CHAPTER VII

THE PERFORMERS OF SACRIFICE IN THE BRĀHMAṆAS

Introduction:

We have seen what are the various sacrifices, how they are classified, and their ancillary rites. Now we shall see the performers of the sacrifice, viz., the sacrificer and his wife (in this section) and the Ṛtvijś (priests) (in the next).

(A) The sacrificer and his wife in the Brāhmaṇa-texts:

(i) Sacrificer:

Among the performers of the sacrifice the sacrificer (vajamāna) is the most important. He is the starting point of the sacrifice. It is he who desires to get certain results or has to fulfil his duties; and hence performs the sacrifice. The sacrifice is, according to the Brāhmaṇa-texts, a sure means for attaining the desired objects. To be able to perform a sacrifice one has to possess the materials of the sacrifice and also sufficient amount to give away as dakṣiṇās. He has to choose the priests and make them work. Thus it is evident that without the sacrificer there can be no sacrifice. We shall now see what the Brāhmaṇa-texts have to say about the sacrificer.
Qualifications of the sacrificer:

The Brahmana-texts while describing a sacrifice generally tell us who should perform that sacrifice. The characteristics by means of which the sacrificer differs are of different kinds. The chief characteristic of a sacrificer is his particular desire. Thus, for example, the sacrifice named Apūrva is to be performed by one who has the desire of getting progeny (JB II.174). Similarly one who desires pratiṣṭhā (firm foundation) may perform the Triṣṭoma Agni-ṣṭoma (JB II.206). One who desires to be greater than the great should sacrifice with the sacrifice named Pañcaśāradiya (TB II.7.10.1).

But the mere desire is not sufficient for some sacrifices. Some sacrifices require some additional qualifications. Thus for example the performance of the Āsvamedha is not possible for everyone. Only one who holds the royal sway should perform the Āsvamedha (ŚB XIII.1.6.3). The Pravargya-performance which is a part of the soma-sacrifice is to be performed not in the first soma-sacrifice, but from the second soma-sacrifice onwards. There is, however, an exception. One who is well-versed in the Vedic lore can perform the Pravargya even at the first performance of soma-sacrifice (KB VIII.3). The Gosava-sacrifice is to be performed by an aged man only (JB II.113). The persons qualified for the Vrātyastoma-sacrifices are the Vrātyas (TMB XVIII.1.1ff; JB II.221).
The sacrificers were at times differentiated according to their castes. Thus the timings of the establishment of the fires differed according to the castes of the sacrificer. The spring is the season for a Brāhmaṇa; the summer for a Kṣatriya and the rainy season for a Vaiśya (ŚB II.1.3.5-8). According to TB I.1.2.6-8, however, the autumn and not the rainy season is for a Vaiśya. The TB I.1.4.8 also admits the fire-establishment of the Rathakāra. The Vaijapeya is to be performed according to TB I.3.2.3 by a Brāhmaṇa or a Kṣatriya (but not by a Vaiśya). The sacrifice named Ṛṣabha is to be performed by Kṣatriya only (TMB XIX.12.3). The Vaiśyastoma sacrifice is to be performed by a Vaiśya only (TMB XVIII.4.5).

There are some very peculiar kinds of the sacrificers. The Punahṣtoṣa sacrifice is to be performed by him who after accepting many gifts feels as if he had swallowed poison (TMB XIX.4.2; JB II.82). The second kind of the Caturdaśa-rātra-sacrifice is to be performed by those regarding whom there are doubts like whether they should be admitted to bed, water, marriage, etc. or not (TMB XXIII.4.2). The sacrificers who are hunched-backed, dwarfish and short are also recognised and in connection with the Audumbarī (pillar), they have to lift up their arms and cut it off (having measured it with their uplifted arms) (ṢadB IV.3.3).
Number of the sacrificers:

Generally there is only one sacrificer in most of the sacrifices. But for the sacrifice named Ḫindrāṇyoh kulāya there are two sacrificers (TMB XIX.15.2). One of these is a Brahmaṇa and the other is a Kṣatriya (JB.132). For the Manustoma-sacrifice there are three sacrificers (TMB XIX.14.3). In the sacrificial session all the priests are also treated as sacrificers and they are also consecrated (for the details of their consecrations see ŚB XII.1.1.1-11; GB I.4.1-6).

Duties of the sacrificer:

The sacrificer desires to get the result of the sacrifice. Thus for example it is said, "He who sacrifices, sacrifices with the desire to have place in the heaven" (ŚB I.9.1.15; 5.1). Then he chooses the priests (SaṭB II.10.1ff) and with their help performs the sacrifice. For the performance of the sacrifice he has to get place from the prince (SaṭB II.10.4ff). For the performance of the sacrifice he has to give dakṣiṇas to the priests (ŚB II.2.2.1ff; IV.3.4.4).

During the course of the sacrifice he has sometimes to recite Mantras. Thus for example if the hotṛ does not know the formula with which (VS II.14a) the kindling stick
is to be consecrated, the sacrificer recites it (ŚB I.8.2.4). In the sacrificial session he may recite the subrahmaṇya formula (ŚB IV.6.9.25; or whomsoever the Ārhapati may ask to recite recites the subramaṇya formula). He mutters in the Pravargya-performance "Apatāṁ gharmam āśvinā" etc. (VS XXXVIII.13)(ŚB XIV.2.2.24ff).

In the Darśapūrṇamāsa sacrifices (ŚB I.9.3.8), in the Rājasūya (ŚB V.4.2.5) and in the Agnicayana (ŚB VI.6.4.1) he has to take Viṣṇu-strides. In the Vājapeya he mounts on the sacrificial post (ŚB V.2.1.9ff; TB I.3.7.2ff) and he is beaten by means of bags of salt (ŚB V.2.1.16; TB I.3.7-6-7). In the Agnicayana he sings sāman over the naturally perforated brick (ŚB VIII.7.4.1ff). In the Sautrāmaṇī he drinks of the Aindra-cup (ŚB XII.8.2.24). In the Rājasūya he undergoes uction (ŚB V.4.2.1-6; TB I.7.8.1ff).

Various rules and observances:

A sacrificer has to observe many rules and observances and thus has to lead a restricted life during the period of the sacrifice. These restrictions may be mentioned as follows:

a) Food: On the day before the Darśapūrṇamāsa sacrifice the sacrificer has to eat what/when eaten counts to as not eaten, i.e., that food of which no offerings are made and particularly he has to eat what grows in the forests -
the forest plants or the fruits of trees (ŚB I.1.9-10). This is the view of Yājñavalkya which is the final according to the ŚB. There are some other views also mentioned. Thus, e.g. Āśāṅga Sāvayasa expected complete fast (ŚB I.1.1.7-8). Barku Vārṣṇa allowed beans (of which no offerings are made) to be eaten (ŚB I.1.1.10). These views are rejected. Before the consecration (dikṣā) of the soma-sacrifice, the sacrificer may eat anything he likes (ŚB III.1.2.6), but when he is consecrated he should not eat flesh either of a cow or of an ox (ŚB III.1.2.21; Yājñavalkya, however, says, "I, for one, eat it provided it is tender"). During the somic-cāturmāsya also he should not eat any kind of flesh (TMB XVII.13.6; 11; 14). The soma-sacrificer has to take merely the fast-milk and that is not to be offered in the fire (ŚB III.2.2.10; cp. ŚB III.1.2.1). Some add rice and barley to the first day's fast-milk; but this is not to be done; for both the rice and barley form his offering-material (ŚB III.2.2.14). Some add to the fast-food all sorts of vegetables and fragrants; but this is also not to be done; for it is inauspicious (ŚB III.2.2.15). It is also said that after the consecration, if he pleases, the sacrificer may not eat anything (ŚB III.1.2.1). The sacrificer performing the Śabalīthomas has to drink hot milk (TMB XXI.3.4). In the Ṛtapesya-sacrifice, he has to take ghee as the fast-food during the Upasad-days. For it is the
fasting food of Gods and through the fasting food of Gods he reaches to them (TMB XVIII.2.5-6). JB II.159 allows water along with ghee as the fast-food for the ṛṭapeya sacrifice. In the Gosava-sacrifice, where the sacrificer behaves like a bull, has to eat grass.

b) Sexual behaviour: There are restrictions upon the sexual behaviour of the sacrificer (GB I.3.21; II.1.14). Thus the consecrated person should not have sexual intercourse with any woman (JUB III.2.4.4). In the course of the Saumika Cāturṃasyas the sacrificer should not have sexual intercourse with any woman (TMB XVII.13.6; 11; 14). In the performance of the Aśvamedha sacrifice, in the evening, the sacrificer (king) along with the four wives - the consecrated queen, the favourite wife, the discarded wife and the Pālgalī enters the hall of the sacrificial fires - the sacrificer by the eastern door and the wives by the southern door (SB XIII.4.1. 8-9). After the evening Agnihotra is offered he lies down with the favourite wife. However, he lies in her lap without any intercourse.¹

¹ cf. Meyer, Trilogie, III.239. For the Brahmacarya as useful for fertility see also Gonda, "Ascetics and Courtisans" ALB (Brahmavidya) XXV (1961) p. 95.
In the Gosava-sacrifice, however, there is no restriction on the intercourse; on the other hand, apparently the prohibited ones appear to have been prescribed, curiously enough. Thus the sacrificer is there expected to behave like a bull and to have intercourse with his mother and sister and any woman of his own family (sagotra).

c) Speech: There are limitations on the sacrificer's speech. He remains silently seated till the sunset. After the sunset he breaks his silence uttering "Vrataṃ kṛṇuta ..." (VS IV.11)(ŚB III.2.2.1-7). He has not to utter any profane word (ŚB III.1.1.10); but if he utters such a word he resorts to Agni with the following mantra "Yam agne vratapā asi ..." (VS IV.16)(ŚB III.2.2.24). Again whatever he has to speak, he speaks faltering (ŚB III.2.2.27). JUB III.2.4.4 says that the consecrated sacrificer uses non-human speech; for he is just like a dead man.

Elsewhere we are told that the sacrificer has to speak truth alone;² but as it is not always easy to be sure that one is speaking truth, he should use the word vicakṣaṇa at the time of speaking (AB I.6; KB VII.3; JB II.64. GB I.3.19 and

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2 Oldenberg, Weltanschauung, p. 214.
II.2.23, on the other hand recommend the one of the word *canasita* in addition to *vicaksana*. An āhitāgni (one who has kept the sacred fires) also should not speak untruth. The worship of the consecrated fire is to speak truth (ŚB II.2.2.19). Aruṇa Aupavesī told to his kinsmen that an āhitāgni should not speak untruth; but rather, he should keep silence so that no untruth would be spoken (ŚB II.2.2.20). ŚB I.1.1.4f we read: "... Verily the Gods are the truth and man is the untruth; therefore, in saying 'I now enter from untruth into truth' (VS I.56) he passes from the men to the Gods. Let him then only speak what is true; for this vow, indeed, the Gods do keep, that they speak the truth; and for this reason they are glorious: glorious, therefore, is he who, knowing this, speaks the truth".

d) *Wandering*: There are also restrictions on the sacrificer's wandering. He has not to go wherever his mind leads him (GB I.3.21). He has also not to go on journey and there is an expiation if he does so (GB II.1.14). He has to remain in the hut and the Sun should not set or rise while he is outside the hut (AB I.3; ŚB III.2.2.27). He should not enter into the water and rain should not fall on him (ŚB III.2.2.27).

e) *Other rules*: There are some other miscellaneous rules about the behaviour of the sacrificer. After the
consecration the sacrificer should not scratch himself either with a chip of wood or with his nail. For he who is consecrated becomes an embryo, and if scratched with a chip of wood or with his nail he would die. He, therefore, has to use a horn of a black antelope. For that represents his womb and womb does not harm the embryo. (ŚB III.2.1.21; cp. GB I.3.21). When a sacrificer is consecrated, he is led to the Gods, as it were; therefore, he should not shed tears; for the Gods do not shed tears (GB II.1.15). His name is not to be pronounced by others (KB VII.3; GB I.3.19).³ His name is not to be uttered in the Sūktavāka; for he is an embryo and embryos have no name (KB VII.2). He should not utter his own name (GB I.3.19) nor should he utter the name of anybody else (GB I.3.19; KB VII.3). KB VII.3 explains that the sacrificer when consecrated becomes Agni (Fire) and if his name is uttered by other persons they will burn themselves and if he utters the name of anybody he will burn them. The consecrated sacrificer should not go naked into the presence of a cow. The Gods, in order to make cow able to endure rain, cold and heat gave the skin of man to the cow and the man began to wear garments. The cow fears that her skin would be taken away by man. Therefore, the sacrificer should not be naked in the

³ For the sacrificer's name as taboo, see Keith, RFV, p.327.
presence of a cow (ŚB III.1.2.13-17; cp. JB II.182f in connection with the Visvajit sacrifice). When he intends to pass urine, he takes up a clod of earth or of some other object by means of the horn of a deer, with the words, "Iyam te yajñiya tanuh" etc. (VS IV.13) (ŚB III.2.2.20). The consecrated sacrificer should not stand up before anybody in order to show respect to him, nor should he pay homage to anybody; on the contrary, others should stand up before him and pay homage to him (GB I.3.19). The consecrated sacrificer has not to offer the Agnihotra (KB VII.3; JB II.38; GB I.3.21). In that in the evening and in the morning fast-drink is given to the sacrificer that is the Agnihotra (KB VII.3). He should not offer the Dārṣapūranāmasa offerings, the Pitryajña, and the animal-sacrifice (Pasubandha) (GB I.3.21; JB II.38) and the Cāṭurmāsya-sacrifices (JB II.38). The consecrated sacrificer has really speaking not to sleep at all. For he who is consecrated draws nigh to the Gods and becomes one of the deities; but Gods do not sleep; but still as not to sleep is not vouchsafed (for man), and Agni being the Lord of the vows to the Gods, it is to him that he now commits himself and lies down to sleep (ŚB III.2.2.22).

Sacrifice and sacrificer:

Let us see the relations between the sacrifice and the sacrificer. "The sacrificer becomes the sacrificer when he
sacrifices (yad vajate tad vajamanah [bhavati]) ŚB III.2.1.17). Thus the etymology of the word vajamaṇa (sacrificer) is given here by connecting it with the root vaj to sacrifice. The sacrificer produces the sacrifice; it is by his order that the priests (ṛtvijah) spread the sacrifice (ŚB I.9.1.2). He is the body of the sacrifice (ŚB IX.5.2.16; XII.8.1.17; KB XVII.7). He is also the body of Vasordhāra (shower of wealth) offerings which take place in the course of Agnicayana (ŚB IX.3.3.17). The sacrifice is also called sometimes the body of the sacrificer (ŚB IX.3.2.7). The sacrificer is often said to be yajñapati - Lord of the sacrifice (ŚB I.1.2.12; I.2.2.28; I.7.1.11). KB x.4 has, however, an objection against it. "Regarding this some say, the lord of the sacrifice is the sacrificer". "What man (is the lord)?" He should say, "The Lord of the Sacrifice is the deity only". (cp. AB. II.6 which uses the word medhapati instead of yajñapati and has the same view as the KB). The sacrificer is sometimes identified with the sacrifice itself (AB II.26; ŚB XIV.3.1.34; JB I.259; III.303 etc.) and with the particular sacrifice e.g. the Āśvamedha (ŚB XIV.2.2.1). He is also identified with some of the factors used in the sacrifice e.g. soma

(TB I.3.3.5), yūpa (sacrificial post)(ŚB XIII.2.6.9; TB I.3.7.3; AB II.3); the paśu (victim)(TB II.1.5.2; II.2.8.2) prastara (bunch of darbha-grass)(AB II.3; ŚB I.8.1.44; I.8.3.11) etc.

Exaltation of the sacrificer:

In the Brāhmaṇa-texts we find exaltation of everything which they consider to be important in any way. The sacrificer is also exalted in various ways. "Of great vigour (mahāvīrya) is this one who has obtained the sacrifice" (ŚB III.2.1.39). "He who sacrifices pleases the Gods" (ŚB I.9.1.3). He is said to be Prajāpati at his sacrifice and it is by his order that the priests spread and produce the sacrifice (ŚB I.8.1.20). For the sacrificer as Prajāpati see also AB II.18. ŚB VIII.5.3.8 we find that he is said to be Indra at his own sacrifice. We have already mentioned that the sacrificer after he is consecrated has not to stand up before anybody or to pay homage to anybody; on the contrary others have to stand up before him or have to pay homage to him. The reason for this is that the Atharvāṅgirases before whom one should stand up and to whom one should pay homage are said to have entered into his body (GB I.3.19). The sacrificer is identified with various Gods like Indra
(ŚB II.1.2.11; III.3.3.10 etc.)\textsuperscript{5}, Sun (ŚB XII.8.2.36),
Agni (ŚB VI.3.3.21; 4.1.3; 12; 4.18; X.1.4.14 etc.) etc. at
different places. He is said to be the best (sreṣṭha)(ŚB
IV.2.4.20). Finally the sacrificer is identified with all
(ŚB XIV.3.2.25). Such identification of anything, as has been
already noted, is a very effective way of exaltation adopted
in the Brāhmaṇa-texts.

(ii) Sacrificer's wife\textsuperscript{6}:

Her duties:

The wife of the sacrificer generally sits behind the
Gārhapatya-fire in the course of the sacrifice (AB III.37);
excepting the sacrifice to the fathers (TB I.6.9.10). In the
Darśapūrṇamāsa sacrifices a girdle is tied around her waist.
The part below the navel of a woman is impure; that part is
concealed by means of the girdle. For, she has to look down
upon the sacrificial butter and this must be done with having
pure part of her body (ŚB I.3.1.12-13). She looks down upon

\textsuperscript{5} For the identification of the sacrificer and Indra see
Hesemann "Vṛtya and sacrifice" IIJ VI (1962) p.21f.

\textsuperscript{6} On the wife of the sacrificer and her duties see Choudhuri,
"The wife in the Vedic Ritual" IHQ 16 (1940), p.70ff.
the sacrificial butter and thus a productive pair is made there. For she is a woman and the sacrificial butter represents the seed (ŚB I.3.1.18). She has to untie the veda-bunch. Here also a productive pair is formed. For the wife is a female and the veda is male (ŚB I.9.2.22). In the performance of the Varuṇapraghāsaparvan in the Cāturmāsyasacrifices, she is asked by the Pratiprasthātṛ about her sexual relation with anybody. When a woman who belongs to one man, carries on intercourse with another this is a sin against Varuṇa and when she confesses it, it becomes truth (ŚB II.5.2.20; TB I.6.5.2). She also offers then the Varuṇapraghāsa (ŚB II.5.2.23-24). In the soma-sacrifice the dust of the foot-print of the cow by means of which soma is bought is handed down to her (ŚB III.3.1.10). The Neṣṭṛ makes the soma-cow look at her. Soma is male and the wife is female; Soma is male and the soma-cow represents the soma. Thus a productive pair is formed (ŚB III.3.1.11). She is led up by the Neṣṭṛ to cleans the sacrificial victim (ŚB III.8.2.1) and then she cleanses the victim (ŚB III.8.2.4). The reasoning why it is the wife who cleanses the victim is that the wife is a woman and from woman the progeny is born. The victim which is killed is thus made to be born again (ŚB III.8.2.5). She exchanges looks with the udgātṛ and as the udgātṛ is Prajāpati and thus represents male element and she the female element, so a productive pair takes place there (ŚB IV.4.2.17-18).
In the Vājapeya-sacrifice, she, along with the sacrificer, ascends the sacrificial post (ŚB V.2.1.10; TB I.3.7.2ff). In the Rājasūya there are the Ratnini offerings. In those offerings there is an offering in the house of the chief queen (ŚB V.3.1.4; TB I.7.3.3). There is an offering in the house of Vāvāti (favourite wife) according to the TB I.7.3.3. By means of these Ratnini offerings the favour of the persons in whose house these offerings are made is obtained. There is also an offering in the house of the wife who has been discarded (Parivṛtti) because she has no son. (ŚB V.3.1.13; TB I.7.3.4). In the Agni-cayana (Fire-building ceremony) the chief queen forms the brick which is called Aṣādha (invincible)(ŚB VI.5.3.7). In the Aśvamedha sacrifice three wives, viz., Mahiśi, Vāvāti and Parivṛtti anoint the horse (ŚB XIII.2.6.4ff; TB III.9.4.6f). The sacrificer enters into the hall of the sacrificial fires with four wives the above three and Pālāgali in addition. They are all adorned and wearing gold ornaments. The sacrificer enters by the eastern door and the wives by the southern door (ŚB XIII.4.1.8). After when the evening-offering has been offered, the sacrificer has to lie down with the favourite wife (Vāvāti) in her lap embracing her without any intercourse. At the same time the other wives also lie down there (ŚB XIII.4.1.9). The chief queen (mahiśi) has to lie down near the horse and the priests cover her with the upper cloth. The
Mahiṣī then puts the generation organ of the horse into her womb and says, "May the vigorous male, the layer of the seed, lay seed" (SB XIII.5.2.2). All the four queens have a part in the obscene dialogue with the priests (SB XIII.5.2.5ff).

**Generalities about the wife of the sacrificer:**

We have described above the chief duties of the wife (or wives) of the sacrificer as mentioned by the Brāhmaṇa-texts. Let us see what the Brāhmaṇa-texts say about the wife of the sacrificer in general.

As the sacrificer's wife sits behind the Garhapatya, she is called the hind-part (jaghanārdha) of the sacrifice (SB I.3.1.12; 9.2.3; II.5.5.29; III.8.2.2; V.2.1.8). Without the wife of the sacrificer the sacrifice is no sacrifice at all and when she sits behind, then it becomes the sacrifice (TB III.3.3.1). If she is in menstruation period at the time of the day of the observance half of the sacrifice dies (TB III.7.1.9). Elsewhere she is described as the half part of the sacrificer (JB I.86; TB III.3.3.5). Thus is her importance indicated. In the list of the persons connected with the sacrifice GB I.5.24 mentions the sacrificer's wife as having faith.
Concluding remarks:

We thus see that the sacrificer and the wife of the sacrificer are very important persons in the performance of the sacrifice. Their various duties and rules of the behaviour tell us the grown up ritualism in the Brāhmaṇa-periods. As we shall see elsewhere, the result of the sacrifice is said to be obtained by "one who knows" and thus importance of knowledge on the part of the sacrificer must be said to have been established, in the Brāhmaṇas. Similarly the mention of faith (śraddhā) in connection with the sacrificer's wife is also important. The importance of knowledge and faith may be said to afford us an inkling of the potential spiritualism in the ritualism of the Brāhmaṇa-texts.
Introduction:

The sacrifice was growing more and more complex and it was becoming impossible for one single person to perform it accurately in all its details. The sacrificer, therefore, required the assistance of persons specialized in various aspects of the sacrifices to perform various sacrificial details on his behalf. These persons are the ṛtviṣ. They belong to different Vedas; and perform their sacrificial duties each one of them in connection with the veda they represented. Here we are now going to see what information about the ṛtviṣ we get in Brāhmaṇa-texts.

Etymology of the word ṛtviṣ:

The word ṛtviṣ is derived either from ṛtvya or ṛtviva. TMB x.3.1 we read the following story: Prajāpati desired, "May I be more than one; May I be reproduced". Then he perceived in himself the seasonal period (ṛtvya). Therefrom he created the ṛtviṣ - the officiating priests; and because he created them from the seasonal period (ṛtvya), therefore, they are called ṛtviṣ. JŚ III.1 gives the story with a slight change. It reads ṛtviva instead of ṛtvya. From ṛtviva, we are further told that Prajāpati created the three ṛtus and these three worlds. Because he created ṛtus from ṛtviva, therefore, they are so called,
and because he created the ṛtvījs from ṛtviva, therefore, they are called ṛtvījs. These etymologies show that the Brāhmaṇa-texts want to connect the ṛtvījs with seasons and with Prajāpati as the creator of the ṛtvījs with seasons and with Prajāpati as the creator of the ṛtvījs. The connection of Prajāpati is as has been already stated above generally intended to bring about exaltation. According to Panini III.2.59 the word ṛtvīj is a nipāta-word derived from the word ṛtu and the root vaj meaning "One who sacrifices in due time (period) or sacrifices to the season (ṛtu) or employed in particular season, sacrifices" (see kasika). It is suggested that he offers at the proper time, according to the proper rules, etc. and correctly. This etymology can throw better light upon the concept of ṛtvīj.

Ṛtvījs - Number:

The number of the ṛtvījs varies from sacrifice to sacrifice. The particular number of ṛtvījs required for particular sacrifices has been given in some details by TB II.3.6.1-4. Prajāpati after having created the beings lay down reduced to the heart only. He called for his body once. The waters listened this and came with Agnihotra and gave the body without head to him. Therefore, in the Agnihotra there is only one ṛtvīj. Then he called for four
times. This was listened by Agni, Vāyu, Āditya and Candramas. They came with Darśa and Pūrnāmāsa sacrifices. They gave him four limbs. Therefore, there are four ṛtviṣás in the Darśa and Pūrnāmāsa sacrifices. Then he called for five times. Beasts listened to this and came with the Cāturmāsya-sacrifices. They gave him hair, skin, flesh, bones and marrow—these five bodily elements. Therefore, there are five ṛtviṣás in the Cāturmāsya-sacrifices. Then he called for six times. The seasons listened and came with the Paśubandha. They gave him six limbs more. Therefore, there are six ṛtviṣás in the Paśubandha. Then he called for seven times. The Hotrās listened to this and came with the soma-sacrifice. They gave Prajāpati the seven vital airs on the head. Therefore, there are seven hotṛ-priests facing to the east who call the vaṣāṭ in the soma-sacrifice. Thus the number of priests in various sacrifice have got mystical reasonings behind them.

Generally speaking in a soma-sacrifice the number of all the priests is sixteen; but according to some there is a seventeenth priest also called the Sadasya. Among these there are four chief priests (mahatvijāh) and each one of them has three assistant priests. A complete list of priests is given by the GB I.5.24 as follows:
(i) rtviṣs belonging to the Rāgveda - (a) hotṛ
   (b) maitrāvaruṇa (c) acchāvāka (d) grāvastut.

(ii) rtviṣs belonging to the Yajurveda - (a) adhvaryu
    (b) pratiprasthātṛ (c) nṛṣṭ (d) unnetṛ.

(iii) rtviṣs belonging to the Śāmaveda - (a) udgātṛ
     (b) prastotṛ (c) subrahmaṇya (d) prātihartṛ.

(iv) rtviṣs belonging to the Atharvaveda - (a) brahman
     (b) brāhmaṇacchāmsin (c) potṛ (d) āgnīdhra

The seventeenth priest is the Sadasya.¹

The chief priests (mahartviṣs):

The hotṛ, the adhvaryu, the udgātṛ and the brahman
are the four chief priests. When the sacrificial horse
was immolated his greatness went away. It entered into
the chief priests. This is the reason why they became the
chief priests. In the Aśvamedha, the Brahmaidana is
given to them. When they eat it they place that greatness
(which had gone away from the sacrifice) into the sacrifice

¹ See Keith, RP, p.298 "The whole arrangement is,
however, artificial and worthless. The three
assistants of the brahman and the nṛṣṭ in practice
are reckoned rather with the hotṛ and the aim at sets
of four has spoiled the natural order".
(ŚB XIII.1.1.1-4;4.1.4-6;TB III.8.2.4). Though the Chief priests are the hotṛ, the adhvaryu, the udgātṛ, and the brahman, the other priests are mystically supposed to be included in the chief priests (ŚB XIII.4.1.4).

Let us see now in detail the particularities of these chief priests one by one on the basis of the Brāhmaṇa-texts.

Hotṛ:

The hotṛ belongs to the Ṛgveda (AB V.32;33;KB VI.II; ŚB XII.5.8.7;JB I.358;GB I.3.2;5.24)

Etymology of the word hotṛ:

AB I.2 gives an etymology of the word hotṛ. There, first an objection is raised that the word hotṛ seems to be connected with the root hu to make libations, but in reality hotṛ does not do this action; then, it is asked why the hotṛ has this name? The objection is removed by giving another etymology of the word from the root vah with ā prefix. In that he according to their portions invites the deities saying "Bring hither N.N.; bring hither N.N. (amum āvaha, amum āvaha) that is why
hotṛ has his name." This etymology, though grammatically difficult to be accepted, shows the view of the Brāhmaṇa-texts that they consider the hotṛ's duty as "bringing" the deities.

Duties of the hotṛ:

The hotṛ has to recite (śaṁs). He recites the invitatatory verses, the litanies (śastra) and the offering verses and also utters the vaisat call (AB V.34; GB I.3.4; JUB III.4.3.4). In the Darśapūrṇamāsā sacrifices he recites the sāmidhenī verses and by means of them he enkindles the fire (ŚB I.3.5.1ff). He calls on Ṛṛṣeya Hotṛpravara in the same performance (ŚB I.4.2.3ff). When he is formally chosen, he takes the hotṛ's seat and goes on muttering formulas (ŚB I.5.1.12ff). At the end of the Darśapūrṇamāsā he invokes the blessings (ŚB I.9.1.2). In the soma-sacrifices he recites the Āprīverses (ŚB III.8.1.2ff); the morning prayers (ŚB III.9.3.10; AB II.15ff);

2 Oldenberg, Religion des Veda, p.386 remarks that the name hotṛ shows that in old times one and the same person used to perform the duties like recitation as well as offering the oblation. cf. Keith, RPV, p.294. Renou, Vocabulaire p.175 explains Hotṛ as "proprement "celui qui verse" secondairement "celui qui invoque""cp. Minard Trois énigmes, I, p.123.
various śastras e.g. the Ājyaśastra etc. (e.g. AB II.33ff) and the Cāturhotr formulas (ŚB IV.6.9.18). At the end of the soma-sacrifices he recites the silent praise (Tuṣṇīmsāma) (AB II.31). In the Rājasūya, he tells the Sunahśepa's legend sitting on the golden cushion (AB VII.18; TB I.7.10.5). In the Āsvamedha he tells the Pāripāvīla legend (ŚB XIII.4.3.2ff). He has also to take part in the theological discussion (Brahmodya) which is a part of the Āsvamedha (ŚB XIII.2.6.9ff; 5.2.12f; 17f; TB III.9.5.1ff). In the same sacrifice he has also to take part in the obscence dialogue and speaks with Pārivṛkti (discarded wife) (ŚB XIII.5.2.7). For the sacrifice named Bṛhaspatisava special characteristics of the hotr are required. He must be bald-headed, of reddish colour and triśukra i.e. purely learned in the three vedas or pure in three things, viz., in motherly descent, in fatherly descent and in his own behaviour (TB II.7.1.1-2).

Hotr and other ṛtvija:

Hotr is female and the udgātṛ is male. For the hotṛ is connected with rć (feminine) and the udgātṛ is identical with Prajāpati (masculine) (ŚB IV.3.2.3. For the hotṛ as female see ŚB III.9.4.25). Elsewhere it is said that the adhvaryu is mind and the hotṛ is speech. Therefore, as the adhvaryu directs so he does (ŚB IV.6.7.19).
But sometimes we find that the adhvaryu also does according to what the hotr tells him. Thus for example after taking seat the hotr urges him to proceed further and the adhvaryu does accordingly (SB II.6.1.23). Thus both the hotr and the adhvaryu are interdependent, though in a majority of cases it is the hotr who has to receive orders (praisa) from the adhvaryu.

**Importance and exaltation of the hotr:**

In order to show the importance of the hotr and to exalt him, he is identified with Satya (Truth)(TMV XXV.18.4). He is elsewhere said to be breath (AB V.8). He is also described as the middle of the sacrifice and by giving dakṣiṇas to him the sacrifice is pleased in the middle (TB III.3.8.10). At other places he is identified with the sacrifice itself (AB I.28; SB VI.4.2.7; TB I.7.6.1; III.9.5.2).

**Adhvaryu:**

The adhvaryu belongs to the Yajurveda (AB V.32;33; KB VI.11; SB XI.5.8.7;JB I.358;GB I.3.2;5.24).

**Duties of the adhvaryu:**

The adhvaryu does the manual activities in general in the performance of the sacrifice. His main duties are
briefly described as to draw the cups for the sacrificer, to act for him, and to offer libations for him. The dakṣiṇās are given to him in view of the duties he has to perform (AB V.34; GB I.3.4; JUB III.4.3.4). Apart from these some of his special duties are as follows:

In the Darśapūrṇamāsa he looks into the sacrificial butter (ŚB I.3.1.26-28). He also performs the Patniśamyā-ajas (ŚB II.5.2.45) and samiṣṭayajus (ŚB II.5.2.46) in those sacrifices. He has to request the hotṛ for reciting the invitational and offering verses at the time of making any offering (e.g. ŚB I.8.2.14 etc). In the soma-sacrifices he has a part in speaking with one who buys the soma (ŚB III.3.3.lff) and in drawing the soma-cups (e.g. ŚB IV.2.1.lff). In the Rājasūya he performs the abhiṣeka to the king (ŚB V.4.2.1). In the fire-altar-building he sings sāmans (ŚB II.1.2.43). In the Mahāvrata-ceremony he sings the Trivṛt-stoma according to some; but TMB V.6.6 has an objection to this - "How an adhvaryu and a Ṛgveda-priest can sing a sāman?" In the Aśvamedha he has a part in the dialogue with a maiden (ŚB XIII.5.2.4) and in the theological discussion (Brahmodya) (ŚB XIII.5.2.12-13; 17-18; TB III.9.5.lff). In the sacrificial session (sattra) he has to consecrate these four persons, namely the sacrificer, the brahman, the udgātr and the hotṛ (ŚB XIII.1.1.1-4; GB I.4.1-4).
Adhvaryu and other ṛtvıjs:

Nothing is done by other ṛtvıjs without the direction of the adhvaryu. For the yajus (to which he belongs) is the mind and the ṛc and śaman are speech. Speech does not speak anything which is not conceived by the mind (ŚB IV. 6.7.19). Pratiprasthatr is described as his imitator (ŚB II.5.2.34). TB I.6.5.1-2 the same point is told in the following way — "Whichever is done by the adhvaryu, that is done by the pratiprasthatr. Therefore, what the superior does the inferior imitates it."

Importance and exaltation of the adhvaryu:

The importance of the adhvaryu is variously stated. He is said to be the forepart of the sacrifice (ŚB I.9.2.3). Elsewhere, he is described as the head of the sacrifice (ŚB IV.1.5.15f). It is the adhvaryu who spreads the sacrifice (ŚB V.5.5.18), nay, he is the foundation (pratiṣṭha) of the sacrifice (TB III.3.8.10). His growing importance brings greater responsibilities to him. This is described in a very effective way by TB I.4.6.4-6. The adhvaryu is isticraga i.e. he is the killer of fruit of all the ṛtvıjs; for he has to do so many activities and hence it is always probable that there may be mistakes due to his inadvertence. But it is the killer of the fruit (isticraga) of others that is likely to suffer first of all. Therefore, he should
recite a verse praying thereby to be secure. ŚB XIV.
3.1.33 also implies that he has to do many activities. Thus he has to do so many activities that he becomes "scorched" as it were at the time of coming out of the sacrificial ground (see also ŚB XI.5.1.32). He is also exalted by being identified with the Sun (SaB II.5.3) with the eye (SaB II.6.2), apana (SaB II.7.2), and with the prāna (TMB XXV.18.4).

Udgātr:

The ṛtvij udgātr belongs to the Ṣamaveda (AB V.32; 33; KB VI.11;ŚB XI.5.8.7;JB I.358).

Origin of the udgātrship:

The origin of the udgātrship is told by the TMB VI. 7.5 as follows: The speech went away from the Gods. The Gods called her. She said, "I am shareless. Let me have a share". "Who could make a share for thee?" "The udgātr", she said. This appears to be the mythical origin of the udgātrship found in the Brāhmaṇas.

Duties of the udgātr:

The chief duty of the udgātr, as is suggested by the story of origin is connected with the speech, i.e., with the singing. Thus it is said that the sacrificer gives
dakṣiṇas to the udgātr thinking that he has sung, for him (the sacrificer) (AB V.34; JUB III.4.3.4; GB I.3.4).

The duties of the Udgaṭr appear to have a special bearing upon the generation. In the soma-sacrifice, he exchanges looks with the wife of the sacrificer. For he is Prajāpati and the wife is a woman. That forms a productive pair (ŚB IV.4.3.1). By means of sevenfold saṃan, he generates the sacrificer and himself for seven times (JUB III.6.6.4). Elsewhere it is said that he is Prajāpati and pours seed. When he recites the Retasyā verses he pours the sacrificer himself in the form of seed. If he were to recite the verse without saṃan there would be only bones and no flesh at all. If saṃan alone were to be sung, then there would be flesh alone and no bones at all. As he recites the verse equipped with saṃan, therefore, a man is born covered by hair, skin and flesh (JŚ I.259). His identification with Prajāpati also shows clearly how he is connected with the generation. He signs Virāj-saṃan with repeated, push, for the sake of impregnation. For from the repeated push, seed is implanted (pregnancy follows) (TMB XII.10.11; cp. JB III.70). On his right thigh the fire is churned; for from the right side the seed is discharged (TMB XII.10.12; cp. JB III.70) which says that the right half is more powerful; cp. also in
this context the following remark which is often found in the Brahmaṇa-texts - daksinato hi vṛṣa vṛṣam upāṣete e.g. ŚB VI.3.1.30). The udgātṛ is compared to the rainy season (ŚB XII.2.7.32) and this also suggests his connection with the productivity.

Among his other duties it may be mentioned that he has to sprinkle the horse in the Aśvamedha (TB III.8.5.3-4). He has in the same sacrifice a part in the dialogue with Vāvata (ŚB XIII.5.2.6) and in the Brahmodya (ŚB XIII.5.2. 14-15; 19-20).

Udgātṛ and hotṛ:

We have already mentioned that these two form a productive pair (see hotṛ). For the udgātṛ represents the male element and the hotṛ represents the female element. Elsewhere he is shown to be superior to the hotṛ. For the hotṛ belongs to one deity only; while the udgātṛ belongs to all the deities (JB I.118).

Importance and Exaltation of the udgātṛ:

The importance of the āśaṃ-priests in general is glorified in the following manner - wherever there is the priesthood of the āśamveda, there the Gods eat much; for the āśaṃ is the food of the Gods (JB II.71). From this
the importance of the udgatr who is a priest belonging to the Samaveda can be understood. If at the time of the creeping for the Bāhiṣpavamāna the udgatr is severed, i.e. if he lets go his hold of the former, then the sacrificer becomes deprived of the sacrifice (TMB VI.7.14). This apparently indicated that the udgatr is as important as the sacrifice itself. JB I.85 in the same strain says that if the udgatr is severed from the Bāhiṣpavamāna-procession then there will be all the calamities. The udgatr is exalted by being identified with Prajāpati (e.g. JB I.70; 88; 259 etc.) He is also identified with the life (TB III.6.5.4). He frees the sacrificer from death (JUB III.7.1.1ff) and the real udgatr is he who removes the death from the sacrificer (JUB III.7.1.1ff).

Brahman:

Origin of brahman:

Manu bestowed the Brahmanhood on Vasiṣṭha according to JUB III. 4.1.1-2. But according to Saṅgīrī I.5.3.1-3 it was Indra who did it. But according to both the JUB and Saṅgīrī it was Vasiṣṭha who received that knowledge. ŚB XII.6.1.38ff another story is found in which Indra is told to have given the Vāhṛtis (which play a very essential role in the duties of brahman) to Vasiṣṭha. It is further added there that in old times a person belonging to Vasiṣṭha family
alone could be the brahman. But in modern times anyone can be the brahman. Thus the Brāhmaṇa-texts connect the origin of the brahmanhood to Vasiṣṭha.

Admission of the brahman in the Śrauta-ritual:

The priest brahman was not easily admitted in the circle of the priests of the Śrauta-ritual. Thus we find questions and answers about his nature and work. KB VI. 11 gives us a discussion in which it is asked, to which veda he (the brahman priest) belongs; for, the connection of the other priests to their respective vedas is well-known; but that of the brahman is not. The answers to this question differ. According to some the adhvaryu himself should work as brahman, while others say that a chandoga should work as brahman. Another view and that which is acceptable to the KB is that the brahman should be a bahyṛca. (=belonging to the R̄V). From this it seems that there was difference of opinion about the veda to which the brahman should belong and he was connected with the Yajurveda or Śamaveda, or Ṛgveda by different authorities. Elsewhere it is also said that he must have threefold knowledge i.e. he must be knowing all the three vedas (AB V.33; ṢB XI.5.8.7; JB I.358). GB (which belongs to the Atharvaveda), however, directly connects the brahman to the Atharvaveda. Gods and Asuras were struggling and
at that time Gods requested Indra to protect the sacrifice. He then took the form of the Rgveda, then of the Yajurveda and then of the Sāmaveda; but in spite of all this he was unable to protect the sacrifice. Then he took the form of the Atharvaveda and wore a turban and protected the sacrifice. Therefore, now also the brahman wearing turban represents the Atharvaveda (GB I.2.19; cp. GB I.5.24). Here the connection of the brahman and the Atharvaveda is clearly mentioned. The efforts of the GB to elevate the brahman-priest and the Atharvaveda are also obvious when we take into consideration how the work of protection of the sacrifice was impossible in the forms of other vedas for Indra.

There were also discussions and objections as regards why dakṣiṇās are to be given to the brahman. There it is said that the other priests have to do certain work, and therefore, dakṣiṇās are given to them. But then it is asked why one should give dakṣiṇās at all to the brahman (AB V.34; JUB III.4.3.4). It is noteworthy that GB does not mention any such objection at all. It only gives the reasons why the dakṣiṇās are given to the other priests (GB I.3.4) and then directly draws attention to the fact that half of the dakṣiṇās used to be given to the brahman in past times; for he bears half of the sacrifice (GB I.3.4; cp. AB V.34; JUB III.4.3.5). Here also the efforts for
elevating the Brahman are evident.

Duties of brahman:

He generally remains silent (AB V.33; JUB III.4.2.1-2) while other priests are doing their duties with the Ṛgveda, Yajurveda and the Sāman (SaB I.5.6). He sits in the southern part and protects the sacrifice (ŚB I.7.4.18; II.4.3.26; V.4.3.26; V.4.5.22; V.5.1.9; XII.6.1.38; XIV.1.3.2; GB I.2.19). He has also to perform expiations (prāvascittis) whenever there is something done in excess or defectively (SaB I.5.9). He, therefore, is called the physician of the sacrifice (AB V.34; ŚB XIV.2.2.19). In the Pravargya-performance he pronounces the anumantraṇa formula over the gharma (ŚB XIV.2.219). He sings sāmans e.g. Vājināṃ sāman in the Vājapeya (TMB XVIII.7.12; JB II.193). In the Āśvamedha, he has a part in the dialogue with Mahiṣī (ŚB XIII.5.2.5) and in the Brahmodya (ŚB XIII.5.2.14-15; TB III.9.5.1).

3 See Renou, "La valeur du silence dans le culte Védique" JAOS, 69 (1949), p.11.

4 See Oldenberg, Religion des Veda, p.395; Gonda, Religionen Indiens, I, p.142.
Importance and Exaltation of the brahman:

As there were some ritualists who were opposing the brahman, there were others who tried to establish, elevate, and exalt him. Thus we have already mentioned how he alone is supposed to be the half part of the sacrifice and all other priests together were the other half. At another place the brahman is conceived as the entire sacrifice (ŚB VI.2.2.40). Elsewhere it is said that on the brahman the sacrifice is based (ŚB VII.26; KB VI.12). In the GB the tendency to elevate the brahman is seen particularly for the leading theme of its composers is to push up to the front the AV and its adherents. Thus it mentions that the brahman knowing the Bhrgvangirasaḥ is knower of all (sarvavid) (GB I.2.18). Again it is said that the sacrifice is incomplete without him (GB I.3.1-2). TB III.8.5.2 identifies him with power (bala) and exalts him.

We have so far seen the four chief priests. Now let us see their assistants.

Assisting priests:

Maitrāvaruṇa:

The maitrāvaruṇa works under the hotṛ (ŚB XII.1.1.6; 5 Bloomfield, The Atharvaveda, p.29)
GB I.4.6;§.24). He is also called praśāstrṛ (e.g. AB VI.14; KB XXVIII.5; TB III.12.9.4 etc) or upvākṣṛ (e.g. AB V.28; KB XIII.8; XXVIII.5.etc.).

Duties of Māitrāvaruṇa:

The chief duty of the māitrāvaruṇa is to recite e.g. a litany to Mitra and Varuṇa at the mid-day pressing (AB V.4) or to Indra and Varuṇa at the third pressing (AB III.50). He shares in the drinking of the Sarvasvata-cup (SB XII.8.2.23). In the Dāsapeya which occurs in the Rājasūya he gets a barren cow (SB V.4.5.22; TB I.8.2.4; TMB XVIII.9.13).

Importance and Exaltation:

Māitrāvaruṇa is said to be the leader of the minor hotṛ-priests (hotrakaśa) (AB VI.6). He is identified with the mind of the sacrifice (SB XII.8.2.23; AB II.5.28).

Acchāvāka:

Acchāvāka is an assistant of the hotṛ (SB XII.1.1.8; GB I.4.6;§.24).

6 Hillebrandt, Vedische Mythology, I, 496, n.4; Oldenberg Religion des Veda, p.399; Keith, RPV, p.296; Renou, Vocabulaire, p.227.
7 See the note 6 above.
Origin of the acchāvāka-priesthood:

Nābhānediśṭha Mānava sought an invitation from the Āṅgirases. He "saw" the duty of the acchāvāka. He came to their sacrifice when the sacrificial food had been invoked. Therefore, there is no formal selection of this priest (i.e. no formal "pravara" is uttered) (KB XXVIII.4). This suggests that the place of acchāvāka was created in later times. 8

Duties of acchāvāka:

He sits in the eastern region (KB XXVIII.4). His main work is recitation of verses (e.g. AB II.36; VI.13;14). Thus he recites at the morning-pressing a litany to Indra and Agni (AB II.36). He has a part in creeping to the sadas. The other hotrakas are in front and he is behind (AB II.36). He recites three hymns in the Saḍaha (AB VI.19; GB II.6.1). On the second day of Dvādaśaha he sings the Rauravasāman (TMB XIII.4.23).

Importance and Exaltation of acchāvāka:

In order to show that the acchāvāka has his own importance, he is connected with Indra and Agni. Thus it is said that previously the acchāvāka was excluded from soma. Indra and Agni preserved soma for him. Therefore,

he is said to belong to Indra and Agni (aindrāṇa) (ŚB III. 6.2.12-13; IV.3.1.1-2). As these two divinities from a productive pair (mithuna), the acchāvāka is called a productive pair (mithuna) (ŚB IV.3.1.3). The importance of the acchāvāka is brought out emphatically by saying that only a Brahmāṇa skilled in the ṛgverses and strong one should perform the part of the acchāvāka (ĀB II.36). GB II.5.15 praises the acchāvāka in similar words saying that he is the strong and skilled in ṛgverses.

Grāvastut:

Grāvastut is an assistant of the hotṛ (ŚB III.1.1.9; GB I.4.6; 5.24).

Origin of the grāvastut-priesthood:

The origin of the grāvastut-priesthood is told in KB XXI.1 as follows - when the Gods performed the sacrifice at sarvacaru, Arbuda, Kādraveya came upto them at the midday pressing and said, "One hotṛ's office is not being performed by you. That is the one of the grāvastut. Let me perform it for you; do you invite me". They agreed and invited him. Then he saw the appropriate verses for his work.

From this it can be understood that Arbuda Kādraveya has made some efforts to introduce the grāvastut-priesthood
and this priesthood thus is later in origin.

Duties of the grāvastut:

The grāvastut has to praise the stones and this work is suggested by his very name "Grāvastut (praiser of the stones)." He praises standing; for the stones are standing as it were. Arbuda Kādraveya praised the stones wearing a turban and with eyes tied up; therefore, now also the grāvastut praises wearing a turban and with eyes tied up (KB ΑΑΙΑ.1).

Fratiprasthātr:

The pratiprasthātr is an assistant of the adhvaryu (ŚB ΑΙΙ.1.1.7; GB Ι.4.6;5.24). As to his being imitator of the adhvaryu or being inferior to him, a reference has already been made in connection with "adhvaryu and other priests" above.

Duties of the Pratiprasthātr:

Pratiprasthātr assists the adhvaryu in the Varuṇa-prāghāsa (ŚB ΙΙ.5.2.19ff). He has to ask the wife of the sacrificer regarding her loyalty to her husband. He asks her, "with whom holdest thou intercourse?" When a woman who belongs to one man carries an intercourse with another she undoubtedly commits a sin against Varuṇa. He thus asks
her lest she should sacrifice with a secret pang in her mind. When confessed, the sin becomes less since it then becomes truth; and whatever connection she confesses not, that will turn out injurious to her relatives (ŚB II.5.2. 20; TB II.6.5.2). In the soma-sacrifice, he having taken ghee in four ladlings lays down a piece of gold in the right wheel-track of the northern soma-cart and offers thereon (ŚB III.5.1.14). In the animal-sacrifice made to Agni and Soma, he roasts the omentum (ŚB III.8.2.20). He has an important role in drawing the soma-cups (ŚB IV. 3.1.4ff). In the sacrificial session he has to consecrate four personalities - the adhvaryu, the brāhmaṇacchaṁsin, the prastotṛ and the maitrāvaruṇa (ŚB XII.1.1.5-6; GB I.4.5-6).

Nesṭṛ :

The nesṭṛ belongs to the adhvaryu as his assistant (ŚB XII.1.1.9; GB I.4.6;5.24).

Duties of the nesṭṛ :

The nesṭṛ makes the wife of the sacrificer speak at the time of making her see the soma-cow (ŚB III.3.1.11). When the slaughterer announce "The victim has been quieted", the adhvaryu gives the direction, "Nesṭar, lead up the lady". Then the nesṭṛ leads up the sacrificer's wife (ŚB III.8.2.1).
He brings her again at the time of the Pātnīvata-graha is being drawn (ŚB IV.4.2.17-18). He utters the offering verses addressed to Tvaṣṭṛ who also has some connection with women (AB VI.3;10). He recites the Vaisvadevaśastra in the soma-sacrifice (AB VI.14). Agnīdhā sits on his lap. Here the agnīdh represents the male element and the neṣṭṛ the female element (AB VI.3;ŚB IV.4.2.8;GB II.4.5). In the Vājapeya sacrifice he draws the cups of liquor (ŚB V.1.2.16ff). In the sacrificial session he does the work of consecrating the pratiprasthātṛ, the potṛ, the pratihartṛ and the acchavāka (ŚB XII.1.1.7-8;GB I.4.6).

Unnetṛ:

The unnetṛ is an assistant of the Adhvaryu (GB I.5.24).

Duties of the unnetṛ:

Unnetṛ enters in the course of the soma-sacrifice, into the Havirdhāra Hall along with the adhvaryu, sacrificer, agnīdh and pratiprasthātṛ (ŚB IV.3.5.9) and other attendants of the adhvaryu. At the time when the adhvaryu pours out juice of the Āgrayaṇa cup, the pratiprasthātṛ holds out (and pours in the two residues of the Āditya-graha), the unnetṛ adds thereto some juice from the Ādhvarīya by means of a camasa-cup or a dipping vessel (udaṅcana)(ŚB IV.3.5.21).
Adhvaryu asks him to fill up the cup of the hotṛ (Sivas IV. 4.2.17). At the time of libation after the drawing of Hāriyojana-graha the unnetṛ calls the Šrauṣṭṛ. "For he is excessive (atirikta), because he does not call for the Šrauṣṭṛ for any other libation, and this libation of Hāriyojana-graha is also in excess. Thus he puts excess in excess" (Sivas IV.4.3.8). There are two unnetṛs in the sacrifice named Garga-trifātra and it is to the second unnetṛ that the thousandth cow is to be optionally given as daksīṇā (as another option it can be given to the hotṛ) (Sivas IV.5.8.12). In the sacrificial session he consecrates the neṣṭṛ, the aṃghāṭha, the subrahmaṇya and the grāvastut (Sivas XII.1.1.9; Gītā I.4.6). He himself is consecrated by a snātaka or a Brahmaśīrṇ (Sivas XII.1.1.11; Gītā I.4.6). The unnetṛ is consecrated last and at the time of the Avabhṛtha he comes out first, For he is the vital air and thus the vital air is put in the consecrated persons on both sides. So they obtain the full term of life and do not depart from this world before their full term of life (Sivas XII.1.1.11).

Importance and Exaltation of the unnetṛ:

In order to show how the unnetṛ is important and in order to exalt him he is identified with Viṣṇu (Gītā II.68).
Prastotṛ:

The prastotṛ belongs to the udgātṛ (ŚB XII.1.1.6; GB I.4.6;5.24).

Duties of the prastotṛ:

In the soma-sacrifice he has a part in creeping, for the Bahiṣpadavamana. (TMB VI.7.13; JB I.85). In the Āsvamedha-sacrifice at the time of killing of the horse he has to sing a sāman connected to Ṛama (TB III.9.20.1).

His work is described to be similar to the snorting of a horse. A horse snorts (praprothati) and the prastotṛ chants (prastauṭi). Therefore, in the Ṛajasūya at the time of Daśapeya a horse is given to him (TMB VI.7.13; JB I.85).

Importance and Exaltation:

If the prastotṛ is severed from the other rtvījaḥ at the time of creeping for Bahiṣpadavamana, the head of the sacrifice is deprived according to TMB VI.7.13; but according to JB I.85 there will be in that case some draw-back in the mouth. This implicitly shows that he is considered as were to be the head or the mouth, of the sacrifice. In glorifying him, ŚB identifies him with the speech of the sacrifice (ŚB IV.2.5.3). Elsewhere he is connected with Prajāpatī (TMB XVIII.9.11).
Subrahmanya:

The Subrahmanya priest works under the udgātā (ŚB XII.1.19; GB I.4.6; 5.24).

Duties of the subrahmanya:

His chief duty is to call the Subrahmanya formula when the morning-recitation has begun and the sacrifice is not finished (Sa ṇ B I.2.7). He has to call this standing upon the heap of rubbish and this has been explained by Sa ṇ B I.1.1-7 by means of a story: - Originally there were Brahma and Subrahma. Subrahma escaped the Gods. The Gods sought Subrahma with the sacrifice. The Gods sought it at the junction of the sacrifice. The heap of rubbish is the junction of the sacrifice. Therefore, the subrahmanya priest calls the Subrahmanya formula while standing upon the heap of rubbish.

The reason for the Subrahmanya standing upon the heap of rubbish is given differently elsewhere: The seers performed a sacrificial session. To the tallest of them they left the duty of calling the Subrahmanya. They did this thinking that thereby the Gods would be summoned from the nearest. They made him stand on the rubbish heap for this purpose (AB VI.3).

The objection that the other priests do the activities
within the altar and the Subrahmana priest without the altar (because he stands on the rubbish-heap) is removed in the following way - From within the altar they throw up the rubbish-heap and the Subrahmana stands on that rubbish-heap. Therefore, it is not that he is doing his work without altar (AB VI.3; JB II.78).

The name of the Subrahmana formula is Brahmaśrī and the priest Subrahmana should know this. Then he provides the sacrificer with abundant Brahman (power) ⁹ and Śrī (prosperity) ¹⁰. The calling of the Subrahmana by such a knowing priest can by itself be an expiatory rite (Saṭṭha I.2.12).

**Female elements of the subrahmana-priest:**

The subrahmana-priest is identified with Vāc(speech) (AB VI.3; JB II.78). A question is asked as to why he is said to be like a female as it were. The answer is that he is Vāc(speech) which is female (AB VI.3). Again, he gets a bull as a dakṣinā the reason of which is that the bull is a male and the Subrahmana is a female and this becomes a productive pair (AB VI.3). Thus we see that the Subrahmana is described as a female.

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⁹ For Brahman see Gonda, *Notes on Brahman*, p.40.

¹⁰ For Śrī see Gonda, *Vishnuism*, p.176ff.
Pratihartṛ:

He is an assistant of the udgātṛ (ŚB XII.1.1.10; GB I.4.6; 5.24).

Duties of the pratihartṛ:

The chief duty of the pratihartṛ is to utter Pratiharā (which is a part of the śāman and follows the Prastāva) and from this the name seems to have originated. To him the dakṣiṇās are given last; for he is the restrainer (pratihartṛ). Then he restrains in the end the cows for the sacrificer and they are not lost (ŚB IV.3.4.22).

Importance and Exaltation of the pratihartṛ:

The pratihartṛ is mystically called the cross-breathing (vyāna) of the sacrifice (KB XVII.7). He is to be understood according to the ŚB IV.2.5.3 either as a physician or crossbreathing. If the pratihartṛ is severed from the priests going for the Bāhiṣpavamāna, then the sacrificer is deprived of cattle; for he is identical with cattle (ṬMB VI.7.15; JB I.85 in this connection differs and says that in that case the fourth part of oneself will be lost).

Bṛāhmaṇācchāṁsin:

The priest bṛāhmaṇācchāṁsin is an assistant of the brahman. (ŚB XII.1.1.6; GB I.4.6;5.24).

Origin of the bṛāhmaṇācchāṁsin:

The priest bṛāhmaṇācchāṁsin originated in the divine sacrificial performance. Gods, while performing sacrifice were afraid of Asuras and Rākṣases. They said, "Who of us shall sit down on the southern side? We will enter upon the sacrifice on the northern side, in a place free from danger and injury." They decided to make the strongest of them sit on the southern side. Indra was the strongest. When he was requested accordingly, he demanded a boon and the work of the bṛāhmaṇācchāṁsin was given to him as a boon. Therefore, in the selection of the bṛāhmaṇācchāṁsin there is a mention of Indra (ŚB IV.6.6.1ff).

Duties of the bṛāhmaṇācchāṁsin:

His chief work is to recite. Thus, for example, he recites in the course of the third pressing a litany addressed to Indra and Bṛhaspati. For the Asuras removed from maitrāvaṭuṇa's litany took refuge in the litany of the bṛāhmaṇācchāṁsin. Indra drove them away from it with the help of Bṛhaspati (AB III.50).
Importance and Exaltation of the brāhmaṇācchāmsin:

The brāhmaṇācchāmsin is connected with Indra (TB I.7.6.1) and the reason of this is in the "origin of brāhmaṇācchāmsin priesthood" already referred to. He is described as the middle, as the organ of generation of the body of the sacrifice (KB XXVIII.9).

Pothṛ:

The pothṛ is an assistant of the brahman (ŚB XII.1.1.8; GB I.4.6;5.24).

Duties of the pothṛ:

He takes part in recitation. Thus, for example, he recites the offering verses at the time of Prasthita libations in the morning pressing (AB VI.10; KB XXVIII.3).

Agniḍhra:

The agniḍhra belongs to the brahman (ŚB XII.1.1.9; GB I.4.6;5.24).

Duties of the agniḍhra:

His chief duty is to enkindle fire (KB XXVIII.3). In the Dārsapūrṇāmasa sacrifices, at the time of the
stambayajurharana, he goes round to the north of the fire and presses the Stambayajus down on the heap of the rubbish (SB I.3.4.13). He makes the spoons and vessels clean (SB I.3.1.1ff). He binds the wife of the sacrificer (SB I.3.1.12). He takes part in the discourse with the adhvaryu. Adhvaryu asks him, "Has the sacrificer gone to the Gods?" Then the agnīdhra replies, "He has gone". Adhvaryu says, "Bid the Gods here". The agnīdhra says, "May they hear (srausāt)". By these words the agnīdhra means that they have recognised him. Thus the adhvaryu and the agnīdhra lead the sacrificer to the world of Gods (SB I.8.3.20; cp. I.9.2.18 also). In the performance of the Patnīsamyaajas he helps the adhvaryu (SB I.4.2.1ff). In the Dāksāyaṇa form of the Darsāpurṇamāsā, he shares the remaining whey along with the hotṛ, the adhvaryu and the sacrificer (SB II.4.4.25). In the Pitrmedha taking place in the Sakkamedha-parvan of the Cāturmāsya-sacrifice, he smells the remaining porridge (SB II.6.1.33).

In the soma-sacrifice he keeps the prastara handled over to him by the adhvaryu in a safe place (SB III.4.4.20). He recites the offering verses for the Patnīvatagraha (SB IV.4.2.15; KB XXX.1; GB II.4.5). For he represents the male element and the wife, the female element. Thus a productive pair is brought out. He sits on the nesṭrī's lap.
Then also it is said that the āgniṛdhra is a male and the
nēṣṭṛ is a female and thus a productive pair takes place
there (ŚB IV.4.2.18; AB VI.3; GB II.4.5). In the third
pressing he stirs the sour milk (ŚB IV.3.3.19). In the
Śatarudrīya performance he sprinkles the vedi. This work
is assigned to him because he is the same as Agni and
none will injure oneself. Therefore, he may not be injured
while sprinkling Agni, altar, which is identical with
Rudra (ŚB IX.1.2.1-4).

**Importance and Exaltation of Āgnidhra:**

The Āgnidhra is often identified with Agni as is
referred to above. He is also said to be representing the
heaven and the earth (ŚB I.8.1.41).

**Sadasva:**

This is the seventeenth priest (GB I.5.4). 12

**Difference of opinion:**

ŚB I.4.1.19 refuses to admit this priest. For then
there will be excess. AB VII.1; KB XVII.7; XXVI.4; 5; JB II.54;
SaqB III.4.5; 5.6; 6.3; 7.3; 8.5; GB I.3.18; 5.24; however,
recognise this priest.

12 for this priest see Weber Indische Studien, I, 144;
Hillebrandt, Ritualliteratur, p.97; Caland, Das
Śrautasūtra des Āpastamba, II, p.122.
Duties of the sadasya:

He has to sit in the Sadas and to look over all the offerings (SaB II.4.5). GB I.2.19 mentions that he has to sit in the southern part. "The Visvedevas sit in the southern part of the sacrifice and inasmuch as the Visvedas sat in the southern part of the sacrifice it became sadasya and that is why the sadasya is so called". GB I.2.19 says that he utters the Vyāhṛti jānat.

Exaltation of the sadasya:

The sadasya is identified with the generation organ of the sacrifice (KB XVII.7). He is also described as the space (SaB II.5.6;10.9) or the space in the eye (SaB II.6.3) or the space in the man (SaB II.7.3). If the sadasya, through ignorance falls short of his work, the self leaves the sacrificer. When the sadasya performs his work skillfully he places (in the other world) his (the sacrificer's) self in the sacrificer (SaB II.8.5). Thus the sadasya is said to be identical with the self of the sacrifice.

We have seen above the individual ṛtvījs, their duties, their importance and exaltation, etc. Now let us see what the Brāhmaṇa-texts say about the ṛtvījs in general.

Sacrifice and ṛtvījs:

There is a long chain of interdepending factors and
the ṛṭviṣis are at the base of this chain. The sacrifice is based upon the holy scriptures. The holy scriptures are based upon the speech. The speech is based upon the mind; mind on the vital air (prāṇa); the vital air on the food; the food on the earth; the earth on the waters; the waters on the light; the light on the wind; the wind on the air (ākāśa); the air on the brahman and the brahman on the learned ṛṭviṣis (GB I.1.37-38). Cp.also AB II.32, "On the priest the whole sacrifice is based, on sacrifice of the sacrificer." AB VII.19, "Sacrifice finds its support in holy power (brahman) and on the Brāhmaṇas". In the absence of the ṛṭviṣis the sacrifice remains empty and if qualified ṛṭviṣis are chosen, then many good results like jiti, vijiti, saṃjiti are obtained (GB I.2.8.4). The ṛṭviṣis are the officiants of the sacrifice. They prosper the sacrifice, they spread it, they generate it (SB I.8.1.28).

Ṛṭviṣis often stand as limbs of the sacrifice. Thus it is said that there are three limbs of the sacrifice namely the adhvaryu, the hotṛ, and the brahman (TB I.8.6.6). If the ṛṭviṣis creeping for the Bāhiṣpavamāna let loose their hold of the former ṛṭviṣi, then various limbs of the sacrifice are damaged as it were (TMB VI.7.13-15; JB I.85). A long metaphor is drawn in KB XVII.7 where the respective
positions of the respective ṛṭvija in the body of the sacrifice are described. Thus the brāhmaṇacchāmsin is its mind, the udgāṭṛ is its expiration, the prastōr is its inspiration, the pratihartṛ is its cross-breathing, the hotṛ its speech, the adhvaryu its eye, the sadasya its generation organ, the sacrificer the body and the hotrakas its limbs.

The sacrificer and the ṛṭvija:

The sacrificer is the producer of the sacrifice and it is by his order that the ṛṭvija spread the sacrifice (ŚB I.9.1.2). After selecting the divine priests the sacrificer selects the human priests and then they work (ŚadB II.10.3).

It is in the hands of the priests to do good or bad of the sacrificer. Thus, for example, if the adhvaryu desires that the sacrificer should be devoid of cattle, he removes the calves (in the New-moon-sacrifice) with a branch.

13 On the priestly magical power against the sacrificer see Levi, La doctrine du sacrifice, p.128; Oldenberg, Weltanschauung, p.131; Keith, RPV, p.379; Gonda, Religionen Indiens, I, p.175; on the priests and magic cf. Frazer, Golden Bough, p.52.
(of pālāśā) which has no leaves and the end of which is dry. But if he desires that the sacrificer should get cattle, he removes them with a branch, having many leaves and sub-branches. (TB II.2.1.2). AB III.2 describes the power of hotṛ in connection with the Praugaśāstra, "If he desires of a man, 'let me deprive him of expiration', he should recite (the triplet) to Vāyu for him in confusion; a verse or line he should pass over; thereby it is confused. Verily thus does he deprive him of expiration. If he desires of a man, 'Let me deprive him of expiration and inspiration' he should recite for him (the triplet) to Indra and Vāyu in confusion; he should pass over a verse or line; thereby is it confused; verily thus he deprives him of expiration and inspiration. If he desires of a man, 'Let me deprive him of the eye', he should recite for him (the triplet) to Mitra and Varuṇa in confusion; he should pass over a verse or line; thereby is it confused; verily thus he deprives him of the eye. If he desires of a man, 'Let me deprive him of the ear', he should recite for him (the triplet) to the Āśvins in confusion; he should pass over a verse or a line; thereby is it confused; verily thus he deprives him of the ear. If he desires of a man, 'Let me deprive him of strength', he should recite for him (the triplet) to Indra in confusion; he should pass over a
verse or line; thereby is it confused; verily thus he deprives him of strength. If he desires of a man, 'Let me deprive him of limbs', he should recite for him (the triplet) to the Viśvedevas in confusion; he should pass over a verse or line; thereby is it confused; verily thus he deprives him of limbs. If he, desires of a man, 'Let me deprive him of speech', he should recite for him (the triplet) to Sarvasvati in confusion; he should pass over a verse or a line; thereby is it confused; verily he deprives him of speech. But if he desires of a man, 'with all his members, with all his self, let me make him prosper' verily let him recite for him thus in due and proper order; verily thus he makes him prosper with all his members with all his self. Thus the hotṛ can do good or bad to the sacrificer.

The sacrificer has to surmise according to the loss, what ṛtvij has been against him - if he looses his cattle, he has to understand that the adhvaryu is the cause. If he gets bad reputation it is due to the hotṛ. If the acquisition and maintenance of his property are affected, it must be due to the brahman and if he loses his self or his offspring it is due to the udgāṭṛ (SaḍB II.9.1). It is also shown how the priests place the sacrificer in the state of bliss (SaB II.2.2.7) or how after having kept him in the mystic word om they lead him to the heaven (JUB IV.
4.5.7). The priests make for the sacrificer another body in the form of the sacrificer in the form of the sacrifice (ŚB IV.3.4.5). They are the supporters of the sacrificer who performs the twelve-day sacrifice (AB IV.25). GB II. 2.4 says that the priests are the friends of the sacrificer.

The sacrificer suffers due to the mistakes made, of course, inadvertently, by the priests during the performance of the sacrifice. When the hotṛ through ignorance falls short of his task, the voice leaves the sacrificer; when the adhvaryu falls short, the eye leaves, and so on. But if they do their work in a good manner then these things (which have left him) are re-obtained by the sacrificer (Sa ṇ B II.8.1-8).

It is, upto now, shown that due to the priests the sacrificer gets something good or bad. But elsewhere the Brāhmaṇa-texts maintain that the result of the sacrifice—whether good or bad—is obtained by the priests as well as the sacrificer. Though the Brāhmaṇa-texts also say that all the blessings are for the sacrificer alone (ŚB I.3.1.26; 9.1.21),14 the sacrificer is elsewhere indentified with the body of the sacrifice (ŚB IX.5.2.16; KB XVII.7) and the priests are the said to be the limbs (ŚB IX.5.2.16). It is

14 Oldenberg, Religion des Veda, p.372.
further said that wherever the limbs, there is the body; and wherever the body, there are the limbs. Therefore, both (the priests and the sacrificer) go to the same world (ŚB IA. 5.2.16). Thus it is implied that the result, whether good, bad or indifferent, is obtained by both the priests and the sacrificer. By means of depositing the upāmsugrāha both the adhvaryu and the sacrificer live long (ŚB IV.1.1.17). If the burning coals fall down to various directions the sacrificer, his wife and the priests are variously shown to get bad results (TB III.7.2.5-6). It will appear that there is no firm position in the Brāhmaṇas as regards who gets the result of the sacrifice. For sometimes it is said that the priests hold the power, to do good or bad, of the sacrificer and sometimes it is said that both get the results together. It is also further indicated that as both the sacrificer and the priests will get the same results the priests would not harm the sacrificer by performing the sacrifice wrongly either intentionally or due to negligence.

The relations between the sacrificer of the warrior class (ksatriya) and the priests who are of the Brāhmaṇa-class

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15 For the priests and the sacrificer as limbs and body cf. v. Nagelein, JAOS, 34, p.261.
are not, from the view-point of the Brāhmaṇa-texts, hostile. When in the Ṛajasūya the adhvaryu declares, "O Bharatas, this is your king, and of us, the Brāhmaṇas, is the soma king" (TB I.7.4.2;6.1;ŚB V.3.3.12;4.2.3) a kind of priestly supremacy and priestly escape from the kingly power may appear at the first sight. But Heesterman's explanation of this point deserves considering. The soma is not only the king of the Brāhmaṇas, but of the whole cosmos. The Brāhmaṇas represent the brahman-power which has a distinct bearing on fertility and growth. The soma pressed and offered in the sacrifice is the soma as the king soma whose realm is recognised in the universal fertility process. "Soma's kingship over the Brahmins is an exact reflexion in the sacrificial microcosm of his universal kingship over the macrocosmic fertility process."

Thus there is no supremacy or escape of the Brāhmaṇas from the rule of the kṣatriyas. In this respect it is important to see that JB II.119 calls the priests the subjects of the sacrificer. So the priests are naturally the subjects of the Kṣatriya sacrificer or of the king-sacrificer also. JB I.287 says that a Kṣatriya should not

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16 Heesterman, Consecration, p.75 f.
hate a Brāhmaṇa and a Brāhmaṇa should not hate Kṣatriya. 17
This rule can clearly express what relations the Brāhmaṇa-
texts expect from the Brāhmaṇas and the Kṣatriyas.

Qualities of the priests:

a) Knowledge and study:

The priests must be well-versed and learned. This
is the chief qualification. The importance of learned
priests is emphasized in various ways. The objection that
one should not sacrifice with the Vājapeya at all, for
thereby one would win Prajāpati who is everything and then
nothing would be left for the offsprings and the offsprings
would be worse - is refuted by saying that the priests there,
should be learned and efficient and then there would be no
harm. For that is the perfection of the sacrifice when
the wise priests assist the sacrificer in performing the
sacrifice (ŚB V.1.1.9-10). 18 As one offers in kindled fire
so does one offer the gift which one gives to a learned
priest and, therefore, one who is learned in the scripture
need not assign the gift to any deity (ŚB IV.3.4.33).

17 For the struggle between the priests and the sacrificer
in general, see G. van der Leeuw, REN, p.218f.

18 For the rtvija who are learned etc. see Gonda, The
Ṛgvidhāna, p.47 (note 15.3); for the importance of
learning in connection with the priests in general
see James, Priesthood, p.208ff.
The Āsvamedha is everything and he who whilst being a 
Brāhmaṇa, knows naught of the Āsvamedha, knows naught of 
anything, he is not a Brāhmaṇa and as such he is liable 
to be despised (ŚB XIII.4.2.17). The learned priests are 
called the human deities (ŚB II.2.2.6; IV.3.4.6; Saād B I.1.28; 
GB II.1.6). Kāthaka-brāhmaṇa XVIII says that whatever 
deities there are they live in the priest who knows the 
veda. "One who has studied the veda they call 'the Rṣi's 
treasure-warden (rṣinām nidhigopāḥ)' (ŚB I.9.2.3). The 
importance of study of the veda is very effectively told 
by ŚB XI.5.7.10 - "Moving indeed are the waters, moving 
is the sun, moving the moon, and moving the stars; and 
verily as if these deities did not move and act, even so 
will the Brāhmaṇa be on that day on which he does not study 
his lesson : therefore, one's (daily) lesson should be 
studied. And hence let him at least pronounce either a 
ṛgverse or a yajus-formula or a śamanverse or a gāthā or 
a kumbyā to ensure continuity of the veda."

b) Pure conduct, pure descent :

The priests are expected to be pure in their conduct
and pure in descent. As we desire to drink from pure and

19 On the importance of study see Gonda, Change and
Continuity p.203.
20 cf. Gonda, Change and Continuity, p.203.
clean vessel so also the Gods desire to drink by means of pure Brahmaṇas. (JB I.282). He is also expected to be of pure descent. See in this context the story of Kavașa Ailūṣa who was discarded as "a son of a slave woman" (AB II. 19; KB XII.3). A priest from a good family (ārṣeva) is identical with all the deities (ŚB XII.4.4.7). It is, however, noteworthy that daksinās are also prescribed to be given to one whose family is not known and to one who is not learned (TMB XX.15.10-11; GB II.3.17).

c) Mutual Co-operation:

Mutual co-operation of the priests was an essential factor. The importance of the Tanunaptra-rite is to be understood in this direction. Gods had discord among them and they put their favourite forms in the house of Varuṇa. Priests also lay down their favourite forms together in the performance of the Tanunaptra-rite. One should not do any treachery to one united by the Tanunaptra (AB I.29; ŚB III. 4.2.1ff). ŚB I.5.2.15 tells us the importance of the mutual understanding as follows - where the officiant priests perform the sacrifice with a perfect mutual understanding there everything works regularly and no hitch occurs. ŚB I.5.2.19 says that - where the officiant priests perform the sacrifice with a perfect mutual understanding there it will indeed rain.
Importance and Exaltation of the Brāhmaṇas in general:

We have seen how the individual priests are exalted; now we shall see how the Brāhmaṇas in general are exalted and their importance emphasized. We have already referred to the fact that the Brāhmaṇas are called human Gods. 22 There are two kinds of Gods; the Gods are Gods and the Gods in human form are the priests (ŚB II.2.2.6;IV.4.1; Saññī I.1.28;GB II.1.6). Thus the priests are exalted as the human gods. TB I.4.4.2 and 4 identify a Brāhmaṇa with all the deities (brahmaṇo vai sarva devataḥ).Kāthakabrāhmaṇa A.VIII tells us that all the deities live in a veda-knowing Brāhmaṇa. Therefore, to such Brāhmaṇas one should pay homage everyday and one should not speak ill of them.

In the evening of the day preceding the Agnīyādheya a ricepap is prepared for the four priests. The purpose of this is according to some to gratify the metres. This view is rejected and it is stated that the result of gratifying the metres can be obtained by mere residence of the Brāhmaṇas - may they be officiant priests or not - in his family (ŚB II.1.4.4). This shows how merely the

22 For Brāhmaṇas as Gods see Oldenberg, Weltanschauung, p.10; G. van der Leeuw, R.E.M, p.220; Gonda, Change and Continuity, p.203.
residence of the Brāhmaṇas also was exalted. Cp. in this context Kaṭhakabrahmaṇa I.5, where it is said, "One who is going to establish fire should not prevent in the evening (preceding to the day of establishment) a Brāhmaṇa who has come along with the Sun as a guest. The Sun indeed enters a Brāhmaṇa in the evening. After prescribing details about the place of the sacrifice, it is said that the officiant priests themselves constitute the place of the sacrifice. Wheresoever wise and learned priests, versed in sacred lore, perform the sacrifice, there no failure takes place and that place is considered to be nearest to the Gods. (ŚB III.1.1.5). Again the place seen by such wise priests is acceptable to the Gods (ŚB III.1.1.11)

If there is no fire available for the Agnihotra one can offer it on the hand of the Brāhmaṇa according to Saṇḍh IV. 1.12 and this implies that a Brāhmaṇa is as great as Agni. TB II.1.4.5 identifies the Brāhmaṇa with Agni Vaiśvānara. Elsewhere the Brāhmaṇas are identified with Āditya and it is said further that when the Brāhmaṇas are satisfied, they allow the sacrificer to the heaven (TB I.1.9.8f).

Importance is found given to the satisfaction of the Brāhmaṇas in ŚB I.7.3.28: - The sacrifice said, "I am afraid of thirst". "How art thou satiated?" "May I satiate myself after the priest has been satiated" (ŚB I. 7.3.28).
The rules such as one should not speak ill of the Brāhmaṇas (KB VI.4; cf. Kaṭhakabrahmaṇa XVIII referred to above) show how great honour was given to the Brāhmaṇas. It is also said that one should not discuss and think about whether a priest is deserving or not (TMB VI.5.9). His speech is to be followed with respect (GB I.1.25). Thus we can realise the height to which the priests have been exalted in the Brāhmaṇa period.

Bad Priests:

It must, however, be said to the credit of the Brāhmaṇa-texts that they do not ignore or hide the bad aspect of the priests. Though it is said that one should not think or discuss about the deservingness of a priest (TMB VI.5.9), it is merely an exhaltation of the priests in general. One has to take into consideration the good qualities of a priest and be sure that one avoids the bad priests. AB III.46 describes three kinds of errors possible due to the selection of bad priests. These errors are figuratively called "eaten", "swallowed" and "vomitted". "When the sacrificer chooses a priest who expects "May he give me or may he choose me", that is like something eaten. That does not profit the sacrificer. Again what is swallowed is when fearing he chooses a priest, "Let him not either oppress me nor let him make confusion in the sacrifice for me".
That is something swallowed. That does not profit the sacrificer. What is vomitted is that when he chooses as priest one who is spoken ill of. Just as men are disgusted by what is vomited, the Gods are disgusted by such priests. That also does not profit the sacrificer. Thus the Brāhmaṇa-texts are aware of the bad priests and they prescribe to avoid them. Elsewhere it is said that when there are unskilled priests having bad conduct that is a harm to the sacrifice. When the sacrifice is harmed, then the sacrificer is also harmed, then the priests are harmed; then the sacrificer loses his offspring and cattle and then he loses his heaven (GB I.1.13).

Looseness of the Brāhmaṇa-texts:

The Brāhmaṇa-texts are not scientific texts; rather they represent prescientific science of the sacrifice. Therefore, the looseness in the Brāhmaṇa-texts is not very difficult to point out. The descriptions of the priests whether individual or in general are scattered and it is for us to collect them together and try to get a comprehensive view. As some examples of their looseness we can note that the adhvaryu is identified with the mind by ŚB XII.1.1.5 but elsewhere the brahman (SaB II.6.2), the maitrāvariṇa (AB II.5.28; ŚB XII.8.2.23) and the hotṛ (TB II.1.5.9) are also identified with the mind. The hotṛ is elsewhere
identified with the voice of the sacrificer (A\bar{B} I\bar{I}.5.28) and still elsewhere the prastotra is identified with the same (\textit{SB} IV.2.5.3). Udgat being connected with Prajapati represents the male element but elsewhere it is also stated, in a mystical manner, that he does the work of a woman (\textit{SB} XI.4.3.1.35). We have already described that there is no fixed position about who – whether the sacrificer alone or both the sacrificer and the priests obtain the results of the sacrifice.

\textbf{Conclusion}:

From what has been said so far we may be justified in making the following points about the priests in the \textit{Br\ddot{a}hma\-na-texts} –

1) They are very essential for the sacrifice and their importance is exalted in various ways particularly by identifying them with the Gods.

2) The \textit{Br\ddot{a}hma\-na-texts}, however, do not neglect the bad priests and they expressly say that such priests are to be avoided.

3) The priests are expected to possess high qualities such as knowledge, good conduct, etc. They are expected to have good relations with the sacrificer, so much so that
they are sometimes said to be his limbs. No hatred or quarrel was expected between the Ksatriya sacrificer (e.g. the king) and the priests.

4) The large number of priests, their various duties, etc. show the grown up, developed, ritualism; but the emphasis laid on the "knowledge" shows how the spiritualism is also finding its place side by side with ritualism.