

# CHAPTER – III

**SPECIAL POSITION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE  
SACRIFICES HAVING POLITICAL IMPORTANCE**

## SPECIAL POSITION AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SACRIFICES HAVING POLITICAL IMPORTANCE

The sacrifice was a well organized religious practice at the time of the *Brāhmaṇas*. The *Brāhmaṇa texts* give us a conformable and conduced history of the sacrifice in their own way. In course of the expansion of the arena of the sacrifices some new lines in response to the social concern were added to the mainstream. The most important one is inclination towards giving importance to royal and kingship corners.

### **Special position and political significance of the sacrifice :**

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<sup>1</sup>. 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. Thus, “he who has sacrificed shares the world of bliss”<sup>2</sup>. 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*. Names of some kings are also found in the *Ṛgveda* : such as, the king ‘*Citra*’ living near

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<sup>1</sup> *Śat.Brā* -III/2/1/40-“*Yo yajñājjāyate tasmādapi rājanyayaṃ vā vaiśyaṃ vā brāhmaṇa ityeva bruyāt brāhmaṇo hi jāyate* |”

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid* - III/6/2/15 “*Tasmādāhu Punyaloka ijana iti* |”

the river *Sarasvati*<sup>3</sup>. The first king was elected, but for that we cannot bear the idea that kingship was elective in nature. The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* records such a story about the origin of kingship or monarchy. Once upon a time there was a war between the Demons and the Gods. The Gods were being constantly defeated by the *Aśuras* in every direction. Gods, therefore, decided to survey with the situation. At that time there was no king among the Gods. After analyzing the situation, the Gods came to the conclusion that as they have no kings, they were being defeated by the *asuras* again and again. So, they decided to elect a king. Then they elected the king *soma* as their king and with the guidance of king *Soma* they (Gods) subdued the *asuras* and conquered all the directions<sup>4</sup>. 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*<sup>5</sup>. 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.

The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* also contains a story of the election of a king from amongst themselves by the Gods. It mentions about the great consecration

<sup>3</sup> R.V- VIII/21/18 – “*Citra id rājā rājakā idānyake yake sarasvatīmanu* |”

<sup>4</sup> *Ait.Brā* – I/3/3 “*Te devā avrūvan arājatayā vai no jayanti rājānaṃ karavāmahā iti tatthehi. Te somaṃ rājānamakarurvan. Te somena rājñā sarvā diśo jayan* |”

<sup>5</sup> *Rāmāyana, Ayodhyā kāṇḍa*- LXVII/31- “*Narājake janapade svakaṃ bhavati kasyacit* |  
*Matsyā iva janā nityaṃ bhakṣayanti parasparaṃ* | |”

*Manu.Saṃ*-VII/20- “*Yadi na pranayedrājā danḍaṃ dandyeṣvatindritah* |  
*Śule matsyānivābhakshyan durbalān balavattarāḥ* | |”

of *Indra*<sup>6</sup>. *Indra* is considered as one of the most prominent among the Vedic gods. All the Gods along with *Prajāpati* decided that they should anoint *Indra* to kingship. *Indra* is generally declared as the most vigorous, the most strong, the most valiant, the most perfect, who carries out best any work. Therefore, they (Gods) installed *Indra* to kingship. Then *Indra* was made to ascend the throne. After ascending the throne, *Indra* delivered a speech indicating his power. The Gods thought that *Indra* will not be able to perform any heroic work unless his (*Indra*) royal power was publicly proclaimed. Therefore, they (Gods) announced *Indra* as the great king. They considered his assumption of office as signifying the birth of military power, of the ruling caste, of the master of all living beings, of the destroyer of demons and the protector of *dharma*. This account shows the great significance of sacrificial ritual attached in the *Brāhmaṇa* text. The great consecration of *Indra* is a form of consecration which is used to anoint a *Kṣatriya*. It is a ceremony which indicates the political power of a king. There are historical references to numerous ancient kings who have performed this kind of ceremony<sup>7</sup>. A *Kṣatriya* who is consecrated with *Aindra Mahābhiṣeka* conquers all conquerors, knows all the worlds, becomes superior to all kings, gains renown and majesty, becomes self-created and self ruled. Thus, here we find an explanation of the acquisition of power through the anointment or consecration.

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<sup>6</sup> *Ait.Brā* – VIII/12

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid*-VIII/15

The above parables clearly mention that the ancient Indian Kingship arose out of a military necessity and that elected monarch should be a capable general whose leadership should have to be recognized by all. Though the above passage mentions that during emergency the king was being elected by the subjects, but for this we cannot directly come to the point that in ancient time kingship was elective in character. The *Brāhmaṇa* text clearly mentions about the hereditary kingship. In the *Ṛgveda* also the kingship is said to have been hereditary. “The kingship is known to have passed from the father to the son for at least four generations among the *Triṣṭus* and for a longer period among the *Purus*”<sup>8</sup>. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* a story is recorded of the *Sṛñjaya* king known as *Duṣṭaritu Paumsāyana* whose kingdom was inherited by him ten generations continuously<sup>9</sup> (*daśapuruṣa rājyaṃ*). Therefore, it can be determined that the monarchy was first elective in nature, but it had become hereditary long before the later Vedic period.

The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*<sup>10</sup> mentions about eleven types of monarchy resembling to eleven types of territories as follows :

- i) *Rājya*
- ii) *Sāmrājya*
- iii) *Bhaujya*
- iv) *Svarājya*

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<sup>8</sup> Altekar, A.S, The State and Government in Ancient India, Motilal Banarsidass, 1992, Page-81

<sup>9</sup> *Śat.Brā* -XII/9/3/1-13

<sup>10</sup> *Ait.Brā*- VIII/15

- v) *Vairājya*
- vi) *Parameṣṭhya*
- vii) *Rājya*
- viii) *Mahārājya*
- ix) *Adhipatya*
- x) *Svavasata and*
- xi) *Athiṣṭhatva.*

Keith <sup>11</sup> has given the translation of the eleven types of sovereignty as follows :

- i) *Rājya* means kingship
- ii) *Sāmrājya* is overlordship
- iii) *Bhaujya* means paramount rule
- iv) *Svarājya* is self rule
- v) *Vairājya* means sovereignty
- vi) *Parameṣṭhya* is Supreme authority.
- vii) *Rājya* means kingship
- viii) *Mahārājya* is great kingship
- ix) *Adhipatya* is suzerainty
- x) *Svavasata* means Supremacy and
- xi) *Athiṣṭhatva* is Pre-eminence.

Some of these denominations such as kingship, self rule and others bespeak about kingship and some other terms like '*Mahārājā*' '*Adhipatya*' and

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<sup>11</sup> Basu, Jogiraj, India of the age of the Brāhmaṇas, Sanaskrit Pustak Bhandar, Kolkata, 1969, Page-87.

others suggest paramount sovereignty. 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*, *Sautrāmanī*, *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.

According to the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, “one becomes *Rājā* or king by performing the *Vājapeya* sacrifice; by performing the *Vājapeya* sacrifice one becomes a *Samrāt*. *Rājya* is of a lower order, *Sāmrājya* is of a superior order. A *Rājā* or king longs to be an emperor (*Samrāt*). The emperor never desires to become a king because *Rājya* or kingship is inferior and *Sāmrājya* or emperorship is supreme sovereignty”<sup>12</sup>. Therefore the position of *Samrāt* is higher than that of a *Rājā* or king. One should not execute the *Rājasūya* sacrifice after executing the *Vājapeya* sacrifice, as it would be regarded as a decline or subsidence like one who is an emperor wants to be a king<sup>13</sup>. Thus

<sup>12</sup> *Śat.Brā* – V/1/1/3- “*Rājā vai rājasūyeneṣṭvā bhavanti, samrād vājapeyena | Avaraṇi hi rājyaṃ paraṃ hi sāmrājyaṃ | kāmāyate vai rājā samrād bhavitum; na samrāt kāmāyate rājā bhavitum |*”

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid* - IX/3/4/8 – “*Vājapeyeneṣṭvā na rājasūyena yajetā pratyavarohaḥ sa yathā samrāt san rājā syāt tādṛk tat |*”

according to the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* it can be said that the *Vājapeya* is a greater sacrifice than that of *Rājasūya* sacrifice. However, in the later Vedic period, the *Vājapeya* obtained the higher rank than the *Rājasūya*, as it is believed that by performing the *Rājasūya* one secures the imperial position, while by performing of the latter, one attains to mere royalty.

In the *Kātyāyana Śrauta Sutra*<sup>14</sup> it is recorded that the *Rājasūya* sacrifice may be executed by a king who is yet to performed the *Vājapeya* sacrifice. Thus according to the *Kātyāyana Śrauta Sutra* and *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, the *Vājapeya* sacrifice is regarded as supreme than *Rājasūya* sacrifice. But it is not mentioned in both the text that the *Rājasūya* must be performed before the *Vājapeya*.

The *Rājasūya* is a ceremony for the *Kṣatriyas* or military class, where the *Vājapeya* is sacrifice for both the classes i.e. for the *Brāhmaṇas* and the *Kṣatriyas*.

Those rulers who were not satisfied with '*Rājya*' and '*Sāmrājya*' but desired to attain unrivalled foremost lordship known as '*Sārvabhauma*' has to perform the *Aśvamedha* sacrifice. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* it is mentioned that the great king *Pr̥thu* who is described as the first emperor was installed by the mighty sages on the celebration of his *Rājasūya* sacrifice. After having subdued his all enemies, he extended (*prathita*) his empire, for which he was known *Pr̥thu*. Protecting his subjects from every sort of wound and injuries

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<sup>14</sup> *Kāty.Śr.Sū-* XV/1/1/2



(*kṣatata*), *Pr̥thu* proved himself to be true *ksatriya*. In his kingdom men lived free from fear and diseases. When *Pr̥thu* went to the sea, its waves become condensed; the mountains opened a way for him. Gods, *asuras*, sages, ordinary men, animals' trees and mountains declared him to be their emperor, protector, delighter, savior and father. In the great epic of *Mahābhārata* it is mentioned that during *Pr̥thu*'s reign the earth produced crops without being cultivated. Every leaf of the trees produced honey; every cow also gave plenty of milk. After his coronation, which is performed by *Viṣṇu*, *Indra* and other *lokapālas*, the earth came incarnate to him with a tribute of gems and jewels, the rivers and the mountains gave him inexhaustible wealth. Horses, cars, elephants and moon came in to existence as soon as he thought of them. *Viṣṇu* himself, who approved his power also entered in his body. Therefore, the entire universe worshipped *Pr̥thu*<sup>15</sup>.

In the Vedic age the king occupies a very significant position. The chief duty of the king is to protect his subjects from all dangers and calamities and to maintain the law and order in a state. It is also the duty of the king to appoint the ministers, priests and other office holders including the superintending of the different departments. The *Atharvaveda* gives us a few glimpses of the characteristics of a good administration. One of the hymn of the *Atharvaveda* states that- “the king defends his kingdom by *tapas* (fervour) and *brahmacārya* (Vedic studentship)<sup>16</sup>, which shows that the effort and self-restraint are the qualities of the king, with which the king is expected to rule. As noted earlier,

<sup>15</sup> Gonda , J, Ancient Indian kingship from religious point of view, Leiden E.J.Brill, 1966, Page-130.

<sup>16</sup> A.V- XI/5/17-“*Brahmacaryena tapasā rājā rāṣṭraṃ vi rakṣati* | ”

in the rituals of the coronation, the king has been equated with *Indra*, the god of war and also with the *Varuṇa*, the judge of the gods. This identification of the king with *Varuṇa* and *Indra* glimpses that the king is also a judge and a supreme commander in war.

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, it can be said that attainment of various types of royal power lays on the performance of numerous rituals or sacrifice.

In the Vedic age the sages perform the sacrifice for the welfare and development of the nation. They also advice the king to execute sacrifice for all round development and prosperity. The king performs sacrifices with royal splendor and temperament to destroy the malicious foes<sup>17</sup>. These sacrifices help the king to earn the favours of gods named *Sāvitrī* and *Soma* and of all the beings and will become the refuge of all the subjects’<sup>18</sup>. By performing the sacrifice the king aspires to become as indomitable like *Indra*, the king of gods. Thus, it is stated in the *Ṛgveda Saṃhitā*–“I have no enemies, the enemies have been slain by me, I have become the sovereign king in my state defeating the

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<sup>17</sup> R. V-X/174/2-“*Abhibrtya sapatnānbhi yā na arātayaḥ |*  
*Abhipṛtanyantaṃ tiṣṭābhi yo na irāṣyati ||*”

<sup>18</sup> Ibid-X/174/3-“*Abhi tvā devaḥ sabitābhi abībrtat |*  
*Abhi tvā viśvā bhutanyabhībarto yathāsani ||*”

antagonists, I have established and solicited my position amongst all the beings and subjects of my kingdom”<sup>19</sup>.

### Source of the sacrifice :

After describing the political significance of the sacrifice, it is also necessary to discuss the source of the sacrifice. As the *Brāhmaṇa* texts refer to us the old practices and the new practices and supply us various instances regarding the changes of sacrifice.

The sacrifice is the prime factor of attaining worldly prosperity as well as heavenly bliss. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* is also no exception to this. It is already discussed that the creation of the world lies in the sacrifice. In the *Ṛgveda*<sup>20</sup> also we read of the cosmic sacrifice, which is performed even before the dawn of creation and in which the one great God, the primal being known as *Puruṣa* offered himself as havis or oblation. This ‘primal being’ later known to us in the *Brāhmaṇa* texts as ‘*Prajāpati*’. According to *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* –“the *Prajāpati* is the source of all creation and he created the universe after practicing austere penance<sup>21</sup>. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* there is a statement that –“all beings are born of sacrifice”<sup>22</sup>. According to most of the *Brāhmaṇa* texts, the important source of the sacrifice is *Prajāpati*<sup>23</sup>. It is said that

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<sup>19</sup> *Ṛ.V-X/174/5*-“*Asapatnaḥ sapatnahābhirāṣtro viśāsahīḥ |*  
*yathāhameṣām bhutānām virājāni janasya ca ||*”

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid- X/90/7*-“*Tam yajñam vahirṣi praukṣan puruṣam jātamgrataḥ |*  
*Tena devā ajajanta sādhyā ṛṣayaśca ye ||*”

<sup>21</sup> *Śat.Brā – II/2/4/1*, - “*Prajāpatirha vā idamagra eka evāsa |*  
*Sa aikṣat katham nu prajāyeyeti.....haiva bhavati ||*”  
*Ibid- II/5/1/1*-“ *Prajāpatirha vā idamagra eka evāsa |*  
*Sa aikṣat katham nu prajāyeyeti.....dipādo bayāmsi ||*”

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid- I/9/2/5*- “*Yajñād vai prajāḥ prajāyante |*”

<sup>23</sup> Keith,A.B, RPVU (Vol-32),Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1989, Page-455.

*Prajāpati* has discovered the sacrifice, which is three fold and with its seven threads having twenty one forms<sup>24</sup> viz. the seven *soma* sacrifices, the seven *pāka-yajñas* and seven *haviryajñas* i.e. there are twenty one forms. The *Prajāpati* then performed that sacrifice. He visualized many particular sacrifices also. Therefore, the origin of the *Agnihotra* offering is narrated in the following manner. In the beginning the *Prajāpati* was alone. He wanted to create beings. He practiced penance and created fire. But at that time there was no food for the fire. *Prajāpati* became frightened and thought that fire would burn him. Hence, he rubbed his hands and produced ghee and milk. Then he (*Prajāpati*) offered the offering in to the *Agni* but *Agni* was not satisfied. Then *Prajāpati* again rubbed his hands and produced the same (*ghee* and milk). But he hesitated whether to offer or not. Then his own *mahimā* (greatness) told him to offer. As his own (*sva*) greatness told him to offer, so he (*Prajāpati*) offered with the accentuation ‘*svāhā*’. This is the origin of the *Agnihotra* offerings. The elements used in the *Agnihotra* offerings and the use of the sacred utterance viz. ‘*svāhā*’ will be uttered at the time of the other offerings also<sup>25</sup>.

At different times *Prajāpati* had various desires and for the fulfillment of those desires, he performed various sacrifices. As for example, when *Prajāpati* desired to become many, to create beings then he visualized the sacrifice named as *Agniṣṭoma* and by performing it he (*Prajāpati*) created

<sup>24</sup> *Gop. Brā-* I/12-“*Sapta sutyāḥ sapta ca pākayajñā | Haviryajñāḥ sapta tathaikaviṁśati |*”

<sup>25</sup> *Śat.Brā-II/2/4/6-*“*Sā hainambhirādhyāncakāra | .....Svo mahimā bhyuvāda juhudhiti sa prajāpatirvidāncakāra .....parām paryāvavartta | |*”

*Taitt.Brā-II/1/2/1-3-*“*Prajapatirgnimsrjat | tam prajā anvasrjyanta .....sya prajāpatiriti | |*”

“*Taddhrtamabhavat | Tasmādyasya dakṣinataḥ kesā unmrṣtā .....cikitsati | |*”  
“*Vasō eva cetayate | Tam vāgbhyavadjjuhudhīti .....svāhākāreṇa juhati | |*”

beings<sup>26</sup>. *Prajāpati* also desired to acquire *Vāja* (food, vigor and others) and then he went to the heaven. There he saw the *Vājapeya* and performed it<sup>27</sup>. *Prajāpati* then created the beings. But the beings after being created did not worship *Prajāpati*. *Prajāpati* wished that all the beings should worship him. Then he saw the sacrifice named as *Apaciti* and by performing it, the *Prajāpati* obtained the desired worship from the beings<sup>28</sup>. *Prajāpati* also saw some other details of the sacrifice. *Prajāpati* not only saw the sacrifice or sacrifices and performed them, but he also gave the sacrifice to the Gods<sup>29</sup>. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* a story is mentioned about the struggling of the Gods and the *Aśuras*. In this story it is mentioned that the *Aśuras* were proud of themselves and offered the oblations in their own mouth. But the Gods offered in the mouth of each other. Then *Prajāpati* gave himself to them (to God). From that the body of the *Prajāpati* itself is considered as sacrifice.

The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* also describes the sacrifice as *Puruṣa* and says that –“its head is *havirdhānam*; its mouth is *āhavaniya*. The sacrificial stake is no other than his crest lock; and the *agnidhriya* and *mārjaliya* is his two arms. The *sadas* (tents for the priests) is no other than his belly and the two fires which are behind it are his feet”<sup>30</sup>. Sacrifice is also identified with *yajamāna*<sup>31</sup>

<sup>26</sup> *Tāṇḍy.Brā-VI/1/1.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid- XVIII/7/1.*

<sup>28</sup> *Jai.Brā- II/100*

<sup>29</sup> *Tāṇḍy.Brā -VII/2/1*

<sup>30</sup> *Śat.Brā – III/5/3/2-6*“*Śira evasya havirdhanam |*”

“*Mukhamevā ’syāhavaniyaḥ |*”

“*Stupa evāsya yupah | Bāhū evāsyāgnīdhriyasca mārjāliyasca | |*”

“*Udamevāsya sadaḥ |*”

“*Atha yāvetau jaghanenāgni | Pādāvevāsyaitavesa .....yajña | |*”

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid- IX/5/2/16*–“*Kim nu lokyaṃkimlokyamātmā vai yajñasya yajamāno |*”

i.e. the person who executes the sacrifice. Further, the sacrifice is also identified with *Viṣṇu*<sup>32</sup>, the supreme deity who pervades the universe. Hence, with this identification the sacrifice gets the most honoured position in this universe.

There is a story in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*<sup>33</sup> that once the Gods and the *Asuras* were passing upwards the heaven; the *Asuras* covered them in the darkness. The Gods entered upon a sacrificial session of a hundred *Agniṣṭoma* and try to destroy the darkness as far as possible. But the whole darkness was not destroyed. Then the Gods went to *Prajāpati* and requested him to teach the method of dispelling the *Asuras* and the darkness too, to get the world of heaven. The *Prajāpati* then taught the Gods the sacrificial session and corrected their mistakes of hundred *Atirātras*. Then the Gods could repel the darkness and the *Asuras* and find the world of heaven.

In another part of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*<sup>34</sup> we get the reference that the Gods and the *Asuras* were born from the same father viz. *Prajāpati*. Both of them were struggling for obtaining the sacrifice. Then the Gods practiced austerities and practiced the *Agniṣṭoma* feast. By means of it the Gods could remove all the *Asuras* and obtain the entire sacrifice.

Sometimes it is mentioned that the *Prajāpati* gave all the sacrifices to the Gods but reserved some sacrifice for himself, such as the *Aśvamedha*.

<sup>32</sup> *Śat.Brā* -I/1/2/13 - “yajñō vai viṣṇuḥ |”

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*- XI/5/5/1-“Devānvā uddhvārnta sarga lokamyat |

*Asurāstamasāntardadhuste.....satramāsāmahā iti | |”*

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid* – IV/2/4/11-“Devāsca vā asurāsca | Ubhaye prajāpatyā pasprdhira | |”

Though the *Prajāpati* first preserved the *Aśvamedha* sacrifice for himself, but he finally gave the same share to the Gods.

In the *Brāhmaṇa* text we do not find any definite position of the argument as to whether the sacrifice was ‘seen’ or ‘created’. Sometimes it is described as ‘seen’ and sometimes as ‘created’. In the above discussion it is mentioned that *Prajāpati* or Gods have seen it. Now we will give some references where the sacrifice is described as ‘created. In the *Tanḍya Brāhmaṇa* it is mentioned that the *Prajāpati* has created sacrifice from the *Yajñayajñīya sāman*<sup>35</sup>. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*<sup>36</sup> says that the *Prajāpati*, after giving himself to the Gods has created his counterpart (*pratimā*), viz. the sacrifice. According to the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*<sup>37</sup>, the *Prajāpati* has created the sacrifice in general. How the Gods have created various sacrificial details are briefly presented below :

- From out of faith the Gods composed the consecration.
- From *Aditi*, the opening offering.
- From *Viṣṇu* the guest offering.
- From the Sun the *Pravargya*
- From the *Svadhā* the *Upaśads*.

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<sup>35</sup> *Tāndy.Brā* -VIII/6/3.

<sup>36</sup> *Śat.Brā*- XI/1/8/3-“*Sa devebhya ātmānampradāya | Athai tamātmāna pratimāmsṛjat yadyajñantasmādāhu..... pratimāmsṛjat |*”

<sup>37</sup> *Ait.Bra*-VII/19-“*Prajāpati yajñamsṛjat |*”

- From *Agni* and *Soma* the day of fasting.
- From this world the opening *Atirātra*.
- From the year they composed the *Caturviṃsa* day.
- From the Priesthood the *Abhiplava-ṣaḍaha*.
- From nobility, the *Prsthya-ṣaḍaha*.
- From *Agni*, the *Abhijit*.
- From waters the *Svarassāman* days.
- From Sun the *Viṣuvat*.
- From Indra the *Viśvajit*.
- From *Mitra* and *Varuṇa* *Go* and *Āyus*.
- From *Viśvedevāh*, the *Daśarātra*.
- From the regions the *Prsthya ṣaḍaha* of the *Dasarātra*.
- From these worlds the *Chandamoya*-days.
- From the year they composed the tenth day.
- From *Prajāpati*, the *Mahābrata* and
- From the world of heaven the *Udayaniya Atirātra*<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> Śat.Brā -XIV/1/2/1-3-“Sradhāya vai devāḥ | diksamiramimatādītayi  
prāyaṇīya.....matirātraṃ | | ”  
“Sambatsarācaturviṃsamaha | Brahmano 'bhilava .....chandomān | | ”  
“Sambatsarādasammaha | Prajāpatermahābrataṃ .....devānapyeti | | ”



The origin of the sacrifice or the sacrificial details are described here in the form of creation.

Sometimes it becomes very difficult to say that the origin of the sacrificial rite is 'seen' or 'created'. Some sacrificial rites have their origin in some past incident. Once there was a dispute between the 'Mind' and the 'Speech'. Each of them wanted to become superior. Mind said, "I am better than you, for you do not speak anything that is not understood by me. Thus you are a follower of me". Speech said, "I am better than you, for what you know, I make you understand; I communicate". Then they (Mind and Speech) went to *Prajāpati* for decision. *Prajāpati* then decided in the favour of mind and said to speech, "Mind is better than you. For you are imitators, a follower of mind. Inferior is he who imitates". Then speech become angry by the decision of *Prajāpati* and said, "I shall never be your oblation bearer". Hence from that incident, whatever is performed to *Prajāpati*, it is performed in a law voice<sup>39</sup>.

### **The role of the seers and man in general for obtaining the sacrifice :**

It is already discussed that the sacrifice or the sacrificial rites either obtained from *Prajāpati* or 'Seen' or 'Created'. But these sacrificial rites are not easily obtained by men. Gods first tried to hide the sacrifice, as by means of sacrifice Gods conquered the heaven. So, the Gods want to make the sacrifice

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<sup>39</sup> *Śat.Brā - 1/4/5/8-12-*"*Athā 'tha manasscaiva vācasca | Ahambhadra uditam manasca ha vai....ūdāte | | "*  
"*Taddha mana ubāca | Ahameva tvaccheyo'smi na vai mayā taṃ kiṃ ca.....asmiti | | "*  
"*Atha ha vāgubāca | Ahameva tvaccheyasyasmi yadvai tvaṃ .....samgapayāmīti | | "*  
"*Te Prajāpatiṃ pratiprasnameyatu | Sa prajāpatirmanasa evānuvāca.....bhavatīti | | "*  
"*Sā ha vāk paroktā viśiṣmye | Tasyai garbha papāta sā ha vāk prajāpatimuvācā.....*  
*....Prajāpataya āsīt | | "*

unattainable by men. Then the Gods drained the sacrifice and affected the traces of it with the sacrificial post. The seers heard this and went on praising and toiling. For by praising and toiling the Gods had attained whatever they want to attained and the seers did the same manner. The seers came to the place where Gods had sacrificed. There they found the sacrificial cake which had become a tortoise and creeping about. Then the seers thought that “this must be sacrifice”. They said, “Stand still for *Aśvins!* Stand still for *Indra!*” but it did not stand still, it crept on. Then the seers again said, “Still for *Agni!*”. It then stood still. The seers having enveloped it in the fire offered it completely. Then the sacrifice shone forth to them. They produced it and spread it. The sacrifice was taught by the former to the later. The father teaches it to the son when he is a student (*brahmacārin*). In this way the sacrifice is taught by the former to the later and remained continued. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* also records this statement<sup>40</sup>. Similarly, the another passage of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* also gives the record of the continuity of the tradition of sacrifice in the *Brahmanical* period- “Even as people hand on from the one to the other a full vessel in the same way the priests hand down the sacrifice from the one to the other . They hand it down by means of speech. They keep the tradition by means of it”<sup>41</sup>.

<sup>40</sup> *Śat.Bra-* I/6/2/1 –4 “*Yajñena vai deva | Imāṃ jitiṃ jigyurśyāmiyaṃ.....ṛṣināmuśrutamāsa | |* ”  
“*Yajñena vai deva | Imāṃ jitiṃ jigyurśyāmiyaṃ.....tiro’bhavanniti tamannveṣṭaṭuṃ dadhadhire | |* ”  
“*Sramena ha sma vai Taddevā jayanti jadeṣāṃ.....yajño iti | |* ”  
“*Aśvibhyāṃ tiṣṭa sarasvatvai tiṣṭendrāya.....pitaiva putrena brahmacāriṇe | |* ”

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid* - I/5/2/7- “*Yathā purnapātrena sampradāyaṃ careyurevamanena ṛtvijaḥ sampradāyaṃ caranti tad vācaivaitad sampradāyaṃ caranti vāgdhi yajño vāgu hi rettastād sampradāyaṃ caranti | |* .

## **Growth and expansion of the Sacrifice :**

Day by day sacrifice was growing and expanding. The expansion of the sacrifice is recorded in one of the story of *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*<sup>42</sup> which is as thus- once the king of *Videgha*, named *Māthava* carried *Agni Vaiśvāṇara* in his mouth. The name of the seer who was the family priest of that king was *Gotama Rāhugana*. The seer *Gotama Rāhugana* addressed the king *Māthava* while he was carrying the *Agni Vaiśvāṇara* in his mouth. But the king made no answer thinking that the fire might be fallen down from his mouth. Then the seer began to invoke *Agni* with the verse of the *Ṛgveda*. But the king still did not give any answer. The seer went on addressing the king again and again, but the king was not responding. Then the seer uttered the expression “butter sprinkled one” and *Agni Vaiśvāṇara* flashed forth from the king’s mouth. The king was not able to hold him (*Agni*) back. The fire came out from his month and fell down on this earth. The king *Māthava* was at that time was on the river *Saraswati*. Again went there burning along this earth towards the east and *Gotama Rāhugana* and *Videgha Māthava* followed after him as he was burning along. *Agni* burnt over all these rivers. But, *Agni* could not burn over the river called *Sadānira*. In the earlier times, the *Brāhmaṇas* did not cross that river as it was not burnt over by *Agni Vaiśvāṇara*. At that time the land to the east of the river *Sadānira* was very much uncultivated and very moorish as it was not tasted by *Agni Vaiśvāṇara*. But, now-a-days the *Brāhmaṇas* have involved *Agni* to taste it through sacrifices. Actually this *Agni Vaiśvāṇara* is represented

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<sup>42</sup> *Śat.Brā* - I/4/1/10-16

as the sacrifice in general and the progress of *Agni Vaiśvāṅara* is compared to the progress and expansion of the sacrifice.

The expansion of the sacrifice can be acquainted from the story of lord *Viṣṇu* who is regarded as identical with the sacrifice. Once the *asuras* wanted to seize the world, the Gods then went to the *asuras* placing *Viṣṇu*, the sacrifice at their hand. The *Asuras* offered the earth to Gods as much as *Viṣṇu*. *Viṣṇu* who was at that time in the dwarf form would lie upon on the earth. The Gods having surrounded the *Viṣṇu* on all three sides, placed *Agni* on the east side and went on toiling and worshiping with the sacrifice and then obtained all the earth<sup>43</sup>. However from this story we can realize that how Gods pervaded all the earth by means of sacrifice and also spread the sacrifice all over the earth. Thus, it can be said that sacrifice was expanding and growing at that time of the *Brāhmaṇas* in a very great extent.

In the age of the *Brāhmaṇas*, the sacrifice was always developing, though the ritualism in general which was already established at that time. In changing time various requirements and demands made it always necessary to develop the ritual further. The *Brāhmaṇa* texts perform this development. Thus, in the *Brahmanical* age numerous sacrifices were growing and these new sacrifices were admitted in the ritual sphere of the *Brāhmaṇas*. Therefore, it is clear that the sacrifice was growing notably during the period of the *Brāhmaṇa*

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<sup>43</sup> *Śat.Brā* – V/2/5/5-6 “*Vāmano ha Viṣṇurāsa | Taddevā na jihidire mahadvai no ’durye no yajñasammitamduriti | |*”  
“*Te prāncam viṣṇum nipādyā | Chandabhirabhita paryagrhnān gāyatrena tvā.....parigrhnāmī ’tyuttarata | |*”

texts. The *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* stands to be the foremost in respect of giving the best information on the growth and expansion of the sacrifice.

### **Obstacles in the way of Sacrifice :**

The growth and expansion of the sacrifice is not always the same as reflected in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*. Besides this, the sacrifice was facing lots of obstacles. In some occasions the sacrifice was ran away. Once the sacrifice ran away from Gods and it was roaming in the form of a black antelope. The Gods then searched for it and found it (black antelope). Then the Gods stripped of its skin and returned with this skin. Its black, white and brown hair represents the three *Vedas*, threefold science, which is the same as the sacrifice. Hence from that time the skin of the black antelope is to be used for the completeness of the sacrifice<sup>44</sup>. The sacrifice is said to have gone away from the Gods in another time and then it was wandering taking the form of the well-winged falcon (*Suparna*). The Gods caught hold of the sacrifice by means of the *Suparna sāman*<sup>45</sup>. The sacrifice was once lost and it was found out by means of the libations (*āhuti*) and at another time by means of directions (*praiṣa*). Once the sacrifice said to the Gods that he will not be their food and went away from the Gods. Then the Gods became afraid and crushed it (sacrifice). But the Gods recognized that as it being taken apart was not sufficient for them. Thus the Gods gathered together the sacrifice and requested

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<sup>44</sup> *Śat.Brā* – I/1/4/1-“*Atha kṛsnājinamādatte | yajñasyaiva sarvattāya | |*”  
*Taitt.Brā* – III/2/5/6- “*Yajño devebhya nilāyata | kṛsno rupam kṛtvā | kṛsnājinena havirdhyavahantī*” | |

<sup>45</sup> *Tāndy.Brā*- -XIV/3/8

*Aśvins* to heal it<sup>46</sup>. Once again the sacrifice is said to have gone away from the Gods and wandered in the form of horse. The Gods rushing after it and took hold of its tail (*vāla*) and tore it out. And having torn it out, they threw it down in a lump. The hair of the horse's tail grew up as those of plants (*aśvavāla-grass*)<sup>47</sup>. Therefore the *Prasasta* bunch is to be made of the *aśvavāla*-grass. Hence, from the above discussion, it can be said that though the sacrifice was ran away many times, its running away itself marked some progress in the development of the ritual.

Once, an individual rite such as the consecration (*dikṣā*) is said to have gone away from the Gods. The Gods then try to grasp it with the two months of spring, but it was not obtained. Then they again try to grasp it with the two months of summer, then the rainy season, then of the autumn, and then of the winter. But they were not successful. Then they sought to grasp it with the two months of the cool season and then they became successful. Hence, the *Dikṣā* of the sacrificial session is to be taken in the two months of the cool season<sup>48</sup>. Here we noticed that the *Brāhmaṇa* text wants to prescribe the particular period for the *Dikṣā*. Thus, through these changes, the sacrifice was developing and becoming definite according to the *Brāhmaṇas*. Further the *Brāhmaṇa* text also gives the record of distrust regarding the performance of the sacrifice, which sometimes took hold of by men. As it is said, “those who sacrifice become

<sup>46</sup> *Ait.Brā* – I/18-“*Taṃ saṃjabhrustaṃ saṃbhr̥tyocuraśvināvimaṃ bhiṣajyatamityāśvinau vai devānāṃ bhiṣajāvaśvināvdhvaryu | |*”

<sup>47</sup> *Śat.Brā* – III/4/1/17-“*aśvavāla prastara | Yajño devebhyo'pcakrāma so'aśvabhutvā.....prasasta bhavati | |*”

<sup>48</sup> *Ait.Brā* - IV/26

sinful: and those who do not sacrifice, become prosperous”<sup>49</sup>. Later *Br̥haspati* appeared to them (men) and persuaded them to confine in the performance of sacrifice. In another place also *Br̥haspati* helped the Gods to drive out the *Aśuras*, who were making disturbance in the performance of sacrifice<sup>50</sup>. So, it can be said that infrequently there arose some difficulties regarding the performance of the sacrifice, but these difficulties were soon removed by some means and thus sacrifice remains continued.

In spite of various obstacles the sacrifice was developing and growing day by day. It was not only developing, but adopting some new principles too. Sometimes, we find that *Br̥hmaṇa* texts have mentioned some old practices along with the new practices. Such references are very useful for understanding the changes and the history of the sacrifice. In the *Śatapatha Br̥hmaṇa*, we find the information that sometimes some rites of the popular nature or even rites from the ritual of the non-Aryan people are being slowly incorporated in the rituals of the Vedic Aryans. In the *Śatapatha Br̥hmaṇa* it is also found that in the beginning the *Sautrāmaṇī* sacrifice has been belonged to the *Asuras*, later it was obtained by the Gods<sup>51</sup>. Again, the *Śatapatha Br̥hmaṇa* records some cases which show that many details of previous sacrificial performances have been altered in the later *Br̥hmaṇa* period. Therefore one of the passages of the *Śatapatha Br̥hmaṇa*<sup>52</sup> gives us information that in the past the wife of

<sup>49</sup> *Śat.Br̥* – I/2/5/24- “ye yajante pāpiyāmsaste bhavanti ya una yajante śreyāmsaste bhavanti |”

<sup>50</sup> Ibid- IX/2/3/2-3 –“*Etad vai devānupapraīṣata | Etaṃ yajñam Tasya mānān dakṣinato 'surā.....iti*”  
“*Te deva indrambruvan | Tvaṃ na vai śreṣṭho baliṣṭho viryavattamo 'si*  
.....yajñamatannavat | |”

<sup>51</sup> Ibid - XII/9/3/7-“*Aśureṣu vā eṣo 'agre yajña āsīt sautrāmaṇī |*”

<sup>52</sup> Ibid- I/1/4/11-13

the sacrificer used to rise to act in answers to the call for preparing the oblation material. But again in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* it is mentioned that she or someone else rises to act.

Again in one of the passages of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* it is mentioned that in earlier times five animals viz. the man, the horse, the bull, the ram and the he-goat were slaughtered and their heads were used in the fire altar building. But now-a-days instead of five animals only two are slaughtered<sup>53</sup>. Again we know that previously the *Brahman* priest belonged to the *Vaśiṣṭa* family. But at the time of the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, anyone who knows the *vyāhṛtis* can be the *Brahman* priest in the sacrifice<sup>54</sup>. Thus from the above references, it is clear that the sacrificial system was not fixed, it was flexible. It went through stages and in course of its development process sacrifices attained and deleted many aspects.

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<sup>53</sup> *Śat.Brā* - VI/2/1/39- “*Etāneva pañca paśunālabhate.....prathama āleve śyāparṇa sāyakāyano ’ntamo ’tha.....brāhmaṇamudyate | |*”

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*-XII/6/1/41- “*Purā vāsiṣṭa eva Brahmā bhavati yatsvatvenā.....evametā vyāhṛtirveda. |*”