CHAPTER - 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 AIM AND OBJECT

The aim and object of this thesis is to give a detail account of the concept of sacrifice i.e. *Yajña* as revealed in Samhitās, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads particularly in the *Ṛgveda Samhitā*. The meaning of the sacrifice, its division, nature, object and its relation with the social, political, economic, religious and the theological cum philosophical aspects during the Vedic age are traced and deliberated here. It also gives a detail description of the five great sacrifices which are called the ‘Paṇcamahā yajñas’ in various Vedic texts. The rules and regulations to perform these sacrifices, its meaning, necessity as well as the outlook of authors of various
Dharmasūtras towards these great sacrifices, the importance of these sacrifices for the smooth running of the society, the nature of its simplicity all are going to be discussed here.

1.2 DEFINITION OF THE TERM VEDA

The sacrifice occupies a prominent position in the vast Vedic literature:

It is a part and parcel of the Veda. That is why, before going to discuss the concept of sacrifice and its implications in the Āryan civilization we have to understand first the meaning of the term ‘Veda’. The term ‘Veda’ is derived from the root ‘vid’ - ‘to know’ with the suffix ‘ac’. It means ‘Supreme knowledge’ or ‘knowledge par excellence’. It has been mentioned in the 

Rgvedabhasyabhūmikā as follows “Veda is that Supernatural Knowledge
which can not be attained through perception and inference”. This can be
attained only through this revealed text i.e the *Veda*. Manu calls the *Veda*
“the repository or fountainhead of all religious duties”. \(^2\) “The *Veda* helps
us to know the supernatural means to attain or get the desired object and to
avoid the undesirable object” - thus remarked by Śāyaṇā, in his introduction
to the commentary on the *Taittirīya Samhitā*. \(^3\) The term *Veda* includes both
the *Mantra* and the *Brāhmaṇa*. ‘*Veda* is the name given to *Mantra* and *Brāhmaṇa* jointly’ \(^4\) thus said in the *Apastambaparibhāṣāsutra*, Śāyaṇācārya in

his introduction to his commentary on the *Rgveda* remarks:

1. pratyakṣenānumityā vā yastūpyo na budhyate /
enāṁ vidanti vedena tasmāt vedasya vedatā //
Śāyaṇā on *Rgvedabhāsyabhūmikā*, p.148
2. vedo’ khilo dharmanāmulaṁ /
   *Manusmṛti*, 2.6
3. īṣṭaprāpyaniṣṭaparīhārayoralaukikamapāyaṁ yo grantho vedyāti sa vedaḥ /
   Śāyaṇā on *Taittirīya Samhitā*, p.2
4. mantra brāhmaṇayorvedanāmadheyaṁ /
   *Apastambaparibhāṣāsutra*, 1.33
“The Mantra and Brähmaṇa constitute Vedas—this definition is a faultless one.”

The great authority on the Pūrvamīmāṃśā system and the famous commentator of its aphorisms Savarasvāmin also defines the Veda as “Mantras and Brähmaṇas together constitute the Veda”.

1.3 FOUR CLASSES OF LITERARY WORKS IMPLIED BY THE TERM VEDA

The Vedic literature actually embraces a huge type of literature such as Samhitā, Brähmaṇa, Āranyaka, Upaniṣad and six Vedāṅgas. Though the Veda consists of primarily the Mantras and the Brähmaṇas,

5. mantraṃ brahmanatmakatvaṁ tavadaduṣṭaṁ lakṣaṇaṁ /
   Sāyaṇa on Rgvedabhasyabhūmikā, p.3

6. mantrasca brahmanarṇ ca vedah /
   Pūrvamīmāṃśāsūtra, 1.2.33
yet the Brahmana portion is again sub-divided into three classes, viz. the Brahmana, Aranyaka, and the Upaniṣad. So, the four different classes of Vedas are Saṁhitā, Brahmana, Aranyaka, and Upaniṣad. A brief account of this literature is given below.

i) Mantra or Saṁhitā: This portion includes the collections of Vedic hymns, prayers, benedictions, incantations, sacrificial formulae called ‘Nivids’ and litanies.

ii) Brahmana: This part belongs to huge or extensive prose texts which contain the Vedic mantras, their applications in different ritualistic performances and sacrifices, details of sacrificial paraphernalia and theological, mystical, philosophical, practical, grammatical, etymological
and metrical speculations. According to Prof. Macdonell—"They reflect the
spirit of an age in which all intellectual activity is concentrated on the
sacrifice describing its ceremonies, discussing its value, speculating on its
origin and significance." 7 Āpastamba expresses that "Brāhmaṇas are
injunctions for the performance of sacrificial rites" 8. According to him the
Brāhmaṇas deal with six topics, viz. vidhi (injunction), arthavāda
(explanation), nīnda (censure), prāṣaṁsā (praise), purākalpa (myths and
legends) and prakṛti (great deeds of kings etc.). Now these will be stated as
follows:

7. Macdonell, A.A., A History of Sanskrit Literature, p 171
8. karmacodana brāhmaṇani /

Āpastambaparibhāṣāsutra, 1.34,35
1. **Vidhi**: It means injunctions for the performance of particular rites. In the Brāhmaṇas all sentences expressed in the potential mood, such as ‘yajeta’- ‘he should sacrifice’- come under the purview of vidhi.

2. **Arthavāda**: It contains the numerous explanatory remarks on the meaning of mantras and particular rites.

3. **Nindā**: It consists of criticism, refutation and denunciation of the opponents’ views. This also deals with controversial remarks.

4. **Prasaisā**: It means eulogy or recommendation of sacrificial rites or related things. Whenever an extolation takes place in the Brahmanas it is implied that the particular thinks so far extoled is very much helpful to the sacrifice.
5. Purākalpa: This includes many legends connected with the performance of sacrifices. The legendary background of the whole sacrificial rituals is very helpful for the understanding of the Vedic civilization.

6. Parakṛti: The Brāhmaṇas include various stories of renowned śrotriyas or priests in connection with the performance of sacrifices. This portion is called the Parakṛti.

iii) Āranyaka: The third stage of development in the field of Vedic literature is marked by the Āranyakas (Forest texts). This literature is important for the discussion regarding the mysticism or symbolism of the sacrifices. The word ‘Āranyaka’ means what is produced in the forest. According to
Sāyaṇa, “The Āranyakas are so called because these were to be read in the forest.”

Those people who desired permanent bliss, would retire to the forests shunning the transitory pleasure of the world. Āranyakas were meant to give a preliminary training to those who desire eagerly for the liberation from the bond of birth and rebirth. As a part of the Brāhmaṇa, they occupy the position of a distinct category of literature due to their contents and language.

iv) Upaniṣad: The last stage of development in the field of Vedas is that of Upaniṣads. This word is derived from the root ‘sad’- to sit, with the

\[9. \text{āranya} \text{adhayayanādetad āranyakam iti tiryate/} \]
\[\text{āranye taddhiyītetyevaṁ vākyarṁ pravakṣate //} \]

Sāyaṇa on Taittiriya Āranyaka, 1.6
prepositions 'upa' and 'ni', which means 'sitting close' - 'a close session'.

So, the term Upaniṣad literally implies sitting down of the pupil near the teacher in a devoted manner to get the knowledge about the highest reality.

The main ideas that have been discussed in these texts are the conceptions of the individual soul and the Supreme soul (Ātman and Brahman). It discusses the secret doctrine concerning the relation between creation and created individuals. The fundamental ideas of the Upaniṣads are nothing but the amalgamation of the Supreme Self and the Individual Self. That soul of every human being is a reflection of the Supreme Being. It has been proclaimed by the Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad as follows 'the Ātman is
identical with *Brahman*[^10]. This same idea is reflected in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* as. ‘That are thou’[^11]. Thus in the philosophy of the Upaniṣads both the concept of *Brahman* and *Ātman* have got merged with each other.

The Upaniṣads deal with such difficult questions regarding the origin of the Universe, the nature of the deity and the soul and the connection of mind and matter and so on. The Upaniṣads are entangled completely with the theological and philosophical speculations on the nature of things as well as the nature of *Brahma*. Later on these works become the very basis of all the philosophical systems of beliefs developed in India. According to

[^10]: *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*, 1. 4.10
[^11]: *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 6.9
Winternitz, “Indeed the entire later philosophy of the Indians is rooted in the Upaniṣads. Their teachings constituted the basis for the Vedānta-sūtras of Bādarāyaṇa.”12 As the Upaniṣads form the closing part of Vedic texts, hence they were regarded as ’Vedānta’ also.

From the nature of the subject matter dealt with in the ’Samhitā’ and ’Brāhmaṇa’ portions we come to know that these are together known as ’Karma-Kāṇḍa’ since they are mainly concerned with sacrifices and other rituals. But the Āraṇyaks are known as ’Upāsasna Kāṇḍa’ and the Upanisads as ’Jñāna-Kāṇḍa’.

12. Winternitz, M., A History of Indian Literature, vol.1, p.246
1.4 CLASSIFICATION OF SAMHITAS

The Mantra or the collections of the Mantras, i.e. Samhitā portions mainly refer to the three Vedas—Rk, Sāman and Yajus. They are also known as ‘Trayi’ or three varieties of knowledge. The Atharvaveda Samhitā is a later production and it is slightly different from the other three Samhitās, so that it has no direct contents on the main sacrifice. In the commentary of the Yajurveda the great commentator Mahidhara says that—“For the benefit of the human being the great sage Vedavyāsa includes the Atharvaveda as one of the Samhitās”. So, the Samhitās which form the first stage of

13. tatradou brahma-paramparayā praptam vedaṁ vedavyāso mandamatin manusyaṁ n vicintya tatkrpayā caturdhā vyasya rgyajuḥsāmātharvākhyāscaturo vedān paśa vai sāmpāyana jaimini-sumantubhyah kramādupadidesa/

Mahidhara on Śuklayajurveda, ch.1
development in the field of Vedic literature are four in number. These are:

I. The Rgveda Samhita: The RK means laudatory stanza. It is mainly in praise of Gods. It contains the hymns of both religious and secular character. The prayers are revealed in the Rgveda in metrical form. With the help of these prayers various deities are invoked by the Hotr priest. This Veda consists of 10 manḍalas, 1028 hymns and 10,581 verses. All these texts represent the poetic ideas of Indo-Āryan people composed at different periods.

II. The Sāmaveda Samhita: Literally the word ‘sāman’ means ‘tune’ or ‘melody’. The Sāmaveda is therefore, the Veda of the tunes. These tunes help to raise the element of beauty and emotion of the verses applied in the

\[ \text{agnih pūrveḥḥriṣibhirīḍyo nūtanairuta /} \]

Rgveda, 1.1.2
ritualistic activities. As the melody or chant is an essential feature of the Śāma
mveda, so it is the Veda of the Udgātṛ priest. The selected and arranged
verses were used to sing by him at the time of the offerings of Soma
sacrifices. Out of a total of 1549 stanzas, only 75 are new. All others are
taken from the Rgveda. These are distributed in two books called Ārcikas-
(i) the Pūrvārcika and (ii) Uttarārcika.

III. The Yajurveda Saṁhitā: The Yajurveda Saṁhitā is the Veda of the
sacrificial formulae that contains all about the sacrificial acts which are to
be performed by the Adhvaryu priest. The sacrificial formulae here are
revealed partly in prose and partly in verse. Here most of the great Vedic
sacrifices have been revealed. This Saṁhitā have two texts- (i) The Kṛṣṇa
(Black) yajurveda and (ii)Sukla (White) yajurveda. The former came to be called Krṣṇa (Black) because the contents are not well arranged and the sacrificial formulae are intermingled to a certain extent, with their explanations. The latter text came to be called Sukla (White) because the hymns are well arranged in it.

IV. The Atharvaveda Sainhitā: The Atharvaveda also called ‘Atharvāṅgirasa’, is not so much concerned with sacrificial matters as the other three Vedas. It is called a heterogeneous collection of spells. These spells teach sorcery directed against hostile agencies such as different diseases, harmful animals, demons, enemies etc. Some auspicious spells such as charms to secure harmony in family and village life, reconciliation of
enemies, long life, health and prosperity are also revealed in it. So, it has a
double aspect, being meant to appease and bless and as well as to curse.

The main priest of this \textit{Veda} is Brahmā. He is regarded as the general director
of the sacrificial ceremonial. Hence, this \textit{Veda} is also known as the
‘\textit{Brahmaveda}’. 

\section*{1.5 \textit{Sākhā}’ OR RECENSION OF \textit{VEDA}}

The sacred lore, otherwise called by the term ‘\textit{Veda}’ was handed down
from generation to generation through oral transmission. Though much
care was taken in the proper pronunciation of these texts, yet some variations
took place in the modes of recitation and in the practical application of the
mantras due to time, situation and different preceptors. Thus the variations
arise in readings, pronunciations and order of texts. These variations become the cause of the creation of different recensions or sākhās of the Veda. In the Śrīmadbhāgavatam it is mentioned that “the different sākhās of the Vedas are created due to the different mode of recitation of the mantras among the different preceptors and pupils at different times”. Though there are different recensions in each Veda, yet the original Samhitā remains the same.

The Name of the Different Recensions of Four Vedas: Each Veda is enjoined with different recensions. Rgveda represents its growth of various

15. ta eta ṛṣayo vedarḥi svarṁ svarṁ vyasyannanekadhā /
sisyaiḥ prasiṣyaistacchiśairvedāste sākhinoabhavan //
Śrīmadbhāgavatam, 1.4.23
periods at different hands and the plan, therefore has been framed with a
view according to the authorship and the contents. At first there were five
recensions of this *Samhitā*, viz. *Sākala, Bāśkala, Āśvalāyana, Śāṅkhā yana*, and *Māṇḍukya*. Among these the first recension is only available.

Secondly, it is said that the *Sāmaveda Samhitā* had one thousand recensions which were taught by Sukarma to his disciples. But among these only three are preserved. These are- (i) *Kauthuma*, (ii) *Rāṇāyanīya* and (iii) *Jaimitīya*.

Thirdly, in respect of *Krṣṇa* (Black) *Yajurveda*, there are found only four recensions, viz. (i) The *Samhitā of Kātha* school, i.e. *Kāthaka*, (ii)

16. sukarmā cāpi tacchisyah sāmavedatarormahān /
sahasrasāṁhitābhedam cakre sāmnāṁ tato dvija//

ibid., 12.6.76
the Śaṁhitā of Kapiśṭhalakāṭha, (iii) the Taittirīya Saṁhitā which is also known as Āpastamba and the (iv) Maitrōyanī.

Again, in the Sukla Yajurveda Saṁhitā, there are two recensions—the Kanva and the Mādhyandina.

Fourthly the Atharvaveda has come down to us in two different recensions. These are (i) Saunaka and (ii) the Paippalāda.

1.6 The Authorship of Veda

The Vedas are considered as the store house of knowledge. As we know, the Hindu religion is based on it. These are considered by the people of the Hindu religion as a Divine knowledge. They believe that the Vedas, which were originally revealed to the sages, are nothing but the supernatural
consciousness. Thus the revealers of the Vedas are called as the ‘Drāṣṭā rah’ only. The Veda is, as a whole, believed to be sacred and hence not to be changed by anybody. As these were mere the revealed knowledge hence these are known as ‘Apauruṣeya’ (i.e. not made by man) and ‘Nityā’ (i.e. eternal). Yāska, the author of the fourth Vedāṅga i.e. Nirukta, discusses it at length.

1.7 THE VEDĀNGAS

There is another division of the Vedic literature which is known as the Vedāṅgas. These Vedāṅgas were raised for proper reading, understanding, and execution of Vedic sacrifices. In Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad it is mentioned
that there are six Vedāṅgas. 17 These are, (i) Śikṣā or phonetics, (ii) Kalpa or ritual, (iii) Vyākarana or grammar, (iv) Nirukta or etymology, (v) Chandas or metre and (vi) Jyotisā or astronomy.

Among these the ‘Kalpa-Sūtras’ occupy an important position in the field of Vedic literature. The ritualistic formulae of the Brāhmaṇas are long and tedious. Hence, to make it easy and remember properly the Sūtra style was adopted. Generally, the ‘Sūtra’ means the short form and the ‘Kalpa’ means the entire treatment of the subject of the Vedic sacrifice in the form of handy manual. Shortness is the great object of this Sūtra literature. “These

17. tatpāparā ṛgvedo yajurvedaḥ sāmavedo’tharavedaḥ / 
   sīkṣā kalpovyākaraṇaṁ niruktaṁ chando jyotiṣamiti // 

Mūndaka Upaniṣad, 1.1.5
Sūtras have been composed as practical aids to the sacrificer and the priests"18 thus mentioned in the Rkvedaprātisākhya by Viṣṇumitra in his Vargadvaṇavṛtti. The subject matter of the Kalpa Sūtras are classified under four heads. These are:

I. The Śrāutasūtras: These sūtras are mainly related with the rules for the performing of the great Śrauta sacrifices that last for many days and these involve a large number of priests. These sūtras deal with the three sacrificial fires, the performance of ‘Darsāpurṇamāsa’ and the different Soma sacrifices.

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18. kalpovedaviḥitānāṁ karmanāṃānupūrveyṛṇa kalpanāśāstram /
   Vargadvaṇavṛtti on the Rkvedaprātisākhya, p.24
II. The Gṛhyasūtras: The Gṛhyasūtras deal with different domestic sacrifices and rites to be performed by the house holders. The duties of the different castes, such as the marriage customs and the five great sacrifices are also mentioned here.

III. The Dharmasūtras: The Dharmasūtras deal with law, religion, custom and usage, the duties of the four castes and the orders (āśramas) in life.

IV. The Sūlvasūtras: The Sūlvasūtras deal with the construction of the place of the sacrifice, measurements of different kinds of fire-altars etc.

These works are important for the Vedic ritualistic studies. There are different Kalpasūtras belonging to the four Vedas.
1.8 CONTENTS OF THE KĀTYĀYANA ŚRAUTA SŪTRA

The Kātyāyanasrautasūtra belonging to the Suklayajurveda deals with the concepts and technicalities of Vedic sacrifices revealed in the Suklayajurveda. So a short introduction on this work is given here. The Kātyāyanasrautasūtra written by Kātyāyana contains twenty six numbers of chapters. The 1st chapter consists of ten Kaṇḍikās. This chapter describes the various topics relating to sacrifice like the procedure of Ādhanā, Cāturmāsya etc. The second and the third chapters describe about the performance of the Dansapūrṇamāsa sacrifice. Here each chapter has eight number of Kaṇḍikās. The Pindaśityajña, Dākshāyana, Āgrayāna, Agnya
dhāna, Punarādhāna, Agnyupasthāna, and the Agnihotra are described
in the fourth chapter. The fifth chapter, which consists of thirteen numbers of Kandikās, describes the Cāturmāsyayajña and Mitra-Bindeśti in a brief manner. The sixth chapter consisting of ten numbers of Kandikās describes thoroughly the Nirūdhapāsubandhayajña. From the seventh chapter up to the tenth chapter there is a brief description of the Agniṣṭoma-yajña. The eleventh chapter deals with the duties and responsibilities of the Rtvik called Brahmā. From the twelfth chapter up to the fifteenth chapter, it describes the Dvādasāśa, Gavāmayāna, Vājapeya and Rājasūya Yajña accordingly. The sixteenth, seventeenth and the eighteenth chapters deal with the description of Agnicayana. The nineteenth and the twentieth chapters describe the Sautrāmaṇīyajña and Aswamedhayajña respectively.
The 21st chapter deals with the description of the *Puruṣamedha, Sarva medha* and *Pitrmedhayajña*. The 22th, 23rd and 24th Chapters narrate the subjects related to various yajñas like *Ekāha, Ahīna*, and *Satra*. The 25th chapter deals with the *prāyascītta* and the last 26th chapter describes about the *Pravargyayajña*. In this *Srautasūtra*, except the 1st, 25th and 26th chapters, the three chapters i.e. 22th, 23rd and 24th chapters are based on the *Tāṇḍya Brāhmaṇa* whereas the rest are based on the *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa*.

**1.9 THE DATE OF THE VEDA**

The date of the *Veda* is a subject of dispute amongst the scholars of the east and the west. The term ‘*Veda*’ comprises a huge mass of literature, not a few books. It is a whole library and not merely a collection of books.
The Samhitās, the Brāhmaṇas, the Āraṇyakas, the Upaniṣads and the Veda-
ṅgas comprise the Vedic literature. It is difficult to fix the date of composition
of such a huge literature, which covers several centuries. On this issue the
great Indologist Prof Jogiraj Basu refers to the view of another great
Indologist Max Müller who remarks thus, “whether the Vedic hymns were
composed in 1000, or 1500, or 2000, or 3000 B.C., no power on earth will
ever determine”. 19 The famous German Indologist Winternitz too thus
observes-

“We cannot, however, explain the development of the whole of this
great literature, if we assume as date-a date as round about 1200 B.C or

1500 B.C as its starting point. We shall probably have to date the beginning
of this development about 2000 or 2500 B.C, and the end of it between 750
B.C. and 500 B.C. According to Bālagangadhar Tilak the Vedic period
begins from about 6000 B.C and extend up to 4000 B.C.

1.10 THE RELATION OF VEDIC TRADITION WITH THE WORLD

CIVILIZATION

Indian cultural tradition was emanated from the vast Vedic literature,
which is the oldest worded record in world civilization. This glorious
heritage is embedded in Sanskrit which is the most scientific language.

Civilization means a state of human society that is developed and organized

21. Tilak. Balagangadhar, Orion, Ch.8, p.220
from all aspects of life. In ancient India there was the Aryan civilization.

Their culture, wisdom, mode of thinking and knowledge all are represented

by the Vedas. They help to know about their spiritual and psychological

experience. The ancient Aryan wanted to know about the reality of life,

God and the Universal nature. Therefore Vedic poetry consists of the subject

matter both spiritual and material. They laid stress on the truth of life and

denergy for action. They realized that God is the source of this creation. This

universe gets strength from the God to move on in a systematic manner.

Due to their nature of optimism they invoked and worshipped the various

deities with the help of sacrifice to fulfil their desire. The main sustenance

of the Aryan civilization were cattle-keeping and agriculture. During the
period of *Rgveda Samhitā*, the Aryan culture and civilization was developed
in the North Western part of India, the banks of the great river Indus and its
tributaries. During the time of *Yajurveda* and the Brāhmaṇas the Aryan
came to the country called ‘Kurukṣetra’, from where the Brāhmaṇic religions
and social systems developed and extended to Videha and the Pāñchāla
countries. By the time of the Upaniṣads, the Aryan culture and civilization
had spread all over *Āryāvarta*, the vast country between the Vindhayas and
the Himalayas. Gradually it spreads to all over India.

1.11 THE SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE VEDIC AND INDO-
EUROPEAN RELIGION

There are some similarities between the Indo-European and Vedic
religion. There we get from the Indo-European myths and cult. It is certain

that the Indo-Europeans had a general notion of 'gods', for which they

used the term 'Deivos' to express the nature common to all the individual
divine powers. The first father of this world is called as Dyau and the first

mother as Prthivi. In Vedic Sanskrit these are called together 'dyāuspitar'.

in Greek language Zeús pater, in Latin language dies-pater. Besides there

we see that in most of the countries of Indo-Europe, people worshipped
two main gods- Agni and Uṣas. From the linguistic point of view we find

similarities in them with that of the Vedic literature. For example, Agni is

uttered as 'Ignis' in Lattin, as Ugniš in Lithuenion, as Āgon in Russian

languages. Moreover, Vedic Uṣas is called in Greek *Eārs and* in Latin Ārora etc. 23

1.12 THE RELATION BETWEEN THE VEDIC AND THE INDO-IRANIAN RELIGION

To understand the nature of the Vedic religion we have to compare it with the Indo-Iranian religion. It may be said that gods with Vedic names have appeared not only in literature of Iran but also further westwards in a monument discovered most recently. Deeds of contract in Babylonia were discovered in ‘Boghaz-koi’ (Asia-Minor), dating to the period around 1400 BC. In these it is found that the gods like Varuṇa-Indra-Mitra etc.

are worshipped. The language of Avesta is very much similar to the Vedic Sanskrit. The great asura, Varuṇa, addressed in Veda and referred to in the inscriptions of Boghaz-koi is called as, Ahura-Mazdā, in Avesta. It is the highest god. Both the people considered the intoxicating juice of the Soma (in Āvestic-Haoma) as the most distinguished offerings one could make.

Priests of both people celebrated the Soma as the lord of the plants. Many forms of prayers, composed by the Zoroastrian priests for spiritual god, are common to both Āvesta and the Veda. For example, the Vedic god Bhaga is called as Bagha, in the Āvesta. So also the Vedic word Atharavan is called as Athravan and so on. The words used in the Zoroastrian prayers are mostly common to both Āvesta and the Veda, which introduce us to the
language of the prayer of the Indo-Iranian, where the devotee delivers himself to the god leaving everything to the wish of the deity, through the performance of sacrifice.

1.13 MEANING OF THE TERM SACRIFICE

The word *Yajña* meaning sacrifice has been called as the *Sacrificeum* in the Latin. In Latin it denotes the making of holy act. Thus opines M. Trivedi. 24 The word *Yajña* has its synonym *adhvara* which denotes the sense of beneficial work or act. It is thus opposed to harmful act. Thus, we see a similarity between the Vedic word *Yajña* and the Latin word *Sacrificeum*. That the English word sacrifice has its different connotations

in Sanskrit, has been rightly pointed out by Anundoram Borooah in his lexicon viz. English-Sanskrit Dictionary as follows: ‘Sacrifice the ceremony- i.e. Yajñah, Kratuḥ Yāgaḥ, Ījyā, Homah, Makhah, Satram, Savanam and Adhvarah’.  

V.S. Apte mentions that yajña means a sacrifice, sacrificial rite; an act of worship, any pious or devotional act. It is used as a name of Agni as well as Viṣṇu. It means to make an oblation. According to the great sage Kātyāyana, yajña means abandonment of material in the name of a deity.  

Three things, viz. material, deity and the act of abandonment constitute a

27. dravyam devata tyagah /  
 Kātyāyanaśravastusūtra, 1.2.2
Sacrifice and the Vedic Aryans

Sacrifice was one of the main pillars of the Vedic religious system. In Sanskrit it is termed as *Yajña*. During the Vedic period the Aryan performed the sacrifices and offered oblations to the various deities. Their main occupation was agriculture and they had to depend on the cooperation of the natural phenomena for their large production. They were afraid of the different calamities of nature which may damage their cultivation. The Vedic Aryans believed with heart and soul that all the natural phenomena like the storm, the cloud, the rain, thunder and lightning, the sun and the wind etc. all are the visible manifestations of different gods. These natural phenomena...
formed the nucleus of the Vedic religion in general and the sacrifice in particular. For the purpose of favourable weather and successful cultivation they tried best to satisfy the gods through the performance of sacrifice. They offered oblations in the sacrificial fire for the different deities and invoked them to accept these with due regard. They believed that whatever is offered in the fire reaches the gods that are invoked. According to them sacrifice has a divine origin. This divine sacrifice was performed by Puruṣa as mentioned in the Rgveda. It was regarded as the model for all sacrifices performed by both gods and men. Hence, in every aspect of the life of the Aryan people, sacrifice played a vital role. It may be social, individual,
political and even the creation and existence of this Universe also.

1.14 CLASSIFICATION OF SACRIFICE

Vedic sacrifices are fundamentally divisible into two varieties. The first is the 'Nitya Yajña' which is enjoined upon a Brāhmaṇa or a Kṣatriya as a part of his daily duties. The second is the 'Kāmya Yajña' which is voluntary.

The 'nitya' or obligatory sacrifices should be performed without fail. Their performance may not produce any tangible result (karane phalasrutirnā sti) but their non-performance will bring disaster (akarane pratyavāyah).

The 'five great daily sacrifices', come under the first section on the other hand most of the 'Śrauta sacrifices' like Rājasūya, Aśamedha etc. come under the second section.
1.15 THE FORMS OF SACRIFICE

Sacrifice may be divided into five classes viz., Homa, Iṣṭi, Paśu, Soma and Satra. Every type of sacrifice has its Prakṛti or model and Vikṛti or modifications which follow the pattern of the model. The Prakṛti is called Pradhāna - the main sacrifice and Vikṛti - the Āṅga or accessories. Thus the Prakṛtis or models of the five types of Vedic sacrifices Homa, Iṣṭi, Paśu, Soma and Satra are Agnihotra, Darśa-Paurṇamāsa, Dakṣa or Prājāpatya Paśu, Agniṣṭoma and Gavāmayanam respectively. Here these are explained now in a nutshell.

**Homa:** The Homa sacrifice is also known as Darvī homa. It consists of offering oblations of milk, curd, rice, etc. to the Sun god and Agni in the
sacrificial fire both in the morning and evening. Agnihotra is the model for the Homa type of sacrifice.

In the Agnihotra two principal oblations are offered gradually to Agni and to Prajāpati in the evening. Similarly, in the morning also two main oblations are offered, which belong to Sūrya and Prajāpati.

Iṣṭi: The model for Iṣṭi type of sacrifice is called ‘Darsapaurnamāsa’. Darsa means the confluence of the Sun and the Moon (Sūryendusamgamah), i.e., the dark moon called Amāvasyā. Paurnamāśi means the full moon. This sacrifice is to be performed on the new moon and the full moon days.

Paṣu-Yāga: Dakṣa or Prajāpatya - Paṣu is the model for all Paṣu-
Yāgas. It is also known as *Nirudha-Paśu bandha*. It may be performed once or twice or six times in a year.

*Agniṣṭoma*: *Agniṣṭoma* sacrifice is the model for all *Soma* sacrifices.

The juice of the *Soma* creeper is the main oblation in this sacrifice. Every year in the spring, this sacrifice is to be performed by twice born caste with his wife.

*Gavāmayana* (*Satra*): This sacrifice is a sessional sacrifice and is the model of all satras. The *Satra* may take one year, ten years, and a hundred years for its completion according to their nature. The *Gavāmayana* takes 361 days for its completion. Besides these among the Vedic Aryans the kings performed the *Rājasūya* sacrifice during their coronation ceremony.
The Vājapeya sacrifice was performed for the emperorship of the supreme sovereignty. Moreover, the Asvamedha was performed due to the kingship and political purpose. The Puruṣamedha, Sarvamedha, Pītrmedha and the Sautrāmanī are some other great sacrifices which have occupied a great position in the Vedic age.

1.16 THE FIVE GREAT DAILY SACRIFICES

In the age of the Ṛgveda the rituals were simple and called forth for a small number of priests. As times rolled on, the rituals became more and more complicated and grand sacrifices came into existence. Originally there were only five priests in the early age, viz. Hotṛ, Adhvaryū, Agniḍhra, Grā-
vastut and Pratipasthāṭṛ. In the later Vedic age the number swells to sixteen
and including the sacrificer it comes up to seventeen. There were four R̄gvedic, four Yajurvedic, four Sāmavedic and four superintending priests called Brahmaná, during the time of that Vedic sacrifices. None could do without the priests. Therefore it was impossible for the common people to perform these huge types of rituals easily. Hence, some domestic rituals are enjoined in the Vedic age. These sacrifices are short and simple and the householders can do these easily. The five great sacrifices known as ‘Pāñcamahāyajñas’ are also included in it. These consist of the sacrifice to beings, the sacrifice to the men, the sacrifice to the Fathers, the sacrifice to the gods and the sacrifice to the Veda—termed as Bhūtayajña, Manusyayajña, Pitryajña, Devayajña and Brahmayajña respectively. These are useful
in giving happiness both in this and the next world. A detail account of the

‘Pañcamahāyajñas’ are also given in the proposed thesis.