CHAPTER - II

CONCEPTS OF SACRIFICE REVEALED IN VEDIC SAMHITAS, BRAHMANAS, ĀRAṆṆAKAS AND UPANIṢADS

Meaning and scope of the term Yajña

The term Yajña has been derived by Pāṇini, in his Astādhyāyī from the root 'Yaj' meaning 'to worship' with the suffix 'nān'. Etymologically the word Yajña derived from Yaj has three meanings. These are devapūjā, saṁgatikaraṇa and making gift. According to it the first meaning of yajña is devapūjā, i.e. worship of the divine and the learned. The word deva has several meanings. According to the sage Yāska, deva means one who

1. yaja yācayata viccha praccharakṣo nān /
   Astādhyāyī, 3.3.90
2. yajdevapūjā saṁgatikaranadānēṣu /
   Dhātupāthah, 1.728
presents gifts or enlightens one or gives noble advice or resides in the heaven³. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa says that the devas are the learned men⁴ who impart knowledge to fellow men. Thus deva-pujā means the respect for the learned and the wise. It is the duty of every man to respect the wise person. During the sacrificial sessions different relevant socio-cultural and religious problems take place, so yajña is a great socio-cultural forum for the refinement of the society. Deva-pujā also suggests worship of the Divine. To worship the Divine is to wish and work for the Divine. It is an act of spreading higher values and divine truth among the human being. Through the institution of yajña sages carried the message and principle

3. devo dānād vā dipanā d vā dyotanā d vā dyusthāno bhavatītī vā /
   Nirukta, 7.15

4. vidvārīsa hi devāh /
   Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, 3.7.3.10
of the *Veda* to all directions of the earth. Destroying injustice, selfishness
and evil spirit gods strove for and stood by truth. They can bring the divine
lustre to the individual with their majestic power. So, by *devapūjā* people
can follow their qualities and nature. The *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* advises the
human beings to imitate the gods. Vedic gods are imagined as models of
perfections in respect of socio-moral ideals. So, *devapūjā* was taken in the
sense of service of the people with that of the worship of Lord, which is
omnipresent.

Secondly, *yajña* means ‘*saṅgatikaraṇa*’. It expresses the sense of mak-
ing friendly union of gods and human beings. Here the great and the learned

5. yat devā akurvan ta karavāni /

ibid., 7.3.26
persons of various places assemble together to find out the solutions
of various problems of human life. It is the process with which the assimila-
tion between the Universal soul and Individual soul becomes possible. It is
a system that strengthens the universal unity. Also it is a process of creation
by assimilating different forces of nature.

Thirdly, yajña expresses the act of dāna or giving away. Through it
people has to give, to offer or to consecrate something to the gods with
devotion and respect. Here the people or the worshippers have to
consecrate themselves to gods. In the Bhāṭṭadīpikā a commentary on the

Mimāṃsā Sūtra, it is said that where the people offer oblations in the
fire with due rule for the gods is called the \textit{yajña}. This idea is already expressed by the \textit{Brāhmaṇa} literature also\textsuperscript{7}. The \textit{Nighantu}\textsuperscript{8} refers to fifteen synonyms of sacrifice. These are \textit{yajña, venah, adhvarah, meghah, vidathah, nāryah, savanam, hotrā, īṣṭi, devatātā, makhaḥ, viśnuḥ, induḥ, prajāpatiḥ}

and \textit{gharmaḥ}. The \textit{Amarkoṣa} also mentions seven synonyms for \textit{yajña}, These are \textit{yajña, savah, adhvarah, yagah saptatantuḥ, makhaḥ and kratuh}.

**Concepts of sacrifice in the various Vedic literature**

The Vedas are the oldest literary monuments of the Aryan civilization.

The beauty of thought and the skill in knowledge of the Vedic people are

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{yatra prakṣ epaṅgago devatoddeś yapūrvako dravyatyāgoanuśthiḥyate sa yāgapadārthāḥ} / \textit{Bhāṭṭadipikā, 4.2.12}
\item \textit{uddiśya devatān dravyatyāgo yāgo abhidhiyate} / \textit{Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, 1.1}
\item \textit{Nighanṭu, 3.17}
\item \textit{yajña savoadhvaro yāgaḥ saptatantumakhaḥ kratuḥ} / \textit{Amarkosah 2.7.13}
\end{itemize}
revealed in them. This Aryan culture and civilization was mainly growing up depending on the *yajña*, i.e., sacrifice. They looked upon every activity of nature through the medium of it. In its external form, *yajña* is a ritual of offering oblation in the sacrificial fire kindled on the *vedi*, i.e., the fire altar.

The rituals were performed in this *vedi*, where deities are being invoked and praised. During the performance of *yajña* different priests had to perform different duties. The Rgvedic priest, i.e., *Hotr*, first recited the Vedic verses. The Yajurvedic priest, i.e., *Adhvaryu* offered the sacrificial oblation with due rule. The Sāmavedic priest, i.e., *Udgātā* chanted the *sāman* and the Atharvavedic priest, i.e., *Brahmā* has the duty of supervising the whole ritual. In this regard he also held some religious discourses. The Aryan
people used these yajñas for various purposes. The yajña was so designed by the Aryans that it became a whole life of the Aryan civilization. For them yajña was not only an ordinary ritual but also a public institution. However the concept of yajña was developed as early as the compilations of the Rgveda. Gradually it was developed and the whole Vedic literature is enjoined with it. Even some times yajña was found to be symbolically performed in the Veda. Here, we are going to discourse the different concepts of sacrifice in various Vedic literature.

(I) The Sanihitās

One come across different concepts of sacrifice in the Vedic Sanihitās which is the earliest part of the Vedic literature.
(a) The *Rgveda Sanhitā*

Among all the texts of the *Veda*, the *Rgveda* is regarded as the most ancient text. It is a great religious book where many concepts of sacrifice have been revealed. The nature has been portrayed vividly by the poet seers of Vedas where they perceived a great sacrifice as being performed among the diverse forces of nature. Seeing this magnificent sacrifice the revealers became inspired and they advocated for sacrifice to be performed here on the earth. To them the sacrifice was nothing but offering materials to others. With this idea in mind, the poet seers of the *RK Sanhitā* reveal the sacrifice that they called variously and the most popular name of it was *yajña*. The dification of nature and the natural elements helped the seers to
develop the idea of sacrifice, i.e., being the act of offering materials in the enkindled fire, into various senses and these are find in the revelations of the *Rgveda*. As the concepts of sacrifice of the *Rgveda Samhita* will be treated elaborately in the third chapter of this thesis, so it is not discussed thoroughly here.

(b) The *Yajurveda Samhita*

The *Yajurveda Samhita* has two texts viz., the *Śuklayajurveda* and the *Kṛṣṇayajurveda*. Although they are mostly same in their contents yet we see the *Śuklayajurveda* possesses a number of such concepts which will be stated here in detail.
(i) The Šuklayajurveda Samhitã

This Veda signifies the spiritual knowledge of the progressive conception of yajña. During the Yajurvedic period, the sacrifice achieved a prominent place among the people. In the first verse of this Veda, sacrifice is said as the best work of the creator God, i.e the šreṣṭhatama karma. The Sun is the source of all energy. The people get strength and energy from this god. So, the seers asked the presiding deity of branches i.e. Prajāpati to enjoin the people with this best work i.e. the sacrifice. It is here beautifully expressed that “For food, for vigour, for breezes, for best work let the God Savitā encourage the worshippers.”

10. om, iṣe tvorije tvā vāyava stha devo vah savitā prārpayatu śreṣṭhatamāya karmāna / Šuklayajurveda, 1.1
The growth and development of the gods depend upon the sacrifice.

It should be extended for the happiness of gods. It is stated that the sacrifice is never injured or disrupted by anybody. It is delighted by the butter’s rapid flow. Brhaspati extends this act of worship. He restores the sacrifice uninjured. All gods are rejoiced here. Its step moves forward.\textsuperscript{11}

The sacrificer who has the devotion to gods helps the devotee in attaining the sacrifice through truth or divinity. In its approach to god Agni, in all its humility, a sacrificer wishes that Agni will lead people to the highest truth. In this sense, Agni has been glorified as \textit{Vratapati}, i.e ‘the lord of act’.\textsuperscript{12}

\begin{verbatim}
11. mano jūtirjuṣṭaṁājyasya brhaspatiryajñamīmāṁ tanotvariṣṭaṁ yajñāṁ samīmaṁ dadhātu / ibid., 2.13
12. agne vratapate vratāṁ carisyāmi, tacchakeyaṁ tanme rādhyatāṁ/ idamahamanṛtāṁsatyaṁupaimi // ibid., 1.5
\end{verbatim}
Here it is said that he will practise the act of Agni and by this he will get mental and physical strength. Thus it will lead him from untruth to truth.

The seer of the Śuklayajurveda compares the yajña with a piece of cloth.

Just like the threads of a cloth are woven with each other, so also the threads of the sacrifice are spreaded both in the heaven and the earth. Both the gods and men have to weave this cloth.\textsuperscript{13} From this revelation we see that the learned people of the society wove cloths in the form of sacrifice.

As because the sacrifice was spreaded over the three lokas by the creator God therefore it has been identified with the pervading Sun i.e., Viśṇu.

It is also entrusted with the act of preservation of the world. It is reflected

\textsuperscript{13} sīṣena tantraṁ manasā mantsina urreṣṭreṇa kavayo vayanti / aśvinā yajñāṁ savitā sarasvatīndrasya rūpaṁ varuṇobhiṣajyan // ibid., 19.80
in this *Veda* very beautifully.\textsuperscript{14} Here it is stated that Viṣṇu had taken three strides in these lokas such as heaven, atmosphere and the earth. This revelation clarifies about Viṣṇu’s pervading character. This has been enjoined in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* (1.1.2.13) as *yajñō vai viṣṇuh*.

The seer of this *Veda* further expresses that just like in the nature everything cooperates with one another so also in the Vedic sacrifice the sacrificers remained in close touch with one another. This relation has been compared with that of a child and his parent.\textsuperscript{15}

The Vedic sacrifice appears as non-violent. So, it is called as ‘*Adhvara*’

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{14} ibid. 2.25
  \item \textsuperscript{15} naktosasa samanasa virupe śiṣumekaṁ samīcī /
    dyāvākṣāmā rukmo antarvibhāti devāagnirn dhārayandraviṇodāḥ //
    ibid., 12.2
\end{itemize}
which literally means ‘without any violence’. The sense of sacrifice from
the view point of non-violence is clearly expressed in this Veda. Thus it
speaks\textsuperscript{16} that the sacrifice which should be in the heaven would be brought
for the sake of heart, mind, heaven and the sun. It is for non-violence and
nothing else.

The sacrifice is here regarded as the ‘Divine ship,’ i.e. \textit{daivīm nāvam}.

This ship is the symbol of divine-majesty. Through it the worshippers can
cross this measurable world peacefully. The \textit{rk} and \textit{sāman} (prayājas and
anuyājas) are the oars of this ship (\textit{svartrām}). This is beautifully stated thus:

\begin{quote}
: For happiness, only the worshippers want to board on the divine ship, that
\end{quote}

16. hrde tvā manase tvā dive tvā stūrjaya tvā /
ūrdhvamimamadhvaram divi deveṣu hotrā yaccha //
ibid., 6.25
is characterised of as the protector of the universe, (sutrāmāṇam) vast (prthivīm), being the heaven itself (dyām), being devoid of anger (anehasam), gentle, symbol of living (suśarmānam), a good one who accomplished everything (supraṇītim), the holder of the status of prayāja etc. (svaritrām), devoid of crime etc. (anāgasam), also devoid of fault (asravantīm)17.

Sacrifice helps to increase knowledge. Through this knowledge the sages have attained the life of immortality. So, the sacrifice is regarded as the celestial path, i.e. Devayāna18. It helps to reach the immortal regions

17. ibid., 21.6
18. etam janītha parame vyomandevāḥ sadhasthā vida rūpamasya / 
   yadāgacchāt pathibhirdevayānaṁairiṣṭapūrte kṛṇavathavirasmai // 
   ibid., 18.60
where death is finally conquered. As the origin of this creation is endowed with the sense of sacrifice, so it is called as the nabhi i.e. the navel of the earth.\(^\text{19}\)

The sacrifice is going on everywhere in the world. No one can imagine its majesty. That is why the sacrifice is declared by the Vedic seer as the ocean that pervades all in the universe. It is expressed that the istaka, that is used in the building of the sacrificial fire altar held as the samudra, which is fathomless. Thus sacrifice in the form of brick is said as the fathomless one\(^\text{20}\).

Cultivation was the main source of occupation of the Vedic Aryan.

19. iyam vedih paro antah prthivyā ayam yajño bhuvanasya nabhīḥ / ibid., 23.62

20. apāṁ prsthamsi yoniragnēḥ samudramabhitaḥ pinvanānam / vardhamāno mahānā ca puśkare divo mātrayā varimṇā prathasva // ibid., 13.2
So, they looked upon the performance of sacrifice in the sense of farming.

That is why, the sacrifice is figuratively spoken of as ploughing. It is revealed beautifully in this *Veda*\(^{21}\). That is for bringing happiness to the gods the poets by their speech hold the plough in the form of sacrifice and spread it in many directions. Here the plough (*lāṅgula*) and its yoke (*yugam*) are symbolically spoken of as the body of sacrifice, that is again symbolically taken as the means of bringing food to this earth. The *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* too expresses the same view as follows:

\[ sa \text{ vā ātmānameva vikṛṣati - na paksapucchāni ātmanastadannām dadhāti/} \]

21. *sīrā yunjanti kavayo yugā vitanvate prthak / dhīrā deveṣu sumnayā //*  
*ibid.*, 12.67
Besides it says, he then ploughs through it here ploughing means food,

and the gods at that time when they were about to heal him (Agni - Prajāpati)

first put food into him and in like manner this sacrifice with a sense of heal,

first puts food into him.

All the creatures of this world should be attached with the sense of charity for the welfare of one another. The spirit of dedication in doing great and noble deeds connect the human consciousness with the divinity.

This sense is expressed in this Veda. Indra the chief Vedic god is prayed for
to connect the sacrifice with his worshippers for mental upliftment. The respective entity or element for the respective place should be favourable to each other to move this creation smoothly. In this Veda, the seer expresses his gratitude to those deities who are most responsible for holding yajña.

The whole universe including the three spheres with their energies act for the creative purpose of immolating with one another. The power of cosmic energy is scattered everywhere and it inspires every creature to

22. samindra no manasā neṣi gobhiḥ samsūribhirmaghavant saṁsvastya /

saṁ brahmaṇaḥ devakṛtaṁ yadasti saṁ devānāṁ sumatau yajñiyānāṁ svāhā //

ibid., 8.15
live with their respective livelihood. All the divine morality, ethical law, humanit

y and divinity are conformed and protected through the *yajña*. It helps to grow and spread the qualities of gods which are suitable for nature.

All the objects associated with the *yajña* are the part and parcel of this activity. Hence, the *yajña* is considered as a means by which the gods can ascend⁴, i.e. the *utkramanam*. On the other hand *yajña* is very much congruous to humanity. All the matters and energies in various forms whether existed in the external world or the inner-self of the individual are developed with the help of *yajña*, bearing the character of charity, assimilation

23. *yaste drapsaḥ skandati yaste aṁśuṇārvacyuto dhīṣaṇayorupasthāt / adhvaroyorvā parivāyaḥ pavitrattāṁ tejuhomī manasa vaṣaṭkṛtam svāhā devānāmutkramaṇamasi //*

*ibid.*, 7.26
etc. The sense of individualism together with the universalism come into notice through the verses of the Yajurveda. Thus yajña was connected to the whole life of the Aryans. Hence, the Yajurveda has rightly says that life prospers through yajña.24.

The great Puruṣa sūkta is revealed in this Veda too. According to the great commentator Sāyaṇa, the term Puruṣa means the whole universe where all creatures exist. The whole world is the manifestation of the yajña. It is a kind of mental sacrifice where the Supreme Puruṣa is sacrificed or immolated himself for creation. This universe is formed with the

24. auryajñena kalpatāṁ prāṇo yajñena kalpatāṁ čkṣuryajñena kalpatāṁ śrotraṁ yajñena kalpatāṁ /
ibid., 18.29
25. Puruṣaḥ, brahmaṇḍarūpe pure śete iti sarvapraṇīśamaśṭi ṛgopaḥ brahmaṇḍaḥ cādhaśyāḥ purusah /
Sāyaṇa on Suklayajurveda, 31.1
combination of different entities of powers. The power of the individual one is co-related with that of the Universal one. As the human body moves on with the co-operation of different organs and limbs, similarly, the society also moves on with the co-operation of the duties of different castes and creeds. At the very beginning the gods worshipped Prajāpati their creator god with that of yajña with their mind. These are the first sacrifices which lead to the manifestation of this world. So, it is mentioned that yajña is the first ordinance of creation. These divine sacrifices became the inspiration of the mortal beings and thus the act of sacrifice followed here on this earth.

26. tāni dharmāni prathamānyāsanā
tāni dharmāni prathamānyāsan/ ibid., 31.16
(c) The *Sāmaveda Sarīhita* :

From the ritualistic point of view the *Sāmaveda* is very important.

The samans are generally applied in the Vedic sacrifices. Thus we get a number of concepts of sacrifice in this *Veda*. This will be stated citing certain examples. This *Veda* holds that sacrifice has been born from Law. It is born as the loftiest Law. It increases the power of the gods. Besides it has been performed by Manu, the ancestor of the human race. Sacrifice is regarded as a path by which one can conquer the world of heaven and attain the heavenly spirit. This has been performed by the great sage Arigiras

27. *ni tvāmagne manurddadhe jyotirjanāya śāsvate /
   dīdetha kanyā ṛtajāta ukṣito yāṁ namasyanti kṛṣṭayah //

*Sāmaveda*, 1.1.5.10
which latter priests followed. Thus the sacrificers were encouraged to
perform sacrifices gently by the way Angiras performed it.²⁸

Being delighted at the activities of sacrificers Varuṇa supports the folk.

According to the seer sacrifice is like a chariot i.e., *ratha* that has been
drawn to the heaven by the two horses namely the *RK* and the *Sāman*. These
become more powerful at the time of sacrifice. The sacrifice thus performed
takes the sacrificer to the heaven and at the same time brings the gods to the
earth. This sense has been clearly expressed in the *Samaveda* where it is
revealed that the steeds yoked the chariots and thus they carry the gods

²⁸. ita etad udāruhan divah prāhānyā ruhan /

pra bhūrjayo yathā pathodyā maṅgiraso yayuh //

ibid., 1.1.10.2
like Indra to heaven and by drinking the delightful *soma* rasas there in Indra and other gods bring water to this earth.\textsuperscript{29} So also in another verse *rk* and *sāman* verses are called as two horses that govern the sacrifice\textsuperscript{30}

The sacrifice brings forth the eternal glow to the sacrificer. It proceeds on following the rule of Nature. So, the fire of sacrifice is called the ‘*Rtāvāna*’. It is the light of Law, which is to be obeyed by the whole cosmos. This light spreads itself everywhere performing the cosmic sacrifice in Nature.

The creation of the different seasons and their different activities together with the change of the climate are the manifestations of the cosmic sacrifice.  
\textsuperscript{29} *yadī vahantāśavo bhrājamānā ratheśvā / pibonto madirāni madhu tatra śrāvānīsi kṛṇvate //*  
ibid., 4.1.2.5  
\textsuperscript{30} *ṛcaṁ sāma yajāmahe yābhyaṁ karmāṇi kṛṇvate / vi te sadasi rājato yajāṇī deveṣu vakṣataḥ //*  
ibid., 4.2.3.10
This sense is clearly indicated in the *Samaveda*. The seer of this *Veda* expresses that earthly sacrifice gives strength to the gods, who latter on helped men by their cosmic power. The sacrifice bears the light as well as the power of Sūrya. It is the cause of rain which in the form of water comes to the earth. On the earth the water enters into the plants and other created things. Thus the sacrificial fire establishes its greatness in the atmospheric region. The earthly sacrifice goes to heaven and from that it again comes to the earth. This act of sacrifice can be learnt from this *Veda* where

31. ya idam pratiprapthe yajñasya svaruttiran ṛtūnutsrjate vasī /
   ibid., 8.2.19.2

32. agnirindraya pavate divi sukro virājātmahiṣi vijāyate /
   ibid., 9. 2.4.1

33. apsu retaḥ śīśriye viśvarūpam tejāḥ prthivyāmadhi yat sanibabhūva /
   antarikṣe svanī mahimānāmi mimānah kanikranti vrṣṇo aśvasya retaḥ //
   ibid., 9. 2.12.2
Indra is said as having multiform. He is the god who lays seed in waters and so on. Thus the sacrifice has been going on in the heaven, sky and the earth.

This sacrifice is the eternal religion which raises the purity unto man and man unto god. The sacrifice is regarded as the symbol of mental and spiritual upliftment. It is an everlasting process. In the performance of offering oblation the inner soul of the sacrificer attached with the inner-air of vitality.

The solemn-vow of the sacrificer comes out at that time with the form of speech or prayer to the gods. Simultaneously, the consciousness of the performer becomes bright and pure and feels mental pleasure. It is a means of getting friendly union between the god and man. The sacrificer praises
the fire of *yajña* to be his friend. The worshippers are fervently requested by the seer to praise Agni by beautiful verses in each of the sacrificial sessions.

This Agni is not an ordinary god. He is immortal, friend of all and what not.

Thus in the *Sāmaveda* we get different concepts of sacrifice.

d) The *Atharvaveda Samhitā*:

In the *Atharvaveda samhitā* the term ‘Yajña’ is expressed in different senses. The *yajña* occurs in the whole world. It is an extensive work led by Visvakarman, who is nothing but *Brahman* (*i.e.* *Paramātmā*, the Supreme Spirit). The sacrifice acts spiritually over the sacrificer. Through mind and

34. *yajñayajñā vo agnaye girāgirā ca daksase /
prapra vayamamṛta ni jātavedasani priyani mitramina śanisiṣam //*

ibid., I. 1.4.1
soul the sacrificer has to control himself. With the act of initiation and
meditation the spiritual sacrifice takes place. This spiritual sacrifice leads
him to the gods. To perform it, all the inner organs of the sacrificer play a
vital role. Here the sacrificer consecrated his all sense organs, mind, intellect
and soul to the sacrificial fire in its spiritual form. Thus the sacrifice helps
the sacrificer to see himself in a right manner. This spiritual sacrifice is
performed and extended also by the gods. It is here expressed that35 “the
sacrificer worships by his speech and mind Agni who is the eye and mouth
of sacrifice. The sacrifice is extended by Viśvakarma. The gods seeing this

35.yajñasya cakṣuḥ prabhṛtirmukhāni ca vācā śrotṛena manasā juhomi / 
imāni yajñāni vitattāṁ viśvakarmanā devā yantu sumanasyamanāḥ //

Atharvaveda, 2.35.5
come towards the sacrifice."

With the help of sacrifice the gods travel between the earth and the heaven. This has been beautifully compared to a car that can carry many passengers to its destination. This car is in favour of gods. Similarly, a sacrifice can bring many gods to its destination within a short period of time. It can assemble the gods where their necessity arises. Hence, the sacrifice is called as the ‘devayānā’ in this Veda.\textsuperscript{36} This is worshippable by every body. Through sacrifice different gods acquire different powers to do their activities in the creation. In this Veda sacrificial activities are also

\begin{quote}
36. ye panthāno bahavo devayānā antarā dyāvāpṛthivī /

sanicarantite mā juṣantāmi payasā gṛṭena yathā kṛtvā dhanamāharāṇi //

ibid., 3.15.2
\end{quote}
compared to farming. (c.f.AV.3.17.1)

The arrangement of fire, the chanting of the mantras, the offering of oblations on fire and the benefits produced from it are like that of the activities of farming. In farming the ploughing, the sowing of seeds, its nourishment and collection of corns are like that of sacrifice. All the gods activate themselves with the help of *yajña*. It helps the creatures in the act of nourishment. It develops the powers of the different deities from all aspects.

Hence, *yajña* is called as the Lord of gods\(^{37}\). *Yajña* has the power of creation and conjugation. For the production of any object two or more elements are

\(^{37}\) yajñah devānāṁ adhipati /

ibid., 7.5.2
needed. To make them prepared, the performer of the work has to deal it
with care maintaining due rules. Thus, every performance of a man leads
him to a new dimension. The *yajña* is regarded as the source of new
production where the divine energy is concealed. With this productive or
creative power, one sacrifice produces the other one. This idea of sacrifice
has been expressed in the *Atharvaveda*.

38. *yajña yajñam gaccha yajñapatiṃ gaccha svāmī yonimi gaccha svāhā /*

In the *Prthivi Sūkta* of this *Veda* it is mentioned that *yajña* is associated with this earth. Here it is reflected
that both the nature and created things are helpful for each other. Here, it is
stated that the earth is the mother of all because all the living beings are
generated and existed due to her generocity. The truth and purity lying in

38. *ibid.*, 7.102.5
the bosom of earth who always sacrifices herself to others and helps to sustain this world. Hence, the *yajña* is regarded as the sustainer of this world. In this way it is seen that in the *Atharvaveda* different concepts of *yajña* are revealed beautifully.

II. Brāhmaṇas:

Like the Sarṇhitās the Brāhmaṇa texts too reflect on different concepts of the sacrifice. Here only the main Brāhmaṇa texts such as the *Aitareya*, *Kauśitaki*, *Satapatha* and *Taistirīya* will be discussed where such concepts are beautifully laid down.

39. satyaṁ brhadṛtamugraṁ dī kṣa tapo brahma yajñah pṛthivīṁ dhārayanti / ibid., 12. 1.1
a) The *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*:

In the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* the sacrifice is called both as the Agni and Viṣṇu. It is Agni because it takes out the oblation in it and brings them to gods. It plays the role of representative of all the gods. Besides, in the form of Viṣṇu it is pervading in the whole universe. For the creation of this universe this god is mostly needed. It exists in the heart of every object which no one can deny. So in the forms of Agni and Viṣṇu all gods are attached with sacrifice. These two gods consist of the forms of the sacrifice⁴⁰. The libations in the sacrifice are given by calling the name of gods. The sacrificial rituals together with the libations makes the divine path to the heaven.

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⁴⁰ *agnirvai sarvā devatā viṣṇuh sarvā devatā ete vai yajñah / Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, 1.1.1*
When the specific oblation is given by calling the name of the particular god, then through that divine path the god comes to the sacrifice. So, in the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*\(^{41}\) it is said that both the ‘*Īṣṭī*’ and ‘*Āhuti*’ are called the passege or ways to heaven. Both the gods and the ancestors of the human race have extended the sacrifice from ancient time. So, the term ‘*Vitanoti*’ is used for sacrifice,\(^{42}\) which means, ‘to extend’. From the time of creation the gods and the sages have been performing the sacrifice. The sacrificer has to reform his mind, speech and intellect. For this he has to perform the *yajñā* with heart where the soul is the *yajamāṇa* itself. The sacrificer tries to get

\(^{41}\) utayaḥ khalu tā nāma yabhirdevā yajamāṇasya hava māyanti ye vai panthāno yah srutayastā vā utayasta u evai tat vargayaṇā yajamanasya bhavanti /

ibid., 1.1.2

\(^{42}\) tvaya yajñani vitanvata iti yajñamevāṃśā etadvitanoti /

ibid., 1.1.4.
the purity both mentally and physically with the spiritual power of the soul. Thus the act of self immolation of the soul is possible with the Supreme soul. The truth comes out from his mouth automatically because the two souls are in close touch with each other. Thus the sacrificer can attain the divinity. In this sense sacrifice is called the ship which can cross the sacrificer from this world to the other world without any misfortune. By the help of speech, truth and knowledge the sacrificer can get upon on that ship. This sacrifice has been performed by the sadhyā gods. The Ādityas and the Arigirases also accompany them. They have first performed this sacrifice which were called the first religion.

43. yajñō vai sutarmā nouḥ / ibid., 1.3.2
Due to the sacrifice the sacrificer can reach the world of heaven by the self-immolation. All activities of the sacrificer are offered to gods. His emotions, thinking and knowledge all are offered to the gods of the sacrifice.

Thus the sacrificer becomes united with the sacrifice. So, the sacrificer is called the sacrifice⁴⁴. It is the sacrificer who invokes the gods with oblation to desire long life etc. His oblation goes to various gods by the power of sacrifice for the benefit of creation. Prajāpati is the year. The twelve months, five seasons and the three worlds, i.e. the Earth the mid-air and the Heaven and lastly the Ādityas are one with Prajāpati. They all are responsible for the cosmic and natural sacrifice. They have to perform this by different

⁴⁴. yajamāno vai yajñāḥ /
ibid., 1.5.2
natural phenomena like the Day and Night, the change of the climate in
different seasons, by producing rain, by growing plants on the earth and by
inspiring the animal to engage in various activities which are essential for
the creation. So, the sacrifice is called Prajāpati. Through the sacrifice
communication is made possible between the gods and men, between the
individual soul and the Supreme soul and between the divinity and the
humanity destroying all types of impediments. The external sacrifice
strengthens the power of gods and make them active for the welfare of the
universe and the inner sacrifice makes the sacrificer attain union with these
deities. The sacrifice is like a chariot of gods. The Rk and the Sāman

45. sanivatsarah prajāpatih prajāpatiryajñah /
    ibid., 2.2.7
46. devaratho vā eṣa yat yajñah /
    ibid., 2.5.5
hymns are the two horses and the Prauga and Āśya stotras are the two inner
reins of this chariot. It is the sacrifice by which the gods went upwards to
the world of heaven47.

b) THE KAUSHITAKI BRĀHMAṆA

In the Kaushitaki Brāhmaṇa it is stated that the Prajāpati is the sacrifice
and the sacrificer also48. Mind is Prajāpati. By the mind the human beings
or the animals are controlled. It is with mind, Prajāpati performed the
sacrifice. Through the mental sacrifice the Prajāpati created the different
animate and inanimate objects. Prajāpati extended the sacrifice. He handed
over the sacrifice to gods, from the gods to the sages and the men can know

47. yajñena vai devā ūrdvāḥ svargani lokamāyan /
ibid.,2.1.1

48. Kaushitaki Brāhmaṇa, 10.1.1
So the sacrifice is related with mind. Mental peace is possible only by giving up of selfish ideas.

c) The *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa*

Different concepts are laid down in the *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* about the *yajña*. It is here said that water plays a prominent part in creation. It is the very basis of life. For sacrificial rituals water is mostly needed. The creation exists on it. So, it is sacred by nature. It is the water which is in motion according to Universal Law. Thus, it is connected with the law of nature. So the water is regarded as the sacrifice here\(^49\). The metres are related with the phonetic and musical panorama of the verses. Among the metres

\[^49\] yajño vā āpo /

*Satapatha Brāhmaṇa*, 1. 1.1.7
the *Virāṭ* has ten syllables. The ten is an even number. The conjunction of
two objects creates a new one. Besides, the dual become stronger than one
to perform any activity. Sacrifice is the means of creation It is a medium
where atleast two entities are united to make a new one. Hence, the *Virāṭ*
metre is significantly called as sacrifice in this *Brāhmaṇa*\textsuperscript{50}. Any work
related to the benefit of the world or production is called a kind of sacrifice.

These kind of activities develop the human beings both physically and
mentally. It is not only a ritual work rather it is that type of work which has
the power of creativity, divinity and spirituality. A sense of co-operation,

\textsuperscript{50} virādvai yajña/

ibid., 1. 1.2.1
unity and dedication arises through sacrifice. Hence, the sacrifice is called

the best work\textsuperscript{51}

By sacrifice the sacrificer can satisfy the gods. It is a carriage which
can bring the different objects to the gods\textsuperscript{52}. This car is driven by the
sacrificer with the help of the verses of \textit{Yajurveda}. The wheel of this car
always goes forward with the help of this. Thus, this sacrifice can carry the
gods to their destination. Sacrifice is happening everywhere. It is in the
earth, mid-air and heaven. All the gods and animal beings are connected
with it. Agni pervades the whole universe in its different forms. In the forms

\textsuperscript{51} yajñ\=o vai śreṣṭh\=atamani karma /
\hspace{1cm} \textit{ibid.}, 1.7.1.5

\textsuperscript{52} yajñ\=o v\=a anah /
\hspace{1cm} \textit{ibid.}, 1.1.2.7
of the Sun, its rays or fire it is entrusted everywhere. Hence, the *yajña* is termed as Viṣṇu in it.\(^53\)

The whole universe is going on in a specific order without violating the rule. The sacrifice of the nature is connected with it. The sacrifice brings light and progress in everywhere. It destroy the darkness and ignorance. It encourages the sacrificer to bring development in all respects.

As the sacrifice is related with the divinity and charity, hence it is called the light, day, god and the Sun\(^54\).

The day and night, the seasons, the year, the production of the crops

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53. *yajño vai viṣṇuh* /  
ibid., 1.1.2.13

54. *yajño vai svarahardevāḥ sūryahatsvare vaitadatosbhi vipasyati* /  
ibid., 1.1.2.21
on the earth, the photosynthesis system, the process of rain all are the
different forms of sacrifice. By the sacrifice the elements of the air exists in
a balanced position and it helps the nature to do its works in a swift motion.

Thus the sacrifice becomes the source of the truth Hence, it is called the
source of rta\textsuperscript{55}

\begin{quote}
The speech which is controlled by the mind is called Sarasvati. The
human beings get spiritual power by the mind and being inspired by the
intellect of that mind they execute activities. They express their thoughts
with the speech which are clear and attractive in nature. With the Vedic
hymns the sacrificer performs the sacrifice. This speech has a power that
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{55}yajño vā ṛtasya yonih / 

\textit{ibid., 1. 3.4.16}
is spreaded everywhere. The speech brings the gods to the sacrifice. So, the speech is said as the *RK* and *Sāman* hymns. The mind is called the *yajuh*. As the speech is the manifestation of mind and soul, that’s why speech is called the sacrifice\(^{56}\).

The sacrifice is related with the lustre. It’s majesty and power abolish the sins from the sacrificer. This spiritual illumination of the Sacrificer helps to keep the law of gods safely. Thus the sacrifice has the ability to destroy or to burn the bad qualities of the sacrificer and lead him to the level of that high position where there is the dignity and glory. Hence, the sacrifice is

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56. vāgyai sarasvatīvāgyajñah /

ibid., 3. 1.4.14
regarded as an act belonging to Agni.\textsuperscript{57}

The sacrifice is identified with the \textit{Puruśa}, i.e. Prajāpati, the creator god, who extends the sacrifice.\textsuperscript{58} That is the sacrifice which is generally instituted, after proper scrutiny of time and production of foods. When the sacrifice is extended, it becomes as large as that \textit{Puruśa}. All the creatures are dependant on the \textit{yajña}. From the time of birth till death they are entrusted with this activity. All the human beings and the gods sustain their lives with the help of \textit{yajña}. All the creatures are the offspring of \textit{yajña}. Hence, the \textit{yajña} is called the soul of all beings and all gods in this \textit{Brāhmaṇa} literature.\textsuperscript{59}

\textsuperscript{57} āgneyayam yajñah / ibid., 2.2.3.6
\textsuperscript{58} puruṣo vai yajñah/ ibid., 1.3.2.1
\textsuperscript{59} sarvesāṁ vā eṣa bhutānāṁ sarvesāṁ devānāmātmā yadyajñah / ibid., 14.3.2.1
The *yajña* itself is supposed to undergo an everlasting series of death and
of coming again to life. It is the eater of all creatures. One is to exist
possessing life and energy due to another’s consecration of life as food.

Hence, in it, the *yajña* is said as the eater of all objects. Sāyaṇa in his
commentary of this *Brāhmaṇa* mentions about the term *yajña*. It is stated
that the term *yajña* has been derived from roots *Yan* and *Jan* meaning
‘dynamic creativity’ and ‘creative dynamism’. It is because by offering in
the Agni its power is extended everywhere in nature. If it is performed
continuously its dynamism goes on and again by unifying these in the forms

60. yajño vai bhujyuh yajño hi bhūtāni bhunakti /
    ibid., 9.4.1.11

61. sa yan jāyate tasmādyanjaḥ yañjo ha vai nāmaitadyad yañja iti /
    ibid., 3.9.4.23
of atoms the process of creativity starts on. Thus we get that \textit{yaj\={n}a} is the symbol of self-less, co-oriented, dynamic and creative activity.

d) The \textit{Taittir\={i}ya Br\={a}hma\={n}a}

In the \textit{Taittir\={i}ya Br\={a}hma\={n}a} also we get different concepts of sacrifice.

The sacrifice is the cause of wealth in this earth. The production of earth is possible due to the \textit{yaj\={n}a}. The crops and grains are the fruits of this \textit{yaj\={n}a}.

These are the symbol of richness of a family. The soil of the earth becomes favourable for farming only with the help of sacrifices. In the sacrifice oblations are generally made to the gods, which creates rain for the benefit of creatures. Thus, as the sacrifice is related with the creation and
preservation so, it is regarded as the lord of wealth.\textsuperscript{62} \textit{Yajña} is a means to get assimilate with the gods. The sacred sacrificial fire extends its power towards different gods and helps to assimilate the soul of the sacrificer with that god whom the sacrificer wishes. Hence, the sacrifice is regarded here as that form with which the union between the sacrificer and gods is possible.\textsuperscript{63}

The universe take place due to sacrifice. The creatures get energy due to the activities of \textit{yajña} in nature. It is the highest truth with which all the creatures are entangled in any respect. So, from the point of creation the

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{62} \textit{yajño rāyo yajña iśe vasūnāmi yajñāḥ sasyānāmūta sukṣītīnām} /
yajñāḥ īśāḥ pūrvacittim dadhātu yajño brahmanvāmiapyetu devān iti //
\textit{Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa} , 2.5.5.1
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
\textsuperscript{63} \textit{yā te agne yajniyā tanūstayehārohātmānam} /
\end{quote}

\textit{ibid.}, 2.5.8.8
sacrifice is regarded as the navel of the earth.\textsuperscript{64} Thus in the \textit{Brāhmaṇa} literature different concepts of sacrifice are got which are revealed by the seers beautifully.

III) The \textit{Āranyakas}:

The \textit{Āranyakas} are mainly dealt with the doctrine of the inner self, i.e. \textit{Ātman}. Hence, a detail description of the concept of sacrifice is not got in it. We are here going to discuss the concepts of sacrifice revealed in the \textit{Taittiriya Āranyaka} and \textit{Sānkhyāyaṇa Āranyaka} only.

a) The \textit{Taittiriya Āranyaka}

It has been stated in the \textit{Taittiriya Āranyaka} that sacrifice has the

\begin{verbatim}
\textsuperscript{64} yajño vai bhuvanasya nābhiḥ / ibid., 3. 9.5.5
\end{verbatim}
power to destroy the obstacles. With its divine power the sacrifice protects
the sacrificer from all kinds of difficulties. It leads the sacrificer towards
the right aspect. The sacrificer becomes purified spiritually through it. It is
regarded that sacrifice has the power to carry on the capacity of different
misfortunes of the sacrificer and to destroy them. With its various forms
which are pervading everywhere the sacrifice is a restless power. It is a
continuous process which has the ultimate reality of joy and happiness.

As it has the nature of all pervading hence, the sacrifice is called as
the Visnu 65. To keep the existence in the world the creature has to deal with
sacrificial activities in different manner. To perform these activities the

65. yajno vai viṣṇuh /

_Taittirīya Āranyaka_, 1.10.3
individual soul takes a principal part. This activates the other organs of the creatures. Thus the individual soul existing in the body of creature vibrates their life circle. It is the manifestation of the universal soul which is immortal and all pervading. The individual soul being inseperated from the universal soul becomes the cause of sustaining the life and its different activitis to proceed on this universe. Thus the sacrifice is going on in different forms between the creator and the creatures. Hence the sacrifice is regarded as the life of immortality. This sacrifice spreads on with the help of air. The air is the cause of vital life and energy. The gods get the sacrificial oblation through it. Thus this vital air is co-related with that of the atmospheric

66. amṛtasya prāṇam yajñametam / ibid., 3.11.2
region which extends the sacrifice in all directions. So, the life is called as
the sacrifice here\textsuperscript{67}.

(b) The \textit{Śāṅkhāyāna Āranyaka}

In the \textit{Śāṅkhāyāna Āranyaka} it is stated that ‘\textit{vāk} is mingled with the
mind\textsuperscript{68}. When knowledge mingled with \textit{śraddha}, the works become true
and long lasting. In the \textit{Āranyaka} literature it is stated that all gods are
existed in the body and soul of the human beings, where the \textit{yajña karma}
occurs in every moment, among the various inner organs as well as the
different external powers of this environment.

\begin{flushright}
67. tvam\ yajña stamuvevāsi somaḥ / ibid., 3.14.6 \\
68. vāk pūrvarūpam mana uttararūpam vidyā sanhiteti / \textit{Śāṅkhāyāna Āranyaka}, 7.8
\end{flushright}
IV. The *Upaniṣads*:

The *Upaniṣads* bear the fundamental spiritual thought of the *Veda*.

Symbolism is an essential characteristic feature of this literature. Importance is given here for holding the spiritual knowledge and meditation which are not seen at all in the other texts of the *Veda*. This literature speaks out different concepts of sacrifice with a view to propagating the thoughts of the Supreme Reality. Here a few concepts of sacrifice revealed in this text will be given.

In the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* it is mentioned that *yajña* is entrusted with the whole life journey of the people. Here it is said that,⁶⁹ “Man, verily is the sacrifice.” Through the body and senses which are endowed with

⁶⁹. puruṣo vāva yajñah /

*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*, 3.16.1
life, a human being performs the sacrifice at various levels. The different
aspects of human life have close similarities with those of a outer yajña.

The days of the brahmacharya, an ordinary life of celibacy, period of
enjoyment in life, the act of giving to the gods, achievement of different
qualities in life, the manifestation of new powers as well as getting wealth
in life and the death all these correspond to-‘dikṣā’ ‘upasad’, recitation of
śāstra and stotra, daksiṇā, purification of mind and soul, prayers for material
benefit and the bath of ‘avabhṛtha’ respectively.

By the religious study and self restraint, one has to worship the God.

Thus by developing a desire for the attainment of the self, one realizes it.
By performing a regular conduct of sacrifice the sacrificer can attain the Brahmalokah with the help of knowledge. So, the sacrifice is called the Brahmacarya. It is stated that70 "the Brahmacarya, which is the period of learning Vedas is very much like that of a sacrifice. He who knows this Brahmacarya, obtains the worldly things. And subsequently by this knowledge he attains Supreme self.”

Sacrifice is the process of creation and preservation. All the creatures of this Universe are performing the sacrifice i.e. (Agnihotra)71—thus said in

70. atha yad yajña ityācakṣate brahmacarya meva tad brahmacaryena hyeva yo jānatā tām vindateatha yadiṣṭamityācakṣate brahmacaryameva tad brahmacaryena hyeveṣṭvātmānumanuvindate /
   ibid., 8.5.1
71. sarvāṇi bhutānyagnihotramupāsata iti /
   ibid., 5.24.5
this Upaniṣad. The sacrifice purifies the human beings physically and spiritually. With the help of it the cosmos and the nature also becomes purified. The Sun and air by their divine forces help to do this. In earthly sacrifices Agni purifies all. So, sacrifice by the its power purifies everything⁷².

Sacrifice is one of the main branches of dharma. The etymological meaning of the word ‘Dharma’ is that one which holds the universe in its proper place. Sacrifice at different levels helps to keep the qualities of dharma. In this respect it is said that⁷³- “sacrifice, study and gift constitute the first branches of dharma.”

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⁷². esa ha vai yajño yo ayanipavate / ibid., 4.16.1

⁷³. trayo dharmaskandhā yajñoadhyayanani dānamiti / ibid., 2.23.1
In the *Isopanisad* it is declared that a man can be part of a divine life by performing the sacrifice. Here it is said that enjoyment should be made through the idea of renunciation. In this regard the seer expresses as:74

“All created things of the universe are ruled by the ‘One’ i.e., Supreme Lord’. You enjoy the life by giving away something to others. You shall not greed for others wealth.”

Thus a sense of renunciation is noticed here which is the basic characteristic feature of sacrifice. Actually though the Upaniṣads give stress on the value of knowledge, yet they never neglect the aspect of the *yajña*.

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74. īśā vāsyamidam sarvaṁ yat kirica jagatyāṁī jagat /
    tena tyaktena bhunjīthāṁā grḍhaḥ kasyasvid dhanam //
    *Isopanisad*, 1
They emphasize that knowledge will be fruitful when it will be acquired with proper action. If an individual does his service with the sense of self consecration and with true and proper wisdom, then he can attain the divinity.

In the *Mundaka Upanishad* also we get about the concept of sacrifice. Here we get the idea that without knowledge the action may be destroyable. All the activities if performed without proper knowledge then these may be weak. All the ritual works including the abnegation etc. should be performed with due knowledge. Before doing these activities if a man knows the true meaning of every activity then he will attain success. Hence, in this *Upanishad*

75. avidyāṁṛtyuṁ śīrvā vidyāṁṛtamaśakte /

ibid., 14
the sense of *yajña* is not supported by the seers\textsuperscript{76}, rather they stressed on the reality of knowledge which give him success and leads him towards immortality with the *yajña*\textsuperscript{77}. One who offers all the activities of one's life to the ‘Supreme Soul’ and thus becoming free from all kind of emotions then he acquired the supreme wisdom and that great immortality. Thus in the Upanisads both the unification of *Jñāna* and *Karma* is supported for the success of the activities of *yajña*. It is generally held by the scholars that the deities represent powers of nature. The Vedic seers tried to extricate these powers behind the natural phenomena with their wisdom and penance. The entire *Veda* is related with the activities of *yajña*.

\textsuperscript{76} plavā hyete adṛḍhāyajñarūpā/

*Mundaka Upanişad*, 1.2.7

\textsuperscript{77} ibid., 3.2.10