

Power of Animal symbolism: Bull as a Metaphor of Masculine Might, Political Authority and Cosmic Evolution within Vedic Corpus¹

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Abstract: For early societies in throes of evolution, religion would have been a way to comprehend the unknown and a strategy to read and control the unpredictable, especially the pulse of nature. This process of integration or assimilation would not be without contestation. However, when the belief system allows dissent to be accommodated and critique to surface, the system sustains itself with minor ruptures. What could be interesting, is to look at the myriad methods that were used in earlier times, where the correlation between religion and power, shaped gender relations or the other way round. Through a study of Vedic Corpus, the author intends to explore animal symbolism and cultic practices. She would begin with a few issues such as how did the bull invest identity on and ostensibly grant power to many across the social fabric? Gods, kings and populace worked out an easy association with the animal on accord of its symbolism. What did the bull really symbolize and how did it work towards resolving social tensions while holding the collective together? Could it have something to do with relevance of the animal in pastoral and early agrarian social-formations, where collective effort under strong and resolute leadership mattered most for survival? Not just mundane issues, the symbol of bull held the potential to address concerns related to cosmic reality as evidenced in the myth on the performance of primordial sacrifice. The author would also look at the bull through its mythic representations of masculinity that resolved issues of lineage perpetuation and also suggested increased fertility of bovine as well as of land. Bull symbol and cults may have also worked towards amalgamation of some tribes, not really welcomed by authors of the Vedas. Overall, the paper aims to unravel myths around the bull in context of its being a cogent symbol of masculinity, socio-political authority and assumed cosmic reality.

Key words: Masculinity, Authority, Sacrifice, social formations, symbols.

1. Introduction:

Our images of everyday reality, our elementary classifications of understanding, our connect with the supramundane often find representation in something very mundane and ordinary such as an animal figure. The image of the animal is used by populace to record and express a range of experiences and ideas and in the process the animal assumes an extraordinary status. It may, in turn, begin controlling the pulse of those who repose faith in it. We are referring to emergence of animal cults that hinge on animal symbolism and its transmission through myths. Many animal worshipping cults have existed in ancient societies and despite temporal and spatial gaps, the same animal has held sway across cultures.

2. Aims and Objective:

The aim of the study is to explore what makes the pervasion of animal-thought so enduring in human mind. A range of queries surface. Does it relate to its inherent power of symbolism? Can an animal symbolize aspects of both mundane and supra-mundane? Is animal-symbolism rooted in a particular social milieu where the animal-symbol unfolds at multiple levels; works towards resolving social tensions, providing an identity marker, holding the collective together along with forming linkages with the supramundane? Does this phenomenon appear to be truer of simple societies than of the complex ones? In the paper we aim to unravel the mystique in the context of mythic representation of the bull and how it has held the power to pervade diverse domains of human existence and stand out as cogent symbol of masculinity, socio-political authority and assumed cosmic reality. But before that it may be essential to explain our methodology for studying and analysing animal symbolism especially in the context of bull cults, as reflected within the Vedic Corpus.

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3. Methodology: Sources, Review of Literature and Concepts Clarification

The methodology involved in the study is based on reviewing the primary sources, reflecting on secondary literature and attempting to understand some tools of analysis through examination of foundational concepts.

Sources: Time, locale and Societal Frames

We have chosen to explore some Vedic texts for the study. There is a general agreement that the earliest Vedic text is the *Rksamhitā*, the prayer book of earliest school of *Rgveda*, that may have been compiled between 1500-1000 BCE while all others including the three schools *Sāmaveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Atharvaveda* with its prayer books or *samhitās*, ritual manuals or *Brāhmaṇas*, forest books or *Āraṇyakas* and *Upanishads* were possibly compiled between 1000 and 500 BCE. Generally speaking the phase represented by *Rksamhitā* is referred to as early Vedic period and rest of the Vedic corpus reflects what we call Later Vedic. Early grammarians such as Pāṇinī (c.450 BCE) and relatively early texts of the Pāli canon (c.250 BCE) show familiarity with some of the texts of the Vedic corpus. Broadly one has to confront the rigorous of inter-textual and intra-textual stratification while handling numerous texts of the corpus. In this paper we are paying special attention to myths of *Rksamhitā*, *Pañcaviṃṣa Brāhmaṇa* and the *Atharvaveda*.

In terms of locale, we can easily get a sense of movement of the composers of Vedic corpus from northwest region of the subcontinent where the *Rksamhitā* was compiled to the east Ganga valley in north India where the *Upanishads* were composed. Numerous social formations can also be sighted such as pastoralism in the early phase to a mix of pastoralism and agriculture in what is often called the later Vedic period. Trade activities also make rudimentary appearance as the later Vedic texts reflect movements towards urban settlements by sixth century BCE. Over all the texts fall in between tribal societies to one in transition to state set up. But full-fledged state is associated with the end of the 'Vedic period' what we call in common parlance as the 'Age of heterodox movements'. What the paper aims at doing is to study the 'power of Bull' as reflected in the myths of the Vedic corpus in order to highlight the role of animal symbolism in the construction of religious and gendered identities.

4. Review of Literature :

Barring a very few works influenced by the French sociologists and anthropologists, a majority of writings on Vedic religion continue to be influenced by the approach of Max Muller. This is true of even such giants of Vedic studies as A.A. Macdonell, Jan Gonda and R.N. Dandekar. Broadly, A.B. Keith's otherwise monumental work *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads* would fall in the same category. It is regretted that he did not find perspectives of sociologists like Durkheim or Max Weber of much use, though he recognizes his debt to A.A. Macdonell's *Vedic Mythology* and works of Max Muller, Hillebrandt, Oldenberg and Julius Eggeling. There is plenty of data in the volumes, which could still be harnessed into a scientific conceptual framework. From our point of view the details of the animal rituals along with their analysis could be of use. An indispensable reading is R.L.Mitra's *Indo Aryans*, which was written in the late nineteenth century though compiled later. Jan Gonda's contributions to studies on Vedic religion are substantive. His numerous works include *Notes on Brahman*, 1950, *Change and Continuity in Indian Religion*, 1965, *The Dual Divinities in the Religion of the Vedas*, 1970, *The Vedic God Mitra*, 1972, *The Vedic Rituals*, *Indra in Rg Samhitā*, *Savayajnas* and J.Gonda ed. *A History of Indian Literature*, vol.I, fasc.(The Vedic Literature) and fasc.2 (The Ritual Sutras), 1975, 1977. His research is meticulous and thorough. However, as just mentioned above the stress is on philological diagnosis that is quite essential in itself but somehow not complete. Yet, for students of Vedic religion Gonda's works become both a facility as well as a prerequisite for further micro studies.

Though these studies are relevant to understand Vedic religion, none deal directly with the power of Bull. From relatively more recent writings on Vedic religions which can be regarded as approximating 'science of religion', a special mention should be made of Bruce Lincoln's meticulous work on Indo-Iranian religion with distinct focus on the *Rgveda*. In his work *Priest, Warriors, and Cattle* (1981), though he has relied considerably on linguistics and comparative mythology- the tools of Max Muller, it is more than obvious that he has taken cognizance of sociological, anthropological and Marxian formulations on religion. In addition, its thrust on ecological grasp to the study of religious phenomenon is a novel feature. He has posed pertinent questions like do cultures, which have similar socio-economic and ecological bases, also have similar religions? Is religion primarily directed towards abstract universal concerns, or are practical and temporal matters a fundamental part of religious thought? On the basis of Primary sources and with help of secondary literature we begin the exercise of comprehending the power of bull in early India, as expressed in the Vedic texts. But the exercise becomes worthwhile if we clarify some concepts that we would use as tools to investigate the theme deeper.

5. Tools of Analysis: Myths and Rituals

Myths are an important tool for reconstruction of any historical period. Historians do not dismiss these as figments of imagination but study these carefully to cull historical seed out. What a myth is, and its connect with human behaviour and power structures. This should enable us to use myths and mythology as tools of historical analysis. Anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss argues that myth is like language but unlike other form of language, and especially poetry, which loses a lot in translation, myth retains its capacities even when poorly translated. This is because the fundamental idea of the myth is a story which is quite transmittable and because of the nature of the organizational components which make up a myth which are irreducible and repeated across myths.

Levi-Strauss did not look for the ‘meaning’ of myth at the level of consciousness. In fact, for Levi-Strauss the kind of logic which is used in mythical thought is as rigorous as modern science. In his book *The Savage Mind* Levi-Strauss asserts that the mythical thought and modern scientific thought simply represent ‘two strategic levels at which nature is accessible to scientific enquiries’. The basic characteristic of mythical thought consists in its concreteness; it works with ‘signs’ which have peculiar character of lying between images and conceptsⁱ. That is, signs resemble images in that they are concrete, as concepts are not; however, their power of reference also likens them to concepts. It is Levi-Strauss’s assertion that mythical thought is a kind of bricolage (‘tinkering’) in the sense that it works with all sorts of heterogeneous material which happen to be available. This material would stand for more than its face value.

But for Phenomenologists such as Gerardus Van der Leeuw and Mircea Eliade, a myth has to be understood as something sacred. Within the frame- work of ritual inquiry, it would be an account of a ‘creation’ of one sort or another, as it tells of how something came into being. Since myth is frequently related to a ‘creation’ (the world, man, a specified institution), it constitutes the paradigm for all significant human acts. By knowing it, one knows the ‘origin’ of things and hence can control and manipulate them at will. This is a knowledge that one experiences ritually, either by ceremonially recounting the myth or by performing the ritual for which it serves as both a model and a justification. By reciting a myth, one recreates that fabulous time and becomes contemporary with the events described, coming into presence of gods or heroes. By ‘living’ the myth one emerges from profane, chronologically ordered time and enters the time that is of different quality, a sacred time, at once primordial and infinitely recoverable.ⁱⁱ

Myths have fascinated Psychologists too. Carl Jung tinkered with the idea of the ‘Collective Unconscious’. He defined this as a common heritage in the unconscious of all members of human species manifesting itself in the form of ‘archetypes’ which are a common property of humanity. Therefore, the recounting of the myth, the choice of symbols within it and the enactment of some of the rituals may not be just a social but a psychological phenomenon as well. The apparent similarities in some myths and rituals across cultures has been explained in terms of ‘shared psychic structures’ which imply same neuro-psychological responses to stress, especially in heightened states of awareness.ⁱⁱⁱ

Historians and mythologists have yet another take on the concept of myth. Well known mythologist W.D. O’Flaherty opines that, ‘a myth is like a palimpsest on which generation after generation has engraved its own layer of messages’ and we must decipher each layer with a different code book.^{iv} This analysis may require what is called a ‘tool box approach to the study of myth’ that is an approach riddled with a wide range of theoretical tools that enables one to reach for the right one at the right time.^v For historian D.D. Kosambi what is most important is the unravelling of hidden social processes through an understanding of the method of elaboration or deletion of elements within a myth of time and space. ‘The fossilized and stratified remnants’ of certain observances, along with ‘caste and religion may actually hold together a particular group’ and may decide its relationship with other coherent groups within a highly composite society.^{vi} A myth then may be assessed as a historical document covered under many layers, and each layer holding a key to a distinct history in a specific spatial and temporal context.

Such wide-ranging perspectives on myth formation implies that our own stand of analysis should be cross disciplinary. Our enquiry should take into serious consideration the whole social and religious expressiveness within which myths are formulated and function.

Likewise, we also need to understand how rituals, especially, sacrifice, would make the bull a powerful symbol in the domain of religion and in comprehension of cosmic reality. Sacrifice may be defined as an act at the core of which lies a very fundamental expectation or anticipation of a bountiful return of what has been deliberately destroyed or given up to appease the divine. At another level it may also be defined as a way of communicating with transcendent reality in words, thought or by ritual performance, the most popular being the last one. As in the case of myths, sacrifice has also been identified as the cause of the origin of the world. Among all the sacrifices, animal sacrifice has been the most

common one. The victim would be first consecrated and then killed and all those participating in the ritual would consume blood and meat of the animal.

French sociologists Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss believe that a sacrifice establishes a union between the realms of the sacred and profane.^{vii} This occurs through the mediation of the slain animal, which acts as the buffer between the two realms, eliminating the need for direct contact. The victim represents or 'becomes' both the invisible divine recipient of the offering and the human being who makes the offering. In other words, he represents the god as well as the sacrificer who seemingly gets merged in him. In fact; it is only in the context of a sacrifice that killing is not regarded as a sin; a suicide, murder or deicide even when it actually might be so. René Girard notes a paradox arising because of victim's sacrality, 'because the victim is sacred, it is criminal to kill him—but the victim is sacred only because he is to be killed'.^{viii} All substitutions within a sacrificial ritual are therefore substitutions for a prior and definitive substitution. The substitute victim is a symbol, a symbol for the pair of opposites like the sacred and the profane, recipient and the giver or god and human. It stands for something else, and therefore it may be an animal, vegetable, drink, etc. If substitution is the key to sacrifice, then the only thing the victim will not stand for is itself or more precisely it alone; a bull may symbolize bulls in general or cattle or even the owner of the cattle. It may be worth noting how the ritual works in the Vedic texts where the animal symbolizes the creation of the universe itself.

6. Bull as a metaphor of Gods and Masculinity:

Ṛksamhitā is a collection of hymns that are a part of some mythic recantation, not all of which is explicit and assumes awareness on the part of the participant-audience. So, it leaves modern readership a little confused and necessitates cross-verification. However, even incomplete myths indicate bull's tremendous power of symbolism spanning religious, community and masculine identities. The bull was one animal that could cut across divides of many kinds and associate itself with the divine or the mundane, the elite or the common, formal or folk art and easily pervaded the language of the time. The *Ṛksamhitā* is replete with numerous references to the terms such as *vṛṣa*, *vṛṣaṇ* and *vṛṣabha*. *Vṛṣa* implies 'to rain down, shower down, pour forth, effuse and shed'. It also implies male, husband, a bull, the chief of a class or anything eminent or best of its kind. *Vṛṣaṇ* means raining, sprinkling, impregnating, manly, vigorous powerful, strong, mighty and great. It can also suggest man, male animal. *Vṛṣabha* also means manly, strong, male, vigorous, showerer of bounties and a benefactor. The terms seemed to be invested with more than ordinary meaning of just a bull. In literary terms then a bull could be used as a metaphor for many concepts. It stood to symbolize various gods right from Indra and Agni to Soma, Maruts, Parjanya, Dyaus, Puṣaṇ, Viṣṇu and Rudra. The word bull carried so much power as to substitute for leadership, invincibility, strength, vigour, aggression, virility and thunderbolt. Many of these qualities would become a part of discourse on masculinity.

The connection between Indra, bull and masculinity comes out directly in some verses. Indra is frequently called a bull and is said to be in possession of 'thousand testicles, potent manhood' (VI.46.3). In yet another verse the poet juxtaposes a bull's semen (*retas*) with Indra *vīrya* (semen). The verse VI.28.8, states, 'Let this concoction be infused among the cows, let it be infused among the semen of the bull, O Indra, let it be infused in your manly power (*vīrya*). Everyday observations of animal behaviour must have spilled over in linguistic construction of idioms. In yet another verse the virile element of the bull comes out in a metaphorical way along with its association with Agni. In the verse 1.140.6, in an apparent reference to burning the wood in a sacrifice or in the forest wood Agni, 'amid brown plants, stoops as if adorning them, and rushes bellowing like a bull upon his wife...'

Even the Maruts are called "the Bull among cows." (I.37.5). This is actually a reference to a band of storm of gods, preeminent among clouds as a bull is among cows. *Aśvins* are called 'Bulls who filled the barren cows with milk' (VI.62,7). Masculine implications are strongly evident. *Aśvins* are praised because they heard the calling of the wife (*Vadhramatī*) of an impotent man and like bulls 'filled the cow with milk' implying made her pregnant. This may have been the case of the ancient practice of *niyoga* where, in case, the husband was impotent, another man replaced him to produce progeny in the husband's name. The references to the bull in these myths are a little cryptic and the bull stands as substitute for others; generally, deities.

However, there is at least one myth that is more detailed and clearer in its masculine and virile connotations of the bull. The bull appears as itself as well as a metaphor for a youthful man. The hymn X.102 contains seeds of a legend wherein an old sage by the name of Mudgala lost his cattle to his opponents. He was left only with a bull that he harnessed to his wagon and with help of his wife who acted as a charioteer he was able to defeat his opponents, win the race and retrieve the cattle. We get only the fragments of the myth but still get an idea of symbolism at work in the context of the bull. Mudgālānī was a wife not in a physical relationship with her husband possibly due to his old age or his being impotent. The bull in the legend actually replaces him and joins the wife in the act of winning the war. The

replacement by the bull may essentially establish the myth within the cycle of rejuvenation and sexual restoration. The myth in some way's points to the restoration of conjugal rights. The bull here can be rightly taken as a metaphor for virility and the myth may actually refer to the ancient practice of *niyoga* where, in case, the husband was impotent, another man replaced him to produce progeny in the name of the man.

One can state with some confidence that the bull was to the Ṛgvedic mind more than a mere beast, it was a symbol of might, thrusting energy, sexual potency with fertilizing power. In the text a monkey is referred to as *vṛṣakapi*. In the hymn X.66, Indra is spoken of as having been exhausted when a bold lascivious monkey gave to him some medicine through which he regained his manly powers. What is significant to us is that the name of the monkey has the word *vṛṣa* at its root. The fact that with consumption of the potion given by the monkey Indra became manly, suggests that *vṛṣa* was certainly connected with the concept of virility and fertility. *Vṛṣabha* was certainly more than an animal. In fact, Sāyaṇa translated the word *vṛṣabha* not as the bull but as "showerer of benefits". This may be so because the word *vṛṣa* (the root of the word *vṛṣabha*) means: "to rain". For Sāyaṇa, writing in the fourteenth century the word was too sacred to be interpreted in any other way. What we need to reflect on is whether it had begun acquiring revered connotations during the early Vedic period itself and if that was the case how can this be rationalized. Griffith observes that the word *vṛṣan* which he renders as "mighty" is commonly applied in the Veda to living beings and things preeminent for strength, and the Vedic poets delight in repeating it and its compounds and derivatives.

Masculine connotations continue in the later Vedic texts itself. Within the *Pañcaviṃṣa Brāhmaṇa*, there are frequent references to the bull as a symbol of strength. The text, based on *Ṛksamhitā*, actually provides an explanation of musical chants that were to accompany recantation of hymns and myths in order to ensure correct performance of a ritual. There is an assumption among the authors on popular familiarity with contemporary myths and hence the details of the myths are skipped. As mentioned above, this poses a problem for present day students of the text. But some things are hard to miss such as bull symbolism for fertility and virility.

There were chants (called *sāmans*) that were directly related to the bull and were supposed to pass on to the recipient (*yajamāna*) strength, power and virility of the animal. The word *vṛṣaṇ* or *vṛṣabha* substituted for these in the verses and would transmit these qualities within a proper ritual context. Often Ṛgvedic verse with slight modification and proper musical notations would furnish such objectives. For example, the verse VI.10.9 was actually located in *Ṛksamhitā*, (IX.65) and referred to soma, also called the bull in the verse. In the *Pañcaviṃṣa Brāhmaṇa*, this particular *sūkta* was used to impart strength to the noble, for whom the rite was being performed. Some chants were especially called *aṛṣabha/ṛṣabha* or bull chants^{ix} and these were 'night lauds', a part of a night rite. Chanting of these would also ensure a growth in the power of various kinds within the sacrificer. These chants could also aid in many other things like obtainment of cattle, ensure their thriving, appeasing of Indra, ensuring Indra's presence in a sacrificial rite and even humbling him in case he decided to leave the sacrifice for the benefit for *yajamāna*'s rival. It is interesting to note that some chants like the *ṛṣabha sāman* as *śakvārī* verses were a metaphorical parallel of bull and cow copulation where 'śakvārī verses are the cow and in his cows, he (*ṛṣabha*) there by produces copulation in order that cows may procreate, for not without a bull does a cow procreate'^x. The *śakvārī* chant was used for possession of cattle and it could also be used for procreation if combined with the bull chant to form the *ṛṣabha - śakvārī sāman*. The word copulation was used within the scheme of chants/ musical notations to endorse the fertility function off of the bull and its role in procreation. We get the same import from yet another verse^{xi}. It starts with, 'the red bull roaring into the cow'. Sometimes the verses that accompanied the Soma rite were compared to a bull and by singing those aloud, strength was imparted to the rite. We also come across references to chants designed to ensure success in ox race. The bull had to be a very powerful being to have so many chants revolving around it with the specific aim of transferring its energy, strength and virility on to the rite, the sacrificer or those associated with him.

7. Bull: Symbol of leadership and Political Power:

In the verse I.177.1 of the *Ṛksamhitā*, Indra is called 'bull of men'. The verse runs, 'The bull of men, who cherishes all people, king of the races, Indra, fame-loving, praised hither...' Here there is a clear reference to leadership trait of the bull. Indra is the hero, a chief distinguished by strength and the word chosen to describe that was 'bull'. One important function associated with Indra was bringing water to his people by annihilating the demon *Rauhiṇa* or *Vṛtra* that controlled it. So, Indra, the bull, the mighty one, sets free the floods to flow at pleasure (II.12.12) after striking his thunderbolt at the clouds and annihilating the demon, *Vṛtra*. Sometimes his thunderbolt itself becomes "the bull" (I.131.3). One of the functions of the chief would have been making water resources to his people practicing pastoralism or agriculture. Indra, the bull, performed the function by becoming *Parjanya*, the rain cloud and bellowing as a bull to release water. Indra, as a bull, was depicted as a fighter too. At another level the myth, which must have been recalled

in performance of rituals, in specifically the Rgvedic context in South Asia may actually be reflective of tussle between Aryans and non-Aryans over the issue of control of water resources. It could also be just a reference to 'Aryan' and 'non-Aryan' contention over latter's movement inside local areas of non-Aryans. If we were to trace the etymology of Vṛtra, it would imply 'resistance'. Indra, the chief of Aryans, overcame a number of human foes who had 'resisted' the onward march of the Vedic people. These human foes came to be looked upon as the Vṛtras or Rauhiṇas. In either case what is important to us is that the comparisons were invoked from the bovine repertoire.

The might of the ruler is often evident in the battlefield. The verse III.46.1 calls Indra a fighter (in a battle, *yudha*), a bull and one physically powerful and young. In all possibilities this verse was recanted in a ritual performed before a battle and the chieftain was compared to Indra and it was expected that he would have Indra's bull like ferocity and aggression, essential for success in a battle. Often bull imagery was invoked to describe a strong leader like Indra who held the mace/ thunderbolt in his, 'bull strong arms'.

But this bull, the chieftain, had to be generous with his wealth and dole it out in form of *dakṣiṇā* payments. As a *vīra*, Indra had shared his spoils with his followers in the past. The message, if decoded, meant that the chieftain should also stake out his spoils with the ritualists who were instrumental in invoking Indra, the bull, and bringing about victory. This a classic example of a pastoral tribal set up where the chief did not have an exclusive right over war spoil.

The bovine symbolism for leadership was not confined only to Indra within the *Rksamhitā*. Agni was also called the 'bull invincible' (III.15.4). He was the red hued steer (VI.8.1), the red Bull (III.7.5). In another verse I.58.5, the bull is equated to Agni, the fire god, clearing the woods through its flames and the explanation runs as, 'with teeth of flame, wind driven, through the wood he speeds, triumphant like a bull among the herd of cows'. It is interesting to note that within this verse the bull symbolism surfaces at two levels; a) Agni's ferocity and speed is likened to that of a bull and b) bull's leadership implications come in the context of its association with the herd of cows where a lone bull commands a herd. It is difficult to miss out leadership connotations apart from strong masculine/virile overtones. We may also add that crowns made of bull horns were often worn by individuals to indicate growing elitism within societies in transition to state structure from a tribal set up.

8. Bull and Cosmic Reality:

The genesis of connection between the bull and cosmic reality first appeared in the *Rksamhitā*. The *Rksamhitā* knows of an asura Bull^{xii}. This was an androgynous bull; *Rksamhitā* called him a Bull-Cow, and in the text, he was said to have three bellies (*tripajasyu*) and three udders.^{xiii} Within the *Atharvaveda* (IX.4) bull appears as an androgynous being, a primordial self-seminating force, and became associated with cosmic parturition. The bull, here, was directly related to the origin myth. The occasion for the recitation of the hymn was the sacrifice of the bull. This sacrificial bull in the verse IX.4.22 got identified with the Cosmic Bull. It is stated that when only waters existed, and the Primeval Bull became the counterpart of the waters. The waters were the fertilizing cosmic waters, and in the beginning their 'counterpart', the Bull, was likewise established as a primordial fertilizing force. In this capacity he was Viśvarūpa. Thus, the Cosmic Bull carried all forms of phenomenal reality in his several bellies (*vakṣana*) which may be likened to female breasts or wombs. The Cosmic Bull had several seemingly contradictory features. It was both impetuous and possessed of milk and had womb-like qualities. It was associated with both masculine and feminine attributes. Verse IX.4.3 reflected the bi-sexual imagery of the bull: a male (yet) pregnant, strong, rich in milk, the Bull carries a vessel of wealth. Evidently the cosmic Bull was conceived to be an androgynous being, carrying in his womb all phenomenal forms which the poet calls his 'vessel of wealth'. Did it become the primeval being as it subsumed within itself both male and female characteristics?

It certainly was associated with primordial reality in popular perception and sacrifices were modelled around its being, granted it a hallowed status. The partaking of its flesh or participating in ritual-myth drama must have filled the participants with a sense of closeness to cosmic reality. One such ritual where the cosmic character of bull surfaced was that of *Agnicayana*. *Agnicayana* was primarily a sacrifice to Agni. According to Eggeling^{xiv} the starting point was the theme of sacrificed man, and the present sacrifice which repeated this archetypal act consisted in immolating Prajapati, who was identified with the sacrificer. The dismembered Prajapati was restored to life and reconstructed in the form of the altar, which reproduced architecturally the creation of cosmos, and was thus an outward projection of ritual thought. Animal sacrifice including that of the bull was an integral aspect of this ritual. Their heads used in building of the altar while the blood was mixed with clay to construct other bricks.^{xv} In this particular ritual bull's association with Agni also comes out through the use of bull's skin (in creation of the altar) to obtain Agni's form because the 'bull was the same as Agni'.^{xvi} Thus in this ritual the bull is associated both with the Prajapati as well as Agni and does play a part in recreation of cosmos with the assumed galactic regenerative capacity.

9. Conclusion:

From the above analysis we can infer that the bull had the power to offer symbolic support to ideas ranging from cosmic reality, masculinity to political authority. It certainly grasped the psyche of the populace of the people who composed the Vedic corpus and could adapt itself to their varied creative demands. This must have to do with the power of the bull to actually fulfil their primary material demands and associated conceptual formulations. That an animal should offer such a sustenance base is not unthinkable in early societies where there existed a fairly compact symbiotic relationship between humans and animals.

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^{vi} D.D.Kosambi, *Myth and Reality*, Bombay, 1962, p.2.

^{vii} H.Hubert and M.Mauss, *Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function*, pp.31-32.

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^{ix} *Pañcaviṃṣa Brāhmaṇa*.1X.2.15

^x *Ibid.*, XIII.5.17-18.

^{xi} *Ibid.*, XI.8.4-5.

^{xii} *Ṛksamhitā*, III.38.4.

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^{xiv} Details in *Sacred Books of the East*,Vol.XLI,p.163

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