



Aitareya and Kausitaki Brahmanas – A Translation

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Introduction

Dear All, the translation of Rig Veda Mantra Samhita is complete only with the respective Brahmana translations. The two Brahmanas under consideration are Aitareya and Kausitaki Brahmanas. The major shrauta rites will be discussed in the separate thread of 'Yagnas and Yagas - A Workbook'.

For now, let me start with Aitareya Brahmana and then move on to Kausitaki.

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Introduction to a Vedic Style of Life

The basic concept of Rig Vedic society emphasizes on three levels of existence for every human being. They are the external, internal and cosmic existence. The external level is where we conduct our so called normal life. In this normal life everyone should abide with the Vedic karmas. The Vedic karmas are basically classified into two:

- 1) Samaskara oriented (as per Grihya Sutras)
- 2) Yajna oriented (as per Shruti and Smriti)

The Samaskara oriented life revolves around the Purifying, Cultivating and Augmenting Samaskaras. The Purifying Samaskaras are discussed more in depth in Atharva Veda (as this Veda deals more with the external existences, manifestations, mantra shastra etc).

The Purifying Samaskaras are 8 in number. They are:

- 1) Garbandhana
- 2) Punsavana
- 3) Simantonnayana
- 4) Jata karma
- 5) Namakarana
- 6) Nishkramana
- 7) Anna prashana
- 8) Chaula karma

The Cultivating Samaskaras are 8 in number. They are:

- 1) Karnavedha
- 2) Upanayana
- 3) Vratadesha
- 4) Veda Swadhyaya
- 5) Keshanta
- 6) Snanam
- 7) Vivaha or Panigrahana
- 8) Agni Panigraha

The Augmenting Samaskaras are 5 in number. They are:

- 1) Sharira Shuddhi
- 2) Dravya Shuddhi
- 3) Agha Shuddhi
- 4) Enah Shuddhi
- 5) Bhava Shuddhi

As we discuss the Samskaras, we find that most of them were part of the society. But some are meant for the external state of being, which is connected to the internal and cosmic existences like a bridge. So there is flexibility in this aspect. Those which are societal can be pursued by any one according to his/her liking. However, there are some which are mandatory, and these bring all round progress and better living. This has to be adhered to for a higher life. I have mentioned earlier about the three types of Samaskaras and the possibility of individual choices, now I will outline the mandatory Samskaras everyone have to practice.

Here is a brief explanation of the purifying Samaskaras. They are:

- 1) Namakarana: The naming ceremony of the child.
- 2) Anna Prashana: The rite where the first solid food is fed to the child.

These have to be adhered to mandatorily.

Here is a brief explanation of the cultivating Samaskaras.

They are:

- 1) Upanayana: The sacred thread ceremony (various colors signify the various castes)
- 2) Vratadesha: The ceremony of enabling the student to learn Vedas by observing holy practices
- 3) Veda Swadhyaya: Learning Vedas and literature
- 4) Vivaha: Marriage
- 5) Agni Panigraha: The ceremony of installing the fire in the house by the married couple.

Here is a brief explanation to the augmenting Samskaras mentioned earlier.

They are:

- 1) Sharira Shuddhi: It is the purification of body and practicing of the holy bath to bring in additional energy that will set the mental and physical faculties at its active best.
- 2) Dravya Shuddhi: It is the consecration of the articles one uses. The incoming wealth can be consecrated by distributing a part of it to satwic activities, such as donation. Also, food should be cooked with at most care as 'anna' is the source of prana, and should be freed of possible impurities of all nature, utensils etc.
- 3) Agha Suddhi: It is the purification of body and mind after attending a funeral rite. The effect of this can be on subtle body also.
- 4) Enah Shuddhi: It is the purification of new arrivals and departures in the family. This is because the family is considered as an ecosystem.
- 5) Bhava Shuddhi: It is the purification of mental and spiritual levels. The mind is constantly active in the external world. For a human being, this depletes the spiritual and mental wattage in him/her .So this should be considered as a rebuilding process.

Post the discussions on the essential Samaskaras; let's move on to the external life in a more specific way. Every human being is unique. It's been mentioned that every one has one unique skill which makes them different from others. This unique skill with least effort will bring the Purusharthas. Usually skills like singing, painting etc get easily identified in people. But a majority find it difficult to understand what is unique about them. This can be identified by a competent guru. Thus, the external life led with this identified skill, collectively with the Vedic practices adhered, will build the bridge to the cosmic and internal levels of existences. The internal existence is the understanding of the subtle nature, the subtle

body, the faculties, the subtle senses etc. When we look at the corpus of the Vedas, we find that the literal meaning is very beautiful. The words and the concepts when read by anyone focused in external life only appear splendid. However, the vedic corpus, has two more levels of existences, more beautiful than poetry. One among them is the multilevel existence of deities. Let's explain this with one deity as an example, say Indra. Indra is the king of Devas and he is praised beautifully in various hymns. But at the internal level, Indra is the mind. When with this understanding one looks into the hymns a new meaning emerges from it. When Indra is invoked with the correct intonations as per the correct procedure, he is perceived in the cosmic level. The correct set of procedures and the underlying sankalpa for each invocation is understood primarily through the Brahmana texts. Thus, a complete life is possible with the understanding, practice and deployment of vedas as per one's life in the three realms. Yagna oriented Vedic karma comes as a tool for the success at all the three levels.

With this prelude, let me start with the Aitareya Brahmana.

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Aitareya Brahmana: Pacika 1

Soma Sacrifice

Consecration Sacrifice AB 1

The consecration sacrifice under the Soma sacrifice is the beginning of this Brahmana. The importance of consecration and its relevance is known to all. The word consecration means "making sacred". Hence, the first step here essentially means purifying oneself for the yagna. The 1-6 verses of Aitareya Brahmana, deals with this process.

1. The Agni is the lowest of the Gods and Vishnu the highest and all the other Gods exist between them. So we have to offer eleven potsherds of cake (rice), three for Vishnu and the remaining eight for Agni. Eight symbolizes the metre Gayathri which is the metre of Agni as well. In celestial presence, Agni and Vishnu are the terminal forms of the sacrifice. All deities are therefore equivalent to Vishnu and Agni. A pap of ghee is offered by those who do not have any form of support on earth (which essentially means unmarried). The ghee offered is from the milk of the cow (the woman) and the rice grains (the men) which when paired gives propagation (either as offspring, cattle or wealth).

This is the essential basis for grasping the yagna. Once this concept is grasped, then the deities are grasped by performing the full moon and new moon sacrifices. This full moon and new moon sacrifices are done as oblations with which one consecrates himself (as per Acvalayana Chrauta Sutra(ACS), the new and full moon sacrifices should precede the Agrayana , Nirunhapacu , the Chaturmasyas and Soma sacrifice). Now the kindling verses are recited which are seventeen in number (15 from Acvalayana Chrauta Sutra (i.2.7) and 2 Dhayyas (iv.2.1) or the fifteen prescribed in Cankhayana Crauta Sutra (CCV) (v.3.3)) are recited. Prajapathi is seventeen fold i.e. 12 months and the five seasons. Thus, one year is taken as Prajapathi for time references.

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Consecration Sacrifice AB 2-3

2. Each libation (ahuti) is done chanting the name of the God. For the offerings to come towards Gods, they have been named, so as to identify the names with the right ones. Now comes the ways in which the Gods are called; how this is done decides the sacrificer's pathways or passage to ascend to heaven. Here a hotr (leader among Rig Veda Ritvij, a group of priests) invokes the Gods in the right ways and the Adhvaryu (the leader in among the yajur veda Ritvij) pours the libations.

3. Once this is completed, the consecrated one is like an embryo, clear of all faults and pure. Water is sprinkled on him symbolizing the nurturing of this consecrated seed. Now with fresh butter, the sacrificer is anointed completely, as the Devas appertain this to the melted butter to which they are associated with. Now the brilliance of consecration enters him. With 21 handful of dharba, the consecrated one is purified. He is then escorted to a hut which is consecrated; just like an embryo is sent back to its womb. The sun will rise and set everywhere except the hut of this consecrated. The sacrificer should remain aloof from the sun till the process is completed. Now he is covered with a garment like the caul of the embryo, above which there is a black antelope skin just like the placenta covering the embryo. He closes his hand like an embryo and clasps the sacrifice and the deities in his hands (sankalapa). Then he looses the black antelope skin and descends to the final bath. Now, the garment is dropped, like the embryo is freed from the placenta. With this act the sacrificer is born as the new consecrated child devoid of impurities or blemishes.

Consecration Sacrifice AB 4

4. Agni, the ever extending, and Soma, the wondrous are invited with the inviting verses. The verses used are RV 5.13.4 and 1.91.9. (refer KB 1.1 and CCS 2.2.13). These are the first offerings (butter portions) of the one who has never done oblations or libations before. Then he extends the sacrifice to the higher realms by extending the Agni with the verses in RV 5.13.4. Now, the Agni in the previous offering embraces the oldest form of Agni with the RV 8.44.12 and Soma is

asked to enter the lives with the RV 1.91.11. Now the recital is made considering Agni as the one who slays the enemies and Soma as the lord. The offering is done remembering the slaying of vrtra. The verses used for achieving this are RV 6.16.34 (slaying of enemies by invoked and praised Agni) and RV 1.91.5 (Soma being remembered as the one who gives Indra the divine strength to vanquish vrtra). Now the Agni and Vishnu are given oblations. The verses used are not from RV, it's from ACS (5.2.3). However, I would like to add a strictly personal modification to this step as ACS is not available and difficult to learn. There are reasons for this modification being made with RV.

1) RV is used for invocation in all Crauta rites.

2) A specific metre Gayatri can bring in the same result of invoking any Ista and consecrating them. Also, Trishtup metre is for empowerment. Hence I recommend the verses RV 1.1.2 and RV 1.1.5 (in Gayatri metre) (where the Agni is invited to the ceremony and requested to carry the havi to other deities) and RV 1.76.2(in Trishtup metre) (where the Agni is asked to be the hota, and help in protecting all realms and also perform the offerings to the deities). Lord Vishnu can be invoked with Purusha Sukta and empowered with RV 1.154.2 (the praise of Lord Vishnu as the one who conquered three worlds). Agni and Vishnu are the consecration of all Gods, the lords of consecration. Thus, the lords of consecration are delighted and they bestow the consecration on the one

Consecration Sacrifice AB 5

5. The Gayatri verses [RV 3.11.2 and RV.3.11.1] are for inviting, invoking and offering. The result of these verses is the bestowing of splendor and brilliance.

Ushnih verses [RV 1.79.4 and 5] are for those who desire long life, a life with complete awareness through all living days.

Anushtup verses [RV 1.45.1 and 2] are for those who desire heaven. The two Anushtup has 64 syllables. Each of the three worlds has 21 subtle levels stretching upwards. This means $21 \times 3 = 63$ syllables to mount the three worlds, and then with the last syllable, one is supported in the world of heaven. This is the power which one gets after knowing the subtle essence of Anushtup.

Brhati verses [RV 7.16.1 and 3] provide prosperity and glory. The one now use the verses and will always enjoy prosperity both external and internal.

Pankti verses [RV 5.6.1 and 2] are used by those who desire the sacrifice. The sacrifice is five fold and the one should use these verses for achieving the same.

Trishtup verses [RV 1.95.1 and 2] provide strength, force, power etc; the one uses these verses now for the same.

Jagathi [RV 5.11.1 and 2] verses are for those who desire cattle and the one uses these verses now for the same.

Viraj verses [RV 7.1.3 and 18] should be used for proper food and the one uses these verses now for the same.

These verses are used for external and subtle consecration.

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Consecration Sacrifice AB 6

6. Viraj is a metre of five strengths; three padas, Usnih and Gayathri. Each pada has 11 syllables, and the three padas put together make the 33 syllables along with the other 33 syllables that form the Anushtup (66 syllables). As explained earlier Anushtup is 64 syllables. The difference of one or two syllable does not distinguish the metre. Hence, Viraj has five-fold strength. One meter exists in another meter and hence it has the strength of all meters on which the world exists (the electromagnetic existence of world is understood by those who can perfect this metrical system), and the one who knows Viraj attains the identity and form of the world.

He becomes an eater of food, a lord of the food and his offsprings from whom he gets the food; the complete cycle will be known to him. Therefore, the Viraj verses to be used are RV.7.1.3 and 18, with salutations to Agni requesting him to be kindled. The consecrated joins the holy order and its truth. The one who is consecrated can only speak this truth. With this consecration, a man should always speak truth which makes him equivalent to Deva; but the truth should be as seen by the discerning eye, the third eye, which sees distinctly. This is the eye bestowed on men which sees the truth. So when someone asks "Have you seen?" and the reply is "Yes, I have seen" with no doubt, his speech is then, just the essential truth, as seen by the discerning eye. Thus, the one is consecrated.

Consecration Sacrifice, the first chapter is completed. Next, is the second chapter on Introductory Sacrifice done by the consecrated being.

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Adhyaya – 2

The introductory Sacrifice AB 7

In the beginning after consecration, the consecrated performs a sacrifice which is an introductory sacrifice. This sacrifice ascends him to heaven, as it is of expanding type in itself. This sacrifice is ideally expiration; an out breathing, through which one shackles the bondage of life with the last out breath. It's the Hotr (the Rigvedi priest) who is common in performing the expiration. He arranges the breaths for its discrimination, as the special ratios of breath with chants are to be adhered to for the successful completion of this. This can be adjusted by the way in which chanting is done.

A calculated breath pattern and intonations should be adhered. If this is not done, the sacrifice does not reach the Gods as one cannot connect with the Gods. The Gods say to Aditi, the Goddess of infinity, "Through you let us perceive this sacrifice in subtle levels", Aditi says "You can, provided you all give me a boon". To this the Gods agree and say "Choose the boon" Aditi replies "The sacrifices should begin and end with me". The Gods agreed.

The out breath resonates in the infinite space and ends with sacrifice. Let me stretch it to Taittiriya Samhita of Yajur Veda for the ritualistic aspects. In TS [4.4.12.14], Aditi is addressed Vishnupatni, the one who governs everything and the power of Vishnu, the highest among Gods as per A.B 1. It is on her governance and energy, this sacrifice is conducted from beginning to end. So the first and the last pap are offered to Aditi which concludes the sacrifice for the boon she has chosen. With the boon she blesses the consecrated one " Through me, you understand the eastern quarter, through Agni

the south, through Soma the west and through savitr the north". This is the secretive detail of the path one takes from being consecrated to door steps of heaven. The offering verse for the Pathya [RV 10.63.15 and 16] is performed and the sun rises in the east in the beginning and sets in the west at the end (this is the cycle of sacrifice, where fire represents the elemental form of sun). Pathya [RV 10.63.15 and 16] are on the nourishment of the earth. In subtle level or antaryaga concepts, the fire rests on the Agni chakra well rooted on the Mooladhara which represents the element earth. The fire which is in the south is the one who conquers the anthariksha loka, the second loka after Prithvi loka where the consecrated sits. Now he offers to Agni [RV 1.189.1 and RV 10.2.3], with the offering, the plants ripe first from the south. The plants are connected to Agni, and its primordial growth represents the subtle element of growth with one's level of awareness. The expansive nature of Agni which is fixed on the earth kindles itself and grows accepting the offerings and expands to higher realms. Now he chants the offering verses of Soma [RV 1.91.1, RV 1.91.4], for the westward flowing rivers as the water is connected to with Soma. The verses mentioned considers Soma connected to water. This is the second level of subtle existence, the swadhistana. The verses mention all the forefathers from whom one is created and this subtle centre is responsible for progeny. Soma the God of delight has been invoked to know this centre beyond all limits.

Now he says the offering verses [R.V 10.82.7] to Savitr, with which one blows towards North West. The blows are instigated with Savitr. This verse glorifies the pure heart of one; the heart which is not eclipsed by absence of knowledge of creator, the Maya. In subtle level, this is the verse that extends to the Anahata chakra, the seat of heart. The ride for the consecrated one's ascent is made possible by the blow of air (element associated with the chakra) which is instigated by Savitr. The last offering for Aditi is made with verses [RV 10.63.10, RV 7.6.2], the earth is wet by the rain, there by binding the five-fold sacrifices as it includes the five Devas. The binding of the three worlds by the invocation of deities of all the three lokas at the cosmic levels and with the shower of Amrita; the three levels of knots is removed internally with the shower of delight and the shower of rain nourishes the mother earth externally. Thus all regions are in order. For the regions to be in order the people must be too and this is what a Hotr knows.

Introductory Sacrifice AB 8

One who desire brilliance and splendor, should offer his libations to East. With this quarter one acquires brilliance and grandeur. The one who desires food should offer his libation to the southern quarter as Agni is the lord that consumes all the food and nourishes. Thus, by conquering southern quarter, one becomes the lord of food, consumes and nourishes himself and his offspring also in future. The eastern quarter is the seat of wisdom in one's body and with wisdom one conquers the subtle existence. The wisdom should be splendid for perceiving the deeper subtle worlds and their dynamics. The southern quarter of one in the internal sense is the Agni chakra where all food is consumed by Agni and here Agni is the lord of the food. In turn this nourishes the one who consumes and hence he also becomes the lord of the food by conquering this quarter and he can create offspring of healthy nature. The one who desires for cattle should offer his libations to the West. Water is cattle; it understands and acquires the cattle. With this offering, one understands the tatwa of water and it's the Swadistana which is associated with the animal instinct in humans. Now the one who desires the drinking of Soma should offer his libations to the North as Soma is the king of the North. He thus obtains the Soma to drink and turns north, the upward region. The upward region is the heaven and in all the four quarters he ascends and progresses. Thus, he understands the primeval instincts and they are cleansed as he drinks the elixir of divine delight, the Soma and ascends to the higher lands of heaven. These worlds are turned towards one another. The subtle body has heaven associated with the Anahata. Aditi, the Vishnupathi is seated in the heart. The creation starts there and dissolves back there from all directions. The world turns towards the one who knows this secret of the fivefold sacrifice and shines with prosperity.

For the path, he says the offering verse (to Aditi; here he begins his journey) in the beginning of the sacrifice as he brings in the speech. Agni is the expiration, the final out breath which celebrates death (here the subtle level is addressed). Agni carries the out breath which contains all that to be left behind in the subtle level back to the nature. Soma is the inspiration; the root of delight is with the intake of breath, the prana and the revelation to the secret communion and receiving it fully. Savitr facilitates the forward urge. Savitr is the transcending force which facilitates the ascent. Aditi provides for the support, the ascent needs binding, as every out breath can result in the lowering of energy levels.

So Soma is guided by savitr to the level which is supported by Aditi and then the out breath of Agni cleanses the next level of ascend and the process goes on. With confidence, he says the offering verse to path, and thus with this speech he brings forth the sacrifice to the path. If you observe carefully, what is mentioned above is the breathing act. As humans we do it involuntarily which makes it a path from life to death, from the first in breath, to last out breath. Here by truthfully

offering his verse to the path, one changes his awareness from normal breathing to subtle breathing which includes divine participation of subtle force; the Devas. Agni and Soma are the eyes; Savitr brings forth the forward urge and Aditi the support. The Gods detect the sacrifice with the eyes; the eyes which cannot be detected. Even after a man wanders in confusion, he perceives with this eye, and he immediately detects the divine presence, which the normal eyes cannot see. It's the perception that is blessed when the ordinary sight is replaced by sights of Soma and Agni, the divine eyes. Then one sees the Devas and becomes one with the Gods, discerning his sacrifice. By the eyes the God distinguish the sacrifice and it will not be distinguished if the consecrated one does not have the same vision. Thus after wandering in confusion, if he perceives than sees, then the sacrifice is being distinguished by him. The Gods also distinguish the sacrifice then, and assemble together. The sacrifice gets extended to from earth, where it's performed. The Gods are gathered together for Aditi in the earth. Thus, he says the offering verse to Aditi in the closure of the sacrifice, with which the distinguishing of the sacrifice happens. The heaven is revealed to him. Here, the Gods are being visualized by the perception that one gets as replacement of his mortal sight. This perception comes with the verses and their subtle working with intonations. Firm rooted on earth, with Aditi as the base on the subtle level, the Hotr invokes the guardians of the various directions and takes their strength and garners their strengths. Now with the closure of sacrifice, with Aditi in the elevated level and with the strong support of Savitr, he for once changes his position to a new offset of existence from where he can visualize the heavens.

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Introductory Sacrifice AB 9

The subjects of the Gods are brought in order which results in the subjects of men to be brought in order. This brings all the subjects in order and also brings the sacrifice in order along with the people. A hotr who knows this invokes the subject of Gods; the Maruts [RV.10.63.15]. The Maruts are the path makers from earth to heaven, and the verses mentioned here from RV is dedicated to VishwaDeva ; the set of Devas whom we invoked by offering the pap with individual verses in the beginning. Now just like pearls that are strung to form a garland, the Maruts are the string who bring the order of sacrifice. With all the metres, he chants the offering verses for the Gods and sacrifices the meters.

By the sacrifices of these metres Gods originally conquered the heaven. And once the person who performs the sacrifice of the all metres thus ascends to heaven [RV.10.63.16: svasti verses for pathya]. These verses are in Tristup meter which provide the strength or force for the journey. In the physical body, the water element predominates and the Maruts control the flow and distribution of it. The Tristup meters offered here for Maruts helps the ascent on this limited existence,

providing control over water and its limitations on human body. Now the Agni is invoked and strengthened in Tristup verses as guide [RV.1.189.1 , RV.10.2.3], Soma is invoked and strengthened in Tristup verses as friend [RV.1.91.1, R.V.1.91.4], Savitr is invoked in Gayatri meter as the supporter [RV.5.82.7 , RV.5.82.9] and Aditi invoked in the Jagati meter as the vehicle [RV.10.63.10 and AV.7.6.2] [AV : Atharva Veda : the protection verses]. The meters tristup, gayatri, jagati are independent here and the others are dependent on the Gods, as their nature of invocation is determined by the meter. By the means of meters, the one who sacrificed did the sacrifice for all meters by chanting the verses

Introductory Sacrifice AB 10

The inviting verses and offering of oblations mention the steps of moving ahead, right from advancement to prosperity. Sacrificing to every God who holds each individual path and gaining the heaven is equivalent to the Gods themselves earning the heavens. Hence, the person who sacrifices should sacrifice with the Gods to become eligible for heaven. If the offering to the Maruts in the beginning is made without the notification to Maruts, who control the atmosphere, one cannot progress higher. If one tries to trespass the atmosphere without a notification to them, he/she will be obstructed and crushed by the Maruts. The ability of the mortal man to traverse through heaven is limited to the very control over one's body which is determined by how the path maker, Maruts; strings him/her to the path and carries him/her. By offering the verses [RV.10.63.15], the Maruts who are the subjects of Gods provide the person who conducts the sacrifice a faster ascent without obstructing or crushing him/her. The ascent to the heaven will be faster for the one who knows this. The verses of invitation and offering for Svistakrt are in the Viraj metre of 33 syllables. The verses are RV 7.1.14 and RV.7.1.15 (the Agni svistakrt; with Agni invoked here as the glorious Agni that's above all, please refer to Kanva Shatapatha Brahmana for Svistakrt oblation). Viraj meter brings glory among the glorious by divine nourishment. In this world the meter is for the procurement of food and nourishment. Gods won the heaven having offered sacrifices with the two Viraj meters, and hence the one who sacrifices also offers the two Viraj verses and wins the heaven. They are of 33 syllables [33 vedic Gods (8 vasus , 11 rudras, 12 adityas , Prajapathi and vasat)] with which each sacrifice from beginning ; the subtle Gods are delighted with the attributed syllables. Thus the vessel of Gods delighted from syllable to syllable (by sacrifice of each syllable) and ascends one to the heaven.