

# **CHAPTER – VII**

## **MAJOR FINDINGS AND CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS**

## MAJOR FINDINGS AND CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

In pursuance of this research work to study and analyze the dichotomic interpretation of the major and minor sacrifices of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, this chapter records the major findings and concluding observations. This research work mainly focuses on the sacrifices of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, and an attempt has been made to highlight the dichotomic interpretation of the major and minor sacrifices of the same.

The Vedic literature is a vast and deep ocean of knowledge with multi dimensional disciplines. In the course of our research period we have found that the sage *Bharadvāja* spent his whole life in the study of Vedic literature, but he was not able to complete it. This gives us idea about the immensity of the Vedic literature.

Next to the *Samhitās*, the *Brāhmaṇa* literature is of great significance. There are several *Brāhmaṇas* of the four Veda. Now-a-days all the *Brāhmaṇas* are not available. All the matters relating to the sacrificial performances are discussed in the *Brāhmaṇa* literature. Besides sacrificial details, from the *Brāhmaṇa* literature we also get information about the ancient Indian culture and civilization, social and economic condition of the people, system of education and the profession of the people, status of women in the society, system of marriage, geographical and agricultural background of people, major entertainment of the people of that time like dice play, chariot race, music, dance and so on. The *Brāhmaṇa* literature also provides us idea about the

political implications of various sacrifices, knowledge of medicine and disease, flora, fauna and so on. Moreover, the philosophical ideas are also found in some places of the *Brāhmaṇa* literature. Thus, along with sacrificial details, the *Brāhmaṇa* literature also provides us a wide variety of subjects of ancient time.

In the course of our study period we have observed that the ‘*Yajña*’ or sacrifice is regarded as the best task or *sreṣṭhatamaṃ karma*. As by performing sacrifice one can redeem his sin and became holy and blessed. We know that by birth human beings are indebted with five kinds of debts known as- *Bhuta-ṛna*, *Manuṣya-ṛna*, *Pitṛ-ṛna*, *Deva-ṛna* and *Ṛṣi-ṛna*. One can redeem himself from such kind of debt by performing *Bhūta-yajña*, *Manuṣya-yajña*, *Pitṛ-yajña*, *Deva-yajña* and *Brahma-yajña* respectively. Sacrifice also insures the operation of all powers for good. The sacrifice is generally characterized as ‘*Sri*’-Prosperity, abundance and wellbeing. The sacrifice is also identified with various gods like *Indra*, *Agni*, *Viṣṇu*, *Prajāpati* and others. If the sacrificial tasks are performed in an exact way, the sacrificer may attain his desired will, but if there is any mistake happened in the sacrificial performance, the sacrificer may occur sin. Thus the performance of sacrifice is identified with the journey of boats. Because, when the sailor voyage the boat in a proper way, one may reach to his destination, but any mistake submerged the boat in the mid way.

In the ancient Vedic society the rituals are regarded as the major social ceremonies. Most of the people of that time performed sacrifice as a daily act of their life. Now-a-days also the sacrificial ceremonies are performed, but

these sacrificial ceremonies are not alike that of the sacrifice which were executed in the Vedic age. As a matter of fact, from the Vedic period there are changes in the performance of sacrifice (both ritualistic and idealistic), and with this changes sacrifices are performed in the present days also.

Sacrifices are generally performed for the attainment or fulfilment of various desirous or wish. By performing sacrifice the sacrificer wants to obtain generally the blessings of the God. Apart from the general sacrifices, there are others which were performed for fulfilment of many wishes veiled under religious traits. In the second category there are a number of sacrifices which are directly connected with kingship or royal upliftment. They are *Rājasūya*, *Vājapeya* and *Aśvamedha*. By performing those sacrifices the sacrificer connects himself with kingship and paramount sovereignty. The great king *Prthu* was installed to his kingdom by the performance of *Rājasūya Yajña*. The attainment of various royal powers lays on the performance of sacrifice. We have found that the Gods installed *Indra* to kingship by the great consecration or *Mahābhiṣeka* ceremony.

This consecration ceremony of *Indra* has great value. As this consecration ceremony is used as model in the anointing ceremony of *Kṣatriya Yajamāna*. By this anointing ceremony one becomes dauntless like *Indra*. A *Kṣatriya Yajamāna* may win his all enemies, conquers the world, gains fame and reputation if he is consecrated with *Aindra Mahābhiṣeka*. Thus here we got an idea that the achievement of royal power lies in the consecration ceremony.

It is observed that in the *Rājasūya* ceremony offerings are made by the consecrated king at the houses of the ‘*Ratnins*’. The *Ratnins* or the king makers actually consisted of different classes of people in the society. The consecrated king makes offerings to each of the *Ratnin*’s house with the intention to seek their support. This bears some political significance. This approach and appeal serves dual purpose- contact with all stratas of society is made and the religious goal is also achieved. In the list of the *Ratnins*, we find four social classes of people. Instead of *Brāhmaṇa* (the *Purahita*) or the *Kṣatriya* (the King himself), we find the names of *Vaiśyas* i.e. *Grāmanī* and the *Śudras* (the *Akṣāvāpa* and the *Govikartana*). The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* gives a record of the participation of the *Śudras* in a purificatory rite named as ‘*Soma-Rudra*’ *iṣṭi*. So, it can be said that the offering made by the consecrated king to the house of the *Ratnins* (i.e. to the various social castes) highlights the social condition of the people in that time. As a matter of fact, the offerings made by the king to the various social classes of people signify that the king’s duty to his subjects was equal and there was no social discrimination among them during those days. Therefore this ‘*Ratninām-haviṃsi*’ offering is politically very significant.

In the *Rājasūya* sacrifice, the *Adhvaryu* priests sprinkled the king with 17 holy waters collected from various sources. By this sprinkling ceremony the king become sanctified. On the first day of the consecration ceremony offering are also made to the eight Gods (along with their epithets) with the intension to achieve their blessings. As a matter of fact, the use of epithets or sprinkling the

king with various holy waters represents the various quality or character of the king.

As a popular festival, the cow raid or the chariot race was performed in the *Rājasūya* or in the *Vājapeya* sacrifice. The special feature of this rite is that by this rite the sacrificer becomes victorious and secures power. As this rite is used to test the physical fitness of the ruler and enable him the fittest man for kingship.

In the *Rājasūya* sacrifice, Tiger's skin is used in numerous rituals. After the oath taking ceremony the king steps upon the tiger skin. It is also observed that in the *Rājasūya* sacrifice the throne (which is made of *khādirā* wood) is installed on the Tiger's skin for the king. Among all the beasts the Tiger is regarded as the supreme animal or the king. Hence, the use of Tiger's skin in the *Rājasūya* ceremony is an indication of the fact that by using the Tiger's skin the *Adhvaryu* wants to make the king supreme or highest among all human beings like that of the Tiger.

Moreover, it has been noticed that Gold is repeatedly used both in the *Rājasūya* and in the *Vājapeya* sacrifice. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* we have found that the 'Gold' is used as the symbol of immortal life. Hence, by using the Gold in both the ceremonies the *Adhvaryu* expected an immortal life for the sacrificer.

It is found that the number seventeen is used again and again in various rituals. This number is considered as a very holy number. The *Śatapatha* have

connected the number seventeen with *Prajāpati*, the lord of creation. Thus, the number seventeen is used in various rituals of the *Vājapeya* sacrifice with the intension that the king or the sacrificer attains such excellence like that of *Prajāpati*.

In the *Aśvamedha* sacrifice, before starting of the actual performance, the king or the sacrificer has to let loose a sacrificial horse for one year for roaming. This horse is protected by various royal attendants or soldiers. These royal attendants are nothing but the different classes of fighter. From these royal guards we get the description of various kinds of weapons like missiles, armours and so on. As a matter of fact, these royal guards of the sacrificial horse highlight the military strength and power of the king.

Besides this, in the *Aśvamedha* sacrifice the four queens the king takes active part in the sacrifice with hundred female attendants each. The participation of the queens in the sacrifice with their female attendants shows the constitutional status and dignity of the four queens.

As a minor sacrifice the *Puruṣamedha*, the *Sarvamedha*, the *Agnicayana*, the *Cāturmāsya* and the *Sautrāmaṇī* ceremony are also possess some significant character in it. It is found that the executor of the *Puruṣamedha* sacrifice attains and secures everything. This sacrifice is also performed for the attainment of overpowering strength. A *Kṣatriya Yajamāna* by performing this sacrifice surpasses all being and attains everything. Moreover, by performing the *Puruṣamedha* sacrifice a general welfare is

wished by the *Kṣatriya Yajamāna* for his people as he gives up his all property as *dakṣinā* to the priests and retires to the forest. This provides us idea about the royal character of the *Puruṣamedha* sacrifice.

Besides this, the *Puruṣamedha* sacrifice also provides some philosophical idea. In the *Puruṣamedha* sacrifice human slaughtering was avoided, after the *Paryagnikaraṇa* performance human victims are set free and offerings are made in symbolical way. The idea of self renunciation in man, avoiding human slaughtering or entering in the life of mendicant is the indicator of the philosophical thinking of the *Puruṣamedha* sacrifice.

In the course of our study period we have observed that the *Sarvamedha* sacrifice is that sacrifice which is performed both for the attainment of ‘every kind of food’ and for ‘universal sovereignty’. As in the *Sarvamedha* sacrifice the sacrificer offers all the sacrificial essences in the fire (like every kind of food both the dry and the fresh), and attains every kind of food and Supremacy too. In Ancient times numerous king performed this sacrifice and secures lordship, sovereignty and every kind of food. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* we have found that the king *Viśvakarman Bhauvana* performed this sacrifice and attains everything and becomes everything. Hence the above discussion gives us idea that the *Sarvamedha* sacrifice has some dichotomic character in it.

The *Agnicayana* or the fire building ceremony generally comes under the *Soma* sacrifice. The long ritual procedure of the *Agnicayana* ceremony is described in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* from *kāṇḍa* VI-X. In the ritual procedure



of the *Agnicayana* ceremony, some philosophical or cosmological thinking are corroborated in it. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* has identified the fire altar of the *Agnicayana* ceremony with the *Prajāpati*, the lord of creation. Moreover, the construction of the bricks and the process of piling them up are also equalized with *Prajāpati*'s cosmic creation. Thus the *Agnicayana* ceremony provides us the cosmological or philosophical idea of life. Besides this, the *Agnicayana* ceremony have some oblations conveying royal character. The *Pārtha* oblations of the *Rājasūya*, the *Vājaprasavīya* oblations, *Rāṣṭrabhṛt* (realm-sustaining) oblations and the sacred bath or *Abhiṣeka* in the *Agnicayana* ceremony possessing some monarchial or dichotomic features of the *Agnicayana* sacrifice.

The *Cāturmāsya*s are seasonal sacrifice and generally considered as fertility rite. The *Cāturmāsya*s also have some royal character in it. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* it is mentioned that the sacrificer of the *Rājasūya* offers *Vaiśvadeva*, *Varuṇapraghāsa* and *Sākamedha* offering and wins the abundance of food, makes the creatures free from *Varuṇa*'s noose and killed his hateful enemy like the Gods. Hence, the insertion of the *Cāturmāsya* in the *Rājasūya* shows the royal or political importance of the *Cāturmāsya* sacrifice.

The *Sautrāmaṇī* is an expiatory rite performed by one who is excessively purged by the drinking of *Soma*. We have found that the *Sautrāmaṇī* sacrifice formed a prominent role in the *Rājasūya* sacrifice. By performing the *Rājasūya* sacrifice the sacrificer becomes deprived from certain sensual powers like vitality, speech and so on. In order to regain such power,

the sacrificer of the *Rājasūya* perform the *Sautrāmaṇī* sacrifice and gets back his lost power. Moreover, a king (who is deprived of his kingdom) can also get back his kingdom by performing the *Sautrāmaṇī* sacrifice. As in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* it is stated that the sage *Cākra Sthāpati* executed the *Sautrāmaṇī* sacrifice for the king *Duṣṭartu Paumsāyana* and returned back his lost dominion to him which was captured by the *Sriṅjayas*. Hence, being a most significant part of the *Rājasūya* sacrifice, the *Sautrāmaṇī* sacrifice also possessing monarchial attachment in it.

It will be pertinent to mention here that the *Brāhmaṇa* literature mainly deals with various ritualistic performances. One of the major traits of the *Brāhmaṇa* literature is to discuss even all the petty matters of the sacrificial performances. Sacrifice was a well installed practice at the time of the *Brāhmaṇas*. Most of the people of that time accepted sacrifice as a part of their everyday life. It was not only a religious practice, but the sacrifice was performed at that time by the people with various motives. *Yajña* or sacrifice has the proven ability to rejuvenate the environment. When the sacrifice is performed numerous mantras are recited and various *āhutidravayas* are offered in the fire, which creates positive effects in the mind of the people and in the atmosphere. The sacrifices which have been discussed in this dissertation also equip the general effects of the other sacrifices. It removes all the negative effects of pollution of the environment besides their added implications. Furthermore, by performing sacrifices one can obtain his desired object and dignified status.

The thesis entitled ‘A Dichotomic interpretation of the sacrifices of *Rājasūya*, *Vājapeya* and *Aśvamedha*: Their Ritualistic and Monarchial Strata with reference to the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*’ resumes to its concluding observation that the political genesis of ancient India was impregnated in these sacrifices. A derivative interpretation of the details of the rituals of these sacrifices had a dichotomic approach which contributed a lot in bringing up in to shape or come in to existence of monarchy in ancient India.