

CHAPTER – I

**A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE BRĀHMAṆA
LITERATURE WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THEIR
CONTENTS AND IMPORTANCE**

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The research work entitled ‘A dichotomic interpretation of the sacrifices of *Rājasūya*, *Vājapeya* and *Aśvamedha*: their ritualistic and monarchical strata with reference to the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*’ is an attempt to highlight the dichotomic explication of some major and minor sacrifices of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. The denotation of the term ‘dichotomic’ has been undertaken in this thesis as conveying the ritualistic statute on the one hand and the monarchical or political substrata on the other of the Vedic sacrifices.

In this research work we have deliberately classified some sacrifices of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* as major and minor sacrifices at par the implication of their royal space. The major sacrifices are *Rājasūya*, *Vājapeya* and *Aśvamedha* and the minor sacrifices are *Puruṣamedha*, *Sarvamedha*, *Agnicayana*, *Cāturmāsya* and *Sautrāmaṇī*.

Introduction:

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. Hence, for thorough understanding of the term ‘*Brāhmaṇa*’ we have to discuss the meaning and implication of the term ‘*Veda*’. 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

questioned¹. The *Vedas* are the first literary documents in the history of mankind, still in existence. *Veda* does not denote any one single literary work, it is rather a large extant of literature that come in to being in course of time, and was transmitted by oral tradition from generation to generation. *Sāyanācārya* the most celebrated commentator on Vedic texts, has defined the *Veda* as- “*iṣṭaprāptyaniṣṭaparihārayoralaukikaṃ upayāṃ yo grantha vedayati sa vedaḥ*”², meaning that which contains the esoteric ways to achieve the desired objects, and to avoid the undesired is called the ‘*Veda*’. The *Vedas* are revealed literature, i.e. they are not authored by any human being. Thus, the *Vedas* are said to be impersonal (*apauruṣeya*), and hence unquestionable. The *Vedas* are also called *Śruti* (that which was transmitted orally) as it contains the highest wisdom traditionally believed to have been revealed to the ancient Indian seers. *Manu* says- ‘*Vedo’khila dharmamūlaṃ*’³. Various Indian Philosophical systems have taken different positions on the *Vedas* as authority –‘*Pramāṇa*’. There are various stories regarding the vastness of the *Vedas*. One such story is found in the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* of *Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda* which runs as follows- Sage *Bharadvāja* devoted his entire life to the study of the *Vedas*, but could not finish it. So, he prayed to *Brahmā* to extend his life for another 100 years for pursuit and completion of the Vedic studies. *Brahmā* granted his desired boon. Then the sage engaged himself once again in the studies, but he could not find any end of the studies. Thereupon a spontaneous

¹ ‘*Vedāḥ svataḥ pramāṇaṃ*’ ; -*Śat.Brā*, Ed. by Several learned scholar, Nag Publishers, Delhi, 2002, Introductory Page-5.

² In the *Bhāṣya bhūmika of kṛṣṇa Yajurvediā Taitt.Saṃ and Ait.Brā*.

³ *Manu.Saṃ*- II/6

utterance came from the heart of Sage *Bharadvāja*- ‘*anata vai vedah*’ meaning infinite indeed are the *Vedas*.

The vast Vedic literature comprises *Ṛgveda*, *Yajurveda*, *Sāmaveda*, and *Atharvaveda*. Each of these is again sub-divided in to four divisions, viz. - the *Mantra/Saṃhitās*, the *Brāhmaṇas*, the *Āraṇyakas* and the *Upaniṣads*. According to Vedic etymologist *Yāska*, there are only two divisions of the *Vedas*, i.e. the *Saṃhitās* and the *Brāhmaṇas* (the *Āraṇyakas* and the *Upaniṣats* forming a part and parcel of the *Brāhmaṇas*), yet some of them are independent text. *Āpastamba*, one of the most renowned lawgivers of ancient India also holds the same view as ‘*mantra-brāhmaṇayor-veda-nāmadheyam*’⁴. *Sāyanāchārya*, the great commentator of the *Veda* in the introduction to his commentary in the *Ṛgveda* also says that the name *Veda* is given to the vast body of literature made up of *Mantra* and *Brāhmaṇa* jointly.

The portion of the *Veda* where we get collection of hymns, prayers, magic songs, benedictory words, sacrificial formula and litanies are called ‘*Mantra*’ or ‘*Saṃhitā*’. The portion which contains theological discussions especially observations on the sacrifice and the practical or mystical significance of the individual sacrificial rites and ceremonies are called *Brāhmaṇas*. *Āraṇyakas* (forest-texts) and *Upaniṣats* which are partly included in the *Brāhmaṇas* contain philosophical expositions. The philosophy of ancient India is pervaded in these works. The ‘*Saṃhitās*’ and the ‘*Brāhmaṇas*’ are loosely designated as ‘*Karma-Kāṇḍa*’ where the ‘*Āraṇyakas*’ and the

⁴ *Āp. Yajñ. P. Sū* I/31

‘*Upaniṣads*’ are called ‘*Jñāna-Kāṇḍa*’, as these portions deal with supreme knowledge.

Brief outline of the *Brāhmaṇa* literature :

The *Brāhmaṇas* in the history of Indian civilization and culture hold the most important position, deserve an analytical and detail discussion. But, before that, we have to face the most important question: what is *Brāhmaṇa*? The term ‘*Brāhmaṇa*’ has been explained in different ways. The word ‘*Brāhmaṇa*’ has originated from the word ‘*Brahman*’. *Ācharya Jaiminī* while describing the nature of *Brāhmaṇa* says- ‘*Śeṣe Brāhmaṇa śabdaḥ*’⁵, which means besides the mantras the remaining portion of the *Veda* is called *Brāhmaṇa*. *Sāyanācārya* also supports this view and says ‘*Mantra*’ and ‘*Brāhmaṇa*’ are the two parts of Vedic literature. So, the portion excluding *Mantra* is called *Brāhmaṇa*. *Jaiminī* also in his *Pūrvamimāṃsā* also says that, whatever in the *Veda* is not *Mantra* is *Brāhmaṇa*⁶.

Etymologically the word (*Brāhmaṇa*) is derived from *√Brahman* which properly signifies the *Brāhmaṇ* priest who must know all the *Vedas*, and understands the whole course and meaning of the sacrifice. He is supposed to be a perfect master of divinity and has the capacity to direct and superintend the sacrificial ceremonies. 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

⁵ *Pūr.Mim. Sū-* II/1/33

⁶ *Ibid-* II/1/32-33.

of the priest are called *Brāhmaṇa*. There is no doubt regarding the meaning of the term ‘*Brāhmaṇa*’ as ‘priestly class’. As the famous *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* of the *Śukla Yajurveda* quotes ‘*Brahma vai Brāhmaṇa*’⁷ which means ‘*Brahman*’ is ‘*Brāhmaṇa*’ i.e. the priestly class. *Patanjali*, the author of the *Mahābhāṣya*, while commenting on *Pānini* gives the same opinion- ‘*Samānārtha vetau Brahmaṇ sabdo Brāhmaṇa sabdo cha*’⁸. It signifies that ‘*Brahman*’ and ‘*Brāhmaṇ*’ convey the same meaning.

The *Brāhmaṇa* literature is entirely in prose. *Brāhmaṇas* treat very minutely all the trifling details of all the sacrificial ceremony. *Āpastamba* defines the *Brāhmaṇa* as – ‘*Karmacodonā brāhmaṇāni*’⁹ i.e. the injunctions of the rites are *Brāhmaṇas*. *Āpastamba* explains the term ‘*Karmacodanā*’ by giving detail characteristic features of the *Brāhmaṇas*. According to him, *Brāhmaṇas* 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).

Vidhī – *Vidhī* means commands or order for the performance of particular rites.

In the *Brāhmaṇas* all the sentences are expressed in potencial mood, example –

⁷ *Śat.Brā-* XIII/1/5/3

⁸ *Pānini Vyākaraṇa-* V/1/1

⁹ *Āp.Yajñ.P.Sū-* I/32

‘yayet’ means ‘he should sacrifice’, ‘samset’ means ‘he ought to recite’ etc come under the purview of *Vidhi*.

Arthavāda – *Arthavāda* contains the explanatory comments on the meaning of the mantras and numerous rites of the *Brāhmaṇas*. These explanations forms the speculative part of the *Brāhmaṇas* in which the Philosophical, grammatical and philological discussions are traced. With an example the subject matter will become clear and easy. As for instance – it is frequently stated in the *Brāhmaṇas* that one who performs the sacrifice like *Agnihotra* or *Gavāmayana* attains ‘*Sājujya*’, ‘*Sārūpya*’, ‘*Sālokya*’, but the through discussions of these three terms are not found in the *Brāhmaṇa* literature. Later on these three terms came to signify three different stages of *Mokṣa* or *Kaivolya* in Indian Philosophy and religion.

Nindā – *Nindā* or censure consists in criticism, refutation and denunciation of the opponents view. The portion of the *Brāhmaṇas* which contains controversial passages, establishment of own opinions are called *Nindā*. Regarding the procedure of certain rites or the choice of particular hymns and the proper import of mantras there existed the difference of opinion among the priests and it was natural. One school criticised the practise and preaching of another school. We may come across various citations like that. As for example- ‘it should not be done in that way’ (*tat tathā na kartavyam*), ‘it should not be recited in that manner’ (*tat tathā na paṭhitavyam*) and so on. Passages of the *Brāhmaṇas* are called *Nindā* or Censure. For example, in the

Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa we find numerous remarks censuring particular injunctions of the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*.

Prasaṃsā – *Prasaṃsā* means recommendation of any action by means of eulogy. That which is praised is enjoined and what is censured is to be avoided (*yat stuyate tat vidhiyate, yannindyate tanniṣidhyate*). Thus *Prasaṃsā* mainly comprises those phrases which declare that the performance of particular rites, with the proper knowledge, produces the desired effect. In such type of *Brāhmaṇa* passages this portion of passage, such as ‘*ya evaṃ veda*’ (one who knows it) is often found.

Purākalpa – *Purākalpa* refers to the performance of sacrificial rites in former times in the mists of antiquity. The stories and legends in the *Brāhmaṇas* which describe the performance of the sacrifices by the Gods come under the purview of *Purākalpa*. Under this head also comes the various stories of fights between the *Devas* and *Asuras*. This interesting element of the *Brāhmaṇa* text forms the legendary background of the whole sacrificial ritual. Many times before the commencement of the sacrifice by human beings, the deities performed the sacrifices and those sacrifices subsequently became the model for the performance of such types of sacrifice for the human beings. The Primeval being or *Prajāpati* at time of creation performed the sacrifice first and from that sacrifice *Virāt*, four *Vedas*, four classes of people, rural birds and beasts, five primary elements, Sun, Moon, atmosphere, mundane mobile and immobile creations were originated. The descriptions of the war between Gods and demons are also included within the purview of *Purākalpa*.

Parakṛti – The last characteristics feature of the *Brāhmaṇa* is *Parakṛti* (*parasya kṛti Parakṛti*) means the achievement of others. The stories of the *Brāhmaṇas* which comprise the particular performance of renowned *srotriyas* or priests, sacrifices performed by the great king, *Dakṣinā* or gifts presented by the king to the *Brāhmaṇas* etc. come under *Parakṛti*. In addition to these it also contains stories of success achieved by sacrifice due to their sacrifice and gifts. The last *pañcīkā* of the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* (V/39) is completely filled with this class of stories and anecdotes.

Priest *Udamaya* ceremonially installed the king named *Aṅga* in the kingdom. That king *Aṅga* offered 88 (eighty eight) white coloured horses, ten thousand elephants wealthy damsels decorated with golden ornaments as sacrificial fees. Such type of *Parakṛti* is mentioned in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*.

The difference between the ‘*Purākalpa*’ and ‘*Parakṛti*’ is very slender. According to orthodox school of Indian Philosophy the difference between ‘*Purākalpa*’ and ‘*Parakṛti*’ is only in quantity not in quality. *Purākalpa* comprises various legends and stories of heroic deeds and other deeds of many persons, where as *Parakṛti* refers to the various achievements of one person. ‘*Parakṛti*’ is also termed as ‘*Parakriya*’.

List of the *Brāhmaṇa* text of the four *Veda* available to us :

There are several *Brāhmaṇas* belonging to the four *Veda*. But, now-a-days all the *Brāhmaṇas* are not available to us. Hence, the names of principal *Brāhmaṇas* of the four *Vedas* are enumerated here –

List of the *Brāhmaṇas* extant now :

- To the *Ṛgveda* belongs the two *Brāhmaṇas*. Such as –
 - i) The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*.
 - ii) The *kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa*, otherwise known as *Sāṅkyāyaṇa Brāhmaṇa*.
- To the *Sāmaveda* belongs several *Brāhmaṇas*, such as –
 - i) *Tāṇḍya Mahā Brāhmaṇa*.
 - ii) *Sadviṃsa Brāhmaṇa*.
 - iii) *Chāndogya Brāhmaṇa*.
 - iv) *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*.
 - v) *Sāmavidhāna Brāhmaṇa*.
 - vi) *Ārṣeya Brāhmaṇa*
 - vii) *Vaṃsa Brāhmaṇa*.
 - viii) *Devatādhyāya Brāhmaṇa*.
 - ix) *Samhitopaniṣad Brāhmaṇa*.
- To the Black *Yajurveda* there is one *Brāhmaṇa*, named as-*Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*.

And to the White *Yajurveda* belongs the famous *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* both in *Mādhyandina* and *Kānva* recension.

- And lastly the *Atharvaveda* has only one *Brāhmaṇa* which is named as –
Gopatha Brāhmaṇa.

A brief description of the contents of the *Brāhmaṇa* literature of the four *Veda* :

***Brāhmaṇas of the Ṛgveda* :**

i) ***The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*** – The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* belongs to the *Ṛgveda* occupies an important place in the history of Indian literature and religion as the Bible in the world of Christianity. Traditionally its authorship goes to one *Mahidāsa Aitareya*, believed to be the only son of a woman named *Itarā*. It consists of eight books or *pañcikās*, again each *pañcikā* consists of five chapters or *adhyāyas* making a total of forty (40) chapters. Each chapter is again divided into many sub chapters called *khaṇḍas*. The total numbers of *khaṇḍas* are 285. This *Brāhmaṇa* is mostly written in prose style and occasionally scatter with poetic compositions.

The first sixteen chapters of this *Brāhmaṇa* deals with *Somayāga* or *Soma* sacrifice also called *Agniṣṭoma* or *jyotiṣṭoma* which is the model (*pakṛti*) of all *Soma* sacrifices. This ceremony generally consists of five days. The first four days of this ceremony consisting the election of priests (*Hotṛ Varanam*), the initiation of the sacrifice or *Yajamāna* called *Dikṣaniyeṣṭi*, the *Prāyaniyeṣṭi* (opening sacrifice), the purchase of *Soma*, the ceremony of doing hospitality to king *Soma*, the *Pravargya*, *Upaśad*, taking away of *Agni* and *Soma*, the taking away of the vehicle carrying sacrificial offerings, the animal sacrifice, the three pressings and the libations of *Soma* juice called *Soma Savana* and finally the concluding ceremony (*udayaniya iṣṭi*) i.e. the ablution known as *Avabhṛtha*.

From the seventeenth chapter to the end of the eighteenth, the duties of the *Rgvedic* priest is enumerated. The last two chapters of the fourth book deals with the duties of the *Hotr*, regarding the performance of *Dvādasāha*, *Ahina* and others.

The last chapter of the fifth book i.e. twenty fifth chapter deals with various matters including expiatory rites to be performed by the superintending priest for mistakes committed by any one of the performing priests.

The entire sixth book deals with the duties of the minor priest at *Sadāha* sacrifice. The seventh and eighth book deals mainly with the sacrifices concerning with the ruling class (*Kṣatriya*) and the relationship in which the princes stand to the priestly class i.e. *Brāhmaṇas*. Therefore, these two books bear great importance from a historical point of view. And the remaining chapters deals with royal inauguration or consecration termed ‘*Abhiṣeka*’ which literally means sprinkling with holy waters collected from different sources on the head of the king. The coronation ceremony of ancient India is fully discussed in connection with *Rājasūya* sacrifice. In *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* the great consecration ceremony (*Aindra-Mahābhiṣeka*) is the model for the inauguration of all earthly kings. In the thirteenth chapter the interesting story of *Śunaḥ-śepa* is discussed.

The last chapter of this *Brāhmaṇa* deals with the appointment of a qualified *Brāhmaṇa* by the king to the office of the domestic priest (*Purahita*). Various interesting short stories of kings gained paramount sovereignty through the great consecration ceremony are also narrated.

The concluding *Khaṇḍa* of this *Brāhmaṇa* deals with some magical performances called *kr̥tya*, through the practise of which a king can secretly do away with his enemies.

The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* occupies a very important place in the history of Indian culture and civilization. Moreover, innumerable myths and legends narrated in connection with various rites, supply materials for the development of later literature.

ii) **The *kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa*** – The *kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa* also known as *Sāṅkyāyana Brāhmaṇa* belongs to the *Ṛgveda*. It consists of 30 chapters (*Adhyāyas* or lessons). Each of thirty *Adhyāyas* of this *Brāhmaṇa* is again divided in to *khaṇḍas*. The first six *Adhyāyas* deals with the fire-alter, daily sacrifices (*Agnihotra*), new and full moon sacrifices (*Darśapaurṇamāsa*), and the seasonal sacrifice (*Cāturmāsya*) e.g. on the full moon day of *Āṣāḍa*, *kārtika* and *Fālguna* respectively in summer, rainy and winter seasons. The remaining *Adhyāyas* i.e. (VII-XXX) deals with *Soma*-sacrifice which fairly agrees with the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*. The *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa* is later than *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*. But it is difficult to say any exact date about it.

The subject matter of it is arranged in logical and systematic way. Its style is secret or hidden, compress and sometimes similar to the sutra style. The narratives are very short. Explanatory passages are avoided to a great extent (limit). Many references are there to the views of authorities like *Paingya* and *Kauṣītaki*. In case of debate or discussion, the view of *Kauṣītakī* is supported. In some respects this *Brāhmaṇa* bears harmony with the *Śatapatha*.

Brāhmaṇas of the Sāmaveda :

i) ***Tāṇḍya Mahā Brāhmaṇa*** – The *Tāṇḍya Brāhmaṇa* belongs to the *Sāmaveda* also called *Pañcaviṃsa Brāhmaṇa*, because it contains of 25 books (*prapāṭhakas*). This *Brāhmaṇa* of the *Kauthumas* is also known as *Prauda Brāhmaṇa*. This is one of the oldest *Brāhmaṇa* and contains many old legends which are historically very important for the student of Indian mythology. This *Brāhmaṇa* informs us of many varieties of *Soma* sacrifice. It describes such sacrificial ceremonies by means of which the *Vrātyas* were received in to the community of the *Brāhmaṇas*. The main contents of this *Brāhmaṇa* are *Yajussamhitā*, *Vistutis*, *Gavāmayana*, *Agniṣṭoma*, *Ukthya*, *Atirātra*, *Dvādasāha*, *Ekāhas*, *Ahins*, *Sattras*, the *Vrātyaṣṭomas* (in 17-1-4) form a matter of special interest.

ii) ***Sadviṃsa Brāhmaṇa*** – The *Sadviṃsa Brāhmaṇa* belongs to the *Sāmaveda* is a supplement to the *Pañcaviṃsa Brāhmaṇa*. As it is enumerated as the twenty-sixth chapter of the *Pañcaviṃsa Brāhmaṇa*, therefore it is called *Sadviṃsa Brāhmaṇa*. It consists of five chapter or *prapāṭhakas*, each of which is further divided in to *khaṇḍas*. The last *Prapāṭhaka* is called *Adbhuta Brāhmaṇa*. The *Adbhuta Brāhmaṇa* is small and separate work, which is later added to the *Sadviṃsa Brāhmaṇa*. This *Brāhmaṇa* deals with the performances of *Sāntikarmas* to silence the ups and downs caused by earth-quakes, untimed proclamation of flowers and fruits in the trees and so on. This text is important as a source of information on such beliefs and application of the *Sāmans* in magical rites. The main contents of the previous chapter are as follows :

Subrahmanya formula, *Abhicāra* (sorcery) rites, performance of *sandhyā* and some other matters relating to the *Soma* sacrifice and *Agnihotra*.

iii) ***Chāndogya Brāhmaṇa*** – The *Chāndogya Brāhmaṇa* of the *Sāmaveda* otherwise called *Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa* has ten *prapāṭhakas*. The first two *prapāṭhakas* of this *Brāhmaṇa* are adopted as *Mantra Brāhmaṇa*, while the rest of eight *prapāṭhakas* make the *Chāndogya Upaniṣat*. Each of first two *prapāṭhakas* ruins in to *eight khaṇḍas*. This *Brāhmaṇa* is no doubt, a fine collection of the *mantras* on *Gr̥hya-saṃskāras*.

iv) **The *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa*** – This *Brāhmaṇa* is also known as *Talavakāra Brāhmaṇa*, is an important work of the *Jaiminīyas*, a rare Vedic school. Like the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* this *Brāhmaṇa* is a large one. It is also available to us not in all its sections. As the *Jaiminīya Upaniṣat Brāhmaṇa* is the part of this *Brāhmaṇa*, it consists of more *Adhyāyas* which are again sub divided in to *Anuvākas*, which are further divided in to *khaṇḍas*.

A table is presented below to show its division and sub-division :

<i>Adhyāyas</i>	<i>Anuvākas</i>	<i>Khaṇḍas</i>
1	18	60
2	5	15
3	7	42
4	12	28
Total 4	42	145

This *Brāhmaṇa* is very rich in myths and legends and also difficult because of its grammatical peculiarities and complicated details of the chanting of the *sāmans*. The *Akhyāyikās* described in this *Brāhmaṇa* are in philosophical style. According to the opinion of the critics this *Brāhmaṇa* is next to the *Chāndogya Upaniṣat*. Many *Ākhyāyikās* of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣat* are found in this *Brāhmaṇa*. The main contents of this *Brāhmaṇa* are as follows :

Agnihotra, Agniṣṭoma, Ekāhas, Ahins, Dvādasāha, Gavāmayana and other *Sattras*. Any commentary of this *Brāhmaṇa* is not available.

v) **The *Sāmavidhāna Brāhmaṇa*** – The *Sāmavidhāna Brāhmaṇa* of the *Sāmaveda* consists of three *prakaraṇas* named as *Kṛcchra, Atikṛcchra* and *Kṛcchrati-kṛcchra*. Its contents are heterogeneous in nature. The sources of *Vratas* narrated in the *Smṛti* and *Purāṇa* texts are found in this *Brāhmaṇa*. The method of *Sāmagāna* and performance of *Sāntikarmas* to draw out the evil effects against wealth-acquisition, destruction of the enemies and others are also explained. In addition, execution of *Kāmya karmas* and *Prāyascitta karmas* are explained here. The third *Prakaraṇa* narrate the process of *Sāmagāna* to acquire long life, abundant wealth. The subject matter related to *Nūtana Gṛhapravesa*, animal wealth, victory of the enemies in the battle, direct-vision of *Gandharvas, Apsarās* etc are also discussed. In this way, this *Brāhmaṇa* absorb the depiction of various topics.

vi) **The *Ārṣeya Brāhmaṇa*** – The *Ārṣeya Brāhmaṇa* is another *Brāhmaṇa* that belongs to the *Sāmaveda*. It has only three *prapāṭhakas* and eighty two (82) *khaṇḍas*. The first *Prapāṭhaka* has (28) *khaṇḍas*, the second

one has twenty five (25) and in the third one there are twenty nine (29) *khaṇḍas*. The first one is nearly in aphoristic style, and the later portion is in normal style. The author of this *Brāhmaṇa* is not mentioned anywhere. As the title indicates, it consists of the *Sāma* chants of various seers, like *Gotamasherka*, *Kāshyapabarhisha*, *Bharadvāja* and others also.

vii) **The *Vaṃsa Brāhmaṇa*** – The *Sāmaveda* has been passed through a lineage of *Āchāryas* or followers. One of the eight *Brāhmaṇas* of the *Sāmaveda* called *Vaṃsa Brāhmaṇa* mentions this lineage of *Āchāryas*. It contains a list of fifty three teachers, the last of whom *Kāsyapa*, is supposed to have received the custom from *Agni*. This *Brāhmaṇa* consists of three *khaṇḍas* and is called a guide book of the history of ancient seers.

viii) **The *Devatādhyāya Brāhmaṇa*** – This *Brāhmaṇa* is the smallest *Brāhmaṇa* belongs to the *Sāmaveda*. It has three *khaṇḍas*, of them the first has twenty six *kaṇḍikās*, the second has eleven and the third one has twenty-five *kāṇḍikās*. The first *Khaṇḍa* gives us the description of *Sāma-devatās* such as *Agni*, *Indra*, *Prajāpati*, *Soma*, *Varuṇa*, *Tvasta*, *Angirasa*, *Puṣan* and *Saraswati*. The second *Khaṇḍa* narrates the features of *chando-devatās*. The third *Khaṇḍa* interpret the derivation of various *Chandas*. This *Khaṇḍa* is important from linguistic point of view.

ix) **The *Samhitaponiṣad Brāhmaṇa*** – This *Brāhmaṇa* is also a very small *Brāhmaṇa* consisting of five *Khaṇḍas*, describing the power of impact caused by singing the *sāman*.

Brāhmaṇas of the Yajurveda :

i) **The *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*** – The *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* of the Black *Yajurveda* is nothing but a continuation of the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā* for the *Brāhmaṇas* were already included in the *saṃhitās* of the Black *Yajurveda*. A special feature of this *Brāhmaṇa* is that it is accented. It contains of three *Kāṇḍas*, each of which is further divided in to *Prapāṭhakas* consisting of various *Anuvākas*. An *Anuvāka* is again subdivided in to units of ten clauses. The first two books are called *Aṣṭaka* comprising of eight chapters. The third book consists of twelve chapters and the last three books are called *kathakaṃ* belonging to the *kathās*. The main contents of this *Brāhmaṇa* are as follows :

Agnyādhana, Gavāmayāṇa, Vājapeya, Rājasūya, Agnihotra, kaukili Sautrāmanī, Sava, Optional sacrifices, Naksatrestī, Mantras relating to Darśapaurṇamāsa, Puruṣamedha, Horse Sacrifice, Varieties of Agnicayana-Savitra, Naciketa, Caturhotra, and Vaisvasrja .

ii) **The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*** – The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* is the only *Brāhmaṇa* attached to the *Śukla Yajurveda* or *Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā*. *Mahidhara*, the commentator of the *Śukla Yajurveda* interprets the term ‘*Śukla*’ in the sense of ‘*Subra*’ or ‘white’ since, according to him the sage *Yājñavalkya* himself visualized this *saṃhitā* by the grace of the Sun. This is the most famous, extensive, doubtless and very significant of all the *Brāhmaṇas*. It is called *Śatapatha*, because it consists of one hundred *Adhyāyas*. The name *Śatapatha* first found in a *Vārtika* to the *Pāinian rule* ‘*Kratūkthādisūtrāntāṭṭhak*’¹⁰ where

¹⁰ Pāinian rule- IV/2/60

both *Śatapatha* (components of hundred chapters) and *Ṣaṣtipatha* (components of sixty chapters) are mentioned. According to Weber and Eggeling and other ideologists, this *Brāhmaṇa* originally consisted of sixty chapter or *adhyāyas*. Later on, the remaining chapters are included into it to make this *Brāhmaṇa* of hundred paths. By the denomination of the term ‘*Ṣaṣtipatha*’ we understood that it is actually the first nine *kāṇḍas* of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* of the *Mādhyandina* recension. These nine *kāṇḍas* comprises of sixty chapters or *adhyāyas* in all. In the primary stage, this *Brāhmaṇa* was read by the savants in that shape (i.e. in nine *kāṇḍas* comprises of sixty chapters). These sixty chapters are regarded as a separate book where in we find a clear description of the ancient Indian sacrificial systems. It will not be unwise if we admit this portion as ‘*Ṣaṣtipatha*’

The *Vājasaneyī Samhitā* is divided in to two recensions namely *kānva* and *Mādhyandina*. The famous *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* is available in these two recensions. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* of the *Mādhyandina* recension are available in hundred (100) *Adhyāyas* which are distributed among fourteen (14) books called *Kāṇḍas*. Each book or *Kāṇḍa* is divided in to various *adhyāyas*, which are subdivided in to several *Prapāṭhakas*. The *Prapāṭhakas* are again sub divided into many *Kāṇḍikās*. Thus, in all total there are fourteen (14) *Kāṇḍas*, Sixty eight (68) *Prapāṭhakas*, four hundred thirty eight (438) *Brāhmaṇas* and seven thousand six hundred twenty four (7624) *Kāṇḍikās* in the *Mādhyandina* recension of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*.

The *kānva* recension of this *Brāhmaṇa* contains seventeen (17) *Kāṇḍas*, one hundred four (104) *Adhyāyas*, four hundred thirty-five (435) *Brāhmaṇas* and six thousand eight hundred six (6806) *Kāṇḍikās*.

The first nine books (*Kāṇḍa*) of the *Mādhyandina* recension are exactly a continuous commentary to the first eighteen chapters of the *Vājasaneyī Samhitā*. They are believed to be older than the last five. In *kāṇḍa* I to V, the Sage *Yājñavalkya* is often mentioned as the great authority, where as in *kāṇḍas* VI-IX, which deals with the lying of the fire alter (*Agnicayana*), *Yājñavalkya* is not at all mentioned. But this portion is ascribed to sage *Sāṇḍilya*. That *Sāṇḍilya* is also considered to be introducer of the *Agni Rahasya* i.e. the ‘fire-alter-mystery’ which constitutes the contents of the Book X. But from this we cannot say that the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* is totally free from the influence of the *Yājñavalkya*. Actually these two teachers, *Yājñavalkya* and *Sāṇḍilya* were equally received great importance in those days. Therefore the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* cannot be declared as the product of a single author. The *Kāṇḍas* from XI to XIV contain supplements of the previous *Kāṇḍas*. The subject matter of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* are as follows :

The first *kāṇḍa* of the famous *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* starts with the description of famous sacrifice named as *Darśapurnamāseṣṭi* or new and full moon sacrifice. In this *kāṇḍa*, we get the description about the vow of abstinence, preparation of offerings, arrangements of the altar, kindling of the fire, *Agharau* or two libations of ghee, special preparatory rites of New-Moon sacrifice, major offerings viz. cake to *Agni*, law-voiced offering (*upāmsuyāga*)

to *Agni-Soma*, cake to *Indra*, *Agni* and many other rites were describe in this *Kāṇḍa*.

In the second *Kāṇḍa* there is the description of establishment of sacred fires or *Agnyādhana*. The second *kāṇḍa* also deals with numerous sacrifices such as the daily performance of *Agnihotra* or Morning and Evening Milk offering or worship of fire and various ceremony related to it, such as *Piṇḍa-Pitryajña*, the *Dakṣāyana* sacrifice, an *iṣṭi* type of sacrifice named as *Navānna* and the illustrious *Cāturmāsya* including of numerous rites and performances viz. *Vaiśvadeva*, *Varuṇapraghāsa*, *Sākamedha* and *Sunāsirīya*.

The third and fourth *Kāṇḍa* deals with the detail description of the well-known *Soma* sacrifice. In the concluding part of this *kāṇḍa* there are descriptions of some additional form of *Soma* sacrifice such as *Sodāsin*, *Dvādasāha*, *Gavāmayana* and so on.

The fifth *Kāṇḍa* starts with the discussion of different kinds of *Soma* sacrifice like *Rājasūya* and *Vājapeya*. At the end of this *kāṇḍa* we find the description of *Śautrāmaṇī*.

The fifth *kāṇḍa* completes with the discussion of some sacrifices having political end in view viz. *Aśvamedha* (Horse sacrifice), *Puruṣamedha* (human sacrifice), *Sarvamedha* (sacrifice for universal rule). As a supplement these sacrifices are also discussed in the thirteenth *kāṇḍa* of this *Brāhmaṇa*.

In the sixth *kāṇḍa*, the detail description of *Agnicayana* or building of the fire altar begins. The *Agnicayana* ritual also continues in the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth *kāṇḍa* also.

The eleventh *kāṇḍa* deals with the New and Full moon sacrifice i.e. *Darśapaurṇamāsa* Sacrifice as already discussed in the first *kāṇḍa*. Along with this some seasonal sacrifices, *Soma sacrifices*, *Agnihotra*, animal sacrifice are also discussed again.

The twelfth *kāṇḍa* deals with satra or sessional sacrifice, known as *Gavāmayana* and also mention the additional expiatory rites for *Agnihotra*, *Soma* sacrifices and the *Sautrāmanī*. In this *kāṇḍa* we also get the myth of *Pururavā* and *Urvaśi* and also the cosmogonic legend of the golden egg and *Prajāpati*.

In the thirteenth *kāṇḍa*, we get the detail description of four important sacrifices viz. *Aśvamedha*, *Puruṣamedha*, *Sarvamedha* and *Pitṛmedha*. The eighth *Adhyāya* of this *kāṇḍa* deals with the funeral ceremonies of the Vedic age, the formation of burial mounds of different size according to different sexes and castes of the dead, reflects the social custom of that age.

The last *kāṇḍa* i.e. the fourteenth book deals with the *Pravargya* ceremony. *Pravargya* is an important rite. It is optionally performed on the *Upasad* days of *Soma* sacrifice. The ceremony is about the preparation of a hot draught of milk and ghee which the sacrificer has to take after oblations that have been made to the various deities. This *kāṇḍa* is generally called *Āraṇyaka* as in its last six *adhyāyas* it contains the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣat*. The importance of this *Upaniṣat* can never be over estimated as it is the finest product of the Vedic Philosophy. It deals with the debates between *Yājñavalkya* and *Gārgi*, the most learned female scholar in ancient India at the court of the

King *Janaka*, the philosophical discussion between *Yājñavalkya* and his wife. All these are recorded in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣat*.

Brāhmaṇas of the Atharvaveda :

i) ***Gopatha Brāhmaṇa*** – The *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa* is the only *Brāhmaṇa* that belongs to the *Atharvaveda*. In its modern part the *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa* follows *Vaitānasūtra*. It quotes from the earlier *Brāhmaṇas* like the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, the *Kauṣītaki Brāhmaṇa*, the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, the *Sadviṃsa Brāhmaṇa* and others. Therefore, it is said that this *Brāhmaṇa* is exterior to 2000 B.C. The *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa* glorifies the *Atharvaveda* and the *Brāhmaṇa* priest, who according to this *Brāhmaṇa* should be expert in the *Atharvaveda*.

The *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa* is extensively divided in to *Purva Gopatha* and *Uttara Gopatha*. The *Purva Gopatha* contains some original matters like (cosmogony, duties of a Vedic scholar and others). The *Uttara Gopatha* deals with the *Śrauta* Sacrifices. The former one consists of 135 *kāṇḍikās* grouped under five *prapāṭhakas*, and the latter one has 123 *kāṇḍikās* grouped under six *prapāṭhakas*. This *Brāhmaṇa* is often regarded as a late composition, borrowing freely from other *Brāhmaṇas*. This *Brāhmaṇa* describes the significance of the *Atharvaveda*. It also mentions that ‘*Omkāra*’ have originate from the *Atharvaveda*.

A brief description of this *Brāhmaṇa* is enumerated below :

Purvārdha :

First *Prapāṭhaka* – The first *Prapāṭhaka* deals with the description of *Omkāra* and the greatness of goddess *Gāyatri*.

Second *Prapāṭhaka* – The second *Prapāṭhaka* describes the discipline of Celibacy.

Third *Prapāṭhaka* – Duties of four *Ṛtvikas* and the stories relating to them found in the third *Prapāṭhaka*.

Fourth *Prapāṭhaka* – The Initiation of *Ṛtvikas* described in the fourth *Prapāṭhaka*.

Fifth *Prapāṭhaka* – In the fifth *Prapāṭhaka* description of *Prathama Samvatsara* sacrifice, *Agnyādhana*, *Purnāhuti*, *Agnihotra*, *Darśapaurṇamāsa*, *Cāturmāsya*, *Paśubandha*, *Agniṣṭoma*, *Rājasūya*, *Vājapeya*, *Aśvamedha*, *Puruṣamedha*, *Sarvamedha* sacrifices are found.

Uttarārdha :

First *Prapāṭhaka* – In the *Uttarārdha* the first *Prapāṭhaka* deals with the description of various sacrifices like *Rudra*'s struggle for oblation, meat offering in the sacrifices and others.

Second and third *Prapāṭhaka* – The second and the third *Prapāṭhaka* deals with the '*Baṣat*' and '*Hinkāra*' description.

Last three *Prapāṭhakas* – The last three *Prapāṭhakas* deals with the subject matter which are to be performed at morning, afternoon and evening time during *Ekāha*, *Ukthya* and *Ekāṣmaka*.

This *Brāhmaṇa* gives derivative interpretation of various Vedic terms like *Varuṇa*, *Angira* and others. Therefore, it plays an important role to show its contribution to the science of linguistics. As a whole, the *Gopatha Brāhmaṇa* is extensive one in various disciplines. No commentary of this work is available. The *Brāhmaṇa* literature that has come down to us only represents a small part of the *Brāhmaṇa* literature as a whole. There are many *Brāhmaṇas* which are not available to us, such as – *Caraka*, *Ahvaraka*, *Satyāyana*, *Jabāla*, *Haridravika* and many others.

Importance of the *Brāhmaṇa* literature :

In the domain of Vedic literature, the Brahmanical composition occupies special and important space. The *Brāhmaṇa* texts are generally the manifestation of the rituals and it is the first origin of the sacrificial rites in the history of religion. In the Brahmanical age, the performance of rituals remained as the supreme tasks of human beings. The domain of the rituals was undoubted. Detailed accounts of the rituals as well as the trifling matters of the sacrificial rites are discussed in the *Brāhmaṇa* texts with great and equal importance.

The main subject matter of the *Brāhmaṇa* literature is the discussion of the Vedic Sacrifices and the several performances related to it. 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 disinteresting¹¹.

¹¹ Winternitz, Maurice, A History of Indian Literature, Vol-I, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1981, Page-174.

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 picture of the then social condition, the evolution of caste system, the occupation of different classes, the geographical background, education of men and women, marriage system, position of women, agriculture and other economic conditions, music, flora and fauna, coronation ceremony, different types of monarchy, democratic elements in kingship, paramount elements in kingship, paramount sovereignty, political implications of various sacrifices, knowledge of medicine and diseases and various subject matter relating to the day to day life style of the people are meat with in the *Brāhmaṇa* literature.

The philosophical ideas too are found in some places of the *Brāhmaṇa* literature, especially in the late *Brāhmaṇas*. The *Brāhmaṇas* often speak of the symbolic character of the various ritualistic elements. Not only that the *Brāhmaṇas* are said to be the forerunners of the thoughts of *Āraṇyakas* and *Upaniṣats*. Many philosophical principles are hidden in the *Brāhmaṇas* which are developed in the later ages. The idea of life after death is repeatedly mentions in the various *Brāhmaṇas*¹². The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* mentions that those who perform some rites in the correct way achieve immortal life after death, but those who do not, repeatedly fall victim to death¹³.

¹² *Taitt.Brā-* III/11/8/5-“*Punarmṛtyu* |”

Sāṅkh.Brā- XXV/1- “*na punar mriyate* |”

¹³ *Śat.Brā* -X/4/3/10-“*mṛtvā punaḥ saṃ bhavanti* |”

The identification of *Brahman* and *Ātman*, the main theory of the *Upaniṣats*, begins to appear in the *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* and in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* mentions that – “everything is indeed *Ātman*”¹⁴. The “final reality is summed up as the self, made up of intelligence, with a body of spirit, a form of light and an ethereal nature, which pervades the regions and upholds the universe, though devoid of speech and mental effects”¹⁵. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* calls *Brahman* as ‘self-existent’ (*svayambhu*)¹⁶ and connected with sacrifice and the fundamental cosmic order.

In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, the fire altar has been identified with the terrestrial world. It is also identified with *Prajāpati*, the lord of creation- “*Prajāpati* is no other than the fire-altar which is here built up, and what five mortal parts are there were of him, they are these layers of earth; and those which are immortal they are these layers of bricks”¹⁷. The making of the fire pan has been identified as the making of the worlds¹⁸. Sometimes the construction of the fire altar has been imagined as reconstructing *Prajāpati*. The *Brāhmaṇa* texts develop their views regarding the cosmogony, *Prajāpati* and on other matter also in connection with the *Agnicayana* ceremony. So, it can be said that *Agnicayana* gives enough scope for philosophical speculations of life.

¹⁴ *Śat.Brā* -IV/2/2/1-“*Sarvaṃ hy ayam ātmā* | ”

¹⁵ Keith, A.B, RPVU (vol-32), Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1989, Page- 467

¹⁶ *Śat.Brā* - 13/7/1/1

¹⁷ Ibid- X/1/3/5, 6/5/3/7, 7/2/4/30- “*Sa yaḥ prajāpatiḥ | Ayameva sa yo ’yamagniscīyathe ’tha yā asya tāḥ pañca martyāstanva āsan netāstāḥ purisacitayo ’tha yā amṛta etāstā iṣṭkā cītayḥ | |* ”
“*Prajāpatireṣo’gni | Ubhayambetatprajāpatirnikṛtāścā ’niruktasccā | |* ”

¹⁸ Ibid- VI/5/3/3- “*Ukhāṃ karoti imāṃstallokaṃ koroti |* ”

A brief description of the social and cultural condition of the Brahmanical age :

It was not the aim of the *Brāhmaṇas* to draw a pen picture of the contemporary society. But the *Brāhmaṇas* contain various explanations on many topics from which we get an idea of the social and cultural conditions of the people in the age of the *Brāhmaṇs*.

D) **Four Varṇa** – The four social classes were there in the age of the *Brāhmaṇas*. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* states that there are four *varṇas* viz. *Brāhmaṇ*, *Rājanya*, *Vaiśya* and *Sudra* ¹⁹. It is also mentions in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* that this class of division was also there among the Gods²⁰. The metres also have such kind of division e.g.- *Gāyatri chanda* is for *Brāhmaṇ*, where as *Tristup* is meant for *Kṣatriya*. The *Brāhmins* were supreme in ritualistic and spiritual matters. They are called the Gods on the earth²¹. The *Kṣatriyas* were identified by their chariots and weapons; they are symbol of vigour and strength²². The *Kṣatriyas* are employer of people, protector of the *Brāhmins*, and kills the enemies. The *Brāhmiṇ* and the *Kṣatriyas* are interdependent to each other. The major activities of the *Vaiśyas* appertained in trade and agriculture. The *Vaiśyas* were also initiated in the Vedic study and have the right to perform some Vedic sacrifices. Among the four social classes the *Sūdras* are called the most lower class in the society. They have no right to

¹⁹ *Śat.Brā -V/5/4/9 “Chatvāro vai varṇāḥ | Brāhmaṇo rājanya Vaiśya Sudra |”*

²⁰ Ibid- XIV/3/2/23-25.

²¹ Ibid-IV/3/4/4 “*Dvayā vai devā | Ahiva deva atha ye Brāhmaṇa |*”

²² Ibid- I/2/4/2 “*Brāhmaṇa rathena ca śareṇa ca rājanya bandhaba |*”

perform any Vedic sacrifices. The *Sūdras* are called unfit for sacrifice. The *Brāhmiṇs* and the *Kṣatriyas* never go behind the *Vaiśyas* and the *Sūdras*²³.

According to *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, the *Brāhmiṇ* Priest and *Kṣatriyas* are regarded as complete, where as the remaining two, i.e. the *Sūdras* and the *Vaiśyas* are incomplete²⁴. Though it appears that there are class distinctions among the people of the Brahmanical age, but it was not yet very rigid. It can be ascertained by one of the records in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* that the *Brāhmiṇs* accepted the *Kṣatriya* king *Janaka* as a *Brāhmiṇ* because of his spiritual knowledge²⁵. Thus in spite of the establishment of the class system, learning and enlightenment were given adequate value.

II) Four orders of life – The four orders of life viz.

- a) Studentship (*Brahmacārya*).
- b) Domestic life (*Gārhastya*).
- c) Third stage of religious life (*Vānaprasta*)
- d) Ascetic life (*Sannyāsa*)²⁶

Only the first two are clearly mentioned in the *Brāhmaṇas*. The main dimension of the society was patriarchal family. The women's rule was subordinate to that of the man. Women were sometimes praised and sometimes blamed as recorded in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* and *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa* –

²³ *Śat.Brā* - VI/4/4/13 “*Na kadācana Brāhmaṇascca kṣatriyascca vaisaṃ ca sūdraṃ ca paścād*”

²⁴ Ibid- VI/6/3/13 “*Aksatriyasya vā purohitasya vā sarvaṃ.....purohita vā*”.

²⁵ Ibid - XI/6/2/10-“*Brahmā Janaka āsa*”

²⁶ *Chāndy.Up* II/23, VIII/15

Brhad. Ār.Up-II/4/1-“maitrayeyīti hovāca yajñavalkya udyāsyān vā are'hamasmāt stānātasmī hanta Teanayā kātyāyanyā'ntaṃ karavāntī”

‘Śrīyā vā etad rupam yat patnayaḥ’²⁷.

‘Strī vā eṣā yacchirnaḥ’²⁸

‘tasmād apy-etarhi moghasaṃhitā eva yoṣa yā eva.....
nrtyati yo gāyati tasmin evaita nimislatamā iva’²⁹

III) **Polygamy and Polyandry** – Polygamy was in vogue in the *Brahmanical* age, but Polyandry was not there³⁰. It is stated in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣat* that sage *Yājñavalkya* has two wives by the name *Maitreyee* and *Kātyayanī*. The *Maitrāyani Saṃhitā* also records the ten wives of *Manu*. According to *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* the king *Hariśchandra* had hundred wives³¹. Every king was legally allowed to have four wives or queen named as *Mahisī*, *Vāvata*, *Parivrktā* and *Pālāgali*. Thus we find that polygamy was the common rule of that time but Polyandry was unknown; means one man may have many wives but one wife should not have more than one husband.

IV) **Importance of the wife** – The sacrificer together with his wife performed the sacrifices, though there were many sacrificial duties which were not performed by her. The wife of the sacrifice is regarded as the hind half of the sacrifice. Though she has no right to perform all the activities in the sacrifice, but there were many sacrifices which were not completed without the

²⁷ *Taitt.Brā-* III/9/4/7-8

²⁸ *Śat.Brā-* XI/4/3/2

²⁹ *Ibid-* III/2/4/6

³⁰ *Ibid -IX/4/1/6-* “*Ekasya bahyo jāyā bhavanti naikasyai bahvaḥ saha patayaḥ |*”

³¹ *. Ait.Brā -VII/13-*“*Hariśchandro ha vaidhasa aikṣvāko rājā aputra āsa | Tasya ha satam jāyā babhubuḥ |*”

presence of wife of the sacrificer³². According to *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* the wife is one's half and she is regarded as the husband's friend.

The wife is called *Jāyā* because the husband is reborn in her in the form of a son. According to *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* a man is incomplete without wife and child - "She, the wife, in sooth is one half of his own self ; hence, as long as he does not obtain her, he is not re generated, for so long he is not re generated, he is incomplete. But as soon as he obtains her he is generated, for then he is complete"³³.

V) Occupation, Entertainment and System of Education –

Agriculture was the major occupation of the people of that time. Numerous occupations were also mentioned in the *Brāhmaṇas*, which indicates economic development of that time. Various arts and crafts and agriculture enabled the people to lead a settled life.

The three higher classes (*Brāhmaṇ, Kṣatriya, and Vaiśya*) learned the *Vedas* as the main subject of study. Other than *Veda*, another subject of study was also there, as for example- *Itihāsa, Purāṇa, Sarpavidyā, Devajanavidyā* and others. Though these subjects were also studied but Vedic study was highly prized.

In the Brahmanical age we find initiative of scientific treatment of subjects in ancient India. The six *Vedāngas* (*Siskā, kalpa, Nirukta, Chanda, Vyākaraṇa, Jyotiṣa*), the subsidiary subjects meant for proper recitation, understanding and ritual employment of the *Vedas*, had their beginnings in the

³² *Śat.Brā-* I/9/2/3

³³ *Ibid-* V/2/1/10 "Yadaiva jāyāṃ bindate'tha prajāyante tarhi hi sarva bhavātī "

Brāhmaṇas. Later on these subjects were studied much methodologically in the *Vedāṅga* texts.

The major entertainment of that period was dice play, chariot race, music and dance. Dice play was the oldest game started from the Ṛgvedic age. Chariot race was also practised by Gods. It was also a part of the ritual called *Vājapeya* sacrifice. Music and dance were especially popular among women. Various musical instruments like *Vinā*, *Dundhubhi* etc. were also used in that time.

The *Brāhmaṇas* mention the use of various metals of which gold were naturally preferred most. Ornaments made by gold and silver were also used by the people. Gold was also used as a sacrificial gift.

VI) Political Condition – Monarchy was the prevailing system of government of that age. Though there was a system of election but later on kingship became hereditary as the famous *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* gives the records of a kingdom ruled by ten generations of a dynasty. But unsuccessful king was dethroned³⁴.

Another great attraction of the *Brāhmaṇas* is their legendary notes. In the description of various sacrificial layouts in the *Brāhmaṇas* we find the representation of many legends. It appears that during the age of the *Brāhmaṇas* the composition of the legends was very popular. Such type of legends give liveliness to the sacrificial paraphernalia. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* of the white *Yajurveda* is called the store house of many attractive

³⁴ *Śat.Brā-XII/9/3/1*-“*Duṣṭarīturhapauṃsāyaṇa | Daśapuruṣa
rājyād.....apururudhu | |*”

legends. As for example, of the most famous legends, the following are mentioned here –

- a) The legend of *Śunaśepa* in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*³⁵ clarifies how he was going to be offered as a sacrificial oblation and was finally rescued by God.
- b) The legend of *Pururavā* and *Urvaśi* in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*³⁶ – the story of their love, separation and reunion.
- c) The legend of deluge of *Manumatsakathā* in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*³⁷ – how a great deluge swept away all the creatures and *Manu* alone survive.

From the above discussion it is clear that the *Brāhmaṇa* literature is very ancient and vast. It is very difficult to say when it was originated. According to Maxmuller the age of the composition of the *Brāhmaṇas* is between 800-600 B.C. It can be said that we get the complete *Brāhmaṇa* literature after the *Ṛgvedic* period. Though the *Brāhmaṇa* literature is very old, the composition of the *Brāhmaṇas* is later than the manifestation of the *Samhitā* portion of the *Veda*. *Brāhmaṇas* reflected the pretensions of the Indian priest hood. Sacrificial offerings are regarded as the foundation and meaning of life and the priests are regarded as ‘living Gods’. 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.

³⁵ *Ait.Brā*- VII/13

³⁶ *Śat.Brā* -XII/5/1

³⁷ *Ibid* -I/8/1