

A DICHOTOMIC INTERPRETATION OF THE SACRIFICES OF RĀJASŪYA, VĀJAPEYA AND AŚVAMEDHA: THEIR RITUALISTIC AND MONARCHIAL STRATA WITH REFERENCE TO THE ŚATAPATHA BRĀHMAṆA

Abstract

The present dissertation paper consists of seven chapters. The first chapter is an introductory chapter where a brief description is prepared on the *Brāhmaṇa* literature with special reference to their contents and importance.

The *Vedas* were and are the cultural store house of India. The *Brāhmaṇas* form a part and parcel of the vast Vedic literature and are generally designated as later Vedic literature. The term ‘*Veda*’ means ‘knowledge’, as the word is derived from the √*vid* (to know). The term *Veda* also denotes the texts containing the most sacred and authoritative knowledge, the texts whose authority can never be questioned. The *Brāhmaṇas* are the second great class of works that belong to the *Veda*. One of the meanings of ‘*Brāhmaṇa*’ is *Veda* or *Veda Mantra*. As all the sacrificial works are done by Priest, so, the books where we get the detail accounts of all the sacrificial works and the various performances of the priest are called *Brāhmaṇa*. The *Brāhmaṇa* literature is entirely in prose. *Brāhmaṇas* treat very minutely all the trifling details of all the sacrificial ceremony and are broadly divided in to two groups –i) *Vīdhi* (percepts) ii) *Arthavāda* (supplementary passages). *Āpastamba* further gives fourfold classification of the *Arthavāda* as-

- *Nindā* (censure)

- *Prasaṃsā* (eulogy)
- *Purākalpa* (myths and legends)
- *Parakṛti* (achievement of others).

There are several *Brāhmaṇas* belonging to the four *Veda*. But, now-a-days all the *Brāhmaṇas* are not available to us. In the domain of Vedic literature, the Brahmanical composition occupies special and important space. There are many depreciatory comments on the contents and literary value of the *Brāhmaṇas*. As on many occasions, while discussing the critical sacrificial rites; the subject matter of the *Brāhmaṇa* literature has become very dull and disinteresting. But for this the importance of the *Brāhmaṇa* literature can never be ignored. The *Brāhmaṇas* are always given a position of great importance. They not only give us the details of the sacrifices but along with this the *Brāhmaṇa* literature records our ancient Indian culture and civilization. The *Brāhmaṇas* contain myths, traditions, detailed description of ritual and information on the social and cultural history of ancient India. In the vast literature of the *Brāhmaṇas* the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* is the most valuable.

The second chapter deals with the meaning and significance of the Vedic sacrifices and a general survey is prepared on the sacrifices of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*.

In the Vedic age, ritual means performance of different rites of the sacrifice. The term ‘*Yajña*’ is derived from the *√yaj*. *Yajña* is a means by which a link is established between human beings with divinities. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, it is mentioned that the rituals are compulsory works of man, since

human beings are indebted to divinity right from their births and they have to repay the debts by performing the sacrificial rites. Sacrifice is the only means of attaining goals of human life. Sacrifice is the dispeller of all sins and bestower of sanctity to all. Even the magnanimity or sublimity of gods depends upon this sacrifice. The rituals are, as if, like a boat journey and the priests are its sailors. It is like a ship sailing to heaven ward. If the boat is sailed smoothly, it reaches to the destination safely; even so, if the sacrifice is performed in due order by the priests, it confers on the sacrificer his desired object. Again, if the sacrifice is not performed accordingly, the priests will incur sin for their mistakes in the sacrifice.

The sacrificial fee is considered as a part of the sacrifice. The sacrificial fee is regarded as an auspicious thing which causes the well-being of the sacrifice. Offering sacrificial fee is considered as a religious duty on the part of the sacrificer. Thus without the sacrificial fee the sacrifice is like a cart without the bullocks. It is clearly mentioned in the *Brāhmaṇa* texts, a sacrificer has to pay sacrificial fee as much as his ability since without sacrificial fee sacrifice remains incomplete. Though the sacrifice is the worship of God, yet all are not entitled to perform Vedic sacrifice. The person, who is married, who is learned in Vedic lores, or who has faith in Vedic sacrifice has right to perform Vedic sacrifice. In keeping with the old social system, the *Śūdras*, who formed the bulk of the human population of ancient India, did not have right to Vedic studies or to perform Vedic sacrifice. But according to modern sociology, the *Śūdras* face no obstacle to study *Vedas* or to perform Vedic sacrifice. Again,

the person though belonging to *traivarnika* class, may lose his hereditary Vedic right at his own sweet will if he has no faith in *Vedas*. Hence in the modern days, we presume, nobody has any misgiving regarding the right to sacrifice.

All works of human life, so trifling it may be, are the sacrifices. Thus, we eat daily is also a kind of *Yajña* or Sacrifice. In that sacrifice we offer oblation in the fire of the belly for the sake of lord *Prajāpati* or the deity of lives (*Prāṇas*). This deity stays in the stomach. Taking food is a kind of *Agnihotra yāga*, and therefore, named as '*Prānāgnihotra*'. The entire life of ours is a sacrifice, childhood, youth and old age are, as though, the three *savanas* of *Somayāga* and the death is the '*Avabhṛtha*' *iṣṭi* of that *yāga* or taking ablution after the end of sacrifice. If the human being realizes the purport of these great tasks, his every work will be a sacrifice and his whole life will be a field of whole *Satra*. In this chapter a brief discussion is made on the sacrifices of *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* like *Darśapurṇamāsa*, *Agniṣṭoma*, *Agyādheya*, *Punarādheya*, *Rājasūya*, *Vājapeya*, *Aśvamedha* and so on.

In the third chapter special position and political significance of the Vedic sacrifices are discussed.

The sacrifice is considered as an indispensable means of gaining victory. It is a means of attaining the possessions and other ends, and of maintaining the right order in the universe. Initiation to the sacrificial rites is considered in the *Brāhmaṇa* text as a second birth of the sacrificer. Thus the performance of sacrifices makes a man twice-born (*dvija*). It is also recorded in the *Brāhmaṇa* text that sacrifice leads one to the world of heaven. Not only the mortal beings,

but even the Gods also attained their divine glory and heavenly status by means of sacrifice. Even it is said that the creation of the world also lies in the sacrifice.

In ancient time, monarchy was the most common form of government. The term '*Rājan*' has been repeatedly mentioned in the *Ṛgveda*. The king is the pivot of social and political organization. A state without a king faces lots of chaos and disorder. There is a frequent reference to the "law of fishes" in the *Rāmāyana* and also in the *Manusmṛti*. The "law of fishes" is a metaphorical way describing the condition of anarchy in a state. If there is no political leader in a state, the stronger and more powerful individuals and groups grab the weaker ones, just as the bigger fish swallows the smaller one.

Numerous sacrifices were performed for the attainment of different types of kingship and sovereignty. As some sacrifices have a purely political end in view, such as- *Rājasūya*, *Vājapeya*, *Aśvamedha*, *Bṛahaspatisava*, *Sautrāmaṇī*, *Puruṣamedha* and others. A ruler becomes *Rājā* by performing the *Rājasūya* sacrifice; whereas the performer of the *Vājapeya* becomes *Samrāt*, *Svarāt* by *Aśvamedha* and *Virāt* by *Puruṣamedha*. Some kings become great conquerors who celebrated their victories by performing sacrifices like *Vājapeya* and *Aśvamedha* which were the two principal ceremonies. The *Aśvamedha* sacrifice is to be performed by one who wants to be the king of kings and *Vājapeya* by one who wants to become an emperor or *Samrāt*. These sacrifices symbolize the degree of success achieve in realizing their ambitions.

In the early Vedic age, the kingship is regarded as a secular and popular institution. The king is regarded as the most important need in those days for the destruction of the enemies and protection of the people. But in the *Brahmanical* age, the institution of kingship associated with various rituals like – *Rājasūya*, *Vājapeya*, *Aśvamedha* and others. These rituals actually give a sacred character to the institution of kingship. Thus, the attainment of various types of royal power lays on the performance of numerous rituals or sacrifice.

The fourth chapter represents the Major sacrifices of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (*Rājasūya*, *Vājapeya* and *Aśvamedha*) and their relation to monarchy in ancient India.

The *Rājasūya* sacrifice is one of the principal ceremonies of royal inauguration. It consists of some animal sacrifices and also a number of various *iṣṭis*. The *Rājasūya* or the royal inauguration ceremony is divided into three distinct parts:-

- a series of preliminary sacrifices.
- the *Abhiṣechaniya* or sprinkling or anointing ceremony and
- a number of post anointing ceremonies.

At first, a purificatory ceremony called the *Pavitra* takes place and the four seasonal offerings (*Cāturmāsya*) follow for the next one year. After finishing the *Cāturmāsya*s, some more *iṣṭis* and *homas* are performed among which the eleven offerings known as '*Ratninām havīṃsi*' take place. The king makers are known as '*Ratnins*' i.e. the keeper of jewel. The king is regarded as the jewel and the king's ministers or counsellors are termed as '*Ratnins*'. In this

ceremony king goes to the house of each *Ratnins* or king makers and make an oblation in their houses in honour of a particular deity. The list of the king makers slightly differ according to the different *Brāhmaṇa* texts. According to the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* there are eleven *Ratnins* or king makers. For the performance of *Ratninām-haviṃsi* offerings the sacrificer required eleven days. On the twelfth day, the sacrificer goes to the house of the discarded wife known as *Parivṛtti* and offers an oblation to the goddess *Nirṛiti*. But, in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* this offering is not included in the *Ratninām-haviṃsi* offerings.

The second part of the *Rājasūya* sacrifice is known as *Abhiṣeka* or *Mahābhiṣeka* is regarded as the main part of the *Rājasūya* sacrifice as it mainly consists in sprinkling the king with holy waters collected from various sources.

Each type of water mixed together in vessel made of the wood of *udumvara* vessel. The sprinkling is done by the three upper classes i.e. by a *Brāhmaṇa*, a *Kṣatriya* and by a *Vaiśya*. The *Brāhmaṇa* sprinkles the king from the *Palāsa* bowl; a relative of the king sprinkles from *Udumvara* pot, a friend or *Mitra* of the king sprinkles from the *Nyāgrodha* vessel and the *Vaiśya* sprinkles from the *Aśvattha* pot. Each type of water actually represents some power and quality of the king. It is expected that the king should possess such qualities in him. The *Rājasūya* sacrifice or royal coronation has some popular rites associated with it, such as – the mimic cow raid, the game of dice and others. As a matter of fact, all these rites associated with the consecration

ceremony simply signify the unrivalled greatness which every king should possess.

In the third part of the *Rājasūya* sacrifice, the performance of the *Daśapeya* comes first. It is so called as during this ceremony hundred persons including the king drink ten cups of *soma* juice with a group of ten people. After the tenth day of the *Abhiṣeka* ceremony the *Daśapeya* ceremony is accomplished. After one year, the *keśavapāniya* begins. Then the sacrificer performs the *Sautrāmaṇī* which is an expiation rite for any excess committed by the drink of *soma*-juice. After that the closing oblation known as *Traidhātavi* is performed, which marks the end of the *Rājasūya* sacrifice.

A complete *soma yāga* consists of seven forms of *saṁsthās* viz. *Agniṣṭoma*, *Atyagniṣṭoma*, *Ukthya*, *Sodāsi*, *Atirātra*, *Aptoryam* and *Vājapeya*. Thus the last form of *saṁsthās* is *Vājapeya*. Among the seven forms of *saṁsthās*, the *Vājapeya* is one of the sacrifice conveying high political significance. It is however, normally performed as an independent rite. According to the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* the word ‘*Vāja*’ means food and ‘*Peya*’ means ‘*drink*’ which is derived from the root *√pa* (to drink). The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* holds the view that the *Vājapeya* is same as *annapeya* (food and drink). He who offers the *Vājapeya* wins food. The *Vājapeya* is that ceremony by which the gods also obtain strength (*vājam*) and by ‘drink of strength’ i.e. *soma* by drinking (*pitvā*) one becomes strong (*vājin*). One becomes king by performing the *Rājasūya* sacrifice and by performing the *Vājapeya* one becomes *Samrāt*. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* identifies the *Vājapeya* with the

Brhaspatisava and makes the statement that the *Vājapeya* itself is the consecration of *Brhaspati*. The *Vājapeya* sacrifice is performed for the attainment of temporal power or lordship of a *Kṣatriya* and also for the spiritual power or lordship of a *Brāhmaṇa*. The numerous rites are performed in the *Vājapeya* sacrifice, such as: - the *Aji dhāvana* or the Chariot race, the *rohā* or mounting a post and the repetition of the number seventeen. As a matter of fact, this race like the cow raid and a dice play in other inauguration ceremonies represents a test for recognizing the ruler's superiority in valour and physical prowess and a means of enabling him to prove himself the fittest man for kingship, as well as magical devices to achieve the defeat of his adversaries in prowess, sagacity and so on. Indeed this ceremony of chariot race was practiced in the remote antiquity and in the later times the Vedic Indians adopted this practice.

The *Aśvamedha* or the horse sacrifice is one of the most ancient and important religious ceremonies by which the king approved his claim to suzerainty over his neighbors. It is performed by that ruler whose strength, power and wealth uphold such an aspirant undertaking. By performing this sacrifice, the sacrificer extends his empire, increases his strength and power and achieved success in new enterprises. As a matter of fact the horse is a representative of royal power and domain (*Kṣatriya*). Anyone who wants to secure the 'heroic power' should perform this sacrifice. The *Aśvamedha* sacrifice is regarded as the king of all sacrifices and the bull of all sacrifices. It is a means of obtaining all desired objects and of attaining all attainments or

success. The *Aśvamedha* is actually a *soma* sacrifice with political significance which aims at the attainment of paramount sovereignty. It is considered as a victory celebration rite. The ruler who is not satisfied with *rājya* or *Sāmrājya* but to attain unrivalled paramount sovereignty should perform the *Aśvamedha* sacrifice. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* calls it a *Kṣatriya yajña*. It is also mentioned that if any weak ruler performs this sacrifice he becomes defeated. Hence, the *Aśvamedha* sacrifice involved an assertion of power and political authority which a king of undisputed supremacy should possess.

Before the actual performance of the *Aśvamedha* sacrifice, the sacrificial horse which is black in the forehead, white in the back part, and which has a mark on its forehead is let loose to roam freely over the whole country for a year. A large number of royal attendants consisting of various types of fighters go with the horse for its protection. It is the duty of the attendants to protect the horse from all dangers and calamities and bring it back uninjured to the sacrificer. While roaming if any one seizes the horse, it means that the person stands in the way of sacrificer's attaining paramount sovereignty. In such a situation, the attendants of the horse fight with the person. If they become fail to do so, the sacrificer cannot perform the *Aśvamedha* sacrifice. While the horse is roaming the sacrificer performed various homas relating to different limbs and various functions of the horse. Till the return of the horse, the sacrificer appoints some *Brāhmiṇ* and *Kṣatriya* lyricists who sing song on the pious and heroic deeds of the king.

After the return of the horse the main sacrifice takes place. In the *Aśvamedha* sacrifice queens play an important role. Not only the chief queen called (*Mahisī*) but all the queens of the monarch with their full retinue and implements have to take active part in this ceremony. *Aśvamedha* sacrifice ends with the concluding ablution ceremony known as *Avabhṛtha* rite. There is a peculiar ceremony including in this *Avabhṛtha* rite known as *Jumbaka* offering. The offering is made on the head of “the ‘white-spotted, bald-headed man with protruding teeth and reddish brown eyes” which is *Varuṇa*’s form. By this offering the sacrificer redeems himself from *Varuṇa*’s noose.

In the fifth chapter the minor sacrifices of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* like *Puruṣamedha*, *Sarvamedha*, *Agnicayana*, *Cāturmāsya* and *Sautrāmaṇī* are discussed with political significance.

The *Puruṣamedha* sacrifice is a slightly different form of *soma* sacrifice like *Aśvamedha* sacrifice. It is performed by a *Brāhmaṇa* or a *Rājanya yajamāna*, desirous of surpassing all the beings. It is neither *Ekāha* nor *Satra* type of sacrifice. The term ‘*Puruṣamedha*’ connotes the meaning as –in this sacrifice instead of animals human beings (*puruṣa*) are offered as oblations. Therefore, it is known as *Puruṣamedha*. But these offerings are regarded as only symbolical and not real. It is also evident from the *Śuṇahśepa* story of the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, where we noticed that *Śuṇahśepa* was to be sacrificed to *Varuṇa*, but was released due to the favour of various deities.

A king by performing the *Puruṣamedha* sacrifice, surpass all being and become everything as he bestows all his property (other than the land and

property of the *Brāhmaṇa*) as *dakṣinā* in order to obtain and securing everything.

On the other hand, by performing the *Puruṣamedha* sacrifice, a king enters in to a life of mendicant. The sacrificer gives up his all wealth to the priests and retires to the forest with the intension to spread the spirit of self resignation in man. Moreover, by giving up his all 'property' or 'wealth' a general welfare is also expected by the king for his subjects.

The *Sarvamedha* sacrifice or All sacrifice is one of the *Ahina* types of *Soma* sacrifice, executed by one who wants to fulfil his all desires or all types of achievements. This sacrifice is also performed for the sake of gaining and winning every kind of food. The *Brāhmaṇa Svayaṃbhu* performed this sacrifice for the first time. He offers his own self in the creatures, and the creatures his own self in to him (*Brāhmaṇa Svayaṃbhu*). And thus, by offering up his own self in the creatures, and the creatures in his own self; he compassed the supremacy, sovereignty and attains the lordship over all creatures. Hence, the sacrificer by offering all sacrificial essences in the *Sarvamedha* sacrifice, surpass all being and attains supremacy, sovereignty and lordship

This sacrifice is regarded as the supreme of all sacrifices, as by performing this sacrifice the sacrificer attain supremacy. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* it is mentioned that the *Viśvakarman Bhauvana* once performed this sacrifice, and having performed this sacrifice he overpass all beings and became everything. This ceremony proves the existence of the territorial ideal of a one state.

In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, the *Agnicayana* (fire-building ceremony) is dealt with in the *kāṇḍas* from VI to X. The *Agnicayana* means the building of the fire-altar which is an optional ancillary rite of a *soma* sacrifice. This ceremony contains a large number of activities and also deals with the philosophical speculations of life. The fire altar is often marked out as *Prajāpati*. It is also mentioned that one who builds the fire altar, reconstructs *Prajāpati*. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* has also identified the fire-altar with the year. There are five layers in the fire altar; these are five seasons of the year. Hence, the fire-altar is identified with the year. Thus the *Agnicayana* (fire-building) ceremony gives us enough scope for Philosophical speculations of life. The *Brāhmaṇa* texts develop their views in connection with the *Agnicayana* ceremony. Along with the Philosophical character, the *Agnicayana* ceremony deals with some oblation conveying political significance. In the *Agnicayana* ceremony the sacrificer after completing the five layers of the *Vedi* mounts upon the altar and makes several libations. Among them some libations convey monarchial strata – such as, the *Vājaprasaviya*-oblation, *Pārtha*-oblations, *Rāṣṭrīddhoma* and so on.

The *Cāturmāsya* sacrifice is a combination of four seasonal sacrifices. Each of the four seasonal sacrifices takes place after four month, so it is known as *Cāturmāsya* sacrifice. The names of the four *parvans* are –

- *Vaiśvadeva*.
- *Varuṇapraghāsa*.
- *Sākamedha* and

- *Sunāsīrīya*.

Each of the *parvan* is performed at the interval of four months. The *Cāturmāsya* sacrifice is called *bhaiṣajya yajña*. It is performed in the joining of seasons (*ṛtusandhi*). For in the joining of the seasons disease is born. Thus, the *Cāturmāsya yajña* which is performed in the joining of the seasons should therefore said to be connected with healing. By performing the *Cāturmāsya*s throughout the year, one wins the year.

This winning of the year has another shade i.e. that of fertility. In connection with the *Cāturmāsya*s in the *Rājasūya*, it is said that one who is desirous of food and nourishment should sacrifice with the *Cāturmāsya*s. In the *Rājasūya* sacrifice, the *Cāturmāsya*s begins on the first *phālguna* with the *Sunāsīrīya* rite. Then in *Chaitra*, begins the *abhiṣecaniya* and in the *Jaiṣṭha* (next year) follows the ceremony of cutting the hair (*Keśavapānīya*). The sacrificer of the *Rājasūya* performs the *Vaiśvadeva*, *Varuṇapraghāsa* like that of *Prajāpati*. As by means of this offering, the *Prajāpati* create abundance of food and makes the creatures free from *Varuṇa*'s noose. Thus, the sacrificer by making this offering obtains the same result like that of *Prajāpati*. The performer of the *Rājasūya* also performs the *Sākamedha* offering, as the Gods slew *Vṛtra* and attains the universal conquest by means of this offering. Thus, by making *Sākamedha* offering the *Rājasūya* sacrificer also gains victory and removed his all venomous enemies. Hence, the inclusion of the *Cāturmāsya*s in the *Rājasūya* sacrifice highlights its *Saumika* character.

The *Sautrāmaṇī* is an expiatory rite performed for any excess committed by the drink of *Soma*. It is not a *Soma* sacrifice but optionally come under the seven *haviryajñas*. The performer of *Sautrāmaṇī* sacrifice gets offspring, cattle and the heavenly abode. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* we get reference that after performing a *soma* sacrifice, one should perform the *Sautrāmaṇī*. For one who performs the *soma* sacrifice becomes empty as it were, his prosperity has been taken away then. The sacrificer then performed the *Sautrāmaṇī* and becomes filled with offspring and cattle and establishes himself firmly in the heavenly world. The *Sautrāmaṇī* sacrifice is divided in to two parts:

- i) The *Caraka Sautrāmaṇī*.
- ii) The *Kaukili Sautrāmaṇī*.

The *Caraka Sautrāmaṇī* is performed at the end of the *Rājasūya* sacrifice and also after the *Agnicayana* ceremony. It is also performed for one who has vomitted *soma* (*somavāmin*) or for one who is excessively purged by *soma* (*somātipūta*). The *Kaukili Sautrāmaṇī* is an independent rite. It is performed for the fulfilment of certain desire.

The *Sautrāmaṇī* sacrifice as an expiatory rite is performed at the end of the *Rājasūya* sacrifice. The *Caraka Sautrāmaṇī* is performed after the *Rājasūya* as a curing and a redressing rite. A king who is deprived of his kingdom should perform this rite. As we get reference from the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, that *Duṣṭaritu Paumsāyana* had been expelled from his kingdom, which had come down to him through ten generations by the *Sriñjayas*. The priest (*Cākra*

Sthapati) performing the *Sautrāmaṇī* for the *Duṣṭaritu Paumsāyana* and returned back to the dominion captured by the *Sriñjayas*.

Thus, as a part of the *Rājasūya* sacrifice, the *Sautrāmaṇī* sacrifice also possesses some political character in it.

The sixth chapter deals with the dichotomic interpretation of the Major and Minor sacrifices of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*.

In the *Rājasūya* ceremony, the consecrated king makes offerings to the houses of the eleven *Ratnins* known as ‘*Ratnināṃ haviṃsi*’ ceremony. The king goes to the houses of each *Ratnins* and makes offering except the *Kṣatra* and *Akṣāvāpa* and *Govikartana* together. For them offerings are made at the royal palace.

The offerings made by the consecrated king to the houses of *Ratnins* are very significant. These *Ratnins* actually represent different classes of people in the society. The consecrated king makes offering to the houses of *Ratnins* with the intension to seek their support, which speaks and supports for mass contact and connection.

Besides this, in the list of the *Ratnins* we find the four social classes of people, such as, the *Brāhmaṇa* (the *Purohita*), the *Kṣatriya* (the king himself), the *Vaiśyas* (*Grāmanī*) and the *Śudras* (the *Akṣāvāpa* and the *Govikartana*). The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* mentions that the participation of the *Śudras* in these offerings are sanctified by a purificatory rite known as ‘*Soma-Rudra iṣṭi*’ In the same *Brāhmaṇa* it is recorded that once upon a time *Svarbhānu*, the *Asura* struck the sun with darkness and stricken with darkness he did not shine. *Soma*

and *Rudra* removed that darkness of him (Sun) and released him from the evil. And in like manner the king when he put those unworthy of sacrifice either in contact with the *Śudras* or whomever else performed the *Soma rudra iṣṭi*. The *Soma* and *Rudra* removed that darkness of him and he becomes consecrated.

The purificatory rite in the consecration ceremony mainly consists in sprinkling the king with holy waters collected from various seventeen sources. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* gives the reason as to why the seventeen kind of water is mixed together is that the *Prajāpati* is seventeen fold and *Prajāpati* is the sacrifice. This is why he (*Adhvaryu*) brings together seventeen kinds of water and elevated this sprinkling ceremony as high as *Prajāpati*.

Moreover, this sprinkling or anointing ceremony is not only considered as sacred bath but it is regarded as the bestower of kingship. As a matter of fact this consecration ceremony symbolizes some holy power or character of the king such as- the flowing river symbolizes vigour, flood for plenty, sea for dominion and so on. Hence, the priest sprinkles the sacrificer with the intention that he should possess such quality in him. It is expected that the king should be vigorous like flowing river, loyal to the people, should be sincere and harmless like the waters of a stagnant pool and so on. Hence, by performing this ritual, the priest connects the sacrificer with constitutional power.

According to the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, he who offers the *Vājapeya* wins food, since '*Vājapeya*' is the same as '*anna-peya*' (food and drink). In fact the numerous lines of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* clearly suggest that the *Vājapeya* ceremony is a simple magical performance to obtain food and drink. But the

Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa mentioned that *Vājapeya* is the ceremony through which the Gods wish to obtain strength (*Vājam*) and by drinking the ‘drink of strength’ one becomes strong (*Vājin*). The *Vājapeya* is performed by both the *Brāhmiṇs* and by the *Kṣatriyas*. It stands for the temporal power or lordship of the *Kṣatriyas* and the spiritual lordship of the *Brāhmaṇas*.

In the *Vājapeya* ceremony we have come across the most popular rites known as *Aji dhāvana* or Chariot race. The interesting feature of this race is that by performing this rite, the sacrificer is made victorious. In this race a post is fixed at the farthest limit with the measurement of seventeen arrows. Among the other competitors, the sacrificer has to reach first to the post. As a matter of fact, this race has some linkage with the ancient system of distribution is evident from the *Vājapeya* legend of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. According to Oldenberg, the purpose of the chariot race is to win the sacrificer by magic the swiftness of the victorious steeds as strength.

Besides this, the chariot race may be considered as a means of wealth. As in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* it is recorded that the *Adhvaryu* takes down the chariot and utters the mantras saying –“Thou art *Indra*’s thunderbolt, a winner of wealth, for chariot is indeed a winner of wealth;-may this one win wealth by thee! Wealth means food, may this one gain food by thee”. In this sacrifice, the number seventeen (17) is marked at various levels such as- 17 days, 17 lauds, 17 cups of *Soma*, 17 pieces of cloth to envelope the sacrificial pole, use of 17 chariots and so on. In the Chariot race we have also noticed that at the time of the race 17 drums are beaten to make auspicious sound. As *Prajāpati* is

seventeen fold and by beating those drums the sacrificer wins *Prajāpati*. The sound of the drum is regarded as the highest kind of sounds and the sacrificer wins the highest of speech by beating those drums. So, it can be said that the Chariot race of the *Vājapeya* sacrifice has both political as well as ritualistic significance.

In the *Aśvamedha* sacrifice the sacrificial horse is let loose for one year. After the return of the horse all the wives of the king performed numerous rites. When the sacrificial horse (victim) is slain, all the wives of the king have to go round it and make ceremonial mournings. After that the chief queen *Mahisī* lies besides the dead horse and unite with it and says-“May the vigour male, the layer of seed, lay seed’! She says for the sake of completeness of union. This union with the horse is believed as a means of fertilization. At the time of union with the horse, there is an obscene dialogue between the priests and the wife of the sacrificer. The indecent languages used in this rite are useful for fertilization and thus add to the fertility power of the *Aśvamedha*.

Besides this, we also notice that in this ritual all the queen of the king take active parts with their attendants. The *Mahisī* (chief queen) has a “hundred daughters of kings” attending upon her, the *Vāvatā* (favourite queen) has “a hundred *rājanya*” (noble women) attending upon her. The *Parivṛktā* (discarded wife) is attended by daughters of heralds (*Sūta*) and head man of villages (*Grāmanī*) comprising hundred in all. *Pālāgalī*, the fourth wife, the lowest queen in social rank is attended by a hundred daughters of Chamberlains and Charioteers. This classification clearly indicates that all the classes of subjects

are equal participants in it and from this description we can also learn the constitutional status and dignity of the queens in the Vedic age.

Of the five sacrificial animals next to the man, horse is regarded as the highest of all animals and by means of this the sacrificer is caused to reach the highest position. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* quotes that the horse is a worth of thousand Cows. It is believed that the sacrificial horse is originated from the *Prajāpati*'s eye. In the *Aśvamedha* sacrifice, when the sacrificial horse is set free, it wanders in to the north-eastern direction, the quarter of 'invincibility' (i.e. victory) where is the door of heaven and where victory is gained. Moreover, the horse is regarded as representative of royal power and dominion and it has its connection with *Varuṇa*. Hence, by roaming about freely it is on the one hand spreads its divine power over the whole country and on the other hand it extends the rule and power of its king.

The *Puruṣamedha* sacrifice is attached with numerous rites and rituals. We notice that in the *Puruṣamedha* sacrifice the victim *Puruṣa* is not really killed, it is symbolical in real performance. From this, we also get the idea that in the age of the *Brāhmaṇas* a changed mentality was working among the people. The sacrificial fee as prescribed for the *Puruṣamedha* sacrifice is very novel. A king may on this occasion give up his all goods and enter in to the life of the wandering mendicant. The main object of this sacrifice is to stir up the spirit of renunciation in man by proving the ephemeral nature of the world show. The philosophical idea in the *Puruṣamedha* sacrifice like avoiding of human slaughtering, self resignation or entering in to the life of wandering

mendicant are the tree steps of an ideal kingship. Besides this, the ‘giving up of all property’ by the king for the welfare of his subjects highlights the idealistic monarchical strata of the then society.

The *Sarvamedha* or All sacrifice is performed with a view to gain every kind of food. As we know that the *Sarvamedha* sacrifice consists of ten days and it is performed for the sake of gaining and winning every kind of food. Because *Virāj* consists of ten syllables and the *Virāj* is all. Hence, the *Sarvamedha* sacrifice has some dichotomic interpretation as by performing this sacrifice one attains all kinds of food and that of universal sovereignty.

The *Agnicayana* ceremony is attached with various ritualistic activities, which gives us enough scope for philosophical speculations of life. Besides these, there are some oblations in the *Agnicayana* ceremony conveying political significance, , such as- the *Pārtha* oblations of the *Rājasūya* sacrifice, *Abhiṣeka* of the *Yajamāna*, Six *Vājaprasaviya* offerings, twelve *Rāṣṭrabhṛt* offerings and so on. In the ritual procedure of the *Agnicayana* ceremony there are a certain rites in which the sacrificer is given a sacred bath. This sacred bath or *Abhiṣeka* in the *Agnicayana* ceremony has some similarities with the royal consecration. After having piled up the fire, the sacrificer should consecrate with sacred bath. As who has piled the fire altar and the sacrificer of the *Rājasūya* conquers both the worlds. After that the sacrificer also performs the *Rāṣṭrabhṛt* (realm-sustaining) oblations. Hence, from the above discussion, it can be said that along with various ritualistic performances, the *Agnicayana* ceremony also have some philosophical as well as political character in it.

The *Cāturmāsya*s are generally considered as fertility rite, but has some healing or curing capacity also. Besides this, the *Cāturmāsya* sacrifice also has some royal character in it. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* it is mentioned that the sacrificer of the *Rājasūya* “offers the *Vaiśvadeva*; for by means of the *Vaiśvadeva Prajāpati* created abundance of food and creatures.....and in like manner the sacrificer by the *Vaiśvadeva* create abundance and creatures”, then he “offers the *Varuṇapraghāsa*, for by means of the *Varuṇapraghāsa Prajāpati* delivered the creatures from *Varuṇa*’s noose.....and in like manner does this sacrificer by the *Varuṇapraghāsa* deliver the creates from *Varuṇa*’s noose” after that the sacrificer “performs the *Sākamedha*; for by the *Sākamedha* the Gods slew *Vṛtra* and gained the universal conquest.....and in like manner the sacrificer slays his wicked, hateful enemy and obtains victory”. Hence, the inclusion of the *Cāturmāsya* in the *Rājasūya* is pointer to its political character.

The *Sautrāmaṇī* is an expiatory sacrifice, performed by one who is excessively purged by *Soma*. As a redressing rite the *Caraka Sautrāmaṇī* is performed at the end of the *Rājasūya* sacrifice. The *Rājasūya* sacrifice is regarded as one of the major sacrifices in ancient India with political import. One who performs the *Rājasūya* should subsequently perform the *Sautrāmaṇī* as a redressing rite. As by performing the *Rājasūya* sacrifice, one becomes deprived of certain things viz. sensual powers (*indriya*), vitality (*vira*), speech (*vāk*), Milk (*pāyas*) and so on. In order to regains the strength and vigour which have gone away from the sacrificer, the performer of the *Rājasūya* sacrifice

should perform the *Caraka Sautrāmaṇī* to reinstates these valour and strength in him. Hence, the *Kṣatriya* sacrificer gets back his valour and strength by performing the *Caraka Sautrāmaṇī*. Moreover, in the *Āpastambha Śrauta Sūtra* it is mentioned that a king who is devoid of his kingdom should perform the *Sautrāmaṇī* sacrifice and thereby gets back his kingdom. And so being a follow up of the *Rājasūya* sacrifice, the *Sautrāmaṇī* sacrifice also has political significance in it.

In the last chapter of this research work we have major findings and concluding observations.

The Vedic literature is a vast and deep ocean of knowledge with multi dimensional disciplines. Next to the *Samhitās*, the *Brāhmaṇa* literature is of great significance. 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 social, cultural, economic background and so on.

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. One can redeem himself from such kind of debt by performing *Bhūta-yajña*, *Manuṣya-yajña*, *Pitr-yajña*, *Deva-yajña* and *Brahma-yajña* respectively. Sacrifice also insures the operation of all powers for good. 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*.

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.

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. 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.

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.

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. In the ritual procedure of the *Agnicayana* ceremony we have find 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 in the *Agnicayana* ceremony we have found 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*. 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 Pauṃsāyana* and returned back his lost dominion to him which was captured by the *Sriñjayas*. Hence, being a most significant part of the *Rājasūya* sacrifice, the *Sautrāmaṇī* sacrifice also possessing monarchial attachment in it.

Yajña or sacrifice has the proven ability to rejuvenate the environment. When the sacrifice is performed numerous mantras are recited and various *āhutidravyas* 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 *Ásvamedha*: 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.

(Aparna Dhar)