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## **Some Salient Features of the *Darśapurnamāsayāga* as Revealed in the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa***

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### **Abstract**

*Yajña is a well-defined act so far the Vedic literature is concerned. All the four Vedas, especially the Brāhmaṇas belonging to them discuss elaborately the procedures of Yajña. Yajña is divided many ways. Amongst them is the Darśapūrṇamāsayāga. In this connection it must be mentioned that the Brāhmaṇas are invaluable literary works which supplement the Saṃhitā part of the Veda-mantrabrāhmaṇayorvedanāmadheyam". Each Veda has different Brāhmaṇas. As such the Śatapathabrāhmaṇa belongs to the Yajurveda. The Śatapathabrāhmaṇa, consisting of 100 chapters as the name itself implies, is not only a voluminous work but also a storehouse of geographical datas, socio-cultural datas, socio-economical datas, legends, historical datas etc. Hence, this Brāhmaṇa has attained more popularity among the scholars worldwide. In fact "it is next to the Ṛgveda" according to the great scholar A. A. Macdonell. On the otherhand the Darśapūrṇamāsayāga which takes place on the new moon day and the full moon day is the model of iṣṭi of the five prominent yāgas the other four being the paśu, soma, homa and satra.*

*In the article "Some Salient Features of the Darśapūrṇamāsayāga as Revealed in the Śatapathabrāhmaṇa" a humble attempt has been made to discuss a part of the salient features of the prominent yāga called the Darśapūrṇamāsa as found in the Śatapathabrāhmaṇa.*

**Key Words:** *Yajña, Vedic, Darśapūrṇamāsayāga, Śatapathabrāhmaṇa, Yāga.*

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**Introduction:** *Yajña* is one thing that stands foremost when we think of Vedic of literature<sup>1</sup>. It plays the pivotal role in the Vedic literature and life as well. The place of *Yajña* in the Vedic literature can be traced well in the light of the following line-

*ṛco yajumsi sāmāni nirmame yajñasiddhaye.*<sup>2</sup> That means the *Ṛgveda*, the *Yajurveda* and the *Sāmaveda* are revealed (by the God) for the accomplishment of the *Yajña*. Again, the *Ṛgveda*, vis-à-vis, states thus-

*tasmāt yajñāt sarvahuta ṛcaḥ sāmāni yajñire/chandāmsi yajñire tasmāt yajustasmādajāyata.*<sup>3</sup>

That means "from that great general sacrifice Ṛcas and Sāma-hymns were born: therefrom were spells and charms produced, the Yajus had its birth from it"<sup>4</sup>. So, it becomes clear that the *Ṛgveda*, the *Yajurveda* and the *Sāmaveda* are *Yajña*-centric and vice versa.

The *Yajña*, which is a unified and well-defined system of ritual, is declared as the best work in the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa*,<sup>5</sup> and *Taittirīyabrāhmaṇa*.<sup>6</sup> There are a lot of Brāhmaṇic passages where the *Yajña* is praised in different ways.<sup>7</sup>

In the *Kātyāyana Śrauta-sūtra* the *Yajña* is defined thus- *dravyaṃ devatā tyāgaḥ*<sup>8</sup>. As such a *Yajña* has three elements- (i) *dravya* i.e. oblatory materials, (ii) *devatā* i.e. a deity and (iii) *tyāga* i.e. giving away the materials. It may be noted here that this concept of *tyāga* is well carried on in the Upaniṣadic statement- *tyaktena bhūñjithāḥ*<sup>9</sup> i.e. foster (yourself) by renunciation<sup>10</sup>. However, the necessity of performing a *Yajña* is also discussed vividly in the Vedic passages. The *Jaiminīyabrāhmaṇa* states- *ajāto ha vai tāvat puruṣo yāvanna yajata sa yajñenaiva jāyate*<sup>11</sup> i.e. a man is born, in the real sense, only after performing a *Yajña*.

The post-Vedic literature like the *Vāyupurāna*, too, opines- *yajñena devānāpnoti*<sup>12</sup> i.e. through the *Yajña* one can attain the gods or assimilate with the gods. Even the *Atharvaveda* shows the therapeutic benefits of a *Yajña* through its verses like-

*idaṃ haviryātudhānān nadī phenamivāvahat/ya idaṃ strī pumānakariha sa stuvatām janaḥ*<sup>13</sup>. And also-

*imaṃ me agne puruṣaṃ mumugdhyayaṃ yo baddhaḥ suyato lālapīti/atodhi te kṛṇavad bhāgadheyam yathānunmāditosati.*

*agniste niśamayatu yadi te mana udyatam/kṛṇomi vidvān bheṣajam yathānunmadito sati*<sup>14</sup>.

In the succeeding literature like *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*, *Manusmṛiti* etc. also the importance of *Yajña* is discussed as follows-

*annād bhavanti bhūtāni paryanyādannasambhavah yajñād parjanya yajño karmasamudbhavah*<sup>15</sup>. And –

*agnau prāstāhutih saṃyagādimumpatisthate/ādityāt jāyate vṛṣṭiḥ vṛṣṭerannaṃ tataḥ praja*<sup>16</sup>.

Therefore, Sri Aurobinda has opined thus- “The smallest circumstances of the sacrifice around which the hymns were written were intended to carry a symbolic and psychological power of significance, as was well known to the writers of the ancient Brahmanas”<sup>17</sup>

Many a times in the Vedic passages the *Yajña* is compared to the whole life of a man -*puruṣo vāva yajña*<sup>18</sup>. In fact the *Yajña* is larger than life. “The extension of the scope of *Yajña* far beyond the ritual boundary is clear from the statement that the *vedi* is conceived as wide as the earth ... This equation of *vedi* to earth speaks out the broadness of conception of *Yajña*. All actions done on the surface of earth are the act of *Yajña*”<sup>19</sup>. Moreover one could feel the urge for universal peace in the mantras chanted in the *Yajña* like-

*Dyauḥ śāntirantarikṣa santi pṛithivī śāntirāpaḥ śāntirauśadhayaḥ śānti/vanaspatayaḥ śāntirviśvedevāḥ śāntirbrahma śāntiḥ sarvāni śāntiḥ sa ma śāntiredhi.*<sup>20</sup>

In this way, a *Yajña* is seen to be a great function in ancient India that creates universal intergrity and brotherhood.

**Some salient features of *Darśapūrnamāsayāga* as revealed in the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa*:** The *Śuklayajurvedasamhitā* of the *Mādhyandina* recension opens with two chapters comprising a total of sixty five verses used in the *Darśapūrnamāsayāga*. Nevertheless the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* is a name that comes first when the term *Darśapūrnamāsayāga* is referred to. Although we find discussions regarding the *Darśapūrnamāsayāga* in other *Brāhmaṇas* like the *Kauṣītakibrāhmaṇa*, the *Upaniṣadbrāhmaṇa* and the *Taittirīyabrāhmaṇa*, those discussions are not so prominent as that of the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa*. The *Mādhyandina* and the *Kāṇva* – both of these two recensions of the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* provide a detailed account of the *Darśapūrnamāsayāga*. Whereas the

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*Mādhyandina* recension discusses this *yāga* in its very first chapter, the *Kāṇva* recension discusses the same in its second chapter. It has been stated there that the sacrificer performs this *yāga* to obtain all that belongs to the enemy because the Gods obtained all that belonged to the Asuras by performing this very *yāga*.<sup>21</sup>

The term *Darśapūrnamāsa* is a compound. It is the assimilation of two words: *darśa* and *pūrnamāsa*. The term *darśa* means “the moon when just becomes visible, the day of new moon”<sup>22</sup>. Sāyaṇa comments on the term *darśa* in the *Taittirīyasamhitā* in the following way- *yasmin dine sūrya eva drśyate candramāstu leśatopi na drśyate soyam darśa. amāvasyā ca tādrśī. tasyāṃ tithau sūryeṇa sahaiva vasataścandramaso draṣṭumasakyatvāt. ataḥ sā tithiḥ sūryamātradarśanāt darśanāmaṅkitasya karmaṇo योग्या*<sup>23</sup>. On the contrary, the term *pūrnamāsa* means “full moon, the day of full moon”<sup>24</sup>

Hence the ceremony performed in these two particular days as is termed as *Darśapūrnamāsayāga*. Moreover, it also becomes clear from this fact that it is a ceremony to be performed once in a fortnight. In this connection, it may be mentioned here that since the ceremony is performed separately, therefore the acts performed in the day of new moon is separately called *Darśayāga* and that performed in the day of full moon is called *Pūrnamāsayāga*. *Iṣṭi*, being the synonymous term of *yāga*, can also be applied to the term *darśa* and *pūrnamāsa*. As such the *Darśayāga* and the *Pūrnamāsayāga* can also be rendered as *Darśeṣṭi* and *Pūrnamāseṣṭi* respectively. A noteworthy fact in this matter is that- one must choose the *pūrnamāsa* first to begin this *yāga*<sup>25</sup>. However, the term *darśa* is placed first in the compound as per the rule- *alpāctaram* i.e. comparatively short words are placed first<sup>26</sup>.

Both these *iṣṭis* viz *Darśeṣṭi* and *Pūrnamāseṣṭi* are almost similar to each other in procedure with a slight difference. The difference lies in the matter of deities of the second offering. While in the *Pūrnamāsa*, the second offering is made for Viṣṇu, Prajāpati and Agni-Soma, the same is made for only Indra in the *Darśa*.

Each of these *iṣṭis* take two days for its completion. On the first day of the *Darśeṣṭi* the sacrificer and his wife take the usual vows of abstinences. This day is called the *upavasatha* i.e. the fast day. The vows chiefly include the abstention from certain kinds of food, especially meat and from other carnal pleasures, the sleeping on the ground in one of the chief fire houses and the observance of silence during the ceremonies. On the second day, the various stages of cake- preparation , from the rice-grain onwards, are gone through; the altar is made ready and the sacrificer’s wife is girdled. After the laying on of kindling wood with the *sāmidhenī* verses follow two libations of butter (agharas) and the formal choosing of the *hotṛ* by the *adhvaryu*. Then the fore-offerings of butter to the kindling sticks and various invited deities take place. The *ājya*-offerings to Agni and Soma follows it and finally the cake-offerings to Agni and Indra. The ceremony comes to an end with an oblation to Agni Svistakṛt in which all gods are invoked. The priests then partake of the offering and of the *idā* i.e. milk libation; the manes are invoked and the fees are given away to the priests. Next come the anuyājas (after-offerings) to the *Barhis*, to *Nāraśamsa* etc. followed by a prayer and finally the bundle of sacred grass is thrown into the fire.

The *Darśapūrnamāsayāga* is the prominent one among the seven Harviryajñas i.e. a class of sacrifice in which offering of havis such as milk, butter, rice, barley and similar materials take place. Moreover, it provides the norm of all sacrifices of the *iṣṭi*<sup>27</sup> type. Hence, it requires four numbers of priests viz.-the *Hotā*, the *Advaryu*, the *Āgnidhra* and the *Brahmā*.<sup>28</sup> In the *Darśapūrnamāsayāga*, the *Hotā* “recites the *sāmidhenī*- verses and by means of them he enkindles the fire. He calls on *Ārṣeya*

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*Hotṛpravara* in the same performance. When he is formally chosen, he takes the Hotṛ's seat and goes on muttering formulas (ŚB I.5.1.12). At the end of the *Darśapūrnamāsa*, he invokes the blessings (ŚB.I.9.1.2)<sup>29</sup>.

Likewise in this *yāga*, the *Adhvaryu* looks into the sacrificial butter and performs the *Patnīsamāyājas* as well as the *Samistayajus*. He also request the *Hotṛ* to recite the invitatory and offering verses. Again, the chief duty of the *Agnīdhra* is to enkindle fire. Besides his other prominent duties are- to clean the vessels and spoons, to bind the wife of the sacrificer, to take part in the discourse with the *Adhvaryu*. In fact the *Agnīdhra* and the *Adhvaryu* lead the sacrificer to the world of gods<sup>30</sup>.

The *Brahmā* “generally remains silent while other priests are doing duties. He sits in the southern part and protects the sacrifice. He has also to perform expiations (*prāyaścittis*) whenever there is something done in excess or defectively”<sup>31</sup>. The fact worthy to be noted here that “Unlike *Somayāga* the four priests have equal powers here” i.e. in the *Darśapūrnamāsayāga*<sup>32</sup>.

It is simplest form of all sacrifice that could be performed by any *āhitāgni yajamāna* i.e. one who has laid the fire called *gārhapatyā* or a non-widower, irrespective of three castes viz. *Brāhmaṇa*, *Kṣatriya* and *Vaiśya*. Again, since it is the archetype of *iṣṭi*, therefore, the procedure of performance of this *yāga* is followed in other *yāgas* to be performed as a part under the headship of other great sacrifices like the *Rājasūya*, the *Vājapeya*, the *Aśvamedha* etc. The *Āgrayaṇeṣṭi*, the *Atithyeṣṭi* the *Dīkṣaṇiyeṣṭi*, the *Navaśasyeṣṭi*, the *Pavamāneṣṭi*, the *Pavitreṣṭi*, the *Prājāpatyeṣṭi*, the *Prāyaṇiyeṣṭi*, the *Mahāvīrājeṣṭi*, the *Mitravindeṣṭi*, the *Vaisvānareṣṭi*, the *Sāvitreṣṭi* are names of some *iṣṭis* that follow the procedure of the *Darśapūrnamāsayāga*.

*Darśapūrnamāsayāga* may be performed in two ways viz- *nitya* (regular) and *kāmya* (optional). When it becomes *nitya*, the *yajamāna* has to perform throughout his life, or for thirty years or till he becomes very old. On the other hand, when the *yajamāna* performs it as a *kāmyeṣṭi* then the period of performance is determined by the *yajamāna* himself.

The *vedi* for this *iṣṭi* is called the *dārśikī-vedi*. It is the simplest form of the *vedi*<sup>33</sup>. This form is compared to the bodily form of a woman- *yoṣā vai vedi*<sup>34</sup>. In this description of the *vedi* meant for an *isti* like *Darśapūrnamāsa*, the ancient Indian idea of feminine beauty is also revealed. In the context of erecting the *vedi* it has been stated there in the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* (1.2.3.16)- *sā vai paścādvaryasī syāt. madhye samhvāritā punaḥ purastādurvyevamiva hi yoṣām praśamsanti* i.e. “It shall be too much broad towards the west, notched in the middle and again broad in the east. In this way one admires a woman.”<sup>35</sup>

One could also see passages on moral in the description of taking vow of abstinence for performing the *Darśapūrnamāsayāga-vratamupaiṣyannantareṇāhavanīyam ca gārhapatyamca prān tisthannpa upasprśati, tadyadapa upasprśati. amedhyo vai puruṣo yadanṛtaṃ vadati, tena putirantartaḥ, medhyā vā āpaḥ. medhyo bhūtvā vratamupayanīti. tasmādvā apa upaspraśati*<sup>36</sup> That means, ‘He who is about to enter on the vow, touches water, whilst standing between the *Ahavanīya* and *Gārhapatyā* fires, with his face turned towards east. The reasons why he touches water is, that man is (sacrificially) impure on account of his untruth; and because by that act an internal purification (is effected)- for water is indeed (sacrificially) pure. After becoming sacrificially pure, I will enter on the vow; thus (he thinks); for water is indeed purifying. ‘Having become purified through the purifying one, I will enter on the vow; thus (he thinks, and) this is the reasons why he touches water’.<sup>37</sup>

Again in the matter of hospitality it has been stated there in the *Śatapathabrāhmaṇa* that the *yajamāna* should keep fasting on the previous day of the sacrifice because the gods, evidently knowing the intention of men, comes to his house that day; and it would be inappropriate if one would eat before the guests i.e. the gods.<sup>38</sup>

As against this Yajñavalkya says there that if the sacrificer does not eat anything then he would behave as a worshipper of the manes. But if eats then, too, he will be insulting the gods by eating before they have eaten. Therefore, Yajñavalkya advises the *yajamāna* to eat only forest grown food such as herbs or fruit which is not considered as sacrificial food- *sa vā āraṇyamevāśniyāt. yā vā āraṇyā'ośadhayo yadvā vṛkṣyam*<sup>39</sup>. In this connection it may be noted here that this tradition of taking only fruits and avoiding rice etc on the fast day is prevalent among people of Hindu religion of the modern India too.

In this way the Vedic *Yajña* like the *Darśapūrṇamāsa* provides “an occasion of gaiety, understanding and co-operation as well as a social gathering on a small scale. It also becomes a way of attaining spiritual strength, uniformity in action and purification of the atmosphere<sup>40</sup>.”

**Conclusion:** Man of every primitive race always wondered about the movement of the luminaries like the moon. They could see two prominent days of the moon's movement. Whereas on one day, the moon becomes full with luster, it disappears on the other. They could observe the repeated happenings of this fact. Moreover, it was also noticed by them that the eclipse, term and tide etc. took place in these peculiar days. So also Vedic Aryans. People of the Vedic period realized the specialty of these two days and believed upon the potentiality of this particular luminary. Hence, they not only started worshipping it through hymn<sup>41</sup> but also gave birth to a system of worshipping it which was later termed as the *Darśapūrṇamāsayāga* so that it could fulfill their wishes. By doing this, they applied the law of attraction consciously or unconsciously. “The law of attraction is the law of creation. Quantum physicists tell us that the entire universe emerged from thought<sup>42</sup>. In many Vedic passages, it had been stated that this Universe was emerged from the great sacrifice performed by Prajāpati<sup>43</sup>. Actually the sacrifice or *yajña* was none but a system where similar thoughts of various people were unified. Moreover, Vedic peoples were aware of the fact that thought are magnetic and thoughts have a frequency. As you think, these thoughts are sent out into the universe and they magnetically attract all like things that are on the same frequency. Everything sent out returns to the source<sup>44</sup>. Vedic people knowing this ‘secret’ of life concentrated on such system of worshipping where repeated focus was given for the fulfillment of one's wish. As such the *Darśapūrṇamāsayāga* was the simplest act for attaining prosperity in every walk of life.

## References:

1. Cf., Murthy, R.S.S., *A Study of the Important Brāhmaṇas*, University of Mysore, 1947, p.28.
2. Cf., *AP*, 17/13.
3. Cf., *RV*, X. 90.9.
4. Cf., Griffith, R.T.H., *The Hymns of the Rgveda*, Delhi, 2004, p.603.
5. Cf., *yajño vai śreṣṭhatamaṃ karma. ŚB*, I.5.4.5.
6. Cf., *yajño hi śreṣṭhatamaṃ karma. TB*, III. 2.1.4.
7. Cf., *yajño vai sutarmā nau. AB*, I. 3.2.  
*yajño vai bhuvanasya nābhi. TB*, III. 9.5.5.  
*yajño vā ṛtasya yonih. ŚB*, I.3.1.16  
*yajño vā devarathaḥ. JB*, I.129

- yajño vai viṣṇuḥ. ŚB, I.1.3.1.; etc. TB, III. 2.3.12;  
III. 2.7.4.; III. 3.6.11. etc. PB, XIII. 3.2.
8. Cf. KŚS, I.2.2.
  9. Cf. IU., I
  10. Cf. Goswami, S. *Īsopanīśad* with English translation and Sankarabhasya, Sanskrit Pustak Bhandar, Calcutta, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, p.28.
  11. Cf. JB., III. 14.8.
  12. Cf. VP., 57/17.
  13. Cf. AV, I.8.9.
  14. Cf. *ibid*, VI. 3.1-2.
  15. Cf. ŚMG., III.14.
  16. Cf. MS, III.76
  17. Cf. Murthy, R.S.S., *op. cit.* p.67.
  18. Cf. ŚB. 1.2.5.1.; CU.III. 16
  19. Cf. Murthy. R.S.S. *op. cit.*, p.69.
  20. Cf. YV., 36.17
  21. Cf. ŚB., 1.7.2.22-24.
  22. Cf., Williams. M.M., *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Delhi, 1984, p.632.
  23. Cf. Sāyaṇa on TS, 2.5.6.
  24. Cf. Williams, M.M *op. cit.*, p. 470.
  25. Cf. pūrnamāsasya prāthamyam-Sāyaṇa on ŚB. 1.1.1.1
  26. Cf. *Aṣṭādhyāyī*, II.2.34.
  27. Cf. iṣṭīśabda ṛtvikcatustayasampādyasapatnikayajamāna kartṛkakarmanāmadheyam. ŚPN.1.1.
  28. Cf. catvāro hyete haviryajñasya ṛtvijaḥ brahmā hotā adhvaryuḥ agnīt. TB.III.3.8.7.; BŚS.II.3.
  29. Cf. Thite, G.U., *Sacrifice in the Brāhmaṇa-texts*, University of Poona, 1975, pp.201-202.
  30. Cf. ŚB., I.8.3.20; I.9.2.18.
  31. Cf. Thite, G.U. *op.cit.*, p.206
  32. Cf. Hazarika, B.N., *A Socio-Cultural Study Of The Śatapathabrāhmaṇa*-A Ph.D. Thesis submitted to the University of Gauhati, 1976, p. 105.
  33. Cf. Murthy, R.S.S., *op.cit.*, p.28
  34. Cf. ŚB.I. 2.3.15.
  35. Cf., Winternitz, M.A. *History of Indian Literature*, Vol. I, Delhi, 1996, p. 191.
  36. Cf., ŚB.1.1.1.1.
  37. Cf. Egging, J., *The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, Part-I, Book I and II, Delhi, reprint 1988, p.23.
  38. Cf., ŚB, 1.1.1.7-8
  39. Cf. *ibid*, 9-10.
  40. Cf. Prasad, R., *Veda- A Way of Life*, Delhi, 2004, p.137.
  41. Cf. RV., X. 85. 19- navonavo bhavati jāyamāno'hnam keturuśasāmetyagram/bhāgam devebhyo vi dadhatyayan pra candramāstirate dīrghamāyuh.
  42. Cf. Byrne, R. *The Secret*, UK, 2006, p.15.
  43. Cf. RV, X.90, 121, 130. And also AV. XIX.6.
  44. Cf. Byrne, R *op. cit.*, p.10