

## CHAPTER FIVE

# YAJÑA

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The *Vedas* are traditionally considered as works dealing with *karma* or activity which is technically named as *yajña*. As all activities are prompted by vital energy or *prāṇa* therefore *yajña* is said to be performed by *prāṇa*. In simple language it means that no activity can be performed without vital energy. It is true that the earlier Vedic literature speaks of *yajña* in ritualistic sense but in the *Gītā*, *yajña* is used in such a wider sense that it includes all the activities. The traditional *Vedānta*, along with other systems of Indian philosophy, holds that actions cause bondage and are obstacles in liberation. The *Gītā* however shows the way how actions can not only be the cause of bondage but can also be the means to liberation. This is what is meant by the term *Vijñāna* which has been explained as skillfulness or efficiency in actions by the *Gītā*.

### **Ritualism and spiritualism**

There is a ritualistic meaning of *yajña* but the Vedic ritualism is not devoid of spiritualism. All *yajña* is marked by the spirit of renunciation which is the foundation stone of spiritualism. The Vedic seer is very much conscious of the fact that whatever objects we enjoy are creations of cosmic powers technically known as *devas*. Therefore, whatever the *yajamāna* enjoys he first offers it to the *devas* with the clear declaration that whatever he is enjoying does not belong to him but to some *deva* — *idam na mama*. Whatever remains after making the oblation to the *devas*, is taken by the *yajamāna* as a result of the grace of *devas*. This is known as *pravargya* in Vedic terminology and as *prasāda* in common terminology. The *Gītā* speaks of it as *yajñośiṣṭa* i.e. remainder of the *yajña*. It further says that one who enjoys *yajñośiṣṭa* is freed from all sins. The message is clear that enjoyment without attachment does not entail any sin. It is clear that one cannot survive without having the bare necessities of life. It is also clear that one cannot procure these necessities without performing action. Actions, therefore, become necessary for maintenance of life. Not only that, one cannot remain without actions because nature which consists of three attributes — *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* — cannot remain in rest for a single moment.

### **Agni and Soma**

The activities in nature are such that one part of it is consumed and absorbed by another part. The part which consumes is known as *agni* and the part which is consumed is known as *soma*. This process goes on in the nature automatically. This is called *prākṛta yajña*. The *yajña* which is prescribed by the scripture is just an imitation of the model of *prākṛta yajña* and is known as *vaidha yajña*. Naturally the objects and actions involved in the *vaidha yajña* symbolize the objects and actions of the *prākṛta yajña*. In fact this creation itself is the result of a *yajña* performed by the creator, the *puruṣa*, in which he created *agni* out of his own mouth and offered himself as an oblation with the result that the whole creation came out of that *yajña*. The act of the *puruṣa* offering himself as an oblation signifies that no creation is possible without self-sacrifice. This act of self-sacrifice is not painful but full of joy and glory.

It takes two to have any creation. As mentioned above these two are *agni* and *soma*, the admixture of whom, result in a *yajña*. At human level these two elements are male and female, *vṛṣā* and *yoṣā*. We shall see how this duality is symbolized in many acts of a sacrifice.

### **Purpose of yajña**

Before we come to the treatment of the *yajña* in some detail, let us look at its purpose. No action is possible unless it is motivated by some desire. *Yajña* is also motivated by one or the other desire. At the lower level these desires are selfish motivated by a sense of ego. The *yajña* is also a means of fulfilling such desires. But this is not the highest kind of *yajña*. The highest kind of *yajña* is that which is performed for the pleasure of the Divine Lord.

It is said that the *yajña* with some desire in view is performed by those who are ignorant. In fact very few of us are free from desire. The scriptures, therefore, give in detail the list of desires which can be fulfilled by performing sacrifice. It is said that by performing sacrifice one can get food and nourishment. The other achievement of *yajña* is that of off-spring. Cattle are also the aim of performing *yajña*. Victory, prosperity and fame are also achieved by performance of *yajña*. One gets long, safe, secure and respectable life by performing *yajña*. Of-course, heaven is the main aim of *yajña*. In short, *yajña* is the means of fulfilling all the desires. It is said that desires lead to bondage and yet all *yajñas* are performed with some desire in view. In this respect the following statement of *Manu* deserves our attention:-

A person full of desires is not appreciated whereas desirelessness is not found in this world. Therefore one should desire for learning the Vedas and also for performing the actions prescribed in the Vedas. All desires are rooted in determination; all *yajñas* arise out of determination. Nay, all vows, which rule religious performances, arise out of determination.

No activities are seen without desire. Whatever we do is inspired by desire. One fulfills all his desires as per his determination.

We have to interpret the above statement of Manu in the light of famous statement of the *Gītā* that one has control over his action but not over fruits thereof. One should not be bound by the fruit of the action nor should one relish idleness. It means that one has no control over the fruit of his actions. It does not mean that actions have to be performed without taking into account their results. The matter of the fact is that the result is produced by the action and if the action is performed in a flawless manner, result is bound to follow. In case we do not succeed, we must find the flaw in our action rather than blaming our misfortune. This is the essence of Vedic ritual.

### **Importance of scriptures**

The procedure of Vedic ritual is to be decoded by the help of scripture and not by our common sense because our common sense can perceive only the gross matter whereas the success of the action depends on the subtle vital force. When the implications of the subtle vital force are overlooked, the result is that the performance of Vedic rituals becomes more harmful rather than not performing them at all. Vedic rituals belong to the realm of divinity which surpasses human comprehension.

Without understanding this point there is sometimes revolt against the rituals. In fact the actions prescribed in the Vedas cover a very wide field of human life. The duties of four *varṇas* are prescribed in the Vedic system. When *Arjuna* in the *Gītā* refused to fight for fear of incurring the sin of killing his near and dear ones, he was shirking his duties as a *kṣatriya* concentrating on the result which was so obvious. This is a crucial point. When scriptures prescribe something they do so keeping in view the subtle imperceptible aspect of the action which cannot be neglected on the basis of perceptible and gross aspect of the action.

What is necessary is the conviction in efficacy of action. Attachment to the result leads to sentimentalism and sentimentalism leads to failure. Disgusted with failure, one adopts wrong means.

### **The spirit of yajña**

The fruit of an action may be of use in life but attachment towards fruits makes one dull. He always thinks of the fruit which results in attachment towards object of senses. This attachment leads to the further desire, forming a vicious circle.

The objects of the senses are limited whereas aspirant for those objects are unlimited. This leads to a competition which ends in enmity. If there is enmity, anger follows naturally. The mind is comparable to liquid objects like water which in Vedic terminology is *soma*. Anger is like fire. Just

as water becomes agitated in vicinity of fire, mind becomes perturbed with anger. Perturbed mind is confused. The action of a confused person becomes disorderly. He does not remember what he has done or said just a moment ago. He cannot take an intelligent decision and always remains indecisive. This is the situation of a sentimental man. He makes many plans but cannot execute them. This is the situation of loss of intelligence where a person cannot remain firm on any decision. He loses his vital energy and consequently his peace. On the other hand, if a person is not overpowered by sentiments and is firm in his decision he achieves peace of mind.

What is important is concern about right performance of action and not about the result. The animals act with the result in mind without caring for the propriety of the action. The first implication of such a situation is impropriety in the behaviour. Secondly, one is led by natural instincts whereas culture means cultivating habits of controlling natural instincts. Thirdly, one becomes bound and loses his freedom. He can become violent even to his near and dear ones for meeting his selfish ends. As a result he is not respected by anybody and out of disgust condemns everybody. In such a situation, he is isolated and is not able to perform any worthwhile activity. May be that he gets success but inwardly he is always frustrated. He always remains absorbed in imagination. This is the picture of a person who is attached to the fruits of the action. Our personality consists of two elements — nature and spirit. Nature is bound by time and space whereas spirit is beyond time and space. As in the outer world, so in the inner world. We have three stages of nature. The first is the earth which is represented by the body. The second is the moon represented by mind and the third is the sun represented by intelligence. The sun represents time, moon represents directions and the earth represents territory. This trinity is perceptible and changeable. What is changeable must have an unchangeable basis. The unchangeable basis of the above mentioned trinity of nature is the spirit. This spirit is not perceptible by senses.

### **From gross to subtle**

Nature cannot comprehend the spirit, it is beyond intelligence. In nature there is a gradual subtlety. The senses and mind are subtler than body. Intelligence is subtler than senses and mind. Spirit is beyond even the intelligence. This is the order given in the *Gītā*. The *Upniṣad* gives a more detailed order. It says that beyond intelligence there is *Mahat* and beyond *Mahat* there is the unmanifest and beyond unmanifest is the spirit. There is nothing beyond the spirit which is the last limit. It is by the knowledge of this spirit that one become liberated and immortal. The nature is spread over from body to intelligence in the individual and from earth to sun in the nature. Beyond intelligence is the *Mahat* and the unmanifest which — though a part of nature — is beyond intelligence because the intelligence cannot comprehend them. Similarly *Parmeṣṭhi* and *Svayambhū* are beyond

the sun in nature. Beyond *Avyakta* and *Svayambhū* is the spirit which is not a part of nature and is beyond time and space. There is a difference between *jīva* and *ātmā*. *Jīva* has a physical existence and it transmigrates from one body to another body. Where as *ātmā* neither takes birth nor does it die.

Animals and men both are *jīva* to certain extent. Both of them have body, mind and intelligence. In metals only the body which is technically known as *Vaiśvānara* is manifest. In plant-life, the mind, technically associated with *taijas*, is also manifest. In the animal kingdom and man even the intelligence, technically known as *prājña*, becomes manifest.

### Equanimity

Even though spirit is present in all the creation it becomes manifest only in man. It is to be noted that at the level of body, mind and intelligence one creature is inferior or superior to other. But at the level of spirit all creatures are equal. All our behaviour should be controlled by the understanding of this factor. The nature consists of three *gunas* because of whom there is an imbalance in it. This imbalance leads to mutual conflict which can be controlled by concentrating on the equality in spirit. When this equality in spirit is overlooked the conflict at natural level leads to violence. That violence has to be curbed by taking recourse to the use of force. But when the inequality at natural level is in consonance with equality in spirit, that inequality at natural level is to be welcome. This means that equality at natural level is not to be aimed at; everybody must get his due according to his natural capabilities. This is the basis of the four-fold order of *varṇas*. When any *varṇa* tries to exploit the other for its selfish end, there is anarchy in the society.

### Equality

Attempts to establish equality at natural level is not the remedy. This fact has been proved by the failure of communism in hitherto Soviet Russia. The spirit is at the center which becomes the basis of equality at heart. The nature is at the circumference. The center is static. The circumference is dynamic. The *Śruti* deals with the center, the *Smṛti* deals with the circumference. The *Śruti* does not change. The *Smṛti* changes according to the time. The center is known as *Agni*, *Manu*, *Indra* or *Prāṇa* which is eternal. Man is known as *Mānava* because he alone can associate himself with the center *Manu*.

The center is important but the circumference which is an extension of the center is also not to be neglected. The *Śruti* says that all this is *Brahman* — We cannot, therefore, say that creation is false. If we hold the creation to be false we are cut off from the glory of the creator. The result is that the beautiful creation becomes ugly for us and we get frustrated shunning from the world in an illusory attempt to realize the self. Just as a poet cannot be known apart from his poetry, the creator

can not be known apart from his creation. The nature is in the present, the spirit is beyond the time. We have to act in the present remaining rooted in timelessness.

### **Morality**

One important question is that one who follows the path of immorality is seen as rich, why should then one follow the path of morality. Manu says that one who follows the path of immorality prospers, achieves all kind of luxuries and stands ahead of his competitors but perishes at the root. What is meant here is that he loses his conscience. When one performs a wrong action his conscience pricks him. This pricking of conscience is the root which saves one from sin. If this conscience is dead, there is no safeguard against sin. In fact the spirit is the root of all peace and blissfulness lies in the spirit. All power on the other hand lies in the nature. It is said that power is more attractive than truth. The vital force of knowledge belonging to mind, activities belonging to *prāṇa* and objects belonging to *vāk* are in consonance with each other in case of truthfulness and therefore they remain connected to the center of spirit wherein lie the blissfulness which is as it were the root of all life. In case of falsehood the life gets disconnected with this root and therefore dries up. There is prosperity in such a case but the life becomes as dry as that of an animal. The intellect indulges into meaningless debate, the mind runs after objects of senses and the body becomes means of violence. This is what is meant by drying up of root through falsehood.

With spirit at the center we have an orderly life whereas with matter at center we have a disorderly life. There is independence in orderly life, whereas disorderly life is in bondage. Man is destined to lead an orderly life thereby gaining immortality whereas other creatures are destined to meet death by leading a life in worldly enjoyments. The attraction of the worldly enjoyments is symbolically known as the golden cover which is to be removed to realize the truth.

Because orderliness is meaningful for human life only therefore we have scripture only for man and not for animals. These scriptures make one realize distinction between natural and spiritual aspect of life. The attraction of nature being the same for man and animal, if the spiritual part which controls the nature is absent, the life of man and animal becomes identical.

### **Desires**

When we speak of orderliness in life, we have to pay attention to four aspects — desire, target, action and enjoyment. As far as desire is concerned, the scriptures decide as to which desires are to be entertained. The desires prescribed by the scriptures are ordained by God. The noble souls also entertain the same desires as are ordained in the scriptures. As regards the results they are controlled by our actions. The man is independent only in performing the actions. He may adopt the method

prescribed by scriptures or may violate it. As far as enjoyment is concerned, one has to enjoy with a spirit of renunciation. On the other hand, if one desires against the prescription of scriptures, the whole scheme becomes disorderly; one starts aspiring for undesirable objects, becomes anxious regarding the fruit and negligent in action. He becomes attached to the result. One should therefore leave the responsibility of producing the result on the actions rather than taking the responsibility on himself. Activity makes one full of life. Attachment to the result makes him dull. This attachment leads to the bondage. On the other hand if one applies his intellect to the performance of action with perfection, he remains detached.

In fact it is not that all desires are to be shunned; there are desires which are to be entertained. The intellect can comprehend such desires by studying the scriptures. The intellect like the sun remains detached. The second type of desires needs no intellect. They arise in the mind automatically because of attachment and aversion. As mind is associated with moon, it is always attached.

The activities inspired by the scriptures are known as *Yajña*, the performance of which is based on the knowledge of scriptures. Such activities do not bind. It is because of this that the study of scriptures has been given so much importance, specially the study of Vedas hold supreme importance.

### **Arthavāda**

The Vedas are known to be books of *karmakāṇḍa* or rituals. The performance of Vedic rituals is based on the *vidhivākya*s of the *Brāhmaṇa*-texts. They are useful for those who actually wish to perform those rituals. There are, however, *arthavādavākya*s also which divulge into the secrets of the rituals. They are useful for those who wish to understand the mystery of the creation.

### **Daśapaurṇamāsa : logical explanation**

The fact is that the method of performing a Vedic ritual is based on the working of nature. In the following pages we shall take up one ritual, the *Darśapaurṇamāsa*, and see how the performance of that ritual can lead to revelation of the mystery of the working of nature. This is the *vijñāna* part of Vedic ritual. This is this part of the *Brāhmaṇa*-texts which was dealt with by *Pandit Madhusudana Ojha* and his disciples. Let us see how they do it in case of *Darśapaurṇamāsa*. Our treatment would be based on the commentary of *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa* by *Pandit Motilal Shastri*. The first thing that the *yajamāna* has to do is to sip water standing in between *āhavnīya* (solar fire) and *gārhapatya* (i.e. domestic terrestrial fire) facing the east. Man is said to be attached to falsehood by nature. He cannot therefore be cultured. Water makes him cultured. This is the purpose of sipping the water.

The natural *yajña* is spread from earth to sun therefore it is known as *Vitāna yajña* i.e. a *yajña* spread over'. The sun is the center of the universe, the soul of what moves and what moves not. It is the conglomerate of all *devas*. It is known as *agnihotra*, because *soma* is being offered in it as an oblation constantly. In this natural *yajña*, moon is *Brahmā*, *agni* is *hotā*, *vāyu* is *adhvaryu*, *Āditya* is *udgātā* and *Samvatsara* is the *yajamāna* who creates the creature.

What happens is that a man is attracted towards earth by nature. The purpose of *yajña* is to get oneself freed from this attraction of earth and get himself directed towards the sun. This is possible only if one has faith. Faith is the quality of mind. When one indulges in speaking and acting his mind get diverted and becomes weak. *Brahmā* of the *yajña* helps him by strengthening his mind. Mind controls our actions and speech, in the same way *Brahmā* controls *adhvaryu*, who is agent of actions and *hotā*, who is the controller of speech.

*Brahmā* helps the *yajamāna* to associate his mind with sun. Then comes speech. The *udgātā* spreads the speech of the earth, known as *anuṣṭup*, up to the speech of sun, known as *Bṛhaṭī*. *Hotā* establishes the *devas* on this speech. Since the speech of *Hotā* follows the speech of *udgātā*, it is known as *anuvāk*. The *adhvaryu* binds the *anuṣṭupa* with *bṛhaṭī*. Thus the combination of mind, vital force and speech comes into *existence* which is known as *graham*. This *grah* is a unit which formulates the divine personality of the *yajamāna*. Since mind action and speech of man are not in harmony with each other, he is said to be attached to falsehood. This makes his personality crooked and dirty. He cannot grasp divinity. Water makes his personality clean and receptive.

The *yajmāna* stands between the terrestrial fire and solar fire facing the east indicating that he wants to travel from earth to heaven. He sips water because water is the first visible creation. After sipping the water, comes taking of vow.

As man is attached to falsehood, *devas* are attached to truthfulness. *Agni* represents all the *devas*. Therefore the vow of truthfulness is taken in the vicinity of *Agni*. The *yajamāna* takes the vow for a particular period. The matter of the fact is that truthfulness and falsehood go together. Falsehood is perishable, truth is immortal. The universe is changing every moment and is therefore perishable. But the spirit is imperishable. The universe is five-fold, but the *Yajña* is associated with sun. The rays from *agni* do not change their direction and are therefore representative of truth. Whereas *agni* represent the truth, water represents faith. Faith has great power but truth is more powerful. Man is sentimental by nature therefore he cannot adhere to truth. He has therefore to take help of *agni*.

In the body the eye represents the sun. Therefore whatever one sees from his eyes is said to be the truth.

The *yajña* is to be performed on *pratipada*. The *yajamāna* should observe *upavāsa* on the previous day. *Upavāsa* is a technical term which means living by the side. As soon as the *yajamāna* takes the vow the *devas* know his mind that he is going to perform *yajña* on the next day. Now the *yajamāna* cannot take food unless the *devas* who are guests have taken their food because it is improper to take food unless the guests have taken their food. If however the *yajamāna* does not take his food, there is objection that his *yajña* becomes associated with *pitras* and not with *devas*. He should therefore take food of such objects which are not taken by *devas*. The food grains which grow automatically in the forest and the fruits are such objects which are not taken by *devas*, he can therefore take them.

The mind is predominated by *Soma* whereas the *devas* are predominated by *agni*. Therefore the *devas* become attracted towards the mind of the *yajamāna*.

The *devas* are predominated by *agni* and the *pitras* are predominated by *Soma*. On the illuminated part of the moon, the *devas* establish their rule. But the other dark part of the moon is ruled by the *pitras*. On *amāvasyā* as this dark part of the moon faces the earth the earth becomes pervaded by *pitras*. If the *yajamāna* does not eat anything on *amāvasyā* the *pitras* enter him attracted by his hunger, therefore he gets attracted to *pitras* and the *yajña* also becomes an act addressed to *pitras* and not to *devas*. The scriptures, therefore, lay down a mid-way between. If the *yajamāna* takes grains which are automatically grown in the forest and the fruits, the *devas* are not neglected because they do not take these objects. Naturally grown grains and fruits have more of solar element and a very little of *Soma*. They are, therefore, not suitable for *devas* predominated by *agni*. The *yajmāna* can, therefore, take them. By doing so he does not feel hungry and the *pitras* are not attracted towards him. His act of *yajña*, thus, is not addressed to *pitras*.

Here the option of seer, *Barku*, is quoted. He says that since *māṣa* is also offered to *devas*, it can be also taken on the *upavāsa* day. This view is not correct because *māṣas* are grown with *godhūma* and can have their mixture.

The *yajamāna* should sleep below because he is to serve the *devas* and a servant should sit below. On the day on which the actual *yajña* (*isti*) is to be performed the first thing is the appointment of *Brahmā*. This is done after the performance of daily *agnihotra*.

In between *Parmeṣṭhi* and sun is *Bṛhaspati* who is the *Brahmā* of natural *yajña*. The *yajamāna* requests *Brahmā* to protect the *yajña* and sits on the south of the *vedi*.

*Yajña vijñāna* is established on *brahmavidyā*. All movement is based on *statis*. In fact, movement on its climax changes into *statis*. *Statis* on the other hand is the result of movements in opposite

direction. *Brahmā* represents *statis* and therefore forms the basis of all movements. He is therefore said to be the protector of *yajña*. *Brahmā* representing *statis* has movements on all the sides which are opposite to each other.

Centrifugal movement in its pure form is *Indra*. Mixed with *Brahmā* it becomes *agni*. Similarly centripetal movement in its pure form is *Viṣṇu* whereas in association with *Brahmā* it becomes *Soma*. *Brahmā*, *Viṣṇu* and *Indra* are the heart of the object from which the object arises.

*Brahmā* represents *agni*. *Agni* belongs to the south. Therefore *Brahmā* sits on the south of the *vedi* facing the north. When *Brahmā* has taken his seat and *yajamāna* has also taken his seat by him the *adhvaryu* takes his seat by the north of *gārhapatya*. Then *adhvaryu* ask *Brahmā* for permission for *apāmpraṇayana*. No action is performed without the desire of mind. *Brahmā* represents mind. Therefore *adhvaryu* who represents *prāṇa* takes the permission of *Brahmā*. After that he takes *praṇīta pātra* from north of *gārhapatya* and places it on the north of *āhavanīya*. This is called *apāmpraṇayana*.

Waters are said to come out of fire. *Bṛgu* and *Āṅgirā* constitute water. *Bṛgu* is *Soma*, *Āṅgirā* is *agni*. Their connectivity in water is *yajña*. Therefore in the beginning of *yajña* the *adhvaryu* performs *apāmpraṇayana* by taking water from *gārhapatya* to *āhavanīya*. The *yajña* is extended from earth to heaven.

Every object is a form of *agni*. One form of *agni* forms the solid objects, this is known as *Cityāgni*, the halo of other object is known as *Citenidheyāgni*. This halo is divided into 33 parts. Each one of which has 30 rays. Thus 990 rays are covered by these 33 parts. There are total 1000 rays, the remaining 10 rays are known as thirty fourth *Prajāpati*. The first *Prajāpati* is in the center, the thirty fourth *Prajāpati* is in the circumference; in between the two is the seventieth ray. *Prajāpati* at the center is known as *Anirukta*. *Prajāpati* at circumference is known as *Sarvaprajāpati* and the *Prajāpati* in between the two is known as *Udgītha*. Since *apām praṇayana* is the beginning of *yajña* therefore it is associated with *Anirukta Prajāpati*.

Placing of *praṇītapātra* by the side of *āhavanīya* is known as *apāmsadana*. Before *āhavanīya*, the *praṇītapātra* is placed by the side of *gārhyapatya*. *Praṇītapātra* contains water. Water represents the female element, whereas fire represents male element. Placing of water by the side of fire means coupling the female element with the male element so as to give birth to divinity in the *yajamāna*.

In nature, *bṛgu*, who is associated with *soma*, represents female element and *āṅgirā*, associated with *agni*, represent male element. They couple together and sun is born.

In the present context, the *praṇītapātra* is placed by the side of *gārhapatya*, which represents the domestic atmosphere, suitable for *progeneration*. Afterwards it is placed by the side of *āhavanīya*, indicating that the earthly element of *yajamāna* is to be transformed into divine element.

The *Praṇītapātra* is placed on the north of the fire because the female element, represented by water, is to be placed on the left of man, who is here represented by fire.

The water and fire are to be kept neither too near to each other nor too far from each other. If they are kept too near, they may develop enmity, if they are kept too far, they may not have any association with each other.

Then comes the act of spreading *kuśā* on the altar. The figure of altar is like that of a man. The animals have a double covering of skin and leather on their body. They, therefore, do not need clothes. Men have only skin and no leather. He, therefore, needs clothes. The *Yajña* is like a man. It has to be covered by *kuśā*, so that it does not remain naked.

The pots required for the *Yajña* are placed in pair, so that they can form couple, so necessary for procreation. A pair becomes more powerful.

The *Brāhmaṇa*-text says that the number of ten is important because it is associated with *Virāṭa* metre which has ten letters.

A metre or *chanda* is cover. Cover forms the shape of an object, whether material or abstract. It is this shape which differentiates one object from the other. *Agni*, *vāyu* and *āditya*, for example, are differentiated from each other because of the metres associated with them, viz. *gāyatrī*, *triṣṭup* and *jagatī* respectively. It would be seen that the number of the letters of these metres correspond to the number of *devas* in each group. *Agni vāyu* and *āditya* have eight *vasus*, eleven *rudras* and twelve *adityas* respectively. *Gayatri*, *triṣṭup* and *jagatī* metres have also 8, 11 and 12 letters respectively. It means that the number of the letters of a metre corresponds to the number of the *devas* with whom that particular metre is associated.

The purpose of *Yajña* is to establish the *adhidaiva* in *adhyātma*. *Adhidaiva* however, is so subtle that it cannot be grasped directly; we have to take the help of *adhibhūta*. Now if the *adhidaiva* has a particular metre having a particular numbers of letters in *adhibhūta* also we have to have objects in that very number.

Here *Yajña* is to be grasped which is associated with *virāṭa* metre, having ten letters. Therefore in *adhibhūta* also, we should have ten pots which are technically known as instruments (*āyudha*).

Here all actions are said to be *Yajña*. All actions comprise of give-and-take. All objects give out something and take in something. Therefore, everywhere a *Yajña* is being performed. *Adhvaryu* is

ordained to observe silence after placing the pots. Speech is a form of *agni*—*Yajña* is to be performed in *agni* and that *agni* would be disturbed if one were to speak. Hence silence is ordained. Silence strengthens mind and steadfastness of mind results in focusing of intelligence which is very much necessary for success in the *Yajña*.

Then comes the heating of sacrificial pots. *Rākṣasas* are subtle element existing in watery part of the air. This element is overcome by fiery part of the heat. Hence the heating of pots is said to eliminate the *Rākṣasas*.

It has been said that speech is also form of *agni*. *Mantra* is a powerful form of speech because it is supported by *chanda*. So by use of a *mantra* the obstructing element of watery air is removed.

First of all the crops are placed in the cart. Grain (*havi*) should, therefore, be taken from the cart to indicate that whatever is to be done should be done immediately and should not be postponed. Grain is available in the cart in abundance. Happiness lies in the abundance and not in scarcity. Even though grain is in abundance in the field also but it is mixed with undesirable element like grass and thorns etc.

When the *adhvaryu* goes to collect grain from the cart, he has to cross the pole which is a form of *agni*, because the neck of the bullocks become black with its association as if burnt by fire. Now, the *adhvaryu* must ask for pardon while crossing the pole so that *agni* does not feel insulted.

The grain, even in the cart, is limited. The *adhvaryu* looks at the atmosphere to inculcate the idea of limitlessness and removes undesirable elements from the grain.

The *Yajña* is said to be five-fold. Therefore, one should take grain from the cart with five fingers.

The pots are to be sprinkled by water. But all water is not pure. Water which is in touch with rays of sun is pure. The standing water is impure. The *darbha* comes out of the standing water; it is that part of water which is pure because of its association with rays of the sun i.e. *indra*. If the rays of sun come in touch with earth, gold is formed and if they come in touch with water, *darbha* is formed. Both of them are purifier. The standing water is impure, it is *vṛtra*, which is purified by *indra*, the rays of the sun. This is said to be killing of *vṛtra* by *indra*. The water which is sprinkled on the pots of the *Yajña* is purified by *darbha* so that no impurity enters the pots.

The skin of the black deer is to be used for placing the pot of oblation on it. The skin of the black deer is a *Yajña* in itself. The solar energy enters the earth and becomes black. This energy is to be sought for (*mṛgyamāna*) and is black. Therefore it is called black *mṛga* (deer).

The *agni* in earth is black. Therefore, the *Ṛgveda* which is associated with earth is said to be the black part of the deer-skin. The *Sāmaveda*, which is associated with *āditya* is said to be white obviously because sun-light (i.e. *indra*) is white. The *Yajurveda* which lies in between the two is brown. Alternatively if the extension of *mahimāmaṇḍala* of earth is accepted as earth itself, then *Ṛgveda* is white and *Sāmaveda* belonging to *āpomaṇḍala* is black, *Yajurveda* lying in between the two is brown. Thus the skin of black-deer is the image of *trayī*.

The skin is called *carma* in Sanskrit. The divine version of *carma* is *Śarma*. *Śarma* is the title name of *brāhmaṇa*, who protects the society just as the skin protects the society from internal disintegration. The *kṣatriya* protects the society from external dangers and is therefore; called *varmā*, the peasants and the business community are the protected lot, *gupta*.

Manu is mind, faith is his wife. The bull is the animal having solar power. Solar power is the destroyer of darkness or *asuras*. Faith is all the more powerful destroyer of darkness. *Kilāṭī* and *Ākuli*, sacrificed the bull and faith both by deceiving Manu, but when the power of solar energy and faith entered the instruments of *Yajña* itself, they became helpless. This is indicated by rattling of the pots of *Yajña*.

The act of putting the pot-shards on the *gārhapatya agni* and the act of putting the mill stones on the black deer skin should be done simultaneously because the pots are like the skull bones and the *purodāṣa* is the brain and the two should be put together. In fact two *Yajñas* are being performed at the macro and micro level. The ritualistic *Yajña* is an imitation of these *Yajñas*. *Yajña* is the oblation of *Soma* into *agni*. *Soma* causes contraction. *Agni* causes expansion. In other words *Soma* is stasis. *Agni* is movement. Stasis and movement combined together form an object. At the macro level *agni* expands from earth to sun. *Agni* in earth is *gārhapatya agni*. *Agni* at sun is *āhavanīya*. In between the two lies *dakṣiṇāgni*. As a result the food grains and vegetables become ripe and are offered as oblation in the *āhavanīya*. This *Yajña* is called *Samvatsarīya Yajña* which makes the creation continue.

At the micro level the *apāna* is *gārhapatya*, *vyāna* is *dakṣiṇāgni* and *prāṇa* is *āhavanīya*. These three together create *vaiśvānara* in which the food is offered as an oblation. To express it in other way the *agni* at the mouth is *āhavanīya* in which all food is offered as an oblation. The backbone is like the equator. The ribs represent the half of the path of earth around the sun. The full circling of the sun takes one year. This year is represented in the *gavāmayana satra* as shown below.

In the *Samvatsara Yajña* the terrestrial *agni* forms the physical body. The atmospheric *Vāyu* forms *prāṇa*. The *āditya* forms the mind. It is on the basis of similarity that the *Brāhmaṇa* text speaks of pots as the skull. This simile can be extended to body, e.g. from heart to shoulder we have the first

part. The second is from shoulder to elbow. The third is from elbow to palm and the fourth is the finger. These four are four *abhiplava*. The five fingers are the five *chandas*.

*Tapa* has a technical meaning of giving away a part of ones self. A vacuum is created by this giving away of the self. This vacuum is filled by receiving something. Thus renunciation and enjoyment go together. What one renounces become the food for others, and what one renounces become the object of enjoyment for the self. Thus one is the food as also the enjoyer of food. The enjoyer of food is *aṅgirās*, the food is *Bṛgu*. The real tap is based on give and take which is the *tapa* of *Bṛgu* and *Aṅgirā*.

*Bṛgu* and *Aṅgirā* form the basis of *āpaḥ*. *Aṅgirā* is expansion which is the basis of verbal glory. *Bṛgu* is contraction which is the basis of material prosperity. *Yajña* is the basis of both.

*Kuśā* has a special place in the performance of *Yajña*. Whatever part of water is in touch with the rays of sun is pure. This part of water is cold Vena. The other part of water which is polluted is called *Vṛtra*. *Kuśā* is formed by pure water. The rays of sun, when grasped by clay become gold. When they are grasped by water they become *kuśā*.

When something comes in touch with *kuśā*, the *asuraprāṇa* are eliminated by *devaprāṇa*. Therefore the water of *praṇīta* is purified by *kuśā*. The water of *prokṣaṇa* carries forward the *Yajña*. In the *Yajña* the *Soma* is purified by water. Water helps in joining the micro-energy with the macro-energy. We have spoken of water as a combination of *Bṛgu* and *Aṅgirā*. *Bṛgu* is offered as an oblation in *Aṅgirā* which is itself a form of *Yajña*.

The sun in the morning has *gāyatrī* as its metre and *vasu* as its *aeva*. It spreads knowledge. In the noon it has *triṣṭup* as its metre and *rudra* as its *veva*. It spreads activity. In the evening the sun has *jagatī* as its metre and *āditya* as its *deva*. The first part of night has *pūṣā* as its *Deva* and is without metre. These four stages represent the four-fold division of the society.

### Symbolism of the yajña-vidyā

The scripture prescribed the use of the skin of dark deer in the *Yajña*. The dark hair of deer represents the *Ṛgveda*. The white hair represents the *Sāmaveda*. The red hair represents the *Yajurveda*. The skin of black deer represents the three Vedas. The *Ṛgveda* belongs to earth therefore is said to be black, whereas the celestial *Sāmaveda* is said to be white. The atmospheric *Yajurveda* said to be red. If we take the sun to be the base, the *Ṛgveda* connected with it is white and the *Samaveda* connected with *Soma* or *Parmeṣṭhī* is black. Thus the skin of the black deer represents the *trayī*. It is because of this that *Manu* said that that territory is fit for *Yajña* where black deer roam about by nature.

As already stated, the Sanskrit for skin is *carma*. This word *carma* is spoken of as *sarma* in the language of the *Devas*. *Śarma* is the title of the *Brāhmaṇa*. It means that just as the skin of the body

safeguards the inner contents of the body from disintegration, similarly the *Brāhmaṇa* protects the society from inner conflict. On the other hand *Kṣatriya* is called *varmā* which means an armour which protects the body from external attacks. It means that warrior class protects the country from external attacks.

An element which hinders the working is called *rākṣasa* and that which blocks the incoming prosperity is called *arāti*. Both of them are anti-*yajña*.

The skin of the black deer has three colours — black, white and grey. The black colour represents the earth which is associated with *R̥gveda*. The white colour represents the sun which is associated with *Sāmaveda*. The grey colour in between the two represents the atmosphere which is associated with *Yajurveda*.

What is circumference at the first level becomes the center at the second level. That is to say the earth and sun are relative terms therefore, what is *Sāma* at the first level becomes *R̥k* at the second level, therefore we can say that *R̥k* is both black and white and the *Sāma* is also similarly both white and black.

The creation of the creator is original. The creation of man is the copy of that original. The black deer is the copy of the Veda, therefore the *yajamāna* uses the skin of the black deer but before using it he must do the dusting. The dust is an obstacle in the *Yajña* because it does not allow the consciousness of the *yajamāna* to get related with the *Yajña*.

The *yajamāna* has to offer *havi* in the pot. For this he calls the priest who has to put *havi* in the pot, therefore, he calls the priest and thereby breaks his silence. The *havi*, speech and *agni* are all *āgneya*. Therefore speech is said to be the producer of *havi*.

Then comes the rattling of the pots of *yajña*. It is said that by rattling these pots the obstacles of the *yajña* are removed. There is a story which means that the sound of a bull frightens away the *asuras*. This sound is the sound of knowledge. When this sound is silenced the sound of faith does the job. But when this sound of faith is also silenced the divine sound of the sacrificial pots does the job and thereby all obstacles are removed.

Two objects could be combined together externally in a physical way, it is Yoga. But if the two objects are combined internally in a chemical way to produce a new object, it is *Yajña*. It is through *Yajña* that the universe comes into existence and is maintained. The two objects which come into contact in a *Yajña* are *agni* and *soma*. *Agni* represents movements, *soma* represents stasis. In every object we find both the movement that is changed and stasis that is permanence. When *soma* brings together the scattered atoms the object is produced. *Agni* in the absence of *soma* destroys the object by scattering the atoms.

It is said that *Yajña* is divided into five parts. This is applicable at many levels. We have five vital forces—*prāṇa*, *apāna*, *udāna*, *samāna* and *vyāna*. *Śrauta Yajña* are also five—*agnihotra*, *darśapurṇamāsa*, *caturmāsya*, *paṣubandha* and *soma*. Similarly there is another division of *Yajña* into five — *pākayajña*, *haviryajña*, *nahayajña*, *atijajña* and *śiroyajña*.

The earth takes round of the sun. it is because of the vital force that it gets from soul thereby the time is divided into five parts — day and night, fortnight, seasons, two *āyanas* and year. These five parts of time are represented by the aforesaid five *śrauta Yajña*.

The solar *agni* is *āhavaniya*. The terrestrial *agni* is *gārhapatya* and the atmospheric *agni* belongs to south. This *agni* is responsible for ripening of the crops which serves as oblation in the sacrifice. This is the natural *Yajña*.

In the body *apāna* represents terrestrial *agni*, *vyāna* represents atmospheric *agni*, *prāṇa* represents celestial *agni*. These three together create another fire known as *vaiśvānara*. The oblation of soul in this *vaiśvānara agni* is responsible for maintenance all living beings.

All the *devas* are supported by *agni*. Every object has three constituents — light, matter and soul. Therefore, we have three types of *Yajña*—*jyotiṣṭoma*, *goṣṭoma* and *āyusṭoma*.

Semen is liquid. Solar luster is solid. Both of them together create the progeny. Therefore, in a *Yajña*, when liquid *ghee* is offered a solid piece of gold is also put in it. This is how the *Yajña* represents the process of creation of a living being in the embryo. Speaking in another way, the terrestrial fire creates our physical body, the atmospheric *vayu* is responsible for our vital forces and celestial fire creates our mind.

In fact we can show how the process of *Yajña* is represented in our body. For example — the smallest finger is connected with the smallest *metre gāyatrī*. The *anāmikā* is represented by *triṣṭup*. The middle finger is associated with *virāṭ* and *tarjanī* is associated with *jagatī*, the thumb is associated with *pañkti*. The skull in the body is the *kapāla*.

The fire with ashes is *asura*. The fire without ashes is divine.

For the success of an action we require knowledge, action and infrastructure. One of the requirements for success is *tapa*. For *tapa* one has to offer himself. If we want to achieve something we have to make place for it by offering something of our own. While performing *tapa* one has to bring mind and body together. Giving and taking go together. Every sacrifice implies some profit also. This is why it has been ordained one should perform *tapa* after the fashion of *bhṛgu* and *aṅgīras*. *Aṅgīras* means sacrifice whereas *bhṛgu* means enjoyment. Sacrifice must follow enjoyment.

Every *tapa* has three aspects, one is at the level of knowledge, another is at the level of action and the third is at the level of physical level. The knowledge is all pervasive. It purifies. *Tapa* at the level of action brings prosperity. The prosperity of knowledge is *śrī* and the financial prosperity is *lakṣmī*. Both of them come out of the purity of knowledge. Knowledge is always expanding. Wealth is always contracting. Combination of the two brings happiness. The third type of *tapa* that is physical labour is of no use without these two.

Having given a glimpse how any object or activity connected with *Yajña* has a deep subtle meaning which is brought out by *Brāhmaṇa* text; let us now concentrate on the picture of *Yajña* as we get from the *Saṃhitā* portion. In the first place the performance of *Yajña* is not motivated by narrow self interest. *Yajña* for the seer is a natural process of the creation. The *puruṣa sūkta* clearly mentions as to how creation proceeds from the *Yajña*. *Agni* plays a prominent role in this process. The *Yajña* at a macro level requires help from all the natural powers. If *agni* is *hotā*, *vāyu* is *adharyu* and *āditya* is *udgātā*, *candramā* is *brahmā*. That the *puruṣa* himself must offer as an oblation indicates that at the root of Becoming is the Being. A *yajamāna* is also supposed to pour his whole being into the process of Becoming at the macro level. He thus loses his individual identity and merges himself into the universal self. He has no will of his own. He only follows the will of the Almighty. With this attitude his path becomes very smooth. The annihilation of the self is symbolized by *puruṣamedha yajña*. When self is eliminated there is no question of selfishness. Whatever one enjoys is enjoyed with a complete sense of detachment.

*Yajña* is a part of maintenance of order in the world. *Yajña* is thus not a mechanical process but a holistic process by which one can get liberation as well as worldly prosperity. The *Yajña* attains this target by purifying the *yajamāna* raising him from the physical to the divine level.

There are some interesting observations in connection with *Yajña*. At one place it has been said that the alter is the end of Earth. It may mean two things. In the first place, since the Earth is round any point of it would be its end also. Secondly since all earthly things transform into divine things at the alter, it could be said to be the end of Earth.

In the *puruṣa sūkta yajña* stands for act of manifestation. The *puruṣa sūkta* also mentions the *yajñic* process of creation. The world is merely an overflow of *puruṣa*; *puruṣa* far exceeds the world.

There are many types of *Yajña*. Whatever we take from others for survival is one form of sacrifice. On the other hand, when we offer something to others it is second type of sacrifice. The best form of this sacrifice is to surrender oneself to the Almighty. The third form of sacrifice consists of works of public welfare. The fourth form of *Yajña* is to strengthen ourselves by taking food. The manifestation of seed into sprout, flower and fruit is also a form of *Yajña*.

There is another form of *Yajña* by which our personality is formed. The causal body is formed by knowledge, ignorance and actions. The subtle body is formed by five divine elements — space, cloud, sun, moon and Earth. At the material level space gives birth to sky, clouds to air, sun to fire, moon to water and Earth to earth. This is the process of the formation of the physical body consisting of five elements. Such is the wider range of *Yajña*.

As *Vijñāna* has been defined as explanation of not only the *Yajña* but of all actions — विज्ञानं यज्ञं तनुते कर्मापि — we shall deal with the philosophy of action which has been best propounded in the *Gītā*, which also gives the best representation of Indian culture as a whole. This chapter on the *Gītā* will form a fitting epilogue to the present work.

