

Redeath and its Relation to Rebirth and Release

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The concept of redeath (or repeated death), though being of fundamental importance in the development of the history of Vedic ideas, has been treated in a rather stepmotherly fashion by most of the handbooks. E. G. OLDENBERG (*Religion des Veda*, second ed. Stuttgart 1914) only mentions the "Wiedertod" in a footnote (565, n. 1), where he refers to a footnote in his *Die Lehre der Upanishaden*. The term *punarṁṛtyu* is found only twice (p. 197; 206) in GONDA's *Die Religionen Indiens. I. Veda und älterer Hinduismus*, Stuttgart 1960.

In his *L'Histoire des idées théosophiques dans l'Inde*, Paris 1906 P. ULTRAMARE indeed extensively treats "La victoire sur la seconde mort" (p. 50-59), but its origin and position in the history of Vedic conceptions do not become clear. He refers to the fear of Brahmin thinkers for the ultimate end of life in yonder world, but fails to explain why this fear arose in some late Vedic texts.

KEITH (*The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads*, Cambridge, Mass., 1925) dedicates 26 lines to the renewed death (572-3) in which he emphasizes its origin and its transition to the concept of rebirth. As usual his explanation is only based on common sense. The fear of repeated death would have developed "in accordance with the desire to distinguish the diverse degrees of good acquired by different modes of sacrifice (..) the Brahmins had to consider the claim of the richer of their patrons, and had to promise them more in the world to come than the poorer, who offered and gave less" (572).

(*Punarṁṛtyu*)" (p. 206). If the traditional view about life after death would be that it is not unlimited (a view which, as far as I can see, was first expressed in the late *punarṁṛtyu* passages and not earlier), then one expects an explanation of the fact that only in late Vedic texts the fear for this repeated dying is formulated. And how could fear for immediate annihilation at death develop into fear for redeath?

GONDA also gives a second explanation of the origin of the concept of redeath: "Diese zweifellos durch das zyklische Denken und durch die Furcht, daß rituelle Verdienste im Jenseits verloren gehen können (TB. 3, 10, 11, 2), mitbestimmte Überzeugung wird uns verständlicher, wenn wir lesen, daß der Eintritt ins Totenreich als eine neue Geburt betrachtet wurde. Sobald aber, in den *Brāhmanas*, die Wiedertod-Idee Einfluß gewinnt, zeigt sich das Jenseits in einer anderen Beleuchtung, in schärferen und beängstigeren Konturen" (206). Why should one try to defeat redeath in yonder world, if yonder world is described "in ... beängstigeren Konturen"? Moreover, rebirth in yonder world is only an expression denoting that death was not total annihilation. People are not reborn as children in heaven; so there is not need to assume death as a logical end of life in yonder world.

According to GONDA the only solution for redeath was ritual in the circles of the priests. "Noch in der *BĀU*. (1, 2, 7; 1, 5, 3; 3, 3, 2) wird der esoterischen Kenntnis der rituell-kosmischen Zusammenhänge diese befreiende Kraft beigelegt. In Verbindung mit der *Ātman*-Lehre vollzog sich jedoch in diesen Vorstellungen eine Änderung (...). Nur diejenigen, die sterben, nachdem sie hier das Selbst gefunden haben, werden — so lautet nun die Lehre — wahrlich frei. (...) Von jetzt an tritt die Furcht vor dem Wiedertod im Jenseits in den Hintergrund" (p. 206).

One may doubt whether fear of *punarṁṛtyu* was removed by the doctrine about the *Ātman*. Ritual and the esoteric knowledge about this ritual were perfectly able to avert this fear. In my view it was the ritualistic *mokṣa* aiming at immortality in heaven which was replaced by a different

One may doubt the correctness of this rationalisation, since the term *punarṁṛtyu* is only found in rather late Vedic texts, whereas rich sacrificers were already living in the most ancient period. Moreover, it is not quite clear how the fear (thrice mentioned by KEITH) for this particular type of death should be connected with the alleged business instinct of the Brahmins. Why was this fear absent in the earlier period? Did the Brahmins later on kid their patrons into this obsession and simultaneously offer some expensive solutions? The defeat of *punarṁṛtyu* by means of e.g. the simple *Agnihotra* hardly fits into KEITH's socio-economic model. His association of redeath with the later concept of rebirth ("It remained only to transfer it to the present world and the effect of transmigration was reached", p. 573) sounds rather simplistic in the absence of any foundation in the texts. Still these ideas about a growing fear for redeath and a logical transition from redeath to rebirth are found in several later publications.

As already observed GONDA only twice mentions the term *punarṁṛtyu*, once (p. 197) in his treatment of "Prajāpati und die rituelle Überwindung des Todes" (187-197) and once (p. 206) in the discussion of "Brahman-Ātman, Karman-Lehre und Erlösungsstreben" (197-213), but it is not clear how he conceives the position of the concept. On the one hand the *Agnicayana* produces "Unsterblichkeit" (a term consistently placed between quotation-marks and on p. 196 further explained as "richtiger wäre: die Fortdauer des Lebens") and in this connection the victory over *punarṁṛtyu* is also mentioned; on the other hand the defeat of *punarṁṛtyu* through the *Agnicayana* is treated in the context of obtaining eternal life in yonder world (p. 206). Is this immortality different from 'Unsterblichkeit' procured by every *Agnicayana*?

Moreover GONDA's explanation of the origin of the concept of *punarṁṛtyu* raises some questions: "Die hier auf Erden durch rituelles Werk und religiöses Verdienst gewonnene Welt war nach herkömmlicher Ansicht vergänglich. Die alte Furcht vor Zerstörung nach dem Tode (...) wandelt sich in Angst vor neuem Sterben im Jenseits, vor dem Wiedertod

aim: *mokṣa* from rebirth and *mokṣa* in Brahman. The smooth transition from the one idea to the other, as pictured by GONDA, does not convince.

Studies on the doctrine of transmigration and its origin mostly pay attention to *punarmṛtyu*. Since real immortality in heaven excludes rebirth on earth, the concept of immortality is critically examined by some scholars. Now it is a fact that *amṛta* and *amṛtarva* often do not refer to immortality on a level with the immortality of the gods, but to non-dying or continuation of life on earth. This was already observed by A.-M. BOYER in his article "Étude sur l'origine de la doctrine du saṃsāra", *Journal Asiatique* 1901, 451-499 (especially p. 454 and 457ff.) According to BOYER (p. 464) the fact that *amṛtarva* could denote a long life on earth rather than unlimited immortality, should imply that references in the *Ṛgvedasamhitā* to *amṛtarva* in yonder world also exclude the possibility of an endless immortality in heaven. Thus the idea of *punarmṛtyu* would be very old, though the term as such is only found in late Vedic texts. It is doubtful whether we may assume such an implicit *punarmṛtyu*. Moreover, BOYER is not quite consistent in his argumentation. On p. 466f. he adduces a few verses from the *Ṛgvedasamhitā* in which immortality is asked for or promised and in this connection he observes that apparently this *amṛtarva* in the sense of real immortality should be an exception.

So BOYER seems to accept life in heaven as a fact for the *Ṛgvedasamhitā* and immortality as an exception, though first he had tried to show that the term *amṛtarva* as such only denoted a long life on earth as well as in heaven. However, it can be proved that the concept of life after death in heaven is very exceptionable in the *Ṛgvedasamhitā*. There is no reason to assume that this life in heaven which in texts after the *Ṛgvedasamhitā* was obtained by all the meritorious sacrificers, should be regarded as limited. The concept of *punarmṛtyu* is a late innovation. In this respect I disagree with BOYER (474ff.).

As to the transition from redeath to rebirth BOYER excluding the possibility of total annihilation observes that "une solution très simple" was unavoidable: dying is going to yonder world and therefore dying in yonder world is going to this world. Unfortunately the passages in which *punarmṛtyu* is found never refer to rebirth on earth and so the logical solution cannot be proved.

In his study "Tod und Unsterblichkeit im vedischen Glauben", *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft* XXV (1927), 339ff.; XXVI (1928), 187ff. ARBMAN makes a distinction between heaven (reserved for gods and the chosen few) and the realm of the dead. The *punarmṛtyu* is located by him in the latter world and regarded as an ever repeated rather than as a second death: "Das 'Jenseits, jene andere Welt', wo der Mensch wieder und wieder vom Tode getroffen wird, ist nicht anderes als ein dunkel und unbestimmt gefaßtes Totenreich, das als solches zum 'Himmel' (*svarga lokā*), der Welt der Götter' (*devaloka*) im Gegensatz steht, die der Macht des Todes entrückt ist" (XXVI, 1928, p. 238). This seems doubtful. Indeed once or twice we find indications about a repetitious death, but mostly *punarmṛtyu* refers to dying a second time. Moreover, it is uncertain whether this *punarmṛtyu* should exclusively be associated with the unsuccessful and non-meritorious deceased. I am under the impression that *punarmṛtyu* also hits the deceased who have stayed some time in a yonder world which is not the gloomy realm of the dead assumed by ARBMAN. ARBMAN does not explain the lateness of the references to this concept.

S. ROHDE, *Deliver us from evil*, Lund/Copenhagen 1946 extensively quotes passages on *punarmṛtyu* (86-91; 97-100), but hardly clarifies the background and origin of this concept. His observation that "this idea may have served as a stage in the development of the idea of man being born to a new life on earth" (p. 87) is neither further elaborated nor substantiated.

In his article "Vorstufen der indischen Seelenwanderungslehre", *Asiatische Studien* 25 (1971), 99-157 HORSCH tries to give some explanations. Following BOYER he states: "Da man sich das Weiterleben im Jenseits nach Analogie zum irdischen Dasein vorstellte, lag die Annahme nicht fern, daß man auch in der andern Welt sterben könnte" (p. 134). However, the parallelism of life in yonder world and on earth is not complete, since the deceased is not supposed to be reborn in heaven as a child. Moreover, HORSCH does not convincingly explain why the idea of *punarṁṛtyu* appeared so late in Vedic literature.

He mentions three points: 1) In the later Brāhmaṇa period there would be an increasing interest in yonder world; 2) The Agnicayana ritual, with which *punarṁṛtyu* is often associated, deals with immortality; 3) Ritualism lost popularity and became replaced by esoteric knowledge (p. 141).

It is true that the mentioned three points coincide with the rise of the concept of *punarṁṛtyu*, but their relation to this concept is still unclear. Realizing this HORSCH tries to define "das soziale Milieu dieses ritualistisch-spekulativen Kreises" and then concentrates on the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*.

His remark "Vorerst fällt auf, daß in der wichtigsten Quelle, dem Brāhmaṇa der hundert Pfade, nur jene Bücher die Wiedertod-Konzeption vertreten, die mit dem Namen Yājñavalkya in Beziehung stehen (Buch II und Xf.), während die *Śāṅḍilya*-Abschnitte (Buch V-IX) nichts davon berichten" (p. 141) raises some questions. The most important passages are found in *ŚB*. X, which is not a Yājñavalkya book, but a (late) *Śāṅḍilya* book dealing with the esoteric interpretation of the *Agnicayana*.

HORSCH also associates the *punarṁṛtyu* concept "mit den nicht-hierarchischen Kulturbereichen jener Zeit und mit dem Kṣatriya-Milieu" (p. 142). It is doubtful whether *punarṁṛtyu* may be associated with Kṣatriyas

and at the same time with the *Agnicayana*, since this ritual has not specific relation to kings.

In an excursus of his article "Tracing the Vedic dialects", *Dialectes dans les littératures indo-aryennes* (ed. C. CALLAT), Paris 1989, 97-265 WITZEL deals with the emergence and spread of the concept of recurrent death and emphasizes its lateness. Having discussed the distribution of the term over the several Vedic schools he concludes: "The origin of the word (and of the concept) *punarṁṛtyu* is, therefore, in all probability, to be found in the late *Śāṅḍilya* tradition of *ŚB*, e.g., not in the extreme East of Northern India, but in a more Western region" (p. 204-5; see, however, also his n. 264: "Unless further research shows that *ŚB* 10, although a *Śāṅḍilya* book, was composed in the East by members of the *Śāṅḍilya* school").

I do not underrate the importance of such a geographic stratification, but warn against attaching too much importance to it in connection with religious concepts. We have to take into account that in those times Vedic peoples rather than Vedic ritualistic schools moved through North India, though "The territory of a Vedic school mostly coincides with that of a particular tribe" (WITZEL, p. 116-117). For a Vedic ritual Yajurvedins like the *Śāṅḍilyas* always had to cooperate with Rgvedins and Sāmavedins. The references to and quotations from each other's texts prove that Vedic religion in North India more or less formed a continuum in a particular period. Moreover individual Brahmins used to travel from the one region to the other (see also WITZEL, p. 117). Therefore, for tracing the origin of a Vedic religious concept the relative chronology of the texts is more essential than their geographical background. Essential concepts like *punarṁṛtyu* did not migrate through North India with moving tribes, peoples or Vedic schools. The map (WITZEL, p. 202) showing the spread of the concept of recurrent death looks like a survey of the spread of cultures and archeological artefacts, but the situation of Vedic concepts and ideas requires a different approach.

The concept of *punarṛtīyū* is found in a limited number of texts which have one aspect in common: their lateness. WITZEL, o.c., p. 203, n. 260 collected about 40 passages with the help of VISHVA BANDHU's concordance s.v. *punarṛtīyū*. See also HORSCH, o.c., p. 140, n. 52 for some references to late Vedic Sūtras and a passage in AB. 8, 25, 2 which does not mention the term but deals with the concept: *na punar mriyate*. There are also a few references in the JB. left out by WITZEL, since they are not found in CALAND's *Das Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa in Auswahl* (Amsterdam 1919) and therefore are missing in VISHVA BANDHU'S concordance.

The lateness of the passage implies that they belong to a period in which the whole of North India including the Eastern part had an easy exchange of ideas.

The concept of redeath lost its significance as soon as the concepts of rebirth and release had become accepted. The limited period in which *punarṛtīyū* played a role indicates that it belonged to a period of transition to new ideas.

Most scholars interpret the concept of *punarṛtīyū* as a precursor of *punarjanman* in their theory of Vedic continuity. Rebirth would even be the logical outcome of redeath. HORSCH, o.c., p. 139 bluntly states: "Kein Zweifel besteht über den entwicklungsgeschichtlichen Zusammenhang von Wiedertod und Seelenwanderung".

Trying to save the Aryan continuity HORSCH, *Die Vedische Gāthā- und Śloka-Literatur*, Bern 1966, p. 478 observes on the transition from redeath to rebirth: "Übrigens: der Schritt vom Leben im Jenseits zum Wiedertod ist nicht größer als der vom Wiedertod zur Wiedergeburt im Diesseits. Am Arischen Ursprung des ersten Schlusses hat indes noch niemand gezweifelt".

In her thesis of 1971 *The historical significance of the first occurrences of the doctrine of transmigration in the early Upaniṣads* (Columbia

Univ., available on microfilm and xerox, Ann Arbor 1973/1985) Hyla Sturz CONVERSE attributed both the doctrine of rebirth and the concept of redeath to non-Aryan influences. Unfortunately CONVERSE ascribed almost everything to the indigenous people (associated by her with the Indus civilization, Dravidians and Proto-Jainism). The idea of life after death would be a late penetration of indigenous influence in the *Ṛgvedasamhitā*. The *punarṛtīyū* as well as the *Agnicayana* by which it can be overcome, are interpreted as indigenous concepts and institutions. I will not elaborately discuss this thesis which contains interesting observations side by side with pure nonsense and I will not deal with all the arguments adduced in support of the hypothesis that all the interesting developments are due to indigenous influence. I just quote some statements on the general position of *punarṛtīyū* in Vedic ideology:

"In the case of the *punarṛtīyū* references in the *Ṛgveda Brāhmaṇas* it would appear that the ritual structure, and the preoccupation of the priests with it, both provided a means of entry into Vedic religion for an indigenous conception, perhaps of rebirth, and at the same time masked it and reoriented it entirely to the ritual system" (p. 316); "... and the doctrine of *punarṛtīyū* may represent attempts to neutralize the transmigratory doctrine by adaptation and incorporation without relinquishing the importance of this life and this world" (p. 378f.); "Most scholars have held that the *punarṛtīyū* concept was an early stage in the development, from Vedic conceptions, of the doctrine of transmigration. However, (...) it would appear rather that the *punarṛtīyū* concept represents a stage in the incorporation of the indigenous doctrine of transmigration" (p. 390).

Why should Vedic ritualists have adopted the doctrine of rebirth in the form of an adaptation (namely redeath)? In all the passages where *punarṛtīyū* occurs, the result of this repeated death is not described. If redeath were only a stage in the introduction of the doctrine of rebirth, one would expect at least one or two passages where rebirth as the result of redeath is mentioned. The late GB. twice mentions *punarṛtīyū* side by

side with *punarājāti* (1,1,15; 1,3,22). Both are defeated. It is evident, however, that these passages do not play a role in a development from re-death to rebirth.

The point is that the texts do not dwell on re-death and the fear for it. It is the defeat of *punarṁṛtyu* which is emphasized, as was also realized by CONVERSE: "... and the emphasis is less on the view of existence from which the fear arose than on the fact of the ready remedy of ritual and its minutiae" (p. 390).

Actually, the problem of *punarṁṛtyu* always turns up together with its solution. This second death (in yonder world) is not treated as the common fate of all human beings. It is especially connected with the topic of the transitoriness of the (mostly ritual) merits. By implication most of the ritualistic claims on immortality are rejected. Only some specific rituals and particularly the esoteric knowledge connected with these rites qualify for eternal life in heaven.

It is hard to imagine that in the latest stage of the Vedic ritualistic literature some authorities would have spontaneously rejected the claims of all the previous ritualists and have introduced the transitoriness of the merits obtained by the rites described in the older texts. Or, to put it in other words: would the ritualists have doubted their own efficacy and have developed a fear for death in yonder world?

In my view the problem of *punarṁṛtyu*, introduced together with its solution and with emphasis on this solution, reflects the reaction of the ritualists to attempts made by non-ritualists to devalue the ritualistic claims. These ritualists probably tried to refute the opinion of other circles that ultimately the merits become exhausted in heaven. By defeating *punarṁṛtyu* real immortality is obtained. This victory is some sort of ritualistic *mokṣa*. CONVERSE observes that "it is significant to note that when the doctrine of transmigration does appear in the Vedic literature it immediately replaces that of *punarṁṛtyu*" (p. 390). I would rather say that as

soon as the doctrine of *mokṣa* obtained by non-ritual means appeared, the topic of becoming released from death in yonder world by means of particular rituals disappeared. There is no reason to substitute *punarṁṛtyu* by rebirth (which could easily be combined with *punarṁṛtyu* as its consequence).

The real substitution is that of sacrifice as the path leading to immortality by other methods of release. The *devayāna* as described by *ChU.* 5,10,1 and *BĀU.* 6,2,15 is reserved for the people in the *arāṇya*, whereas the ritualists in the *grāma* enter upon the *piṛyāna* (*ChU.* 5,10,3; *BĀU.* 6, 2, 16). By way of compromise knowledge of the *pañcāgnividyā* is also mentioned as a qualification for the *devayāna-mokṣa*. The five fires of this doctrine are represented as symbolic Agnihotra fires, but the actual performance of the Agnihotra hardly plays a role anymore. This is even more evident in the parallel passage *KaṣU.* 1,2. Knowledge and asceticism substitute the ritual.

It is difficult to prove or disprove that these ascetics and other people living in the *arāṇya* were non-Aryans. Moreover the problem of ethnicity is more difficult than sometimes assumed. The acculturation between Aryans and non-Aryans started already before the period of the oldest *Upaniṣads*.

It is clear, however, that the people in the *arāṇya* did not (exclusively) consist of retired sacrificers and one may suppose that the concept of *mokṣa* from rebirth originated with renouncers who were in competition with the Vedic orthodoxy of the ritualists. These renouncers need not be regarded as non-Aryans, but indigenous influence may have played a role.

The point is that Vedic literature (to some extent even including the *Upaniṣads*) was dominated by the ritualists and that other aspects of Vedic religion were hardly represented in the texts. Still there are some stray references to religious paths other than ritual.

In *TB*. 3, 12, 8, 5 the bricks of the fire-altar are (i. a.) interpreted as *sarya*, *śraddhā*, *tapas* and *dama*. According to *AB*. 2, 13 the gods reached heaven by means of *yajña*, *śrama* and *tapas*. *JUB*. 4, 26, 15 equates the three sacred fires with *karma* (sacrifice?), *śama* and *dama*. In the *Upaniṣads* enumerations of religious practices are found: *yajña*, *dāna*, *tapas*, *anāśaka* (*BĀU* 4, 4, 22); *yajña*, *mauna*, *anāśakāyana*, *araṇyāyana* (*ChU*. 8, 5, 1-3); *tapas*, *dāna*, *ārjava*, *dhimsā*, *satyavacana* (*ChU*. 3, 17, 4); *tapas*, *dama*, *karma* (*KeU*. 4, 8); *ṛta*, *sarya*, *tapas*, *dama*, *śama*, *agnayas*, *agnihotra*, hospitality, *mānuṣa* (read *mānasa*?), *prajā*, *sarya*, *tapas* (*TU*. 1, 9); *sarya*, *tapas*, *dama*, *śama*, *dāna*, *dhama*, *prajana*, *agnayas*, *agnihotra*, *yajña*, *mānasa*, *nyāsa* (*TĀ*. X = *MNU*. 505-516).

The ritualists and the non-ritualists form an opposition in the *pitṛvāna-devayāna* texts of *ChU*. and *BĀU*. The non-ritualists obtain *mokṣa* from the cycle of rebirths. Release from *punarṛtvyu* is the aim of the ritualists and is only found in some late *Brāhmaṇa*/*Araṇyaka* texts and in the *BĀU*. In the other *Upaniṣads* it no more plays a role. This means that the concept of release from *punarṛtvyu* is only found in a limited number of texts covering a very short period. It looks like an ultimate effort of the ritualists to hold their ground in a difficult period in which other aims were threatening the position of the sacrifice.

The theme of the victory over *punarṛtvyu* (to be regarded as a reaction against the scepticism of the non-ritualists who doubted the eternity of sacrificial merits and consequently of life in heaven) must have been developed somewhere in North India in the period when the latest strata of *Brāhmaṇa* literature were composed. If our hypothesis on the background of this theme is correct, there is no need to look for a geographical localisation of its origin. Reactions against the claims of Vedic ritualism may have arisen everywhere, though the outskirts of the traditional Aryan culture (especially the extreme East) would seem to be a probable place of origin.

WITZEL, o. c., p. 204-5 assumes that the starting-point lies with the *Sāṅḍilya* tradition of the late tenth book of the *ŚB*. and therefore concludes that the origin of the *punarṛtvyu* concept is to be found "not in the extreme East of Northern India, but in a more Western region" or even more to the south, where the *Jaiminīyas* may be localized (p. 205). However, *JB* 1, 245 describes a discussion at the court of Janaka of Videha in which a local Brahmin fears the competition of the Brahmins from the country of the Kurus and Pañcālas, travelling Brahmins who show contempt of the peoples beyond the borders of Aryan civilisation. Ultimately he turns out to know more than these Kuru-Pañcāla Brahmins and it is his claim that this knowledge will bring king Janaka beyond *punarṛtvyu*. Moreover, several other passages dealing with *punarṛtvyu* describe discussions in Videha, e. g. *JB* 1, 23-25. HORSCH, "Vorstufen", p. 141-142 emphasizes the connection with North East India.

HORSCH also attaches much importance to the association with the Kṣatriyas (p. 142). Now it is a fact that esoteric discussions often took place at the court of kings and that especially innovating aspects are often attributed to Kṣatriyas. However, the topic of a Kṣatriya who teaches a Brahmin a lesson is not significantly associated with the theme of the victory over *punarṛtvyu* (especially in comparison with the early passages on rebirth).

WITZEL (p. 205) draws attention to the fact that the Agnicayana and the Agnihotra play an important role in discussions on *punarṛtvyu* and in this connection observes: "It is to be noted that both rituals were of immediate concern for non-Brahmins as well; many Kṣatriyas take part in the discussions about the Agnihotra, a standard topic of the *brahmodayas* and other types of public debates. The Agnicayana was, due to its costs and the elaborate rituals involved, of interest especially to the royal families and the well-to-do gentry". However, the Agnicayana is not a specifically royal ritual like the Rājāsūya or the Aśvamedha and the performance of the Agnihotra for Kṣatriyas is even problematic according to some texts

tra. The performance of the ritual affects the situation of man and cosmos and actualizes the macro-microcosmic identification. The ritual has a threefold scope of action: itself, cosmos and man. It is also said that elements of the ritual are actually placed inside man himself.

The Brahmayajña is not a real *yajña*, not even a real sacrifice. It consists of the study and recitation of the Veda. On the Brahmayajña (= Svādhyāya) in relation to actual sacrifices on the one hand and the sphere of the *aranya* on the other see C. MALAMOU, *Le Svādhyāya, recitation personnelle du Veda. Taittirīya-Āraṇyaka Livre II*, Paris 1977, p. 5ff. MALAMOU (p. 9) rightly connects this Svādhyāya with the Ātmayajña.

For the relation between the Agnihotra and the Āmayajña substitute (in the form of the Prānāgnihotra) see BODEWITZ, *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa I, 1-65. Translation and commentary. With a study Agnihotra and Prānāgnihotra*, Leiden 1973, p. 213ff.

The interiorisation of the Agnicayana is evident in several Yajurvedic Upaniṣads: *MaiU.* (see VAN BUITENEN, *The Maitrāyaṇīya Upaniṣad*, The Hague 1962, *passim*; BODEWITZ, *o.c.*, p. 275ff.; the opening of the Upaniṣad even identifies the Agnicayana with Brahmayajña); *TU.* (see VAN BUITENEN, *o.c.*, p. 29ff.; BODEWITZ, *o.c.*, p. 291f.); *KaṭhU.* (BODEWITZ, *WZKS 29* (1985), p. 5-26); *ŚwU.* (Th. OBERLIES, *WZKS 32* (1988), 34-62.)

For our research the following places are not interesting: *AB.* 8,25 (Purohita), *ŚāṅkhB.* 25,1 (Viṣuvat), *TB.* 3,9,22,4 (*apunarṇāra* in connection with Aśvamedha); 3,10,10,4 (Agnicayana); *ŚB.* 2,3,3,9 (Agnihotra); *ŚB.* 10,6,5,8 (Aśvamedha); 11,4,3,20 (Mitravindā rite); 12,9,3, 11-12 (Sautrāmaṇī); *JB.* 1,6 (Agnihotra); 1,13 (Agnihotra); 1,23; 25 (Agnihotra); 2,350-351 (*punarṇṛyu* also called *nṛyu* in heaven; not in CALAND's *Auswahl*, not mentioned by WITZEL); *JUB.* 3,6,7,7-8; 4,12,2,6 (unless the connection between the Sāvitrī and Svādhyāya as a Brahmayajña is overemphasized); *GB.* 1,1,15; 1,3,22; *BŚS.* 2,11 (Agnyādhāna); 28,4

(see BODEWITZ, *The Daily Evening and Morning Offering (Agnihotra) according to the Brāhmaṇas*, Leiden 1976, p. 116-118).

It is rather to be observed that Kṣatriyas play a role as organisers of, or participants in, interesting esoteric discussions and that for some reasons the Agnicayana and the Agnihotra often formed the subject of these discussions.

Therefore we have to look for the ideological background of the passages in which *punarṇṛyu* (and especially its being overcome) play a role. The Agnicayana is undoubtedly important in this connection, but it is remarkable that the extensive treatment of this ritual in *ŚB.* 6-8 contains no references at all to the concept.

In my discussion of the *punarṇṛyu* passages I will only treat the elements which are essential for the claims on immortality. The theme of the victory over *punarṇṛyu* is found in the description of several rites which in this connection only once play a role and therefore are hardly relevant for our analysis. Moreover, several passages just mention the theme without giving any further information. Still a certain concentration on a limited number of rituals is to be discerned: the Agnicayana, the Agnihotra and the Brahmayajña.

These three rituals have one thing in common: the aspect of representing a symbolic sacrifice or of being sometimes substituted by a symbolic version. In this respect they may be associated with the debate between the ritualist and the non-ritualist. They seem to represent the answer of the traditional Vedic ritualist to the criticism of people outside the ritualistic circles who preferred wisdom (*vidyā* or *jñāna*) to action or ritual (*karma*). The interiorized ritual does not attach much importance to the actual performance. The symbolism, the knowledge of the implications and the relation to man himself are essential. The *adhijajña*, *adhidaiva* and *adhyaṅma* approach of Vedic religion is especially evident in the esoteric discussions on the Agnicayana and (to some extent) the Agniho-

(Prāyaścitti); *VādhS.* 3,9 (Agnvādhāna); *BĀU.* 1,2,7 (Aśvamedha; cf. *ŚB.* 10,6,5,8); 1,5,2; 2,10; 3,3,2; *HirŚS.* 18,4,61; *BGS.* 3,8,6.

The remaining text-places will be discussed. I start with the Agnicayana passages:

TB. 3,11,8,5-6 deals with the Nāciketa piling of the altar and forms the possible source of *KaṭhU.* 1. Actually it is a *Kaṭha* text inserted in *TB.* This particular piling of the altar removes *punarṁṛtyu* (and in the second boon of Nāciketas also the destruction of merits, the cause of *punarṁṛtyu*). The direct context does not explain the specific nature of this Nāciketa piling. Further on, however, in that section of the text which was no more translated by DEUSSEN, *Sechzig Upanishad's des Veda*, Leipzig 1897, p. 263 (see now P.-É. DUMONT, *ProcAPhS.* 95/6 (1951), p. 653) the interiorisation of this ritual becomes evident. Prajāpati threw gold into the fire. It did not satisfy him. Then he threw this gold into himself, into his heart, into Agni Vaiśvānara. We may connect this statement with *KaṭhU.* 1,14 (*nihītaṃ guhāyān*). See BODEWITZ, *WZKS* 29, p. 9-13 on the interior Agnicayana in this Upaniṣad.

ŚB. 10,1,4,14 equates the sacrificer who piles the altar with Agni, the immortal. A microcosmic counterpart of the ritual and the cosmic entity is produced. The tripartite aspect of the ritual is stressed just as in *KaṭhU.* 1,17-18 (see BODEWITZ, *o.c.*, 12-13).

ŚB. 10,2,6,19 deals with the immortality of the Agnicit in a context which again starts from the cosmic, ritual and the microcosmic tripartition.

ŚB. 10,4,3,9-10 (not mentioned by WITZEL, since the term *punarṁṛtyu* is missing, though the concept plays a role) makes a distinction between those who know an esoteric interpretation of the Agnicayana and those who do not. The latter become the victim of death again and again in yonder world, whereas the first come to life again after death and become immortal. Immortality is obtained after separation from the body,

the only prey of death. This means that the old ideal of living on in heaven with a (new) body is rejected. One may reach this immortality either through action or ritual (*karma*) or through knowledge (*vidyā*). The text, however, rectifies this statement by saying that the fire-altar (or the piling of this altar) is *karma* as well as *vidyā*. In my view this rejection of the opposition between *karma* and *vidyā* reflects the discussion current in those times on the preferable ways leading to immortality. The Brāhmana simply equates ritualism with the path of wisdom.

ŚB. 10,5,1,4 describes how on account of a particular knowledge of the piling of the altar the sacrificer passes the sun and leaves the world of mortality (cf. *JB.* 1,11: Agnihotra). The next paragraph (10,5,1,5) states that the body of the immortal then will consist of Ṛc, Yajus and Sāman (cf. *JB.* 1,2: Agnihotra). The text continues (10,5,2) with a tripartite equation in which the man in the sun, the gold man below the altar and the manikin in the right eye (a primitive conception of the soul) are identified. The threefoldness is again emphasized and 10,5,2,6 states that one need not mind destroying the altar (after the conclusion of the ritual), since it is yonder world. The ritual is just a means for establishing the immortality of the sacrificer.

ŚB. 10,6,1,4-9/11, though belonging to the Agnicayana section, deals with Agni Vaiśvānara which is variously interpreted by the participants in a debate with Aśvapati Kaikeya (a king). Aśvapati identifies Agni Vaiśvānara with man himself. The knowledge of Agni Vaiśvānara overcomes *punarṁṛtyu*. In the parallel *ChU.* 5,11-18 Agni Vaiśvānara is replaced by Ātman Vaiśvānara and the term *punarṁṛtyu* is no more used. The knowledge of the Ātman Vaiśvānara is here connected with a ritual (*ChU.* 5,18,2-5, 19-24), a symbolic sacrifice, an Ātmayajña, a Prāṇāgnihotra. Here the Upaniṣad also follows its source, since *ŚB.* 10,6,2 likewise continues with the eating of food; the threefold eater is the sun (cosmic), Agni (ritual) and the breath. Cf. *MaiU.* 6,2 *atha ya eṣo 'ntare hr̥pūṣkara evāśrīto 'nnam atti sa eṣo 'gnir divi śrītaḥ saurah* (an Upaniṣad dealing

with the interiorisation of the Agnicayana as well as of the Agnihotra). In the discussed passage the fire altar is placed inside man. The same is found in *KaṭhU.* 1,14.

The Brahmayajña is associated with defeating *punarṁṛtyu* in *ŚB.* 11,5,6,9, where it is also stated that one attains *sāmatā* with Brahman. In the next Brāhmaṇa (11,5,7) the daily study is praised and equated with ritual (11,5,7,3 "And whatever portion of the sacred poetry he studies for his lesson, with that ritual is sacrificed by him who knowing thus studies his lesson"). Study may substitute ritual and overcome redeath.

TĀ. 2,14,1 likewise deals with study (Adhyāya = Brahmayajña) in a passage on *punarṁṛtyu* and makes the one who studies reach *sāyujya* with Brahman, a turn of phrase also used by *SāṅkhB.* 21,1 in connection with smiting away death, the evil (an implicit *punarṁṛtyu* passage); see also *BGS.* 3,8,5-6 on reaching *brahmanas sāyujyaṃ salokatām* and overcoming *punarṁṛtyu*. Study is described as a symbolic sacrifice. See also *TĀ.* 2,19,1 on a *brahmapasthāna* which secures freedom from *punarṁṛtyu*. *BDhS.* 2,6,8-9 describes the Svādhyāya-Brahmayajña as a symbolic sacrifice (equation between ritual and microcosmic entities) which destroys *punarṁṛtyu*.

In *SāṅkhĀ.* 13,1 the Brahmayajña which drives away repeated death is associated with someone whose body is prepared for indifference to desire and concentration on the Ātman. The whole passage concerns meditation and the search for Brahman/Ātman.

ŚB. 12,3,4,11 (context: *sattra* and sacrifice in general) deals with placing all the worlds, all the gods, all the Vedas and all the vital powers (i.e. all the imperishable) inside oneself and conquering redeath.

JB. 1,46 mentions the situation of someone who does not overcome redeath, since he misses the required knowledge about his own identity. From *JB.* 1,49-50 and 1,18 it appears that one can become more successful by knowing one's non-individuality and by identifying oneself with

the highest deity, the sun. The successful soul obtains *salokatā* with the sun (1,50), the unsuccessful one (1,46) does not return to earth for rebirth. He stays during some time in a world won by his merits and ultimately will be reached by redeath. Implicitly the Agnihotra plays a role in the defeat of *punarṁṛtyu*.

JB. 1,245-246 (Jyotiṣṭoma) comments upon three Virājs: the cosmic, the sacrificial and the human, by which one may get rid of redeath. This reminds us of the threefold approach in the Agnicayana.

JB. 1,252 (not found in CALAND's *Auswahl* and not containing the term *punarṁṛtyu* and therefore not mentioned by WITZEL) deals with death in heaven (cf. *JB.* 2,350) which is passed and states that someone who knows particular numeral agreements between Stomas in the Jyotiṣṭoma and cosmic as well as microcosmic entities, will not die again (*na punar mriyate*). The ideology of the Ātmayajña is present in so far as one places oneself in all the mentioned cosmic entities (especially referring to the year and its subdivisions) and thereby cosmifies oneself. The threefold approach is again striking. It is also remarkable that the body is regarded as the evil, death, which should be overcome. Cf. *JUB.* 3,7,1,10, where it is stated that with a body one becomes the victim of death and that the bodyless is immortal. The old Vedic ideal of continuing life in heaven with a perfect body has already become defeated by new conceptions in which immortality loses its connection with an incorporated individual.

Most of the passages discussed above deal with the Agnicayana and the Brahmayajña. The contribution of the Agnihotra is less conspicuous, though there are many contexts in which *punarṁṛtyu* is found that belong to Agnihotra sections. Probably these rituals were especially associated with religious aims which retained some relevance in later times.

TU. 1,9 and *TĀ.* 10 (= *MNU.*) mention together *agnayas* and *agnihotra* among the aims in life lower than *saṁnyāsa* (see quotation above). I think that *agnayas* should refer to the several types of *agnicitis*.

The Agnicayana forms the central ritualistic and esoteric subject of Yajurvedic Upaniṣads like the *MaiU.*, the *KaṭhU.*, the *ŚvetU.* and the *TaiU.* The Agnihotra also plays a role in the *MaiU.* Here we are in the sphere of the symbolic or interiorized rituals, the Ātmayajñas. Probably both the Agnicayana and the Agnihotra formed the ultimate foundations of the ritualists in the competition of the paths of salvation. It was their symbolism rather than the actual performance which carried weight and in this respect these Vedic rituals (together with the pseudo-ritual of the Brahmayajña) could be associated with defeating *punarmṛtyu*.

It is evident that the concept of *punarmṛtyu* which is almost exclusively found in passages where its defeat is described, should be interpreted in the context of an antagonism between ritualism and other paths leading to final bliss. The defeat of *punarmṛtyu* is the answer of the ritualists (the Brahmins) to the challenge of the non-ritualists who say that ultimately everybody will die in the heaven promised by the Brahmins. The only passage in *AB.* dealing with *punarmṛtyu* (8,25) conspicuously defends the position of the Brahmin (in this case as the Purohita). Here, in this relatively old passage, where the ritual hardly plays a role, still no concessions are made to new ideas, but in the later texts almost all the old Vedic ideals concerning life after death are given up. Overcoming *punarmṛtyu* does not produce individual immortality but amounts to selfannihilation in Brahman, i.e. some sort of *mokṣa*. For such a release, however, one does not need a ritual. Even the Ātmayajña, the last strategic weapon of the ritualistic texts, could not avail against meditation and non-ritual practices.

Yājñavalkya's Curse

JOEL P. BRERETON

The advance of Vedic studies has generally come about through careful examination of specific items that can then provide the basis for broader hypotheses. This paper concerns a single item in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, but it is a detail that reveals significant features both of the language of the late Veda and of the rhetorical strategies of this Upaniṣad. It occurs in *BĀU(M)* 2.4.6 *brāhma tāṃ pārādāt / yò 'nyātrāmāno brāhma vēda kṣatrām tāṃ pārādād yò 'nyātrāmānaḥ kṣatrām vēda lokās tāṃ pārādāt yò 'nyātrāmāno lokān vēda devās tāṃ pārādāt yò 'nyātrāmāno devān vēda bhūtāni tāṃ pārādāt yò 'nyātrāmāno bhūtāni vēda sārvaṃ tāṃ pārādād yò 'nyātrāmānaḥ sārvaṃ vēdedāṃ brāhmedāṃ kṣatrām ime lokā ime devā imāni bhūtānidāni sārvaṃ yād ayām ātmā*.¹ The problem I address concerns the verb *pārādāt/pārādāt*. Translators have shown some uncertainty about how to deal with this verb.² Often they have chosen to render it by the present tense. So, for example, EDGERTON³ translates: "The brahman caste renounces him who thinks the brahman caste any-

¹ *BĀU(K)* 2.4.6 is identical. See C. PÉREZ COFFIE, *Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad II: Critical Edition to the Second Chapter of the Kāṇva Recension According to Accented Manuscripts* (PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 1994). The passage occurs again also in *BĀU(M)* 4.5.7, which after *devās tāṃ pārādāt ... devān vēda* adds *vedās tāṃ pārādāt yò 'nyātrāmāno vedān vēda yajñās tāṃ pārādāt yò 'nyātrāmāno yajñān vēda*. K 4.5.7 adds only the reference to the vedas and omits that to the yajñas.

² E.g., R. HUME, *The Thirteen Principal Upaniṣads* (London, 1931), 100. HUME understands the verb as an aorist and therefore translates it as a preterite ("has deserted"). But he then imports the notion of a gnomic aorist into the Upaniṣads as a justification for translating either "deserts" or even "would desert."

³ F. EDGERTON, *The Beginning of Indian Philosophy* (Cambridge MA, 1965), 167 (translating *BĀU(M)* 4.5.7).

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