CHAPTER ONE

CONCEPTION OF VRATA - ITS AGE AND ANTIQUITY.

In many places of the Sastras the grandeur of religion is discussed but a great controversy is noticeable regarding the definition of religion. Going to the temples, daily worshipping, obeying vratas etc. are taken as religion. Thus obedience to certain religious attitudes and justifications are regarded as 'Dharma' or Religion. Manu also states in his Sama'hita "Acaro paramo dharmah" etc.

Regarding the question of what is religion, the Smrti Sastras are taken as evidence for there are many justifications of religion. There are also the Smritis of Manu which is regarded as the principal book. Manu is followed by Atri, Yajnavalkya, Vismu, etc. But there are many Smritis which against these Sastras and these are not accepted as locus (the principal works).

According to the Smritis of religion, the origin of the religion is the Vedas. The derivation of the word 'dharma' comes from the root 'dhr'. In many places of the Rgveda the word 'dharma' is discussed. The word is applied in the sense of Yajna. These religions are at first seen in various mantras. Thus religion or 'dharma' is elaborately discussed in some mantras. The explanation of the dharma in the Aitareya Brahmana is as:
In the Vaisesika śāstra it is said - 'yatōdbhhyadayo nihsreyasasiddhiḥ sa dharma'. There are other definitions of 'dharma' besides these. Those are - 'Ahinsā paramo dharmah', 'ācāraḥ paramo dharmah', 'anṛṣaṃsyam paro dharma', etc.

Panini at the time of discussing the use of suffix 'nic' refers to the word 'vrata'. There he said that the suffix 'nic' is used in the sense of causative. According to the rule¹ "Mundamisras lakṣṇanavratastrahaḥalakalakrtatustevyo nic", the suffix 'nic' is used in this sense. The latter commentators explained this as follows: 'when suffix 'nic' follows the word 'vrata' then taking of food and restriction to take food comes by the word 'vrata'. Then the application should be 'vratayati'. As for example - 'Payo vratayati', i.e., resolves to take milk or 'Sūdrānam vratayati', i.e., resolves to take food from the 'sūdra' or of lower class.

In the Sabdakalpadruma and Vācaspatya, etc., the monumental encyclopedia of words of nineteenth century it has been explained in the sense of taking food and fasting for the achievement of virtue ('punya'). According to Patanjali, the great commentator of Panini, in his Mahābhāṣya, discusses the word 'vrata' in the sense of differentiation of taking food etc. We find there "Payovrata Brāhmaṇo Yavāgvrata rājanya amikṣyavrata vaisya ityucyate. Vrataṇca namavya vahārthamapadiyate. Sakyam canena salimamsadinyapi vratayitum".

The synonymous words of 'vrata' are 'Niyamah', 'Punyaka', 'Niyamana', 'Samyama'. But in the latter Samhitās and Brahmanas, the word 'vrata' is used in the sense of milk as the performer of 'vrata' lives only by taking milk.

Yāśakaśārya said that the word 'vrata' comes from the root 'vrn' ('Vratamiti karmanāma. Vrnotiti vratah': Idamapitarad vratameva smadeva nivṛttikarma varayati iti vratah, annamapi vratamucyate yada vṛnati sarīram' - Niruktā). That work is to be entitled as 'vrata' which dignifies the subject. So the second synonym is varayati. That 'vrata' restrains man from various kinds of desires and evil deeds like addiction to women etc. and edifies the life of the performer.

It is stated in the Manu-samhitā that desire is the source of resolve and the resolved rituals and all vratas, restrictions are to be entitled as analytical disintegration. He said that the Brahmins should learn the Vedas according to the rules of Sastras and rules of vratas. In Chapter XI Manu explained certain Prayascitta vratas by which exoneration of offence will be abolished. Among these 'Candra-yanavrata' is important. By the compound 'vriyate idam' we get the word 'vratam'. There the root is 'vr' and the suffix is 'atac' and that is also 'krt'. So in the position of vr + atac and by the rule 'Sarvadhatukārdhadhatukayoh' we get the guna and by the rule 'iko yanāc' we get the 'yan'. Hence we get the word vratam. According to some, the source of the word vrata is from the root 'vrat'. There

2 Nirukta, II/13. 3 Panini, 7/3/84.
4 Ibid., 6/1/77.
is no relation of this word with the root 'vraj'. Panini used the word 'vrajam' in the sense of cause and possession. The word 'vrajam' is also to be found in the Rgveda (cf. 'apascidasm aramanta devin prthag vrajantih, etc.). But it is not used in the sense of 'vrat'. As it is stated previously, the word 'vrat' comes from the resolve. At the time of performances some sorts of resolve are required and those are to be entitled as vratas. As for example, we may cite - 'Payovrato brahmano yavagubrato rajanye-amiksabrato vaisya'. The meaning of this is - there is a vrata of Brahma which is called Payograhana. Such 'vrata' of a Ksatriya will be entitled Yavagugrahana, for a Vaisya it is Amikasagrahana. Preservation of four Ashrama system was also one kind of vrata. For a Brahma-carī, maintenance of Brahmacarya is a type of vrata. In this way for a grhastha to maintain his 'garhasthyadharma' is a type of vrata. In the society the works which are to be done by the indicated persons are also to be entitled as a vrata. For instance, the vrata of an Adhyapaka is to teach. In this way the vrata of a medical practitioner is to serve the people etc. In the Rgveda we find the words like 'mahivrata', 'Sucivrata', etc. These words are also applicable in the sense of vrata. In the Rgveda there are different kinds of vratas for different kinds of Deities (God). The seer of the mantra was notable to disobey the vrata. (cf. 'deva devanam amu hi vrataguh). From these it is clear that at the time of the Rgveda there are certain rules for certain gods which are to be obeyed. The rivers are flowing for the preservation of some rules which are made by the
gods. If anybody disobeys the rules of the gods he must be punished for his guilt. For this reason they prayed to god for exonerating their guilt. In the Rgveda we find this thing again and again.

There are two kinds of vratas - Pravrttirupa and Nivrttirupa (instigation, abstention). Taking of foods and worshipping of gods is of the first kind and fasting etc. is the second. This abstention is also of three kinds - Nitya, Naimittika and Kämya. Nitya vrata is that which is to be performed regularly. As for example ekadasi, etc. Naimittika vrata is that which is to be done occasionally. As for example Chandrayanavrata, Suryagrahana, tirthayatra, etc. And Kämyavrata is that which is to be performed for fulfilment of particular desires. In the Bhavisya Purāna we find - "Samyak sa sadhanam karma karttyamadhikarina / Niskarmena Mahavira kam yam kamànvitena ca"/.7

Regarding characteristics of the vrata it is said resolving of doing self duties are to be entitled as vrata. On the other hand some scholars are different in their opinion. According to them - 'Agnihotrasandhyavandanēdivisayasamkalpe'tiprasakteh. Ato bhiprayuktaprassiddhivisayo yah samkalpavisseh sa eva vrataṃ. Na ca vrataṃ sarkalpayettityanvayā iti vācyam". It is found in the first chapter of the Vrata Rāja. According to this views in Agnihotra and Sandhyāvandanā, etc. there is no resolve. But these works are mentioned in the Brahmanas as Nityakarmam. For this reason they are not to be entitled as vrata. There is a connecting link between vrata and fast and that is not applicable in Sandhyāvandanā, etc.
Vrata is that karma which is specially resolved to do with certainty. As the karma which is to be done with resolve is called vrata. But the word vrata is used in the sense of religious performance. With this fast is also to be done otherwise the vrata should not be fruitful yet the rituals are performed with steadfastness. We cannot entitle these as vratas. Rituals are rooted in firm resolve but these are naimittika and kāmya. Everybody is not bound to perform rituals. But the five Mahāyajñas are compulsory for every household. So there is a vrata in every house as they perform Panchamahāyajñas. The household should perform Panchamahāyajñas till death. Other vratas should not be compared with these. According to Manu the five Mahāyajñas are -

"Adhyāpanam Brahmayajñah Pitryajñastu tarpanam,
homo daivo valirbhamto nryajñotithipūjanam".  

According to others these are as follows:

"Ahuṭam ca hutameva tathā prahutameva ca,
Brahmayam hutam prāśitaṁ ca pāncayajñanācaksate."

It is clear from the above discussion that steadfastness is the prime characteristic of vrata. No vrata should be performed without firm resolve. Steadfastness which is done before the performance of vratas that is fulfilled after the performance of vratas. Another main characteristic of vrata is fasting. Regarding this we find a sloka in the Savadastomehānīḍhi -

"Tapanodayārabhya yamastakamabhojanam,
upāvasa iti khyate iti smṛtyukte nahare".

5 Manusamhitā, 3/70.
At the time of performing vrataś fasting is essential from the beginning up to the end. Restraint from sin and dealing with the qualities (guṇas) are chief characteristics of fasting.

Lakṣmīdhara, the writer of Kṛtyakalpataruśa thinks that there is no rigid characteristic of vrata. Vrata is praised by him and happiness in this world and beyond this world is acquired by man is described by him as the result of performing vrataś. All worldly happiness are to be acquired by men by performing vrataś. It is also stated by Lakṣmīdhara that during ages after ages what are done by the people is unable to fulfill even one part of the sixteenth kalas of vrata. After explaining the word vrata Hemadri stated that bathing, donation and offering oblations, worshipping and fasting are called the parts of vrataś. We find in the Caturvargaśintāmanī - "Snanañahomajopavasadiparah vratah", etc. Raghunandana also in his Vratatattva explained the word vrata and he gave no characteristic features of it. He described certain general rules regarding performance of vrataś.

In Dharmaśutra also there are certain vrataś like Vedavrata, etc., social duties like upanayana and others are entitled as essentials. In these ceremonies there is no steadfastness and desire. Vrataś which are stated by Manu as essential duties, are attached with firm resolve. Lakṣmīdhara citing the view of Kasyapa stated in his book that there is no difference between the rules of vrata and the rules of yama (restraint). Here he did not follow the view of Manu. According to him there is wide difference between vrata and yama. To him he is sinner who giving up

6 cf. Manusamhitā, 4/204.
yama performs only niyamas. Scholars like Kâne etc. thinks that yamas are principals but the niyamas are secondaries.

Hemâdri divides vrata into two from the viewpoint of Varāha-narânam. These are mental (mânasika) and physical (kâyika). Mental vratas are following: Non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing. On the other hand fastings at night are to be entitled as physical vratas or kâyika vratas. There are different kinds of rules and regulations for different kinds of vratas.

Vrata is seen in the Vedic literature as one of the works or performances which is to be done. But there is a wide difference between vratas of men and vratas of women. It is stated in the Mahâbhârata that service to their husband is called vrata for a woman. In the Manusambhîta also we find:

"Nâsti striñam prthakyajño na vrataṁ nāpîyoganan,
patim susrusate yena tena svargam mahiyate." 7

There is no sacrifice of woman which excluded to her husband's service as we see that there is no fruit of vrata if it is hold without permission of the household. The wife will be worshipped in the heaven only by the service to her husband. Women indeed have no particular yajña, no sacrifice to perform without an understanding from her husband.

Seldom, a man himself is also permitted to perform. Except these, in all cases there is no right of a man to perform a sacrifice without his wife. As for example we may cite the case of the Hanâvâna. Having made the golden Sîtâ in the absence of real Sîtâ Râma performed

the Asvamedha Yajña. On the other hand the vrata of a woman will not be fruitful without her husband or the permission of her husband. It is stated in the Manusamhitā:

"Patyōs jivati yā tasya strī upavāsām vratam caret, āyusyam harate bhartumāraṁ caiva gacchati." 8

In this way it is the vrata of a minister to obey his king and at the same time it is the vrata of a king to protect his subjects. There should not be any other thoughts except this. According to Laksānīdhara it is called Ananyakarmātā. According to him it is also vrata. From this viewpoint we may say that the incident which is related to the Rājauyāpam is also a vrata. King Dilīpa served the Kamadhenu for the removal of a curse. This service of Dilīpa to Nandini, the daughter of Kamadhenu is also to be entitled as vrata because Dilīpa performed this for begetting a son and resolved to do so.

In modern times we may divide vrata into two -
(1) Bhaktimūlakam and
(2) Prayascittamūlakam.

The aim of the first division of the vrata is to get peace and happiness in this world and at the same time to get good footing in the other world. In the first division we may take Savitri Caturdasi, Gaṇesha Caturthi, etc. Candrayana, Prajāpatya, etc. in the second division. These are meant for atonement.

8 cf. Manu, - 5/
There are many vratas which are connected with fasting and there are certain vratas which are not connected with fast. In the vratas not connected with fasting their restrictions are directed towards taking food etc. The period from which fasting is included to vrata is quite known to us as we do not find this in Smritis and Puranas. It seems that fasting was not known to them.

In pravrttimulaka dharma vrata was connected with the social changes. Again for the fulfilment of desires vratas are performed. The said karmas are mixed with vratas and festivals. We find in the Bhavishyapuranam - "Vratasca samyaksamkalpanitanau stheyaviscaramupam tatra pravrttinivrttyubhayarupam tatra dravyaviseshbhojanapajadikam pravrttitrupam upavasadikam ca nivrttirupam tace nityam naimittikam kamyanc.

Nityamkādayadivrataṃ, naimittikāṃ cāndrayānādivratāṃ kāmyam tattat tithyupavasādirupam," etc.

There is no such a close relation between nivrttimulakakarma and vratas. But there are certain festivals which are to be done daily. The meaning of this nitya is to perform without desire (or desireless).

It is known that the relevant portions of the Purāṇas are quoted in the Dharmasastras in support of their contention. So the words vrata, utsava, etc. mentioned in the Purāṇas are rooted in the Dharmasastras. Before the 6th century A.D. all performances like vrata etc. are included in the Purāṇas. Medhatithi, the commentator of Manusambhita, at the time of giving his comments, cited many examples from Purāṇas. Discussion regarding creation etc. (philosophical discussion) is also available in the Purāṇas. It may be true but it must have a relation with the Smritis.
From these evidences we may come to the conclusion that at the middle of the 4th century old performances were discussed. For this, we find Varnasramadharma - acara, sraddha, prayascitta, dana, puja, vrita, tirtha, pratista, diksa, utsarga, etc.

Literatures of each country are mostly influenced by political and social environments. This is specially applicable to Sarti books. The writers of these books did not show their scholarship only but also gave attention to social atmosphere. They also tried their best to control the society by contemporary rules and regulations.

There are so many stories in the Puranas to popularise the vratas among people. It is said that performances of vratas and worshipping were the greatest duties of men. It was placed in such a high position as only by performing vratas man may get emancipation. We find the story of King Nrga in the Varaha Purana. He was sudra by caste in his previous life but became a king by performing Buddha-dvadasi vrata. Madrasvah, the king and Kantimati, the queen were the servants of vaisya caste in their previous life. On Asvinisukladvadasi in the temple of Visnu they lit up the candles for the whole night. As a result of this, they became the king and the queen in their next life. Kuvera was also a sudra in his first life. After performing the Dhanyavrata, he became the lord of sacrifices and became the king of wealth also. There are so many stories like these in the Puranas by which the greatness of vratas are vouchsafed. The Brahmana who is wellversed in the Vedas possesses the right to perform vratas.
In the Puranas the Brahmanas adopt every possible means to make the people bountious to themselves. They are not, however, satisfied with this even. They became so greedy for gifts that they call upon the administrative power of the king to force the people to be charitable to themselves in normal times as well as in famines.

There exists a relation between vrata and the religion which is rooted in pravrtti (i.e., pravrttimulak dharma). According to social changes the rules of vratas are also changed.

It is clear from the relation between vrata and charity in the Puranas that generous contribution was one of the main parts of vrata. The Matsya Purana strengthened this view. In the Chapter 101 of the Matsya Purana we get sixtytwo kinds of vratas. At the time of giving description of Adityasayanavrata in the Matsya Purana the power and influence of charity has been discussed in that chapter. We are taught generosity and honesty from that chapter. Here at first the Brahmana should be payed homage by sugar, milk and ghee. Then a golden lotus will be presented to him. This golden lotus must be of eight finger in circumference and it must have eight leaves full of gems. With this some nice clothes, uttariya (garments to cover the upper part of the body), upādhan (pillow), patram (pot), shoes (paduka), chāmara (chowries) and āstarana (wrapper), paricchāda (covering), phala (fruits), dhūpa (incense), a gold horned, silver legged cow, a calf and a metal pot are also to be presented. But all kinds of presentations should not be taken into consideration in all kinds of vratas. In Sasthikalpavrata the deities are Sasthi, Sri
Lakṣmī, Kāmpatni, etc. This vrata is to be performed with a view to get wealth and sons. In this vrata only one cow and an ox should be given as presentation.

Men and women of all castes and tribes are eligible to perform vratas. Men may attain emancipation and earthly desires by performing vratas. By this all kinds of sins should be destructed. Every vrata must start with a speech of a seer or a god.

The results of regularly performing vratas are elaborately discussed with the help of stories in the Purāṇas. The vratas became popular by wide canvas of these puranic stories. Most of these vratas are uttered by the seers or by gods.

There is a flow of vratas in the itihasas and Purāṇas. But smrtis do not mention vratas so elaborately as it is mentioned in the itihasas and Purāṇas. Yet the vratas are not mentioned vividly in the books of Smṛtis but we get certain names of vratas in the form of Dharmasūtras. As for example we may cite Pusyanakṣatra vrata in the Dharmasūtra of Apastamba and Dwādasivrata in the Vīśnudharmasūtra.

This Dwādasivrata is to be performed in lunar fortnight of Margasirśa month. According to the Vīśnusūtra it is to be performed in the month of Kārtikeya after bathing and performing of Agnihotra.

In ancient times upper castes like Brāhmaṇa and Kṣatriya, etc. studied the Vedas, Purāṇas and other dharmasūtras with care and expanded the field of study of these sāstras giving their knowledge to others. By this knowledge they tried to abolish their sorrows of life. In the post-Vedic period performance of vrata took a very
important place and because a prime religion which was described by the seers in thousands of books. All kinds of religious duties are being performed till now according to the rules framed by those sāstras. The greatness of vratas is described in the Purānas and Smṛtis. As for example - Diti, the mother of demons and Kasyapa got two bold and heroic sons performing a vrata.

The greatness of vratas is elaborately discussed in the 17th chapter of the Padma Purāna:

"Avicchinnam tatha saukhyam grhe vai putrapaṭrakam
Muktva sa muktam kālamante mokṣam ganisyati.
Api ca ekavimśe 'dhyaye subhasaptāvratam
Tasya śrīrimalā kirttirbhava jayamani jayamani
Apsarasā ganaiḥ sarvaiḥ pūjyānapah suralaya
Vasedganaḥdiyo bhūtvā yāvadabhutasamplavam
Kalyadavatirnasca satpadviḍhiyo bhavet." 9

In the dharma sāstras, vṛata has a prominent place. Both Hemadri and Laksmdhara believed that vṛata is one of the vital limb of the Purāṇas. So Laksmdhara in his Caturvargacintamani, has dwelt at length about vṛata. After Hemadri, we find many books of vṛata: Viramitrodasa is one of them. Vrataprakasa is one of the widest chapters of the book. Sri Saṅkarabhatta, the son of Pandit Nikanta Bhatta wrote a big book entitled Vratanka. P. V. Kane also informed us that there was a book of vṛata, in 1703 A.D. and the writer of this book is Saṅkara. He also mentioned Vratodypansakausmah.

9 cf. Padma Purana, Patalakhanda, 17th Chapter, Slokas - 3 to 6a.
There is also Vratarāja of Viswanātha. Kamalakarabhatta, the writer of Nirnayasindhu wrote a book on vrata entitled Vratakamalakara. In Nirnayasindhu, he also wrote a chapter on vrata which elaborately discussed the principal vratas.

In the middle of 17th century A. D. Anantadeva wrote Smriti-kaustuva, major portion of which discussed the rules and regulations of vratas. The Kṛtyasarasamuccaya of Amṛita Nath Ojha described vratas elaborately. Beside these there are other books also whose vratas are mentioned and discussed. Among them mention may be made of Kalaviveka of Jīmūtavāhana, Tithiviveka of Sulapāṇi, Vargakriyā-kaumudī of Govindarāja, Dharmasindhu of Kasinathopādhyāya, Kala-mādhava of Madhvācārya, Kṛtyaratnakara of Candeswara, Vratodayana-kaumudī of Śaṅkara, Kṛtyatattvārvnava of Śrīnāthacārvacyutamani, Vrata-sāgara of Vallālsena, Smrticaṇḍrika of Devannabhatta, Nityācarāśīnaka of Narāsingha Bajpayee, Smayavanradīna and Kṛtyācara of Śrīdattopādhyāya, Jayasīngakalpadruma of Jayasīngha, etc.

Almost all the purāṇas praised the vratas again and again. Some vratas were performed at the Vedic period but those are not available today. The vratas connected with the Vedic sacrifices are also abolished in the Christian Era. Yet the greatness of vratas is not discussed with greater importance in Gṛhyasūtra, Dharmaśūtra and in the Smritis of Manu and Yājñavalkya but the names of the vratas are mentioned hither and thither. The performance of vratas was a prevalent custom of common people but they were not eligible to study Vedas. It is stated that the heaven is to be obtained by the
performer of vrata after death and they are happy even in the world.
The result which is to be obtained by worshipping Sūrya is not
available even by performance of Vedic sacrifices hundred times.
In Brahma Purāna we find -

"Ekāhenapūjayanādh prapyate phalām
Yathoktadaksinaiviprāma tatkṛusatāirapi." 10

It is stated in the Padma Purāṇa that he who performs
Jayantivrata, possesses Gods and all sacred places in his body.
cf.: "Tasya sarvāni tirthāni dehe tīsthanti devātāh
Karoti yo nāmo bhaktyā jayantīm Kṛṣṇavallavan". 11

Bemārī quotes from Garuda Purāṇa :-

"Na gāṇḍa na kuruśetram na kāsī na ca puskaram
pavanāni mahābhāge yathedam vratamuttamam."

In India all the vratas are not performed in each place.
There are different kinds of Vratas in Southern and Northern India.
The process of performing vratas are also different. The same
vrata is performed in different ways in different provinces.

Men and women of all castes and at the same time even the
mlechhas have the right to perform the vratas. A Brahmin can per-
form vrata himself according to the preceptor. But women can per-
form in various ways, the wife will perform with her husband, the
mother with her son or with her preceptor and a sudra only can

10 cf. Brahma Purāṇa, Chapter 29, Sloka No. 17.
perform with his preceptor. An widow will be able to perform if she got the permission of her son. But she who is without son is able to perform by the permission of her preceptor. The performer of vratas should be truthful, not greedy, and should be the possessor of good dealings. He should obey the rules of performing vratas strictly. It is stated in the Skanda Purana -

"Nijavarnasramacaraniyatah suddhamānasaḥ / 
Aluvdhah satyavādi ca sarvabhiśatahite rataḥ // 
Vratesvadikrto rajanyayatha viphulasramah // 
Śraddhāvān sapakhrūṣa madadambhavibhajītaḥ // 
Purvaṁ niscayamāsritya yathāvatkarmandaḥaḥ / 
Avedanindako bhūmanadhikāri vratādiṣu // " 12

Devala also stated the importance of this question in his Vratadhikārinimāvah. As we do not find the word 'stṛi', so we can come to the conclusion that there was no difference between men and women. Sometimes Mlecchas have also the right to perform vratas.
It is stated in the Devipurāṇam:

"Snātaḥ pramuditairhṛstairbrāhmaṇāḥ ksatriyairarbhiḥ. 
Vaisyaḥ sudraṁbhaktiṣeṣtairmlecchaṁvanyaisca 
manavaiḥ. 
Stribhisca kuru sādula tadvidhanamidam śru."

12 Skanda Purāṇa - Prabhāsa Khaṇḍa, 83/4.
At the time of performing vratas the performer should be calm and quiet. He must be pure-minded. At that time four kinds of 'acāras' are to be obeyed. Those are Brahmacarya, Ahimsā, Truthfulness and restraint from taking flesh. Debala in his Vratarāja stated:

"Brahmacaryamahimsa ca satyamaniṣavarjanam
Bratesvetāni catvari caritavyāni nityasah."

In certain vratas the performer should have to take bath thrice daily. The performer will take one meal before the day of performance (at night time only). There is a controversy among the scholars regarding the time which is mentioned as 'naktam'. According to some scholars it is just before two moments of sunset. According to some it is just after the sunrise when stars are twinkling in the sky. Reading of the Rāmāyana is essential at the time of performing vratas. According to others reading of Itihasas and Purānas is required.

As there are different vratas so the rules regarding vratas are also different. In Durvāstami vrata, taking of parched rice is prohibited. At the day feeding of others is mentioned. Thus in Dampatyaśtami vrata the Brahmīn couple must observe the day without taking any kind of food. In Kalivrata eight Brahmānas and eight young ladies should not take any food. In naivedya wine and meat is permissible and feeding of Brahmānas also stated. But this system is not so popular.
If the vrata is proposed to be performed but not completed, the performer will born as a dog in his next life. It is stated in the Vrataraja:

"Pravam vratam ghritya yo nacaret kamomohitah
Jivan bhavati candalo makte sva-bhijayate."

It is not harmful to leave the vrata which is promised to be performed but not fulfilled being afraid of something. Hemadri explained the word 'bhaya' in this connection:

"Kasmadapi bhutat bhitasya vratikasya yadi
Vratahanih syattada nasti tatra dosah".

But Madanaratna says 'if the performer is afraid of some unknown beasts etc. it is not harmful to him. At the time of performing the vrata if a women becomes menstruous then she is not permitted to continue.

The writer of Vrataraaja gave an elaborate description of articles required to perform vrata. To support his view he also quoted various Puranas. These articles are mainly Pancaratnas, Pallavas, Pancagavyam, Pancamritam, Sarasas, Sarvausadhas, Saubhagyastakam, Saptamrdah, dhanyami and sâkam. To perform vrata sacred food is also needed (boiled rice with ghee).

In the Agniyagama we find:

"Vrihisastikamudmasca kalayah salilam payah /
Syamacascaiva nivarah godhumadyah vrate hitah //
Kusmandalavuvrntakapalakijyokarastajet /
Caturbhaiksyam saktukanah sakam dadhi gtram madhu
Syamakah salinivarah yakam mulandulam /
Havisya vratanaktadavagnikaryadike hitam //
The performer should not take Madhu and Mamsa, etc. (honey and meat, etc.).

**THE PLACE OF PERFORMING VRATAS**

Places of vratas are also indicated by the writers of Puranas. Mountains, seas, forests, are fit for performing vrata.

It is stated in the Devimurānam:

"Deśo nadi jaya sailo ganganārakapuskaram
Varanasi Kuruksetram Prayagam Jambuvesvaram
Kedaram Vampadam ca Kudavapakṣarakahvayam
Somesvaram Sabapunyan tatha camarakantakam
Kalam javam tatha Vindhyam yatra vasograsasya ca."

Vratas are to be performed according to tithi, masa, pakṣa, nakṣatra, etc. In certain vrata special stress has been given to masa, tithi, nakṣatra, etc. So these are to be marked carefully.

In Nagapancami and others the vratas are to be completed on that very day. But for others on the other hand the vrata should be repeated. There are certain vrata which are to be performed in the 7th or 12th month of the year and there are some which are to be performed for the whole life. As for example: Adityavaravrata. It should be started on Sunday and connected with the Hastānakṣatra.

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14 cf. Devimurānam - 15/6 - 8a.
This vrata should be repeated on the 6th Sunday. The Somavāra vrata will be connected with nine Somabāra and these will begin on a special Monday connected with certain stars.

There is no vrata which is desireless. So the preceptor will select that vrata by which the performer is able to get the desired object. The wife will perform that vrata which is fruitful to her husband.

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