CHAPTER FIVE

Coronation Ceremony and Rituals of Kings of South Asia

Charles Drekmeier states that ritual provides a means of acting out and thus reducing strains and frustrations produced by the uncertainties and rationally inexplicable occurrences of life. On the social level, it consolidates the values of the community, reminding individuals of shared purposes, and representing in a simple, dramatic form social and religious relationship.¹ Religion and ritual influence social as well as political interaction in the society. The practice of ritual is “the prescribed order of religious services” ² and the form of activity is determined by consideration of tradition and symbolism.³ The maze of ritual comprised diverse elements. It included rites for the propitiation of the gods, for securing for the governing authority a moral sanction; and for regulation between the upholder of law and order and his subjects. Political integration came through the channel of religion and ritualistic observances. As the universe was an organic whole, so in its imitation different duties and functions were attached to the various elements of the body politic. Simultaneously, the relation between the gods, the king, the priesthood and the classes of the population were defined and all these were welded together and their correlation defined.⁴

¹ Charles Drekmeier, Kingship and Community in Early India, Bombay: Oxford University Press, 1962, p. 27.
⁴ Naraya Chandra Bandhopadhyaya, Development of Hindu Polity and Political Theory, Delhi: Munishiram Manoharlal, 1980 (re print), p. 79.
The coronation ceremony (*Abhiśeka*), and its relationship with a king is elaborately mentioned since the Rgvedic period. The ritual of anointing (*Abhiśeka* or *Abhiśheka*) or “some sort of ritual washing or baptism may probably be regarded as an almost universal element in the history of religions.”

It is an ancient practice, which can be traced back to antiquity of cultures across the globe. In many religions e.g. Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism *Abhiśeka*, is an “integral part of that ancient and composite Indian tradition which provides a ritual basis to the various creeds. The rite of the sacred bath occupies an important place in the Brāhmanical and Hindu practices as well as in those of the Buddhists and Jains.

5.1 Interpretation of *Abhiśeka*

5.1.1 Etymological analysis of *Abhiśeka*.

Etymologically the word “*Abhiśeka*” (Sanskrit) or “*Abhiseka*” (Pāli) is a compound of two Sanskrit words: *Abhi* and *Seka* (from the root *sic*). The prefix ‘*Abhi*’ means “to, towards, into, over, upon, and can be added to nouns as well as verbs”. As an adverb or preposition the prefix *Abhi* “expresses (with accusative case) to, towards, in the direction of, ... before, in front of, over.” It may even express one after the other.

The second part ‘*Seka*’ or ‘*Sheka*’ of the word ‘*Abhiśeka*’ is derived from the root ‘*Sic*’ which means: “to pour out, discharge, emit, shed, infused or pour into or on.. to emit, semen, impregnate.., to scatter in small drops, sprinkle, besprinkle or moisten with...”

Thus the word *Abhiśeka* comprised of the union of these two components. Apte defines

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8 *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, p. 61.
Abhiṣeka as “sprinkling, watering, wetting,” and “bathing; ablution, holy or religious bathing.” 10 In Pāli ‘Abhiseka’ means anointing, consecration, inauguration of king etc.11

In Buddhism it refers to “ceremonial bathing in sacred water”; or “the tenth stage of perfection” 12 and “sprinkling water on the top of the head of statues of Buddha or kings.” 13 In Jaina tradition a related word “Abhiṣekam” is not commonly used because it is generally associated with “a religious ceremony, which consists in pouring milk on the lingam.” 14 Benjamin Walker states that Abhiṣeka originally implied ceremonial purification by bathing, especially in a sacred river. But he concedes, more strictly Abhiṣeka is the rite in which a person is invested with power by being sprinkled with sanctified water or oil and it is an inauguration or initiation ceremony.15 Thus, Abhiṣeka is a consecration rite and besprinkling 16 primarily by anointing or sprinkling, usually with water or to pour out towards.17 Further many scholars have interpreted the term Abhiṣeka in various ways and a variety of terms have been used to define the word Abhiṣeka.18 It is possible to construct a composite meaning of Abhiṣeka as follows:

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anointing, inaugurating or consecrating (by sprinkling water), inauguration of a king, royal function; the water or liquid used at an inauguration; religious bathing, ablution; bathing of the divinity to whom worship is offered.  

5.1.2 Purposes of Abhiṣeka

Consecration (Abhiṣeka) is one part of the ritual of royal installation of the Rājasuya described in Brāhmaṇical literature of ancient India. In brief, a would be monarch who is the commissioner (Yajamāna) commissions a Brāhmaṇa priest to perform this ritual on his behalf to invest him with the royal power. The sacrificer or the Brāhmaṇa priest knows the meaning and the techniques of the sacrifice. This knowledge is essential for the successful outcome of the ritual, for it is believed that the priest may render a ritual effective only through a knowledge of the nature of the sacrifice and the god to whom it is sacrificed. This knowledge is, so to speak “the Brāhmaṇa’s special technology”, which has the power to install the commissioner. i.e. the would be king on his throne.  

The motives behind the practice of Abhiṣeka are complex and numerous, but we can find some hints through the Sanskrit Brāhmaṇical literature. The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa mentions that this religious ritual of Abhiṣeka was performed in order to acquire imperial glory and to define or confirm the divine status of the king. But originally it appears to have ensured continuity of life and even immortality. Another purpose of


Mahābhīṣeka, as noted in the Ahirbudhnyā-samhitā, was to ward off all diseases, as one destroying all enemies and for the attainment of all desired objects. According to accounts of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. Abhiṣeka tried to awaken lustre and power in the person concerned. In the Rājascuya ceremony, the king was anointed with oil and water, as an heir apparent. Abhiṣeka was an important part of Rājascuya or royal consecration and of the Aśvamedha by which status was confirmed. Basham says, “implicit in the whole Brāhmanical ritual [of king’s Abhiṣeka] was the idea of king’s divine appointment.” Further two ideas of the rituals of Abhiṣeke have been employed to serve several purposes:

(I) to endow an object or a person with divine power

(II) to mobilise this power in the objects and persons possessing them.

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24 Basham, op.cit, 1954, p. 82.
25 Gabriella Eichiger Ferro-Luzzi, “Abhiṣeka, the Indian rite that defies definition,” Anthropos, Vol. 76, 1981, p. 733. Further, “The gods, above all those residing in Sanskrit temples, surpass their devotees in purity and are in no need of being purified.” E. Allgro, viewed that by this rite the god continued to inseminate the land, that of the king to ensure its uninterrupted fertility (E. Allgro. The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross, New York, Doubleday, 1970, p. 58, (Cited by Garg. op.cit, 1992, p. 11.). Spellmen suggests that it was the coronation ceremonies and other sacrifices of the later Vedic period which channel ideas of divinity towards the king, to an even greater degree during the Vajapeya sacrifice, the king become as god Indra or Brhaspati through the priest (Spellmen, op.cit., 1964, p. 21.). Gonda says that through the Abhiṣeka, the monarch is supposed to be re born as the son of the sages who act as priest; now he is vested with sanctity and inviolable (J. Gonda, Ancient Indian Kingship from the Religious Point of View, Leiden: E.J.Brill, 1969, p. 87). R. N. Saletore has described few purpose of the Abhiṣeka ceremony. Viz. the first Mantra of Abhiseka referred to the prince as the re-born son of the sacrificial priests (Ṛtviks) with his energy enhanced by his entry into and emergence from the sacrifice. The second blessed him with an expended realm, good health for conducting its administration efficiently and a large supply of cattle for performing sacrifice. The third required of him a solemn oath to protect the weak and punish the wicked and be a guide to men. The fourth and fifth were blessings involved for the prince’s prosperity. The sixth and seventh were the prayers for the glorification of the caste through his power, continued prosperity of his subjects, and the extension of Prajāpati’s aid to shield him (Encyclopedia of Indian Culture, ed. R. N. Saletore, New Delhi: Sterling Publishing Privet LTD. 1981, pp 7-11). Jayant Gadkari argues that there are two main Abhiṣekas viz. Laguabhiseka (coronation on a small scale) and Mahābhīṣeka (coronation on a large scale). The laguabhiseka was meant for conferring rank in the oligarchical structure (hierarchy) and the Mahābhīṣeka was meant for bestowing the status of the chief of oligarchy (Jayant Gadkar, Social and religious from Rgveda to Purāṇa, Bombay; Popular Prakashan, 1996, p. 59.) R. S Sharma assumed that they invented castle coronation ceremonies for the purpose of imposing
The whole range of Brähmana ritual of Abhiṣeka was indeed symbolic. Through this ritual the king was empowered with the capabilities and qualities of divinities of the Brähmanaical pantheon. But he was not reborn as a god. For that matter not only the would-be monarch but any ordinary commissioner (Yajamāna), by successful performance of a sacrifice could obtain divine power and majesty. In course of the consecration, the water fortified with the magic spell (mantra) played an important role, bestowing upon the king exceptional power derived from divine sources. It is clear that the Abhiṣeka ceremony gave a high position to the king and this ceremony may have been held to obtain higher status to rule in the society.

5.2. Vedic coronation ceremony and its rituals

Consecration or Abhiṣeka is primarily a ritualistic term implying as it did the ceremonial consecration of the person to be anointed as king or overlord. The Abhiṣeka was closely associated with the conferring of Rājya (state) as well. In the Rgvedic period both Indra and Varuna are called 'Samrāj', amongst their many other titles and by the time of the white Yajurveda this word was certainly being applied to the human king. Jayaswal states that in the age of Brähmana literature, coronation becomes

the people with the power, prestige and majesty of the king and they indoctrinated the common people in the divine attributes and even incarnation of the king. (R. S. Sharma, op.cit, 1959, p. 199.)

29 Rgveda, I.25.10, V.68.9.
30 Yajurveda, XV.12.
elaborate, ritualistic and very technical.\textsuperscript{31} The coronation in all Hindu kingdoms was an important ceremony, which had constitutional significance in a political sense and sacramental significance in a religious sense.\textsuperscript{32} The coronation or the anointing ceremony, it is correct to maintain, was intended, as has been suggested only for kings and not for the common people.\textsuperscript{33} The \textit{Abhiśeka} was an important event in the life of the king and the people. The monarch became revitalised, entrusted with the duty of protecting his subjects, uniting his realm and expanding it, while the people were in a position thereafter to look up to one that would care for them like a father.\textsuperscript{34} It implied the coronation of a king with holy water (\textit{abhisecaniya āpah}) by the victory at the \textit{Purusamedha}. It was an elaborate ritual mentioned in connection with the anointment of a king after his election to that position and was the second function in the \textit{Rājasuya} sacrifice.\textsuperscript{35}

The principal ceremonies or sacrifices of royal inauguration were the \textit{Rājasuya}, the \textit{Vājapeya}, the \textit{Punarābhīṣeka}, and the \textit{Aindrābhīṣeka}. The \textit{Punarābhīṣeka}, or renewed consecration, made the king elect eligible for sorts of all royal dignity, viz. \textit{Rājya}, \textit{Śāmrājya}, \textit{Bhaujya}, \textit{Śvārājya Pārameshthya}, \textit{Māhārājya}, \textit{Ādhipatya}, \textit{Śvāvasya} and \textit{Ātishthatva}. The interesting part of the ceremony was the king's ascent to the throne or \textit{Āsandī} which was made of \textit{Udumbarā} wood with the exception of the interwoven part (\textit{vivayana}) which consisted of \textit{Mūnja} grass and the besprinkling.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{32} D. Sridhara Babu, \textit{Kingship: State and Religion in South Indian}, Gottingen, 1975, p. 56.
\textsuperscript{33} \textit{Satapatha Brāhmaṇa}, XXVI.41.
\textsuperscript{34} \textit{Encyclopaedia of Indian Culture}, 1981, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Aitareya Brāhmaṇa}, VIII.6., Hemachanda Raychaudhuri, \textit{op. cit.}, 1953, p. 163.
The *Aindrāmahābhiṣeka* or Indra’s great unction consisted of five important ceremonies. Closely connected with *Aindrāmahābhiṣeka* was another important ceremonial called the *Aśvamedha* or horse sacrifice.

The simplest of all inaugural performance is the *Abhiṣeka*; the consecration of a king by sprinkling water. While describing the great consecration ceremony of Indra, *Aindrāmahābhiṣeka*, the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* mentions the different territories and respective kings thereof as illustrations of these different types of kingship. The objects of these special coronations are thus described. Indeed, the *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa* remarks that an *Abhiṣeka* transfers a god’s power to king, because anointed by a certain rite, the god was victorious, a king anointed by the same rite, will be similarly victorious.

In the course of *Indārābhiṣeka*, when the divine sacrificer Prajāpati anoints Indra, it is stated that Indra “became the supreme authority, as connected with Prajāpati. Anointed with this great anointment Indra won all victories, found all the worlds, attained the superiority, pre-eminence and supremacy over all the gods, and having won the overlordship, the kingship, the great kingship, the suzerainty to this world. Self-existing, self-ruling, immortal in yonder world of heaven, having obtained all desires he became immortal. If he who knows thus desire of a Kṣatriya, may he win all victories, find all the worlds, attain the superiority, pre-eminence and supremacy over all kings, and overlordship, paramount rule, self rule, sovereignty, supreme authority, kingship, great kingship, and great suzerainty; may he be all encompassing, possessed of the earth,

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37 *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, VIII. 15.
39 *Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa*, II.7.15ff.
40 *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, VIII. 38.3.
possessed of all life, from one end to the further side of the earth bounded by the ocean. Sole ruler, he should anoint him with this anointing of Indra.\textsuperscript{41}

The consecration ceremony or coronation is regarded as the new birth of the king. The first day of coronation usually starts by making offerings to eight deities, Savitā, Agni, Soma, Brhaspati, Indra, Rudra, Mitra, and Varuna.\textsuperscript{42} Next, he is made to wear new garments, and undergarments called Tārpya. A garment made of undyed wool termed Pandra, a mantle or cloak, adhivāsa and a turban or head dress, uṣnisa. As this ceremony is regarded as a new birth these ‘garments are symbolic of different parts of an embryo. Thus the tārpya stands for amnion (ulva), pandra for uterus or chorion (jarāyu), adhivasa for womb (Yoni) and uṣnisa for navel or umbilicus.\textsuperscript{43} After this rebirth of the king the Adhvaryu priest strings a bow and hands over the same to the king with three arrows. The bow is a symbol of strength, vigour and government. The priest says, ‘the bow is a symbol of the king’s strength or military power and I shall consecrate him after he attains strength.\textsuperscript{44}

The throne called āsandī is to be made of Khadirā wood (Acacia catechu) according to the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa and the Udumbarā wood (ficus glomerata) according to the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa. The Udumbarā is important for royal life. In the coronation ceremony of a king as described in Brāhmanical literature, the use of Udumbarā fruits and vessels made of Udumbarā wood is noticed. In Punarābhiṣeka or renewed anointment the king ascended the throne made of Udumbarā wood. In the Gobhila Grhya Sūtra, for one desirous of becoming a ruler, a fast for eight nights is

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., VII. 14-15.
\textsuperscript{42} Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, V.3-4.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., V.3.5-30.
\textsuperscript{44} Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, V.3,30.
recommended and then a performance of sacrifice is to be done in which fuel of *Udumbarā* wood is to be used.\(^45\) *Udumbarā* is sacred to Prajāpati. So, in building a house a *Snataka* should avoid an *Udumbarā* tree on the north side.\(^46\) Hence, *Udumbarā* wood was mostly used for sacred activities.

During the consecration ceremony, different representatives of the nobility and common people had to give their consent to the accession of the king designate to the throne. As these representatives of the nobles and commons had a voice in choosing the king they are called *rāja-krtah* or *rāja-kartarah*, i.e. king maker. It is only with the express consent of the king makers that a king can ascend the throne i.e., to become a king. If they do not accord sanction or disallow consecration, the king cannot be consecrated or declared as king. In that case he will have to abdicate in favour of his son or relation chosen by the king makers. This fact is recorded in clear and unmistakable terms in the Brāhmanical texts of the Veda.\(^47\)

### 5.2.1 Sprinkling ceremony of the king

An essential part of the *Rajasuya* was the *Abhiṣeka* or besprinkling. It began with offerings to the deities such as Savitā Satyaprasava, Agni Jyeshtha, Soma Vanaspati, Brhaspati Vak, Indra Dhamapati and Rudra Paśupati.

After the sacrifice (*Homa*) was over, the prince sat on a tiger’s skin and was blessed with an invincible life, obedient subjects, and a strong kingdom, by sprinkling holy water from the sacred river Sarasvati; the sea, a whirlpool, a pond, a well and the dew from the skies. In this water barley and *Durva* grass were steeped. The sprinkling

\(^{45}\) *Gobhila Grhya Sūtra*, IV 9, 1-5.

was made either by a Brāhmana priest a relative or brother of the prince to be anointed, a
friendly Rājanya and a merchant (vaisya). The king then took an oath, which was
administered by the officiating priest, that from the prince’s birth to the day of his death,
if he played him false, the king would let the priest take the former’s sacrifice, his gift,
his palaces, his good deed, his life and his offspring. 48

The priest brought seventeen kinds of water in seventeen vessels of Udumbarā
wood for the king’s anointment, to be held at the mid-day Soma feast of the Ukthya
sacrifice. First, the water of the Sarasvati river, (Srasvariti) second, water from a pool
or river while in a state of agitation from the fall of something into it (Kallola), third,
water disturbed by the passage of an army over a ford (Vrishasena); fourth, water taken
during an ebb tide (artheta); fifth, water taken during a flood tide (Ojashvati); sixth,
water from the point of junction of two streams produced by a sandbank in a river
(Parivāhini); seventh, sea water (Apāmpati); eighth, water from a whirlpool
(Apāngarbhā); ninth, water from a pool in a river where there is no current (Suryatāka);
tenth, rain-water (Manda); twelfth, well water (Varajākshita); thirteenth; dew drops
collected from the tops of grass beades (Vāsā); fourteenth, honey (Savishta); fifteenth,
liquor amnion (Sakvari); sixteenth, milk (Janabhārit); seventeenth, clarified butter
(Visvabhārit). 49 Of these kinds of liquid, the first symbolises speech, next three vigour,
fifth abundance, sixth lordship, tenth allegiance of the people to the king, twelfth food,
fourteenth to seventeenth, cattle, and the last two independence. 50

47 Ibid. IX. 3.4-5, 4.1-13
48 Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, VIII. 13. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, V. 3.4, 14.
49 Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa V.3.4.; Kātyāyana XV. 8, Aśvalāyana, XVIII. 21.3.
While collecting water from each of the seventeen sources, the priest recites a Vedic hymn (mantra) describing that water as "the bestower of kingship" and praying that water bestow kingship upon the sacrificer. Each variety of water contains a distinct quality. That quality the priest bestows upon the king by sprinkling him with the corresponding water, besides imparting him vigour, which is the general quality of water. Sarasvati is the goddess of speech. It is speech that the priest thereby sprinkles on the king. The lord of rivers (ocean) being the same as the lord of waters, the priest thereby makes the king the lord of the people by sprinkling with that water. The priest thus makes the king the offspring of the people. By sprinkling with the water from a pool in a sunny spot or from the rain waters poured during the sun shine, the priest makes him "sun skinned" and lustrous as the sun. The water from a pond when sprinkled upon the king makes 'the people steady and faithful to him.\textsuperscript{51}

\textbf{List of consecration waters}\textsuperscript{52}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Āpastamba</th>
<th>Baudhāyana</th>
<th>White Yajurveda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sarasvati</td>
<td>Streaming water</td>
<td>Sarasvati water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sea, Sindu or river with a male name</td>
<td>Water from a well with a male name</td>
<td>Eastward streaming water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The upstream wave caused by a man or an ox stepping down into the water</td>
<td>Billowing water</td>
<td>Westward stream water</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Downstream wave of same description as No.3</td>
<td>Water from a pool</td>
<td>Water flowing downstream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Water from well</td>
<td>Water from well</td>
<td>Water flowing upstream</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Water flowing upstream or (water) from hail</td>
<td>Water from a whirlpool</td>
<td>Water from a branch of a river</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{51} Sachchinanda Sahai, \textit{op.cit.}, 1997, p. 5.

\textsuperscript{52} Āpastamba Śrauta Sūtra, XVII.12.14-13, 22., Baudhāyana Śrauta Sūtra, XII.8-9; White Yajurveda, No. 6-8; Heesterman, \textit{op.cit.}, 1957, pp.84-85.
|   | Water leaping up and falling down | Sea water
|---|----------------------------------|------------------|
| 8 | Water flowing around             | Water from a whirlpool
| 9 | Water drawn in the sun shine     | 7. Reflecting water Drawn in the sun shine at place in a river where the water stands still
| 10| Reflecting water                 | 8. Water drawn in the sun shine Rainwater caught while the sun is shining
| 11| Stagnant water                   | 9. Hail Water from tank
| 12| Hoarfrost                        | Water from well
| 13| Birth water of a calf            | Hoarfrost
| 14| Milk                             | Honey
| 15| Curd                             | Birth water of a calf
| 16| Ghee                             | Milk
| 17| Honey                            | Sarasvati Water Ghee

Table 13

These waters were collected at proper seasons and opportunities, and kept in reserve in pitchers near the northern altar. On the day of the ceremony seventeen small vessels made of the wood of the Udumbarā or of the Vetasa (Calamus rotang) were provided, and the Adhvaryu, proceeding to the first pitcher, drew some water from it into the vessels while repeating the mantra. viz. “O honeyed water whom the Devas collected, thou mighty one, thou begotten of kings, thou enlivener; with thee Mitra and Varuna were consecrated, and Indra was freed from his enemies; I take thee.” Next, he drew some water from the second pitcher, with the mantra. Thus, “O water, thou art naturally a giver of kingdoms, grant a kingdom to my Yajamāna so and so (naming of king),” and then poured into the vessel butter taken four times in a ladle, a mantra being repeated to consecrate the operation of pouring. In this way all the seventeen vessels being filled into a large bucket made of the same wood, while repeating the verse “O honeyed and divine
ones, mix with each other for the promotion of the strength and regal vigour of our
Yajamāna. The mixture was then removed to the altar opposite the place of Mitrā and
Varuna. 53

The water in big vessels was cleaned with a gold piece tied in two Kusa blades
(known as the Utpavana rite) and was distributed in four vessels made of Palāsa
Udumbarā, Nyagrodha and Asvatta wood. The sacrificer wore a silken garment and a
white turban. Then followed the ritual bath after which wearing a new dress he took from
the Adhvaryu a bow and three arrows for protection, each act being accompanied with
proper mantras. The deities and mortals were formally apprised of the anointing to be
shortly held and asked to approve of the same. 54

The sprinkling was done jointly by the Brāhmaṇa (adhvaryu), a Kṣatriya, and
also a Vaiśya, representing the three estates of the realm. The next important feature of
the ceremonies was the bath administrated to the king before he was seated on the
throne. 55 After that he must be loyal to religion, law and truth (satyasava and satya
dharma). 56 The king must follow this oath “if I play thou false, may I lose the merit of
all my religious performances and gifts, of my good deeds, my place, my life, and even
my progeny.” 57

In the rite of a coronation ceremony the prospective king is bathed with the
sacred water collected from different seas, rivers and ponds. 58 It is to be pointed out that
in the ‘Rājasuya’ described in the Brāhmaṇas the principle rite is the ‘Abhiṣechaniya’ in
which the king is bathed with water brought from seventeen sources in seventeen vessels

53 Ibid, V.3.5. 3-12.
56 Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, 17,10.
of Udumbarā. According to the Gopatha Brāhmaṇa, there should be four jars each of gold, silver, copper and clay and those should be filled with the water for coronation. The priest would bathe the king with the water of the jar. The most common material for Abhiṣeka is water. Water is on the one hand not only believed to remove dirr but also to free from wicked power and on the other hand considered to draw fresh potency and to facilitate the introduction of beneficial influence. Several materials can be used to ‘purify’ the collected water, including a piece of gold, and herbs or grasses. A certain technique must be employed when pouring water or other material on the object during the Abhiṣeka rituals. It should be applied from above, preferably spreading from the head of the idol to its feet; even in the case Abhiṣeka performed to the feet only this direction is maintained.

The king was then made to put on his bathing dress, consisting of an inner garment for the loins (Tārpya) made of linen or cotton cloth steeped in clarified butter, arid blanket like a barber’s sheet (adhivasa), and a turban (uṣnīsa). A bow was then brought forth, duly strung, and then handed to the king, along with three kinds of arrows, for all of which appropriate mantras are provided. The Mairāyaniya prescribe three garments and three formulae: a Tārpya garment (thou art the amnion of the royal power),

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57 Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, VIII. 15.
58 Atharvaveda, XVII. 1-10; Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, I. 38., Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa, II.7,15-17.
60 Ibid., Vol. I, p. 67.
61 Kāṭākṣaśāraṇa, pp. 103, 233.
63 Hoeterman, op. cit., 1957, p. 82.
65 Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, V.3.5. 19-27.
a *Pāndara* garment (thou art the womb of the royal power), and the turban (thou art the umbilical cord, *nābhi*, of royal power). 66

Four basket were next brought out, one made of Palāsa wood (*Butea frondosa*) one of Udumbarā (*Ficus glomerata*), one of Vata (*Ficus indica*), and one of Asvattha (*Ficus religiosa*), and the collected waters in the bucket were divided into four parts, and poured into them. Two slips of *Kusa* grass were next taken up, a bit of gold was tied to each, and the slips thus prepared were then dipped into the baskets. A little water was taken out with them, and sprinkled on the king while repeating the *mantra*,

"I sprinkle this by order of *Savīta*, with a faultless thread of grass (*Pavītra*) with the light of the sun, you are O water, unassailable, the friends of speech, born of heat, the giver of soma, and the sanctified by *mantra*; do you grant a kingdom" (to our *Yajamāna*). 67

After that, the *Adhvaryu* came forward and stood in front of him with the bucket made of Palāsa wood in his hand. The high priest, or a relative of the king, stood on the right side with the bucket of Udumbarā wood. A *Kṣatriya* on the left with the bucket made of Nyagrodha wood, while a *Vaiśya* stood behind with the bucket made of Asvatta wood, and each on his turn, in the order named, poured the contents of his bucket on the king’s head. *Mantra* were recited when about to pour the water. 68 These actions were probably symbolic of the consent of all people to the anointing. 69

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66 *Varaha-Srauta Sūtra*, III.3.2,30.
68 *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*, V. 3.5. 10. 25.
69 *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*,V.4.1.9ff; *Kātyāyana Śrauta Sūtra*, XV.6.11.
After the bath, the king descended from his seat, cast off his wet clothes, put on his regal dress including hog skin shoes, and then took three steps forward, symbolically to represent the subjugation of the religions, repeating for each act a separate mantra. The Adhvaryu in the meantime offered an oblation to the fire, and the Agnidhara, collecting a portion of the water that had run over the king's person.

After that, when the king was seated on the throne the priest touching the chest of the king says, "he hath sat down, the upholder of sacred law and order. Verily the king is the upholder of the sacred law for he is not capable of all and every speech, not of all and every deed; he should speak only what is right and do the right deed alone." In the next step the priest takes up sticks and silently strikes the king on his back. By striking him with sticks (danda) he takes him beyond the pale of judicial punishment; hence the king is exempt from punishment.

A Brāhmaṇa hands over a sword to the king as a symbol of royal power and military strength. The sword is symbolic of Indra's thunderbolt. The king is the victory of Indra on earth and the chief priest, victory of Brahma and guide of Indra. The king in his turn handed over the sword to his brother, who again hands it over to the satra. The satra hands it over to the Grāmani. The Grāmani, in his turn hands it over to a sajāta, a tribesman. Each receiver of the sword becomes weaker than the giver. Thus the king is made weaker than the Brāhmaṇa, the king's brother is made weaker than the king and so on. This gradual inferiority of deficiency in power is intended for the proper functioning of the body politic.

71 Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, V.4.4.5.
72 Ibid., V.4.4.7.
73 Ibid. V.4. 4. 10-12.
After this stage the king must join the dice play. Five dice are handed over to the king to be thrown by him, different signification being attached to the results of the castings, such as the king's victory in all the quarters or the dominance of the Kali age (representing the king) over the three other ages.  

The next important feature in the rituals of the Rājasuya is the mimic cows. A chariot was made ready and four horses were yoked to it. The king had to ascend the chariot, take it in the midst of a group of hundred or more cows belonging to his kinsmen collected to the north of the Ahavaniya fire, touch one of them with the string of his bow and say, 'I seize these'. Then he had to restore to the owner as many cows as were collected or more, return to the sacrificial ground and make four offerings called Rathavimochaniya. Before getting down from the chariot the king had to put on boar skin and bow to the earth saying "O mother earth, do not injure me nor may I injure thee." The reason underlying the ritual of the mimic cow-raid is that Varuna lost his vigour after consecration and got it restored from the cows. According to Keith, the ritual suggests the king's victory over the pretenders to the royal throne and he cites a parallel from the ceremony of coronation of the kings. The mimic cow-ride is an illusory technique founded on the primitive magical notion that by creating the illusion one can actually control the reality.

When the king has performed the consecration ceremony, he does not shave his hair. The reason why he does not shave his hair (is this): that the collected essence of the

74 Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, V 4.4.7.
75 Taittiriya Samhitā, I 8.15.1, Šatapatha Brāhmaṇa, V. 4.3.
waters where with he is then sprinkled (anointed) is vigour. Further, it is the hair (of his head) that reaches first when he is sprinkled; hence were he to shave his hair, he would cause that glory to fall off from him, and would sweep it away: therefore he does not shave his hair. The king does not shave his hair for a year. After a year, the ceremony called Kesavapaniya was held for cutting the hair of the king’s beard, which was allowed to grow during the interval after the consecration.

According to Brāhmanical literature, there were another important ceremonies, which were related to the coronation of king viz. the Rājasuya, the Vājapeya, the Aśvamedha.

5.2.2 Rājasuya

The ceremony, in ancient time, was called the Rājasuya or that which can be effected only by a king from rājan ‘a king’ and shu ‘to be effected.’ This derivation, however, is not universally accepted. Some interpret the term to mean the ceremony at which the soma juice is produced, from rāja ‘moon’ for the moon-plant, su ‘to bring forth’. The earliest reference to the Rājasuya in the sense of royal consecration occurs in the Atharvaveda. While the verses used in the ceremony are preserved in the Samhitās of the Yajurveda, its main features are outlined in the Brāhmaṇa. The Rājasuya, or inauguration of a king, was a more complex ceremony, which consisted of a long succession of sacrificial performances spread over a period of upward of two years. It is referred to in the Atharvaveda and later literature such as Taittirīya Samhitā,

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79 Satapatha Brāhmana. V3.1.2.
80 Mitra, op.cit, 1891, p. 2.
81 Atharvaveda IV.8.1; XI.7.7.
82 Aitiṭyāra Samhitā, I, 8, Kāthaka Samhitā XV; Maitriyāni Samhitā, II, Vājasaneyi Samhitā, X.
83 Satapatha Brāhmana, V.2.3.1 etc.
Aitareya Brāhmaṇa etc. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa says that to the king doubtless belongs the Rājasuya, for by offering the Rājasuya he becomes a king. The Rājasuya is not a single ceremonial, but a series of rituals, several of which had independent existence. The completion of the whole ceremony was spread over about two years and three-months. Bhattacharyya states that the Rājasuya, on the other hand, is a more complex ceremony extending over very long period covering more than two years and comprising a number of Istis, Soma sacrifices and animal sacrifices. It is mythically connected with the coronation of Varuna or Indra and displays many popular elements. The nobles and office-bearers of the court play an important part in this ceremony. The Rājasuya ceremonies can be divided into three distinct parts.

I. Preliminary sacrifices of Abhiṣeka.

II. Abhisechaniya ceremony.

III. Post anointing ceremonies.

The preliminary ceremonies began with the first day of the Dikṣā or initiation which took place on the first day of the bright half of the month of Phālguna (March-April). It was followed by offerings to Anumati and Nitti who received the fallen portions of the grain mixed with salt scattered on a piece of ground in the south. In this period, several ritual parts must be practised and many ceremonies held by the prince.

84 Atharvaveda, IV 8.1; XI 7.7.; Aitareya Brāhmaṇa V.1.1.12., VII. 13 to VIII 23; Sankṣayana Śrouta Sūtra XV.12-16; Taittiriya Samhitā 18.1-21, V. 6.2.1.; Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa, 16 to 18.4, Āpasiṃba Śrouta Sūtra XVIII. 3 to V 5.5; Vājasaneyi Samhitā IX. 35 to X. 34; Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, V.2.3 to V. 5.5; Kāvyāyana Srauta Sutra XV 1-5; Paścavimsa Srauta Sūtra, XXXVI. 11-13; Lāvyāyana Śrouta Sūtra, IX. 1-3.; Kausika Sutra Sūtra, XVII.

85 Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, V. I.I.12.

86 Law, op.cit., 1986, p. 161,
One of the most interesting features of the Rājasuya is the ceremony of the Ratninam havimsi or jewel offerings (the offerings in the houses of the jewels, which are twelve). The ratnin was applied to those people of the entourage in whose houses the ratni havis rite was performed. The Taittirīya Samhitā and Kāthaka Samhitā say that the recipients of these offerings, the eleven Ratnins, were all the essential officers of the state representing its principle departments. They have a symbolic value. The person to be crowned recognizes the importance of his high functionaries and is declared to be their king and they are supposed to approve of him as king. They are, metaphorically, the ‘jewels in the crown of sovereignty.’ They are mentioned in the following order: (I) the commander in chief (Senānī), (II) the court chaplain (Purohita), (III) the queen (Maheśī), (IV) the court-ministers and chroniclers (Sūta), (V) the head of the village community (Grāmani), (VI) the chamberlain (Ksattrī), (VII) the head of treasury (Sangrahitrī), (VIII) the collector of taxes and revenue (Bhāgadughā), (IX) the commentator as well as controller of gambling (Akshvāpa), (X) the master of forests, literally, destroyer of beasts (Go-vikarta), (XI) the courier (Pālāgala), (XII) the minor wife, the discarded wife of who does not stay in the royal palace (Parivrktī). Heestermen says that in the first place we must refrain from considering their names as clues giving information on the actual organization of the royal

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88 Ibid., p. 61.
89 Taittirīya Samhitā, 1.8.9; Kāthaka Samhitā, XV.4.; Maitrīyāni Samhitā, II.6.5 say about twelve Ratnins.
91 Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, V.3.1.1.; The Taittirīya Samhitā and Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa present the another list such as consists of Brāhmaṇa or priest, Rājanya, Maheśī, Vāvāta Parivrkti, Senānī, Sūta, Grāmani, Ksattrī, Sangrahitrī, Bhāgadughā, Aksāvāpa (Taittirīya Samhitā, 1.8.9; Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa 1.7.3.). In the Maitrīyāni Samhitā the list is Brāhmaṇa, Rājanya, Maheśī, Parivrkti, Senānī, Sangrahitrī, Ksattrī, Sūta, Vaisyagrāmani, Bhāgadughā, Taks-Rathakārau Aksāvāpa and Go-vikarta (Maitrīyāni Samhitā, II.6.5; IV.3.8.) The Kāthaka Samhitā substitutes Govyacha for Go-vikarta and omits Taks-Rathakārau (Kāthaka Samhitā XV.4). A shot list of eight heroes, as among the friends of the king is given in the Pañcavimsa Brāhmaṇa which consists of brother, son, priest, Mahesi, Sūta, Grāmani, Ksattrī and Sangrahitrī (Pañcavimsa Brāhmaṇa XIX.14)
government. Here, in their ritual context, these personages are rather to be considered symbols of various phenomena.\(^92\)

The \textit{Ratninam havimsi} was performed on twelve days one after another in the house of an aforesaid \textit{ratna}. With each \textit{ratna} was associated a deity, e.g. Indra with the king, Agni Anikavat with the commander of army etc. On the first day the king goes to the house of the commander of the army and offers a cake \textit{Agni Anikavat}, thereby consecrating himself, so that the officer might be faithful to him. The remaining offerings were made on successive days at the houses of the respective persons concerned excepting \textit{Ksattr, Aksavapa} and \textit{govikartana} for whom offerings were made at the royal place.\(^93\)

\textbf{Offerings of the Ratnins in the coronation ceremony}\(^94\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Designation of ratnins</th>
<th>Gift name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The commander of the army</td>
<td>Gold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Purohita</td>
<td>A white-backed bull</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The king himself</td>
<td>A bull</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The queen</td>
<td>A milch cow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The court minstrel and chronicler</td>
<td>A horse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The headman</td>
<td>A spotted bull</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The chamberlain</td>
<td>A reddish-white draught bull</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The charioteer</td>
<td>Twin bullocks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keeper of the dice and the huntsman</td>
<td>A dice-board a claw-shaped knife</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The courier</td>
<td>Bow, quiver, and a red turban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discarded wife</td>
<td>Black, decrepit, diseased cow.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\begin{table}[h]
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\begin{tabular}{|l|l|}
\hline
Designation of ratnins                  & Gift name                        \\
\hline
The commander of the army              & Gold                             \\
The Purohita                           & A white-backed bull              \\
The king himself                       & A bull                           \\
The queen                              & A milch cow                      \\
The court minstrel and chronicler      & A horse                          \\
The headman                            & A spotted bull                   \\
The chamberlain                        & A reddish-white draught bull     \\
The charioteer                         & Twin bullocks                    \\
Keeper of the dice and the huntsman    & A dice-board a claw-shaped knife  \\
The courier                            & Bow, quiver, and a red turban    \\
Discarded wife                         & Black, decrepit, diseased cow.   \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Table 14}
\end{table}

The \textit{Abhisecaniya} rite was the central ceremony of the \textit{Rajasuya} ceremony. Kane states that in the \textit{Abhisecaniya} rite of the \textit{Rajasuya}, there are two parts, religious

\(^{92}\) Heesterman, \textit{op.cit.}, 1957, p. 53.

\(^{93}\) \textit{Satapatha Brāhmaṇa}, V.3.1.1, 13.
and popular. It lasts for five days, one day for Diksa, three days for Upasads and one Sutya day for Soma pressing. It (consecration) has as its immediate basis the Ukthya, a form of Soma sacrifice, which is nothing but an Agnistoma covering five days with these additional rituals, viz. the slaying of a second victim to Indra and Agni on the last day, the chanting of the Ukthya-stotra followed by the recitation of the Ukthya Śastra. To develop this Ukthya sacrifice into the Abhisecaniya, certain rites were further added.

The next interesting feature in the Rājasuya was the Abhisecaniya, the consecration ceremony made up of no less than seventeen kinds of water including the water of dew, pond and sea.

The sacrifice performed at the coronation of a king by himself and tributary princes, confirmed his title. In the Rājasuya ceremony when the king shot an arrow we are told that being one with Prajāpati he rules over many. The importance of the Rājasuya is inter alia apparent from the statement that one becomes a Rājā or the king after having performed that sacrifice. Thereby the king is rendered adanya and placed beyond the reach of judicial destruction. The Rājasuya included rite underscoring and accomplishing the change of status of a king such as Abhiśeka and the mounting of the throne as well as rites to ensure to support of important personal, both human and divine.

94 Ibid., V.3.1.1ff.  
96 Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, IV. 2.5.14.  
98 Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, V.1.5.14.  
99 Ibid., V.1.1.12.  
101 Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, V.4.4.1.
5.2.3 Vājapeya

The Vājapeya probably did not partake of political nature in its origin, it being primarily designed to celebrate something like an Olympic victory. It was, later on adopted for religious consecration. Heesterman states that in the Vājapeya we may study the cosmic symbolism of the chariot course. The drink of strength or battle of the seven forms in the soma-sacrifice was offered by kings or Brāhmaṇas aspiring to the highest position and preceding the Rājasuya. The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa sets out to show that the Vājapeya is a ceremony of greater importance than the Rājasuya. But the Vājapeya was at first of less political importance than the Rājasuya and could be performed by the Brāhmaṇa or Kśatriya as well as Vaiśya, though of-course with different purposes. According to the Taittirīya text, the Vājapeya obtained a high rank than the Rājasuya for the reason that the former was declared to confer imperial position and the latter but royal dignity, from which followed the necessary prohibition that Rājasuya could not be performed after the Vājapeya. The Vājapeya was the preliminary ceremony performed by a king elected paramount sovereign by a number of petty Rājās, this sacrifice being followed in due course by the installation and consecration ceremony, the Rājasuya. The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, and the Kātyāyana Śrauta Sūtra state that the Vājapeya is the superior sacrifice because it bestow on the

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102 Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa, I.3.2.2.; Jayaswal, op.cit, 1943, p. 199.
105 Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, V.1.
106 Sankhāyana Śrauta Sūtra, XVI 17.2.3.
108 Āśvalāyana Śrauta Sūtra IX.9.19.
sacrificer paramount sovereignty (Samarj) while the Rajasuya merely confers royal dignity of Rājya.109 According to this explanation, the sacrificer by offering the Rajasuya becomes king, and by the Vājapeya he becomes emperor (Samarj).

The main important ritual of the Vājapeya is that of collective drinking, a continuation of the preceding Sodasi rite in which the sacrificers, viz. five Vājapeya cups to Indra and also seventeen cups of Soma and seventeen cups of Surā to thirty four, are deposited on earth-mounds situated in front of or behind the axle. Among the rites peculiar to the Vājapeya, the most interesting is the chariot race, in which the sacrificer is allowed to carry off the palm, from which the sacrifice derives its name. The ritual of the chariot race in the Vājapeya is a direct miming of the legendary contest of the gods. On this occasion, the sacrificer prays to Savitr for impulsion uttering a hymn and when the car is moved the Adhvaryu utters mantras addressed to the horses of the sacrificer’s chariot. After the cars have come back with the sacrificer keeping ahead of the others, victorious horses are again anointed.110 Before stepping down from the chariot, the sacrificer puts on a pair of sandals of boar skin with the words: “thou art ardour of the cattle, like thine may be my ardour.”111

After the chariot race the next interesting item is mounting of the sacrificial post by the sacrificer (the king elect) and his wife, from which homage is made to the mother earth, followed by the seating on the throne, the symbol of sovereignty.112 The royal having descended from the pole, is offered a throne with a goat skin spread thereon and addressed by the Adhvaryu (priest) in the following word: “Thou art the ruler, the ruling

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109 Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, V.1.1.13; Kātyāyana Śrutsa Śūtra, XV.1.1.2.
110 Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, V.1.5; Āpastamba Srauta Śūtra, XVIII.3-4.
111 Baudhāyana Srauta Śūtra, XII.16:11.6
112 Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, V.2.1.24.
lord (yantri yamāna) thou art firm and steadfast (dhruva, dhruna).” 113 The Brhaspatiya pap is now given to Brhaspati, but its Svistakyu is left to be offered later on after the Ujjiti oblation. This is followed by the Ujjiti oblations which are supposed to give him control upon life, men, the three worlds, cattle, five regions, six seasons, seven kinds of domestic animals in short Prajāpati himself. After one or two other rites, the Māhendra cup is drawn, and while the Praśastha-stotra is chanted, to be followed by the recitation of its Śastra, the sacrificer comes down from the throne and attends to the chanting and recitation.114 One who has performed the Vājapeya is entitled to use the white parasol. The king should sit like a Ksatriya or a very qualified Brāhmaṇa and observe certain rules of conduct.115

The Vājapeya has several interesting elements. Compared to the Āsvamedha and the Rājasuya, its character is more festive and the nature of people’s participation is easy. The race of seventeen chariots is spectacular also from the viewpoint of amusement. So also is the drinking ceremony.116 This ceremony was held by the king as one part of the royal ceremony.

5.2.4. Āsvamedha

The horse sacrifice was originally a fertility-cum-agricultural ritual which later became transformed into a ceremonial for royal paramountcy.117 The Āsvamedha ceremony also contains passages indicating the king’s divinity.118 It is agreed on all hands in the Vedic texts that the performer of the Āsvamedha sacrifice should be a

113 Ibid., V. 2.1.25.
114 Śatapāṭha Brāhmaṇa, V.2.2.
115 Āpastamba Śrauta Sūtra, XVIII.7.16-17.
117 Aitareya Brāhmaṇa XI 7.7-8; Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa V.4.12.3; Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa XIII 3.3.6.
118 Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa, III 9.20.2.; Śata ‘pata Brāhmaṇa, XIII.4.4.3.
Ksatriya king. The *Satapatha Brāhmana* clearly pointed out "let him who holds royal sway perform the horse sacrifice; for, verily, whosoever performs the horse sacrifice, without possessing power, is poured (swept) away... were unfriendly men to get hold of the horse, his sacrifice would be cut in twain." All the kings who were, according to the *Aitareya Brāhmana*, actually consecrated with the Indra’s great function are represented as “going round the earth completely, conquering on every side, and offering the horse in sacrifice”. The *Āpastamba Śrauta Sūtra* says that a paramount king (*Sarvabhuma Rāja*) may perform the *Āsvamedha*. The *Āsvamedha*, horse was equated with Prajāpati. The performance of the *Āsvamedha* (horse sacrifice) involved ‘an assertion of power and a display of political authority such as only a monarch of undisputed supremacy could have ventured upon without humiliation. In the sophisticated form of the *Āsvamedha*, which could only be performed by the paramount king, was recognition of the archaic notion. The institution of divine kingship was derived from the belief that the well-being of the social and natural orders depended on the vitality of the leader, which was to be infused into others by the sacrifice of his body. Since the king’s dedication of his physical body was out of question in the historical period, so the horse was used as a substitute. The *Āsvamedha* sacrifice generally lasted for three days. It required the presence of four queens, accompanied by princesses and a large retinue. There were rules stipulating the colour and qualities of the sacrificial horse. After it was selected it was allowed to roam over the country, for the period of one year under guard. During the horse’s absence three *Istis* were to be offered every day to

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120 *Satapatha Brāhmana*, XIII 1.6.3.
121 *Āpastamba Śrauta Sūtra*, XX.1.1.
122 *Satapatha Brāhmana*, I.1.1.
Savitr followed by a chant by a Brāhmaṇa and also by a Ksatriya lute-player. The Hotr recited to the king, surrounded by his sons and ministers, the narrative called Pārīplava. Also every day for a year four oblation called Dhrti were made in the Āhavaniya. At the end of the year the horse was brought back for the sacrifice and the sacrificer erected the Diksa Yūpas and a large number of animals were slaughtered. The remnants of the sacrificial materials were sprinkled over the king. Soma was pressed all the three days. The function ended with a ceremonial birth.

The characteristic of the sacrifice according to the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa as interpreted by Sāyana are (I) the presence of all kind of riches in the kingdom,(II) the existence of all sorts of welfare, (III) abundant food, (IV) abundance of yields from cattle,(V) its continuous flow of benefits,(VI) its special abundant benefits, (VII) its steadiness, (VIII) its glory, (IX) its power to produce fame for the Brāhmaṇas of the country, (X) its power to remove sins, and the corresponding ability of every Ksatriya in the kingdom to kill the enemy, (XI) its power to ensure long life and, (XII) to secure acquisition of property by the subjects and preservation thereof.

The Asvamedha sacrifice was performed not only to extend and confirm the sovereignty of the king, but also to bring spiritual and material blessings on the kingdom. It was a method of enhancing the possibilities of offspring as well as a rite of religious purification. It was felt to bring advantage to the kingdom and not only to strengthen the

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123 Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, XII, Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa, III.8.9.4; Ápastamba Śrauta Sutra, XX.1.1.
124 Ibid.
125 Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, XII 2.7-9, 18.32.
kingship, but also to promote the fertility and prosperity of the country and its people. It was, therefore, one of the most important sacrifices in the state. 127

5.3. Archaeological evidence of coronation ceremony

Most of early as well as later literatures have given more or less similar details about the coronation ceremony. But the articles, which have been used in the coronation ceremony, can be seen differently in the later period. Further, every king of India has appreciated the coronation ceremony and has mentioned it in the inscriptions too. Mauryan, Kushana, Sātavāhana, and Ikshvāku kings and their family members as well as subjects mentioned the king’s Abhiṣekavara. 128 According to insessional evidence, the date of the coronation of the king was considered as the date of the king and regnal year of the king was counted from his coronation date. E.g. king Aśoka used his Abhiṣeka Varṣa when he was erecting the inscriptions in various places in his empire and he released the prisoners twenty five times as a commemoration of his coronation date. 129

The mention of Abhiṣeka Varṣa in Aśokan inscriptions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of inscription</th>
<th>Occasion</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Reference</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a[bhis]ita[sa]</td>
<td>B.C.</td>
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<th>Satam</th>
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There is no evidence that post Mauryan kings used the word, ‘Abhiṣeka’ when mentioning their regnal year. But they often used specific words such as ‘samvatsara’, ‘savatsare’, ‘savachare’, ‘samvachhar’, ‘sam’, ‘sava’ ‘samva’, ‘sha’, and ‘sa’ as an equivalent of ‘Abhiṣeka.’ The ‘samvatsara’ means year or commemorative day of the king and implies the Abhiṣeka year of the king.

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131 *El*, Vol. IX, p. 239.
132 *ASI* (AR), 1918-1919, p. 41.
The mention of the term 'sanvatsara' in inscriptions of post Mauryan kings

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of king</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Occasion</th>
<th>Find spot</th>
<th>References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kanishka</td>
<td>1st century B.C.</td>
<td>Kanishkasya sam 3 he 3 di</td>
<td>Sarnath at Varanasi</td>
<td>EI, Vol. XXXIV, pp. 9-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Century</td>
<td>Details</td>
<td>Place</td>
<td>Source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------</td>
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<td>-----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Pulumavi</td>
<td>2nd century B.C.</td>
<td>Raño vāsithiputasa sri pulumavisa samvachhare chhathe 6</td>
<td>Nasik</td>
<td>EI, Vol. VIII, p. 59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Virapurisadatta</td>
<td>3rd century A.D.</td>
<td>Ramno sari virapurisa datasa samva 6 vā pa 6 diva 10</td>
<td>Nagarjunakonda</td>
<td>EI, Vol. XX, p. 20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 16
Further, according to archaeological evidence, earlier as well as later period kings held some ceremonies such as Asvamedha to highlight their authority in the kingdom.\footnote{Archaeological Survey of Western India, Vol. V, pp. 60-61, Epigraphia Carnatica, Vol. X, p. 63; Indian Historical Quarterly, Vol. VIII, p. 278; EI, Vol. XII, 65-69, XIX, p. 115ff.}

The Sātavāhana king, Sātakarni, son of Simuka became sovereign of the whole of Daksināpatha. He seems also to have controlled eastern Mālva and performed the Asvamedha sacrifice.\footnote{ASI (AR), 1923-24, p. 88.} Nāgarjunakonda inscription of king Virapurisadatta mentions Asvamedha sacrifice.\footnote{EI, Vol. XX, p. 20.} Nānāghat cave inscription, erected by Nāgamika (king?) gives some details about Rājasuya and Asvamedha ceremonies.\footnote{EI, Vol. XXI, p. 20.}

Likewise, in one of the Ajanta paintings, a characteristic feature of the coronation ceremony i.e. the pouring of water upon the head of the king is illustrated.

The king is seated and a man on either side pours water upon him out of a pitcher. It is important to note that in all illustrations, whether royal or otherwise, there are always two streams of water. The water was poured on the king successively out of a golden chank, a silver one, and a natural one with spiral running clockwise. The king faces east, the quarter of the sun.\footnote{EI, Vol. XXI, p. 20.}
5.4 Coronation ceremony and rituals of Sri Lanka.

The Dīpavamsa, the Mahāvamsa, the Samantapāsādikā, the Vamsatthappakāsini and the Sārathadipani furnish valuable details about bestowed Mauryan consecration tradition in the island during the reign the king Devānampiya Tissa after 3rd century B.C. The Chronicles mention a few occasions at which the coronation ceremony was held such as Vijayaḥiṣeka, (consecration of king Vijaya) Panduvāsudevāḥiṣeka, (consecration of king Panduvāsudeva), Abhayāḥiṣeka (consecration of king Abhaya), Pandukābhayaḥiṣeka (consecration of king Pandukabhaya), and finally, the first coronation of Devānampiyatissāḥiṣeka (consecration of Devānampiya Tissa) in the island before the third century B.C. But there is no information to identify the details of these coronation ceremonies.

There is literary evidence to reveal that the Brāhmanas, officers and chief queen were involved in this occasion. It is “the ministers” who carry out the consecration of both king Vijaya and Panduvāsudeva. But in the case of king Abhaya, it is his brothers who preside at the ceremony. King Pandukabhaya solemnised his own consecration. The younger son of the Brāhmana Pandula who had befriended him earlier and had taught him the art of kingly rule, ‘conferred the office of his chaplain. Brāhmana Canda, as royal chaplain, may not impossibly have performed

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143 The Ajanta Caves Ancient Paintings of Buddhist India, London; Tames and Hudson, 1998, p. 46.
144 Dīpavamsa, Ch. XI, V. 33-36., Ch. XII, V. 1-5.; Mahāvamsa, Ch. XI, V. 27-36, Samantapāsādikā, Vamsatthappakāsini, Vol. I, p. 305; Sārathadipani, p. 147.
145 Mahāvamsa, Ch. VII, V. 71; Ch. VIII, V. 27; Ch. IX, V. 12; Ch. X, V. 78., Ch. XI, V.7.
146 Mahāvamsa, Ch. VII, 71, Ch. VIII, V. 27.
147 Ibid., Ch. IX, V. 29.
148 Ibid., Ch. X, V. 78.
Pandukabhaya’s consecration, but the conferment of the chaplaincy would appear to have taken place after the consecration.\textsuperscript{149}

The \textit{Vamsatthappakāsinī}\textsuperscript{150} and the \textit{Sāratthadipani}\textsuperscript{151} provide some valuable information about the nature of the system of \textit{Abhiṣeka} before the 3rd century B.C. in the island. The \textit{Vamsatthappakāsani} says, “Aśoka heard that there was no \textit{Abhiṣeka} ceremony, but that Devānampiya Tissa rules merely by a new staff.”\textsuperscript{152} The \textit{Sāratthadipani} says, “that there was no \textit{Abhiṣeka} ceremony of this pattern.”\textsuperscript{153} Hema Ellawala remarks that another hypothesis is that there may have been two schools of thought as to the existence of the \textit{Abhiṣeka} ceremony in Sri Lanka prior to Devānampiya Tissa. One school, as early as the 11th century A.D., may have held that there was an \textit{Abhiṣeka}, in some form or other, prior to king Devānampiya Tissa, while the other may have held that the only \textit{Abhiṣeka} ceremony known to Sri Lanka was the one which was introduced by Aśoka during the reign of Devānampiya Tissa.\textsuperscript{154}

The chronicles and the \textit{Vamsatthappakāsinī} state that the three staffs were sent to king Aśoka by Devānampiya Tissa. P. Weerasinha states that they may have been emblems of the three chiefdoms such as Tivakka (north) Candanagama (South), and Kajaragama (south). Otherwise, they were sent by king Devānampiya Tissa as emblems to confirm himself as a chief king, prince Uttiya as a vice royal of the north and prince Nāga as vice royal of the south in the united kingdom. We may assume that sometime,

\textsuperscript{149}John Senaviratne, “Royalty In Ceylon,” JCBARS, Vol.XXVI, No. 71, 1918, p. 129.

\textsuperscript{150}\textit{Vamsatthappakāsinī} mentions that the details regarding the Abhūśaka ceremony given here are taken from the commentary on the Cūlasihanada Sutta of the \textit{Majjimanikāya} in the \textit{Sihalatthakathā} (see Introduction p. xvii-xviii) \textit{Vamsatthappakāsinī}, Vol. 1, p. 305.

\textsuperscript{151}\textit{Sāratthadipani} is sub commentary of \textit{Vinaya Piṭaka}.

\textsuperscript{152}Tato pubbepana abhisekagahanamkhena nāma natthi, \textit{Vamsatthappakāsinī}, Vol. 1, p. 305.

\textsuperscript{153}....amaccehi saddhiṃ pucchitvā na tathā idiso abhisekaparihāro etthiṣi sutvā Sadhu abhisekaparihāram pesessamīti vatvā...\textit{Sāratthadipani}, p. 140.

Devānampiya Tissa may have sent this new staff as a symbol of his kingdom. Based on the inscriptive evidence, this argument is doubtful.

According to the *Vamsatthappakāsinī*, and inscriptive evidence, the rulers, prior to Devānampiya Tissa maintained their authority by taking up a new staff, which is further proof that this staff or club was regarded as the emblem of a chief or royal authority in ancient times and hence the veneration of the staff.

Further, there is no evidence to suggest that the custom of bearing the staff by the king, declined after the consecration of Devānampiya Tissa. The staff or spear (Kunta) was one of the symbols of royal authority of Sri Lanka even after third century B.C. According to literary evidence of Sri Lanka, this custom had existed up to the Kandyan period (17-18 century).

The *Mahāvamsa* says that when king Dutthagamani marched forth against the Tamils, the spear (kunta) in which was deposited the Buddha’s relics, was taken in front of his army. It appears once again at the end of the second coronation ceremony which was held by Dutthagamani after defeating the invaders and establishing an unified state at Anurādhapura. It was taken in front of the royal procession, which made its way to the Tissa tank of Anurādhapura to carry out the water ceremony, which was performed at the end of the royal consecration. When the water ceremony was over, the Kunta, was not brought back to the palace but was later enshrined in the Mirisavati Cetiya by the king at Anurādhapura. In the reign of king Yasalālaka Tissa, his Dovārika, who was a

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156 See, pp. 229-254.
158 *Mahāvamsa*, Ch. XXV, V, 1, 9-10, 11-18, Ch. 25, V. 1.
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¹⁵⁶ See, 229-254.
¹⁵⁸ Mahāvamsa, Ch. XXV, V, 1, 9-10, 11-18, Ch. 25. V. 1.
powerful officer of the royal court, carried the staff. According to this instance, Hettiarachchhy assumed that hence we must conclude that the \textit{Yatti} (staff) had lost all its significance as the royal standard by the time of Yasa Hilaka Tissa. But this argument is doubtful because we have another evidence to prove that this custom continued for a long period in Sri Lanka. The Kandyan kings had used the staff as an emblem their authority. According to the description of Baldieus, the Kandyan king called Vimaladharmasuriya I, used two staffs as a symbol of state authority. While one of the them was carried with him, the other chief scepter was carried by a person in front of the king’s procession. Hence it can assume that after coronation ceremony of Devanampiya Tissa, this custom did not decline. Hettiarachchhy states that when the \textit{chatra} or parasol replaced the \textit{Yatti}- the equivalent of the \textit{kunta}, as royal standard, the king would have given his old symbol of royal authority ‘a stately disposal’.

5.4.1 “Abhiśeka” ceremony of king Devānampiya Tissa

The second consecration of Tissa was certainly an important event in the island and he adopted the title ‘Devanapīya’ following king Aśoka. The \textit{Mahāvamsa} mentions that in the first consecration of king Devānampiya Tissa various valuable things were found because of his merit, such as different types of gems and pearls from the surface of the earth and beaches of the ocean and miraculous bamboo stems (\textit{Venu Yatti}) from the foot of the \textit{Chiita Pabbata} (mountain). King Devānampiya Tissa was considering these valuable things and finally he decided to send all of them to his

\textsuperscript{159} \textit{Ibid.}, Ch. XXXV, V. 52-53.
\textsuperscript{160} Hettiarachchhy, op. cit., 1972, p. 27.
\textsuperscript{162} Hettiarachchhy, \textit{op.cit.}, 1972, p. 26.
unseen friend king Aśoka as gifts. 163 After that king Devānampiya Tissa appointed as envoys his nephew Mahārīththa, a Brāhmaṇa, an Amacca and a Ganaka and sent them with a body of retainer to the emperor Aśoka.

The envoys reached the Mauryan court and were welcomed by king Aśoka who conferred various royal honours on the king’s nephew, senāpati, and the Brāhmaṇa, a Purohita. The position of Dandanāyaka was conferred on the Amacca and the Ganaka was made a Setti. 164 Further, the emperor gave these envoys everything that was necessary for royal consecration and asked them to perform the Abhiṣeka of the Sinhalese ruler again. 165 The Mahāvamsa as well as other Sri Lankan sources give a long list of articles of consecration, which had been sent by king Aśoka and the message of Dhamma with the envoys. 166 According to accounts of the Samantapāsādikā, king Aśoka sent Paṁca rājakakudabhanda (the regalia, which are five in number) viz. the canopy, fan, sword, diadem, and sandals, to his Sri Lankan king with envoys. 167

Some scholars have presented different ideas about the voyage of king Devānampiya Tissa’s envoys. 168 Among them, Romila Thapar states that Aśoka’s relationship with Ceylon was not purely political. He and Tissa were on very close terms. As a young man Tissa must have come into contact with the Dhamma-mahāmattas sent to Ceylon five years before Tissa’s coronation. Obviously the personality of Aśoka as it emerged from the work of these officers, impressed Tissa. He may perhaps have decided

163 Mahāvamsa, Ch. 11, V. 18-19.
166 Dipavamsa, Ch. 11, V. 32-34, Ch. 12, V. 1-4, Mahāvamsa, Ch. 11, V. 27-32.
to model himself on the older king. His first coronation took place in Aśoka’s seventeenth year, and some time later he had a second coronation to which he invited a representative of the Indian king. Aśoka returned the courtesy with gifts and a mission. Mahinda probably came with this mission as a personal representative of Aśoka, and no doubt, was accompanied by other monks. It is clear that Thapar tried to emphasise that Arahanta Mahinda arrived in Sri Lanaka as an ambassador of the Mauryan empire to participate in the royal coronation of king Devānampiya Tissa. But this argument of the primacy of Mauryan influence in early Sri Lankan polities as has been shown earlier is doubtful.

Hettiarachchy states that all our literary sources place special emphasis on the consecration of Devānampiya Tissa at the instance of the emperor Aśoka and this emphasis itself implies that it was regarded as a major event by the people, both contemporary and of succeeding generations. Gunawardana also remarks that the consecration of Tissa was certainly an important event in the development of the ideology of political leadership in the island.

In the Sri Lankan literary sources, king Aśoka ‘sent gifts to Devānampiya Tissa. These are of interest as enumerating all that was ‘needful for consecrating a king’. They are as follows, the first five being of course what are known as Rajakakudha bhanda.

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169 Romila Thapar, *op.cit.*, 1997, p. 135
172 See Table 17.
The list of coronation articles sent by king Asoka to king Devanampiya Tissa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Dipavamsa</th>
<th>Mahāvamsa</th>
<th>Vamsatthappakāsani and Sāratthadipani</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Vālavijani (chowris or fan)</td>
<td>Vālavijani (fan)</td>
<td>Sāmuddhika tini samkhāni (three chanks, including a chank produced in the sea.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Unhisa (diadem)</td>
<td>Unhisa (diadem)</td>
<td>Gangodaka (water from Gangā river)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Khagga (sword)</td>
<td>Khagga (sword)</td>
<td>Arunavannamattika (ruddy coloured mud)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Chatta (royal parasol)</td>
<td>Chatta (parasol)</td>
<td>Atthatthabrāhmanaghapatika nīyo (eight each of Kattiya, Brāhmaṇa, and Gahapati, virgins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Pāduka (slippers)</td>
<td>Pāmanga (shoes)</td>
<td>Atthatthameva suvannasajjha lohamattikamayaghathe (eight each of gold, silver bronze and earthen pots)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Vethana (turban)</td>
<td>Moli (turban or crown)</td>
<td>Attahi Kattiya kulehi (eight Kattiya kula)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Sarapamanga (Sara wood)</td>
<td>Vatamsa (ear ornaments)</td>
<td>Attahi Amaccakula (eight families of ministers)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Bhinkara (an anointing vase)</td>
<td>Pāmanga (chain)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Nandivattaka (right hand chank)</td>
<td>Bhimkāra (pitcher)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sivika (palanquin)</td>
<td>Haricandana (yellow sandal wood)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Gangodaka (water from Ganga)</td>
<td>Adovimam Vattakotim (A set of garments that had no need of cleansing)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Sankha (conch trumpet)</td>
<td>Hattapunjanim (a costly napkin)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Adhovima Vatta kotim (Koti of cloth which are with out being washed</td>
<td>Anjanam Nagamahatam unguent brought by the Nāgas)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Suvannapāti (golden vessels)</td>
<td>Arunabhanj Mattika (red coloured earth)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Kacchhu (Spoon)</td>
<td>Anotattodaka (water from the Anotatta lake)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Hatthapuṇjani (costly towels or napkin)</td>
<td>Gangasalila (water from Gangā river)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Anottodaka kajam (water from Anotatta lake)</td>
<td>Sankha (conch)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Haricandana (most precious yellow sandalwood)</td>
<td>Nandiyāvattā (spiral) shell winding in auspicious wise</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 17

According to this table, it is clear that the articles used in the coronation ceremony in Sri Lanka were different from the coronation articles mentioned in Brāhmaṇical literature, though there are some similarities. Further, explaining king Devānampiyatissa's second Abhiṣeka the Vamsatthappakāsinī provides detailed information, which was obtained from Śīhaltakathā,\textsuperscript{174} on the system of the coronation ceremony and its rituals. It mentions that:

In the first place, he who wishes to be duly inaugurated as king should obtain for this purpose three chanks (golden and others), water from the Gangā river, and a maiden of the Ksatriya race. On the day of his installation, the royal mandapa is beautifully decorated with all sorts of precious ornaments; within that mandapa is erected another, made of the branches of the Udumbarā or Attikkā tree and in the centre of this inner mandapa is placed a seat, made of the wood of the same tree. The king covered with jewels and invested with the insignia of royalty, wearing the sword, the pearl umbrella, the forehead-band, the slippers, and the chowrie made of the white hairs of the Semara tails, repairs to the above mentioned seat; a royal virgin, adorned with costly ornaments, and holding in her hand a sea chank filled with river water and opening to the right, then approaches the place where the king is seated, and lifting up the chank with both
hands, pours its contents upon the king’s head, addressing him, at the same time, in these words: “sire, by this ceremony of Abhīṣeka, all the people of the Kṣatriya race make thee their Mahārāja for their protection. Do you rule over the land in uprightness, and imbued with the ten royal virtues. Have thou for the Kṣatriya race a heart filled with paternal love and solicitude. Let them (in return) protect, and guard, and cherish thee.’

Next, the royal chaplain, splendidly attired in a manner befitting his office, taking in both hands a silver chank filled with Ganga water, and raising it aloft, pours the Abhīṣeka water over his head, and says as follows: “sires, by this ceremony of Abhīṣeka all the people of the Brāhmaṇ race make thee their Mahārāja for their protection. Do you rule over the land in uprightness, and imbued with the ten royal virtues. Have thou for the Brāhmaṇ race a heart filled with paternal love and solicitude. Let them (in return) protect, and guard, and cherish thee.”

Next he who holds the office of Setthi, attired in a suitable manner, taking in both his hands a golden chank filled with Ganges water, and raising it aloft, pour the Abhīṣeka water over his head, and says as follows: “Sire, by this ceremony of Abhīṣeka all the Grhapati, for their protection, make thee their Mahārāja. Do you rule over the land in uprightness and imbued with the ten royal virtues. Have thou for the Grhapati a heart filled with paternal love and solicitude. Let them (in return) protect, and guard, and cherish thee'. Further they say, "if your Majesty act in conformity to our suggestions, it is well; otherwise it is to be hoped that your head will split into seven pieces."  

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174 See introduction, pp. xvii-xviii.
175 Vamsatthappakāsini, Vol. 1, p. 305.
Those who address the above form of words pronounce, as it were, a curse upon the king, as if they should say: "it is meet that thou shouldest rule the land in accordance with these our words. Should it not be so, mayest your head split in seven pieces". In this island of Sri Lanka be it known that a Kṣatriya princess, sent Dhammāsoka, performed the ceremony of Abhiṣeka over the head of Devānampiya Tissa with a right handed sea-chank filled with water from lake Anotatta. Previous to this no such ceremony was known in Sri Lanka.¹⁷⁶

Though three distinct persons the Kṣatriya maiden, the Purohita Brāhmana or royal chaplain, and the Setthi or merchant pour the water over the king's head, only one would seem to have been essential for the ceremony, viz. the Kṣatriya maiden. The quotation give above from the Cūla Sīhanādasuttavannanā in Sīhalatthakathā, while including "a maiden of the Kṣatriya race" omits reference to the other two in its enumeration of the 'necessaries' for an Abhiṣeka and also explicitly bids us understand that it was the "Kṣatriya princess sent by Dhammāsoka (who) performed the ceremony of Abhiṣeka over the head of Devānampiya Tissa. The omission, again, of the other two chaplains and Setthi is significant. However that may be, we knew the name of the chaplain who officiated at Devānampiyatissa's Abhiṣeka as also of that of the Setthi who probably figured at that ceremony. According to the Vamsatthappakāsinī, they were Talipabbata and Tissa. They were members of the embassy to Asoka who before sending them back along with the things needful for Devānampiya Tissa's consecration, conferred on them the dignities of chaplain and Guild-lord respectively.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶ ibid.
¹⁷⁷ JohnSenaviratne, op.cit., 1918, pp127-128.
The Abhiṣeka of king Devānampiya Tissa was performed by a Kṣatriya maiden. The Kṣatriya maiden was essential to perform the Abhiṣeka, for the Brāhmaṇa and the Grhapati (householders) were not included in the list of necessaries for the ceremony. Then again it is clearly stated that it was the Kṣatriya maiden sent by Aśoka, who performed the Abhiṣeka of king Devānampiya Tissa. This conspicuous difference as to the status of the Kṣatriya and the Brāhmaṇa in the case of the two forms of Abhiṣeka ceremony mentioned above. It encourages us to suppose that the opposition against the presence of the Brāhmaṇas, in which Buddhism and Jainism played a big part, led, during the Mauryan period, to the use of an Abhiṣeka ceremony in which the purohita played little or no part.178

According to the opinion of Ellawala, before king Devānampiya Tissa there was no Abhiṣeka ceremony in the form in which it was introduced to Sri Lanka by Aśoka; but undoubtedly the Abhiṣeka ceremony in some form or other was known in Sri Lanka. Most probably king prior to king Devānampiya Tissa followed the Hindu form of Abhiṣeka, where the Brāhmaṇa was the most important figure, where as in the case of king Devānampiya Tissa’s Abhiṣeka a member of the Kṣatriya race figured most prominently.179 There is no archaeological evidence to say that kings prior to Devānampiya Tissa followed the Hindu form of Abhiṣeka. It is clear that chiefs or petty rulers may have used the new staff as Abhiṣeka. But it can be assumed that some part of the Vedic Abhiṣeka tradition influenced Devānampiya Tissa’s second coronation.

The consecration of Devānampiya Tissa impressed other petty rulers as well as the political structure of the island at that time. Hettiarachchy states that this coronation

178 Ibid.
179 Ellawala, op.cit., p. 27.
ceremony given to the Anurādhapura ruler by the powerful Indian monarch must have made a deep impression on the other petty leaders of the country. The introduction of this glamorous ceremony to the Anurādhapura court in place of the early ritual to indicate the accession of a new ruler, must have added to the growing prestige of the Anurādhapura ruler. Further, the consecration ceremony helped to attach a dynastic basis to the ruler in the island which seems to have been absent at an earlier date. Hence, along with the consecration ceremony various high notions of kingship made their way to Sri Lanka, and though somewhat modified to suit Buddhist ideologies, they nevertheless exerted a powerful influence on the institution of kingship. 180

Further, after third century B.C, there is no evidence to prove that the Kṣatriya maiden or Brāhmans were directly involved in the coronation ceremony. The ministers or high officers had often engaged in this functions. e.g prince Thulatthana himself was consecrated by the ministers. 181 King Sanghatissa was consecrated by his two ministers, king Sanghabodhi and Gothābhaya who performed the ceremony. 182 King Mahāsena’s Abhiṣēka was carried out by the Thera Sanghamitta, who came from South India. 183 According to these instances, though, the Brāhmanas were living at that time in the island, their power was not higher than that of the Kṣatriyas.

5.4.2 Water festival and consecration.

Water festival was one major part of the coronation ceremony since 3rd century B.C. King Devānampiya Tissa himself arranged a water festival for the dwellers in the

181 Mahāvamsa, Ch. XXXIII, V 18.
182 Ibid., Ch. XXXVI, V. 63.
183 Ibid., Ch. XXXVII, V. 2.
capital, but without apparently observing what is termed "the tradition of crowned kings." After the emergence of the state in Sri Lanka, kings were bound especially by royal customs and their ritual parts. King Dutthagāmani's coronation ceremony was performed according to all the formalities of the royal office and he went to a water ceremony at the end of his coronation. The Mahāvamsa states that the week of the festival of kingship was done by the fearless king Dutthagāmani who had carried out the consecration with great pomp. He went to the Tissa tank at Anurādhapura, that was adorned according to the festival custom, to hold festival plays there and to observe the tradition of crowned kings. The water sports must have been a most pleasant form of recreation, that we find Dutthagāmani once disposed himself in the water for a whole day through, to gather with the women of the harem. The Vamsatthappakāsinī says that Dutthagāmani went to Tissa tank for two reasons i.e. to enjoy water sports and to preserve the customs of the consecrated kings. This ceremony can be seen once again during the reign of the king Ilanāga, who after defeating the power of Lambakanna (took up arms against him) raised the parasol of sovereignty and went to the Tissa tank for the water festival.

According to these instances, we can assume that the water sports, which were held after the consecration ceremony may have formed a major part of the consecration of the kings. Some officers also joined this ceremony with the king. This ceremony may

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184 Ibid, Ch. XIV, V. I
185 Mahāvamsa, Ch. XXVI, V.6
186 Ibid., Ch. XXVI, V. 6-7.
187 Ibid. Ch. XXVI, V. 19
189 Mahāvamsa, Ch.XXXV, V, 38.
have caused to highlight the king’s authority as well as to develop the relation between the king and the officers of the kingdom.

5.5 Buddhism, Coronation ceremony and rituals of Sri Lanka.

The ceremonial of consecration was borrowed from India and was modified later in details under the influence of Buddhist concepts. There is no reason to suppose that the ceremony was of purely Buddhistic origin. A new religion seldom adopts an entirely fresh ritual. It rather adopts and assimilates an existing ritual so as to suit the new circumstances, and in the Abhiṣeka ceremony one sees but a revised edition of the Vedantic ceremony of the royal inauguration.

Although many features of the coronation ceremonies, such as animal sacrifice, which would have come into direct conflict with Buddhist ideologies, must have been absent in the ceremony introduced by Aśoka who was himself a protagonist of Avihimsā, the Abhiṣeka differed little from the Indian ceremonies. Further, the dominating power of Brāhmanas fell from the coronation ceremony in Sri Lanka. That place belonged to Kṣatriyas in the coronation ceremony. In Sri Lanka, some ceremonies held after consecration in India, such as the Asvamedha were replaced by water sports or Buddhist activities.

The coronation or Abhiṣeka of kings, which was originally a secular business of the state, later assumed the garb of a religious ceremony. According to Vedic traditions, the vessels which were used on the occasion of the coronation ceremony were

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190 JRCBAS, Vol. XXVI, No. 71, 1918, p. 118.
made of Udumbara (Ficus glomerata), Palāsa (butea frondosa), Nygrodha (ficus indica), and Asvatta (ficus religious). But the Vamsatthappakasīnī says that the clay should be taken from eight specific places which were all connected with sacred Buddhist places at Anurādhapura. According to the Vamsatthappakasīnī, clay for this purpose had to be taken from under the northern flight of steps either of the Mahābodhi, or of Lovamahāpāsāda, or Nila Pokkarani, or of Pagompālaka, or of the Mahāchetiya, or from under the northern door of the Catussālā, or from under steps of the entrance to the hall named Samujjavasālā where the Bhikkhus used to drape their robes. The specific statement that clay should be taken from under the steps of these places shows clearly that the coronation of a king was regarded as having religious significance. These incidences show clearly that some Buddhist concepts influenced the coronation ceremony after 3rd century B.C. in the island.

Further, after the coronation ceremony early Sri Lankan kings tried to engage in religious or social activities. King Dutthagāmani distributed places of honour to his warriors according to their rank, and we may be sure that there were many manifestations of bounty on the occasion. If at the festival of consecrating the Chatta on the Mahāthūpa, king Sanghatissa distributed the six garments to the Buddhist monks, his generosity at his own consecration was probably on no meaner scale. The king Sirināga availing himself of the coronation of the Lovamahāpāsāda, ‘remitted the tribute’ of families throughout the island. King Moggallāna I went to the Mahā Vihāra to see Buddhist monks after his success and he offered his parasol to

193 Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, V. 3.5.10-14.
195 Mahāvamsa, XXVI, V, 1.
196 Ibid., Ch. XXXVI, V. 67.
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the Sangha. These instances imply that some coronation rituals of the kings of Sri Lanka were influenced by Buddhism.

There is no evidence about the Buddhist monks involved in the coronation ceremony of kings. In the fourth century A.D., Thera Sanghamitta who was the teacher of king Mahāsena, arrived in Sri Lanka from India to participate in the consecration of Mahāsena. Further, after the seventh century A.D. the coronation ceremony was held inside the Buddhist Vihāra. For instance, Sena II had his coronation at the Mahācetiya and declared in writing that the ceremony should be performed every year. After defeating the invader king, king Vijayabāhu I arrived in Anurādhapura from Polonnaruwa for the consecration. He may have arrived in Anurādhapura the sacred Buddhist centre to hold his coronation. Thus, the consecration of Buddha’s status began after the fifth century A.D. in Sri Lanka.

Further, the kings of this period considered the date of coronation as an important event of their life. It is clear that they always referred to this occasion. The Vessagiriya rock inscription of king Mahānāga mentions that the gift was given by him after raising of the parasol (Catta). The Timbirivāva rock inscription refers to the minister Naka Honiya who granted revenues to the Gangapabbata Vihāra dated in fourteenth year of raising of the parasol by king Naka (may be Mahādātika Mahānāga). The Bōuvattegala rock inscription mentions that minister Abagiri offered

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197 John Senaviratne, _op.cit_, 1918, p. 131.
198 *Mahāvamsa*, Ch.XXXVI, V. 26
199 _Ibid._, Ch. 41, V. 26-29.
200 _Ibid._, Ch. XXXVII, V.
201 _Ibid._, Ch. li, V. 82.
202 *Mahāvamsa*, Ch. 57, V. 8.
203 _Ibid_. Ch. XXXVIII, V.66; Ch. XXXIX, V. 40.
204 IC, Vol. II, part 1, No. 37, p. 50.
205 _Ibid_. No. 74, p. 108.
revenue of a tank to the Buddhist monastery in the twentieth year of the raising of the umbrella (catta) of the king Bhātiya Tissa.206

According to these inscriptive evidences, it is clear that the coronation was one of the major factors that confirmed the power and authority of the king. The Pāli commentaries explain that the coronation ceremony was essential to appear as a king. The Sammohavinodani states that the king means the Ksatriya who is consecrated (Rajano to muddhaabisitto).207 The Sumangalavilāsinī says that kings mean those who were consecrated (Rajanoti abhisitto).208 Thus according to the Buddhist concepts of the commentaries the royal state becomes impossible without consecration.

206 Ibid., 84, p. 123.
207 Sammohavinodini, p. 518.