṇa’s barley by the creatures” not a motif that is uniformly accepted. On the other hand, the point is that Varuṇa seizes the creatures (not because of any particular affront to him) and the Maruts free them. Varuṇa appears in the name; but what about the Maruts? Well, the word

¹⁵ . This is like making dough-effigies, though actual effigies are absent here. Yet, the patra is clearly a symbol for a living person.

‘praghasah’ denotes them. For this we have to examine the mantra wherein they figure. The mantra is as follow, with slight difference in its versions –

*PraghāsyanhavāmahemarutoYajñavahasah. Kārambhenasajośasah.*¹⁶ (MS. I.10.3 = TS I.8.3.2 = KSIX.3)

With a slight difference –

Praghāsinohavāmahemarutaścarisadaśah.

Kārambhenāsajośasah (SB II.5.2.21)¹⁷

In the first version, the Maruts are called praghasyah and *Yajñavahasah* while in the other praghasinah ... risadasah. The first epithet is practically the same at both versions; and it means “consumers” (praghasyah, actually meaning “deserving praghasa (food)”; prahasyah, meaning “having the habit of devouring”); *Yajñavahasah* indicates their ability to accomplish the sacrifice and carry (√vah) it to success, while risadasah indicates their quality of destroying (√das) to “bite off” the injurious. It is the first epithet praghasinah or praghasyah which enters the name of the sacrifice as praghasah (“eaters”- of sin). So, the name includes both Varuṇa and the Maruts in two opposite capacities. It is this nature (praghasah, praghasinah) of the Maruts that makes the mantra suitable not only to clear the wife (if she has committed adultery),¹⁸ who is made to recite a mantra, but also to save the progeny

¹⁶*op cit*, Schroeder, V., p. 376

¹⁷*op cit*, Upadhyay, G.P., p. 56

¹⁸ Cf. SB II.5.2.20 sapatnimudanesyanprcchatikenacarasiti; varunyamvaetatstrikaroti yad anyasyasaty ‘anyenacarati. The Kathaka Samhita. XXXVI.5 has anrtamesakarotiyapatyuhkritasaty’ athanyaiscarati. The word krita (“purchased”) in relation to patni here is interesting! The general belief is that, if she tells a lie about her relations with others, her beloved person would die; cf. Kathaka Sam., op.cityanmithubruyatpriyatamenayatayet. The SB (loc.cit.) says that by telling out the sin (by confession) it becomes less (niruktamva-enahkaniyobhavati). According to this text, if she does not confess, that is detrimental to her relations (jnatibhyohasyai tad ahitamsyat).

(prajah) of the sacrifice from any sin actually committed. The point is, where exactly does she confess her sin, or denies having committed it, After the Adhvaryu indicates so, the Pratiprasthatr sets to bring the wife (to the new altar) from her seat at the south of the old Gārhapatya (i.e. the usual one in the sala = pracinavamsa). Having approached her, and leading her, he asks her. “With whom are you carrying on?” (kenacarasiti); this is necessary; for, if she carries on with another person when she belongs to one (i.e. her husband), she commits sin against Varuṇa (SB - varuṇyamvāetatstrikaroti). Thus, any sin or default committed is against Varuṇa. The releaser is the bend of the Maruts, as shall be further seen.

The whole idea is that the sin has to be confessed; and that by confessing it, it becomes less (SB - niruktamvāenaḥkaniyobhavati). If she does not confess, it would turn injurious to her relations. Now, it is to be noted, that this confession is not a public one, or in the open. The direction at the SB is ‘while he is about to lead her’ (patnimudanesyan). This has to be taken as being at the place where she had been sitting, i.e., to the south of the Gārhapatya fireplace; and, as she starts, she is asked; and she replies in the affirmative or in the negative, as the case may be. The verse pragasinohavāmahe etc. comes immediately after when she reaches the fire on the southern altar, and is about to offer the patrani through a winnowing basket. This rite is done prior to the actual sacrificial rites (SB *puraYajñatpurahutibhyojuhoti*). This is done for purification prior to the actual sacrificial rites and offerings. It is to be particularly noted, that the patrani are to be offered to the Maruts, who are invoked as has already been indicated above. Here is a clear mention. It is said, that this offering is done previous to the main sacrifice, as these are for the Maruts who are common people; and common people do not partake of sacrificial oblations (ahutadovaivisah). Further it is said, “(As the creatures sat without the vital energy, due to Varuṇa taking it off as punishment for the sin), the Maruts destroyed their sin;

and so now the Maruts destroy their sin”. According to the Taittiriya tradition it seems, the verse is not to be repeated by the wife, the sequence being: the priest approaching the wife causing her to speak out if she has any lovers (patnimvacayati, which has no reference to the verse); she is to indicate ‘so and so is my lover’ (asau me jaraitinirdiset); then the priest (but not the wife) recites the verse, and while doing so the leads the wife. The TB says that if the wife repeats the verse, which is invitatory (puronuvākya), the sacrifice would be devoid of strength (I.6.5). It is the sacrifice who repeats it (ib.: yajamanonvaha). However, the SB (for that matter, the White Yajurveda tradition) makes the wife repeat it, as is clear from the sequence: *tam vācayatipraghasinohavāmahemarutas ca risadasah*; as this verse is like the puronuvākya, thereby, she invites them (the Maruts) to accept the patrani. There is another subtle detail. The SB has it that the priest asks her, “With whom are you carrying on?” but, there is no mention of what she does, her reply (or any other indication of her reply) being just understood from the warning, that her not-confession would harm her relatives. The TB however, clarifies that she has to speak out (*yajjarāmśāntamnabrūyāt*)’ or, she has to indicate (asau me jarāitinirdiset). Further, it is clear that mere confession (or, saying that she has none, in case she has none) was enough for the lover being seized by the fetters of Varuṇa (*nirdiśyaivaināmvaruṇapaseṇagrāhayati*).

In that case, the verse has to be understood as for destroying this sin, being consumed by the voracious Maruts. In any case, the confession is secret, and known only to the priest, who guards it – not even letting her husband know. The presence of the Maruts in the name of the *Parvaṇais* also the reason why the name of the *Parvaṇais* always in the plural, and never in the singular for the Maruts are conceived as a band and never a single person. It may also be noted that the Maruts are said to cure the creatures (cf. KB V.1, bhaiṣajyam, referred to above; MS bheṣajamaicchat). If we

note that the Varuṇa-praghasah are the *Parvaṇain* the rainy season, we could guess that the seizure by Varuṇa is the general ill- health in this season-pertaining to stomach-disorder, with which Varuṇa is particularly associated.¹⁹

However, the MS (I.10.12) says that Varuṇa is the Hemanta (hemanto hi Varuṇaḥ). In that case the Varuṇa-praghasah would fall (not in Asasha but) in Margasirsa-pausa, which will be beyond Karttika, which is generally the period for the *Śākamedhaparvan*. This text prescribes an option for the start of the *Cāturmāsyas*, saying that it might start, with the *VaiśvadevaParvaṇain* Vasanta or Varsa (*vasantayastavyamprajānānaya . . . yadipravrsiyajetasakṛtupastrniyat*).

The Śākamedha, performed after four months hence, is the next paruan; and here also the importance of the Maruts is prominent. This is a two-day sacrifice. On the first day (previous to the Full – moon day) there are three istis (offerings) – to Agni Anikavat (“sharp-pointed” indicating flames) in the morning a *Puroḍāśa* on eight pot sherds; to the Maruts called Santapana a caru (mess of boiled rice) in the noon; and caru to the GrhamedhinMaruts.²⁰ On this day itself, prior to these offerings, the two fires are carried to the two new altars (as in the Varuṇapraghāsah). The next day, there is an offering of boiled rice on a wooden spoon (called darvi) to Indra and a *Puroḍāśa* to the Maruts termed kridinah (“sporting ones”).

Other rites to follow are *Mahapitr-Yajña* and lastly Tryambaka-yage (SB II.5.3.1). As the next day begins, an oblation to Indra in a davri (wooden ladle) is to be offered (either after or before the usual Agnihotra offering). At this, a bull is fetched and made to bellow, as the offering in the darvi is put in the Āhavanīya fire; because the

¹⁹Cf. the legend of Hariscandra and dropsy; AB. VII.33 = 35.7.

²⁰ This is prepared with rice boiled in the milk of all the cows of the sacrifice, Kane, p. 1100. However, the milking of all cows is not clearly mentioned by all earlier texts. The SB II. 5.3.4 does not mention it; the same is the case with Kathaka Sam. XXXVI.9.

bull is the form of Indra. If the bull does not roar, the Brahma priest, seated on the southern side, orders “Offer”, and the offering is made. The order “Offer” in a loud voice represents the roar or the bellowing. Afterward there is an offering to the Maruts- the sportive ones (marudbhyahkridibhyah) in the morning; because, they fortified Indra with praises sporting round him, when he killed Vṛtra (op.cit. 18). The TB explains the purpose of the offering to the Maruts in a somewhat different way saying, that it is because the Maruts told Indra whether Vṛtra was surely dead. So, to be assured they dancing on Vṛtra’s body but it is wordless about the alternative to the bellowing of the bull. It recommends, that a bull may be made to bellow, bringing in also the symbolism of the Vasatkara²¹. Further it says that the material for the offering to Martus is to be set apart at the time of the rise of the sun (sakam, suryenoditenirvapati), this detail is absent at the SB.

There is also disparity in respects to the oblations made to Indra. The SB speaks of darvi-homa to Indra; and thereafter the seven-potsherd *Puroḍāśa* to the kridin Maruts. The TB speaks of offering the niskasa²² to Indra, then the offering (not specifically the seven- potsherd *Puroḍāśa*) and a further caru to Indra as uddhara. A further variation in the later period is that, if the bull does not bellow, the offering may be cast at the thunder of the cloud, or the Agnidhra priest is made to roar at this time, he being called Brahmaputra (“the son of the Brahman priest” whose assistant he is).²³ The roar of the Agnidhra is clearly a variation of the order of the Brahman who says “Offer”, according to the SB. The MS (I.10.16), likewise associates the bull with Indra, saying that the bellowing of the bull is the Vaṣat sound at the offering (ruvathovasatkarah). It also mentions the niskasa saying that it is kept aside to be offered to Indra the next day, also that the niskasa-offering is for the continuation of

²¹ The BSS V. 10 follows the TB in not having the alternative.

²² . The niskasa is the remnant of the earlier offering.

²³ . Asv. Gr.S. II. 18.11-12; Kane, op.cit., p.1101.

the sacrifice. The darvi (wooden spoon) with which it is offered (the next day, i.e. the day of the start of the Śākamedha) is termed ‘woman’s hand’ (esakhaluvaistriyahasto yad darvi). The offering with darvi is said to cast away Nirrti (the goddess of death) and the clarification of the offering to the Maruts, termed kridin is the same as from the TS noted above; but further Indra is said to be the sun and the Maruts his rays. The point of uddhara is mentioned also here, with the note that, it is like the king getting for himself the uddhara. The detail of setting aside (nirvapa) for the Maruts, at the sunrise and the identification of the sun with Indra and the sunrays with the Maruts, perhaps has the seeds of the name Śākamedha.

In any case, the significance of the Maruts and, rather, independent of Indra- is a clear point here, as in the Varuṇapraghāsah. It is great to see the Maruts and Varuṇa together in the Rgveda. The Maruts as the healers, as against Varuṇa who would seize the creatures, and also their projecting place in the Śākamedhaspeak for their unique importance in the two main parvans of the Cāturmāsya, which are said to be the very “thighs” of sacrifice (SB XI.5.2.3.5). This would indicate an important Marut-cult, which had developed but lost its authority in the early Vedic period.

Further in the context of the *Mahapitṛyajña* (Great oblation to the manes), a small variation is to be noted. At a certain point two butter-portions are to be offered to the manes; and after that, all the members (priests and the sacrifice) change their sacrificial threads from the left to the right shoulders. Having crossed the sides in the regular order, the call for offering is to be articulated. According to the SB the call for offering is to be articulated. According to the SB, the call of the Adhvaryu priest is *Oumsvadha* in place of *Oumsrausat*, and the Agnidhra should respond with *Astuavadha* (this is because the offering is for the manes as against the gods). In place of the Vaṣat call, the utterance is “savdhanamah” (SB II.6.1.24). However, the SB indicates a variant practice as prescribed by Asuri. According to him, the

respective utterances should be asravaya, astusrausat and Vaṣat. This is because; in the other way (noted above) there would be the danger of departure from the manner of the sacrifice (ib.25). This variation does not occur in the TB or other Brahmana.²⁴ The offerings to the manes consist of *Puroḍāśa*, dhana (parched grains) and mantha (powdered parched grains). The whole offering, mixing the three, has to be poured into the southern fire at the same time. Each of the materials is cut only once for forming a unit of this offering. Now, the SB notes an alternative as regards the mantha. Actually, the mantha stands in this rite in place of idā (which is used in the Darśapūraṇamāsa). The portions having been cut, the place whence they are cut from is not smeared with clarified butter as is the practice in the normal offerings. In the case of the mantha, some ritualists prescribe that it should be handed over to the Hotṛ without cutting from it; he invokes it, smells it and hands it over to the Brahman. He does the same and gives it over to the Agnidhra, who also invokes and smells it and places it aside.²⁵ The SB, however, says that as the mantha stands for idā, a portion of which is cut and smelt, a portion of the mantha also be cut, and smelt. But, unlike in the case of the idā, the mantha portion which is cut is not to be eaten, but simply smelt (SB II.6.1.33). In a further variation as pointed out by the SB as being prescribed by Āsuri, even this mantha-portion is to be eaten (though it is a ritual of the manes), on the plea that a portion of whatever is offered into the fire has to be eaten.²⁶ When the entire sacrament has come to an end, the priests and the sacrifice

²⁴ In this rite, the pounding of the grains for making a purodasa for the manes is done by the Adhvaryu or the Agnidhra to the east of the Gārhapatya fire, with his face to the south; for such details, Kane, op. cit. p.1102.

²⁵ According to KSS V.9.13 it is placed on the utkara (rubbish heap). This sutra gives three alternatives in this case.

²⁶ Idā is eaten first by the Hotṛ at the Darśapūraṇamāsa sacrifice; then all the four priests eat it. For mantha here, SBloc.cit.33 athatvetarasyaYajñasyedaprasitramsamavadyanty' evametasyapisamavadyeyuh; tam upahuyaivajighrantinaprasnanti; prasitavyam tv' evavayammanyamaheiti ha smahasuriryasyakasyacaganujhvatī.

change the sacrificial thread to their original position on the left shoulder. The remaining of the sacrificial offerings etc. have to be thrown into the fire.²⁷

It seems there was a practice of throwing the sacred grass and the enclosing sticks also into the fire (cf. SB II.6.1.46). But the text says that when the Agnidhra orders, “throw it away”, the Adhvaryu only touches himself and throws nothing at that time, though later they are thrown. Now, about the throwing away of the remaining sacrificial offerings into the fire; the SB does not approve of it, though it has been a practice at its period. The SB, on the other hand, proposes that the remainder of the offerings may be thrown into the water, or be eaten up by the priests. Its plea for not throwing the remainder is that as it is residue of the offerings, it is inappropriate to throw this *ucchista* into the fire.²⁸

However, the later tendency in the same school, as seen from the KSS appears to be that it is thrown into the fire as the first option, in water as a second one and eating as the last one.²⁹

As the discussion regarding the *Cāturmāsya* comes to an end, the SB touches an noteworthy point viz. about the shaving of the head on the part of the sacrifice. This shaving is usual at santification and at the two *istis* mentioned above. At this point it is necessary to mark the end of one cycle, before the next *Purnamasaisti*, which follows immediately. Though it is not mentioned here, the usual practice had been

It may be noted that the general practice appears to be of throwing the whole into the fire in the case of the offerings of corn, while from the offering of soma, portions were partaken of. In this practice and belief, associated with the *ida*, *prasitra*, and *mantha* here, wherein the portion is to be partaken of or smelt, lie the seeds of the later concept of *prasada*, which is a portion of the offering to the deity. Mark the next variation which is regarding the closure of this sacrificial rite.

²⁷ Cf. SB I. 8.3.19; also the practice of throwing the *yupa*.

²⁸ *op cit*, Upadhyay, G.P. p, 435 - *neddhutocchistamagnaujuhavameti*. The idea is that it will be placing into the mouth of the guest, his own residual food.

²⁹ *op cit*, Nityananda, pp. 546-552 *barhiḥparidhyagnauprasyati, havirucchistan ca; apsuprasyamvā*.

to shave the head all round leaving a tuft in the centre of the head. The SB gives a sort of an description and recommends the whole head being shaved (parivartana). It says that the sun and the fire face all the four quarters (sarvatomukha). Thus, he controls all food. Man, however, faces only one quarter. But, by shaving the head all round he comes to face all quarters and would control all food. So, he should shave all rounds. Asuri, however, differs. According to him, the sacrificer's facing the quarters has nothing to do with the control of food. So, he may not shave it at all (SB II.6.3.17). The TB (I.5.6.1ff) dwells on the sequence in which the hair on the body, the moustache and head are to be shaved.

The MS (I.10.1ff) while dealing with the *Cāturmāsyā* mentions that the *Puroḍāśas* should be of the number of the inmates of the house (*cfPratipuruṣamPuroḍāśah*) where purusa need not be taken in a limitedonly to the 'male' members. It indicates that it was not mandatory on person (who has set up the fires) to perform all the four *Parvaṇa* of the *Cāturmāsyā*, with regularity. It says, that a person who wants prosperity in cattle should perform the *Vaiśvadeva*, not the Varunapraghasas and the *Śākamedha* (vaisvadevenayajetapasukamonaVaruṇapraghāsairnaŚākamedhaih...sa yada sahasrampasumgacchedadhaVaruṇapraghāsairyajate).

It also says that the whole year covers twelve months which are used up by the three *Parvaṇa* (leaving the Sanasiriya which, hence, does not figure in the original scheme, according to this text). It differentiates between a rtuyajin (sacrificing by the seasons), who sacrifices saying "This is Vasanta, this is pravrs, this is Sarad", and the *Cāturmāsyayajin* who obtains the thirteenth month (ib. trayodasamasamsampadayati). How? This way – To offer for three months in the first year and leave; to offer for two months next year and leave; the same next year. Every month symbolizes one year (= 12 months, i.e. 12 Full-moons) $3 + 2 + 2 = 7$ years. In months it will be as follows:

1. $I \sqrt{\sqrt{\sqrt{}}}$; $II \times \sqrt{\sqrt{}}$; $III \times \sqrt{\sqrt{}} = 84$ total months for offering in three years;
 $36 + 24 + 24$
2. 84 to be converted into units of 24.
3. This will have three full years $(24 \times 3) + 12$. The last remaining twelve months constitute a year, which symbolize the thirteenth month.³⁰

The mention of the thirteenth month is rather interesting. Though the detail of the thirteenth month is not found in some other texts, the difference mentioned here is remarkable. Does it indicate that (in the original scheme) the *Cāturmāsya* sacrifice was to start in the year characterized by the thirteenth month?³¹ As noted earlier, in the introductory portion of this chapter, the *SunaśīrīyaParvaṇa* was not included in the *Cāturmāsya* parvan-s. The MS does not mention it by the name. However, it mentions the thirteenth month. Now, the KB identifies the *Sunaśīrīya* with the thirteenth month (trayodaśamvāetammasamapnotiyacchunasiriyenayajate). It says that the thirteenth month symbolizes the whole year (or comprises; etāvanvaisamvatsaro yad esatrayodaśamāsaḥ). It says that in the thirteenth month the whole of the year is gained. Actually, the model for the various rites herein is either the *Vaiśvadeva* or the *Darśapūrṇamāsa* sacrifice, according to the KB, as a special mark, here the deities are Sunasirau (the plough-share, suna, and the plough, sira).³² This would make it clear that – (i) the original three *Parvaṇa* comprised the whole year; (ii) with the importance of the thirteenth month, this month was added to the scheme in the form of the sunasiriya, which, hence, had no fixed place, but could be performed any time before the next cycle.

³⁰ For similar explanation cf. KS XXXVI.3, p. 478

³¹ We may compare the tradition indicated at the AB (I.12 = 3.1) according to which Soma for a Soma-sacrifice was to be purchased in the thirteenth month.

³² Keith, A.B., *Rigveda Brahmanas*, Cambridge-Massachusetts, 1920, p. 375

The *Cāturmāsyaparvaṇa* are for the welfare of the creatures; especially with a view to promote the prosperity of the family. Hence there seems to be a regular scheme. The *Vaiśvadeva* is associated with the birth of creatures and the arrangement of milk for them; the *Varuṇa-praghasa* is to liberate the creatures from the shackles of *Varuṇa*, who is said to have seized them as “they ate his barley.” The same *Parvaṇa* is associated with also the safety of the two-footed animals (= humans) and also their food, the four-footed beasts. The *Śākamedha* is to honour the manes and to ensure the availability of rains for the next year. This completes the regular year, while the year having thirteenth month is adjusted with the *Sunaśīrīyaparvan*. The MS actually distinguishes an usual sacrifice and the one who performs the *Cāturmāsyā* on the basis of the thirteenth month. It is very likely that the first performance of the *Cāturmāsyā* was to be started in a year when there was the thirteenth month, as noted above. It is also possible that the last *Parvaṇa* (*Sunaśīrīya*) was to be performed when the year was marked by the thirteenth month with specification of month itself. This appears to be the original scheme. Later on, all the four *Parvaṇa* came to be performed even in an ordinary year. The protective nature of the *Cāturmāsyā* is seen also in the fact that the *Parvaṇa* are termed “*Bhaiṣajya-Yajñah*”, and that they were to be performed on the joint of seasons to keep diseases away (KB V.1 *bhaiṣajyayajñavācā* *eteyacCāturmāsyam*, *tasmādrtusandhisuprayujyante*, *rtusandhisu hi vyadhirjāyate*).

It will be in the fitness of things to examine the position of the Maruts. We have already noted how they are helped in as saviours, as against *Varuṇa*, in the *Varuṇapraghasa*. Their triple phase is to be marked in their names as *Santapanah*, *Grhamedhinah* and *Kridinah*. Their character as saviours or healers makes them variable *bhiṣaks* in these *Bhaiṣajyayajñas*. But, there is yet another point to be noted. In the *Tryambaka-yaga*, for *Rudra*, at the *Śākamedha* and in the *patrayaga*, there is a

close resemblance. As in the patra-yaga, at the Tryambaka-yāga also the motif of offerings (*Puroḍāśas*) equal to the number of the members in the family plus one to represent the yet unborn is present. Hence the *Puroḍāśas* are prepared on one potsherd, and the northern cutting of each is to be offered to Rudra, and his sister Ambika, outside the locality and on a crossroad in the northern direction of the Uttaravedi on a firebrand carried from the Southern fire. Before their being carried, they are prepared on fire to the north of the Gārhapatya fire. It is said that the north is the quarter of Rudra (SB II.6.2.1-7). According to one practice the *Puroḍāśas* may be smeared with clarified butter,³³ and, according to another favoured by the SB this is not necessary and even dangerous, as Rudra would sense cattle, through this smearing, and would attack them³⁴. The one extra *Puroḍāśa* is not to be cut, but placed whole hiding it in a hole made by rats (this is because the rat is said to be the favourite creature of Rudra); it is concealed as the foetus remains concealed prior to birth (*yad upakiratitiravaigarbhaḥ . . . ya evasya prajāajatas ta rudriyatpramuncati*). Thus, this offering totally is to keep the progeny safe from the destruction of Rudra, as the one at the *Varuṇapraghasa* was to guard it, in like manner, from Varuṇa. But, there the Maruts (and not Varuṇa himself) are offered to, though there is indication in another text that Varuṇa was offered to,³⁵ while here Rudra figures in his dual capacity. The prayer to Rudra is – “Medicine art thou,

³³ The KS XXXVI. 14, mentions both views, but prescribes that they should not be smeared.

³⁴ Cf. *anaktaevasyurabhimanuko ha rudrahpasunsyadyadyanjanjyattasmanaktaevasyuh*.

³⁵ There is indication, that it was Varuṇa himself to whom the *Varuṇapraghasa* offerings mentioned above (patrani and the mesa-mesi), were offered – cf. KB V.3. *prajapatirYajñakratumapasyatvaruṇapraghasam tam aharat, tenaayajatastenestvavaruṇamaprinat, sapritovarunovarunapasebhyahsarvasmaipapmanahprajahpramuncat* etc.; but, this is a traditional and hackneyed explanation; and it is not exactly as one finds at the SB and earlier, at the Mait, Sam. Also, the KB is very cryptic and deals with the rite summarily, and is a later text (see, Keith, *Rigveda Brahmanas*, Intr). It may be also noted that it refers to the *Parvaṇa* in the singular (*varuṇapraghasam*) which is not in line with the general practice. The GB Uttara. I.21-26 has practically the same passage but yet cryptic. This is a yet cryptic. This is a yet later text.

medicine to the cow, to the horse, to man the medicine, weal to the ram and to the ewe” (*bheṣajamasibheṣajamgave’svayapurusaḥbheṣajam, sukhamesyai*).³⁶ The idea behind the rite, like the previous one, being a bheṣaja is clear. It may be further noted, that Varuṇa is never given the responsibility of a bheṣaj in the Vedic tradition, while the Maruts have close association with Rudra, being called “Rudriyasah” (RV.V.57.7; VII.56.22; I.64.3; II.34.13) and Rudrah. The *Varuṇapraghasa* makes them clearly the bhisaks with their phase as praghasinah or praghasyah. It is clear, that, far from Varuṇa and other gods like Indra, the Maruts dominate the three main *Cāturarmāsyaparvaṇa*, Rudra takes over the third. They actually belong to the same ‘family’ (i.e. of Rudra). It is due to this importance of theirs that they are offered a cake on seven pot sherds, even in the first parvan. One feels that the *Cāturarmāsya*s were a contribution of this Rudra- ‘family’ (or cult) in the Vedic fold to the Vedic sacrificial tradition, which was controlled by such gods as Varuṇa, Indra and ViṣṇuPrajapati, as an embodiment of sacrifices, held both these cults together. It is said, that the Maruts approached prajāpati when he created milk from his own body to feed his progeny, and said, “We shall destroy the progeny you are about to create” (SB II.5.1.3.12). Though the *Puroḍāśa* on seven pot sherds is mentioned late, in the order (after Agni with eight pot sherds, Soma’s caru, Savitr’s eight or twelve potsherd cake, caru to puṣan and to Sarasvatī), the respect to the Maruts is to be shown; and they are offered for the safety of the progeny (SB II.5.1.14 prajābhayo’himsayaikriyate). Here Rudra, the terrible, and the Maruts, the praghasinah (destroyers) are on equality. Both are fierce, and are to be appeased for safety.

³⁶Mait. Sam. I.10.4. The rite of going round the offering sun-wise and not-sun-wise is left out, as it is common, and there is no variation. The KS (loc.cit.) mentions only going round (pariyānti) without any difference as to sun-wise and not-sun-wise; the same is the case at MS I.10.4.

The Tryambaka-yāga follows the *Mahapitṛyajña*; and there is a close connection between these two rites. The Tryambaka-yāga is the sticking on one of the same motif as is found in the *Mahapitṛyajña*. If we follow the concept of the safety of the prajāḥ, which is so dominant in the *Cāturmāsya* offerings, it becomes clear that the living prajāḥ and the dead (i.e. the manes) are sought to be separated by the Tryambaka-yāga, where Rudra is propitiated not only to save the living creatures- also granting suitable husbands on the maidens in the house,³⁷ but also is requested to go away to the far off region, beyond Mujavat, with his bow unstrung.

In the sacrifice the performers never look back to where he was offered to; they touch water for purification after the sacrifice gets his head shaven; he cleans himself, takes fire out from the uttaravedi and offers his Agnihotra offering. Then he churns his fires and performs the full-moon offering.

While urging Rudra to go beyond the Mujavat, the SB enjoins a verse (VS III.61) and comments that it is actually causing him to sleep³⁸ (SB II.6.2.17 niśvapayatyevainam), and that, when asleep, none injures any one. This is the Tryambaka-havis (offerings to Tryambaka i.e. Rudra, along with his sister Ambika

³⁷ The mantra – tryambakamyajāmahe etc. which ends in mṛtyormukṣiyamāmṛtat (May I be released from death, not from non-death), suitably changed to sugandhimpāṭivedānām (for sugandhimpustivarhddhanam) ending in itomukṣiyamāmṛtat (VS III. 60; SB II.6.2.12-13), MS (I.10.4) has the mantra; but, later in the same context, in the words, tryambakamyajamahaitipariyanti, tatrapipatikamaparyeti, pativedanamevasyas tat. There is no full metrical modification as we have in VS (or the SB following it), nor do we have the words itomukṣiyamāmṛtat. This would indicate that the fuller metrical modifications were a later phase; they are found in the Vaj. Sam. They are absent in the TS (I.8.6.10 is the usual mantra), where even the word pāṭivedānām is absent; KS (XXXVI.7) has about the same words and directions. It has tryambakamyajamahesugandhimrayiposanam; and there is no change from RV VII.59.12 (māmṛtat).

³⁸ This is the Kārttika month; we may compare the sleep of gods in later mytho-ritualistic traditions; but with a reverse. There Karttika is the month for awakening, Asadha being for starting sleep. There is another point. Among the Cāturmasyaparvan-s, the middle two (Varunapraghasah and Sakamedha) are important. The period in between these *Parvaṇais* four months – from the Asadha New-moon day to the Karttika New-moon day. This period corresponds to the later Cāturmasya period as one unit, the difference being, that this later period is from the bright 11th in Aśāḍha to the same day in Kārttika.

(cf. SB – rudraesatebhagaḥsahasvasra’mbikaya). The MS has other epithets of Rudra (such as pināka-hastahkrttivasah and avatatadhanva), common with the VS and SB it adds “mountain, indeed, is the abode of Rudra” (gिरirvairudrasyayoniḥ, also KS, paromujavatotiḥ). The Tryambaka-yāga (or havis), hence, has a unique significance for the prajāḥ. Here Rudra is sent out of the locality (along with Ambikā), because he is a dreadful god; he is triggered off to go beyond human habitation to the mountain to the north, the quarter that is renowned to offer the offerings to him. He is calmed, asked to go to his mountain abode and even made to sleep.³⁹ This last act is considered to be inauspicious and unfavorable; and this is why the performers return, without looking back and touch water for purification. This motif, along with the thrice going round sun-wise and anti-sun-wise (apasalavi and prasalavi) striking the left thigh, as the mantra tryambakamyajāmahe is being spoken, specifies that this rite has a motif similar to the pitṛmedha (funeral).⁴⁰ As such, as a part of the Śākamedha, it is only a continuation of the motif of the *Mahapitṛyajña*, with a change. The idea in going round by the right and by the left is, thus, suggestive of a custom to give final respect to a person who is expected not to return (or come) back from ‘sleep’ (= death) for quite some time. In the case of Rudra, this ‘sleep’ indicated his exit for a period till he is offered next year in the same rite. After the ritual, the performers return without looking back.

According to the SB (II.6.2.19) these *Cāturmāsya* rites were utsanna, i.e. not in the regular run. This would indicate that they were out of the light of regular sacrifices,

³⁹ Here we have the germ of the epithet girisah, in later times, which has also the idea of “mountain-sleeper” = giri + √si.

⁴⁰ *op cit*, p. 611 a similar rite is done at the Horse-sacrifice, Ibid XIII.2.8.4, where the verse gananamtva (RV II.23.1) is modified (praṇānāmtva) and is uttered as the wives go round the silenced (dead) horse. It seems the custom of slapping the thighs while going round at the Tryambakayāga, was not followed by all – may be it was a later addition; thus, for example, the Kathaka Sam. Does not mention it, nor the three rounds, mentioning simply tryambakamyajāmahe itipariyanti, without mentioning the number of rounds.

and that they were not compulsory; they were recommendatory in nature, as the *bhaiṣajyani*. The MS says that the four *Parvaṇa* were taken from the well-known Soma-sacrifices: *Vaiśvadeva* from the Agnistoma; *Varuṇapraghasa* from the Ukthya (a type of Soma-sacrifice); and *Śākamedha* from the Atiratra. This is a way of uplifting these sacrifices, on the one hand, and, on the other, of showing a continuity of sacrifices through identification. The Soma-sacrifice was the image (though not the norm or *prakṛti*) for these sacrifices (especially the *Varuṇapraghasa* and the *Śākamedha*). The *karira* fruits are used as offering, which are explained as being *saumya* (MS.loc.cit.12) and thence offering being termed “*saumiahuti*”. There is a discussion at the SB (XI.5.2.8) about carrying fire from the *Āhavanīya* (of the usual sacrificial chamber) to the new *uttaravedi*. The KSS(V.4.2) refers to this point and has further explanation on it, where it states a view that it is to be done on the course of the Soma-sacrifice, or from the *Darśapūrṇamāsa*, which is the *prakṛti* for the *Cāturmāsya* (ib.4, *pranayanamsomādvācyam, prakṛter va . . .*). This would indicate that, though the two important *Parvaṇa* in this sacrifice, like the other two were accepted as being formed from the *prakṛti* (i.e. *Darśapūrṇamāsa*), according to one view, the inspiration from the Soma sacrifice was admitted. The *Cāturmāsya* parvans are performed without animal sacrifice, unlike the Soma-sacrifice. The details indicate that herein the pattern is more of the domestic rites (*gṛhya*), rather than the *Śrauta*. We could, undoubtedly, take them to be the forerunners of the *Gṛhya*-tradition.

❖ Names and epithets of the Agni God

In the Puranas, the common names of Agni are like *Vahni*, *Jatavedas*, *Hutasana*, *Havyavaha*, *Havya Vahana*, *Havyasana*, *Saptarcis*, *Kṛṣṇavartman*, as well as

Brhadbhanu, Nilalohita, Jalagarbha, Samigarbha, *Yajñagarbha* and Vibhvasu.⁴¹ The god Agni was given the title of Samarat and the Brahmanas worshipped him. Agni is the consumer of all sacrifices, hence the mouth of the gods. He is the first god, for he takes the offerings to the gods and is their messenger too. He is a means of performing the sacrifice and has a visible form, Agnimat, who keeps up the sacred fire. The deities enjoy the offerings through him. Agni look like gold in shine. He is the responsible of the creation of gold and as such the epithets like Hiranyareta, Hiranyagarbha are conferred on him.⁴² Other epithet of Agni is Bhutapati, because Agni is the master of every creature, on the earth. He (Agni) has been bestowed by many names and epithets, which fall into three classes, as they describe his appearance, functions and relations. Certainly all words for ‘fire’ may be used to address Agni, the more common ones are Anala, Pavaka, Krsanu, Pingaksa (yellow-eyed), Lohitagriva (red-necked), Vibhvasu, Suci,⁴³ Sukra, Suvarcas, Mahadyuti, Vaidyutbha (having lightning like luster), Vimala, Atidipta etc.⁴⁴ There are some epithets he shared with the sun-god e.g. Vibhvasu, Suci, Suvarcas. These names and epithets also occur in the Epics. The common epithets of the gods like Deva, Bhagavan, Jagatprabhu are also applied to him. He has also certain generic or philosophical attributes in common with the other gods for example, Avyaya, Aksaya, Acintyarupa, Ananta, Adaya, Mahatman and Sadatman.⁴⁵

❖ The development of a family

⁴¹ MKP, 96.33, 96.25.44; Br.P. 98.17, 96.33; Br.P. 128.16, 96.41.61; 97.1, 96.46.60; Br.P.128.17, 96.70, 96.26.60; Br.P. 98.18 & 96.59

⁴² MKP, 96.49-50; Mbh. 13.84.46 where Agni and Soma are reckoned as joint fathers of gold

⁴³ MKP, 96.17,18, 96.23, 96.60, 96.45.59, 96.59, 97.2.6

⁴⁴ Ibid., 96.60, 96.28, 96.44, 96.70 & 96.70

⁴⁵ Br.P. II.24.91; III.7.21.22

Agni is a son of Vasu, wife Vasorddhara. Dravinaka and others are sons. The vamsa of Agni, the succession of fires and their descendants are described in detailed in chapter 51 of the Matsyapurana. The BhagavataPurana mentions forty nine Agnis. Pavaka, Pavamana and Suci and those forty five sons together with Svaha. All are prayed in sacrifices.⁴⁶ In the Brahmapurana it is said that Agni is the husband of Svaha. Svaha and her three sons are gods presiding over Agni. He married a daughter of Daksa. His son was Manu Svarocisa. Agni is married with Vikesi. He is the father of Urjja clan of apsaras and also of Nala and Angaraka, who afterwards became a planet.⁴⁷

Agni is a son of agneyi and uru. His daughter Succhaya married sista. Son of Dhruva.⁴⁸ Agni is also known as Rta. He is the son of Samvatsara, married Svaha. Agni is the eldest son and mind born son of Brahma in Svayambuvaantara, of Brahma's tapas.⁴⁹ He is one of the eight tanus of Mahadeva. There is a myth in the Brahmapurana, that when the gods were in threat from Tarakasura, they sent Agni to Lord Siva. At that time, lord Siva was in privacy with Parvati, he threw the virilesemen into Agni who had come in the form of a parrot and unable to bear it, Agni threw it in to the Krttikas from which Karttikeya was produced. Agni threw the leftover semen in to his wife svaha and from it were created Suvarna and Suvarna, who were married to Samkalpa and Dharmaraja respectively.⁵⁰ According to the Bhagavata Purana Agni swallowed the seed of Siva borne by Ganga as a punishment for disturbing Uma's union with the lord, and unable to digest it, he discharged it into a bush of reeds (sarkandas) where it became Kumara.

⁴⁶Bha.P., IV.1.60-62; 7.16

⁴⁷Bha.P., IV.1.60, IV.1.48; BR.P. II.9.56; Va.p. I.76, VIII.1.19

⁴⁸Matsya P. 4.38, 43; 196.9.

⁴⁹ Br. P. II.13.23, Va.P. 29.1; Vi.P. I.10.14, 21.63-4 & 27.35

⁵⁰ MKP., 96.49

❖ The Fire – God Agni in Relation to Other Gods

The god of fire, Agni has significant relations with other gods in the Puranas. He is recognized as Hari. He is pleased with a devotee of Hari. Agni is the mouth of Hari as embodying all Vedas.⁵¹ Agni is associated with certain gods that is Brahma, Visnu, Siva (the lord of bhutas), Indra (the lord of gods), Aryman, Varuṇa (the lord of the water), Aditya (the illuminating one). He is also identified with certain ideas like the day, the night and the two twilights, kala and time and its various measures for example muhurta, ksana, lava, kala, katha and nimesa.

He is also compared with the gross elements like the wind, the earth, with its mountains and forests, and the sky which holds the moon and the Sun. He is also called the submarine fire that is held within the bosom of the great ocean. Agni is the name of Marutgana. Agni is the father of Skanda-Karttikeya. When he (Skanda) was installed as the commander in chief, Agni gave him two assistants of great strength that are jvalajihva and jyotis.

Fire is one, but his forms are many. He is trividha, three-fold (in earth, air and sky). According to the Puranas, initially Agni was only one but subsequently he got three forms. The Matsya Purana specifically mentions three Agnis, that is, daksina Agni, Gārhapatya Agni and ahvaniya Agni.⁵² Another classification of fire is divyam, bhautikam, abyoni and parthivam.⁵³

Agni is depicted as light among all living beings. He is also described as dwelling under the form of glowing light, among the siddhas with loveliness, among the nagas

⁵¹ MKP, 96.47, 70 & 96.64.

⁵² Matsya P. 51.10-12 – तस्यैकलौकिकोऽग्निर्दक्षिणाग्निः स वै स्मृतः ।

स च वै गार्हपत्योऽग्निः प्रथमो ब्रह्मणो सुतः । यः खत्वा हवनीयोऽग्निरभिमानो द्विजैः स्मृतः ॥

⁵³ Br.P. II.24.6; 21.53.56; Va.p. 53.5

under the form of wind, among the mankind he is anger, among the birds and animals he is moha or illusion, among the trees he is stability. Agni is firmness with reference to the earth, fluidity in water, swiftness in wind and with his faculty of permeation. He stands in the sky. Agni presented Ajagava bow to Prthu. He is worshipped in Kusadvipa.⁵⁴

Description of Nine fire-altar

***Caturasra* altar**

Caturasra altar is the most widely accepted altar. It is highly used in all types of sacrifices. It is known as the wish-fulfiller alter. It bestows an exceptional success to the sacrificer. It fulfills all the desires of the sacrificer related to this ordinary life like wealth, property, progeny, etc. It is always square in shape as suggested by the title since the meaning of the word *Catuḥ* is four. Its all four sides are equal in size and shape.

***Yoni* Alter**

Yoni alter is known as *Sarvasiddhikuṇḍa*. *Sarvasiddhikuṇḍa* literary means giver of all kind of success. But this alter is specially used for the procurement of child (Putra). Here the word child (Putra) does not mean a male child only. It is believed that the infertility is removed through the performance of this sacrifice. The effect of this sacrifice is believed to be continued for generations. It can also be performed for removing the problems related to children.

***Ardhacandra* altar**

⁵⁴Bha.P. IV.15.18 & V.20.2

Ardhacandra altar effects the mindposition of the sacrificer. It is supposed in the astrology that Candra or Moon is the deity of mind. Mental disturbance, depression, uneasiness, lack of confidence, etc are the result of unhealthy and weak mind. So, the performance of a sacrifice in the *Ardhacandra* alter brings peace and strength of mind. It also strengthens the mine of the sacrificer.

***Trikona* alter**

The deity of the *Trikona* alter is Mars (Maṅgala). Mars is believed to be the deity of earth. According to mythology he is the son of earth. Hence the sacrifice performed in this *Trikona* alters removes the problems related to land, property, etc. As a result of this, a person not having his own house will become able to have his own house and property. Moreover, it gives the strength to the sacrificer to conquer his enemies.

***Vṛtta* altar**

Vṛtta altar has completely different purpose. According to Indian philosophy, human being has four goals of life viz Dharma, Artha, kama and Mokṣa. *Vṛtta* alter plays the influential role in achieving the highest goal i.e. Mokṣa. It inspires the aspirant to chase his spiritual journey and ward off all the obstacles of his path.

***Ṣaḍastra* altar**

As the word *Ṣaḍ* means six, this alter has six angles. The oblations made in the *Ṣaḍastra* altar removes all the kinds of difficulties. Its performance accomplishes all unfulfilled desires or rather it bears the fruit of the well performed action speedily. It also makes the sacrificer free from the effect of black magic, etc.

***Aṣṭakoṇa*Altar**

Aṣṭakoṇa altar has eight angles. It helps the sacrificer to attain eight kind of Lakṣmī i.e. eight kind of fortunes. It is completely attributed to the procurement of worldly happiness, luxury and pleasure.

PadmaAltar

Padma altar is also known as Rājākuṇḍa or Pradhānakūṇḍa. Padma is a symbol of richness, luxuriousness, etc. It also represents the purity and piety. The accomplishment made in this altar brings hundred-fold returns to the sacrificer. It is a very unique altar and has special powers to bless the sacrificer.

Catuṣkoṇa altar

As the name itself reflects catu that is four. It has four angles having equal measurement. It is a very popular altar. All above mentioned altars are believed to be a part of this *Catuṣkoṇa* altar. Therefore, it is very significant and allover accepted.

I have made all these altars and have been using these altars in different sacrifices. The photos of these altars are given in the appendix at the end. I take this opportunity to mention here that I have so far performed more than 2,000 sacrifices till date. A list of these sacrifices is given below:

Sr. No.	Name of the sacrifice	No. of Sacrifices performed
1.	Laghurudra	More than 1000
2.	Atirudra	28
3.	Mahārudra	02

4.	Viṣṇuyāga	12
5.	Laghu-Viṣṇuyāga (one in Wemly, London)	25
6.	Ganeśayāga	More than 150
7.	Lakṣmīyāga	200
8.	Śatacaṇḍī	56
9.	Sahasracāṇḍī	1
10.	Navacaṇḍī	More than 500
11.	Vaidikanavagrahayāga	120