Chapter - I

Introduction

Āśvalāyana Śrautasūtra is the oldest and the most authentic Śrautasūtra of the Vedic sacrificial arena. Sacrifices are the hub and nexus of the whole Vedic literature. Without a proper understanding of the Vedic scarifies it is very difficult to understand the Vedic texts. The texts of the four Vedas represent theoretical aspects while the sacrifices provide for the practical aspects. Both are inter-related and complimentary to each other. There are a number of sacrifices performed in the Vedic age, namely Darśapūrṇamāsa, Agnyādhāna, Agniṣṭoma, Vājapeya, Rājasūya, Sautrāmanī, Cayana, Aśvamedha, Puruṣamedha, Sarvamedha, Somayāga and many others. The details of all the sacrifices are found in the Brāhmaṇa literature and in the Śrautasūtras. The problem is that the different Brāhmaṇas and Śrautasūtras have prepared the detailed accounts of the different sacrifices which always do not maintain conformity and uniformity.

The Vedic sacrifices are divided into two sections – Prakṛtiyāga or Principal and Vikṛtiyāga or Subsidiary sacrifices. The subsidiary rites follow their respective principal sacrifices in the performance of different sacrifices. Therefore, it is necessary, to study the details of principal
sacrifices. Āśvalāyana Śrautasūtra mainly deals with the Śrauta sacrifices and prepares an authentic account of the Vedic sacrifices.

Śrautasūtras belong to the Vedāṅgas. Vedāṅgas are the auxiliary works through which the meaning of the Vedas can be known. Among the six Vedāṅgas the second one is ‘Kalpa’. The kalpa deals with the four types of sūtras and they are – Śrauta, Grhya, Dharma and the Śulva sūtra. The Śrautasūtra deals with the rituals of great sacrifices. Among the various sacrifices, there are some principal or model sacrifices, following which the other subsidiary sacrifices are performed. In the Āśvalāyana Śrautasūtra there are number of sacrifices but five among them are regarded as the principal sacrifices. They are – Homa, Iṣṭi, Paśu, Soma and Satra. These are considered as the principal sacrifices because of their special features. Before going into the main stratum of the dissertation, a brief account on the definition and origin of the Vedas as well as of the Vedāṅgas are being presented.

Definition of the Veda:-

Veda means knowledge per excellence or the supreme knowledge. It also means the sacred religious knowledge. The word Veda is derived from the root ‘vīd’ with the suffix ‘Ghañ’ means ‘to know’. Kāṭyāyana and Āpastamba defines Veda as the conjoint text of the Mantras and the Brāhmaṇas.¹ In the Hiranyakesī Śrautasūtra and in the Sabaras
commentary on Mīmāṃsādarśana, the same definition of Veda is given.² Sayanācārya in his commentary on Aitareya Brāhmaṇa has given the definition of the Veda as the supernatural way to attain the desired object and to get rid of the harmful things.³ Manu defines Veda as the root of all Dharmas.⁴

The Vedas or the Vedic literature consists of four different classes of literary works. These are – Samhitās, Brāhmaṇas, Āranyakas and Upaniṣads. There are four saṃhitās – Rgveda saṃhitā, Atharvaveda saṃhitā, Yajurveda saṃhitā and Sāmaveda saṃhitā. The four saṃhitās have their own, Brāhmaṇas, Āranyakas and Upaniṣads.

Origin and importance of the Vedāṅgas

Vedāṅga means the limbs of the Veda. The origin of the vedāṅgas is the Veda. The number of the vedāṅgas are six which is first mentioned in the Saḍviṃśa Brāhmaṇa of Sāmaveda ⁵, but their names are first mentioned in the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad.⁶ These are – Śikṣā, Kalpa, Vyākaraṇa, Chanda, Jyotiṣa and Nirukta. The knowledge of the six vedāṅga is very essential for proper understanding of the Vedas. These vedāṅgas are written before the creation of the Upaniṣad because in the Upaniṣad no one of the vedāṅga is mentioned. In the introduction of Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, it is found that with reference to the ‘parā’ and ‘aparā’ vidyā the priest has mentioned the four Vedas and the six
vedāṅgas as the example of ‘Aparā’ vidyā. In the Pāṇiniya śikṣā these six vedāṅgas are described as the six limbs of the Veda. Chandas are the feet of the Vedas. Kalpas are the hands, Jyotiṣa are the eyes, Nirukta are the ears, Śikṣā is the nose and Vyākaraṇa is the mouth of the Vedas. The study of the Vedas with these six limbs can help to attain the Brahma-loka. The main aim of Śikṣā and Chandas are to give correct and metered pronunciation of the mantras. Vyākaraṇa and Nirukta give proper knowledge about word and meaning. Jyotiṣa and Kalpa deals with the right time and proper implication of the mantras in proper place. The vedāṅgas are divided into two parts according to their subject matter. Among them the three – Nirukta, Chanda and Vyākaraṇa are mainly meaning based (artha-pradhāna) and the rest three – Śikṣā, Kalpa and Jyotiṣa mainly deals with the sacrifices (yajña pradhāna). The following chart represents the inter-relation of the Vedas, the Vedāṅgas and the Śrauta sūtras:-

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{Veda} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{Mantra} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{Rk} \quad \text{Sāma} \quad \text{Yajur} \quad \text{Śuddha Brāhmaṇ} \quad \text{Āranyaka} \quad \text{Upaniṣad} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{Vedāṅga} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{Arthapradhāna} \quad \text{Yajñapradhāna} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{Nirukta} \quad \text{Vyākaraṇa} \quad \text{Chanda} \quad \text{Śikṣā} \quad \text{Kalpa} \quad \text{Jyotiṣa} \\
\downarrow \\
\text{Śrautasūtra} \quad \text{Grhyasūtra} \quad \text{Dharmasūtra} \quad \text{Śulvasūtra}
\end{array}
\]

\text{(Aśv.ŚŚ. intro. Pg.12)}
Origin of the Śrautasūtras (Kalpa sūtra)

Śrautasūtras come under the group of kalpa sūtra which is one of the important among the six vedāṅgas. Kalpa means rule or injunction. Kalpas are the books of rituals, which are written in a peculiar aphoristic style. The kalpas have developed a unique style called the sūtras. Sūtra means a matter written in a few words but after explanation, it gives a broad and wide knowledge about the matter. The main aim of sūtra is to give more detailed knowledge and information in a few words. Thus, all the six vedāṅgas are written in the sūtra style. In the Brhadāraṇyaka also there is mention about sūtras. With which sacrifices are performed is called kalpa. In the Brāhmaṇa literature there is description of various sacrifices and different ākhyāyikās. But the sūtra literature compiled by the sūtrakāras deals with the rules of the sacrificial ceremonies alone without the ākhyāyikā portion. This is named as ‘kalpa’.

Kalpa sūtras are divided into four parts. They are – Śrautasūtras, Grhyasūtras, Dharmasūtras and Śulvasūtras. The Śrautasūtra deals with the rules for the execution of the great sacrifices which lasts for many days. The Grhyasūtras contains rules for the ceremonies and sacrificial acts of everyday life. The Dharmasūtras are the texts books of spiritual and worldly laws. And the Śulvasūtras contains practical manuals giving the measurement necessary for the construction of the sacrificial alter or the
Vedi. It shows advance knowledge of geometry and constitutes the oldest Indian mathematical works.

Śrautra sūtras of different Vedas

The names of the Śrautasūtras available at present are mentioned here. All the four Vedas have their śrautasūtras. Among them the śrautasūtras of the Kṛṣṇayajurdeva of Taittirīya śākhā are highest in number. The Āśvalāyana and Śāṅkhyāyana Śrautrasūtra belong to the Rgveda. The Ārṣeyakalpa or Masaka, the Kṣudra sūtra, the Jaiminīya, the Lātyāyana and the Drāhyāyaṇa śrautrasūtras belongs to the Śāmaveda. The Baudhāyana the Bhāradvāja, the Āpastamba, the Hiranyakeśi or Satyāśādha, the Vaikhānasa, the Vādhuṇa, and the Kāthaka śrāuta sūtra belongs to the Taittirīya saṃhitā of the Kṛṣṇayajurveda. The Mānava and Vārāha śrāutasūtra belongs to the Maitrāyanī saṃhitā of the Kṛṣṇayajurveda. The Kātyāyana śrāutasūtra is the only śrāutasūtra of the Śuklayajurveda. The Vaitāna śrāutasūtra belongs the the Atharvaveda.

Beside these above mentioned śrāutasūtras, there are many śrāutasūtras, but their texts are not available at present.

Place of Āśvalāyana Śrāutasūtra in the Sūtra literature

The Āśvalāyana śrāutasūtra has a very important place in the sūtra literature. Āśvalāyana created this book to describe the duties of Hotā in
some important Vedic sacrifices. For this reason it is regarded as the most important śrutasūtra of the Rgveda. The sūtras of the Āśvalāyana śrutasūtras are written in a very hard language that, it is very difficult to understand it without the help of its commentary. There are many commentaries on Āśvalāyana śrutasūtra, but at present only the Nārāyaṇa’s commentary and the Siddhānti’s commentary is available. In many places Nārāyaṇa’s commentary helps us to get clear understanding of the critical portions of the śrutasūtras. Nārāyaṇa’s commentary gives very easy description of the critical portions of the śrutasūtra. According to the tradition, Āśvalāyana was the pupil of Śaunaka. In many place of his śrutasūtra Āśvalāyana quoted the views of Śaunaka with great honour. At the end of the śrutasūtra he pays homage to his teacher. Āśvalāyana śrutasūtra mainly deals with great sacrifices following the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa of the Rgveda. Āśvalāyana śrutasūtra describes the model sacrifices such as – Darṣapūrṇamāsa yāga, Agnihotra, Nirodha Paśuvandha, Agniṣṭoma and Gavāmayana Satra sacrifices. Āśvalāyana śrutasūtra is a very important work and a thorough study of this śrutasūtra gives a clear understanding of the Vedic ritual. Āśvalāyana’s contribution is very important and among all śrutasūtras his śrutasūtra occupies a unique place.
Contents of the Āśvalāyana Śrautasūtra

The Āśvalāyana śrautasūtra consists of twelve chapters and each chapter is again divided into some khaṇḍas which are also termed as kaṇḍikās. These are several commentaries on Āśvalāyana Śrautasūtra, such as – Devatrāta’s commentary, Vidyāranya’s commentary, Siddhāntī’s commentary and Nārāyaṇa’s commentary. At present only the Nārāyaṇa’s commentary and Siddhāntī’s commentary are available. Nārāyaṇa, who has the commentary on the Śrautasūtra of Āśvalāyana, is the son of Narasimha and of Gārgya gotra.

All the twelve chapters of Āśvalāyana śrautasūtra give detail description of the various important śrāuta sacrifices. The first chapter of the Āśvalāyana śrāuta sūtra deals with the Darśapūrṇamāsa yāga. This yāga is described first as the model of all iṣṭi yāgas, and the other yāgas are excuted by following the rules of the model, that is the Darśapūrṇamāsa yāga. In the second chapter Agnyādheya ceremony, Agnihotra homa, various Kāmya iṣṭis and Cāturmāsya yāgas are described in details. The third chapter gives detail information about Paśuyāga and Prāyaścitta homa. Fourth chapter deals with different Aṅgayāgas which should be performed in the first four days of the Soma sacrifice. In the fifth chapter the Prātahsavana, Mādhyandina savana and the Trīya savana of the Agniṣṭoma sacrifice is discussed. The subject matter of the
sixth chapter is the description of the *Ukthya, Śoḍaśī, Atirātra, Somātireka*, substitute of *Soma*, death of *Yajamāna* and *yajñapuccha* are given. In the seventh chapter, general rules of *Satra, Caturvimśa* day, *Abhiplava ṣaḍaha* and *Prśṭhya ṣaḍaha* are discussed. The eight chapter deals with the *Prśṭha ṣaḍahas* sixth day of *Satra, Abhijit, Svarasāma, Viśvajit, Daśarātra, Mahāvrata, Mahānāmnī* and the rules of learning *Upaniṣad*. In the ninth chapter *Saumika, Cāturmāsya, Rājasūya*, various *Ekāha, Vājapeya, Āptoryāma* are discussed. Chapter ten consists of various *Ekāha* and *Ahīna, Dvādaśāha* and *Aśvamedha* sacrifice. In the eleventh chapter different *Rātrisat ra* and *Gavāmayana* is discussed. And in the last chapter there are discussion about different *Ayansatra*, the *Savanīya paśu* of *Satra*, the rules abide by the *Satra* division of the *Savanīya paśu* and the *Pravara pātha* which is the last rule of the sacrifice.

**Socio-cultural life reflected in the Āśvalāyana Śrutasūtra:-**

From the study of the various ritualistic aspects of the śrutasūtras it is observed that śrutasūtras not only describes the various technical points of the sacrifices but also gives an idea about the social, cultural and religious life prevailed at that period. From the description of the various sacrifices in the Āśvalāyana śrutasūtra, we can get the knowledge of the social and cultural life of that time. In the Āśvalāyana śrutasūtra we find six seasons by name for performing some sacrifices. Every season consists
of two months. The spring season starts in the month of Caitra. In the Āśvalāyana śrautasūtra it is mentioned that a Brāhmaṇa can establish the sacred fires on the Parva day in the spring season.\textsuperscript{11} From this we can get an idea of the climatic and geographical condition of that period.

From the study of the Āśvalāyana śrautasūtra we come to know about the names of the four main castes of that time. They are – Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya, Vaiśya and Śūdra. All these varṇas or castes had their well and good position in the society. The Brāhmaṇas were in top position, Kṣatriyas are in second, the Vaiśyas are in third position and the Śūdras are in fourth position. This classification is known from the fact that the Brāhmaṇa should establish fire in the spring, the Kṣatriyas in the summer season, the Vaiśyas in the rainy season and the Chutāra or Rathakāras in the autumn season.\textsuperscript{12} In Śāṅkhīyāyana śrautasūtra also this rule is mentioned. Most of the Śrautasūtras said that fire should be established in the Cold (Śīśira) season.\textsuperscript{13} So, it is observed that the people of that period were fully familiar with the four-fold classification of the society. In Āśvalāyana śrautasūtra we also come to know about another sub-class like the Rathakāra beside these four classes. In the Āśvalāyana śrautasūtra it is mentioned that, for establishing the daksīna fire, the fire should be brought form the house of the Vaiśya or a rich person.\textsuperscript{14} The Kṣatriya class also has a good position in the society. They maintained
and protected the state as a king. The Kṣatriyas also have their separate season for establishing the fire and for performing a sacrifice. The Rājasūya sacrifice is a very big sacrifice which is performed by the Kṣatriya kings where a huge amount of wealth was spent. The Vājapeya rite is performed by the Kṣatriya kings before the Rājasūya and it is performed by the Brāhmaṇas before Brhaspatisava. The Rājasūya sacrifice is mainly done by the Kṣatriyas or the warrior class. In the Āśvalāyana śrautasūtra we find that a piece of productive land is donated as daksīṇā. From the mentioning of the woolen thread it is observed that weaving of wool was in practice at that period. Transport system was present at the period of śrautasūtras because the chariots and carts were used for communication. In some sūtras of this śrāuta sūtra it is mentioned that śakata and Mahānasa (big cart) were used for carrying loads from one place to another. In the śrāutasūtra we find many types of furniture used for different purposes. Except the Kuśāsana (grass cushions) we also find āsanas made of gold. In the Rājasūya sacrifice we find that sitting on a āsana of gold the Hotā recites the story of Śunahšepa. In the Āśvalāyana śrautasūtra we find mention of food like – vegetable, meat, milk and milk products. In this śrāutasūtra we find that milk and milk products are used for offering oblation to the deities, milk products like – ghee, curd are used very much. Beside this, yavāgu (barley) and purodāśa (big cake made with rice powder) are used
severally. In this śrautasūtra names of various plants are found which are used in the sacrifice. The aśvattha tree is referred in the sūtras as a material for kindling the sacred fire. In the sūtra it is mentioned that the araṇis are collected from the aśvattha tree which grows touching a śamī tree or which grows upon a śamī tree.\(^\text{20}\) From the study of this śrautasūtra it is come to notice that the people of that age were like to wear ornaments of gold, silver and pearls. In the Āśvalāyana śrautasūtra it is mentioned that Vedic mantras are recited by women. Women also had to take part in the sacrifices with their husband. This point shows the position of women in the society. In Āśvalāyana śrautasūtra names of many deities male and female are mentioned. From the above discussion we can get an idea about the society and culture reflected in the śrāuta sūtra.

**Sacrifice and its importance**

Śrauta sūtra deals with the rituals of great sacrifice. Sacrifice was the focal point of Vedic civilization and therefore, a brief discussion of sacrifice follow –

The word ‘Yajña’ is derived from the root ‘\(\sqrt{Yaj}\)’ with the suffix ‘Nañ’ (Devapujāsaṅgatikaranañadānesu). The word ‘Yajña’ is taken in the sense of worshipping Gods, making union with them. The word ‘Yajña’ actually means giving something in the fire to propitiate the Gods.\(^\text{21}\) In the Nirukta, the Yajña is used in the sense of offering oblation in the fire.\(^\text{22}\)
In Vedic age religious ceremonies could mean the performance of different sacrificial ceremonies. The Vedic Brāhmaṇa literature describes the main objects of sacrifice and so it is repeatedly mentioned that sacrifice is the best work. In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa is mentioned that sacrifice is the necessary duty of a man because the life of a man is given by the God and performing a sacrifice only, a man can pay homage to the Gods. Behind the creation of universe by the supreme God there is performance of the sacrifice. Sacrifice is the only helper in the life of a man to attain all his desired objects. In the Aitarey Brāhmaṇa sacrifice is termed as ‘Sutarmā Nauh’ it means a well made boat which takes away all the obstacles or sorrows. Here sacrifice is compared with a well made boat. Sacrifice is the bearer of holiness, sin saver and a well wisher for all. Even the power of the Gods are also depends on the sacrifice. In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa it is mentioned that the Gods gained their godness by performing sacrifices. So, in the Brāhmaṇa age, sacrifice was not only a ceremony but it had its own independent identity and also had a strong power to give desired fruit. Yajña is performed to attain some desired fruit. Aupamanyava said, it is designated thus because of spreading many skins of black antelopes or because the sacrifice attains success through Yajus – mantras. At the time of interpreting a mantra, Nirukta clearly mentioned that Yajña is Brahmā.
A sacrifice comes to us from Gods. When the creator wanted to become many, he performed tapas and from that the whole universe come out.\textsuperscript{28} In the \textit{Gītā} also the origin of the sacrifice is mentioned clearly and said that God has created man along with the sacrifices and asked them to become prosperous through sacrifices.\textsuperscript{29} In the \textit{Puruṣa sūkta} also it is mentioned that, Gods are the performers of the sacrifices.\textsuperscript{30} Vedas are said to be divine creation or \textit{Apauruṣeya} and thus the sacrifice which is the principal subject matter of the Vedas are believed to be \textit{Apauruṣeya}. Though the sacrifice is \textit{Apauruṣeya} like the Vedas or not but it is clear that sacrifice in its broader – aspect of helping all, is inherent in the natural phenomena.

Vedic scholars have given different opinion regarding the interpretation of sacrifice, Swami Dayananda Saraswati in his \textit{Rgvedādibhāsyabhūmikā} mentioned that sacrificial efforts are of two types one is supernatural and the other is made by man. To keep the atmosphere pure, God has created natural things like the Sun, flowers, trees and other things. But the pollution which is caused by man like – dirt, bad smell, and slum should be remedied by man only. This aim is achieved through sacrifices, ordained according to requirements.\textsuperscript{31}

MacDonnell says, -- The expectation of something in return for the offering is, however, frequently apparent, and the key-note of many of
hymn is ‘I gave to thee thou may give to me’. In Gītā it is said that “one must please gods through sacrifices because the Gods will shower every sort of favor and happiness. There are many instances where sacrifices are performed for their favors received by man. In the Rāghuvaṃśa, we find that Indra sustains earth by showering rains and king Dīlīpa sustains heaven by offering oblations.

In this connection, Swami Dayananda Saraswati’s words are notable. He says: Karmakānda which is full of rituals, is the second out of four subjects of the Vedas (Vijñāna, Karma, Upāsana and Jñāna) without which the practice of learning and knowledge are incomplete. To emphasize the importance of sacrifice Swami Dayananda said that, sacrifices are performed in order to purify the atmosphere and rain water as the oblations offered in all the sacrifices, beginning with the Agnihotra, the smallest and going up to the Aśvamedha, the biggest, consist of things fragrant, sweet, nourishing and healing. These things are mixed proportionately and offered in fire. Thus, it is bound to be beneficial to the whole universe. The Pūrvamīmāṃsā also supports this statement. In the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, it is said that sacrifices are performed to make the human beings happy and there the learned priests also gets happiness.

The importance of sacrifice is also mentioned in the Rgveda and in the Atharvaveda. In the Rgveda it is mentioned that sacrifice is an oasis in
the desert, and one who does not perform the sacrifice is inhuman and non-offering of the sacrifice is a type of social calamity.\textsuperscript{39} We know that \textit{Yajurveda} deals with the \textit{Karmakāṇḍa} therefore it deals with the rituals. So it is said that \textit{Yajña} is the best work in the life of a man.\textsuperscript{40}

\textbf{Common features of Śrauta sacrifices:}

\textbf{Agni (Fire)}

In all the Śrauta sacrifices three sacrificial fires are very important. These are – \textit{Āhavanīya} fire, \textit{Gārhapatya} fire and the \textit{Dakṣiṇa} fire. These three sacred fires are placed in three sides of the sacrificial alter or \textit{vedi}. The \textit{Āhavanīya} fire is placed to the east of the alter and its shape is rectangle. The \textit{Gārhapatya} fire is placed to the west of the alter and it is circle shaped. The \textit{Dakṣiṇa} fire is half circle shaped and placed to the south of the sacrificial alter.

Among the sacrificial fires only the \textit{Gārhapatya} fire is continuously maintained. This fire is used to cook food, offering the oblations and to warm up the various dishes of the sacrifices. The \textit{Āhavanīya} and \textit{Dakṣiṇa} fires should be derived from the \textit{Gārhapatya} fire but they are not always maintained. The \textit{Āhavanīya} fire is used to offer oblations to the Gods. All types of \textit{havis} are offered in this fire for Gods. East is the side of Gods so it is placed to the eastern side of the alter. The \textit{Dakṣiṇa} fire is placed to the
south of the alter to drive away the evil spirits and souls of the dead by its flames. South is the direction of the God of death. In this fire offerings for such spirits and forefathers are given.

Āhutidravyas (Oblation)

In the Vedic sacrifices different types of dravyas are given āhuti. Among this dravyas milk and milk products like curd, ājya (liquid ghee), ghee, navanīta (butter) are the main. One cake called purodāśa which is made with the powder of rice is the main āhutidravyas of Īṣṭi sacrifices. Animal fat (vapā) is the āhutidravya of Paśu sacrifice and among the animals goat is regarded as the main āhutidravya. Beside this cow, sheep and horse are also offered as āhuti dravya. In the Aśvamedha sacrifice different body parts of the horse are offered for the deities. Soma juice is the main āhutidravya of Soma sacrifice. In some of the sacrifices like Sautrāmanī and others honey and wine are offered as āhutidravyas. In the rites performed for the forefathers ‘Tila’ is mandatory. If we think about the different types of āhutidravyas offered to the deities then some points are noticed that the food and drink which are liked by men are offered to the deities for getting their affection. Sometimes dravyas are offered according to the physical feature of the deities. For the dual deity Aśvinīkumāra who are regarded as the deities of day and night, for them the milk of a black cow having white calf is offered. Like this for the deity
Sūrya, white goat is offered as āhutidraya. Sometimes āhutidrayyas are selected on the basis of the purpose of the sacrifice. For the deities Agni, Indra and Āditya the purodāśa of eight, eleven and twelve kapālas are offered because the chandas of these three deities are Gāyatrī, Uṣṇik and Jagatī and the number of letters in each pada are eight, eleven and twelve respectively.

Vedi (Alter)

Vedi is the most important part of a sacrifice. Vedi means the main place of sacrifice, where the sacrificial fire is established. Before placing fire some darvas or kuśas are placed there which is called Prastara. At the time of sacrifice, Agni is told to bring the guardian deities to the place of sacrifice and sit over the darvas. In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa it is mentioned that vedi is derived from the root ‘√Vid’ (means to gain), and with the help of this, the Gods gained the whole world again which was captured by the Asuras in ancient time. In different types of sacrifices, the size of the vedis are also different. In the primary stage of the Vedic age, use of same types of vedi was prevalent. In the later period two types of vedis were in use, one is Pradhāna vedi and another is Uttarā vedi. In some yāga one Mahāvedi is made because of the requirement of wide space. In Paśuyāga one Pāṣukī vedi is made for its different look. In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa vedi is compared with the figure of a beautiful
woman. Here it is also mentioned that the eastern and western side of the 
vedi should be wider and the middle should be small. For making a perfect 
vedi some books were written at that time which is called the Śulvasūtra. 
In that age except the round, square and triangle shaped vedi, some vedis 
were made like the Śyena bird. The width of a vedi is mentioned as seven 
varga puruṣa. One varga puruṣa means the length of a person standing in 
hands up position. The shape of vedis changes in different sacrifices but 
their width never changes. For making a vedi geometrical knowledge is 
esential and in this connection the Śulvasūtras are very helpful.

Ṛtvik (Priest)

To perform Śrauta sacrifices presence of four official priests are 
very important. The four priest who occupied with the Śrauta sacrifices 
are– i) Hotā, or the ‘caller, invoker’. In the śrauta yāga Hotā recites the 
mantras in order to praise the Gods and invite them to the sacrifice. ii) The 
Adhvaryu, who executes all sacrificial acts. ii) The Udgātā, who 
accompanies with songs the preparation and performance of the sacrifice, 
especially for the soma libations. iv) The Brahmā, who protects the 
sacrifice from harm. Every sacrifice is connected with a certain amount of 
danger. Even if a single act is not properly performed then it brings about 
the ruin of the sacrificer. So, Brahmā looks after every smallest act of the 
sacrifice that it is performed properly or not.
In the śrauta sacrifices priests play a very important role. Priests are the main connector between the sacrificer and the God. Generally, the Brāhmaṇas well versed in the Vedas are appointed as priests.43 They are also termed as the protector of sacrifice.44

Each of the four above mentioned priest has three assistants with them. The assistants with their main priest forms their individual gaṇas termed as – Hotāgaṇa, Udgāṭa gaṇa, Adhvaryugaṇa and Brahmāgaṇa. The names of the assistant priests with their main priests are as follows – Hotāgaṇa -- Hotā, Maitrāvaruṇa, Acchāvāka and Grāvastut. Udgāṭa gaṇa – Udgāṭa, Prastotā, Pratiharttā and SuBrahmānya. Adhvaryugaṇa – Adhvaryu, Pratiprasthātā, Neṣṭā and Unnetā. Brahmāgaṇa – Brahmā, Brāhmaṇaṇacchaṃsi, Potā and Āgnīdhra.45

The presence of all the sixteen priests is not necessary in every sacrifice. Their presence is important only in the Somayāga. According to Kausitakī sampradāya, there must be seventeen priests in the Somayāga and they are called ‘Sadasya’. But in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa appointment of seventeen priest is clearly prohibited.46 Among these sixteen priests, Hotā, Udgāṭa, Adhvaryu and Brahmā are undoubtedly main. Hotā is called Rgvedic priest, Adhvaryu is Yajurvedic and Udgāṭa is Sāmavedic, because at the time is sacrifice they perform their own acts by reciting the hymns of the Rgveda, Yajurveda and Sāmaveda respectivey.47
Hotā is the main and oldest priest among others. His presence is very important in the sacrificial ground as an Invoker. Hotā recites the Anuvākya and Yājyā mantras and pronounces vaṣaṭkāra at the time of offering oblation in the sacrifice. In the Darśapūrṇamāsa yāga he recites, sāmīdhenī verses and in Somayāga he recites śastra with his assistants. In other sacrifices also he has to recite many hymns. In the Śrauta sacrifices all the main acts are performed by Adhvaryu. Not a single act can be done without his permission. Yāskācārya in his Nirukta defines the term Adhvaryu as – one who relate the sacrifice and also completes all works of the sacrifice, he is the leader of the sacrifice ‘Adhvarasya netā’. In the Śrauta sacrifices Adhvaryu has to prepare the sacrificial alter, the homa kunda, he has to cook the havirdravyas like purodāsa and also has to offer the āhutidravyas in the fire. So the Yajurvedic priests have important place in completion of a sacrifice. The presence of Udgātā and his assistant priests is necesssay only in the Somayāga because in the yāga Udgātā and his assistants recites the śastras and sings the stotras. The Brahmā is the protector and supervisor of the sacrifice. Brhamā is full of knowledge of the three Vedas, so he is called ‘Trivedavid’. In the ‘Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa it is clearly mentioned that one who has the knowledge of the three Vedas may take the charge of Brahmā. The Brahmā is also termed as ‘Abhibhāvaka’ or guardian of the sacrifice in Brahmāṇa literature. Brahmās position was very high in the sacrifices that it was believed that
only silent sitting of Brahmadeva makes the sacrifice successful without any mistake. In the Aitareya Brahmana it is mentioned that the half portion of Dakṣina of the sacrifice is paid to Brahmadeva and the left half portion paid to other priests.

It is mentioned earlier that Hota, Adhvaryu, Udgata and Brahmadeva, these four priests have their own three assistant priests. Among them, Hota’s assistant Maitravaruna, Adhvaryu’s assistant Pratiprasthata and Brahmadeva’s assistant Agniḍhra have very important role in the Vedic sacrifices. In the madhyandina savana of Somayaga Maitravaruna recites sasttras for the dual deity Mitravaruna. Beside this in the Sarasvata graha ceremony he has the right to drink soma rasa. In the Satapatha Brahmana Mitravaruna is appreciated imagining as the ‘Mana’ of the sacrifice. As an assistant of Adhvaryu, Pratiprasthata had very important role in the sacrifices. Sometimes in the Aitareya Brahmana and in the Satapatha Brahmana the word Adhvaryu is used in plural number to mean both Adhvaryu and Pratiprasthata. As an assistant of Adhvaryu, Pratiprasthata has to perform many important works. In the Somayaga he has to offer some small types of oblation. In the Varunapraghasa ceremony of Caturmasya yaga Pratiprasthata has to call upon the yajamana patni (sacrificer’s wife) for confessing her confidential hidden sins. In the Agnisomiya Pasuyaga he has to cook the vapaa (animal fat) of the animal.
Again in the ceremonies of Satrayāga, he makes Adhvaryu, Brāhmaṇācchaṁśi, Prastotā and Maitrāvaruna dīkṣita in the work.

The main important work of Āgnidhra is to maintain the ‘Dhiṣṭya’ named fire places of the Somayāga. In every Pradhānayāga when Adhvaryu offers oblation with the pronunciation of Anuvākyā and Yājyā mantras by Hotā, then Āgnidhra wishes to fulfill the sacrifice pronouncing the words ‘Astu śrauṣṭ’. Beside Somayāga, in different Iṣṭiyāgas he performs many work, sometimes as an assistant of Adhvaryu also. In Pativratagraha ceremony he recites the Yājyā mantras.\(^{51}\)

Dakśinā (Fee)

Dakśinā plays a very important role in the Vedic sacrifices, because it is mentioned that without Dakśinādāna a sacrifice cannot be properly completed.\(^{52}\) In a Vedic sacrifice, the Yajamāna is the main (Kartā) performer and he can get the fruit of the sacrifice. The priests perform the sacrifice on behalf of the Yajamāna and at last after giving daksinā to the priests the sacrifice comes to an end. In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa it is mentioned that, if daksinā is not given properly then a sacrifice not only remain incomplete but also it makes the yajamāna a sinner.\(^{53}\) At the same time it is also mentioned that if they satisfy the priests with proper giving of daksinā then the Yajamāna can get supreme peace in the Devaloka.\(^{54}\) But it is also mentioned in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa that, a Yajamāna can
give dakṣinā according to his ability, because without dakṣinā a sacrifice cannot be performed. In different sacrifices different types of things are given as dakṣinā. In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, four types of things are found as dakṣinā, such as – gold, cow, cloths and horse.

Role of Yajamāna(sacrificer) and Yajamānapatnī (sacrificers wife)

The Yajamāna or the sacrificer plays vital role in a sacrifice. Actually a Yajamāna is the main in sacrifice because he starts the sacrifice with the ceremony Ṛtvikvaraṇa and ends it with Dakṣinādāna ceremony. In the middle though it is done by the priests but the Yajamāna has to perform some rites. Like the priests he has to recite some mantras and also has to take part in some ceremonies. After offering oblation to the deities, when the priests consume the havis then the Yajamāna also take part in this ‘haviḥsēṣabhakṣaṇa’. In the Vedic age the ‘Traivarṇiks’ (Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya & Vaiśya) has the right to perform sacrifice. In the sacrifice after the dīkṣāgraṇa ceremony all the yajamānas are treated as Brāhmaṇas. In the first day of the Somayāga, the yajamāna become dīkṣita with the dīkṣanīyeṣṭi ceremony and this dīkṣā is like a new birth for the yajamāna. The yajamāna who is willing to perform Darśapūrṇamāsa yāga, has to take a bath in the evening for following the rules of the sacrifice. He has to take vows for obeying the rule and take “Brata”. With this brata he becomes God and at the end of the sacrifice with leaving the brata he again
becomes a man. The *Agnihotra Homa* is a sacrifice which is performed by a *yajamāna* only. If he becomes ill then only it is performed by a priest. At the time of the sacrifice he has to sit behind the priest *Brahmā* to the southern side of the alter. In the *Samvatsarsādhyā satra yāga*, the *yajamānas* are the priests. They perform the duties of the priests. In this *yāga* no priest is required because here the *yajamānas* are the priest.

The presence of *yajamānapatnī* in a sacrifice is also very essential. A sacrifice is performed by a *sapatnīk yajamāna* only. An unmarried *yajamāna* has no right to perform a sacrifice. At the time of performing a sacrifice the wife of the sacrificer must be present at sacrificial ground and she has to participate in some rites most actively. In the *Iṣṭiyāga* while performing the *Patnīṣamyāja homa* the wife of the *yajamāna* must be there with the *yajamāna*. At the end of the *Somayāga*, the *Avabhrītha* iṣṭi rite is performed by the *yajamāna* and his wife together. In the *Cāturmāsya yāga* also some rites are performed by the *yajamāna- patnī* in the *Varuṇapraghāṣa iṣṭiyāga*. In the sacrificial rites the presence of *yajamānapatnī* is essential, but she has no right in the *haviḥśeṣabhakṣaṇa*.

**Yajña Pātra (Sacrificial instruments and utensils)**

The different types of instruments used in the Vedic sacrifices are generally termed as ‘*Yajñāyūdha*’. In the *Taittirīya Saṃhitā*, the list of ten *yajñāyūdhas* are found. These are – * sphya, kapāla, Agnihotrāhāva nī,*
śūrpa, krṣṇājina, samyā, ulukhal, musala, dṛsad and upala’.
Though these ten yajñāyudhas are mentioned in the Taittirīya Samhitā, but there are many instruments and utensils which are used in the sacrifices like – juhū, upabhṛt, šruk, dhruva, prāṣitaharaṇa, iḍāpātra, grahapātra, camasa, madantūpātra, hṛdayśula, prastara, veda, pranītāpranayan, ājyasthāli, and anvāhāryasthāli.

Division of Śrauta rites

The śrauta rites are fourteen in number. They are divided into two main groups of seven Havis sacrifices and seven Soma sacrifices. The name of the seven Havis sacrifices are – Agnihotra, Darśapūrṇamāsa, Āgrāyaṇ, Piṇḍapitryajña, Caturmāsyā, Niruḍa Paśuvandha and Sautrāmanī. The Seven soma sacrifices are – Agniśṭoma, Atyāgniśṭoma, Ukthya, Śoḍaśī, Vājapeya, Atirātra and Āptoryām. The Havis sacrifices consists of offerings of milk, ghee, grain, cakes and purodāśa, the most common of these sacrifices is the Agnihotra, where daily morning and evening oblation of milk is given to the three fires. The most important of the other sacrifices are the New and Full Moon sacrifices (Darśapūrṇamāsa) and those offered at the beginning of the three seasons that is the Cāturmāsyā.
Five types of yagās

The meaning of the word yāga and yajña are almost same. The words yāga and yajña sounds same but there is some difference in their meaning. Yajña is a general name and in comparison to that yāga is a special name. Yajña means to offer something to the deities. But yāga means some special ceremonies like – Iṣṭiyāga, Paśuyāga, Somayāga and others. This word has some other meaning also. In the yajñas at the time of āhuti, sitting in the place when the word ‘svāhā’ is uttered at the end of the mantra then the ceremony is called Homa. On the other hand in standing position when the word ‘vausṣat’ is uttered at the end of the mantra then the ceremony is called yāga. The ceremonies which are performed with the root ‘vhu’ are Homa (like agnihotram juhuyāt) and the ceremonies performed with the root ‘vyaj’ are the yāgas (like somena yajeta).

In the Aitareya Aranyaka śrauta sacrifices are divided into five categories, they are – Agnihotra, Darśapūrṇamāsa, Cāturmāsya, Paśu and Soma.60 According to the different characteristic features, the śrauta rites consists of five yāgas namely – Homa, Iṣṭi, Paśu, Soma and Satra. The Darśapūrṇamāsa yāga is considered to be the model or Prakṛti of all Iṣṭi 61 yāgas. There is thousands of Iṣṭis.62 But while performing any of the Iṣṭiyāgas, the rules of the Darśapūrṇamāsa should be followed.63 The Paśu
and *Homa yāgas* also have their *prakṛti yāgas* and they contain the rules and regulations for the sacrifices of their type. *Agnihotra* is the model of *Homa* sacrifices. The model of *Paśu yāgas* is the *Prajāpatya Paśu*. *Agniṣṭoma* is the model of *Soma* sacrifices and *Gavāmayana* is the model of *Satra* sacrifice.

**A brief discussion of the five principal sacrifices**

*Agnihotra* :- *Agnihotra* is the model or *prakṛti* of *Homa* sacrifices. After establishment of the *Śrauta agni* in the home with *agnyādhān* ceremony a *sapatnīk Yajamāna* can perform the *agnihotra yāga* daily. This is performed by the *sapatnīk yajamāna* daily morning and evening by offering the oblation of milk, curd, *purodāsa* in the *āhavanīya* fire for *Sūrya* and *Agni*. This *yāga* is considered as *nityakarma* for the three classes of people, *Brāhmaṇa, Kṣatriya* and *Vaiśya* in the Vedic age. In the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* it is mentioned that this *yāga* must be performed by the householder till his death.⁶⁴

The *Agnihotra yāga* must be performed by *Yajamāna* but in some crucial situation on behalf of him this *yāga* may be performed by his son, brother or son-in-law. In absence of these persons it may be performed by a priest.⁶⁵ On behalf of the *Yajamāna*, only the priest *Adhvaryu* has the right to complete this *yāga*.⁶⁶ But in *pūrnimā* and in *amāvasyā*, the *Yajamāna* has to do this *yāga* any how. This *yāga* is a daily performing rite for a
āhitāgni Yajamāna, but it should be performed for getting some desired fruit also. In that case the oblations of offerings are different. The main oblation offered in this yāga are – milk, curd or yavāgu but for some special fruit rice, anna and are offered. The main oblation offered in this yāga is milk and for that the Yajamāna should bring a cow which is called ‘Agnihotra Gābhī’. The agnihotra ceremony starts at the evening. The sapatnīk yajamāna first kindle the āhavenīya fire and dakṣīna fire from the gārhapatya fire. Then milk is warmed up in the gārhapatya fire taking a sacrificial utensil. For offering oblation in the fire two wooden spoons is necessary, one small spoon is called ‘srub’ and the big one is called ‘agnihotrāhāvanī’.

The Agnihotra yāga cannot be performed by a bachelor or a widower; it can be possible only if the widower can marry again. It is also found that if the yajamāna is not interested to marry again then by imagining his late wife he can perform this ceremony. The morning and evening ceremonies are jointly called Agnihotra because the Agnihotra yāga starts in the evening with offering oblation to Agni. As Agni is the main deity in the evening ceremony, it is called Agnihotra yāga.

Darśapūrṇamāsā :- Darśapūrṇmāsā yāga is the model or Prakṛti of all Iṣṭi sacrifices.67 This yāga is the combination of two Iṣṭi yāgas namely Darṣeṣṭi and Pūrṇamāseṣṭi. One is performed in every pūrnimā and
pratipada and the other, is performed in every amāvasyā and śukla pratipada. The first one is called Pūrṇamāsa yāga and the second is called Darśayāga. The Pūrṇamāsēṣṭi is called upavasathā day and the Daršeṣṭi is called Yajanīya day. The word upavastha means the day on which the sacrificer invite and welcome the Gods to the next day’s sacrifice. So the day preceding the sacrifice is called upavastha.

In the Pūrṇamāsa yāga, the deities of the pradhānayāga are Agni, Viṣṇu and Agni-soma. Main deities of the Darśayāga are Agni, Indra-Agni. One who has performed Somayāga earlier, for him deities are Agni, Indra and again Indra. The oblation for the first Indra is curd and for the second Indra, it is milk. To perform this sacrifice three sacrificial fires are very important. These are - the Āhavanīya fire, the Gārhapatya fire and the Dakṣīṇa fire. These three fires are placed to the three sides of the sacrificial altar. The Āhavanīya fire is placed to the east, the Gārhapatya is placed to the west and the Dakṣīṇa fire is placed to the south of the altar.

In Darśapūrṇamāsa yāga presence of four official priests is very important. These four priest plays very important role in performing the Darśapūrṇamāsa yāga. They are – Hotā, Adhvaryu, Udgātā and Brahmā. Hotā is the invoker who recites the mantras to praise the Gods and also invites them to the sacrificial ground. Adhvaryu executes all sacrificial
acts. *Udgātā* accompanies with songs the preparation and performance of the sacrifices, especially for the soma libations. The *Brahmā* is the high priest who protects the sacrifice form harm. *Brahmā* looks after every smallest act of the sacrifice for its accurate performance. The main oblation of *Iśṭiyāga* is *purodāśa*. *Purodāśa* is made with the powder of rice or *yava*. So, *purodāśa* is the main oblation of offering in the *Darśapūrṇamāsa yāga*. *Darśa yāga* is performed like the *Pūrṇamāsa yāga*. There are some differences only in the offerings of the *pradhānayāga*. In the *Darśayāga* there are three main offerings: the first oblation of offering is *purodāśa* for the deity *Agni*. The second and third deity is *Indra* and the oblation of offerings is curd and milk. When milk and curd mixed together, it is called *Sanājya* and as the *Sanājya* is offered to the gods, it is called *Sanājya yāga*\(^7\) by the performers of the sacrifice.

**Paśuyāga**: *Paśuyāga* is considered as an *aṅga* of *Somayāga*. But it is also performed separately. There are different types of *Paśuyāga*. The *Prakṛti* of this *Paśuyāga* is ‘*Agniṣomīya Paśu*’. Another kind of *Paśuyāga* which is essential for the *Traivarniks* and *Āhitāgnis* is there, and the *prakṛti* of that is ‘*Niruḍa Paśuvandha*’. The *āhitāgnis* have to perform this *yāga* every year in the rainy season in *pūrṇimā* and in *āmāvasyā tithi*. This *yāga* also can be performed twice a year, in the *Uttarāyaṇa* and in the *dakṣīṇāyaṇa* of the Sun, or it can be performed six times in a year every
season each. In the Paśu yāga one vedi is made other then the main vedi which is called Paśukavedi. This vedi is made to the eastern side of the Āhavanīya vedi. Another small vedi named Uttaravedi is made over the Paśukavedi and the middle point of the vedi is called Nāvi. In the Paśuyāga Yūpakāśtha is required to tie up the Paśu or the animal. After performing the prayājayāga the Paśu is slained and the aṅgas are offered in the fire. The person who slain the Paśu is called Śamitā and the place is called Śamitrādeśa.

To perform Paśuyāga six official priests are required. They are Adhvaryu, Pratiprasthātā, Hotā, Maitrāvaruṇa, Agnit and Brahmā. Generally in the other yāgas Hotā pronounces the yājyā and anuvākyā mantras at the time of the sacrifice, but in the Paśuyāga Hotā recites the yājyāmantras only. Praiśamantras which are recited by Adhvaryu in other yāgas, in Paśuyāga these are recited by Maitrāvaruṇa. In this yāga Adhvaryu performs the upākaraṇa ceremony. After vali the fat of the Paśu is offered in the last prayāja yāga. After prayāja yāga the Pradhānayāga is performed in the Niruḍa Paśuvandha yāga the main deities are Indra and Agni (or Sūrya or Prajāpati). Adhvaryu offers the fat (or vapā) in the fire for the deities. After that purodāśa and the aṅgas of the Paśu are offered in the fire. The aṅgas which can be offered in the fire should be cooked in the fire. At the time of cooking Adhvaryu offers purodāśa to the
main deities and other priest except Pratiprasthātā consume the purodāśa which is left after offering in the fire. Then Adhvaryu offers the boiled parts of the animal in the Āhavanīya fire. When Adhvaryu offers oblation in the fire then his assistant Pratiprasthātā performs upayāja homa by establishing in other place. The main thing of oblation in Paśuyāga is the Goat. All parts from the body of the goat are not offered in the fire. Some special parts like the heart, liver and fat are offered. In the pradhānayāga purodāśa is also offered with the parts of the animals body. Purodāśa is offered to the pradhāna devatā by Adhvaryu and the offered purodāśa is consumed by the Yajamāna and the priests except Pratiprasthātā. The body parts of the Paśu are offered after boiling them in a pot of clay. The fat of the Paśu which floats while boiling the flesh is also offered in the fire. In the prayāja and anuyāja yāga oblation of curd mixed with ājya are offered.

Somayāga: Somayāga is the most difficult and expensive yāga among all Vedic sacrifices. This yāga can be performed by those persons only whose father or forefathers had done this yāga earlier. The person whose father and forefathers never performed this yāga, never performed any haviryañja and never studied the Vedas, he has no right to perform Somayāga. But the person can get the right to do this yāga only if he performs one Paśuyāga in pūrṇimā or in amāvasyā on the day before the
Somayāga. Beside this everybody has to perform the Kuśmāṅḍa homa and Pavitra Iṣṭi before the Somayāga. This yāga is also performed by a sapatnīk yajamāna. The right time of performing this yāga is vasanta or the autumn season. Soma juice is the main oblation of offering in this yāga. If somalatā is not found then it can be performed with its substitute.

In Somayāga soma juice is poured out from somalatā and this pouring is called ‘sutyā’. The very day when soma juice is offered in the fire is called ‘sutyādina’. If there is one sutyādina then the Somayāga is called Ekāha, if there is two to twelve days of sutyā then that yāga is called Ahīna and if there are twelve or more then twelve days of sutyā then that yāga is called ‘Satra’. The model of all Ekāha Somayāga is Agniṣṭoma. For this yāga the yajamāna choose some eligible Brāhmaṇas with the assurance of giving dakṣīṇā. This is called Rtvik varaṇa. In the Somayāga four priests expert in each of the four Vedas are required with their assistants. That means the presence of four Sāmavedic priest, four Rgvedic, four Yajurvedic and four Atharvavedic priest are very important. The name of the sixteen priest are — Udgātā, Prastotā, Pratihartā and Subrahmanya (sāmavedic), Hotā, Maitrāvaruṇa, Acchāvāka, Grāvastut (rgvedic) Adhvarya, Pratiprasthātā, Neṣṭā, Unneta (yajurvedic), Brahmā,
Brāhmaṇācchasāti, Āgnīdhra and Potā (athrvedic). One extra priest can also be present there except the sixteen priests named ‘sadasya’.

For Somayāga big and open place is necessary where the vedi and the three kuṇḍas of fires should be placed. The three fires are the gärhapatya, āhāvanīya and the daksīna fire. The āhavanīya and daksīna fire are kindled from the gärhapatya fire.

After the placement of other fires in various places Dīkṣāniya Iṣṭī is performed. The deities of this yāga are Agni-Viśnu⁷⁴ and the oblations of offerings are kapālas of boiled purodāśa. With this Iṣṭī ceremony the yajamāna and his wife becomes dīkṣita and they has to be abide by the rules and regulations till the end of the whole sacrifice.

After completion of the Dīkṣāniyā iṣṭī, the Prāyaṇīyā iṣṭī is performed in the second day morning. The deities are – Pathyā, Svasti, Agni, Soma, Sabitā and Aditi. The oblation of the first four deities are Ājya but for Aditi oblation of Caru is given. After that the ‘Somakraya’ ceremony is organized⁷⁵. Soma is the king and the guest, so after somakraya it is taken to the place of sacrifice with due respect. As soma is the guest of all, the ‘Ātithyā Iṣṭī’ is performed for his arrival with great honour. The deity of this yāga is Viśnu and the oblation of nine kapālas of purodāśa is given. After completion of this yāga, the priests and yajamāna takes a vow together which is called ‘Tānūnaptra’.
Then the Pravargya yajña and the Upasad Iṣṭi is performed. The deities are – Agni, Soma and Viṣṇu and the oblation for these three deities are only ājya. After Pravargya and Upasad Iṣṭi ceremony one Mahāvedi is made in the Prāgvaṃśaśālā or house for Somayāga to the east of the place of sacrifice. The main oblation of the yāga ‘soma’ is placed in the Havirdhānamandaṇḍapa which is made over the mahāvedi. The pravargya and upasad ceremony are performed twice in the fourth day. Once at the morning and again at the evening to finish the work. In the afternoon purodāśayāga related to the Paśu is performed and in the evening pradhānayāga of the Paśu and other parts of the yāga are performed. Same day in the mid night the priest recites some mantras which are called Prātaranuvāka.

In the fifth day the ceremony of Dadhigraha is performed after that the Mahābhiṣava ceremony, then the Savaniya haviryāga and then the ceremony of the serial oblation of juice is started. After that oblation of two grahas namely śukra and manthī are given in the fire then the rtugraha ceremony is performed. In the rtugraha ceremony śastras⁷⁶ are recited by Hotā and oblation of stotra⁷⁷, śastra, graha, grahacamasā are given. After completion of the Prātaḥsavana, Mādhyandina savana is started. In the Mādhyandina savana idābhakṣaṇa and drinking of soma juice ceremony are celebrated. The reward giving ceremony is also
observed in this *savana*. Lastly the *Tr̥ṭīya savana* started where the Mahābhīṣava ceremony is organized. Here the *Patnīsaṁyāja, Samiṣṭayajuh* and *aṅga yāgas* are performed. With the *Prāyaścittahoma* and *savana-samāpti homa* all exsits from the sacrificial ground. *Agniṣṭoma* is the *prakṛti* of all the *Somayāga* and the rest are *vikṛti*. The rules of the *vikṛti yāgas* are like the *Agniṣṭoma* but there are some difference in the number of *stotras* and *śastras*.

**Satrayāga**: *Gavāmayana* is the model of all *Satrayāgas*. The *Somayāga* which takes more than twelve days to perform are called *Satrayāgas*. The *Gavāmayana* and *Dvādaśāha yāgas* are included in the *Somayāgas* but they have some special features. The *Satrayāga* can be performed for one year, ten years, hundred years or even for thousands of years. The *Gavāmayana yāga* takes 361 days for completion. The ceremony is divided into three parts - first half 180 days, second half also 180 days and one day between the two halves which is called ‘Viṣuva Day’. These two halves of 180 days are called *Pūrvaṁkṣa* and *Uttaramkṣa* respectively and one day between the two pakṣas all together 361 days. In the *Gavāmayana yāga* the *yajamāna* plays the role of a priest. The *yajamāna* performs all the duties of a priest.
Notes and references:

1. Āp.Śs.24.1.31 – ‘mantrabrähmanayor vedanāmadheyam’

2. Hir.Śs.1.1.7;Śabarabhāṣya-2.1.33. ‘manstraśca Brāhmaṇaśca veda’


4. Medhātithis commentary on Manusmṛti.2.6.- ‘vedo akhilo dharmamūlam’

5. Saḍ. Brāh.4.7. – catvāra asyai vedah śarīraṁ saḍaṅgānyangāni.’


   Jyotiṣāmayanam caiva vedāṅgāni sañeva tu’.


   sāmavedoatharvavedah’.

8. Pāṇinīya śikṣā .41-42. ‘Chandah pādau tu vedasya hastau kalpoatha pathyate, jyotiṣām ayaṇāṁ caksur niruktam śrotram ucyate, śikṣā
ghrāṇaṁ tu vedasya mukhaṁ vyākaraṇaṁ śṛtram, tasmāt
saṅgamadhityaiva brahmāloke mahiyate’.

9. Āśv.Śs.introd.pg.13- ‘Alpākṣaram asandigdham sāravad viśvato

   mukham, astobham anavadyaṅca sūtram sūtrabidāh viduh’.

10. Brhadāraṇyaka 2.4.10;4.1.2;4.5.11 – ‘sūtrānyanubyākhyānāni

    byākhyānāni’
11. Āśv.Śs. II.1.12 – vasante parvāṇi brāhmaṇa ādadhīta

12. Āśv.Śs.II.1.13 – Grīṣmavarsāśaratsu kṣatriyavaiśyopakrūṣāh

13. Śāṅkh.Śs.II.1.1-4 – vasante brāhmaṇasya agnyādheyam, grīṣme kṣatriyasya, varṣāsu vaiśyaisya, śaradi vā, śiśirah sarvavaranānām

14. Āśv.Śs.II.2.1 – gārhapatyam prajjvalya dakṣiṇāgnim āniya vitkulād vittavato vaikayonaya iti

15. Āśv.Śs.IX.9.28 – teneṣṭvā rājā rājasūyena yajeta brāhmaṇo brhaspatisavena

16. Āśv.Śs.III.14.9 – dakṣiṇādāna urvarāṁ dadyāt

17. Āśv.Śs.II.6.7

18. Āśv.Śs.IX.9.23

19. Āśv.Śs.IX.3.10 – hiraṇyakāśipāv āsīn ācaśte hiraṇyakāśipāv āsīnah pratigrhnāti yaśo vai hiraṇyaṁ yaśasai vaināṁ tat samardhayati

20. Āśv.Śs.II.1.16 – aśvatthāc chamīgarbhād araṇī āhared anavekṣamāṇah

21. Kāṭ.Śs 1.2.2- ‘dravyaṁ devatā tyāgah’

23. Šat.Br.1.7.2.6.- sa yena devebhya ṛṇam yajati, tadenam 
stadavadayati. Yad yajati atha yadagnau juhoti tadenam 
stadavadayate....


26. Šat.Br.1.5.2.6 – ‘deva ayajanta tenestvaitadbhāvaṁ yadiḥām devah’

Bahukṛṣṇājīna ityaupamanyavah. Yajuṇṣyenam nayantīti vā

tapo atapyat.

Sad.Br.II.1.1- prajāptirakāmayata bahusyaṁ prajāyeyā iti

Sad.Br.V.1.1.2 –prajāpatistapo atapyat.

Manu smṛti.I.34- aham prajā sisrksustu tapastaptvā suduścaram . 
patīnprajānāmasrjaṁ maharsīnadito daśa.

29. Bhagavadgīta.III– sahayajñah prajāḥ srṣtvā purovāca prajāpatih, 
anena prasavisyadhvamesa voastviṣṭkāmadhuk.

30. Rv. X.90.16 – yajñena yajñamayajanta devāstāni dharmāni 
prathamānyasan.
31. र्गवेदाधि:हायश्याहुमिका p.51.52 – ‘तत्रा द्विद्धह प्रयातनो अस्ति 
िश्वरक्षो जिवक्ष्ट्वा. इश्वरेणा खल्वग्निमयाय सुर्यो निर्मिताः 
सुगंधहापुपादिश्चा – यतो दुर्गंधादिविकारस्या 
उपत्तिरमु:ष्यादिभ्या एवा भवति, तस्मादसया निवऽरानामपि 
मनुष्याविरवा कराणियमिति – याज्ञवल्लक्कार्या इत्याम्पयाज्ञा तेनाव 
दत्तस्य तामपि या उल्लाङ्गहयति सा अपि पपियानसं क्लेशवाणिष्च 
भवति’.

32. HSL.p.72 also RV.II.12.15 – यह सुनवते पाते दुध्रा अति वज 
दार्दार्षि सा किलास सतया, वयावम ता इंद्रा विशवा प्रियसह सुविरासो 
विधामाव वादेमा 

RV.X.125.2 – ‘अहम सोममाहनासेन बिभारमिहासे तवास्तारमुत 
पुषानाम भागाम, अहम दात्हीम द्राविनाम हविझाते सुप्राव्या 
याज्ञमन्या सुनाते’

33. भगवादगीता III.1.1 – देवाभावयातीनेना तेदेव भावयांत्व वा, 
परापरात्व भावयांताह श्रेयान परमावप्यात्मा.

34. Ragh.1.26 – दुधोहा गामः सा याज्ञवाया सस्याया माक्षावा दिवम, 
सामपदविनिमयानोभो दादहतुर्भुवनान्त वयावम.

35. र्गवेदाधि:हायश्याहुमिका, p.47 – तत्रा द्वित्या विशाय 
कर्मकांदाक्ष्याय, सा सर्वाक्रियामयो अस्ति।नैतेना विनः 
विद्याभ्यासाज्ञाने अपि पुर्णे भावताहं.
36. Ṛgyedādibhāṣyabhūmikā, p.48 –

sa cāgnihotramarabhyāśvamedhaparyanteṣu
sugandhimiṣṭapuṣṭaroganāsakagunairyuktasya samyak saṃskāreṇa
śodhitasya dravyasya vāyuṛṣṭijalāśuddhikaraṇārthamagnau homah
kriyate, sa taddvārā sarvajagatsukhakāryeva bhavati.

37. Pūrva.Miṃ.IV.3.1–‘dravyasaṃskārakarmasu
parāthatatphalaśrutirarthaivādah syāt’.

38. Ait .Br.1.2 –‘yajño api tasyai janatāyai kalpate yatraivam vidvān
hotā bhavati’

39. Ṛv .X.63.12 – apāṃśīmaṁ visvāmanāhutimapāratiṃ
durvidatrāmaghayataḥ.

40. Taitt.Bṛ.3.2.1.4;Śat.Bṛ.1.7.1.5 –‘yajña hi śreṣṭhatamaṃ karma’;
’yajña vai śreṣṭhatamaṃ karma’.

41. RV.7.11.5 – ni hotā satṣi varhisi

42. Śat.Bṛ.1.2.5.1-10; Taitti Br.3.2.9.7

43. Śat.Bṛ.3.5.3.12- ye vai brāhmaṇāḥ susrubamanśoanucānāste biprāh.

44. Śat.Bṛ.1.5.1.12- yajñaṣya prāvitārah.

45. Āṣv.Śs.4.1.16–‘Hotā maitrāvaruṇocchāvākogrāvastudadhvāryuḥ
pratipraṣṭhāta nesṭoṃnetā brahmā brāhmaṇācchāmsyāgnīdhraḥ
potodgātā prastotā pratiḥarttā subrahmānya iti’.

46. Śat.Bṛ.10.4.1.19 – na saptadasamṛtvijam kurvāta.
47. Āp. Yajñaparibhāṣāsūtra.20.22 – ṛgveda hotā karoti
sāmavedenodgātā, yajurveda adhvaryu.

48. Nir.1.8.1 – adhvaram yunakti iti adhvaryuh.

49. Śat.Bṛ.11.5.8.7 – tadāhuh. Yadṛcā hotraṁ kriyate yajuśādhvaram
sāmnodgithoatha kena Brahmatvamityanayā trayyā vidyayeti ha
brūyāt.

50. Śat.Bṛ.12.8.2.23

51. Śat.Bṛ.4.4.2.15

52. Śat.Bṛ.3.5.1.18- tadu tad yajñasya karma na vyamucya yad
dakṣiṇāmāśīt.

53. Sat. Br. 1.2.3.4.

54. Śat.Bṛ. 4.3.4.4; 4.3.4.6.

55. Śat.Bṛ.11.1.4.4 – yacchaknuyāt taddadyān nā dakṣiṇaṁ havih syāditi.

56. Śat.Bṛ.4.3.4.7 – catasra vai dakṣiṇāh. hiranyaṁ gorvāsoaśvah

57. Ait. Br.7.34.5.

58. Taitt.Saṃ- 1.6.8.2-3 – yo vai daśa yajñāyudhāni veda mukhatosya
yajñah kalpate sphyasca kalpani cāgnihotrahaṇi ca śūpam ca
kṛṣṇājinaṁ ca śamyā colukhalaṁ ca musalam ca drśoccopala caitāni
vai daśa yajñāyudhāni.

59. Śat.Bṛ.1.7.2.10 – ‘ dve va āhuti somāhutirevānyājyāhutiranyā ityādi’.

60. Ait. Ārn.2.3.3 –sa eṣa yajñah pañcavidho Agnihotram
Darśapūrṇamāsau Cāturmāsyāni Paśu Somah.
61. SPN.1.1—

iṣṭiśabdārtaṁ vikcatuṣṭayaṁ asampādyasaṁpatnikāyajamānānākārtrkakarmanā
madheyyam.

62. Vidhyādhara in his introd to Kāt.Śs. p.34- parasahasramiśṭayo
vihitah.

63. Pūrva Mim.VIII.1.11-Iṣṭisu Darśapūrṇamāsayah pravṛttih syāt.

64. Śat.Bṛ.12.4.1.1 – etadvai jārāmaryaṁ satraṁ jaryā hıyēväśmāṁ
mucyate mṛtyunā vā.

65. Taitt.Saṁ. 2.3.6 – tasyaitasyagnihotrasya yajñakratoreka ṛtvika.

66. Kāt.Śs.4.13.1 – udhareti yajamāno bruṇatāḥ sāyaṁ prātaragnihotre.

67. Āp.Śs.24.3.32 – Darśapūrṇamāsīvṣṭināṁ prakṛtih.

68. Śat.Bṛ.1.1.1.17 – svo yāgārthe agnisamīpe niyamavisaśto vāsa

upavāsa, yaṛātavyāṁ devatānāṁ yognisamīpe vāsaḥ sa

upavasathastatsambandyaharaupava sathamanvādhaṁ initi yāvat.


70. Kāt.Śs.4.2.24 – somayāji sannayet.

71. Kāt.Śs – 7.1.5 – vasante Agniṣṭomah

72. TāṇḍyaBrāhmaṇa.9.5.3 – yadi somāṁ na vindaṁ pūtikānabhisunuyāt.

73. Āsv.Śs.4.1.5 - catvarastripuruṣah.

74. Śāṅkh.Śs.5.3.31 – aparāhne diśāniyagñāvaiśnaviśṭih.

75. Āsv.Śs.4.2.20 – diśānte rājakrayah.
76. *Sastra* – the mantras which are recited to appreciate the Gods are called *śastras*.

77. *Stotra* – the mantras which are sung to praise the Gods are called *stotras*.

78. *Kāt.Śs.12.1.7* – *yajamānāḥ sarve satresu*.