

Virajā In Post-Vedic Literature

Prof. Sulok Sundar Mohanty

Goddess Viraja, the presiding deity of Jaipur has very ancient origin. The two armed idol of the deity reveals the early origin of her worship here. Her glory has also been lauded in the Mahabharata (Vanaparava, 85.6), Padmapurana (1.39.6, 45.28-29), Brahmapurana (42.1), Vamanapurana (22.19), Brahmandapurana (3.13.57). The Kapilasamhita written around sacred places of Odisha including the Virajaksetra (7.16-17). The virajaksetramahatmyam is a Sthalapurana added to the Brahmandapurana fifteenth century AD. King Yayati (c. 10th century A.D.) of the Kesari dynasty ruled over the areas of the state of Odisha known then by the names like Kalinga, Odra and Utkala and Jaipur was his capital. During this period Buddhism had lost its popularity due to the emergence of Sahajayana thought in it. Kalinga country which was Sramanised from very early time now gradually became Brahmanised. In keeping with the popular mood king Kesari instituted a horse sacrifice inviting ten thousand Brahmanas from Kanauj. Tradition believes that goddess Sakti took the form of Viraja and she emerged from the sacrificial fire. After the sacrifice was over, the deity continued to be worshipped there particularly for the benefit of the deceased ancestors. The episode of Gaya was also believed which added that when the demon was immolated, as per his wish, Visnu declared this tirtha as a pitrtirtha, known as Nabhigaya; the other two being Sirsagaya and Padagaya where offer of pindas would bestow merit to the deceased ancestors to reach heaven and even get liberation. Among the Puranic texts cited above, the Kapilasamhita and Virajaksetramahatmyam offer more details on the offer pindas in the sraddhas in this pitrtirtha.

VIRAJA REMOVES BLEMISHES

Removal of blemishes a person commits, in a common attribute of both the Vedic and the Puranic deities. The worship of the deity in both the traditions involves recitation of mantras but in the former offer of oblation in the sacrificial fire constitutes the principal rite while in the later, it is puja in the tirtha (seat of the concerned deity). In case of goddess Viraja it may be seen that the prowess of the deity to remove the blemishes is her prominent attribute and this has been sustained in both the traditions.

The Mahabharata (op. cit.) mentions that the Pandavas were advised to take a dip in the river Vaitarani flowing beside this tirtha and then visit goddess Viraja, shining like the moon (in the sky during the night) to be free from all sorts of blemishes :

**tato vaitaranim gacchet sarvapaparamocanim |
vairajam tirthamasadya yatha virajate sasi ||**

The Kapilasamhita (op. cit.) also mentions that offer of pindas in this tirtha destroys sin (tatra pindam prayacchanti ye narah vitakalmasah) and even the sight of the Nabhigaya, Viraja and the river Vaitarani destroys crores of grave blemishes (mahapataka-koti-ghani sakrddarsana-matratah) The Virajaksetramahatmyam (2.33) also mentions that by the sight of goddess Viraja, bowing down her after propitiating her with the praise made by Brahman, the devotee sets himself free from the blemishes made by Brahman, the devotee sets himself free from the blemishes and obtains all his wishes :

**drstva virajasam devim stutva stotrena vedhasa |
pranamyā patakanmuktah sarvan kamanavapnuyat ||**

In the Viramitrodaya (Tirthaprakasa, pp. 598-599) Mitramisra quotes from the Brahmapurana with also confirms the attribute of this goddess in removing the blemishes. It mentions that Brahma has established the goddess by whose sight a person purifies the ancestors extending upto seven steps. A person having only one sight of her and worshipping her, liberates his ancestors and reaches the Brahmaloaka :

**viraje virajamata brahmana sampratisthita |
yasyah samdarsananmartyah punatyasaptam kulam ||
sakra drstva tu tam devim bhaktya puja pranamyā ca |
narah svavamsamudhrtya mama lokam sa gacchati ||**

Cayani candrasekhara Mahapatra, a poet of Odisha during eighteenth century A.D. mentions in his drama Madhuraniruddham (V.7) that blemishes emerge, as people believe, from the rajoguna in Prajapati who had ventured misadventure against his own daughter. Hence it (rajoguna) is to be discarded to attain merit. This has been maintained in the Vedanta texts. The power to discard that (rajoguna) is indeed achieved with the sight of Viraja as it is clear from the name (vi-rajā) it self :

**Prayo' kamayata prajapatirapi svapatyam atyahite |
hetum tatra rajah prajalpati janah kirtayi ca tadvarjanam ||**

**brahmaupasinaste rajo naca temah satvam na va tatvatah |
vedanta bruvate visisya viraja namna yadamnayase ||**

THE VIRAJA MANTRA

In the ritual practices the importance and decisive power of the well-formulated word has always been recognized. It is interesting to note the following mantra frequently mentioning the word Viraja in the Mahanarayani-upanisad (20.15) :

pranapanavyanodasamana me sudhyantam jyotiraham viraja vipapma bhuyasam svaha [1] van-manas-caksus-srotra-ghrana-reto-buddhyakutisamkalpa me sudhyantam jyotiraham viraja vipapma bhuyasam. svaha [2] sirah-pani-pada-parsva-prasthodara-janjhasisnopastha-payavo me sudhyantam jyotiraham viraja vipapma bhuyasam. svaha [3] tvak-carma-mamsarudhiramedosthimajja me sudhyantam. jyotiraham viraja vipapma bhuyasam. svaha. [4] sabda-sparsa-rupa-rasa-gandha me sudhyantam. jyotiraham viraja vipapma bhuyasam. Svaha. [5] prthivyap-tejo-vayvakasa me sudhyantam. jyotiraham viraja vipapma bhuyasam. svaha. [6] annamaya-pranamaya-manamaya-ijnanamayanandamaya me sudhyantam jyotiraham viraja vipapma bhuyasam. Svaha. [7]

(Taittiriya Aranyaka, Andhra Edn, 10.65)

May my out-breath, in-breath, inner-breath, up-breath, and link breath become purified. May I become the radiant, free of dust and evil! svaha! [1] May my speech, mind, sight, hearing, taste, smell, semen, intelligence, intentions and desires become purified. May I become the radiant, free of dust and evil! svaha ! [2] May my head, hands, feet, sides, back, belly, thighs, penis, sexual organs and anus become purified. May I become the radiant, free of dust and evil ! svaha ! [3] May my outer and inner skin, flesh, blood, fat, marrow, sinews and bones become purified. May I become the radiant, free of dust and evil ! svaha ! [4] May my (bodily constituents) of sound touch, visible appearance, taste, and smell. May I become the radiant, free of dust and evil! svaha ! [5] May my (bodily constituents) earth, water, fire wind, and space become purified. May I become the radiant, free of dust and evil! svaha ! [6] May my (body) made of food, breath, mind, intelligence and bliss become purified. May I become the radiant, free of dust and evil ! svaha ! [7]

The ritual application of this mantra is seen during the sutra period. The Baudhyanadharmasutra (3.8.12) prescribes here the first seven mantras for offering additional oblation of clarified butter in a candrayanavrata (lunar

penance) and at 4.3.8, it declares all these seven mantras as the Viraja mantra which are capable of destroying grave sins :

**aghamarsanam devakrtam suddhavatyastaratsamah
kusmandyah pavamanyasca viraja mrtyulangalam
durga vyahrtayo rudra mahadosavinasanah**

GODDESS VIRAJA TRACED FROM VEDIC TRADITION

Even after being worshipped as an idol in the puranic pattern goddess viraja maintains her link with the Vedic tradition. The Manusmrti (3.197-198) declares that the ancestral deity of the Brahmanas is the group of Somapas, of the Ksatriyas, the Havirbhuksi of the Vaisyas, the Ajjapas and of the Sudras, the Sukalins.

The Somapas are the sons of Kavi (Bhrgu), Havirbhuksi are the sons of Angiras, the Ajjapas are the sons of Pulastya and the Sukalins are the sons of Vasistha.

**somapa nama vipranam ksatriyanam havirbhuyah
vaisyanam ajjapa nama sudranam tu sukalinah
somapastu kaveh putra havismanto' ngirah-sutah
pulastyasyajjapah putrah vasisthasya sukalinah**

The Vayupurana (73.41-46) mentions that being fickle like the birds, the Ajjapas, ancestral deities, move around the worlds. Pulaha is born from kardama Prajapati. Ajjapas. are born from Pulaha. They move around the worlds at their free will. Viraja is their daughter born from their minds. The Vaisyas intending to cherish their desires in the sraddhas, remain devoted to them (Ajjapas). In stead, they worship their daughter, goddess Viraja, as she is widely known. She is also the wife of Nahusa and mother of Yayati :

**ajjapa nama pitarah kardamasya prajapateh
samutpannasya pulahadutpannastasya vai punah
lokesvetesu vartante kamagesu vihangamah
etan vaisyaganah sraddhe bhavayanti phalarthinah
etesam manasikanya viraja nama visrta
yayaterjanani sadvhi patni sa nahusasya tu**

Many female deities unknown or lesser known in the early vedic period became famous in the Sutra period. They include Sita, Asa (desire), Sraddha (faith), Medha (intellect), Bhuti (prosperity), Ardra, Anagha, Sasthi, Raka, Anumati, Sri, Ambika (Rudra's sister) Hri, Pusti, Indrani, Rudrani and Varunani.

Virajā In Post-Vedic Literature

At though noticed rarely, idol worship and worship of the deities in the temples was known to the Sutrakaras during the later Vedic period. The Vedic mantras like Gayatri, Sraddha, Savitri receive worship in the puranic tradition being deified and in case of the viraja-mantra the same is again seen signifying the emergence of the puranic tradition from the Vedic tradition.

Prof. Sulok Sundar Mohanty

Retd. Principal

G.M. College (Autonomous)

Sambalpur, Odisha.