

11-1-2011

## From Cosmogony to Anthropogony: Inscribing Bodies in Vedic Cosmogony and Samskara Rituals

Christine Boulos  
*University of South Florida, cdemian@mail.usf.edu*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/etd>



Part of the [American Studies Commons](#), [Feminist, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Commons](#), and the [Religion Commons](#)

---

### Scholar Commons Citation

Boulos, Christine, "From Cosmogony to Anthropogony: Inscribing Bodies in Vedic Cosmogony and Samskara Rituals" (2011). *USF Tampa Graduate Theses and Dissertations*.  
<https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/etd/3715>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the USF Graduate Theses and Dissertations at Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. It has been accepted for inclusion in USF Tampa Graduate Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@usf.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@usf.edu).

From Cosmogony to Anthropogony:  
Inscribing Bodies in Vedic Cosmogony and *Samskara* Rituals

by

Christine E. Boulos

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
Department of Religious Studies  
College of Arts and Sciences  
University of South Florida

Major Professor: Carlos Lopez, Ph.D.  
Pratyusha Basu, Ph.D.  
Wei Zhang, Ph.D.

Date of Approval:  
November 1, 2011

Keywords: Judith Butler, performativity, sex, gender  
mantras

Copyright © 2011, Christine E. Boulos

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my husband, David. Thank you for supporting me emotionally, physically, and spiritually. You have always made me and my education a priority, whether it was listening patiently as I tried to explain my thoughts and my projects, or spending the weekend with Elijah so I could get two more days in of writing or studying. Thank you so much for being my best friend and refuge for the last five years. I do not know how I could have done this without you. I love you more than you can imagine.

This thesis is also dedicated to my mother, Nancy Demian. Thank you for always encouraging me to be myself, study what I love, and for believing in me, even when I did not believe in myself. Without you I would not have even applied to graduate school, let alone completed this thesis. Thank you for all you do and for all you have done. “The teacher is ten times greater than the tutor; the father is a hundred times greater than the teacher; but the mother is a thousand times greater than the father” (*MDhS* 2.145).

And finally, to my beloved, Elijah. “In your offspring you are born again; That, O, Mortal is your immortality” (*TB* 1.5.5.6).

## AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge Dr. Carlos Lopez. With you I not only (de)constructed the Hindu female ascetic, but I (de)constructed myself. Whether it was traveling through villages in India, spending hours in your office discussing Michel Foucault, or “singing for my grade” at the local karaoke bar as we celebrated the end of another term, you have showed me a world of possibility and invested in me in ways that have humbled me. For a woman whose own textual history has attempted to constitute her as a wife, mother, and a professional that is more “appropriate” for the daughter of first generation immigrants (read: doctor, engineer, lawyer) you have helped me trace the impossible in ways you cannot even begin to fathom. I can only hope that one day I can give to a student all that you have given me. It is then that I will know success in this part of my life. “...the birth that a teacher who has fathomed the *Veda* brings about according to rule by means of the *Savitri* verse--that is his true birth, that is not subject to old age and death” (*MDhS* 2.148).

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Introduction.....	1
Textual Sources.....	5
Chapter 1: Butler, Bodies, Gender, and Sex.....	7
Conclusion.....	11
Chapter 2: Sacrifice and the Discursive Formation of the Cosmos.....	12
Creation as the Pre-Discursive Body.....	13
Sacrifice as the Inscriptural Process in Constituting Cosmos.....	18
Conclusion.....	20
Chapter 3: <i>Samskaras</i> , Mantras and Constituting Gendered Persons.....	22
<i>Samskaras</i> , Bodies and Constituting Persons.....	24
Mantras and Speech Acts.....	26
Case Study: Constituting the Bride and Student.....	28
Conclusion.....	32
Conclusion.....	33
Butler, Bodies, and where they May Lead Us.....	34
List of References.....	37

## ABSTRACT

This thesis argues that the inscription of bodies is necessary in order to constitute the cosmos, gender and sex. A study of the *Vedic* cosmogonic mythologies of the deities Purusha and Prajapati illustrates the ways in which sacrifice, as a form of inscription, constitutes the cosmos by ordering and fashioning the boundaries of the bodies of the deities through differentiation and unification. An analysis of *samskaras*, or consecratory rites of *The Law Code of Manu*, show that they operate as regulatory norms in order to constitute sex and gender. But the instability and unnaturalness of the categories of gender and sex are exposed when an analysis of the *samskara* rituals of the bride and student show that performative acts and speech involved in their respective rites are nearly identical.

This discussion of bodies, gender and sex is founded on Judith Butler's work to show how bodies, sex, and gender are also social and cultural constructs. In particular, Butler's work with performativity reveals the ways in which performative action and speech acts constitute people through their stylized and strained repetition. It is this repetition that proves to be deceiving as it creates the illusion that sex and gender are inherent to bodies. We discover that the problems maintaining the appearance of these categories is experienced in both the cosmogonic myths and with the wife and student.

## INTRODUCTION

Cosmogony involves the study of the origins and ordering of the universe. A study of Vedic cosmogony suggests that the cosmos is produced through sacrifice, where the initial acts of creation are identified as being either flawed and defective, or indistinguishable. The mythologies of Purusha and Prajapati, the lord of the gods and the first sacrificer, describe the initial creation as flawed and incomplete, and the subsequent need for sacrificial activity in order to constitute the cosmos. In both of these myths, creation and cosmos are two distinct discursive events.

At the anthropogenic level, where we are dealing with the study and origin of individuals, *samskaras*, a series of rituals that span the entire life of an individual, operate to constitute gendered and sexed persons out of flawed, defective or incomplete procreation. They are detailed especially in *Manava Dharmashastra*, or *The Law Code of Manu (MDhS)*. A study of *samskaras* suggests that the categories of gender and sex persons, is not inherent or a given, but that *samskaras* constitute gender and sex.

This thesis argues that in Hindu thought the cosmos, sex, and gender are not inherently given categories but that they are inscribed onto bodies which are also constituted. On both the cosmogonic and anthropogenic, ritual activity--sacrifice or consecratory rites-- inscribe these categories. The use of the word inscription is derived from Judith Butler's work on the 'performativity of gender', which argues that gender is not some natural essence or identity that is derived from one's sex. Rather, Butler argues,

gender must be understood as produced through stylized and repeatable acts and gestures. It is through the repetition of these acts, that we become recognizable in terms of conventional gender identities. It is the stylized and repeated acts that inscribe gender and subsequently sex and the anthropological level, and the cosmic order at the cosmological level. The target of such inscriptional processes is the body.

In order to support this argument, chapter one outlines Butler's ideas of performativity, gender, sex, and bodies as targets of inscription. The chapter establishes the body as the operative metaphor that will be used to discuss the inscriptional processes that occur at the cosmological and anthropological levels.

The second chapter argues that sacrifice operates in the cosmogonic myths of Purusha and Prajapati in order to inscribe the cosmos by differentiating, unifying, and connecting and undifferentiated creation. The chapter begins by examining the *Purushasukta, Rig Veda 10.90*<sup>1</sup>, to argue that the state of creation, much like bodies prior to inscription, is chaotic and unformed. The hymn describes the sacrifice of the cosmic giant man Purusha, who is also said to be the sacrificer and the one who the sacrifice is being offered.

1. Thousand-headed is Purusha, thousand-eyed, thousand-footed. He covered the earth on all sides and stood above it the space of ten fingers.
2. Purusha alone is all this, what has been and what is to be, and he is the lord of the immortals, who grow further by means of food.
3. Such is his greatness, and greater than this is Purusha: a quarter of him is all beings, three-quarters of him the immortal in heaven.

---

<sup>1</sup>Walter H. Maurer. Trans. *Pinnacles of India's Past: Selections from the Rg Veda*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company (1986), 272.



4. Three-quarters of Purusha went upward, but a quarter of him was here below.  
From that he spread out in all directions into what eats and does not.
5. From that Viraj was born: from Viraj, Purusha. When he was born, he extended beyond the earth, behind and also in front.
6. When with Purusha as oblation the gods offered a sacrifice, the spring was its clarified butter, the summer the fuel, the autumn the oblation.
7. A sacrifice on the sacred grass they sprinkled him, Purusha, who was born in the beginning. With him the gods sacrificed, the Sadhyas and the seers.
8. From that sacrifice, a total offering, was brought together the clotted butter: it made the beasts: those of the air, of the forests and the village.
9. From that sacrifice, a total offering, the Hymns of Praise and the Chants were born; the meters were born from it; the Sacrificial Formula from it was born.
10. From it the horses were born and whatsoever have incisor teeth in both jaws.  
The cows were born from it. From it were born the goats and sheep.
11. When they portioned out Purusha, in how many ways did they distribute him?  
What is his mouth called, what his arms, what his thighs, what are his feet called?
12. His mouth was the Brahmana, his arms were made the Rajanya, what was his thighs was made the Vaisya, from his feet the Sudra was born.
13. The moon from his mind was born; from his eye the sun was born; from his mouth both Indra and Agni; from his breath the wind was born.
14. From his navel was the atmosphere; from his head the heaven evolved; from his feet the earth; the directions from his ear. Thus they fashioned the worlds.

15. Seven were his altar-sticks; thrice seven faggots were made, when the gods, offering the sacrifice, tied Purusha, as their victim.

16. The gods sacrificed with the sacrifice to the sacrifice. These were the first rites. These powers reached the firmament, where the ancient Sadhyas are and the gods.

Chapter two will also include an analysis of the myths Prajapati, the deity who presides over creation and serves as its progenitor in the *Brahmanas*, part of the post-Vedic literature. The sacrifices performed by Prajapati are done to fix the defectiveness of creation, which is expressed in the stories as either metaphysical excess or as a lack of cohesiveness. At the beginning of the myth, Prajapati is often described as being lonely and in need of companionship. He then decides that he will propagate himself in order to produce off spring or companionship. In the following excerpt from *Shatapatha Brahmana 7.1.2.2*, he produces time, which results in the deterioration of his joints, which also result in the year not functioning properly.

When Prajapati had emitted the creatures, his joints (*parvans*) became disjointed. Now Prajapati is the year, and his joints are the two junctures of day and night, of the waxing and waning lunar half-months, and of the beginnings of the seasons. He was unable to rise with his joints disjointed.<sup>2</sup>

In order to restore the joints of Prajapati, thus reconstituting him, as well as the year, he performs a series of rituals.

With the *agnihotra* [the twice-daily sacrifice] they healed that joint [which is] the two junctures of day and night, and joined it together. With the new and

---

<sup>2</sup> Brian K. Smith. *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Religion*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers (1998), 61.

full moon sacrifices, they healed that joint [which is] between thee waxing and waning lunar half months, and joined it together. And the *caturmasyas* [quarterly sacrifices] they healed that joint [which is] the beginning of the seasons, and joined it together (*Shatapatha Brahamana 1.6.3.36*).<sup>3</sup>

Finally, chapter three discusses *samskaras* and that the fashioning and ordering of bodies produces persons, where bodies are ritually gendered and sexed gender and sexed through the repeated performance of *samskaras*. The ritual constitution of gendered persons involves constituting sex and gender, and will be discussed within the context of marriage and *upanayana*, initiation into Vedic studentship to show that from the beginning there are ambiguities and instabilities in the categories of the wife and student. An analysis of their respective ceremonies shows that both the bride and student are reciting almost identical mantras while performing the same ritual act, which leads to the ambiguity of their categories. A study of these performative expressions in the form of language and physical acts challenge the naturalness and stability of the categories of gender and sex within this post-*Vedic* context.

### ***Textual Sources***

The *Rig Veda* and the *Brahmanas* are our textual sources for the *Purushasukta* (*Rig Veda 10.90*) and the myths of Prajapati, respectively. They are a part of an extensive Vedic literary tradition. The term Vedic refers to *Vedas*, the ancient Indian collections of religious text that are also considered the oldest religious literature (1750-500 B.C.E). The oldest collection is the *Rig Veda (RV)*, a collection of 1028 metrical hymns, sayings.

---

<sup>3</sup> Brian K. Smith. *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Religion*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers (1998), 65-66.

and verses. *RV 10.90*, for which we can find hymn of Purusha, is considered to be the most recent linguistically.

The Vedic collection is followed by the *Brahmana* texts (1200-850 B.C.E.), which contain prose texts with prescriptions for carrying out and explanations for the sacrificial rituals. Among the older *Brahmana* is the first part of the *Aitareya Brahmana*, the *Kausitaki Brahmana*, and the *Jaiminiya Brahmana*. The encyclopedic *Satapatha Brahmana*, belonging to the *White Yajur Veda*, is the more recent of the *Brahmanas*. It is within these ‘post-Vedic’ texts that we derive the stories of *Prajapati*.

*The Law Code of Manu* (ca. 200 B.C.E.- 200 C.E.) is the most authoritative legal code, comprised of a collection of legal codes that order and organize life within the social system. The post-Vedic texts also include the *Srauta sutras* (sacrifice), the *Grhya sutras* (domestic rituals), and the *Dharmasutra* (laws and morals).

**CHAPTER ONE:**  
**BUTLER, BODIES, GENDER, AND SEX**

In *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, Butler attempts to determine how the category of sex factors into a relationship between gender and the materiality of the body. She argues that while sexual difference is often determined to be a matter of material difference, sex actually functions as a part of regulatory practices that produce bodies. In *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*, Butler takes a more detailed look at the relationship between the materiality of the body to the performativity of gender in order to clarify the ways in which sex, as a part of regulatory practices materializes the body's sex. In both these works, she is challenging the traditional definitions of each of these categories as being inherent or natural, exposing them to be social and cultural constructs. In this chapter I will lay out Butler's key ideas concepts involving sex, the performativity of gender, and bodies and their materialization in order to argue in chapters two and three that bodies are being fashioned in the cosmogonic mythologies and *samskaras*, with cosmos being inscribed in the myths, and gender and sex in the *samskaras*.

Butler begins her arguments by addressing the dominant cultural notion that sex is a natural and inherent quality of each person, which is defined in terms of anatomy and chromosomes.<sup>4</sup> This conceptualization of sex involves a binary division, in which bodies

---

<sup>4</sup>Judith Butler. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. (New York: Routledge, 1999), 10.

marked with penises correspond to XY chromosomes and bodies lacking a penis correspond to XX. She argues that this pre-cultural component to identity is actually a cultural category. By debunking the naturalness of sex, she also breaks the necessary link between sex and gender. Therefore, if sex is a cultural construct and not an inherent quality then gender is not predicated on sex, and is not bound to one particular sex.

Butler challenges the naturalness of the categories of sex and gender by putting forth her theory of 'performativity,' which expands John L. Austin's notion on performative utterances. Austin argues that speech and language are not intended to simply be descriptive, but that words invent and affect reality. This is the notion of 'speech acts,' which Butler later incorporates into her theory of the 'performativity of gender.' Butler asserts that speech acts precede or help to create their actors, or that actors can only become actors while performing those acts that culture deems possible.<sup>5</sup> She locates the performative in the relationship between speech and bodies, understanding speech to be a bodily act with specific linguistic consequences. Therefore, one can only become an intelligible actor when one is performing the normative speech acts. Butler uses normative in relation to gender specifically concern those norms that govern gender.

Butler's extends Austin's 'speech acts' theory by incorporating her theory of the 'performativity of gender,' which involves the ongoing and ceaseless repetition of stylized acts, which are thought to be successful when they allow us to believe that both sex and gender are inherent parts of bodies.<sup>6</sup> Her theory posits that gender is only real to

---

<sup>5</sup> James Loxley. *Performativity*. (New York: Routledge 2007), 120.

<sup>6</sup> Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, xv.

the extent that it is performed, which proves to be a significant departure from the customary ways of understanding gender to be expressive of a core identity. She goes on to explain that certain types of acts either conform or contest an expected gender and are often thought to be expressive of a core identity (sex). These expectations of gender are predicated on an idea that anatomical differences give rise to gender identity.<sup>7</sup> Butler argues that what we interpret as an internal essence of gender is in fact manufactured through the repeated and stylized acts of bodies. Therefore, sex does not produce gender, and neither are inherent to bodies.

Butler's use of performance does not mean that because individuals are acting that they have a choice in selecting their gender, because they do not. The use of performance is intended to be a way of explaining that gender is not an inherent part of persons, but that it is produced through repeated acts. These acts involve our everyday activities, including the ways we dress ourselves and the colors we dress in, the bathrooms we use, and the ways in which we talk about ourselves using pronouns. The repeated and stylized production of these acts are so effective that both gender and sex appear to be inherent to bodies.

According to Butler, there are no bodies prior to cultural inscription. There is only a region of cultural unruliness and disorder, or 'pre-discursive bodies.' The use of the term of 'pre-discursive bodies' is a way of referring to bodies prior to the inscription, since we can only refer to bodies as such at the time of their inscription. This is because they do not exist in any categorical way prior to inscription, and this inscription occurs due to the

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, xv.

‘performativity of gender’ and the repeated and stylized acts that accompany it.

Butler draws on Mary Douglas’ discussion of the body and purity in order to formulate her idea of inscription. According to Douglas in *Purity and Danger*, the contours of the body are established through markings that seek to impose certain codes of cultural intelligibility. In Douglas’ account, the limits of the body are never material, but the surface of the body becomes “systematically signified by taboos and anticipated transgressions.”<sup>8</sup>This is not to imply that bodies are passive surfaces in which culture is inscribed, or that they stand outside of culture as the foundation of social identity. Butler argues that gender and sex operate as cultural norms that result in the materialization of bodies and signification of the body through the forcible reiteration of norms. The matter of bodies becomes inseparable from sex as the regulatory norm. Bodies are the effects of the dynamic productivity of power, through demarcation and differentiation.

Within the perspective of preformativity, bodies are produced within a small range of viable roles that are normative. The way she articulates the normativity of the performative is through the understanding of the force and power that characterizes the body and compel it to conform and adhere to established conventions. The body is forced to repeat. This develops into a form of compulsion or forced production, where the composition of the body is an exercise in confining it within a limit, and where normativity marks out a social realm comprised of both gendered subjects and the abjected.<sup>9</sup>The excluded bodies define the limits of the norm by falling outside of it. Butler’s goes on to identify the ways in which sex constitutes the normative and regulates those whose bodies constantly perform within the limits as being a part of the social

---

<sup>8</sup> Butler. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 179.

<sup>9</sup> Loxley, 121.



realm. However, their cultural and social intelligibility is never a permanent condition. The forcible reiteration of the norms constitutes the materiality of the body. Thus, materiality is the effect of power and its most productive effect. Therefore, if we consider the ways in which the performativity operates through constraint, repetition, and reiteration, we can begin to see how sex function as norms, when it not only (re)produces itself, but it “confer(s) reality” unto the norm.

### ***Conclusion***

Butler’s work with bodies, gender, and sex is helpful to the study of cosmogony and *samskaras* because her theory of the ‘performativity of gender’ supports the argument that sex, gender, and bodies are social and cultural constructs and not natural or inherent. In terms of this study, it helps us to understand the body as the operating metaphor that will tie each chapter together. Specifically in terms of inscription, Chapter two will examine sacrifice as an inscriptional process that constitutes the cosmos. I argue that this inscriptional process reveals that creation and cosmos are two distinct process in the cosmogonic mythologies produced. In chapter three, the metaphor of bodies will be deployed and argued that *samskaras*, and specifically the mantras used in these rituals constitute gendered and sexed bodies by inscribing the pre-discursive body, making it socially and culturally intelligible. This reveals that even in these Hindu text that sex and gender are not inherent, but that gendered and sexed bodies are constituted through ritual activity.

## CHAPTER TWO: SACRIFICE AND THE DISCURSIVE FORMATION OF THE COSMOS

Mircea Eliade argued that “every creation has a paradigmatic model--the creation of the universe by the gods.”<sup>10</sup> Yet, Vedic cosmogony “eludes this archetypal model by posing a radical disjuncture between divine creation and sacred cosmos.”<sup>11</sup>

Vedic cosmogonic mythology of Purusha and Prajapati explain the origins of the universe using different descriptions for creation. These myths present sacrifice as the only way in which creation is fashioned into cosmos. The *Purushasukta*, *RV 10.90*, tells of the great cosmic man, Purusha, who is described as a massive, thousand-headed, thousand-eyed, and thousand-foot ‘body.’<sup>12</sup> Following a sacrifice performed by the gods, his once indistinguishable body is fashioned into what would be characterized as a human body-- with arms, legs, a head, eyes, and mouth. At the time of the sacrifice his body is equated to cosmos: social order, cosmic order, and sacrificial order. One of the arguments of the chapter is that Purusha’s body is a metaphor for creation and cosmos. Here, the use of the term pre-discursive body refers to Purusha’s body during creation. The use of pre-discursive body refers to bodies prior to its inscription, which is distinguished from the ordered universe, cosmos, that has been constituted by means of the sacrifice.

---

<sup>10</sup> Mircea Eliade. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. Trans. Willard R. Trask. (New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1959), 31.

<sup>11</sup> Smith. *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Religion*, 51.

<sup>12</sup> *RV 10.90.1*.

This chapter will argue that sacrifice operates in the cosmogonic myths of Purusha and Prajapati to inscribe into an originally informed and chaotic creation. Through a discussion involving unformed creation in the *Purushasukta*, and metaphysical excesses in the myths of Prajapati, we will be able to identify creation in terms of a pre-discursive body. I argue that sacrifice operates inscriptionally in order to fashion the boundaries of the cosmos by either distinguishing or unifying the elements of creation. The cosmos as the body of the universe is a differentiated manifestation from the originally unformed pre-discursive bodies of Purusha and Prajapati. Finally, this chapter will address the materialization of the cosmos as an effect of these inscriptional processes for which the body is the site of cosmic reality.

### *Creation as the Pre-Discursive Body*

Creation and cosmos in Vedic cosmogonic myths are not the same, but represent different ideas of order and continuity. The cosmos is always conceived as a cohesive, functional, and interconnected universe. This section will argue that the state of creation prior to inscription is comparable to that of pre-discursive bodies.

The *Purushasukta* presents the oldest formulations of the Vedic model of reality. Unlike many cosmogonic myths that begin with a god(s) creating the cosmos, such as that belonging to a nomadic Australian tribe that tells of the divine being *Numbakula*, who created the ancestor and institutions for the tribe,<sup>13</sup> the first verse of the *Purushasukta* informs the reader that there is ready made universe.<sup>14</sup> The universe is represented as the cosmogonic giant man, Purusha, who is infinite, incomprehensible,

---

<sup>13</sup> Eliade, 32-33.

<sup>14</sup> *RV 10.90.1-4*.

and without limits. He is described as spreading out in all directions.<sup>15</sup> From the outset, Purusha is equated to the totality of creation. The description of the deity provided in the first four verses of the hymn is also a description of the state of creation, which is inconceivable and indistinguishable.

While the hymn tells the reader of the vastness of Purusha, there are no markers or characteristics that make it possible to place his body in any recognizable category. If we consider Purusha at the beginning of the hymn from the perspective of Butler's conception of bodies prior to their inscription, then Purusha is awaiting form and meaning to be inscribed. In other words, cosmos is yet to be inscribed. The use of bodies is a helpful metaphor to articulate the condition of the original creation because bodies prior to their inscription lack the contours needed to understand them as bodies. Bodies as the operating metaphor also helps to articulate the sacrificial ordering which inscribes bodies in order to produce the cosmos.

In the post-*Rg Vedic* texts, the metaphor of body continues to operate in the cosmogonic mythology of Prajapati. Purusha, who plays a prominent role in the Vedic *Samhitas*, is overshadowed by Prajapati in the later *Samhitas* and the *Brahmanas*.<sup>16</sup> Smith points out that there is no doubt that in the minds of the writers that these two deities are the same, citing *Satapatha Brahmana 6.1.1.5*, "That same Purusha became Prajapati."<sup>17</sup> However, the myths of *Prajapati* offers another way of understanding cosmogony as a result lack of cohesion or unity expressed in terms of excessive difference and similarity,

---

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Smith, *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Ritual*, 54.

<sup>17</sup> Smith, *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Ritual*, 54.

which is being likened to pre-discursive bodies.

Like Purusha, Prajapati already exists at the beginning, but he finds himself alone and stricken with the desire to either produce offspring or for companionship.<sup>18</sup> He propagates himself through ascetic toil or heat, setting off the process of creation. However, following procreative act, he becomes himself exhausted and run down.<sup>19</sup> Other *Brahmanas* describe the effects of the procreation as causing him to disintegrate.<sup>20</sup>

The characterization of Prajapati as disjointed is also a description of the state of creation, since creation is identical to Prajapati. The year is representative of the entire expanse of time, with night and day, the equinox, and the end and beginning of each season representing the joints of the year. The emissive condition of the joints of the year represent the instability and inability for creation to function properly. When Prajapati is described as being disjointed, it means that there is no continuity of time, but of chaos.

In the same way that Prajapati's propagation causes the year not to operate properly, the problems associated with metaphysical excess--excessive similarity or difference-- prevent creation from functioning in a productive fashion. When Prajapati propagates himself, his cosmic emissions form the different parts of the universe. The variations of the myth describe the creatures produced as either too similar or too

---

<sup>18</sup> *Aitareya Brahamana* 5.32: "Prajapati had a desire. "May I be propagated; may I be multiplied." He heated up ascetic heat, and when he had done so, emitted these worlds-- earth, middle space, and heaven. He warmed up these worlds, and when he had done so the luminaries [i.e, gods]. were born.... He warmed up the luminaries, and when he had done, so the three Vedas were born" (Brian K. Smith. *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Religion*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1998), 57.

<sup>19</sup> *Shatapatha Brahamana* 7.1.2.2: "When Prajapati had emitted the creatures, his joints (*parvans*) became disjointed. Now *Prajapati* is the year, and his joints are the two junctures of day and night, of the waxing and waning lunar half-months, and of the beginnings of the seasons. He was unable to rise with his joints disjointed" (Brian K. Smith. *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Religion*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1998), 61.

<sup>20</sup> Smith, *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Ritual*, 54.

different. Many of these creatures go on to devour each other,<sup>21</sup> or they resist Prajapati's supremacy.<sup>22</sup> The stories about metaphysical excess reflect the unstructured chaos of creation and the lack of a unifying principle in the universe.

The stories involving excessive difference articulate the chaos of the universe by stressing the lack of interconnectedness and unity. In one version of this myth, Prajapati emits the creatures who then run away from him, fearful that he would eat them, while others run away to look for food, or they wander off because they are disoriented.<sup>23</sup> Smith explains that in other variants of the myth, the creatures produced are so vastly different and express a defiant form of independence, refusing to be united in any way to one another, or with Prajapati. Prajapati's inability to unify his progeny, and that they are running away from him, is an expression of chaos and the absence of unity.

In contrast to the lack of unity in myths of excessive difference, the lack of difference among creation is the central issue dealt with in the myths of excessive similarities. These myths are less frequently found than those involving excessive difference, but similarly expresses chaos in terms of an overtly structured and homogenous creation. The resulting progeny are described as being indistinguishable.<sup>24</sup>

In these stories, the creatures do not have individual names and forms, so there are no

---

<sup>21</sup> *Pañcavimsa Brahmana* 24.11.2: "Prajapati emitted the creatures. They were undifferentiated (*avidhrta*), at odds with one another (*asamjanana*), and ate each other" (Brian K. Smith. *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Religion*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1998), 59.

<sup>22</sup> *Pañcavimsa Brahmana* 21.2.1: "Prajapati emitted the creatures. These emitted ones went away from him, fearing he would devour them" (Brian K. Smith. *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Religion*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1998), 60.

<sup>23</sup> Brian K. Smith. *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Religion*, 60.

<sup>24</sup> *Taittiriya Brahmana* 2.2.7.1: "Prajapati emitted the creatures. These emitted ones were closely clasped together [*samaslisyan*]..." (Brian K. Smith. *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Religion*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1998), 59.

markers to distinguish one creature from the next.<sup>25</sup> They all look the same and are placed in one category. In other versions of the myth, the creatures are said to be created equal, causing discord and rivalry among them. There is no hierarchy in place that would have some creatures deferring to those who could possibly be superior to them. These creatures, who are at odds with each other begin to eat one another. In these stories, differentiation and hierarchy appear to be the most effective way of ensuring stability and order, but the order needed to put an end to the discord, rivalry, and chaos does not exist.

Although it can be argued that the sacrifice that is to inscribe order will involve the bodies of these deities, this is not readily apparent. When discussing *Prajapati* we are talking about a body, defined in terms of joints, skin, hair, flesh and bone.<sup>26</sup> This is unlike *Purusha*, who is infinite and cannot be imagined in terms of distinct body parts. The actual physical description of these deities is not what is important here. Instead, their bodies are reflective of the lack of continuity and coherence that defines creation prior to the sacrifice that is intended to inscribe order. Therefore, the importance of using the metaphor of bodies is not to be preoccupied in the physical characteristics of bodies, but to consider in what ways pre-discursive bodies are like creation prior to sacrifice. Each of the examples in both the *Purusha* and *Prajapati* myths enumerate the problems of disorder and incoherence that pre-discursive bodies encounter prior to their inscription. The only way offered to address these issues, and constitute the cosmos is to inscribe sacrifice.

### ***Sacrifice as the Inscriptural Process in Constituting the Cosmos***

---

<sup>25</sup> Smith, *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Religion*, 59.

<sup>26</sup> *Shatapatha Brahmana* 1.6.2.17: “It was five body parts of his that fell into pieces--hair, skin, flesh, bone, and marrow--and these are the five layers [of alter]. When he builds up the five layers, it is also with those five body parts that he build up [Prajapati]” (Brian K. Smith. *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Religion*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1998), 65.

Sacrifice is central to the inscription of bodies in these cosmogonic myths. The sacrifices in these myths take the pre-discursive bodies of Purusha and Prajapati and inscribe them with order and meaning. The sacrifice differentiates the indistinguishable Purusha, into categories, such as Purusha as the social order, defined by the four *varnas* of society. In the myths of Prajapati, sacrifice involves the putting together and pulling apart of creation in order to help retrieve those that have fled from him and devoured one another. In both myths, the sacrifice operates to impose intelligibility by categorizing the pre-discursive bodies of Purusha and Prajapati.

During the sacrifice of Purusha, each part of his body corresponds to one of the three orders of reality. As the sacrifice is being performed the boundaries of the cosmic order, sacrificial order, and the social order are inscribed through the formation of its components. The sacrificial order is made up of the mantras and the animals that are to be sacrificed,<sup>27</sup> while the social order is made up of the four castes.<sup>28</sup> The cosmic order is constituted by the formation of the moon, the sun, the gods also constitute *Indra* and *Agni*, and the heavens.<sup>29</sup> At the time these components are inscribed, they also constitute Purusha's physical body, defined in terms of arms, legs, head, eyes, mouth, etc. This body was in conceivable at the beginning of the hymn, but at the time the sacrifice is being performed, we have the simultaneous formation of a cosmic order, a sacrificial order, and a social order. Thus, the components of cosmos are identified or homologized as the body of Purusha. For example, in the social order, the *Brahmana*, priests, are the

---

<sup>27</sup> *RV 10.90.6-10.*

<sup>28</sup> *RV 10.90.11-12.*

<sup>29</sup> *RV 10.90.13-14.*



mouth of Purusha, while his arms are the *Rajanya*, warriors. Each part of his body corresponds to a different part of the cosmos. Purusha's body corresponds with cosmos.

The correspondences of the three orders of reality illustrates how sacrifice operates to transform the pre-discursive body into cosmos by inscribing reality. The inability to articulate Purusha in terms of bodies prior to the sacrifice means that inscribing produces bodies. This inscription also constitutes creation as chaotic and unformed. The disorder that defines creation is not explicitly stated in the hymn, but can be inferred once order has been constituted, because the formation of the cosmos at the time of the sacrifice also results in the formation of creation. Therefore, we cannot identify disorder until we have order, they constitute one another. This shows that the sacrifice operates to not only constitute, cosmos, but also creation.

In the myths of *Prajapati* sacrifice is also important in inscribing the cosmos. Here, fashioning the cosmos is not so much about *Prajapati* distinguishing an unidentifiable creation, but with correcting the defectiveness of his creation. For each description of creation, whether in terms of it being disjointed or metaphysical excess, there is a corresponding sacrifice that is to be performed. Each of these rituals are intended to inscribe order for both *Prajapati* and his creation. In the case of the disjointedness of the year, when each of the sacrifices that are performed all the things that make up the year function as they should because the joints of *Prajapati's* body have been put back together. In this manner, time is inscribed by unifying the disjointed body of *Prajapati*.

The sacrificial activities also resolve the problems associated with excessive similarities and differences. For every myth involving some form of metaphysical excess,

there is a corresponding sacrifice that is intended to address the excess.<sup>30</sup>

In these Prajapati sacrifices performed the success is based on the sacrifice's ability to connect, reintegrate, divide, and reunite creation, which in turn does the same for the body of Prajapati.

**Conclusion.** The myths of Purusha and Prajapati, the Lord of Creatures, offers another way of looking at cosmogony in terms of pre-discursive bodies, defined by metaphysical excess: excessive similarities and excessive differences. In the myth, Prajapati is said to produce a defective creation, where the creatures are either too similar or too different, through ascetic toil and his cosmic emissions. The deployment of sacrifice in these myths serves as the solution for defective creation by either unifying or differentiating the creation. Both the *Purushasukta* and the myth of *Prajapati* offer different ways of describing creation, but never do they equate creation, or the initial generative acts of creation, to cosmos.

In these myths, the body is the operating metaphor for creation and cosmos, as a way of illustrating sacrifice as a form of inscriptionality. The body helps to conceptualize the ordering of pre-discursive creation as an effect of the inscriptionality of sacrifice, which constitutes order. Sacrifice accomplishes differentiation, demarcation, and the

---

<sup>30</sup> *Pañcavimsa Brahmana 24.1.2*: The distressed Prajapati. He saw [i.e., discovered] the forty-nine-day sacrificial session. Thereupon this [creation] became separated (*vyavartata*). Cows became cows, horses [became] horses, men [became] men, and wild animals [became] wild animals" (Brian K. Smith. *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Religion*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1998), 63.

*Pañcavimsa Brahmana 17.10.2*: "Prajapati emitted the creatures. These emitted ones ran away from him. He saw this "undefined" (*anirukta*) morning *soma* pressing. With that, he went into the middle of the. They turned toward him and circled him" (Brian K. Smith. *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Religion*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1998), 64.

*Pañcavimsa Brahmana 21.2.1*: He said, "Return to me, and I will devour you in such a way that, although devoured, you will multiply." He consumed them by means of [a certain] ritual chant and caused them to multiply by means of [another] ritual chant" (Brian K. Smith. *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Religion*. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1998), 64.

bordering up of and an unformed and chaotic creation.. As we transition to anthropogony in the next chapter, we will uncover that just as creation and cosmos are two distinct moments in the cosmogonic mythologies, so too is procreation and anthropogony, specifically when we consider the *samskaras* rituals as a form of inscription that constitute gendered and sexed persons.

**CHAPTER THREE:**  
**SAMSKARAS, MANTRAS AND THE CONSTITUTING OF**  
**GENDERED PERSONS**

*MDhS*, the prominent place of *samskaras*, consecratory rites, suggests that ritual is the only way to constitute gendered persons. The need to fashion and constitute social persons indicates that procreation is not anthropogony. In other words, individuals as gendered and sexed persons must be socially constituted. Beginning at the time of conception, rituals must be performed in order to begin to fashion and order bodies. These rituals show that social identity is rooted in the processes that constitute and order bodies by producing sexual and gendered differences, which is especially illustrated in the Vedic initiation rituals (*upanayana*) and marriage. Through an analysis of these rituals, it seems evident that gender and sex are not natural or inherent categories for the author of *MDhS*. I argue that gender and sex are produced through the *samskaras*, with the presence or absence of mantras, or formulas that are recited during rituals, playing a significant role in the production of gendered and sexed persons.

*MDhS* explicitly states that the wedding ceremony is equivalent to Vedic initiation,<sup>31</sup> yet the author explains that for a female the entire series of rituals should be

---

<sup>31</sup> *MDhS* 2.67: “For females, tradition tells us, the marriage ceremony equals the rite of vedic consecration; serving the husband equals the tending of the sacred fires” (*The Law Code of Manu*. Patrick Olivelle, trans. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 28.

performed without the recitation of mantras.<sup>32</sup>

It appears that mantras are essential to the production of man, while the absence of mantras inscribe woman. However, an examination of mantras during each of the ceremonies suggests that the same mantras are being recited by the bride and the student. If we are to consider the relationship between sex and gender in terms of the ways in which regulatory norms operate in a performative fashion to constitute the materiality of bodies, then the presence or absence of mantras is not predicated on an innate sexual difference, but instead mantras are essential to the processes that constitute gender and produce sexual difference

This chapter will argue that just as sacrifice was the only way to fashioning the cosmos, *samskaras* operate on the anthropogenic level to differentiate and constitute bodies as socially and culturally intelligible as gendered and sexed bodies. The chapter will begin by introducing *samskaras* and how they begin to differentiate bodies, which are inconceivable outside of the *samskaras*. *Samskaras* operate discursively, inscribing bodies through processes intended to purify and differentiate them by producing gender and sex. The chapter will go on to argue that a consideration of the use of mantras as a part of the regulatory practices of *samskaras* leads to the materialization of sex by inscribing gender through the initiation into Vedic studentship and the marriage ceremony. A study of two ritual actions of the student/ bride stepping on a stone, and the teacher/ bridegroom's seizing of the new partner's (student's/ bride's) hand, will show how the materialization of the body's sex is destabilized by the performativity of gender

---

<sup>32</sup> *MDhS* 2.66: "For females, on the other hand, this entire series should be performed at the proper time and in the proper sequence, but without reciting any vedic formula, for the purpose of consecrating their bodies" (*The Law Code of Manu*. Patrick Olivelle, trans. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 28.

as a result of the ambiguities that develop as a result of the bride and student engaging in identical ritual actions.

### **Samskaras and Inscribing Bodies**

The term *samskara* etymologically expresses the meaning of “composing, making perfect, preparing properly and correctly with a view to a definite purpose.”<sup>33</sup> *The Law Code of Manu* outlines thirteen *samskaras* that are to be performed in order to consecrate the body and making it perfect.<sup>34</sup> *Samskaras* are rituals for constituting social persons, achieving the success of preparing and making them perfect through the demarcation and ordering of pre-discursive bodies. This results in the production of gendered and sexed persons.

The idea of pre-discursive bodies can be found from a close reading of verses 26-28 of the second chapter, which references to a polluted body prior to birth. This body has been polluted through the taint of semen from the womb, and requires ritual action in order to consecrate bodies. The *samskaras*, which include the the fire offerings for the benefit of the fetus, the birth rites, the first cutting of hair, and the tying of a sacred cord, are all performed in order to remove the pollution of procreation from the womb. In a sense, it distinguishes the fetus from the pollution of the womb. The purification and consecration of bodies during the development of the fetus resembles the myth of

---

<sup>33</sup> Jan Gonda. *Vedic Ritual: The Non-Solemn Rites*. (Leiden, The Netherlands: E.J. Brill, 1980), 364.

<sup>34</sup> *MDhS* 2.26-28: “The consecration of the body, beginning with the ceremony of impregnation, should be performed for twice-born men by means of the sacred vedic rites, a consecration that cleanses a man both here and in the hereafter. The fire offerings for the benefit of the foetus, the birth rite, the first cutting of the hair, and the tying of the of the Munjagrass cord-- by these rites the taint of the semen and womb is wiped from twice born men. Vedic recitation, religious observances, fire offerings, study of the triple Veda, ritual offerings, sons, the five great sacrifices, and sacrifices-- by these a man’s body is made ‘brahmic’” (*The Law Code of Manu*. Patrick Olivelle, trans. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 25.

Prajapati, specifically in terms of excessive similarities. In the myth the creatures that are undifferentiated and the same lack form, but ritual distinguishes one creature from the other. With the fetus and the womb, the fetus is purified from the pollution of the womb and constituted as being something other than the polluted womb. In this way the body needs to be differentiated from the already polluted womb.

Since the first six *samskaras* are involved removing the taint of semen and the womb, it may be argued that differentiating bodies is the result of a continuous chain of ritual acts. Gonda explains that not one of these *samskaras* is a free standing act that definitively leads to the formation of a person's identity, but instead they successively bring about a person's personality to higher stages of development.<sup>35</sup> In other words, each act builds on the other, and thus, the overall production of persons becomes a process as opposed to a one time event.

The *upanayana*, the initiation of a young man into Vedic studentship, and the marriage ceremony marked the most important transitions in one's life, marking the culmination of all the previous *samskaras* which prepared the individuals for these significant rituals. Through these two *samsksras* one is transformed and assumes a new way of life. For the student the *upanayana* marks the student's second birth, specifically through the study of the *Veda*, making him ritually fit to occupy himself with *Brahaman*. As for the young woman, she becomes a wife as a consequence of the marriage ceremony. According to *MDhS* 2.67, the wedding ceremony for a female is the equivalent of the *upanayana* for a young male, while serving the husband is the equivalent to living with the teacher, and maintaining the home equals tending to the sacred fires. But while

---

<sup>35</sup> Gonda, 365.

the wife and student share comparable roles within their relationships with their respective partners, the series of events that lead up to their initiations are distinguished by the presence, or lack thereof, of mantras. It is the use of mantras during the performance of these *samskaras* that is said to distinguish men from women, thus constituting them as gendered persons.

### ***Mantras as Speech Acts***

According to Laurie Patton, many scholars have discussed mantras as speech acts.<sup>36</sup> Speech acts are generally defined as a utterance or statement that do more than simply state a fact or describe something, but involve doing a purposeful act. Mantras can be analyzed through the linguistic categories of John Searle, who expanded upon Austin's linguistic taxonomies. Searle distinguishes between five different types of speech acts. The first are assertives, which function to commit the speaker to the truth of an expressed proposition. The second type are directives, whose aim is to get the hearer to do something. The third are commissives, which point to commit the speaker to some future course of action. The fourth type are expressives, which express some psychological attitude toward the proposition. And finally, the last type are declarations, which function to bring about a state of affairs indicated in the proposition by the simple fact that they are being said.<sup>37</sup> Declarations create a reality as they are being spoken, and is the category for which mantras fall into, as well as Butler's performativity of gender. The efficacy of the mantra always depends on the contexts of the speakers and the hearers. The mantra

---

<sup>36</sup> Laurie L. Patton. *Bringing the Gods to Mind: Mantra and Ritual in Early Indian Sacrifice*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 60.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 60.



must be recited within the confines of its respective ritual for it to produce the desired effect, which in the case study is gender.

The *Rig Vedic* mantras are oral statements that derive their effectiveness and power from the *RV*, as it is considered to be the most authoritative text in Hinduism. The power of these texts is expressed in numerous ways throughout Vedic ritual. In the *Brahmanas*, mantras are invoked to philosophically explain the nature of sacrifice, while their use in the public rites, or *Srauta* rituals, are to describe or strengthen a sacrificial action. In the *Grhya* rituals, or domestic rites, mantras tend to describe the state or condition of the householder who is performing the sacrifice. They often become verbal substitutes for the materials in the sacrifice, such as milk or butter.<sup>38</sup>

In both the *Grhya* and *Srauta* sutras, the sacrificer is told which *Vedic* mantras to use in the performance of these rites. Patton explains that in both cases there is an elaborate system of correspondences operating, where the primarily oral text, the *Rg Vedic* mantra, is linked to other primarily oral texts, the *Brahmanas*, the *Srautas* and the *Grhya Sutras*, which in turn relates to the world of actual performance.<sup>39</sup>

For the purposes of this study, mantras as speech acts are important because it is through the recitation or absence of mantras that the student and bride are constituted as man and woman. However an analysis of the stone and garment hymn, and the seizing of the student/bride by the teacher/bridegroom reinforce the argument presented in chapter one that gender and sex are socially constructed categories. In this case, mantras as speech acts constitute gendered persons.

---

<sup>38</sup> Patton, 60.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 60.

### *Case Study: Constituting the Bride and Student*

According to Meiko Kajihara, the marriage ceremony and *upanayana* have a number of major ritual actions in common at the end of the *Vedic* period.<sup>40</sup> These ritual actions include the basic routine of the *grhya* (household) rituals, such as the general ritual preparation, and offerings into the fire, the student/bride stepping on a stone, the putting on of a new garment, the teacher's/ bridegroom's seizing his/her hand, the teacher/bridegroom's touching his/ her heart, and the student/couple keeping a *vrata* (may include a pilgrimage or fast).<sup>41</sup> Of the number of commonalities, Kajihara examines the ritual practice of the student/bride stepping on a stone, and the teacher's/bridegroom's seizing his partner's hand in order to determine whether these rituals have always had these features in common or if they borrowed from one into the other. She argues that it is not a coincidence that the marriage ceremony and *upanayana* have these features in common, after all they have developed under the same mutual influence.<sup>42</sup>

Of the number of shared commonalities shared between the marriage ceremony and the the *upanayana*, Kajihara focuses on what she calls the 'stone and garment' hymn. Two versions of the hymn are located in the *Atharaveda Samhitas*. She cites the hymn as one of the possible sources for the *upanayana* in the *Gyhyra sutras*, the ritual manual for domestic rituals. Her comparative analysis of the features of the 'stone and garment' hymn shows that more than half of the *Grhyra sutras* use several formulas from it for *upanayana*. The features include the wishing for long life, the stepping on a stone, and

---

<sup>40</sup> Meiko Kajihara. "The *Upanyana* and Marriage in the *Atharaveda*." *The Vedas, Texts, Language, and Ritual: Proceedings of the 3rd International Vedic Workshop*. Eds. J.E.M. Houben and A. Griffiths. (Munshiram Monoharlal Publishers PVT. Ltd., 2004), 417.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 417.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, 428.

the putting on and taking off of a new garment.

In each of these versions, the gender of the person for or by whom the ritual actions is being performed is always masculine, as indicated in half of the formulas.<sup>43</sup> Yet, all but one of the *Grhya sutras* employ the formula for stepping on a stone from the marriage ceremony, where it is the ‘female’ bride and not the ‘male’ groom who is the one stepping on the stone.<sup>44</sup>

Through a comparative study between formulas consisting of stepping on a stone in the *upanayana* and marriage in the *Grhya sutras*, she determines that there has been a borrowing of the formula for this ritual action, from the initiation ritual for a male into the marriage ceremony for a female. The fact that a gendered mantra is applied to both the bride and groom indicates that the recitation of the mantra is not predicated on sex, like *MDSH* would like for us to believe. Although *MDSH* explains that the *samskaras* for females should follow the same sequence of events as they do for males, with the exception of mantras, the presence of mantras here calls into question the idea that the use of mantras is dependent on being male or female. Instead it reveals that the categories of male and female are a consequence of the recitation of mantras as mantras are declaratives that constitute gendered persons. If we are then to consider the argument that gender precedes sex, then mantras are producing gender, which gives rise to the

---

<sup>43</sup> *Paippalada Samhita* 15.5.7: “Stand on this stone here. You, become firm (m.) like the stone. Smash away those who are wishing to injure. Conquer those who are fighting hostility” (Meiko Kajihara. “The *Upanyana* and Marriage in the *Atharaveda*.” *The Vedas, Texts, Language, and Ritual: Proceedings of the 3rd International Vedic Workshop*. Eds. J.E.M. Houben and A. Griffiths. (Munshiram Monoharlal Publishers PVT. Ltd., 2004), 424.

<sup>44</sup> *Saunaka Samhita* 2.13.4: “I hold the agreeable firm stone on the lap of the divine earth for progeny for you. Stand on it as one (f.) who is to be acclaimed in succession, one (f.) who has much splendor. Let Savitr make your life long” (Meiko Kajihara. “The *Upanyana* and Marriage in the *Atharaveda*.” *The Vedas, Texts, Language, and Ritual: Proceedings of the 3rd International Vedic Workshop*. Eds. J.E.M. Houben and A. Griffiths. (Munshiram Monoharlal Publishers PVT. Ltd., 2004), 424.

assumption of sex.

The borrowing of ritual actions also occurs in terms of the teacher's/bridegroom's seizing his new partner. The ritual action is prescribed in the *upanayana* and the marriage ceremony in all the *Gryha sutras*.<sup>45</sup> The action was originally found in the nuptial hymn in the *Atharaveda*, and was integrated later on into the *upanayana* formulas.<sup>46</sup> Once it was incorporated into the ritual, it became well established. The *upanayana* formula parallels the nuptial formula, with the exception of the reference to the wife and householder in the nuptial verse being changed to *mitra* and teacher in the *upanayana* formula.

Khajihara's evaluation of the commonalities and substitutions of pronouns and persons in the marriage ceremony and *upanayana* does not account for the gendering and sexing of the wife and student at the time of their respective rituals. Although her analysis is helpful in showing how the rituals have influenced or borrowed from one another, I am arguing that there is more than simply borrowing or reciting similar mantras, but that these similarities show that there is already an ambiguity with the categories of wife and student. If we take another look at *Saunaka Samhita* 14.1.15 and *Paippalada Samhita* 10.53.1, the student and the bride are having their hands seized by the teacher and

---

<sup>45</sup> *RV 10.85.36*: I seize your hand for happiness, so that you shall attain great age with me [as your] husband. Bhaga, Aryaman, Savitr, Puramdhi-- the gods have given you to me for householdership" (Meiko Kajihara. "The *Upanyana* and Marriage in the *Atharaveda*." *The Vedas, Texts, Language, and Ritual: Proceedings of the 3rd International Vedic Workshop*. Eds. J.E.M. Houben and A. Griffiths. (Munshiram Monoharlal Publishers PVT. Ltd., 2004), 427.

*Saunaka Samhita* 14.1.51: "Bhaga seized your hand. Savitr has seized [your] hand. You are the wife by ordinance. I am your householder" (Meiko Kajihara. "The *Upanyana* and Marriage in the *Atharaveda*." *The Vedas, Texts, Language, and Ritual: Proceedings of the 3rd International Vedic Workshop*. Eds. J.E.M. Houben and A. Griffiths. (Munshiram Monoharlal Publishers PVT. Ltd., 2004), 427.

<sup>46</sup> *Paippalada Samhita--Orissa transmission 10.53.1*: "Dhatar has seized your hand. Savitr has seized [your] hand. You are Mitra by ordinance. Agni is your teacher" ("The *Upanyana* and Marriage in the *Atharaveda*." *The Vedas, Texts, Language, and Ritual: Proceedings of the 3rd International Vedic Workshop*. Eds. J.E.M. Houben and A. Griffiths. (Munshiram Monoharlal Publishers PVT. Ltd., 2004), 427.

bridegroom, respectively. At the time that their hands are seized the teacher and bridegroom recite something along the lines of “X seized your hand. *Savitr* has seized your hand. You are Z by ordinance. A relationship between you and another individual is established.” If the words are substituted but the ritual action is the same, then the ritual action appears to be inconsistent with the speech act. One again, the actions performed on the wife and student are not constituting them as different individuals, but they appear to be doing the same things. This leads us to question the categories of wife and student being applied. For example, if we maintain the idea that the regulatory norms of sex work in a performative fashion to constitute the materiality of bodies, and more specifically, to materialize the sex of bodies, then how are the norms working in these examples to materialize the bodies of the bride and the student in terms of sexual difference? Particularly if the performative aspect of their identities are the same; where it is performativity that contributes to the materialization of sex? Instead, we are left with rather ambiguous categories as the boundaries that are intended to constitute the bride and student are blurred.

**Conclusion.** An analysis of the deployment of the *samskaras* in *MDhS* shows that procreation does not equate to anthropogony and that they are instead two distinct events. Much like what we have in the mythologies of Purusha and Prajapati in which we are able to look at cosmogony in terms of pre-discursive bodies, what we have in *MDhS* is a different way of looking at anthropogony in terms of pre-discursive bodies. What is different with the *samskaras* is that the body is not simply the operating metaphor, but it is that through which *samskaras*, as a form of inscription, constitute social persons. In the

case of the *samskaras*, the relationship between mantras and bodies constitutes the social, gendered person.

The continuous application of the *samskaras* in order to constitute the person suggests that the very category of social person is not a stable category. This instability is supported through the analysis of the rituals of marriage and *upanayana*. In considering Butler's explanation of performativity, *samskaras* operate in much the same fashion in order to produce the illusion that sex is an inherent part of bodies that gives rise to gender through the restrictions on the use of mantras for females. Yet, an analysis of the rituals involving the wife and student reveals that mantras are involved in both ceremonies and therefore their use is not predicated on sex, as *MDhS* asserts.

## CONCLUSION:

### BODIES AND WHERE THEY MAY LEAD US

In the beginning of this thesis it was stated that creation did not equate to cosmogony and procreation did not equate to anthropogony. Instead these were each represented as two different conditions. It was argued that constituting the cosmos and persons involves the inscription of bodies. In the cosmogonic mythology, the differentiating, demarcating, unification, and connecting the individual bodies of *Purusha* and *Prajajapti*. It was only at the time when the deities' bodies were produced that the cosmos was also constituted. While we were able to establish that the cosmos was inscribed, the instability of the cosmos was revealed in the ways in which the Brahman priests projected the rituals they performed onto *Prajapati* in order to legitimize the role of sacrifice in constituting the cosmos and ensuring its' stability. The significance of the ongoing rituals supported the use of the metaphor of bodies by showing how the cosmos does not quiet comply with the norms that impel its materiality. The forced reiteration of the regulatory norm, sacrifice, in order to materialize the cosmos becomes imperative to ensuring a sense of stability.

This stability is not as easily constituted in the case study of the student and the bride. While it can be argued that *samskaras* operate as regulatory norms that materialize the body, the initiation into *Vedic* studentship and the marriage ceremony completely disrupt the materialization through the use of almost identical mantras and ritual actions.

Therefore, it is not possible to tell that the bride and student were differentiated since comparable ritual activity was involved in their constitution and have no way to really categorize them as the categorization of bride and student are void of meaning.

### ***Butler, Bodies, and Where They May Lead Us***

The use of Judith Butler's work with bodies, gender, and sex is not often utilized as a theoretical lens in the area of religious studies. One of the exceptions is *Bodily Citations: Religion and Judith Butler* (2006) is one of the only collections we have that deploy Butler's work in the context of religious studies. The articles of a number of scholars of religion use her theory of the performativity of gender as a way of examining a number of issues that develop from different religious communities and different areas of study within the field, including ritual and ethics. Despite the limited use of her work in the field of religious studies, it can be helpful to those areas of religious studies that focus on gender, sex, and bodies. Ellen T. Armour and Susan M. St. Ville (2006) argue that Butler's ongoing analysis of the relationships between bodies, language, and cultural norms in identity construction is helpful to scholars of religion considering the role of bodily practices, as well as linguistic ones, in the production of religious identity.<sup>47</sup> The objective of each of the essays produced in this volume is to either pose challenges to, raise questions about, extend and/or deepen Butler's own work from the perspective of

---

<sup>47</sup> Ellen T. Armour and Susan M. St. Ville. "Judith Butler--In Theory." *Bodily Citations: Religions and Judith Butler*. Ellen T. Armour and Susan M. St. Ville, eds. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 10.



religious studies.<sup>48</sup>

Barbara A. Holdrege's (1998) publication, "Body Connections: Hindu Discourses of the body and the Study of Religion," deploys Butler as well as other scholars in order to discuss the the numerous taxonomies she constructs, including what she calls 'lived bodies,' 'ritual bodies,' and 'integral bodies'. In her article, Holdrege argues that Hindu tradition provides "extensive, elaborate, and multiform" discussions of the body, and suggests that a look into this would significantly contribute to growing scholarship on bodies in religious studies.<sup>49</sup> Holdrege is somewhat critical of the two dominant trends of analysis in religious studies involving the scholarship on bodies. She argues that scholars of religion tend to adapt categories that have been theorized by scholars in other disciplines without developing analytical categories that are grounded in the distinct languages of religious traditions. Moreover, she also argues that as a result of the tendency to appropriate categories from other disciplines, scholars of a religion are left with what she thinks is a confounding amount of scholarship discussing bodies.

While the use of scholarship on bodies within religious studies can be beneficial as it maybe more rooted in the idioms of religious traditions, the use of Butler, who is neither a scholar of religion or necessarily apt in discussing Vedic or post-Vedic texts, can be helpful in extending the operating metaphor of bodies into the renunciant literature, the *Samnyasa Upanishads*. Through her work with the relationship between performativity of gender and the materialization of bodies in relation to ritual and

---

<sup>48</sup> Ellen T. Armour and Susan M. St. Ville. "Judith Butler--In Theory." *Bodily Citations: Religions and Judith Butler*. Ellen T. Armour and Susan M. St. Ville, eds. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 10.

<sup>49</sup> Barbara A. Holdrege. "Body Connections: Hindu Discourse of the Body and the Study of Religion. *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, Vol. 2., No. 3 (1998), 341.

inscription, I propose that renunciants, in an attempt to disassociate themselves from the social order, renounce rituals in order to constitute the 'abject' body that is discussed by Butler. This is a departure from Patrick Olivelle (1995) that suggests that to begin to examine the Brahmanical ascetic creation of the body one must consider what occurs within the ascetic tradition as a deconstruction of the social creation of the body. Even if we were to consider the 'abject' body as a deconstruction of the social creation of the body, then would that deconstruction result in the pre-discursive bodies? Moreover, what are the other possibilities that can be imagined in sex and gender no longer operate as norms and we are back to constitute the pre-discursive body?

## LIST OF REFERENCES

- Ellen T. Armour and Susan M. St. Ville. "Judith Butler--In Theory." *Bodily Citations: Religions and Judith Butler*. Ellen T. Armour and Susan M. St. Ville, eds. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006, pp. 1-12.
- Butler, Judith. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex."* New York: Routledge, 1993.
- . *Undoing Gender*. London: Taylor & Francis, 2007.
- . *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge: 1999.
- Eliade, Mircea. *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*. Trans. Willard R. Trask. New York: Harcourt, Inc., 1959.
- Gonda, Jan. *Vedic Ritual: The Non-Solemn Rites*. Leiden: EJ Brill, 1980.
- Holdrege, Barbra A. "Body Connections: Hindu Discourses of the Body and the Study of Religion." *International Journal of Hindu Studies*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1998), pp.341-386.
- Hollywood, Amy. "Performativity, Citationality, Ritualization." *Bodily Citations: Religion and Judith Butler*. Ellen T. Armour and Susan M. St. Ville, eds. New York: Columbia University Press, 2006, pp. 252-275.
- Hopkins. Thomas. *The Religious Life of Man: The Hindu Religious Tradition*. Encino, California: Dickenson Publishing Co. Inc., 1971.
- Kajihara, Meiko. "The *Upanayana* and Marriage in the *Atharaveda*." *The Vedas, Texts, Language, and Ritual: Proceedings of the 3rd International Vedic Workshop*. Eds J.E.M Houben and A. Griffiths. Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 2004, pp. 417-423.
- Loxley, James. *Performativity*. New York: Routledge, 2007.
- Michaels, Axel. *Hinduism: Past and Present*. Trans. Barbara Harshav. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- Maurer, Walter H. *Pinacles of India's Past: Selections from the Rg Veda*. Amsterdam; Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1986.

Olivelle, Patrick. "Deconstruction of the Body in Indian Asceticism." *Asceticism*. V.L. Wimbush & R. Valantasis Eds. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 188-210.

-----Trans. *The Law Code of Manu*. Trans. Patrick Olivelle. New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Patton, Laurie. *Bringing the Gods to Mind: Mantra and Ritual in Early Indian Sacrifice*. Berkley: University of California Press, 2005.

Smith, Brian K. *Reflections of Resemblance, Ritual, and Religion*. Dehli: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1998.