CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION
CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

As intended in the beginning of the present work, we have attempted to study almost all the sacrificial places occurring in various ritual texts. The ritual texts refer to the sacrificial places from the perspective of mysticism, mythology and ritualism. In this manner, we can see the relation between various ritual actions performed on various places and the emerging magico-religious effects therefrom. Thus, those different places where the rites take place influence the outcomes generated from multiple actions by the participants.

After going through various actual references from the Vedic texts and different related views of different scholars concerning this topic, one can conclude in the following way-

1. It is well-known that ritual was the most important element of the Vedic religion. The ritualistic system originated from the Vedas, developed into a full-fledged science in the period of the Brāhmaṇa texts.
2. Different components of the ritual were studied carefully by the Vedic authorities and all were given due import.
3. Various places or locations on or in which major or minor rites were actually performed were one of the key components.
4. These specific places were used by the gods to obtain success in the sacrifices or even to overcome their enemies. Thus it was the divine spirit who chose the right place for the right sacrifice either intentionally or accidentally. Hence, the human Vedic ritualists followed the procedures like the divine sacrificers to fulfill their desires through the sacrifices. After having read the numerous
arthavādas provided by the Brāhmaṇa texts, to support the use of a specific place in a specific rite to achieve desired result over again, we can trace back the theories of imitative magic and ‘myth-ritual’ connection in the Vedic thinking.

5. Hence, it was strongly believed by the Vedic Indians that the sacrificial places are a driving force in procuring effects desired from the sacrifices in a magico-religious manner.

6. Naturally, as a background they assumed that different places possess special qualities affecting the outcomes of the sacrifices. Consequently, they believed that if the place is changed then the result would also change.

7. The sacrificial places possess positive as well as negative qualities. These qualities were attributed to various places by the Vedic Indians on the basis of their ideas of auspicious and inauspicious. The places produced beneficial or baleful results depending upon their individual qualities. Thus, the places producing harmful results were used for the Abhicāra rites.

8. If we go through the Vedic literature, we can observe that Vedic deities like Varuṇa or Rudra posses double nature. Sometimes they are destructive, but if one appeases them properly then they become favourable too. Certain sacrificial places are also of the similar nature. One has to offer oblations on such places to pacify the terrifying deities, evil spirits to remove the negative effects related to them. On the other hand, the same places are used for the offerings to obtain happiness and prosperity. Thus these places possess positive as well as negative qualities simultaneously. These places can be called as ‘dvī-swabhāva’ or ‘double-natured’ places. The favourable or adverse nature of the results arising from such places is subjected to the way they are used and to the
rites in which they are used by the Vedic people. The Valmīka (ant-hill) or the Ūṣarākṣetra can be designated as the ‘double-natured’ sacrificial places. Therefore, the places turned out to be one of the significant and sacrosanct factors in the Vedic sacrificial machinery.

9. The Vedic sacrificial places include natural places like the regions or the forest and the man-made places like the fire-places or the Cātvāla or the Adhīdevana.

10. The basic sacrificial place or the Devayajana is complete with the different sheds, mounds and pits prepared by the ritualists. It is the foundation of the whole sacrifice. It is a natural as well as a manmade place. It was obviously chosen with specific intentions and so specific features. Of course, the features of a Devayajana with sacred intentions were different from those of with the exorcist intention.

11. The sacrificial fires and the cardinal points too were used as sacrificial places. Since associated with the determined sacrificial activities, these two phenomenas do not remain the abstract spaces. However, they become transformed fully into the sacrificial places.

12. Moreover, the Vedic rituals can not be imagined without the sacred fires and the quarters as the sacrificial places.

13. Similarly various altars and hearths were prepared to fulfill definite desires. The minute details followed in the measurements and shapes of the altars for the obtainment of diverse intentions also prove the significance of a place in the Vedic sacrifices. The two additional altars in the Sautrāmaṇi or the unequivocal descriptions about the shapes of the brick-fire-altars can be cited as the befitting examples of this concept.
14. Thus, the fires, the cardinal points and the altars can be nominated as the three principle categories of the Vedic sacrificial places.
15. Other than the three prominent categories, the Vedic ritual actions require many more miscellaneous places.
16. We can further categorise the miscellaneous places. Different sheds and pits within the Devayajana and some queer places outside the sacrosanct arena make these two categories. The sacrificial arena itself was identified with the universe or Prajāpati by the Vedic Indians; consequently even the minor places inside it carried similar sanctity. Moreover the outer places possessed preferred magico-religious powers. Therefore, though named as miscellaneous places, the study of the sacrificial places can not be completed without taking them into consideration.

Though no completeness is claimed a genuine attempt is made in this thesis to study and analyse ‘the concept of sacrificial place’ in the Vedic rituals. While selecting the subject and during the actual research, it was strongly felt that collecting the required references, analyzing them and putting them together on the basis of the magico-religious effects would assist the cause of the ritualistic studies. It would contribute in its own way to the future research in the field of the science of the Vedic ritual.

**********************