The present study entitled "The Vedic Concept of Yajña and its Social Significance" presents an indepth analysis of the theoretical and practical aspects of Vedic Yajña in an objective manner with reference to the original sources and modern literature on the subject. This analysis is carried out within the frame work of the weltanschauung of the Vedas. It answers lucidly and forthrightly the following basic questions regarding Yajña as a Vedic view of life: What does Yajña signify or symbolize? Is it a mere time-consuming primitive ritual practised perpetrated and polluted by a priest craft to exploit the religious sensibility of the people? How is Yajña accommodated within the frame work of the Vedic vision of life? How does the Yajña culture contribute to the enrichment of the socio-spiritual life of the Aryans?

The thesis embodies in the main the result of the author's investigations giving scope for a wide range of perceptions and perspectives. Intending to know the essentials of this branch of the Vedic lore, he attended the performance of Atirātra conducted at Pānjāl, Kerala in April 1975 under the auspices of an international committee consisting of Professors R.N. Dandekar and C.G. Karshikar (Poona), Klaus Mylius (Leipzig), Asklo parpola (Helsinki), V. Raghavan (Madras), E.R. Sreekrishna Sarma (Tirupati), J.A.B. Van Buitenen (Chicago), and Frits Staël as Chairman.

It was of considerable help for him in understanding at first hand something about the technicalities of Yajña or sacrifice. With the help of traditional Vedic scholars like Sri Agnihotra Ramanuja Tatachari and the late Sri Erkara Raman Nambu-
diiri and many others who were kind enough to supply, interpret and explain to the author the relevant basic texts and primary sources, he has made an attempt in these pages to collect and examine the Vedic ideas regarding the nature and the purport of Yajña.

Special care has been taken by the author to see that neither narrow-minded orthodoxy nor crude nationalism should overpower him in arriving at conclusions. Texts must be studied from within themselves, they should not be made to subject themselves to extraneous theories. At the same time the right to question every aspect of the subject have been profusely exercised and pains have been taken to find out internal evidence in support of rational answers as far as possible.

In this thesis the approach is rather philosophical than historical. This does not mean that we disregard or undermine the findings of historians but it means that the main concern is not in narrating the history of ritual literature but to study and understand the nature of Yajña and the purpose it was designed to serve. Historians of the philosophy of Ancient India allot but a few negligible paragraphs for the philosophic tendencies enshrined in the treatises on Yajña, and that too with a sort of reluctance, actuated more by the desire to be historical rather than philosophical in there outlook.

The ambition of the present thesis is humbler than that of a historian or a literary critic, and its scope narrower. All that is attempted here is to show that the idea of Yajña or sacrifice is pivotal to Vedic thinking and that it has a profound philosophic background, and that if has always been complementary
to the Vedic way of life and view of life, though most often it degenerated into mere ritualism and very often into priest craft.

This thesis has been divided into seven chapters. In Chapter I an attempt has been made to show the denotation and connotation of the word Yajña with reference to its sources. The significance of the Rgvedic reference to Yajña as 'the navel of the earth' is sought after. In course of time, in accordance with the law of evolution and growth of human mind how the simple acts of sacrifice and nature worship developed into a highly complicated and comprehensive system of spiritual endeavour incorporating newly discovered phases and dimensions of life of the Aryan people, is hinted at. It is shown that in Vedic Literature Yajña is presented as an Aryan pattern of world interpretation. The concept of Yajña served the Vedic poets as a basic analogy or root metaphor born of archetypal images in their endeavour to express and explain their experience of Reality that constitute their visionary consciousness.

Chapter II is devoted to an enumeration and classification of the important Yajñas with a short account of their general features. A detailed account of some of the important elements of the Yajña system such as Yajñana, Dīkṣā, Vedi, Agni, Soma, Yūpa, Rtvika, etc., are given.

Chapter III represents the Vedic vision of life without which any treatment of the theory of Yajña becomes incomplete. The Vedic poet's perception of "the mortal as the brother of the immortal" and the derivation of the visible finite from the invisible infinite is found out and illustrated. How the Rgvedic poet uses the concept of Yajña as an archetype (prāmāṇa), as an ultimate underlying from and a root metaphor, and how it serves for the efficient
handling of ektypes (Pratimā) of their world-view has been briefly dealt with.

In chapter IV a few relevant Vedic passages pertaining to important rituals are explained, because they serve to give us an insight into the method of interpretation of universal evolution familiar to the Vedic seers. They also give us a perspective of the vision of life the Rais sought to unfold in the sacrificer's discerning eye in the image of the Yajña. These passages serve the purpose of invoking and unfolding in the Āryan mind a cosmic consciousness conducive to the apprehension of reality in its totality.

Chapter V endeavours to see the philosophical foundations and religious imports of Yajña. It is found that the discovery of Rta is the pivot of Yajña consciousness. The way and the truth of sacrifice is dealt with in this chapter. Besides the symbolic nature of sacrifice aspects like sex and sacrifice, divinisation of man through sacrifice etc., are made explicit. The awakening and the enlargement of consciousness as a consequence of divinisation is discussed.

An attempt has also been made in this chapter to show that both Jnānakanda and Karmakanda have wonderfully maintained the idea of unity of all existence, and that the promoters and professo\[s of rituals have tried their best to remind man of his final goal and supreme value of life.

Chapter VI deals with the social significance of Yajña. It is seen that the concept of Yajña grows and develops into a master image and a man-making art; it pervades not only the religion and philosophy of the Āryans but also their daily social life and all important activities from birth to death. The Grhyaajnas
are meant to refine and purify or transform the individuals that
make up a society of Āryans.

This chapter examines the possibilities of infusing the
modern civilized societies with the spirit of unity and harmony
with which the seers comprehended and co-ordinated the forces of
nature, both microcosmic and macro-cosmic.

I am resubmitting the thesis in the light of the comments
and criticisms of the examiners to whom it was once sent for eva-
 luation. The thesis was revised strictly according to the sugge-
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