

शब्दानुगमः
Indian linguistic studies
in honor of
George Cardona

Volume II
Historical linguistics, Vedic, etc.

edited by
PETER M. SCHARF

17 February 2022

Scharf, Peter M., ed. शब्दानुगमः: *Indian linguistic studies in honor of George Cardona*, volume 2, *Historical linguistics, Vedic, etc.* Providence: The Sanskrit Library, 2021.

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ISBN vol. 1: 978-1-943135-01-1

ISBN vol. 2: 978-1-943135-02-8

ISBN set: 978-1-943135-03-5

The Sanskrit Library
89 Cole Avenue
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Table of contents

Preface	iii
Contributors	xi
Tables of contents	xv
Formation of the Indo-Iranian languages: locations and dates according to archaeological evidence ASKO PARPOLA	1
Stative perfects DON RINGE	85
Ved. -anta, Gk. -οντο, and the thematic aorist in Vedic and Greek LAURA GRESTENBERGER	99
A deeper look at Vedic <i>vidh-</i> and Old Avestan <i>vīd-</i> ‘honor, serve’ ADAM A. CATT	127
Avestan meter and the problem of catalectic pādas WILLIAM W. MALANDRA	153
The development of <i>r</i>-clusters and syllabic <i>r</i> in the Aśokan Rock Edicts YASUKO SUZUKI	171
Vedic view of language as power SHASHIPRABHA KUMAR	207

How to define the god of fire: fresh perspectives on Yāska's etymologies of <i>agni</i> YUTO KAWAMURA	221
Testing the <i>Anukramaṇī</i> GEORGE DUNKEL	241
The changing face of the <i>Śaunakīya Atharvaveda</i> MADHAV M. DESHPANDE	259
<i>Tat tvam asi</i> once again: philological and linguistic considerations HANS HENRICH HOCK	277
Dual varṇa in Vedic texts LAUREN M. BAUSCH	293
On the poetics of the first poem: genre, aesthetics, and sentiment in the <i>Vālmīkirāmāyaṇa</i> ROBERT P. GOLDMAN	323
Layers of memory: some Homeric problems from a Vedic (and Old English) perspective EDWIN D. FLOYD	355
Why did Bharata mention just four figures of speech? EDWIN GEROW	391
Lost in edition: punctuation in an Indian monastic code JOSEPH LAROSE	403
On the unreliability of Tibetan translations for the reconstruction of the original text of Buddhist Sanskrit works: observations on rNgog lo tsa ba's translation of Yamāri's <i>Pramāṇavārttikālaṅkāranibandha</i> ELI FRANCO and KARIN PREISENDANZ	421

The theory of demonstration in the <i>Nyāyabhāṣya</i>: the preceding stage of Dignāga's apoha theory	
KYO KANO	459
Arthāpatti in Kumāriḷa's <i>Tantravārttika</i>	
KIYOTAKA YOSHIMIZU	489
Some remarks on word order in Garhwali and Kashmiri	
PETER EDWIN HOOK	523
Index of primary texts cited	533
Author index	551

Dual varṇa in Vedic texts*

LAUREN M. BAUSCH

Abstract: Adheesh Sathaye (2015) casts Viśvāmitra as both a brāhmaṇa and a kṣatriya in the Brāhmaṇa texts. Building on the work of Arthur Anthony Macdonell and Arthur Berriedale Keith, as well as Brian Smith, who defines varṇa as a classificatory scheme, this paper uncovers vestiges of a religious basis in middle and late Vedic texts for a person to hold, simultaneously, more than one varṇa. In the Vedic period, dual varṇa was possible because brāhman, kṣatrá, and víś could be understood as inherent powers incorporated in the body. These powers functioned cooperatively to expand dominion, which metaphorically stood for the integration of the manifest and unmanifest worlds in one’s mind.

Keywords: Vedic, varṇa, powers, religious goals, dominion, the unmanifest

1 Introduction

While recognized in the *R̥gveda*, varṇa is more fully developed, but still fluid, in middle and late Vedic. Macdonell and Keith (1912: 248–

*This paper builds on observations made in my dissertation and responds to Steven Lindquist’s talk about “Varṇa in Late Vedic Narrative,” which was given on the occasion of *Self, Sacrifice, and Cosmos: Late Vedic Thought, Ritual, and Philosophy—A conference in honor of the Contributions of Prof. Ganesh Umakant Thite* at UC Berkeley on 24 September 2016. I presented versions of this paper at the 227th meeting of the American Oriental Society in Los Angeles and at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts in New Delhi in 2017. I am grateful to these learned audiences for their questions and feedback, and to G. U. Thite, Peter Scharf, Stephanie Jamison, ShashiPrabha Kumar, and Nathan McGovern for commenting on earlier drafts.

50) observed that the threefold division into bráhmaṇ, kṣatrá, and víś occurs at *R̥gveda* 8.35.16–18.¹ Just *bráhmaṇ* is found in hymns 8.36–37 and *kṣatrá* is mentioned twice in the latter (Jamison and Brereton 2014: 57–58, 1101–6). While *bráhmaṇá* and *kṣatríya* occur a few times in the *R̥gveda*, *rājanya*, *vaíśya*, and *śūdrá*—denoting the four varṇas along with bráhmaṇá—are found only in the late *Puruṣasūkta* (*RV.* 10.90.12). In contrast, the later Samhitās and Bráhmaṇas refer to these terms frequently and, in doing so, outline several aspects of varṇa in more detail. This paper examines varṇa taxonomies in middle and late Vedic texts to suggest that the possibility of having dual varṇa was due to understanding bráhmaṇ, kṣatrá, and víś as inherent powers, which refashioned older Vedic mythology and religious goals.

In *Classifying the Universe*, Brian Smith defines *varṇa* as a classificatory scheme to order and connect different parts of the cosmos. In his words (Smith 1994: 12–13):

Varṇa furnished the Vedic ritualists with the only organizational concept capable of generating and negotiating connections of both the vertical and horizontal type; as such, *varṇa* might be regarded as the “root metaphor” or “master narrative” of Vedic thought. . . . Otherwise put, the *varṇas* functioned as supercategories which cut across the boundaries of the species or discrete classes and thus ordered all the realities of the visible and invisible cosmos. There are, as we shall see, Brahmin parts of the human anatomy, deities, cosmological worlds, cardinal directions, times of the day and year, animals, food, plants, trees, Vedas, and meters and hymns, in addition to the Brahmin social class—and there are also Kshatriya and Vaishya counterparts for each.

Smith’s book provides ample evidence for consistent patterns of categories organized according to what he calls the elemental qualities of bráhmaṇ, kṣatrá, and víś (72, 314). While Vedic texts do not explicitly designate the varṇa set as “elemental qualities,” Smith’s work illustrates that these categories constitute an organizing principle based on explanatory connections (*bandhu*). While bráhmaṇá, kṣatríya, vaíśya, and śūdrá are the social manifestations of the elemental qualities, they represent

¹When the accent is on the first vowel, *bráhmaṇ* is neuter and refers to sacred speech, the absolute, or their power.

only one among a potentially infinite set of classifications to describe the world in which we live. How brāhman, kṣatrá and víś connect to specific devas and inherent powers in Vedic texts helps to explain why it was possible for a person to embody more than one category during the Vedic period.

2 Examples of dual varṇa in the Vedas

In *Crossing the Lines of Caste*, Sathaye (2015: 51) characterizes Viśvāmitra as a brāhmaṇa in the *R̥gveda* and as both a brāhmaṇa and a kṣatriya in the Brāhmaṇa texts. In the *R̥gveda*, numerous hymns, not to mention the Sāvitrī mantra, are attributed to this famous seer. Verse five of sūkta 3.43—attributed to Viśvāmitra Gāthina—asks Indra when he will make “me” king:

कृविन्मा गोपां करसे जनस्य कृविद्राजानं मघवन्नृजीषिन्।
 कृविन्म ऋषिं पपिवांसं सुतस्य कृविन्मे वस्वो अमृतस्य शिन्नाः ॥
 (RV. 3.43.5)

Will you indeed make me your herdsman of the people; will you indeed (make me) king, you bounteous possessor of the silvery drink? Will you indeed (make) me a seer, (for) I have drunk of the pressed drink; will you indeed do your best for immortal goods for me?” (Jamison and Brereton 2014: 528)

In this verse, could becoming a king (*rājān*) and a seer (*ṛṣi*) represent one and the same goal in relation to the immortal goods (*vāsu amṛta*)? Sāyaṇa glosses ‘king’ with the ‘master of everything’ (*rājānam sarvasya svāminam*) and *ṛṣi* with ‘the seer of something beyond the senses’ (*ṛṣim atīndriyārthasya draṣṭāram*). Besides this verse and RV. 3.53 (cf. 3.33), in which Viśvāmitra serves King Sudās, there is no trace of anything royal associated with Viśvāmitra in the *R̥gveda* (Macdonell and Keith 1912: 252–63).²

²On the debate regarding Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha’s relationship with Sudās, see Rahurkar 1964: 16–24, 120–25; Jamison and Brereton 2014: 537–38; Sathaye 2015: 48.

And yet, later Vedic texts explicitly depict Viśvāmītra's sagely and royal character.³ In the *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* (21.12.1–2), Viśvāmītra is called the king of the Jahnus (*viśvāmītro jāhnavo rājā*) and when he saw a particular rite, he attained *rāṣṭra*.⁴ In the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (7.13–18), the young brāhmaṇa, Śunaḥśepa, calls Viśvāmītra a prince.⁵ Sathaye (2015: 54) explains that *rājaputra* refers to his royal pedigree with the Jahnus, as is stated explicitly in the text (*AB*. 7.17; Aufrecht 1879: 200). Following Keith (1920: 308 fn. 8) and Macdonell and Keith (1912: 260–61), Sathaye comments on how Viśvāmītra promises Śunaḥśepa a twin inheritance: to be a kṣatriya with the Jahnus lineage and a brāhmaṇa with the Gāthins.⁶ Finally, in the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* (2.219), Viśvāmītra wished for his offspring to attain *rājya*.⁷ After directly seeing a special stoma equated with kṣatra, his offspring attained *rājya* and were consecrated. According to Sathaye (2015: 36), “during most of the Vedic period being both a Brahmin and a Kṣatriya was not such a social impossibility.”

While Viśvāmītra's story stands out for its popular retellings in Indian literature, his social mobility was not an isolated case in middle

³ See Macdonell and Keith 1912: II.311 fn. 13 for Vedic occurrences in which Viśvāmītra is called a *ṛṣi*.

⁴ विश्वामित्रो जाह्नवो राजैतमपश्यत्स राष्ट्रमभवत्।(*PB*. 21.12.2). See also Caland 1931: 566; Macdonell and Keith 1912: II.260–261. On Jahnu and Jāhnavā, see Macdonell and Keith 1912: I.280–281. For *vrcīvant*, which occurs in *RV*. 6.27.5–8, see 1912: II.319.

⁵ *AB*. 7.17.6. Cf. *RV*. 1.24, *TS*. 5.2.1.3, *KāthS*. 19.11, *ŚSS*. 15.17–27, and Jamison and Brereton 2014: 118–19. Noting *AB*. 7.26.4, Heesterman (1957: 160–61) views Śunaḥśepa as the brahman part of the sacrificer's own personality from which he is reborn “out of himself.”

⁶ अधीयत देवरातो रिक्थयोरुभयोर्ऋषिः।जहूनां चाधिपत्ये दैवे वेदे च गाथिनाम्।(*AB*. 7.18). Aufrecht's (1879) Roman transliteration of the palatal spirant as *s*, the retroflex spirant as *sh*, and the vocalic *r* as *ri* have been replaced with *ś*, *ṣ*, and *ṛ* respectively in Romanization in accordance with standard ISO 15919.

⁷ अथाकामयत विश्वामित्रो—राज्यं मे प्रजा गच्छेदिति।स एतं त्रयस्त्रिंशं स्तोममपश्यत्।तमाहरत्।तेनायजत।नत्रं वै त्रयस्त्रिंश [sic] स्तोमानाम्।ततो वै तस्य राज्यं प्रजागच्छत्।अष्टको हास्य प्रजायामभिषिषिचे।गच्छति राज्यं य एवं वेद।ततो वै ते प्रजा अस्मिन् लोके विधाय स्वर्गं लोकमगच्छन्।प्रजामेवास्मिन् लोके विधाय स्वर्गं लोकं गच्छति य एवं वेद।(*JB*. 2.219 Chandra and Vira 1986: 254).

and late Vedic tradition. Indra, the *kṣatrá* par excellence, becomes a priest (*brahmán* in the masculine gender) in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (*ŚBK*. 5.7.6.1–3; *ŚBM*. 4.6.6.1–5) and in the *Gopatha Brahmana* (1.2.19).⁸ The inspiration for these myths may have been drawn from *Rgveda* 8.16.7, in which Irimbiṭhi Kāṇva praises “Indra the brahmán, Indra the *ṛṣi*” (*índro brahmá índra ṛṣir*). In the *Śatapatha*, the devas feared an attack from the asurarakṣas from the southern direction, so they moved to the northern side to extend the yajña in a secure place free from fear and danger:

ते हेन्द्रमूचुस्त्वं वै नो वीर्यवत्तमो ऽसीति त्वं न इदं दक्षिणतो गोपायाथ वयम्
उत्तरतो ऽभये ऽनाष्ट्रे निवाते यज्ञं तनवामहा इति। स होवाचेन्द्रः किं मम ततः
स्यादिति ते होचुरेतदह ते ब्रह्मत्वमित्येषो ते ब्राह्मणाच्छःसीयेति तस्माद्ब्रह्मण
एव ब्राह्मणाच्छःसीयात्तस्माद्ब्राह्मणाच्छःसिनं प्रवृणात इन्द्रो ब्रह्मा ब्राह्मणादि-
त्येन्द्री होषा होत्रा तस्माद् एव ब्राह्मणानां वीर्यवत्तमः स ब्रह्मा स्यादो वा
एषामनूचान्तमः स एषां वीर्यवत्तमस्तदेषो ह दक्षिणतो गोपायत्यथैत उत्तरतो
ऽभये ऽनाष्ट्रे निवाते यज्ञं तन्वते। (*ŚBK*. 5.7.6.2–3)

They [the devas] told Indra, “Verily you are the most vigorous among us. Protect us to the south. Then we will extend the ritual offering to the north in a secure place free from fear and danger.” Indra said, “What would be mine because of that?” They said, “Namely this brahmanhood (*brahmatva*) would be yours. The office of *brāhmaṇācchaṁsin* would be yours.” Therefore, the office of *brāhmaṇācchaṁsin* is for *brāhman* only. Therefore, they choose the *brāhmaṇācchaṁsin*, saying, “Indra is brahmán through relating to *brāhman* (*brāhmaṇāt*).” For this office of the hotṛ priest (*hotrā*) belongs to Indra. Therefore, whoever is the most vigorous among the *brāhmaṇas* should be the brahmán. Whoever verily is the most learned among them is the most vigorous among them. Therefore, he surely protects to the south. Then they extend the ritual offering in a secure place free from fear and danger.

In this passage, the devas ask Indra to protect the southern side of the yajñabhūmi in exchange for becoming a brahmán priest. Indra then officiates as the *brāhmaṇācchaṁsin*, the assistant of the hotṛ, not because of his social birth, but through a connection with *brāhman*.⁹ Note that in

⁸When the accent is on the second vowel, *brahmán* is masculine in gender and refers to a priest.

⁹*Brāhmaṇācchaṁsin* literally means one who recites from the *Brāhmaṇa*. Theoretically, the *brāhmaṇācchaṁsin* is under the brahmán priest, but practically he is an assistant of

exchange for protecting the sacrificial ground, which befits a kṣatriya, Indra becomes a brahmán priest. In the *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa*, the devas asked Indra to protect the yajña while they fought the asuras.¹⁰ Indra became various Vedas depending on which side of the yajñabhūmi he stood, but the devas said that he did not completely protect the yajña until he took the form of the brahmaveda, meaning the *Atharvaveda*. At this point, possessing a turban and—as in the *Śatapatha* passage—standing to the south, Indra became a brahmán priest (*brahmābhavat*). The narrative goes on to explain the origin of the brāhmaṇācchamsin and the other priests under the brahmán priest. Indra is also called a brahmán priest in *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* 3.374: *indra eva brahmāsīt*. The king of the devas is simultaneously a brāhmaṇa and a kṣatriya.

In *Mādyandina Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 11.6.2.5–10, King Janaka of Videha is referred to as *rājanyabandhuḥ* three times before he is declared a *brahmán* priest. According to Sāyaṇa, the brāhmaṇas were angry with Janaka, whom they saw as inferior and called ‘kinsman of royals’ (*rājanyabandhu*) in a derogatory way. According to Sāyaṇa, “An inferior rājanya is the rājanyabandhu. From the force of anger, there was the imposition of inferiority on him” (*nikṛṣṭo rājanyaḥ rājanyabandhuḥ. krodhavaśāt tasya nikṛṣṭatvāropah.*). Janaka outtalked them, so the brāhmaṇas wished to challenge him to a discussion about brāhman. Sāyaṇa glosses *rājanyabandhuḥ kṣatriyaḥ*. However, *ŚBM*. 11.6.2.10 concludes, “Then Janaka was a brahmán priest” (*táto brahmā janaká āsa*). Sāyaṇa explains, “He became a brahmán, meaning brahmán in the highest degree,” i.e. the most learned brahmin (*brahmā brahmiṣṭhaḥ sambabhūva*). In this context, Janaka was a brahmán by virtue of his knowledge of brāhman. This is another case in the Brāhmaṇa texts, like Indra’s, in which someone is said to hold two varṇas.

The categories of king and seer were especially closely related. The *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*, for example, narrates the story of Anūpa Dhītoni:

the hotṛ. On being the subordinate of the hotṛ and then the brahmán in the schematic division of the sixteen officiants, see Gonda 1975: 269 fn. 29.

¹⁰देवाश्च ह वा असुराश्चास्पर्धन्त। ते देवा इन्द्रमब्रुवन् — इमं नस्तावदज्ञं गोपाय, यावदसुरैः संयतामहा इति। (GB. 1.2.19).

अनूपो वै धीतो निरकामयतो भयं ब्रह्म च क्षत्रं चावरुन्धीय, राजा सञ्चृषिः स्या-
मिति । स एतत्सामापश्यत् । तेनास्तुत । ततो वै स उभयं ब्रह्म च क्षत्रं चावारुन्दु,
राजा सञ्चृषिरभवत् । उभयमेव ब्रह्म च क्षत्रं चावरुन्दे, राजा सञ्चृषिर्भवति य एव
वेद । (JB. 3.97)

Verily Anūpa Dhītoni desired, “I should obtain both brahman and kṣatra. Being a king, I should become a ṛṣi.” He saw this sāman. He praised with it. Then verily he obtained both brahman and kṣatra. Being a king, he became a ṛṣi. One who knows in this way obtains both brahman and kṣatra and, being a king, he becomes a ṛṣi.

In the case of Anūpa Dhītoni, simultaneously holding two varṇa categories was possible. Similarly, *Jaiminīya Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa* 1.4.2 “applies the term Rājanya to a Brāhmaṇa” (Macdonell and Keith 1912: 261). He “therefore thence is born a Brāhmaṇa like a ṛṣi, a piercingly kingly hero” (Oertel 1896: 83–84).¹¹ In addition, *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* 12.12.6 attests to a ṛṣi of royal descent (*rājanyarṣi*).

Heesterman (1995: 652–53) argues that at one point the king and brahmin were “two sides of one and the same person, that is the consecrated warrior.” Before there was a priesthood, he posits, there was a consecrated warrior, a king who held the priestly function (653–654). Heesterman understands their original unity to be in the “prescript that king and brahmin should act in unison.” Heesterman (1985: 29–30, 36) claims that priests and warriors were at one time not closed, separate groups, but fluid roles. After all, the yajamāna is reborn ritually a brāhmaṇa, no matter to which varṇa he belongs. Heesterman (1957: 7, 226) further argues that the Rājasūya (royal consecration) is not a coronation ceremony, but rather an annual rite “performed by a king who wants to obtain access to heaven (*svargakāma*-).” While there is a definite connection between sovereignty and the yonder world, the claim that the king came first merits reconsideration, given that Brāhmaṇa texts corroborate the idea that brāhmaṇa is more primary than kṣatrá.

Not accounted for sufficiently in Heesterman’s theory, in most middle and late Vedic accounts, brāhmaṇa is more basic than kṣatrá: either brāhmaṇa is created first or kṣatrá and víś emerge from brāhmaṇa it-

¹¹तस्मात्ततो ब्राह्मणं ऋषिकल्पो जायते ऽतिव्याधी राजन्यश्शूरः । (JUB. 1.4.2). Cf. JB. 2.266 below.

self.¹² In the *Taittirīya Āraṇyaka*, brāhman is said to be *svayambhū* ‘self-existent’.¹³ It is said to have existed alone in the beginning (*ŚBK*. 3.2.5.1–3) and to have been created (*ŚBM*. 6.1.1.10) in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. Prajāpati wanted to reproduce and entered the waters, from which an egg arose. Julius Eggeling translates, “From it the Brahman (neut.) was first created, the triple science. Hence they say, ‘The Brahman (n.) is the first-born of this All.’”¹⁴ According to Smith (1994: 89), “it is out of the brahman-power that not only the Brahmin god and the Brahman social class were created, but also all other human classes.” In the *Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, brāhman existed alone until it emitted kṣatrá.¹⁵ The text then states that brāhman is the womb or source of kṣatrá, and, in addition, created the víś.¹⁶ In the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, kṣatrá is also said to have been created from brāhman.¹⁷ The *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* declares brahman to be before (*pūrva*) kṣatra,¹⁸ and the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* describes brahman as older (*jyāyas*) than kṣatra.¹⁹ The *Brāhmaṇa* texts depict brāhman, in an abstract sense, as more primary than kṣatrá or víś.

Heesterman’s king-centered theory depends to some degree on the socio-political organization of varṇa, which is well known and well attested.²⁰ For example, the *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* describes the fourfold

¹²See also Smith 1989a: 257.

¹³ब्रह्म स्वयम्भु।(TĀ. 3.6).

¹⁴ततो ब्रह्मैव प्रथममसृज्यत (प्रजापतिः) त्रय्येव विद्या तस्मादाहुर्ब्रह्मास्य सर्वस्य प्रथमजमिति। (ŚBM. 6.1.1.10 Eggeling 1882–1900: part 3, p. 146).

¹⁵ब्रह्म वा इदमग्र आसीदेकमेव।तदेकः सन्न व्यभवत्।तच्छ्रेयो रूपमत्यसृजत क्षत्रं... सैषा क्षत्रस्य योनिर्यद्ब्रह्म।(BĀU. 1.4.11).

¹⁶BĀU. 1.4.11–15. Note that *śaúdra* occurs at BĀU. 1.4.13.

¹⁷ब्रह्मणाः क्षत्रं निर्मितम्।TB. 2.8.8.9 (Mitra 1982: 914).

¹⁸ब्रह्म हि पूर्वं क्षत्रात्।(PB. 11.1.2). Caland (1931: 249) translates, “for the priesthood comes before the nobility.”

¹⁹ब्रह्म वै क्षत्राङ्गघायः।(JB. 2.32). The *JB*. also establishes brahman as superior to kṣatra and víś: अपभ्रंशो ह वै ब्रह्मणाः क्षत्रम्।(JB. 2.223). अवलम्ब उ ह वै ब्रह्मणाः क्षत्रं च विट् च।(JB. 2.123).

²⁰For the political aspects of varṇa, see also Proferes 2007: 129–34. Both Gonda (1989: 45) and Jurewicz (2012: 85–88) discuss the social aspect of varṇa in the *Brāhmaṇas*.

varṇa based on birth and occupation as follows:

ऋषिर्ह स्म मन्त्रकृद्ब्राह्मण आजायते, ऽतिव्याधी राजन्यश्शूरः, पोषयिष्णुर्वैश्यो रयिमान्, उत्थाता शूद्रो दक्षः कर्मकर्ता। (JB. 2.266)

A brāhmaṇa of course is born a ṛṣi, a reciter of mantras; a rājanya a hero who can shoot a long distance; a vaiśya a wealthy man who can feed others; a śūdra standing up, a dexterous doer of action.

A passage in the Rājasūya section of the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (7.29) accounts for the varṇas in relation to the kṣatriya (Keith 1920: 315). Macdonell and Keith (1912: II.255–256) describe the passage as follows:

The Brāhmaṇa is a receiver of gifts (*ā-dāyī*), a drinker of Soma (*ā-pāyī*), a seeker of food (*āvasāyī*), and liable to removal at will (*yathākāma-prayāpyaḥ*). The Vaiśya is tributary to another (*anyasya balikṛt*), to be lived on by another (*anyasyādyah*), and to be oppressed at will (*yathākāma-
jyeyah*). The Śūdra is the servant of another (*anyasya preṣyaḥ*), to be expelled at will (*kāmothāpyah*), and to be slain at pleasure (*yathākāma-
vadhyaḥ*). The descriptions seem calculated to show the relation of each of the castes to the Rājanya. . . . The passage is a late one.

Although here the kṣatriya is at the center of the social scheme, Whitaker (2015: 53–54), citing *Mādyandina Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 5.4.4.15, argues that the king is socially subordinated to the adhvaryu priest in the Rājasūya when the adhvaryu hands him a vajra. Also in the context of the Rājasūya, in *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* 8.9, homage is paid to brahman (neuter) thrice resulting in kṣatra falling under the influence of brahman. So while it may be tempting to assume that this sort of social ordering applied across the Vedic period, there is evidence to suggest that a single codified understanding of varṇa was not yet in place.

3 Religious aspects of varṇa

As Macdonell and Keith (1912: 259) observe, a brāhmaṇa during that period need not be of pure lineage by birth. According to Keith (1920: 28), tradition ascribes the redaction of the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* to the wise brāhmaṇa Mahidāsa Aitareya, whose father “preferred sons of other wives to the son given him by Itarā.”²¹ The implied meaning is that his

²¹The name Mahidāsa Aitareya is mentioned in *AA*. 2.1.8, *ChU*. 3.16.7, and *JUB*. 4.2.11.

mother was not a brahmin, like another ṛṣi mentioned in the text. After Kavaṣa Ailūṣa, the son of a dāsī ‘slave woman’, saw the ‘child of the waters’ hymn, the Sarasvatī River flowed around him (*AB*. 2.19.1). In *Taittirīya Saṁhitā* 6.6.1.3, a brāhmaṇá is depicted as learned (*śuśrúvān*), a ṛṣi, and descended from a ṛṣi (*ārṣeyá*) (Keith 1914: 547–48), whereas *Kāṭhaka Saṁhitā* 30.1 holds that the parentage that matters is what has been heard (*śruta*), i.e. sacred knowledge itself:

किं ब्राह्मणस्य पितरं किमु पृच्छसि मातरम्।
श्रुतं चेदस्मिन्वेदां स पिता स पितामः ॥(*KāṭhS*. 30.1)

You ask: what is the father of a brāhmaṇa and what is the mother? If there is knowledge worthy to be known in him, that is the father. That is the grandfather.

Well before the Upaniṣads, being a brahmán went hand in hand with directly knowing brāhman, which is described in terms of seeing a hymn or hearing ($\sqrt{śru}$). To know brāhman was to become brāhman, the imperishable source and power behind the intellect. These examples corroborate that realizing sacred knowledge cum brāhman was enough, in spite of birth caste, to certify a genuine brahmán in the middle and late Vedic period. Moreover, in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, a consecrated rājanyà or vaiśya is also called a *brāhmaṇa*.²² These passages exhibit a fluid boundary for the categorization of varṇa based on directly seeing brāhman, knowledge, and ritual rebirth, as opposed to contexts upholding what is now accepted as the standard varṇa scheme based on birth.

In *Mādhyandina Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 10.4.1.9–10, during the Agnicayana sacrifice, Śyāparṇa Sāyakāyana sees the one akṣára (syllable = imperishable), which is said to be the great brahman and the manifold brahman (*mahad brahma . . . bahu brahma*) (see also Macdonell and Keith 1912: 263). The akṣára is described not only as *brahman*, but also as *brāhman* and *kṣatrá* and as, simultaneously, *brāhman*, *kṣatrá*, and *viś*. Śyāparṇa Sāyakāyana said: “If this my sacrificial performance were complete, my own race [*prajā*] would become the kings (nobles) [*rājan*], Brāhmanas [*brāhmaṇa*], and peasants [*vaiśya*] of the Salvas; but

²²छन्दोभ्यस्तस्मादादाप्यब्राह्मणो दीक्षते राजन्यो वा वैश्यो वा ब्राह्मण इत्येवैनमाहुरेतर्हि हि ब्रह्मणो जायते।(*ŚBK*. 4.2.1.27).

even by that much of my work which has been completed my race will surpass the Salvas in both ways” (Eggeling 1882–1900: IV.343–344).²³ Following the ideas that all beings pass into the akṣāra and the three varṇas are found in the akṣāra, Śyāparṇa Sāyakāyana recognizes all three varṇa categories among his own progeny. His vision of varṇa is not limited to a hereditary scheme of social order, but instead encompasses the underlying unity of the whole.

A closer look at the Brāhmaṇa texts shows earlier vestiges of a religious aspect of varṇa categories. In this context, “religious” refers to engaging in practice that aims to expand the mind, a goal that is metaphorically connected with increasing dominion. In his work on the nivids—uttered by the hotṛ priest during the three pressings of the Soma ritual, Theodore Proferes (2014: 201–2) discusses the marutvatīya nivid to Indra and the Maruts based on *RV*. 10.73 in the midday pressing of the Agniṣṭoma ritual. After an invitation to drink Soma, the priest requests Indra, strengthened by the Maruts, to smash the “hostile defenses (*vr̥tra*)” and “release the waters,” to further “priestly power (*brahman*) and this power of dominion (*kṣatra*).” Proferes’ example from liturgical practice, which emphasizes priestly power and the power of dominion, calls attention to the non-sociopolitical aspect of varṇa. This religious motif offers a lens to explore not just Vedic liturgy, but varṇa in middle and late Vedic as well.

In terms of the religious dimension of varṇa, the elemental qualities of varṇa are associated with specific devas. The category of brāhman is usually said to be Agni, Br̥haspati, and Mitra,²⁴ while kṣatrā is often equated with Indra, Varuṇa, and Soma.²⁵ Vís is commonly associated

²³अक्षरम्... एतद्ब्रह्म नत्रं विद्... श्यापर्णाः सायकायन आह यद्वै म इदं कर्म समाप्स्यतममैव प्रजा सुत्वानाः राजानो ऽभविष्यन्मम ब्राह्मणा मम वैश्या यन्तु म एतावत्कर्मणः समापि तेन म उभयथा सुत्वान्प्रजातिरेह्यत इति। (*ŚBM*. 10.4.1.9–10).

²⁴Agni is brāhman in *ŚBK*. 1.5.3.8, 7.2.4.25, *ŚBM*. 10.4.1.9, *JB*. 1.182; Br̥haspati is brāhman in *ŚBK*. 4.9.1.12; Mitra is brāhman in *ŚBK*. 5.1.4.1.

²⁵Indra is kṣatra in *ŚBK*. 1.3.2.6, 1.5.1.25, 4.9.1.13, 6.1.3.4, 7.2.4.26, *KB*. 12.10.22, *JB*. 1.182, *ŚBM*. 3.9.1.16, 4.4.1.18, 10.4.1.9; Varuṇa is kṣatra in *ŚBK*. 1.5.1.4, 1.5.1.30, 1.5.1.32, 5.1.4.1, *KāthS*. 36.7, *JB*. 2.197, *ŚBM*. 2.5.2.64, 4.1.4.1, 5.1.5.3, 13.1.5.3, *KB*. 7.10, 7.12, 12.8, *GB*. 2.6.7, *AB*. 6.15, 8.6, *TB*. 2.6.13.3; Soma is kṣatra in

with the Maruts and the Viśvadevas,²⁶ in addition to other groups of devas like the Vasus, Rudras, and Ādityas.²⁷ Given that Agni and Indra exemplify the brāhman and kṣatrā categories, respectively, it is somewhat surprising to find examples in which they are put in the other category. For example, in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, Agni is said to be both brāhman and kṣatrā.²⁸ In the *Maitrāyaṇī Saṁhitā* and the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, Vaiśvānara, a standard epithet of Agni, is equated with kṣatrā.²⁹ And in the *Śatapatha*, both Indra and Agni represent the kṣatrā.³⁰ So, even though Agni is the exemplar of brāhman, sometimes he is said to be kṣatrā. In the same way, in the *Kāṭhaka Saṁhitā*, kṣatra is that whose purohita is brahman.³¹

In addition, Agni and Indra act in unison or are joined together in middle and late Vedic literature. As in other Brāhmaṇa texts, the *Kauṣṭiki Brāhmaṇa* homologizes brahman and kṣatra with Agni and Indra.³² In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (*ŚBM*. 10.4.1.5), these two were originally separated, but became one form (*ekam rūpam*) in order to procreate. In Smith's (1994: 103) translation:

Now Indra and Agni were emitted as brahman and kṣatra—brahman was Agni and kṣatra was Indra. The two were separate from each other when they were first emitted. They said, "Being in this condition, we shall be

ŚBK. 4.3.2.7, 4.4.1.8, 4.9.3.2, 7.2.4.6, 7.3.3.14, *ŚBM*. 3.4.1.10, 5.3.5.8, *KB*. 7.12.22, 9.5.1, 10.8.20, 12.10.11, *JB*. 3.24. Cf. *क्षत्रस्य राजा वरुणो ऽधिराजः* | (*TB*. 3.1.2.7).

²⁶Maruts are viś in *ŚBK*. 1.4.3.10, 1.4.3.12, 1.5.1.4, 1.5.1.22, 1.5.1.25, 1.5.1.30, 1.5.1.32, 4.9.1.15, 6.1.3.4 and *PB*. 6.10.10, 18.1.14; the Viśva Devas are viś in *ŚBK*. 4.9.1.14, *ŚBM*. 2.4.3.6, 3.9.1.16, 10.4.1.9; herbs are viś in *ŚBK*. 4.3.2.7; and the Soma pressing stones are viś in *ŚBK*. 4.9.3.2.

²⁷*BĀU*. 1.4.11–15. Agni rules the Vasus, Indra or Soma rules the Maruts or Rudras, Varuṇa rules the Ādityas, and Bṛhaspati rules the viś or Viśva Devas. See Smith 1994: 96.

²⁸अयं वा ऽग्निर्ब्रह्म च क्षत्रं च | (*ŚBM*. 6.6.3.15).

²⁹क्षत्रं वै वैश्वानरो | (*MS*. 3.3.10, *KāthS*. 21.10, *ŚBM*. 6.6.1.7, 9.3.1.13). Cf. *क्षत्रं वै मित्रः* | (*MS*. 4.3.9).

³⁰क्षत्रं वा इन्द्राग्नी | (*ŚBK*. 1.3.2.6; cf. *ŚBM*. 2.4.3.6). *अग्निर्ब्रह्म च क्षत्रं च* | (*ŚBM*. 6.6.3.15; Smith 1994: 102–4).

³¹ब्रह्मपुरोहितं क्षत्रम् | (*KāthS*. 27.4, *KapS*. 42.4).

³²ब्रह्मक्षत्रे वा इन्द्राग्नी | (*KB*. 12.10.29).

incapable of producing creatures. Let us two become one form.” The two became one form.³³

In the *Kāthaka Samhitā*, brāhman and kṣatrá are united.³⁴ In the same way that Indra and Agni act together, brāhman and kṣatrá function cooperatively in *Taittirīya Samhitā*: “By means of brāhman alone he whets kṣatrá, and by kṣatrá he whets brāhman.”³⁵ Like Agni and Indra, then, brāhman and kṣatrá join forces.

Similarly, ritual offerings effectively unite brāhman and kṣatrá, such as in this passage of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*:

ऐन्द्राग्नी द्वादशकपाल एतेन ह वा एनं जघ्नुर्ब्रह्माग्निः क्षत्रमिन्द्रो ब्रह्म चैवैतत्क्षत्रं
च सःरभ्य ते सयुजौ कृत्वा ताभ्याः ह्वेनं जघ्नुर्ब्रह्म चैवैतत्क्षत्रं च सयुजौ
करोति तस्माद्ब्रह्म च क्षत्रं च सयुजौ। *ŚBK.* 1.5.3.8; cf. *ŚBM.* 2.5.4.8

The [offering on] twelve potsherds is dedicated to Indra and Agni. With this indeed they verily struck him. Agni is brāhman. Indra is kṣatrá. Having taken hold of brāhman and this very kṣatrá, having united those two, with just those two they strike him [Vṛtra]. He unites that brāhman and that kṣatrá. Therefore, brāhman and kṣatrá are united.

This caru offering unites brāhman and kṣatrá, creating the power necessary to defeat Vṛtra. Here the Brāhmaṇa text upholds one of the principal religious goals of the *R̥gveda*, namely to strike down obstacles in order to release something, or else to uncover something hidden: the cows, the dawn, and the opening for the waters. To do this, Indra smashes Vṛtra and splits the mountain (*R̥V.* 1.32.1). The Aṅgirasas too split the stone and release the light and cows (*R̥V.* 4.2.14–15). While Vṛtra’s name literally means the coverer, the mountain encloses something hidden within. In both cases, breaking what covers releases pent-up waters, light, or cows, which serve as metaphors for a treasure that remains hidden beyond the cognitive mind.³⁶ What is unseen, especially when

³³Cf. *PB.* 15.6.3.

³⁴ब्रह्म चैव क्षत्रं च सयुजौ करोति (*KāthS.* 37.11).

³⁵ब्रह्मणैव क्षत्रं संश्यति, क्षत्रेण ब्रह्म। (*TS.* 5.1.10.3). Cf. Keith 1914: 410. Compare the use of *sam√so* in *TS.* 5.1.10.3 to *√jinv* in *MS.* 2.7.7. In the *MS.*, brāhman incites kṣatrá for the kṣatriya, and kṣatrá incites brāhman for the brāhmaṇa.

³⁶See Scharf (2020: 761–65) for a description of how light and the unmanifest appear in enlightenment accounts from the *R̥gveda* to the *Bhagavadgītā* and the *Yogasūtra*.

described as the dawn or light, could represent the light of svár. Uniting brāhman and kṣatrā to strike down the obstacle, then, implies the conscious integration of svár with the earthly and intermediate worlds. A similar goal is stated in *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* 2.119: “By means of brahman and kṣatra joined together, we go to the svarga loka.”³⁷

Just as Indra defeated Vṛtra, kṣatrā controls the viś. In *Kāṇva Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 1.5.1.25, Indra, who is the kṣatrā, restrains the Maruts, who are the viś.³⁸ The text states, “The kṣatra is the one who restrains the viś.”³⁹ A similar idea is stated in the *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa*: “by vigor afterwards he surrounds/masters the viś.”⁴⁰ Because kṣatrā is stronger,⁴¹ it must discipline the viś, just as Indra leads the Maruts (Smith 1994: 109). In the *Atharvaveda*, both Indra and Agni maintain security for the king in the viś.⁴² The *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* also maintains that reciting verses addressed to Indra and Agni unites brahman and kṣatra and, placing brahman (Agni) before kṣatra (Indra), one makes the kṣatra and viś subject to brahman.⁴³ In this way, the viś are under control.

In Vedic, viś generally refers to the people, especially subordinate subjects, or to a dwelling.⁴⁴ *Mādhyandina Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 11.2.7.16 states that brahmán and kṣatrā are firmly established in the viś (तस्माद्भुभे ब्रह्म च क्षत्रं च विशि प्रतिष्ठिते). In *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* 12.4.11, the viś as subjects relate spatially to the quarters: “As finale

³⁷ब्रह्मणा च क्षत्रेण च संयुग्म्यां स्वर्गं लोकं गच्छामेति।(JB. 2.119). Cf. स्वर्गो लोको ब्रह्मणा। (AĀ. 3.1.6).

³⁸क्षत्रं वा इन्द्रो विशो मरुतः।(ŚBK. 1.5.1.25). मरुतो वै देवानां विशो।(PB. 6.10.10). Cf. AB. 7.8 and fn. 26.

³⁹क्षत्रं वै विशो निषेद्धा।(ŚBK. 1.5.1.25).

⁴⁰वीर्येण विशं पुरस्तात्परिगृह्णाति।(PB. 6.10.11).

⁴¹क्षत्रम् वै विशो ज्यायः।(JB. 2.32).

⁴²इन्द्राग्नी विश्वे देवास्ते विशि क्षेममदीधरन्।(AV. 3.3.5; Smith 1994: 103).

⁴³आग्नेय्येन्द्रीषु स्तुवन्ति ब्रह्म चैव तत्क्षत्रं च सयुजीकरोति ब्रह्मैव क्षत्रस्य पुरस्तान्निदधाति ब्राह्मणे क्षत्रं च विशं चानुगे करोति।(PB. 15.6.3). Cf. PB. 2.8.2 and 3.9.2 where kṣatra and viś are subject to brahman.

⁴⁴Graßmann 1996: 1296. In the *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa*, a king is said to “enter” the viś through the Jagatī, whereas a brāhmaṇa obtains fiery brahmavarcasa through the Gāyatī. तेजो ब्रह्मवर्चसं गायत्र्या ब्राह्मणो ऽवरुन्धे विशं राजा जगत्या प्रविशति।(PB. 19.17.6).

they undertake ('apply'): 'the quarter, the peasantry: for propping the quarters' (Caland 1931: 278).⁴⁵ In the Brāhmaṇas, the term *viś* appears with both positive and negative connotations, which in a few places are connected with the goal of reaching the svarga loka. The *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa* explains that the *viś* have the power to confound and harm:

तासां याज्या पुरोनुवाक्याः ता वै स्वस्तिमत्यः पथिमत्यः पारितवत्यः प्रवत्यो नीतवत्यो भवन्ति। मरुतो ह वै देवविशो अन्तरिक्षभाजना ईश्वरा यजमानस्य स्वर्गल्लोकं यतो यज्ञपेशसं कर्तोः। तदात्स्वस्तिमत्यः पथिमत्यः पारितवत्यः प्रवत्यो नीतवत्यो भवन्ति। न एनं मरुतो देवविशो हिंसन्ति। स्वस्ति स्वर्गल्लोकं समञ्चते। (KB. 7.8)

Of these the invitatory and offering verses contain (the words), 'safe', 'path', 'bring across', 'forward', and 'lead'. The Maruts, the subjects [*viś*] of the gods, enjoying the atmosphere, have the power to confound the sacrifice of the sacrificer as he goes to the world of heaven. In that they contain (the words) 'safe', 'path', 'bring across', 'forward', and 'lead', verily the Maruts, the subjects of the gods, harm him not; safely he attains the world of heaven. (Keith 1920: 388)

In this passage, *viś* qualifies the Maruts, who are capable of harming the offering, thereby preventing the sacrificer from reaching the svarga loka. The right words, however, ensure success: the sacrificer's safe passage to the svarga loka.

According to the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, the *viś* are kingdoms (*rāṣṭra*).⁴⁶ In the context of the Rājasūya, mantras are addressed to the waters, called the givers of *rāṣṭrā* (*rāṣṭradā*), to bestow *rāṣṭrā*.⁴⁷ The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* states that the waters are collected for completeness (*sarvatvāya*) and for wholeness (*krtsnātāyai*). By this, the yajamāna is made, indeed becomes, the lord of the *viś*.⁴⁸ By offering, the adhvaryu makes the *viś* stable and unmoving for him, the king, because, the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* explains, "That *viś* is perfect (*sámṛddha*) which

⁴⁵दिशं विशमिति निधनमुपयन्ति दिशां धृत्यै। (PB. 12.4.11).

⁴⁶राष्ट्राणि वै विशः। (AB. 8.26) (Keith 1920: 340).

⁴⁷राष्ट्रदा राष्ट्रं मे दत्त स्वाहा। (SBK. 7.2.2.12).

⁴⁸राष्ट्रदा राष्ट्रं मे देहि स्वाहापां पतिरसि राष्ट्रदा राष्ट्रममुष्मै देहीत्यपां वा एष पतिर्विश पुवैनमेताभिः पतिं करोति विश पुवैताभिः पतिर्भवति। (SBK. 7.2.2.8).

is stable and unmoving.”⁴⁹ Smith (1989b: 110–11) explains that the king goes to perfection (*samṛddha*), which is represented as the svarga loka, in the Rājasūya sacrifice, but must return to earth. He describes *samṛddha* as what is “entirely invisible” and “unconstructed perfection.” Another mantra connected with the Rājasūya speaks of finding support in both heaven and earth, in brahman and kṣatra, in all three worlds, and finally in one’s whole self (*AB*. 8.9).⁵⁰ When the yajamāna finds support in all this, he attains “prosperity [*śrī*] ever increasing,” sovereignty (*aiśvarya*), and overlordship (*ādīpatya*) over *prajā*.⁵¹ In the Brāhmaṇa texts, *prajā* refers to anything generated—from progeny to the effect of one’s actions—or to people. Described as embryonic potentials stored in the sun, the *prajā* become embryos and are born in the sacrificer’s fire, which is homologized with his breaths, his senses (*ŚBK*. 3.1.9.1, 1.3.1.1; Bausch 2019: 120). Keith (1920: 326) translates: “When the lordly power falls under the influence of the holy power, that kingdom is prosperous [*samṛddha*].”⁵² On one hand, this kingdom is earthly because it belongs to a kṣatriya king, but, on the other hand, the phrase *rāṣṭram samṛddham* additionally evokes finding support in heaven, as the previous mantra explicitly states, to achieve wholeness. The goal, then, may be expressed in terms of reaching the yonder world, which requires mastering the *vīś*, so as to establish dominion and achieve completeness and perfection.⁵³ In this sense, the Brāhmaṇa texts connect *vīś* with going to *svár*, the luminous yonder world that comprises the unmanifest potentials of the mind.

In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, Prajāpati utters the *vyāhṛtis* and creates the earth, intermediate space, and heaven, which correspond to *brāhman*,

⁴⁹अथ जुहोति वैशन्तासु ... विशमेवास्मा एताभिः स्थावराम्नपक्रमिणीं करोति।सा वै समृद्धा विद्धा स्थावरानपक्रमिणी।(*ŚBK*. 7.2.2.14).

⁵⁰प्रतिष्ठामि द्वावापृथिव्योः, प्रतिष्ठामि प्राणापानयोः, प्रतिष्ठामि धाम्यहोरात्रयोः, प्रतिष्ठामि ताम्यन्नपानयोः, प्रतिष्ठामि ब्रह्मन्प्रतिष्ठामि तत्रे प्रत्येषु त्रिषु लोकेषु तिष्ठामीत्य ४ अनन्तः सर्वेणात्मना प्रतिष्ठति।(*AB*. 8.9.3–4) (Keith 1920: 325).

⁵¹सर्वस्मिन्ह वा एतस्मिन्प्रतिष्ठत्य, उत्तरोत्तरिणीं ह श्रियमधुते, ऽधुते ह प्रजानामैश्वर्यमाधिपत्यं।(*AB*. 8.9.4; 1879: 218).

⁵²तदात्र ब्रह्मणाः क्षत्रं वशमेति, तद्राष्ट्रं समृद्धम्।(*AB*. 8.9.6).

⁵³राष्ट्रं विशमति वदति।(*TS*. 5.4.7.7). राष्ट्रं विशं घातुकम्।(*TB*. 3.9.7.4–5).

ḥṣatrá, and víś (See also Smith 1992: 107–13). The passage states:

भूरिति वै प्रजापतिरिमांमजनयद्भुव इत्यन्तरिक्षं स्वरिति दिवमेतावद्वा इदं
यावदिमे लोकाः । (ŚBK. 1.1.4.11; cf. ŚBM. 2.1.4.11–12)
Verily Prajāpati, uttering *bhūr*, created this [Sāyaṇa: earth (*bhūmi*)].
Uttering *bhúvaḥ*, he created the intermediate space, and uttering *svaḥ*,
he created heaven. Verily as far as there are lokas, there is this [Sāyaṇa:
universe (*jagat*)].

Then the next *kaṇḍikā* recounts that uttering the *vyāhrtis*, Prajāpati created the *varṇas*:

भूरिति वै प्रजापतिर्ब्रह्माजनयद्भुव इति क्षत्रं स्वरिति विश्वमेतावद्वा इदं याव-
द्ब्रह्म क्षत्रं विट् । (ŚBK. 1.1.4.12)
Verily, uttering *bhūr*, Prajāpati created *brāhman*. Uttering *bhúvaḥ*, he
created *ḥṣatrá* and uttering *svaḥ*, he created the *víś*. Verily as far as there
is *brāhman*, *ḥṣatra*, and *víś*, there is this [*jagat*].

Commenting on the Mādhyandina recension, Sāyaṇa interprets *brāhman* as the *brāhmaṇa* social group,⁵⁴ but, given the placement of the accent, it is likely that it refers to brahman-power. Associating the earth with *brāhman*, the intermediate space with *ḥṣatrá*, and heaven with *víś* brings to mind spatial wholeness and the Vedic religious goal of incorporating the three worlds within the mind of man. A human being begins with (his consciousness of) *brāhman* somewhat limited to the earthly realm and must develop mastery, represented by *ḥṣatrá*, of the *víś* that are created when Prajāpati utters *svar*. In other words, just as the *ḥṣatrá* governs the *víś* (as discussed above with reference to ŚBK. 1.5.1.25), the mind expands to incorporate heaven, which is unmanifest and beyond. Phrases like “he conquers so much of the world” (*tāvantaṃ lokāṃ jayati*),⁵⁵ “he conquers the svarga loka” (*svargaṃ lokāṃ jayati*),⁵⁶ and “he conquers the luminous merit-world” (*jyotiṣmantaṃ puṇyaṃ lokāṃ jayati*)⁵⁷ occur frequently in the *Brāhmaṇas* with respect to those *yaja-*

⁵⁴Sāyaṇa on ŚBM. 2.1.4.12: ब्रह्म ब्राह्मणाजातिः, क्षत्रं क्षत्रियजातिः । स्वरित्यादि निगदसिद्धम् । (Vāre 1987: 1.367).

⁵⁵ŚBK. 3.2.10.11, 3.1.3.3, 3.1.3.4–5, 3.1.5.1, 3.1.6.1, 3.1.8.5. Cf. 4.4.4.14.

⁵⁶तथैवैतद्यजमानः सर्वेश्छन्दोभिरिष्ट्वा स्वर्गं लोकं जयति । (AB. 1.9).

⁵⁷ज्योतिर्वा एषो ऽग्निष्टोमो ज्योतिष्मन्तं पुष्यं लोकं जयति य एवं विद्वानेतेन यजते । (PB. 19.11.11).

mānas who know thus and make ritual offerings. The worlds that these sacrificers conquer are not simply material kingdoms, but an expansion of the mind to include more and more of the unmanifest aspect of reality that is represented in the texts as the yonder world of light, the svarga loka.

The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* sometimes describes brāhman, kṣatrā, and viś and their divine counterparts as internal powers, specifically related to the mind and body not just of the cosmic man, but of an individual person too.⁵⁸ In an explanation of the Maitrāvaruṇa scoop (*graha*), the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (*ŚBK*. 5.1.4.1–2) connects Mitra and Varuṇa with krātu and dākṣa:⁵⁹

क्रतु ह वा अस्य दक्षो मैत्रावरुणास्तन्न यदध्यात्मं स यदभिगच्छति मनसादो
मे स्याददः कुर्वीयेति स क्रतुर्यदस्मै तत्समृध्यते स दक्षो मित्र एव क्रतुर्वरुणो
दक्षस्तदस्यैतावात्मनो ब्रह्मैव मित्रः क्षत्रं वरुणो ऽभिगन्तैव ब्रह्म कर्ता क्षत्रिय-
स्तौ हैतौ नानेवैवाग्र आसतुः स शशाकैव ब्रह्म मित्र ऋते क्षत्राद्वरुणात्स्यातुं न
क्षत्रं वरुण ऋते ब्रह्मणो मित्राद्बुद्ध स्म क्षत्रं कुरुते ऽप्रसूतं ब्रह्मणा न ह स्माह
तत्समृध्यते। (*ŚBK*. 5.1.4.1)

Mitra and Varuṇa are his will (*krātu*) and dexterity (*dākṣa*), which belong to his self. When he understands with his mind, “Let this be for me; let me do this,” that is *krātu*. When that is accomplished for him, that is *dākṣa*. *Krātu* is the same as Mitra, and *dākṣa* is the same as Varuṇa. Both these belong to his own self. Mitra is the same as brāhman and Varuṇa is the same as kṣatra. Brāhman is the same as the one who understands (*abhiḡánti*). A kṣatriya is the doer (*kartī*). In the beginning, these two were separate. Brāhman, which is Mitra, could remain without kṣatra, which is Varuṇa. But kṣatra, which is Varuṇa, could not stand without brāhman, which is Mitra. Therefore, whatever kṣatrā does that is not urged by brāhman surely is not successful.

⁵⁸In the *Puruṣasūkta* (*RV*. 10.90.12), the mouth of the cosmic man is the brāhmaṇá, his arms the rājaníya, his thighs the vaśíya, and his feet the śúdrá.

⁵⁹Cf. *ŚBM*. 4.1.4.2–6; Smith 1994: 105. In the *Ṛgveda*, Mitra and Varuṇa are associated with *krātu* and *dākṣa*: नपाता शवसो महः सूनू दक्षस्य सुक्रतू। (*RV*. 8.25.5). Gonda (1957: 6) lists a number of references connecting Mitra and Varuṇa to *dākṣa*. Note that *dākṣa* also pairs with Aditi in the *Ṛgveda*. Long (1977: 35) observes that this pair is homologized with the earth and sky.

Here Mitra and brāhman are identified with krātu, the will or the mental procedure that precedes action.⁶⁰ In this kaṇḍikā, the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* defines *krātu* as, “When he understands with his mind, ‘Let this be for me—let me do this,’ that is *krātu*.”⁶¹ The *Śatapatha* says that Varuṇa is kṣatrā, the dākṣa, i.e. dexterity, physical skill, or means by which the will is accomplished.⁶² Sāyaṇa glosses *krātu* as *saṅkalpa* (concept or intention)⁶³ and *brāhman* as *brāhmaṇajāti*.⁶⁴ Following the latter, Eggeling translates *brāhman* here as priesthood and *kṣatrā* as nobility, though a translation linked to internal powers seems more appropriate in this context, given the placement of the accent on *brāhman* and that they refer to *krātu* and *dākṣa*. Renou (1955–1969: II.58) understands *krātu* to emphasize “the faculty of understanding, which immediately precedes the creative act. *Krātu* is inspiration.”⁶⁵ Kasten Rönnow (1932: 72), who produced a detailed philological study of *krātu*, describes it as the determining, energetic sense of the courageous warrior that can give him victory.⁶⁶ After reviewing a list of translations for the term given by Monier-Williams, Grassmann, Geldner, and Rönnow, Gonda (1959: 37, 159) describes *krātu* as a power-substance:

one of these power-substances or Daseinsmächte which within some form of experience were supposed to be present in persons, objects,

⁶⁰मित्र एव क्रतुर्... ब्रह्मैव मित्रः । (ŚBK. 5.1.4.1). In the first hymn of the *R̥gveda* (verse 5), Agni is called *kavīkratu* (Varenne 1977–1978: 377–178). As Gonda (1959: 37–42) has shown in great detail, Indra too is often described by means of epithets that include the word *krātu*, such as *śatākratu*, *krātumant*, *sukrātu*, etc.

⁶¹स यदभिगच्छति मनसादो मे स्याददः कुर्वीयेति स क्रतुः । (ŚBK. 5.1.4.1).

⁶²क्रतुर्वरुणो दक्षः । (ŚBK. 5.1.4.1).

⁶³‘क्रतुः’ संकल्प इत्यर्थः । (Sāyaṇa’s commentary on ŚBM. 4.1.4.1 Vāre 1987: II.957). Grassmann (1996: 1443) defines *saṅkalpā* as ‘Plan, Auschlag’.

⁶⁴‘ब्रह्म’ इति ब्राह्मणजातिः, सैव ‘मित्रो’ देवः । क्षत्रियजातिरेव, ‘वरुणो’ देवः । (Vāre 1987: II.957).

⁶⁵My translation. Renou (1955–1969: II.58) said, “*Krātu* souligne la qualité requise: la faculté de comprendre, qui precede immédiatement l’acte créateur. *Krātu* est l’inspiration personnifiée en forme de dieu.”

⁶⁶Rönnow (1932: 72) explains, “Die Grundbedeutung von *kratu* wurde auf S. 3 folgendermassen angegeben: Er ist der bestimmende, energische Sinn des mutigen Kriegers, vor allem Indras, eine Macht in seinem Innern, dank welcher ihm Sieg und Erfolg bitten, geben kann.”

and phenomena, and by virtue of which these are powerful, effective, influential. It may rather vaguely be described as a kind of effective mental power or intelligence, mental energy and determination, which enables its possessor to have a solution for a practical difficulty... ‘an internal psychical and intellectual power such as resourcefulness or inventiveness enabling its possessor to proceed to successful action.’⁶⁷

Both Long (1977: 31, 49–50, 59–60) and Gonda (1984: 111, 1959: 159) understand *dákṣa* to be an ability, dexterity, or adroitness. Just as Agni and Indra, as well as *bráhma*n and *kṣatrá*, join forces, *krátu* and *dákṣa* also work as a team. Renou (1955–1969: VII.71) opines that *krátu* and *dákṣa* are “the two stages of realization: design and implementation.” Similarly, Varenne (1977–1978: 378) describes the “fundamental solidarity” between *bráhma*n and *kṣatrá*, two forces that combine into a dual unity in the ritual: the power of intelligence and the technical ability of the priest.

Many Vedic texts connect *bráhma*n and *kṣatrá* with the body. The *Śatapatha* makes explicit that both *bráhma*n and *kṣatrá* belong to oneself (K: *adhyātma*, *ātman*, M: *adhyātma*) and work in tandem.⁶⁸ The *Maitrāyaṇī Samhitā* states not only that *bráhma*n and *kṣatrá* are joined together, but also that both are embodied in the *puróhita*.⁶⁹ In the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, *bráhma*n rejects one who considers *bráhma*n as different from himself and the same goes for *kṣatrá*, because these two are this self.⁷⁰ The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (AB. 2.40; Keith (1920: 163) says that *brahman* is specifically the ear, for by the ear *brahman* hears and in the

⁶⁷Commenting on *RV*. 8.42.3, Gonda (1984: 111) writes, “*kratu-* for the sake of brevity may be translated by ‘resourcefulness’ or ‘inventiveness.’”

⁶⁸अध्यात्मं . . . तदस्यैतावात्मनः । (ŚBK. 5.1.4.1). अध्यात्मं स यदेव मनसा । (ŚBM. 4.1.4.1).

⁶⁹संशितं मे ब्रह्म संशितं वीर्यं बलम् । संशितं ह्यत्र मे जिष्णु यस्याहमस्मि पुरोहितः ॥ ब्रह्म ह्यत्र सयुजा न व्यथेते ब्रह्माह ह्यत्र जिन्वति ह्यत्रियस्य । ह्यत्र ब्रह्म जिन्वति ब्राह्मणस्य यत्समीची कृणुतो वीर्याणि । (MS. 2.7.7).

⁷⁰ब्रह्म तं परादादो ऽन्यत्रात्मनो ब्रह्म वेद ह्यत्र तं परादादो ऽन्यत्रात्मनः ह्यत्र वेद . . . इदं ब्रह्मेदं ह्यत्रमिमे लोका इमे देवा इमे वेदा इमानि भूतानीदं सर्वं यदयमात्मा । (BĀU. 4.5.7).

ear brahman finds support. Such examples suggest that brāhman and kṣatrá were considered internal powers embodied in man.⁷¹

The passage in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (*ŚBK.* 5.1.4.1–2; cf. *ŚBM.* 4.1.4.2–6) goes on to describe the one who understands (*abhi-gántr*) as brāhman (neuter, i.e. the power), while the actual doer (*kartṛ*) is the kṣatriya.⁷² Sāyaṇa glosses *abhi-gántr* here as connected with the power of knowing (*jñānaśaktiyuktaḥ*) and *kartṛ* as connected with the power of action (*kriyāśaktiyuktaḥ*).⁷³ According to the *Śatapatha*, the two powers originally were separate. Brāhman could remain without kṣatra, but kṣatra could not stand without brāhman. Then kṣatra united the two, because of which the text, applying these categories socially, states that a rājanya should not be without a brāhmaṇa:

तद्धोपमन्त्रयांचक्रे ऋत्रं ब्रह्म सꣳसृजावहै पुरस्तान्म एधि त्वत्प्रसृतः कर्म करवा
इति तथेति तौ समसृजेतां तत एष मैत्रावरुणो ग्रहो ऽभवत् ... तस्मादवकृत्समे-
व ब्राह्मणस्य यदराजन्यः स्यात्समृद्धमु तद्वो राजन्यं लभतै [ŚBM.: लभेत]
राजन्यस्य तु हैवानवकृत्सं यद्ब्राह्मणः स्याद्⁷⁴ असमर्धुक हास्य कर्म भवति यो
राजन्यो ऽब्राह्मणो भवति तस्माद्वाजन्येन कर्म करिष्यमाणेन ब्राह्मण उपसर्त-
व्यः सꣳ हास्मै तद्दृध्यते यत्काम एनमुपधावति। (*ŚBK.* 5.1.4.2)

Then kṣatra proposed, “Let the two of us unite brāhman and kṣatra. Come in front of me. Urged by you, let me perform the kárma.” [Brāhman said,] “Okay.” Those two united. Out of that, this Maitrāvaruṇa scoop came into existence. . . . Therefore, it is quite proper for a brāhmaṇa to be without a rājanya, and there would be success were he to obtain a rājanya. But it is not proper for a rājanya to be without a brāhmaṇa. Surely the kárma of a rājanya without a brāhmaṇa would not be successful. Therefore, a brāhmaṇa is to be approached by a rājanya

⁷¹उत्त नो ब्रह्मन्नविष [RV. 3.13.6] इति शंसति। श्रोत्रं वै ब्रह्म, श्रोत्रेणो हि ब्रह्म शृणोति, श्रोत्रे ब्रह्म प्रतिष्ठितं। (AB. 2.40).

⁷²अभिगन्तैव ब्रह्म कर्ता ऋत्रियः। (*ŚBK.* 5.1.4.1). On the bhāṣika accent, see Cardona (1993, 2015). On how the meaning of *brahman* changes according to accent, see Brereton (2004: 325).

⁷³‘अभिगन्त’ अभिगमनशीलः ज्ञानशक्तियुक्त इत्यर्थः। ‘कर्ता’ क्रियाशक्तियुक्तः। (Vāre 1987: II.957).

⁷⁴Cf. *ŚBM.* 4.1.4.6: एतद्ध त्वैवानवकृत्सं यत्तन्त्रियो ब्राह्मणो भवति। Sāyaṇa explains (959), ब्राह्मणस्य स्वाभाविकज्ञानशक्तिसम्भवात्तन्त्रियस्य तदभावात्तन्त्रियेण ब्राह्मणो ऽनुसरणीयः।

about to do an action. Surely that [action] succeeds for him [rājanya], who with whatever desire has recourse to him.”⁷⁵

One might be tempted to dismiss the *Śatapatha*’s interpretation in the previous *kaṇḍikā* of brāhman as krātu and of kṣatrā as dākṣa because of the strong emphasis later literature and culture has placed on the social application of varṇa. And yet, the text maintains that a true brāhmaṇa is inextricably connected to brāhman and both brāhman and kṣatrā are powers within oneself. Everything exists within one who knows, but the same is not the case for those who have not realized brāhman.

Examples abound in Vedic literature of what Smith calls the “elemental qualities” being associated with powers. Smith (1994: 101) argues that the “powers” called *brāhman*, *kṣatrā*, and *vīś* are “animating forces behind the social classes and their analogues—and the ‘second-order’ forces I have termed the essential powers.”⁷⁶ Adding to the explanatory connections that Smith observes, brāhman is connected with power (*drāviṇa*),⁷⁷ vital power (*varcas*),⁷⁸ and fiery energy (*téjas*) (Smith 1994: 101; Magnone 1992: 140). Sometimes through its connection with Indra and Agni, kṣatrā is tied to vigor (*vīrya*)⁷⁹ and strength (*ójas*),⁸⁰ (*bála*), and (*sáhas*), including that *sáhas* used to defeat Vṛtra (Gonda 1952: 5; Smith 1994: 94). *Vīś* is said to be inherently powerful (*svátavas*),⁸¹ abundance (*bhūman*),⁸² generating (*prajanana*), cattle (*paśu*),⁸³ and connected to nourishment (*puṣṭi*) (Smith 1994: 73). In this way, middle and late Vedic texts sometimes conceived brāhman, kṣatrā, and *vīś* as internal powers. That said, Caland and Eggeling translate these cate-

⁷⁵Cf. *ŚBM*. 4.1.4.6: स॒ऽ है॒वास्मै॑ तद्ब्र॒ह्मप्र॑सू॒तं क॒र्मा॒र्द्यते॑ ।

⁷⁶Smith gives the following examples: “*tejas* and *brahmavarcaśa* (Brahmin); *ojas*, *bala*, *vīrya*, *indriya* (Kshatriya); and *puṣṭi*, *prajanana*, and *ūrj* (peasantry).”

⁷⁷*MS*. 2.7.20 and *TS*. 4.3.3.1–2.

⁷⁸*ŚBK*. 1.1.3.5, cf. *ŚBM*. 2.1.3.6: *brahmavarcaśā*. The connection is found within the compound, which qualifies brahmin.

⁷⁹*ŚBK*. 4.9.1.13.

⁸⁰*TS*. 5.3.2.1, *MS*. 3.2.9, *KāthS*. 20.11, *TS*. 1.1.14.

⁸¹*ŚBK*. 1.4.3.10–12.

⁸²भू॒मा वै वि॒ड् । (*ŚBK*. 1.1.3.7.)

⁸³*PB*. 19.16.6.

gories as priesthood, nobility, and peasantry or leave them untranslated in their translations of the *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* and the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*.⁸⁴ Yet in the appropriate context, *brāhmaṇ* has been translated by Keith as ‘holy power’, by Smith as ‘brahman power’, and by Renou, Thite, Olivelle, and Proferes as ‘priestly power’. The term *kṣatrā* has been translated by Keith as ‘lordly power’, by Thite and Olivelle as ‘royal power’, by Eggeling as ‘power’, and by Proferes as ‘power of dominion’.⁸⁵

4 Conclusion

Vedic figures like Viśvāmitra, Indra, Janaka, and Anūpa Dhītoni are described in terms of being, simultaneously, both a *brāhmaṇa* and a *kṣatriya* in the *Brāhmaṇa* texts. As a realized seer who embodies the internal powers of *brāhmaṇ* and *kṣatrā*, someone like Viśvāmitra with dual *varṇa* constitutes the cooperative function of divine pairs like Indra and Agni as well as Mitra and Varuṇa. One may recall that Agni carries the oblations from this to that yonder world and Indra smashes *Vṛtra* to release the waters. These *devas* are connected with the integration of the worlds and cooperate, much like the internal powers, to achieve wholeness. According to the *Brāhmaṇas*, the religious practice of Vedic sacrificers works in a similar way. The *Brāhmaṇa* texts describe how the *kṣatrā* governs the *vís*, which leads to abundance. The *kṣatrā*, physical skill or ability, cannot act without its *brāhmaṇ*, the will or mental power to conceive intentionally, to achieve proper control of the *vís*. The *vís* metaphorically represent progeny (*prajā*), the unmanifest potentials of the mind, in the *svarga loka*, and kingdoms (*rāṣṭra*). By controlling the *vís*, *brāhmaṇ* and *kṣatrā* together secure an expansion of dominion.

⁸⁴Sometimes Eggeling leaves *brahman* and *kshatra* untranslated, or he writes it as “Brahman (neuter),” “Brāhmaṇ,” etc.

⁸⁵Note Eggeling (1882–1900: V.324–327) translates *rāṣṭra* as “royal power” in *ŚBM*. 13.9.2.1ff, 13.10.2.1–2, etc. Patton (2005: 151) touches on how mental powers are moved into bodies and then transformed into an instrument.

Religiously speaking, this dominion includes the svarga loka or svár, to which the víś are connected. In addition to *kṣatrá* primarily meaning dominion in the *R̥gveda*, Jurewicz (2016: 180) asserts that the term “conveys the meaning of a state conceived of as shining, lofty and beyond death.” According to *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* 4.6.24, “The svarga loka is universal sovereignty” (*sāmrājyaṃ vai svargo lokah*). In this light, dominion over the víś, to reach svár, represents an expansion of the mind to include both the manifest and unmanifest and everything in between—represented metaphorically in Vedic as the earth, sky, and intermediate space.

To what extent is this expansive unification of the worlds the rāṣṭra that Viśvāmitra attains in the *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa* and the rājya that he wishes his offspring to attain in *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*?⁸⁶ After all, through each respective offering, the yajamāna conquers that much of the world (*tāvantaṃ lokāṃ jayati*). The internal powers—vital power, strength, and abundance—aid in conquering more and more of the worlds. Even though, as Smith has shown, the groundwork for a social hierarchy of varṇa categories has been laid out in Vedic texts, it is not the only organizing principle operating through the varṇa triad. Because of the religious emphasis on expanding the mind, which is represented in terms of dominion achieved through the partnership of brāhman and kṣatrá, it is possible for Viśvāmitra and others to be dvivarna in the Vedic period. The terms used to describe a brahmán as a learned person, however, evince a shift. *Taittirīya Samhitā* 6.6.1.3 employs the perfect participle *śúśruvān*, emphasizing that the vast, knowing mind has been directly realized through hearing. *Kāṇva Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* 5.7.6.2 describes a brahmán with the present participle and superlative suffix *anūcānátamaḥ*, suggesting that a learned person was later considered to be the most diligent student who was well versed in the Veda due to reciting after the teacher. Understanding brāhman, kṣatrá, and víś as inherent powers in the *Brāhmaṇa* texts may have prompted a more stringent articulation of the four-tiered social hierarchy in subsequent Dharma literature.

⁸⁶*PB*. 21.12.1–2; *JB*. 2.219.

Abbreviations

- *AA*. *Aitareya-āraṇyaka*
- *AB*. *Aitareya-brāhmaṇa*
- *AV*. *Atharvaveda*
- *BĀU*. *Bṛhadāraṇyaka-upaniṣad* (according to the Kāṇva recension)
- *ChU*. *Chāndogya-upaniṣad*
- *GB*. *Gopatha-brāhmaṇa* Vidyāvāridhi 1979
- *JB*. *Jaiminīya-brāhmaṇa*
- *JUB*. *Jaiminīya-upaniṣad-brāhmaṇa*
- *KāthS*. *Kāthaka-saṁhitā* Schroeder 1900–1910
- *KapS*. *Kaṣiṭhala-saṁhitā*
- *KB*. *Kauṣītaki-brāhmaṇa*
- *MS*. *Maitrāyaṇī saṁhitā* Schroeder 1881–1886
- *PB*. *Pañcaviṁśa-brāhmaṇa*
- *RV*. *R̥gveda* Ś. Sonāṭakke, Kāśīkara, et al. 1933–1951
- *ŚBK*. *Kāṇva Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa* Pimplapure 2002
- *ŚBM*. *Mādhyandina Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa*
- *ŚSS*. *Śānkāyana-śrauta-sūtra*
- *TĀ*. *Taittirīya-āraṇyaka*
- *TB*. *Taittirīya-brāhmaṇa*
- *TS*. *Taittirīya-saṁhitā* N. Sonāṭakke and Dharmadhikari 1970–2006
- *TU*. *Taittirīya-upaniṣad*

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