

Sacrifice before Deities

This essay by T. DEVMAL GAJRA, BOMBAY HUMANITARIAN FUND, 1918 won first prize

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 Smritis 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 Mimamsa. 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:

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|------|-------------|------------|---------|---------------------|
| (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 Vivah (marriage) are also called Yajnas. The cremation (the Antyeshti) 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 Adhvara Yajna. The word Adhvara 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 ceremonials 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 Vidyarathi, 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 Vasishtha (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 Mimamsa (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 Savitri 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. Shrijut 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 Mimamsis—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 orientalist 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 Mimamsa 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 Sharka. They say: "This method of sacrifice is not auspicious, oh Purandara! Animals have not been ordered to be slaughtered. Oh puisant 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 harmlessess 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 coroborative 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.

BRHASPAT

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—together 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: (1) "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 mercy 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 Gomeza.

In his "Satyarth Prakash" Swami Dayanand Saraswati explains that the Sanskrit word 'Go' means not only 'cow' but also (1) 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 "Gomeza"—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 'Gomeza' 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.