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Animal Sacrifices Before Deities  
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ANIMAL SACRIFICES BEFORE DEITIES.

INTRODUCTORY.

What a divine charm surrounds that mysterious word Religion. Whenever we are in trouble we seek shelter in that word Divine. It promises us peace ever-lasting and all pervading. It soothes our troubled hearts and inspires hope in dejected minds. It gives life to the dying, vigour to the languid, and warmth to the cold frigid sceptic. Such divinely inspiring, such great soother of all our woes and troubles, how can it countenance the deprivation of the joy and life of poor innocent dumb creatures? Yet there it is. Most men of religious persuasions have, for ages past, been destroying hundreds of creatures that live and feel like themselves, that love, serve and protect them, in the vain hope of gaining heaven, of atoning for their sins and of appeasing the 'wrath' of that Merciful Father who has endowed both men and animals with life.

These gentlemen justify their doings on the authority of their sacred scriptures. A Mahomedan holds that his *Ida* is not celebrated in accordance with the injunctions of the Holy Kuran, unless a cow or a goat is killed on the sacred altar. A Christian and a Jew refer to the sacrifices described in the Old Testament; they speak of the attempted immolation of Abraham's son by his own father. The Hindu seeks justification in the *Ashwa-Medha* (horse sacrifice), *Gomedha* (cow sacrifice), *Nar Medha* (human sacrifice), *Aja Medha* (goat sacrifice) and several others mentioned in his scriptures. They of the other religions, they, that spill the blood of the members of lower creation to save themselves from the fire of hell, have their own traditions to support them in this fiendish practice.

To assert that the prevalent custom of killing God's creatures in His name is irreligious is to wage war against the vested interests of certain priests and their followers, against ignorance, superstition, misinterpretation and interpolation. Yet one who has faith in the Merciful Nature of the Lord, one who holds that the Divine commands breathe peace to all from the amoeba to man, from the corpuscles to the innumerable universes that are eternally evolving and devolving, may boldly, though humbly, make an attempt in this direction.

MY RELIGIOUS SCRIPTURES.

Before attempting to break down this great superstructure of superstition and sin, it will be well to define scriptures, as they constitute the greatest authority in the matter of religion. The writer holds that the Veda is the scripture *par excellence*, that it is the word of God to and that it is the scripture of the whole world. For understanding, interpreting and explaining the Veda several books have been written. Of these the *Brahmanas* occupy a position of great honour in the Vedic literature. They contain the details of the *Mantra* ceremonies with long exposition and meaning; and they abound in dramatic parables, human and divine, and in illustration. Besides these, there are the books on *Kalpa* (science of the dramatic display of the *Mantras*) such are the *Shrauta* and other *Sutras* (epigrammatical sayings). To the *Brahmanas* are also attached the *Upanishads* as appendices. They treat of the spiritual in religion.

The *Smrities* and the *Dharma Sutras* are not only our sacred law books, but they also lay down rules for the everyday

life of man. These, the authors state, are in agreement with the *Vedas*.

The philosophical import of the *Vedas* is found in our six schools of philosophy—our *Sankhya* and *Yoga*, our *Nyaya* and *Vaisheshika* and our *Purva* and *Uttara Mimansa*.

Then there are two voluminous poems on the ancient history both sacred and profane—the *Ramayan* and the *Mahabharat*. These abound in religious discussions of various kinds. They are held in great reverence by the mass of the Hindu population and are helpful in understanding the scriptures. The latter apocryphal works of the Hindus are the *Puranas* and *Tantras*. In some quarters they are held in great contempt, whereas elsewhere they are revered. The *Tantras* are said by some to preach rank immorality and by other to contain sciences, physical, mechanical and mystic. The writer also holds that from time to time there have been born, in this world of mortals, great ones who have ever tried to lead man back from his degraded, sinful state to the primitive state of purity. Moses and Mahomed, Christ and Krishna, Buddha and Mahavir, Dayananda and Shanker, Confucius and Zoroaster, Appolonius and Plato, these and many others have all worked in the same direction. They have all revived and restated, with some changes on account of change of times, the same eternal truth contained in the *Veda*. Their teachings, too, are, therefore, to be revered and to be considered authoritative so long as they do not directly conflict with the eternal *Veda*. When carefully considered they will be found in harmony with those of the scripture of the scriptures. In regard to the theme before us, they support the *Veda* in holding up the doctrine of *Ahimsa* (harmlessness) and in inculcating spiritual and beneficial sacrifices.

#### THE ISSUES INVOLVED.

The position of the writer is that the animal sacrifices are irreligious in as much as they are nowhere enjoined in the scriptures. The scriptures, on the contrary, condemn in unmistakable terms all kinds of cruelty and they commend sacrifices of a beneficial and peace-producing nature. The writer well knows it that, from ages, animals have been sacrificed in the name of religion, that it has been preached that those who perform these sacrifices would obtain salvation and various other tempting things, and that whenever these sacrifices have been performed, the Vedic *Mantras* have been sung and the learned in the scriptures called in to officiate at and direct the performance of the sacrifices.

He proposes to assail the position of the cruel and superstitious sacrifices of the dumb animals, firstly, by establishing the beneficent character of the scriptures, by showing that scriptures regard all life to be sacred and command us all to endeavour to protect the dumb and mute creation. Secondly, he will try to show that the believers in animal sacrifices have either willfully fathered the doctrine on the sacred lore or misunderstood or misinterpreted the passages on which they rely for their support, he would also try to give the real exposition of some of the scriptural sacrifices. Sight would also be thrown on such practices as seem to lend support to the theory of animal sacrifices - their true significance or import being explained.

#### THE VEDA ON ANIMAL SACRIFICES.

"Look on all with the eye of a friend!" Such is the teaching of the holy *Veda* (*Yajur Veda*). Friend to all should the Arya be! Friend to all! Sure he cannot destroy the life of any. Therefore he is ordered in the sacred scriptures. (*Yajur* 42-49). "Thou shalt not kill the horse; thou shalt not kill the cow; thou shalt not kill the sheep or goat; thou shalt not kill the bipeds; oh man! Protect the gregarious deer; kill not the milch or otherwise useful animals."

Elsewhere the scripture says: "They that trouble others for the sake of their own good are *Rakshas* (monsters) and they that eat the flesh of birds and beasts are *Pishachas* (devils) (*Yajur* 34-51). For flesh-eating, drinking, gambling and adultery, all, destroy and mar the mental faculties of a man (*Atharva* VI.7-70-71) and such sinners as eat raw or cooked flesh or eggs go to destruction." (*Atharva* VIII.2-26-23).

In response to the commandments given above the Aryas of India constantly prayed unto all Great and Glorious God to give them strength to protect the weak against the strong and to add to their flocks and herds; for the cows and other milch animals enabled them to perform regularly the *Deva Yajna* (sacrifice) by means of milk.

The *Veda* considers the protection of animals to be a very sacred act—so, so very sacred that it lays down that a husband should solemnly ask his wife on the occasion of marriage "to be kind to animals and to try to protect the happiness of all bipeds and quadrupeds." In return the husband promises to do the same.

Further the *Veda* lays down that they who kill men or slay cows should be outlawed and ostracised (*Rig* I.16-114).

## THE YAJNA.

The *Veda* teaches that life is sacred, that animals must be protected for they are beneficial to mankind. But then why have animals been decapitated for religious rites hitherto? How is it that several learned men both of the east and the west have asserted that animal sacrifices are sanctioned by the *Veda*? Before this difficulty can be solved, it is necessary that the true meaning of the Vedic word for sacrifice should be understood. This word is 'Yajna.' It is a word which is very important in Sanskrit literature. It is this word with which the life history of a Hindu opens and closes. The great grammarian Panini says that 'Yajna is the performance of a *Deva Puja*, *Samgati* and *Dan*. The word *Samgati* signifies association, or concentration and focusing of powers (of the body and mind). *Puja* stands for worship and legitimate use. *Dan* means charity or self-sacrifice, giving away or expending. Thus the word *Yajna* comes to mean the legitimate use of *Deva* by means of corporate or combined action (or concentration of bodily or mental powers), expenditure of wealth or powers. To get at the full significance of our *Yajna* we should note the meaning of *Deva*. The word is derived from *Diva* which has the following meanings:

- (1) *Krida*.. Play and Diversion.
- (2) *Vijigisha*.. Desire for Victory.
- (3) *Vyavahar*.. Social Relations.
- (4) *Dyuti*.. Sight.
- (5) *Stuti*.. Praise.
- (6) *Moda*.. Happiness.
- (7) *Mada*.. Self-Consciousness.
- (8) *Swapana*.. Negation of motion.
- (9) *Kanti*.. Glory.
- (10) *Gatishu*.. Knowledge, motion, and attainment.

Thus *Yajna* may be defined as "the association of men and concentration of powers for social happiness, conquest over nature or enemy (of one's county or humanity); promotion of the well-being of society; the propagation and dissemination of enlightened principles; the maintenance of national self-respect; the increase of national glory; and the cultivation of acts of peace and war." It may also be added that *Yajna* also means such concentrated effort as secures man spiritual advancement and salvation.

That the word *Yajna* was used in the above sense by the Vedic Aryas may be established by referring to certain well-known practices of the Rishis. Every man was required to perform *Pancha Maha Yajna* every day. These five duties are (1) *Brahma Yajna* (meditation and worship of the Lord); (2) *Deva Yajna* (pouring libations of clarified butter and odoriferous substances in the sacred fire and associating with the learned); (3) *Pitri Yajna* (pleasing and serving parents, teachers and learned men called *Agni Shvatta-yajna*), (4) *Bhuta Yajna* (giving food to the fallen, degraded, weak and maimed, dogs, cows, ants, etc.); and (5) *Atithi Yajna* (showing hospitality to guests, especially those itinerant preachers who go about teaching people to be pure and religious).

It is most significant that one of the five *Yajnas* commands us to do deeds of mercy and charity unto the lower creation. What can have such *Yajnas* to do with spilling of blood?

The *Naimittika Karmas* (periodical sacraments), as distinguished from the *Nitya Karmas* (daily duties), were also called *Yajnas*. To instance *Garbhadan Sanskar* (the attempt to propagate our like) is known as *Putreshti Yajna*. Similarly *Yajnopavit* (sacred thread) and *Viwah* (marriage) are also called *Yajnas*. The cremation (the *Antyeshhti*) is sometimes styled *Purusha Medha Yajna*.

Coronation was known as *Rajasuya Yajna*. At this *Yajna* the officiating priest exhorted the king to be good and to do good, to promote peace and prosperity of the nation, to protect the weak against strong, etc. (*Shatapatha Brahmana*). In the same *Brahmana* occurs the formula *Vag vai Yajno* (speech is *Yajna*) III.-I-30.

In the *Upanishads* man is called a *Yajna* or sacrifice (*Chhandogya* III.16) The Sapta Rishis (the seven holes in human face—eyes, ears, nostrils and mouth) are said to perform a great *Yajna*.

The *Gita* (III.10, IV. 24 & V.29) also shows that the word *Yajna* has spiritual significance.

Professor Max Muller also supports the views expressed here. (India, what can it teach us? p. 227)

It may be argued that though the word *Yajna* is used in the above senses it may also signify animal sacrifices. This can be

rebutted by referring to the *Rig Veda*. The *Veda* says that the *Devas*, learned and pious men, perform *Adhvaya Yajna*. The word *Adhvaya* means that in which no *Himsa* (injury of any kind) is done to any creature. (*Nirukta* I.33)

#### THE NAR MEDHA (MAN-SACRIFICE).

Some writers maintain that human sacrifices, of necessity, were prevalent in the Vedic age. They were necessary for disposal of the prisoners of war, for the immolation of wives and concubines, for the requirements of the necromancy and for propitiating the tutelary deities of the gods of those times.

Now this historical argument, which has been advanced by Dr. Ranjendralal Mitra, cannot hold water. The laws of the Aryan warfare were most humane and the Aryans were chivalrous knights. They declined even to fight a man who had lost his armour or who had turned his back on them. They also promised safety and protection to the conquered everywhere (Manu VII.90-93, Ramayana I.10-11, etc.).

As to burning of wives etc., it has been now clearly established that Sati nowhere exists in the Vedas. (Raja Ram Mohan Roy's Works)

Many of our learned men deny the existence of black art in the Veda (Swami Dayanand). Even those who believe in it have not shown in any reliable authority that ceremonies connected with it were bloody.

Regarding the propitiating of gods, we assert that the religion of the Vedas is monotheistic and not polytheistic or henotheistic. This we do on the authority of Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Pt. Gurudatta Vidyarthi, Sri Aurovindo Ghosha, Pt. Shiva Shankar Kavya Tirtha, Maurice Phillips, Louis Jacolliot and Prof. Ludwig.

It should also be borne in mind that even they that believe the Vedas to be polytheistic have the fairness to allow that the Vedic gods are beneficent and not malificent.

Thus the so-called historical argument has been shattered to pieces. Now the passages that are quoted in support of human sacrifices may be dealt with. These are two, namely, that which occurs in the first mandal of the *Rig Veda* and that which is in chapters 30 and 31 of the *Yajur*.

#### STORY OF SHUNA SHEPA.

In the first passage they say that Shuna Shepa (son of Rishi Ajigarta), bound down to three pillars, prays for deliverance from that place till his bonds actually loosened and he is saved from immolation.

We, on the following grounds, state that the passage in question has absolutely no reference to immolation of sacrifice:—

- (i) Rishi Jaimini is our great authority on the interpretation of the Vedas. He, as well as Sayana and Yosaka, says that Vedas contain no historical references. Therefore the prayers in question could not refer to the immolation of any historical personage.
- (ii) The Veda gives absolutely no other name except that of Shuna Shepa (which should be taken in generic sense and not as a proper noun) in the passage. No other personages of the received tradition are to be found in the Veda.
- (iii) According to the current story Shuna Shepa was sold for sacrificial purposes by his father. His king wanted to unjustly immolate Shuna Shepa instead of his own son and his father was acting as an executioner. Now the prayers in the Veda open by calling on God to enable the devotee to see his father once more. This prayer looks unreasonable in the mouth of one whose father is present before him and whom the father treats so cruelly.
- (iv) In over ninety verses of prayer there is absolutely no reference to the unjust and cruel behaviour either of the king or of the father.
- (v) Prayers for being released from bonds are offered by Vasishta (*Rig*. VII. 86.5) by Gritsamad (*Rig*. II. 28.5) and by Bhardvaja (VI.74-4). Evidently these refer to bonds of sin. As in these passages so in that of Shuna Shepa there is no reference to physical bonds or bloodshed.
- (vi) Maurice Phillips says: "...we are not justified in concluding that Shuna Shepa was bound as victim to be sacrificed. His bonds and ropes may be taken in a figurative sense."
- (vii) Romesha Chandra Datta also supports this view.

The general sense of the passage is that a sinner Shuna Shepa (not a particular individual) or sinful man/prana[?] (vital power) prays for deliverance from sin. He approaches the Deity first from one point of view and then from another till he worships Usha or Jnan (realization) and succeeds in breaking through his bonds of sin.

## STRANGE CONFUSION.

The sacrificial translation of the 30th and the 31st chapters of the *Yajur Veda* is altogether stupid and inconsistent with itself. It creates such deities as Kshatra, Tapas, Nirta (dance); sport, laughter, pastime, etc. Clearly no pantheon of the world speaks of such divinities.

There is no independent historical evidence to show that human sacrifices were ever offered anywhere in the world to divinities like these.

The copula *Alabhate* which is supplied by these translators is not always correct and in agreement with the context. The *Taittiriya Brahmana* does not put this copula in all places.

The meaning that is given to this copula is not in accordance with its *Yogic* sense. But all Vedic words are *Yogic* as proved by Pt. Gurudatta Vidyarthi in his book *The Terminology of the Vedas*—a book that had had the honour of being a text at the Oxford University.

*Alabhate* is made up of (a) which means well or thoroughly and (Labha) which means to get or to secure. This interpretation is supported by Manu (II.170), by Subodhini Tika of the *Mimansa* (II.3-17) by Megha-Duta and by Apte's *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*.

The stupidity of the sacrificial translation becomes palpable in the case of the 31st chapter or the *Purusha Sukta* of the *Yajur Veda*. Here the Deity is said to have one thousand heads and one thousand eyes! (Ordinarily one head has two eyes).

## ORDER OUT OF DISORDER.

The moment we take the *Yogic* sense of the words the whole of the 30th chapter becomes one consistent and clear whole, so elevating and instructive. It begins by praying to the Almighty *Savitra* to help us in political affairs and to give us an educated, orator-like, just and righteous king. It describes in detail the qualities, qualifications and duties of a king; it names the elements that go to make up a perfect and ideal body political. The last *mantra* of the passage, which, to the distorted fancy of the perpetrator of cruelty in the form of animal sacrifice, requires the victims to be one too tall, one too short, one too white, one too black, etc., would be translated as under:

"Oh King as wise men accomplish their purposes by having intimate and thorough knowledge of things, great and small, visible and invisible, so you should be conversant with all sorts of things and acts..."

## THE ASHWAMEDHA—HORSE SACRIFICE.

A great mischief has been caused by the misinterpretation of this *Yajna*. To understand the true significance of this *Yajna* we must understand what *Ashwa* is. As it is usually with the Vedic words, this word has a great number of meanings. Shrijit Aurovindo Ghosh has emphasized the fact that the Vedic roots have various meanings. In supporting his position he has referred to the words 'Chandra' and 'Gau.'

*Ashwa* according to the *Shatapatha Brahmana* (XIII.3.3) means God. Taking hold of this meaning we can without the least hesitation say that *Ashwa Medha* has spiritual significance. This view has been held up by Sjt. Aurovindo Ghosh in his '*Arya*.' Pt. Bhagwandas, M.A., in his *Pranavavad* also supports this view.

*Ashwa* means horse as well as all such physical forces which can enable us to move quickly. In one place (*Rig Veda*) we read of *Ashwa Agnim* (*Ashwa* is heat). In another place we read *Ashwa*, the *Agni* (heat) carries, like the animals of conveyance, the learned who recognize its distance-carrying properties (*Rig*. 1.27-1). This idea is also supported by *Shatapatha* (III.3.29-30). On this principle Pt. Gurudatta translates the chand[?] hymn of the *Rig Veda*. His translation of the opening verse is as under:

"We will describe the power generating virtues of the energetic horses endowed with brilliant properties or the virtues of the vigorous force of heat which learned or scientific men can evoke to work for purposes of appliances (not sacrifice). Let not philanthropists, noble men, judges, learned men, rulers, wise men and practical mechanics ever disregard these properties."

It might be said that the sacrificial translation, as usual, is full of stupidities. It assumes deities that none has ever heard of. It states that a horse is born of gods. It involves a self-contradiction inasmuch as it propitiates gods with horse sacrifice, yet believes that gods are annoyed to hear the praise of the horse to be sacrificed. Lastly, it disregards the clearest

injunctions of the Vedic lexicographers and grammarians.

*Ashwamedha* also refers to polity. Political wisdom should so pervade the notion as *Ashwa* (God) pervades the universe. This is supported by the *Shatapatha* in the following words: "A king administers justice to his subjects, governs them properly, encourages learning among them, and performs homa by throwing the samagri (odoriferous materials), clarified butter in fire. This is *Ashwamedha*."

On this principle the great Swami Dayanand Saraswati translates the 23rd chapter of the *Yajur Veda*. The learned writer strengthens his position by quoting [*Rig. ?*] i.21, *Shatapatha* XIII.2.12.14-17, XIII.1.3.2, 2.6.15-17 and also XIII.2.2.4-5 and several other authorities.

The greatest argument in favour of this translation is that in it there is nothing immoral, obscene and disgusting as is to be seen in the sacrificial translation. The Mimansis—our great authority on interpretation—say that we must always take for granted that the teaching of the Rishis are always reasonable and rational.

## THE GOMEDHA—COW-SACRIFICE.

It is a well-known fact that from ages immemorial the Hindoos have been looking upon the cow as a sacred animal, so much so that they call it their 'Mata' (mother). One cannot conceive how this people could have ever offered their most sacred animal to fiendish gods. But the priests and orientalisists say so; and for their statement they find support in the Shastras. As in the case of *Ashwa Medha* so here their dogmatism is founded in ignorance of the true significance of the words, 'Go' and 'Gomedha.' Reference has already been made to the fact that Sjt. Aurovindo Ghosh considers 'Go' as a typical Vedic word having a number of meanings.

'Go' according to one dictionary has no less than nineteen meanings. One of these is speech. This meaning is also given in the *Nighantu*, the Vedic dictionary (I-II). It appears also in the Persian word *Giiftagoo* [?] (speech) and in the Zend formula "Sharin Goo" (speak good).

*Medha* in the *Yajur Veda* appears for vehicle as well as mechanism. *Gomedha Yajna*, therefore, is the method of improving, controlling and purifying speech.

*Go* means earth. This meaning is also given in *Nirukta*. It also can be seen in such English compounds as Geography, Geometry, Geology, etc. (the hard sound being changed up soft one). Therefore *Gomedha* means cultivation and purification of earths. As will be seen hereafter such is also the meaning assigned by the Parsi to his *Gouzeza* [?].

*Go* means ray of light. This would make *Gomedha*, a science which teaches us the proper use of the rays of the sun and moon. This meaning of *Go* is clear from *Gotaw* which is another word for the moon (Chandra).

*Go* means a sense. This meaning can be seen in the Sanskrit word *Go char* a which means the range or object of our senses. With this meaning *Gomedha* becomes an attempt or effort to control one's senses.

That the above meanings are the real ones is proved by the following passage of the *Shatapatha Brahmana* as given by Swami Dayanand:

"*Gomedha* means control of senses, purification of the days of light, of earth, dwelling place, etc." The same Brahman calls speech a *Yajna* (III.r.)

That *Gomedha* cannot mean cow sacrifice could be established by referring to:

- (i). *Shatapatha* (III.1.2.21) wherein it is said that he that eats the flesh of a cow or an ox is destroyer of all.
- (ii). *Rig Veda* (1.16.5-40) and *Atharva Veda* (IX.5.10.5) - where cow is called *Aghanya* (that which should not be killed).
- (iii). *Nighantu* (1-8) wherein a *Yajna* is said to be *Adhvara* or such act as does not permit any kind of injury.

## WHY A GUEST IS CALLED GOGHNA (COW-SLAYER).

Much has in some quarters been made of this synonym (*Goghna*) of a guest. The word does mean a 'cow-slayer' but its root gives several other meanings, e.g., one who is given milk and water, one whose entertainment leads to heaven, one who must be spoken to sweetly, one who irradiates the house, etc.

To establish that the current meaning is the real one there should be independent evidence to show that beef-eating was common in ancient India, that cow-killing was inseparably connected with the reception of a guest, that the guest was required to slay and that in the very house, of his host. But no such evidence is available.

On the other hand, there is ample evidence for establishing the meanings given by the writer. The readers may refer to the

*Atharva Veda* (VII.6.2., I. 6.20), the *Rig Veda* (VIII.103-12), the *Apastamba* (IL.2-4, 11-14) and *Manu* (III.101). Further both the *Atharva* and the *Rig Veda* state that a guest is one who never slays and one who promotes *Ahimsa* (harmlessness).

#### THE BRAHMANAS ON THE SACRIFICE.

The *Brahmanas* are the oldest prose works of Sanskrit literature. They are said to give gramatical import of the Vedic *mantras*. Dr. Sangatram, a great modern Vedic Pandit, says: "These sing the psalm of the glory of the white virtue over the dark deeds and that they estimate the merit of *Yajna* as *adhvara* or that which does not involve the least injury." Evidently such books could not sanction the slaughter of animals. Several references have been given in previous sections. Here it may be pointed out that both the *Aitareya* and the *Shatapatha Brahmanas* say that wherever *Pashu* (animal) occurs in the sacrificial sections, it has the technical meaning of *Purodasha* (a cake made of grain.)

#### THE UPANISHADS ON SACRIFICES.

The *Upanishads* are *par excellence* books of spiritualism and so are their sacrifices spiritualistic. To instance, the *Taittiriya* (10.64) thus speaks of the great sacrifice:—

"Thus of the sage who is a sacrifice; the self is the sacrificer, body the fuel, bosom the sacred altar, the hair on it the sacred grass, the Veda his tuft of hair (shikha or choti), heart the sacrificial post, passions the clarified butter, anger the heat, asceticism the sacrificial fire..."

#### THE SUTRAS ON SACRIFICES.

The Sutras contain description of sacrifices. But these have the same sense as those of the Vedas and *Brahmanas* for the Sutras contain clear injunctions against killing. Bandhayana permits even *Vaishyas* and *Brahmanas* to take up arms to protect cows.

#### THE SMRITIS.

Of these *Manu* is the most important and typical. The great sage orders Brahmacharies (II.177), Grhasthas (IV.246), Vanaprasthas (VI.8,14) and Sannyasis (VI.60) to abstain from flesh-eating and to be harmless to all. He also condemns flesh diet and animal sacrifices in the fifth chapter (45-50 & 53-55). His teaching, that is commonly known to the people is: All are murderers, the man who advises the killing, the man who kills, the man who flays, the man who purchases, the man who sells, the man who cooks, the man who distributes and the man who eats flesh.

In the face of these clear injunctions all such couplets as countenance animal sacrifice must be considered spurious. The same is the teaching of other law-givers.

#### THE DARSHANAS.

These philosophical treatises have occasionally referred to sacrifices and slaughtering. The Vaisheshika says: Dharma excludes every kind of injury, hurt, etc.

Regarding the Sankhya Pt. Beharilal Shastri says:

"As yoga is against animal sacrifices, so the Sankhya is quite averse to it." He strengthens his position by noting Vijnana Bikshu.

Patanjali in Yoga gives first place to *Ahimsa* (harmlessness) in his scheme of God-realization. He further lays down that realization of *Ahimsa* leads to stopping of ill-will.

Vyasa, the writer of Vedanta, says *Himsa* (killing, etc.) destroys this world as well as the other.

Shabar Swami Bhata while commenting on the aphorism of Chanda in the Mimansa says: Killing is prohibited.

#### THE RAMAYANA.

Vishwamitra and his contemporaries believed that animal and blood oblations destroy a *Yajna* (*Bala* 19.6) Sita says that in the jungle she would live on fruit and roots. (*Ayodhya* 27.16) Lakshman says the same thing. (*Ayodhya* 31.26) Clearly therefore the *Ramayana* is Ahimsik in its character.

## THE MAHABHARATA.

This voluminous poem is so important and so infaranimg[?]: greatly supports the views expressed here. In *Anushasana Parva* (115.56) is given the history of King Vasu. He was thrown from heaven because, though he knew that flesh was inedible he declared it to be edible. In the *Shanti Parva* (338) the King is said to have fallen because, though he knew that animals should not be sacrificed, he asserted that they should be burnt in sacrificial fire. The *Ashwamedha Parva* (91.11 and the following) contains a very beautiful speech made by the Rishis of great penance moved by compassion at the condition of animals to be sacrificed by King Shaka. They say: "This method of sacrifice is not auspicious, oh Purandara! Animals have not been ordered to be slaughtered. Oh puissant one! These preparations of thine are destructive of merit... Oh thou of a hundred years do, thou, perform a sacrifice with seeds of grain that have been kept for three years." The opinion given here finds support from the following in the *Shanti Parva* (265.45): "Only those who transgress fixed limits, who are short of intelligence, who are atheists and sceptics, and who desire the acquisition of celebrity by sacrifices and religious rites speak highly of destruction of animal in sacrifices." "The pious Manu has spoken highly of harmlessness in all acts. Indeed men kill animals actuated by desire of evil." The chapter 264 (6) echoes the same idea when it says: "All acts that are done *without injuring creatures* come to us both here and hereafter." The 47th shloka of the chapter 262 of the same volume calls cow by its Vedic name *Aghanya* (that which should not be killed) and the following asserts that Nahusha committed a sin in killing a cow. The chapter 272 giving the story of the Brahmana *Satya* is corroborative of the same. The Brahmana though a great ascetic diminished greatly in virtue for he thought of offering a deer at his sacrifice where he usually offered fruits, etc. The 20th chapter of the same book suggests that at sacrifices animals were given in charity (and not killed). This idea is also found in the *Mimansa*.

## THE PURANAS AND TANTRAS.

These are comparatively recent apocryphal accretions of the Hindu scriptures. Their contents are of a mixed nature and their authority doubtful. The reformed Hindu societies have abjured them, while the more orthodox, though clinging to their authority, do not hesitate to declare that these contain a lot of spurious matter and they assert that their received interpretation is wrong. These, in some places, speak against the animal sacrifices and in others support them. According to one theory, however, the true import of the passages sanctioning animal sacrifices is quite different. This theory says that the language of these books is cryptic. According to this theory, eating of *Mamsa* means control of tongue; *Madya* (wine) means the nectarine fluid that comes out of the cranial cavity of a *Yogin* (ascetic); *Matsya* (fish) is the vital breath moving through the Ganges and the Yamuna of the human body or the nerves which are otherwise called the *Ida* and the *Pingala* in the *Yogic* language. This latter theory is given by Pt. Beharilal Shastri and is such as lays axe on the last authority of the slayer of dumb creatures.

## THE PREVALENCE OF THE ANIMAL SACRIFICES AND REACTION AGAINST THEM.

Either on account of the *Puranas* and *Tantras* or inspite of them, the animal sacrifices with many other dirty ceremonies became current throughout the world at one time. They stained and polluted the sacred altars not of India alone, but also those of Ceylon, Britain, Palestine, Persia, Greece, Egypt and America.

## BRHASPATI.



Action leads to reaction. A great fall ends in an attempt to rise. A degraded age gets a prophet to improve it. The prevalence of the cruel custom of killing God's creatures by His own name called into play the merciful instincts of the great ones everywhere. In India the first to raise his voice against this barbarous practice was Brhaspati—the great Charvaka. He argued: "If animals can go to heaven by being offered at sacrifices; it would be advisable to burn old men and women to set them free from the torments of hell."

#### LORD MAHAVIR AND LORD BUDDHA.

This reaction was continued with greater vigour and with greater success by the mighty sons of God—Lords Mahavir and Buddha. These two masters were the very personification of love and kindness. Their effort was to remove the corruptions and accretions from religion, to bring humanity back to the old pure *Yajna* of the primitive age. To show the spirit of his teaching, the following is reproduced from the Popular Life of Buddha by Arthur Little.

"When the great Muni was at Sravasti certain old Brahmanas came to listen to his teachings. They asked him if the Brahman Dharma was the same as in ancient days. Buddha replied that in olden times the Brahman Dharma was completely different. The points of difference that he detailed were these.

4. They (ancient Brahmanas) made sacrifice of rice, butter and never killed cows, the best friends of men and givers of medicine.

6. Then Brahmanas became covetous of these beautiful women and this vast wealth (of kings) and schemed to get both. They instituted costly sacrifices, the horse sacrifice, the man sacrifice, etc.

7. Hundreds of thousands cows were slaughtered at these sacrifices.

The true Dharma being lost, the world being plunged into sensuality, caste disputes, blood. The lost Dharma, it is the mission of Buddha to hold up once more; as an oil lamp in the dark; that those who have eyes may see!!"

Such views of one of the greatest men of the world, resembling so closely as they do, those of another great personality—Bhishma Pitamaha—make the position of the present writer, namely, that the animal sacrifices are against the commandments of the Lord; that they are invention of a crafty priesthood and that they have been condemned by the great ones of all ages—altogether unassailable and secure.

#### THE REACTION CONTINUED.

The reaction inaugurated by these two master minds was continued in India by a galaxy of great ones. Shri Shankaracharya's Digvijaya shows that he had warm disputes with the *Wamamargis* and their friends. As is well known to the Indian historian the *Wamamargis* have been chiefly responsible for the introduction of animal sacrifices. Thus Shankara raised his voice against the slaughter.

Ramanuja was one of the greatest leaders of the *Vaishnavas*. He was dead against animal sacrifices—so against them was he indeed and so true have his followers been to his teachings that the very word *Vaishnava* has come to mean a vegetarian.

Ramanuja was followed by Swami Rama Nand, whose great disciple was Kabir. This reformer too was a friend of the dumb poor creatures. He praises vegetarian diet, states that the acts of devotion will avail nothing to the man who sacrifices animals.

In one place he exclaims: "He calls it Haram' (unlawful food)—the corpse of that which God has killed—but he kills it—the live creature—and calls it lawful. He pays his devotion to God and fasts, while he takes out the heart of a creature. If heaven can be so obtained why not to sacrifice the whole of your family?"

The other two *Vaishnavite* reformers of the Middle Ages were Lord Gaurang Chaitanya and Swami Vallabhacharya. The followers of both abhor the idea of flesh diet and animal sacrifices.

#### GURU NANAK.

As the other reformers were against animal sacrifices so was the founder of Sikhism. Amongst the commonest utterances ascribed to him are: (i) "He that uses *Bhang* (Indian hemp), fish and wine, all his vows and religious performances are of no avail"; (2) "Soiled is the garment on which falls blood; how can the heart of them, who drink blood; be pure?" (3) "Nanak! The cruel man goes to hell bound up." Even the tenth Guru, the Warrior Gobindsing who is said to have

sanctioned *Jhatka*, thus speaks out: "Direct to hell shall they go, they that eat the forbidden food"; and again: "Blind is the Guru of them that resort to the forbidden food and give up the lawful ones." The great exponent of this theory was.

#### MAHARISHI DAYANAND SARASWATI.

He like Lord Buddha said that he had come to revive the ancient lost faith of the Vedas. In one of his famous lectures at Poona he spoke of *Ahimsa* and clearly pointed out that no animals should be killed. In another on *Yajna* he said that burning of animals in the sacred fire is a fabrication of the new Pandits and that flesh-eating is altogether unworthy. This mighty man strongly appealed to Maharana Sajansing of Udaipur to stop the sacrifice of buffaloes, sent a memorial to Queen Victoria of blessed memory to foster the protection of kine, formed his Gokrishyadi Rakshani Sabhas (societies for the encouragement of agriculture and protection of kine and other animals) detailed in his *Gokarananidhi* the advantages of a purely vegetarian diet, but more than that what he did was to give the world a new view point. Thanks to his efforts, the Indian society has been stirred to its very foundations and the Sanskrit and Vedic Pandits have been awakened from their deep sleep. Many of the learned, with the clue given to them by Rishi Dayanand, have passed through the maze of the vast Sanskrit and Vedic literature and proved that the word of God—the Eternal Veda—and its expounders—the Rishis of the Yore—condemn the slaughter of animals for religious ceremonies as irreligious and immoral.

#### CEYLON'S SUPPORT.

Writing an appreciation of Swami Dayanand's works Prof. Shivpad Sundaram of Jaffna tells us that the Swami's views on animal sacrifices are the real Vedic views and that the *Agama* and the *Nigama* (his religious scriptures) condemn these brutal rites.

#### IN OTHER LANDS.

Truth is one though variously seen. Dharma, the real Dharma, is one for all. The great teachers and reformers are members of the same brotherhood. Like the religious teachers of this sacred land, those of other climes were against flesh-diet and animal sacrifices. Amongst them Lord Zoroaster occupies a high position.

#### THE PARSI SCRIPTURES.

This great reformer and revivalist, who attends to an older revelation and praises the wisdom of Atharvan Angrah, why was he amongst the mortals? Did he not come here to teach and preach merry for the dumb creatures? Did he not join the cow in her supplications unto the Ahurmazda? Is it not because of this that he was appointed to the office of a prophet and a law-giver? Did

he not faithfully discharge his trust and preach against cruelty? Yes, he did. He taught men to pray to God to 'hasten away all wicked thoughts, to diminish all wicked words and to burn up all wicked works.' (Korda XLIX.5) He commended: "Be not cruel; be not wrathfulminded; commit no sin through shame... Torment not." (Do. X.)

Again Mihahada declares: "Do not ye kill the *Zandabar* animal.. nor cause hurt to others... Ye do not make them lifeless... to kill innocent *Zandabar* is as bad as to kill stupid innocent man..."

Now to the sacrifice. The following from Pt. Ganga Prashad, M.A., a great student of comparative theology, is sure to elucidate the point: "The similarity in the rituals of two religious (Parsi and Hindu) extends to the nomenclature. The word *Yasna* corresponds exactly to the Sanskrit *Yajna*. The similarity does not end here. Dr. Haugh shows the identity of several important rites of the Parsis with those of the ancient Aryans of this country. Many scholars maintain that the Vedas sanction the killing of animals, even the cow being not excepted, for purposes of sacrifice. The question is intimately connected with that of "flesh-eating." There is a similar controversy as to whether the killing of animals for sacrifice is not allowed by the *Zend Avesta*. We shall like to say a word about the "Vedic ceremony of *Gomedha* which is supposed to mean cow-sacrifice." Now we find this ceremony also in the *Zend Avesta*, where it is called by the identical name *Gomezha*.

In his "Satyarth Prakash" Swami Dayanand Saraswati explains that the Sanskrit word 'Go' means not only 'cow' but also

(i) the earth and (2) senses. *Gomedha* means exoterically the ploughing of land for agriculture and (2) esoterically the control of one's senses. Some people are apt to ridicule this interpretation as far-fetched. But let us see what no less an authority than Dr. Haugh says about the corresponding or identical Parsi ceremony of "*Gomezza*"—*Gitesli Urva*[?] means the universal one of the earth, the cause of all life and growth. The literal meaning of the word, soul of the cow, implies a simile, for the earth is compared to a cow. By its cutting and dividing, ploughing is to be understood. The meaning of the decree, issued by Ahur Mazda and heavenly council, is that the soil is to be tilled; it therefore enjoins agriculture as a religious duty. Is not this the same thing what Swami Dayanand says about "the Vedic '*Gomedha*'"? Such then was Zoroaster, such his mission, such his teaching and such his *Yajna*. He came to revive the true ancient religion, to preach the pure '*Gomezza*' that countenances no harm to any sentient creature. His was a religion of love and mercy, of purity and goodness. Not for animal sacrifices!

#### THE VOICE FROM THE NILE.

Every age had its reformer, every time its great teacher, sent down to earth to teach love and mercy, kindness and charity. Of such one was Appolonius. He came, for the cow complained unto Hermes (Brahma of Egyptian theology) against the cruelties inflicted on her by the priests of Egypt. He came and saw to grieve that the temples that anciently were full of sacred scent, now gave the stink of blood and murder. He raised his voice against the then current brutalities and appealed in the name of the sacred ancient faith. He expected to get help from India to accomplish his noble task. (Petrie's Personal Religion in Egypt and Prof. Rama Deva on Vedas and Swami Dayanand).

#### THE GRECIAN'S GRACE.

In the Encyclopedia of Religions and Ethics (Vol. L, p. 195) we read the following about the Grecian Golden Age: "Among the various bits of the specific theory imported into the Golden Age by the philosophers, one of the oldest and most important was the doctrine of vegetarianism. This doctrine doubtless goes back to the older Orphics, but the most prominent representatives of it in antiquity were the Pythagoreans. The earliest reference to it now surviving is a fragment of Empedocles and the most complete discussion of it in connection with the Golden Age is Ovid, *Mel*, XV, X, I. In this famous passage Ovid introduces Pythagoras himself as the expounder of his own doctrines. The essence of it is that in the Golden Age, we lived up on the limit[?] of the earth and that the degeneration of the latter age is marked by the departure from this rule.

Back to this old age of purity, simplicity and love, Pythagoras wanted to take mankind. Consistent to his teachings in his whole life, he visited only one altar, that at Delos, and this because it was unstained by slaughter and death (Clemenes Alexandrinus quoted in the *Virjanand Magazine* III. 2.30).

Plato, too, in his *Republic*, prescribes vegetarian diet and mercy unto the living creatures.

Well might we conclude that in the land of Indies—land that is so dear to the learned and the pious—animal sacrifices were considered by the great ones to be irreligious.

#### AN UNKNOWN REFORMER OF BROTHERLY BRITAIN.

The Vedic Magazine (Vol. III.12, p. 30) has the following to say on sacrifices in the Celtic lands. "The practices ascribed to the Druids by Roman writers have a family likeness to those inculcated in the *Vama Marga* literature. It appears that when Buddhism spread in India, the distant colonies also felt the impact of the revivifying *Amrita* (ambrosia) wave; and the Celts of Britain following the example of the mother-country drove away from their midst the maleficent spirit of *Vama Marga* which trampled over their social edifice and stunted, neutralized and nullified all righteous activities; for we are told by Pomponius Mela that in his time (44 A.D.) this ancient savagery was no more. It appears that some reformer; whose name cannot be ascertained at present, inspired by Buddhism and believing with the great teacher that animal sacrifices are a later invention and are against the spirit of God's commandments, succeeded in reforming the Celts.

#### THE FAR-OFF SCANDINAVIA.

It appears that a reformer similar to that of Britain raised his voice against animal sacrifices in the Teutonic lands. The

famous work of the count Bjornstierna called the Hindu Theogony lends support to this view.

## THE PROPHETS OF PALESTINE.

The Lord of the Bible commanded: "Behold I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is on the face of the earth, every tree in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat."

He that ordered men to live on herbs and fruits could not have commended them to sacrifice unto Him His own creatures, much less so when He strengthened His previous commands by the words "Thou shalt not kill."

But in the words of Sir W. E. Cooper: "At the very earliest period of Israelitist history [Not in the pre-historic time when they were, perhaps, pure and their sacrifices of sweet scents were like those of India. T. D. Gajra] we find the people following the instincts of all semi-savage races by shedding the blood of animals and offering their bodies as sacrifices to appease the Being they worshipped; and it is conceivable that the rulers of the Israel on codifying the customs into some intelligent shape to meet the requirements of times only followed these instincts in giving to the people that wonderful code of laws which is to be found in the books of Numbers and Leviticus; instincts however which completely harmonized with their own tastes and inclinations in the matter.

"Further on, as the people became more enlightened, we find less attention paid to the rigid ordinances laid down by ancient law-givers. In Psalm LI.17-19 [better IL.8-13, actually Isaiah 1.11-12] written by David 1034 B.C., we find the passage:—

'To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me, sayeth the Lord, I am full of burnt offerings of rams and the fat of the fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of the bullocks or of lambs or of he-goats.'

'When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts?'

And again in Jeremiah VII.22:—

For I spoke not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the Land of Egypt, concerning burnt offerings or sacrifices; but this thing I commanded them, saying, "Hearken unto my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my people; and walk ye in all the ways that I commanded you.'

"Such scriptures clearly shew that, not only had the people no Divine authority to offer these brute offerings and sacrifices, but they were actually an abomination to the Lord." Such is the judgment of Sir William Cooper!

## LORD JESUS CHRIST.

Christ, who came to fulfil (not to destroy), could not but have forbidden animal sacrifices; for in the words of St. Jerome: "From the beginning of human nature we neither fed upon flesh, etc."

True to the dictum the Lord says in the Romans: "Destroy not him with thy meat for whom Christ died for the Kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness and peace and joy in the holy Ghost. For meat destroy not the work of God. It is good neither to eat flesh nor to drink wine." (XII etc.)

In the Gospel of the Ebionites the Lord is represented to have said: "*I have come to abolish sacrifices*; and if you do not cease to sacrifice, the wrath of God against you will not cease."

The fact that James, the brother of Lord Jesus, and almost all of the early Christian saints were vegetarians makes Christ's teaching still more clearly vegetarian. The position of Clemens Alexandrinus, who says: 'Sacrifices, I believe, are an invention of mankind to excuse the eating of flesh'—a position which is identical with that of great Bhishma, as well as with that of the present writer—is well established by the teachings of Jewish and Christian Prophets.

## ISLAM AND ANIMAL SACRIFICES.

Prophet Mahomed came to the world at a time when a great shock was required to awaken the nations from their deep slumber and make them shake hands. He was born in a central place. The land of his birth, Arabia, was at the time full of superstitions. The people were not only idolatrous, but they lived an unclean life. Their hands were stained with blood.

Living in such a land, it is remarkable that "prophet Mahomed's ordinary food was dates and water or barley bread; milk and honey were luxuries of which he was fond, but which he rarely allowed himself. The fare of the desert seemed most congenial to him even when he was Sovereign of Arabia." (P. XXX of the Introduction of the Table-talk of Mahomad the Prophet, by Stanley Sane-Poole). This shows that the Prophet was almost a vegetarian.

Here are a few passages from the same book to show that the Prophet had great compassion for the lower creation.

(1) "Fear God in respect of animals; ride them when they are fit to be ridden and get off when tired." (P. 164)

(2) "He who is not loving to God's creatures and his own children, God will not be loving to him." (P. 169)

So compassionate in his spirit, the Prophet could have permitted animal sacrifices and meat diet most reluctantly and on account of the hardness of the heart of the wild Arab.

To establish that the esoteric Islam and real religion of Mahomed favours vegetarianism and is against animal sacrifices, the following additional authorities are cited.

(1) The Kuran says:

(a) The servants of the Merciful are those who walk meekly on the earth and when the ignorant speak unto them, speak peace (XX.V—64).

(b) God loveth those who act justly (IX.8).

(c) God forbideth wickedness, iniquity and oppression (XVI—92).

(d) God has created the quadrupeds to be beasts of burden and He has created vegetables and cereals to serve as food for man.

(e) God does not want the flesh of your sacrifices, nor the blood of animals, but He wants your sanctity only (Surate-Haj).

(2) A commentator of the Holy Book of the Mahomedan, commenting on the history of Jacob and Joseph states that Jacob suffered the pangs of separation from his dearest son, Joseph, because he had sacrificed a young calf and thus given pain to its mother.

(3) Hazrat Ali, the Kaliph and son-in-law of Mahomed, says: "Do not make thy stomach tomb for beasts."

(4) The Sufis and Parhezgars (recluses of the Islam) abstain from flesh diet.

(5) Some of the greatest men in the Islamic world have forbidden the slaughter of cow for sacrifices. Hejahr bin Usif, Akbar the Great, and His Majesty the present Amir of Afghanistan are some of the examples.

## THE FAR EAST.

In the Far East are prevalent three great religions—Taoism, Confucianism and Buddhism. Of them, the Ahimsic character of Buddhism has been well-established. Lao-tse, the great teacher of the first of the three religions, he that was inspired by the writers of sentences (Sutrakars of Sanskrit literature), believes in a primitive golden age of humanity. In the description of this age he distinctly tells us that then mankind lived on terms of utmost intimacy and friendliness with lower creatures. Then neither feared the other. Men lived in that age in innocence and purity and theirs was a very simple vegetarian diet. (Legge's Introduction to Taoism, Part I, pp. 27-28). This great one tells us that the three great jewels of morals are *Gentleness*, Economy and Humility (p. 31). In the thirty-first chapter he points out: '*Arms, however beautiful, are instruments of evil omen, hateful, it may be said, to all creatures. They who have the Tao do not like to employ them.*' (p. 32).

It further appears that Taoism like the Hindu Yoga believes in Ahimsa and its wonderful results.

## KINDNESS OF CONFUCIUS.

Confucius was another great one of China. He calls himself a transmitter and calls upon his followers to revere the ancient ones. He wanted mankind to go back to the Golden Age of purity and kindness. True to his teachings, he practised kindness himself. We read: "When Confucius was eating with the Ki family, he made no attempt to decline anything, but finished his meal with the rice and liquid added to it, without eating any of the flesh. (Texts of Confucianism, Vol. IV. p. 21).

## THE WHITE-BEARDED REFORMER OF THE ANTIPODES.

The Red Indian of America are said to have great many affinities with the Indo-Aryans. (The Hindu Superiority—chapter on colonization). These evidently had their Golden Age of purity. They once enjoyed high civilization and performed pure *Yajna* of the Vedic Aryans. But they fell off from their high state. They indulged in bloody sacrifices. However, an old venerable reformer visited them from beyond the seas and taught them to be kind and polite, to give up cruelty and blood

thirstiness. (Man's Downward Progress by Pt. Gurudatta, M.A., and the Religions and Philosophies Series.) Arya Musafir tells us, on the authority of Brahma Paper, that a Buddhist Sannyasi named Bhavan Shan remained in Mexico for 41 years and returned to China after that time (Kulyat Arya Musafir, p. 554).

## CONCLUSION.

Thus had it been successfully shown that the Veda—The Word Divine—commands us all to desist from injuring any living being. The Veda speaks of *Yajna*, but that is a beneficent institution calculated to advance the good of all sentient beings. What the Veda teaches, the Brahmana dramatically expounds and expands, the Sutra states in an epigrammatical form and the Smriti sings in song. The Upanishad appeals for the same teaching from the spiritual aspects and the Darshana shows the rationale of it. Despite of this men have, from time to time, either through ignorance or blinded by passion, misinterpreted the Vedic *Yajna* into animal sacrifice. Thus have they polluted the high and holy altar of religion. To show the wrongness of this practice have the sages and seers of the world laboured: Krishna and Christ, Zoroaster and Jaimini, Buddha and Mahavir, Lao-tse and Confucius, Pythagoras and Plato, Dayanand and Shankar—all these and several others have at the top of their voice condemned the animal sacrifice to be highly wicked and irreligious. Let those whose conscience is not blunted and those whose reason is not blinded by passion heed this voice—the voice of the Divine, the voice of the law-giver, the voice of the great and the wise one everywhere—nay the voice of his very soul. Is it not a fact that the soul of everyone who has in him his mother's milk denotes at the absurdities and obscurities, filthiness and impurity of the animal sacrifices? Where is a man who will not feel shocked to hear of the sexual connection established between a human being and an animal at the so-called horse-sacrifice? Who is there who does not get disgusted with the devilish scene in which the holes of an animal—poor innocent animal—are artificially closed and he is killed with fists? Can that person be called a human being who maddens a poor creature by striking it on the head and then leads him on to the god of his distorted imagination? Is it possible for one to believe in and worship an all-merciful, loving God and yet to commit these atrocities? Is the perpetration of this ungrateful and wicked act consistent with Manu's dictum of "*Swa Atman Priya*?" Neither the unhesitating reply *No Atma*, 'no soul' approves of it. None likes to be treated in this way. Let, therefore, those who want to save their souls from the damnation, do unto these dumb, poor creatures even as they would be done by others. This is what religion teaches and commands us to do: and if we fail to observe the great principle of *Ahimsa*, we become irreligious. Well, then, may it be said that the practice of killing before God and in His name His own creatures being against *Ahimsa* is decidedly irreligious!

## COMPETITIVE PRIZE ESSAY SCHEME NO. XVII. SECOND PRIZE ESSAY.

Animal Sacrificed Before

BY

R. OHURHNDHAR,

B. a.

BOMBAY HUMANITARIAN LEAGUE.

1918.

## INTRODUCTION.

Scene:—Jejuri, a place 32 miles from Poona.

"Oh I suffered with those I saw suffer," exclaimed a person in the anguish of his heart when he was a witness to the following scene.

A sunny day, not a speck of clouds in the sky, the bright sun floating in the blue deep and showering golden rays on fields and fields of Jondhala; a delightful breeze wantonly playing with the raven curls of a delicate little girl of five years—a slender, little thing, a fragile flower; her lovely hand entwined round the neck of a little lamb, all soft and white, as if clad in robes of snow; the lamb lying on the grass and gazing at the girl with affection. If God made it mute, He also made it eloquent for the lamb expressed its thought with the most effective speech, the speechless speech of deep love: there was love, deep love in its eyes and was best expressed, because it was silent.

Enters on this peaceful scene a middle-aged person and brutally catches hold of the lamb. A rough rope is flung around its delicate neck. The lamb bleats piteously and the girl tightens her grasp and cries, 'oh, don't take it away.' Paying no heed to this, the man forcibly drags along the lamb and thrusts the girl aside. The piteous bleating of the lamb, its very helplessness to save itself, its longing look at the girl—Oh! The whole situation was quite pathetic and touching. The girl's misery was so deep of yet not a moan of anguish came out from her lips, not a tear of grief fell from her eyes. A moment, she was all silent and the next, she fell headlong on the ground and her soul winged its way to heaven to meet her dear, dear lamb; for grief had done its work. It was all pent up in the little heart and it choked the flow of tears: and by its very depth, burst out suddenly, rending her heart in twain.

"I suffered with those I saw suffer... poor souls."

"They perished!" exclaimed the spectator and said, "Is this religion? Is this the sacred institution of the Aryas? Has it degraded to mere slaughter? Is this what the Vedas teach? If so, alas, for your religion! Alas, for your sacrifice, the sacred institution of your mighty Aryas and alas, for the Vedas if they teach such butchery!"

Let us answer our sympathetic friend and all those who feel like him, that this is not religion, this is not sacrifice, this is not what the Vedas teach. Then what is the real sacrifice? What is its origin? What is its essence? On what principle is it founded? Is it mere butchery? The answer to these questions is the burden of the following pages.

Centuries before the birth of Christ the world was quite young. Light dawned only in the East and the rest of the world was in dark. Mighty men lived in forests and led a simple life. They looked to nature as their mother, trusted in her like children and loved her as flowers love the sunshine. They sought solitude and saw Nature face to face. Their heart was in tune with the heart of Nature and she revealed her lore to them. In the silence of hours they heard the Vedas. They were called 'Rishis'. They did not compose the Vedas but they heard the Vedas, which, therefore, are called 'Shruti' (what is heard). The Rishis were the divine listeners of the song of nature. They were also called *Mantra-drshhtaras*, 'Seers of hymns.' They did not search the Truth but they saw the Truth.

To say that these divine singers or listeners or seers, living in the eternal calm of forests, brooding over the mystery of life and seeing the soul of the soul, the Oversoul, invented and laid down a practice consisting of sacrificing animals before god, is sacrilege.

But it may be asked, why do they refer to Sacrifice? What is that Sacrifice? What do the Vedas say on the point? What is the significance of such words as '*Ashwa-medha*' and '*Go-medha*' which are now taken to mean 'sacrifice of horse' and 'sacrifice of cow'?

At the outset, therefore, I wish to refer to the true interpretation of these terms given by Swami Dayanand Saraswati on the authority of *Shatapatha Brahmana* XIII. I.6.3; IV.3.2.

"*Ashwamedha*" means the king's governing the people with justice and equity and righteousness, a person working in the cause of education and other beneficent reforms and the burning of clarified butter and odorous substances in a clear fire for the purification of the atmosphere."

"*Gomedha*" means "the purifying of food substances, the subjugation of the senses, the use of the solar rays and the improving of the world around."

"*Narmedha*" means "the cremating of the body of a person, when dead, in accordance with the injunction of Vedas."

This makes the matter quite clear; but still we are left in the dark as to the real notion of 'sacrifice' which the divine singers had. To find it out I shall now sift all the evidence that is available, and on the test of the true principles of sacrifice, I shall prove that killing of animals before God and in His name is irreligious.

If we analyse the phases of thought in the Vedic hymns, we find that the conceptions regarding the creation of the world fall in three distinct classes. The first kind of conception is the most poetic and it is that, "The Gods *built* the world." A Vedic poet may be pictured as singing some praise of a god pausing in the midst of his invocation and thinking as to how the world was made. A thought flashes in his poetic brain and he says, "Why! The Gods *built* the world, as I built my hut."

The second kind of conception is that, "The Gods say 'Dyawa-Prithivi' (the heaven and the earth) *gave birth* to the world after the manner of human beings." Here evidently the poet gives a symbolical explanation, but with this we are not much concerned. We pass on to the third conception. It is the most important one. In his spirit of inquiry the poet throws away the first conception in such words:

"What indeed, was the wood, what the tree, out of which they fashioned the earth and the heaven?" *Rig Veda* X.31.7 and the second conception in such words:

"What was the standing place, what the stable support, the position from which Vishwakarma then all-seeing produced

the earth?" *Rig Veda* X.81.2

The poet, then, goes beyond these conceptions and sounds a new note. He becomes a mystic and flies as he likes in the cloudy mysticism, he becomes purely theological and arrives at the following conclusion:—

"The world was created *through Sacrifice* as *by Sacrifice* it is kept going."

This is a grand and sublime idea. It reveals a new standpoint whence the poet views the whole universe in a new light. The thought which is introduced in some mystical hymns addressed to Vishwakarma, such as "The highest, the lowest and the middle stations are Thine, teach to Thy friends at the sacrifice, *do Thou sacrifice to Thyself, delighting* or, addressed to Agni, such as:

"In Heaven Sacrifice, oh Deva, to the Devas.... and similarly *sacrifice to Thyself, Oh Thou* of the beautiful birth." (X.7.6) (*thought*) *culminates* in the wonderful and well-known Purusha-Sukta" *Rig Veda* X.90.

First of all a description of the Purusha is given: "Purusha of the thousand heads.... covered the earth in all directions. Purusha is the whole Universe, whatever has been, and whatever shall be."

Then follows the Sacrifice of the Purusha... the spring was the sacrificial butter, the summer was the fuel, the autumn was the oblation... Him (the Purusha) the gods sacrificed whose favour is to be sought and the Rishis..."

From the various parts of the body of the Purusha were produced the creatures, the *Rig, Sama* and *Yajus* hymns, the four castes and the Sun and the Moon and the Worlds.

"So the Gods *through Sacrifice* earned a right to sacrifice. These were the first ordinances..."

To understand this hymn and the conception of Sacrifice, I now give the whole theory of Sacrifice viewed in three aspects:

1. Sacrifice as the origin or source of creation.
2. Sacrifice as the work of art.
3. Sacrifice as the rule of life, the supreme duty of man.

## ORIGIN OF THE CREATION.

The primordial germ was first found in the waters. It rested on the lap of the Unborn-Aja. It, then, grew into the world-egg floating for ages unnumbered on the primeval waters of Chaos, till at last the Principle of Universal Life called Brahma (neuter) which was in it, latent but inactive, sprang out as Brahma or Prajapati, the active creative principle. This is the Purusha of the Purusha-Sukta—the giant male Principle or the Man. Gods offered him in sacrifice and the various parts of his body produced the universe. Hence the Purusha or the Male Principle is the whole pre-existing Matter, having a latent capacity for generating life.

Sacrifice is, then, in the first place, the *evolving out of the Purusha*. It is the act of evolution itself. It is, then, applied to *every sacred action*. For every sacred action is nothing but evolution and every sacred action is performed in accordance with the eternal law called 'Rita' in the Vedas. Rites or the rite is "performing an action as the law lays it down." Rite, we may say, is the English rendering of Rita, the law, of which Varuna is the keeper.

In the body of the *Yajna*-Purusha, that is, the internal body or the psychological body of nature the process of evolution or the great *Yajna* is constantly going on in accordance with the Rita. The forces are working harmoniously and they resolve other into the vast and exquisitely adjusted mechanism of the universe. Hence Universe is nothing but the result of *Yajna* or, in other words, the *physical expression* of the Purusha, that is, *pressing out* (ex) and manifesting as the cosmos.

When this *Yajna* began,

"From its kindled heat, Right and Law were born." These two principles, Right and Law, govern the *Yajna* or evolution. These two principles are inseparable. 'Law' is founded on 'Right' and 'Right' works out itself by 'Law.'

It will thus be seen that the real 'Yajna' or the real *Yajna* of God is evolution, the expression of the divine element which man represents. This evolution is to be worked out in accordance with the two principles of Law and Right.

## YAJNA AS THE WORK OF ART.

The whole manifested cosmos is a marvellous piece of art. You may examine, as an art-critic, its prominent parts, such as, the blue dome of sky, the luminous lamps of light moving in it, or the towering mountains and the bounding rivers; or you may examine it in its minute parts, in the tiny blades of grass, the slender filaments in flowers. You will find that everything is finished to perfection or is striving harmoniously to reach that perfection. The whole creation is dancing rhythmically to



the tune of the Sweetest *Mantra* chanted by the Master-Musician. And in this way *Yajna* is going on. It is the greatest piece of art; for in this piece the utmost symmetry and harmony are seen; and they are the result of a strict adherence to the law of *Rita*.’

Hence the slaying of animals before God is a false *Yajna* or is no *Yajna* at all. It is, on the other hand, an obstruction in the great *Yajna*, for, when you kill an animal, you cut short the progress of the soul as manifested in the form of the animal. The progress of the soul or its evolution is a *Yajna* in itself and is a part of the great *Yajna*. And by slaying an animal, you hinder it from fulfilling its purpose which it had to fulfil when it took that particular form. You are thus responsible for a grave violation. Your act of slaying is a disturbing element in the smooth working of the creation. It is a discordant note in the song of nature, an ugly spot in the artistic piece of nature. Viewed in this light, to kill animals, even before God, is opposed to the eternal law which governs the *Yajna* of the *Yajna*-Purusha. And, therefore, also such an act is opposed to ‘dharma’ or religion. ‘Dharma’ is not different from the eternal law; they are one and the same; for ‘dharma’ means ‘that which regulates, holds and sustains the Universe. ‘Dharma’ comes from ‘dhri’, to hold.

"*Dharanad dharmam ity ahu.*" (*Mahabharata, Karna Parva 69-59*). ‘Dharma’ is so called because it supports.

"*Yat-syad-dharana-samyuktam sa dharmam iti niscaya*" (*Mahabharata, Karna Parva 69-59*).

That is ‘dharma’ which is possessed of ‘dharana’ (capacity of sustaining). It is thus shown that to kill animals even before God is to break the *Rita*; and to break the ‘*Rita*’ is to do an act which is opposed to ‘dharma’, that is, to do an act which is irreligious.

#### YAJNA AS THE RULE OF LIFE, AS THE SUPREME DUTY OF MAN.

It is stated before that the whole cosmos issued from the body of the *Yajna*-Purusha. Humanity is, therefore, his heart and brain. Whatever the humanity does, affects the *Yajna* of the Purusha. If we do good, we hasten the *Yajnic* process. If we do evil, we retard that process in a double way; we not only stop the motion of the cycle, but we give it a jerk in the backward direction. He who will be a *Yajnika* must always try to help this *Yajnika* process. His body should be a shining temple of purity—a sacred place where he always does good. If he speaks a word, that word should be in a line with the Vedic *Mantras*. If he does any act, physical, mental or spiritual, that act should be in a line with the whole evolutionary process of the Purusha. From the moment of the evolution of the Universe to the moment of its absorption, during the whole day of Brahma, from its very dawn to its night, a web, endless and rainbow-tied, is being woven by the Purusha. Possibly He holds one end of the thread. I say, possibly, for the cosmogonic Sukta says,

"Nor Aught, nor Naught existed then" (*Rig Veda X.129*). But further it says,

"That One breathed breathless in itself and there was nothing more than *It*." (*Rig Veda X.129.2*) and hence my guess.

Now "the other (end of the thread) descends unbroken down to earth, held firmly by those who know,’ and add, thread by thread to the woof. Each *Mantra* recited, each *Saman* sung, each sacrificial rite accomplished, is such a thread. And still the tissue grows, still the pattern spreads, resplendent and many-coloured, and the sacrificial Shuttle is never still."

Killing of creatures before God, the Master-Weaver, "is an act which, no doubt, is done in the belief that a *Yajna* is performed, that a new thread is added to the woof; but this is ignorance and sin too." Sin is ignorance. "Sin grows out of ignorance. Here the ignorance is in the belief that a new thread is added and the sin is that a thread of the woof is broken." Therefore killing of creatures before God is opposed to religion, because it is sin and all sin is irreligious. The duty of man is consequently to act in such a way that he will add threads to the web and not break the threads already existing. To do *Yajna* should be the guiding principle of his life.

Thus far I dealt with the sublime Vedic conception of *Yajna*. Now I wish to trace its development in the later literature, and show how it is related to the primary conception.

In the *Bhagavad-Gita*, chapter IV, there is a verse which runs thus:—

"*Brahmagnaw apare yajnam yajnenaiwopajuhvati*" (*Bh. IV.25*).

"In the fire of Brahma, others sacrifice *Yajna* by *Yajna*." This corresponds exactly with the idea found in the Purusha-Sukta "*Aum yajnena yajnamayajanta deva*." The passage from the Gita is to be interpreted in the light of a stanza that precedes it. It is as follows:—

"*Brahmarpanam Brahma havir*

*Brahmagnau Brahmana hutam*

*Brahmaiwa tena gantayam*

*Brahmakarma-samadhina*." (*Bh. IV.24*).

Brahma, in short, is everything and everywhere. Brahma is fire; Brahma is the thing sacrificed and the God. for whom the sacrifice was performed; is Brahma. Brahma permeates everything and Brahma pervades everywhere.

This is one explanation of the Vedic idea contained in "*Aum Yagnena Yajnamayajanta deva.*" But it does not make clear how the *Yajna* of the *Yajna*-Purusha is identical or how it closely resembles the *Yajna* as conceived in other passages of the same book. I, here, try to find out that connection.

Throughout the whole later literature, there seems to be an approach towards one central idea and the condensed expression "*Idam na mama*" is to the key to it. The whole theory may be said to be based on the idea expressed or implied by the words, 'This (is) not mine.' A Brahmana throws in fire some oblation uttering these words. He gives up a thing and the thought, that the thing is his, vanishes. The "*mamatwa*" goes away. But his *Yajna* will be a true *Yajna* not simply when he throws away the rice with the thought that "this is not mine"; he must also be so disinterested as to say that even the fruit that may result from that action is not his. In other words, he gives up the "*mamatwa*" (not only of the rice, but also of the fruit of the action of throwing rice). Thus, in life, whatever action a *Yajnika* does, he is not attached to it. He does it as his duty, pure and simple. He is absolutely indifferent as to the result or the fruit of that action. He says "fruit or no fruit—I have nothing to do with it. If there is no fruit, still I have to do the "*Karma*" (action), as it is my duty. If there is any fruit, it is 'Shri-Krishnarpanam' offered to Shri Krishna." "Whatever I do, I offer it to the Supreme Lord." And Shri Krishna also says to Partha (*Bh. IX.27*):

"*Yat-karoshi yadashnasi yaj-juhoshi dadasi yat  
yat tapasyasi kaunteya tat-kurushwa madarpanam.*"

This is, indeed, a great *Yajna*; for in this *Yajna* lie sacrifices what is, perhaps, the dearest thing to man on earth—his *Ahankara* (egoism). Man may sacrifice everything—his ease, rank, wealth or even his life; but rarely does he sacrifice his egoism. Even on the stake he says, "I give up my life." Thus in death as in life, man clings to his ego. Hence to sacrifice egoism is the supreme *Yajna*.

Sacrifice, then, is all-abandonment. It is coming out of your narrow self. The shell that encases the self is cast aside and the self becomes free. It finds expression and evolution. Here, then, is the true link between the earlier and later conception; for, as was shown before, the essence of the Vedic Sacrifice was evolution, expression or coming out of the *Yajna* Purusha. Before the *Yajna*, the cosmos lay hid in the Purusha. As the bud opens out into a flower and reveals its petals, filaments and the wealth of perfume, so the Purusha opened out in the beginning and revealed the cosmos in all its wonderful beauty.

How different is this sublime conception of *Yajna* from the low and wretched conception of killing animals before God! In one case, you kick off profit and loss. In the other you hold to it firmly. In one case you rise above petty gains, in the other you sink beneath the burden of those gains. In one case you lose your little self and find your greatest self; in the other you cling to your little self, wall it up on the outside and limit its free growth.

Now I turn to other arguments.

The practice of killing animals before an image of God shows the imperfect knowledge or rather the misconception of the nature of God and also the *degradation* of the mind of man. Man thinks that God exists only in the image before him. He does not know that God pervades the Universe, that He is omnipresent, that He is not only in the image before him, but also in the animal that is killed, also in himself, the sacrifice, and he forgets that he, himself, is "the image of the Maker." I kit[?] this is ignorance; what is sordid is that man takes a low view of God. His mind is so depraved that he thinks that God is like a judge who can be bribed. He, therefore, approaches Him with some offering in the hope that He will specially favour him with gifts. This is not merely ignorance, or a crime; this is sacrilege. To approach a judge with bribes is a crime. To approach God, the Judge of Judges, with bribes is sacrilege; hence irreligious.

To kill before God His own creatures is an act which implies that man is wiser than God, who is All-wise. Creatures are the created and God is the creator. God creates the creatures, we do not know why; but He is All-wise and we trust in His wisdom. Still we know this much, that He does not create the creatures to be destroyed by man; for no one creates a thing only to be destroyed. It would be folly to create a thing and then to destroy it. Such folly is rarely seen in man and, therefore, never in God. It follows, then, that to kill animals before God is to try to defeat the purpose of God and to do an irreligious act.

As a rule, killing is negation. It is destruction. Religion prohibits it, as it is contrary to religion; for religion is not for negation arid destruction; but religion is for progress, for advancement and, I may even say, for creation. Religion can never countenance anything, which overthrows its dictates and which is opposed to it. The object of killing animals before God may be to do some good, some sacred action, some 'religious' action. How can that object be achieved, when in

doing that act, you transgress the rules, the "Immutable ordinances" of God?

Lastly man kills creatures and thinks that he performs a sacrifice; but what is sacrifice? Sacrifice is giving up what is one's own. Does man own creatures? Perhaps, he would say: "Yes, I own creatures. I bought them, I fed them and so I own them." Even granting this, how can he say that he owns them, in the sense, that he owns their life? If he owns their life, then perhaps, he has a right to deprive them of life; but man does not own their life and, therefore, has no right to deprive them of life. Man did not put life in them, nor did man buy their life. For life is not, in the true sense, to be bought and sold. God gave them life and God owns their life. To say, therefore, that man has a right to kill creatures is to say that man owns their life. And to say that man owns their life is to lay claim to something which does not belong to man, and to utter a grave falsehood and is, therefore, irreligious.

## CONCLUSION.

In the foregoing pages, I tried to prove that killing of animals before God is irreligious, that is,

(i) it is not religious; it is nowhere laid down in the scriptures. The passages which speak of sacrifice contain one grand and 'subtle' idea "of *Yajna* of the *Yajna*-Purusha; they do not speak of butchery of animals before God and to understand them in this way is a huge misconception. The sublime conception of *Yajna* degenerated into the notion of mere butchery on account of this huge

misconception or perhaps the ingenious invention of a depraved oligarchy of priests; and,

(ii) it is opposed to religion; it violates the dictates of religion. Killing of animals is transgressing the commands of "Dharma" and breaking the *Rita*, the physical and spiritual order of the Universe, and so is irreligious.

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<http://ia331302.us.archive.org/3/items/AnimalSacrificesBeforeDeities/HTM/>

[Ed. note: Tried to fix verse references but due to the bad scan it wasn't always possible. JanM]