

Brahmarākshasa in Modern Hindi Literature

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Abstract

The paper deals with the transformation of the image of Brahmarākshasa from Vedic to modern times. Authors seek to study several literary texts in Sanskrit (Rig-Veda, Mahābhārata, Manusmṛiti, Purāṇas, Pañcatantra etc.) and in modern Hindi (mostly by Gajānan Mādhav Muktibodh). Their main goal is to analyze the development of this important but to a great extent forgotten mythological image from the perspective of its most important achievements against their historical background and socio-cultural context. This paper is a modest but the very first attempt to perform such kind of study of the image of Brahmarākshasa.

Keywords: Brahmarākshasa, Gajānan Mādhav Muktibodh, Sanskrit, myth.

Ancient and medieval Sanskrit texts

Many demons appear in Indian mythology. Amongst them are Rākshasas, Bhūtas and Pishācas. The most common type of demon is Rākshasa. They are rivals of people, not of gods. Hindu gods, referred to as “suras”, compete for power with Asuras. Rākshasas are described in the Rig-Veda as evil shape-shifters polluting shrines and sacrifices. The Rig-Veda hymns contain pleas to gods (mostly Agni) to destroy and annihilate Rākshasas. In the Rig-Veda there are hymns called “Agni the Demon-Smasher” (IV.4, X.87, and X.118). Although these demons are an essential part of Vedic universe, the etymology of the name *Rākshasa* is murky, and therefore no classification is provided in this text.

There are descriptions of the origin of Rākshasas in later mythology. Thus several episodes in the Rāmāyaṇa describe different versions of Rākshasas’ origin. Sage Agastya, for instance, tells Rāma that once Brahmā-Prajāpati created Water and then some creatures to protect it. These creatures were exhausted by hunger and thirst, they came to him and asked what they should do. Brahmā told them that they should protect Water. Some of the creatures said ‘Rakshāma’ [we will protect], and some said ‘Yakshāma’ [we will worship]. The creator named those who said ‘Rakshāma’ as Rākshasas, and those who said ‘Yakshāma’ as Yakshas (Ram. 7.4.8 – 13).

In the Mahābhārata there are several passages on this matter. For instance, all Rākshasas are said to be offsprings of the sage Pulastya (MBh. 1.59). There is also a curious myth stating that at the very beginning Brahmā created only Brāhmiṇs in each species – Brāhmiṇ-men, Brāhmiṇ-Rākshasas, Brāhmiṇ-Pishācas and so on. As a result of their downfall they have lost their Brāhmiṇ status and became simply men and demons of all types (MBh. 12.181.1 – 20).

The idea of a special species of Rākshasa, that is Brāhmiṇ-Rākshasa, is of crucial importance for this paper. This kind of Rākshasa emerges in early Sanskrit tradition, continues its existence up to the Middle Ages and then re-emerges in modern Hindi literature as a bright and symbolic figure. The following passages are to be devoted to the origin, development and further transformation of this mythological creature, called Brahmarākshasa.

Brāhmiṇ-Rākshasa (Brahmarākshasa) is mentioned in the “Laws of Manu” (200 BCE – 200 CE). Chapter XII states causes of men’s reincarnating as Brahmarākshasa: “He who is associated with outcasts, he who has approached the wives of other men, and he who has stolen the property of a Brahmana becomes a Brahmarākshasa” (Manusmṛiti 1886). Brahmarākshasas are also mentioned in the epics. In the Mahābhārata’s “Book of the Assembly Hall” sage Nārada, describing the great sacrifice, states that performance of this sacrifice has many obstacles, because Brahmarākshasas, engaged in obstructing all sacrifices, are trying to find some vulnerability in it (MBh. 2.11.68).

The next episode mentioning Brahmarākshasas is found in the “Book of Shalya”. It is the longest episode on this matter in the whole epic. Sage Vaishampāyana is telling a story about the river Sarasvatī cursed by the sage Viśvāmitra. The river-goddess had to flow for an entire year bearing blood mixed with water. There came a great number of Rākshasas, who were drinking the blood flowing in the water. Gratified with that blood, they were laughing and dancing cheerfully like people who have attained heaven by their own merit. The Sarasvatī remained in such state for quite some time. Then there came a group of Rishis, who put great effort to free Sarasvatī from this curse. Waters of Sarasvatī were purified and Rākshasas who lived there started to suffer from hunger and sought the protection of the Rishis themselves. One Rākshasa said to those sages: “We are hungry and expelled from eternal virtue. We are sinners but not on our free will. This bad virtue exceeds because of your inattentiveness and evil deeds. That is why we turned into Brahmarākshasas. That is why those of vaiśyas, shudras and kshatriyas who hate Brāhmiṇs, and those who dishonor wise men become Rākshasas in this world. Our ranks exceed by the sexual sins of evil women”. Rākshasas pleaded for salvation, and Rishis made Sarasvatī to take another shape called Aruna. Brahmarākshasas bathed in that new branch of Sarasvatī, got released from their sins and went to heaven (MBh. 9.41.1 – 24).

This myth presents the following causes of Brahmarākshasas reaching their state: not just their own evil nature, but evil deeds of people, or as a result of evil men reborn as Rākshasas. Brahmarākshasas are not satisfied with their status; it is emphasized that they are sinners not of their free will, and so they are happy to be liberated from their sins. This very short description of Brahmarākshasas leads to the assumption that these creatures are a special kind of Rākshasa. This kind of demon might have superior status amongst other Rākshasas. It remains unclear whether this high status is based on their extra viciousness or on their special powers.

The next episode connected with Brahmarākshasas is included in the “Book of Instructions”. They are mentioned in the context of the ritual performed in honor of one’s ancestors. The first part of the offering should be given to Agni. If the fire is lit, then Brahmarākshasas can do no harm to the ritual (MBh. 13.92.12). Further in this book, the great sage Bṛhaspati reveals several punishments imposed on sinful men. If a twice-born person who

has studied the four Vedas, becomes infected with imprudence and receives a gift from a sinner, he has to reincarnate as a donkey and live for five years. Casting off this donkey form, he has to reincarnate as a bull for seven years. Casting off this bull form, he has to reincarnate as a Brahmarākshasa for three months, and only then can he again be reborn as a Brāhmiṇ (MBh. 13.112.39 – 42). This episode explains the origin of Brahmarākshasa to the full extent. These creatures are third reincarnations of Brāhmiṇs, who have to go through a cycle of births as punishment for accepting a gift from an evil person.

A similar episode is embedded in the conversation between Umā and Maheśwara. Umā wonders why some people do not observe any vows, do not perform any sacrifices and are similar to Rākshasas in their behavior. Maheśwara answers that those who do not observe any vows are infected with imprudence, those who consider all unrighteous deeds as righteous ones, who neglect all limitations, have to be reborn in the next life as Brahmarākshasas (MBh. 13.133.57 – 63). This episode underlines the reasons why people are reborn as Brahmarākshasas. One might presume some connection between Rākshasas of this origin and sacrifice. Those who do not perform sacrifices in their human life are reborn as Brahmarākshasas, and in their demonic life aspire to obstruct sacrifices by any means possible, as it was mentioned in “Sabhāparva” (MBh. 2.11.68).

There are a lot of Rākshasas of different kinds and origins appearing in the Rāmāyaṇa, however Brahmarākshasas are hardly mentioned. The only exception is in the First Book, and this episode is also connected with the performance of sacrifices. King Daśaratha fears that Brahmarākshasas might ruin this great sacrifice. There is a widespread conviction that Rāvaṇa, the main antagonist in the Ramayana, is himself a Brahmarākshasa. Being the son of sage Viśravas of a Brāhmiṇ origin and rākshasi Kaikasī of a Kshatriya origin, Rāvaṇa is half-Brāhmiṇ, half-Kshatriya. Even though Rāvaṇa acts mostly according to his Kshatriya status, one can presume he might be considered as a Brahmarākshasa only for being a Rākshasa of a special origin and high status, and not as a Brahmana reborn as a Brahmarākshasa due to some evil deeds.

Brahmarākshasa can be found in other Sanskrit texts. There is a legend in the Gaṇeśa Purāṇa (14th -17th centuries) about the sage Gṛtsamada who became a Brahmarākshasa as a result of his mother’s curse. There is no evidence of the sage changing his form into Rākshasa, nor had he to die to reincarnate in a Brahmarākshasa’s form. This curse turned to a blessing for the sage, who later engaged himself in meditation on the Supreme Being. The Supreme Being in this Purāṇa, associated with Ganesha, appeared in front of the sage Gṛtsamada. Despite the sage being a Brahmarākshasa, he was addressed by the Supreme Being as a Brāhmiṇ and, due to his devotion, he was granted his desires of “pre-eminence in all his transmigrations above all other Brāhmiṇs, divine knowledge, along with a beautiful shrubbery, in which he might engage himself in divine meditation (Stevenson 1845: 320-321).

Brahmarākshasa reappears in a more visible and vivid way in Sanskrit prose. Brahmarākshasa appears in “Pañcatantra” (around 3rd century CE) in the eleventh story of the third book “Of Crows and Owls”. The story “The Brahman, the Thief, and the Ghost” is about a poor Brāhmiṇ who kept and fed two cows. One day a thief decided to steal them. He was joined by a strange creature with “a row of sharp teeth set far apart, with a high-bridged nose and uneven eyes, with limbs covered with knotty muscles, with hollow cheeks, with beard and body as yellow as a fire with much butter in it” (Pañcatantra1956). Brahmarākshasa’s name is “Satyavacana” [Truthful]. Brahmarākshasa was taking food once in three days, and was going to eat the poor Brāhmiṇ that very day. The Thief and Brahmarākshasa came by the house of the Brāhmiṇ and waited for a proper moment to ambush him. They started to argue who should

commit the crime first. The Brāhmiṇ was woken up by the sound of their quarrel, and they introduced each other. “The Brāhmiṇ stood up and took a good look. And by remembering a prayer to his favorite god, he saved his life from the ghost (Brahmarākshasa), then lifted a club and saved his two cows from the thief” (Pañcatantra 1956).

Brahmarākshasa appears in “What Ten Young Men Did”, a Sanskrit novel of the 7th century AD which describes the adventures of ten young noble men. In the eleventh chapter Mitragupta, son of the minister, tells his story of the adventures. Mitragupta is confronted by a terrible Brahmarākshasa on an island. This Brahmarākshasa asks Mitragupta to answer his questions, otherwise he would eat the young man. Mitragupta answers all questions correctly: “What is cruel? – A wicked woman's heart. What is most to the advantage of a householder? – Good qualities in a wife. What is desire? – Imagination. What is the means to achieve the difficult? – Wisdom. And the respective proofs of these responses are Dhumi, Gomini, Nimbavati and Nitambavati”. Mitragupta told Brahmarākshasa all these stories, he was satisfied with them and offered Mitragupta his help. At the end of this chapter Brahmarākshasa saw another Rākshasa, carrying a young beautiful girl, and they started a fight so cruel that they both were killed. The girl who was saved turned out to be a princess (Daṇḍīn 2005: 396-455). In this story Brahmarākshasa bears quite a striking resemblance to the Sphinx from the Greek myth of Oedipus. His similarity does not lie within his description, but within his behavior, the manner of asking questions. This resemblance is not quite coincidental, because Mitragupta was saved by the Greek ship earlier in this story. It can be assumed that the author adopted the Greek story and included Brahmarākshasa as the most intelligent demonical being. Again, Brahmarākshasa is not an entirely cruel being, although he was threatening to eat Mitragupta at the very beginning; he sacrifices his life in the battle to save the princess.

Another medieval Sanskrit text, “Thirty-two tales of the throne”, also has the legendary king Vikramāditya amongst its main characters. Brahmarākshasa appears in the “Story of Thirteen Statuettes”. Vikramāditya saves a Brāhmiṇ who was drowning in the currents of the Ganges. This Brāhmiṇ grants the king a gift of death at will and going to heaven. Then Vikramāditya faces a Brahmarākshasa, who resided on a fig tree. Brahmarākshasa had a gaping mouth; he was “with bristling hair, while the rest of the body was reduced to a skeleton”. The king asked him who he was, and Brahmarākshasa explained, “I was a sacrificial priest of this city, willing to perform sacrifices in anyone’s name for a fee. I became an ill-willed Brāhmiṇ spirit because I accepted forbidden gifts (i.e. gifts from evil people). Five thousand years have passed by, and I still have not been released from this plight”. Vikramāditya granted this creature his gift of death, and Brahmarākshasa passed away and “mounted the divine flying chariot and went to heaven” (Sinhasanadvatirīśika 2007: 635). There are visible traces of the epic legends about Brahmarākshasas in this story. Indeed, it is a greedy Brāhmiṇ, who takes gifts from evil people, who is later reborn as Brahmarākshasa. He does not have to suffer several reincarnations, as it was said in the Mahābhārata, but he has to suffer for five thousand years in this state.

Brahmarākshasas are mentioned in some Sanskrit classifications and treatises. In “Prashna Marga”, a work on Hindu astrology written in the mid-17th century, Brahmarākshasa appears amongst “the spirits causing evil eye” (Prashna Marga 1991).

A brief analysis of Sanskrit texts does not completely unveil Brahmarākshasa’s nature and origin. Even though some core features of this creature can be identified: Brahmarākshasa is a special kind of Rākshasas, though there are no evident traces of its origin. It can be either a Brāhmiṇ, “fallen” in the previous life, or some kind of a super-Rākshasa with qualities that distinguish it from its kinsmen. In earlier texts there is an inclination towards Brahmarākshasa

being a super-Rākshasa. In later texts Brahmarākshasa receives its literal interpretation – a Brāhmiṇ who has sinned in his previous life. Brahmarākshasa does not differ greatly in its qualities from other Rākshasas. It pollutes sacrifices, although it is mostly engaged in eligible ruining of great ones, i.e. Rājasūya or king Daśaratha's great sacrifice. Brahmarākshasa prefers to hide in a tree. As other Rākshasas Brahmarākshasa is a shape-shifter, although it is mainly described in its human-like, though extremely ugly, form. Brahmarākshasa does not always sin voluntarily, it is eager to get redemption. Brahmarākshasa asking tricky questions is quite unusual for this type of creature.

There are almost no traces of Brahmarākshasa in medieval vernacular texts, especially in Khariboli, Braj or Awadhi. Brahmarākshasa stays alive in people's memory because of endless interpretations of medieval Sanskrit texts.

Modern Hindi texts

Beginnings of the modern Hindi literature were characterized by the growing importance of the national movement. This was the period of re-thinking of the past of India, traditional values and images (Šukla 1961: 485; Gaeffke 1978: 16).

However Brahmarākshasa was neither among the first nor among the most popular traditional "revised" images of this time when the figures national heroes and leaders, both real and mythological (e.g. prince Rāma) were mostly needed.

Brahmarākshasa, being an example of a demonic creature known to Indians from time immemorial, re-enters modern Hindi literature some later, through works of prolific Hindi poet and writer Gajānan Mādhav Muktibodh (1917-1964).

Brahmarākshasa is found in the two works of Muktibodh – the poem "Brahmarākshasa" and the short story "A disciple of Brahmarākshasa". Both of them were written approximately at the same time; the story and the poem were first published in 1957, but the poem was subjected to a serious revision. In his poem and story Muktibodh invoked one and the same topic which is revealed in these texts in two different ways not only because of the limitations laid by different genres, but because of some crucial differences hidden within the images of Brahmarākshasa.

In the eponymous poem Brahmarākshasa lives in an empty well, with deep-sunken stairs leading to the old stale waters. The well is situated quite far from the city. The narrator stays besides this well and listens to the tragedy that drifted in this old well (Muktibodh 2007: 123). Neither the narrator nor Brahmarākshasa are able to overpass the steps leading to the well, and so Brahmarākshasa stays confined to this place and finally dies. The narrator wishes that he'd be Brahmarākshasa's favorite disciple, and that he could bring his incomplete works to the final conclusion.

In the story "A disciple of Brahmarākshasa" a young lad from a village comes to Varanasi in search of a guru. Two young students play a trick on him and send him to the old, abandoned house, where the guru can be found. The lad enters this house, and it becomes known not to the lad, but to the reader, that the house is haunted by Brahmarākshasa. The lad after entering this house goes through lots of floors to the upper one. There he meets one Rishi, who agrees to become his guru on the condition that the disciple should not leave the premises of the building for twelve years. After completing his education the lad and his guru have their final meal together during which the guru reveals his supernatural origin by stretching his hand through the whole building and bringing a pot of ghee. He explains his own origin in the following words:

“Disciple! I’m going to tell you that I’m Brahmarākshasa, but at the same time I remain your guru. I need your affection. During my human life-time I was a prominent scholar, who gained extensive knowledge, but couldn’t find a proper disciple to impart this knowledge to. That’s why my soul got stuck in this world, and I remained here in the form of Brahmarākshasa” (Jain 2007: 119).

Now this Brahmarākshasa can be liberated from his post-mortem being, because he found a good disciple. Brahmarākshasa vanishes after warning the lad not to keep gained knowledge to himself, otherwise he would become Brahmarākshasa himself (Jain 2007: 114-120). From a sociological point of view Muktibodh has captured the lore of traditional Indian education; this story “narrates the slow process of a young pupil’s transformation, and ends by telling us how his teacher attained liberation by transferring his moral and intellectual authority to the pupil” (Kumar 2005: 45).

In both writings Brahmarākshasa’s appearance is presented very briefly. In the poem Brahmarākshasa is a kind of demonic creature, “his body and mind are extremely covered with flowers and thorns” (Muktibodh 2007: 122). Brahmarākshasa tries to wash away the dirt that covers his body to purify himself from any “shadow of sin”, left by the modern epoch. All his attempts are in vain, he “remains dirty”. Brahmarākshasa’s attempts to purify himself are accompanied by his endless arguments on different topics, and this remains just a fruitless “maddening process” which leaves only “dark feeling in his life” (Muktibodh 2007: 121).

Brahmarākshasa has knowledge in almost every field, but this knowledge is confined to him, he does not impart it to other people, only unrelated sounds and echoes rise up from the well. Brahmarākshasa himself is unable to climb the steps from the well; his speeches are unable to reach the world outside it too. Brahmarākshasa in this poem knows both modern and traditional knowledge. Muktibodh uses him as an allegory of a ‘typical’ member of middle class society, who is unable to reject a traditional way of thinking, and cannot truly adopt modern ideas.

It seems that Muktibodh himself does not accept this accommodation, this compromised position, and it is a root of many problems in the society in his opinion. Historian of Hindi literature Śyāmchandr Kapūr comments that “Muktibodh rejected morbid Western rationalism and turned to absolutely Indian milieu. That’s why in his poetry on the one hand can be seen clear protest against rotten Indianness, and on the other hand establishment of his own identity. Muktibodh indeed is the first Hindi poet-rationalist. He had rejected previous traditional rules in poetry and by doing this put new life into Hindi poetry” (Kapūr 2001: 272).

At the time of this poem’s creation modern ways of thinking were widely associated with Western ways of thinking, with Western education and scientific mode of thought. There was a constant controversy as to which way the society should follow, how to preserve tradition and, at the same time, adopt modern ideas. Western ways of thinking are tightly associated with western ways of society development. Due to the historical reasons, for India this way is connected with colonial politics of the British Raj. Modernization and westernization leading to progress were an excuse for British authoritative presence in India. Mahatma Gandhi criticized modern ways of development as the way of rejecting the country’s past, blindly following Western traditions, and adopting Western ways of thinking. Mahatma Gandhi stated that India should follow its own way without rejecting tradition and opposing modernization, but incorporating them into the new special way of progress (Choudhuri 2003: 112-114). It is clear that Muktibodh was influenced by ideas of Mahatma Gandhi, and was interpreting them in the figurative language in his writings.

Indian literary critics describe the allegory of Brahmarākshasa in the poem in the following way: “Brahmarākshasa is an intellectual, member of middle class society, who tries to wash off traces of his class faults, but he can’t manage it. His knowledge brings no social benefit; his mind could never come to any ultimate conclusions. Brahmarākshasa knew history, international trends, but the limitations of his class and hypocrisy transformed his self-contained intellectualism into stagnated selfishness... He couldn’t overcome the flaws of his class; he was crushed in his inner struggle because of the many external and internal contradictions. He couldn’t become a ‘great mind’ of his time, because he was limited by his attempts to achieve perfection and liberate himself” (Tiwārī 1980: 103).

Both Brahmarākshasas portrayed by Muktibodh bear some similarities alongside with great inner difference in their description. Clearly they were Brāhmiṇs reborn as evil creatures due to misdeeds in the previous life. Though Brahmarākshasa from the story was liberated from his post-mortem being, the Brahmarākshasa from the poem died, abandoned and forgotten.

The difference in these two images of Brahmarākshasas is underlined by the description of the locus they inhabit. It was said earlier that in the poem Brahmarākshasa lives in the step-well. These step-wells are a unique type of buildings in Western India. Essentially a device to contain water, step-wells, later became socio-religious institutions. The main body of these step-wells is located mostly underground, and some types of these wells resemble Hindu temples located above the ground. These wells consist of a vertical well from which water is drawn, and the surroundings with a stepped corridor leading down from the surface of the earth to the water. These stepped corridors are usually decorated with elaborate carvings (Jain-Neubauer 1981: 2). These step-wells were used not only for fetching water, but for informal gatherings, leisure and sometimes for spiritual practices. These wells assumed the status of a shrine because of “associations such as ‘pātāllōk’ – journey to water world and fertility – womb of mother earth” (Pandya 2010: 36). It can be assumed that the step-well and its stale waters symbolize the inner world of Brahmarākshasa in which he is trapped, unable to come free, unable to “cross the one step” of the well. The reason why Brahmarākshasa cannot be either liberated or accepted by other people is his arrogance and inability to impart his knowledge.

From the first glance, the locus in the story differs greatly from the locus in the poem. In the story Brahmarākshasa inhabits a big building with a “huge empty courtyard, surrounded by huge, beautiful and empty verandas with lanterns underneath their roofs” (Jain 2007: 116). This courtyard is empty but clean, and the building has several floors with wide and freshly whitewashed ladders leading to them. Each floor described in this story has “white covers and widely spread futons”, lanterns and burning aroma sticks. These floors are heavily decorated with musical instruments and paintings all the way to the top. The building is empty and extremely high. This high building can be assumed as an opposing image of the well, depicted in the poem. Both dwellings are inhabited by Brahmarākshasas, but one lives almost in the dark hole, while another in the temple-like building. Both dwellings have a similar structure, but inverted in space. The well leads down into the depths of the earth; the house leads towards the sky. The well can be associated with the underworld; the high house with heaven. Assuming that the well symbolizes the conflicted inner world of Brahmarākshasa from the poem, the high building with accurate decorations symbolizes the inner world of Brahmarākshasa in the story. Thus the difference and similarity between these two Brahmarākshasas is underlined by the almost negative pictures of the locuses they live in.

The main difference between these two creatures is their attitude towards attained knowledge. Brahmarākshasa from the story is the one able to share it, while the Brahmarākshasa

from the poem is the one who dies without sharing. Still, Muktibodh pities him. He describes the dead Brahmarākshasa as a “dead bird, stuck in the dark dense thorny brushwood”. This thorny brushwood symbolizes endless searching and counting, in which Brahmarākshasa’s soul got entangled. Besides, it seems that for Muktibodh the legible knowledge is a traditional one, because the Brahmarākshasa who was liberated, was the bearer of traditional wisdom. This might be connected with the general feeling that was common in post-Independent India: the feeling of finding its own way in further development of the society, the way that would not copy the one suggested by the Western culture.

The image of Brahmarākshasa presented by Muktibodh is unique and extraordinary. It is the only example in Indian literature where Brahmarākshasa is presented amongst the main heroes of the narrative, acts independently, and moreover intends to do no harm to human beings. In Hindi literature the presence of this image is so overwhelming that almost no other mentions of this creature occurs. In further interpretations of this creature there is a solid belief that Brahmarākshasa is a sinned Brāhmiṇ in his after-life.

For example, in children’s play “A barber of Brahmarākshasa” by Rājesh Joṣi this character is an educated Brāhmiṇ who failed to learn the concept of modesty, became extremely arrogant and did not find a proper student to impart his knowledge to. That is why he became a Brahmarākshasa. This Brahmarākshasa meets a boy and decides to eat him. The boy tricks him by telling the story about a sick prince in this kingdom who can be cured only by being fed the blood from the hearts of one hundred and one Brahmarākshasas, and he has already captured one hundred Brahmarākshasas. Brahmarākshasa becomes very frightened by this information and lets the boy go (Joṣi 2012). In this story the clear intertextual connection to Muktibodh’s writings can be seen.

Surprisingly, Brahmarākshasa is mentioned as a part of a personifying metaphor in the novel “Tiraskṛt” [Rejected] written by the Dalit writer Sūrajpāl Chauhān. In his novel he describes the caste as Brahmarākshasa, a Brāhmiṇ ghost, who follows him whenever he goes (Chauhān 2002: 57).

Quite recently Brahmarākshasa has reappeared on the movie scene in the horror-movie “Creature 3D” directed by Vikram Bhatt. Vikram Bhatt said that in his movie the main antagonist was a 400-year old creature, which was extremely strong, and the more it ate, the stronger it became. He also added, “We had to use our creative skills to develop a new creature for the film. The creature is called Brahma Rakshas, who has also been featured in old Indian fables” (Bhatt 2014). In this film Brahmarākshasa turns out to be created by Brahma as a result of his curse put upon some Rākshasas. These Rākshasas turned into monsters with the legs and tails of dinosaurs, and the body and head of a human being. They became flesh-eaters and were left for eternity to wander on the realms of Earth without any hope for salvation. This film’s main protagonists figure out that Brahmarākshasa can be killed only by a weapon bathed in a sacred pond of the only Brahma Temple in Pushkar. Thus in this film Brahmarākshasa is a blend of a mythological creature from different Indian legends and some sort of dinosaurs.

Concluding the study of this mythological image in the light of forgoing analysis the authors should stress up that writers of different historical periods and of different outlooks are always trying to make Brahmarākshasa fit the changing values of their epochs. As it was shown in the paper, emerged in early Sanskrit tradition Brahmarākshasa continues its existence through the Middle Ages and enters modern Hindi literature as a striking symbolic character. From the very beginning this image were looked upon as having an ambivalent nature: noble but sinful, wise but evil etc. Authors of Hindi tradition also follow this paradigm of the development of this

literary image. Due to the inner ambivalence of this image, the figures of Brahmarākshasas made by Gajānan Mādhav Muktibodh, Sūrajpāl Chauhān, Rājesh Joṣī and other writers can be viewed as a reflection of evolution of traditional Indian values. This is the reason why the image of Brahmarākshasa may continue to serve as a source of inspiration for many generations of authors to come.

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