

ANIMAL SACRIFICES AND SANATANA DHARMA

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Introduction

What is the difference between any animal taken at random and any human being? Except for the bodies, there is no difference at all. The entire universe consists of just three realities. They are the Para Brahman or the Supreme Lord, The Jivātmas or Ātmans and Prakriti or Insentient Matter. Hindu scriptures do not recognize any difference between one ātman and the other irrespective of the bodies occupied by the embodied ātmans at any point of time. The Svetāsvara Upanishad ¹ says, “*The ātman or the individual soul is as subtle as the extreme tip of a hair which has been divided and sub-divided hundreds of times. Yet it is potentially infinite. It is neither male nor female nor neuter. It is identified by whatever body it assumes at any time*”. What determines the type of body an ātman will assume after the destruction of its previous body? Will the ātman get embodied in a cat or a dog or a buffalo or a cow or a human being or an insect or any other type of living being? The Sevāsvatara Upanishad ² has this to say, “*By desires, by contact or association, by seeing, and by ignorance or delusion, the embodied ātman (self or soul) assumes successive forms (types of bodies) in various places according to its deeds just as the present body evolves and grows nourished by showers of food and drink. The embodied ātman itself chooses many forms, gross or subtle based on the qualities of the previous body, based on its actions and its mind. The cause of a combination coming into play lies elsewhere.*”

Only human beings conduct animal sacrifices. Only human beings take the life of another sentient being for material gain. Only human beings kill animals as part of a ritual for some hypothetical gain in this world or the next. In order to understand the true nature of animal sacrifices, it is necessary to understand the relationship that

exists between human beings and animals on the one hand and between all sentient beings and the Para Brahman on the other. Let us examine the nature of the Para Brahman, the Ātmans and Prakriti.

The Nature of the Para Brahman

According to Hindu Shastras, the whole universe is entirely dependent upon the Para Brahman or the Paramātmān. The Mandukya Upanishad ⁶ states, *“This is the Lord of all –their knower, their inner controller, their source, their origin and dissolution.”* The Brhadāraṇyaka Upanishad ^{4.4.13} declares that the Para Brahman is the maker of the Universe, the maker of all, and all constitute His Self while He is the Self of all. According to the Isavasya Upanishad ¹, the Para Brahman pervades the entire Universe, for it declares, *“Everything whatsoever which is subject to change in this ephemeral world – all that is pervaded or enveloped by the Lord.....”*

The Para Brahman is not dependent on anyone or anything. In the Bhagawad Gita ^{9/5}, Sri Krishna declares, *“This entire universe is pervaded by Me in an unmanifest form. All beings abide in Me but I do not abide in them.”* Ācharya Sri Rāmānuja commenting upon this in his Gita Bhashya ^{ibid} elaborates on the meaning of the Lord’s statement as follows- *“The entire Universe composed of sentient and non-sentient beings is pervaded by the Lord, the inner controller whose form is not manifest namely whose essential nature is unmanifest. The meaning is that all this pervaded by the Lord as the Supreme Master (Sesi) so that He may sustain and rule this Universe. This is the pervasion of all by the inner controller who is invisible to the entire group of sentient and non-sentient beings. And the fact that the Lord does not abide in them means that He is not dependent upon them for His existence.”*

The Nature of The Ātman & Prakriti

The Ātman or the Self is very difficult to define in empirical and direct terms. It may be thought of as the knowing subject or entity (*gnyātr*). The English term ‘soul’ or ‘spirit’ may be the nearest equivalent but it does not convey the full sense of the term

ātman as conceived in our Scriptures. It is the *purusha* which is different from the twenty-four categories of *prakriti*. It is *sat* or immutable and *avināshin* or indestructible. The *ātman* is *nitya* or eternal and *sāshvata* or stable. The *deha* or body is made up of elements of *prakriti*. The body is the *kshetra* or field of knowledge and the *ātman* is the *kshetragnya* or knower of the field of knowledge. The *deha* is perishable (actually subject to transformation) whereas the *ātman* is eternal. In short the *ātman* is that entity which experiences whatever happens within the body it is occupying.

All *ātmans* are absolutely alike. Sri Krishna Paramātmā says in the Gita ^{6/29}, “He whose mind is fixed in Yoga sees equality all around; he sees his *ātman* as abiding in all beings and all beings in his *ātman*.” The import of this verse is clarified by Āchārya Sri Rāmānuja in his Gita Bhāshya ^{ibid} as follows, “On account of the similarity between one *ātman* and every other *ātman* when they are separated from *Prakriti* (i.e. the *deha* or the body), all *ātmans* are by themselves only of the nature of knowledge. Inequalities pertain only to *Prakriti* or the bodies they happen to be embodied in. One whose mind is fixed in Yoga, experiences the sameness of the nature of all selves as centres of intelligence and realises that the perceived differences are due to the bodies only. When one *ātman* is visualised, all *ātmans* become visualised because of the similarity of all selves. This is supported...”

Prakriti is defined as the locus or substratum of the three *gunas* namely, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*. It is referred to variously as *akshara*, *avidya*, and *māyā* in the scriptures. It exists for consciousness but not in consciousness. Though *prakriti* is *akshara* or indestructible it is ever changing in its form and functions. That is why, as a person ages, one sees various changes in the body. When a person dies, the body decays further. Yet the elements of the body in terms of the most fundamental units of matter remain affected. *Prakriti* is called *avidya* because it not only veils the knowledge of the Brahman but also obstructs our efforts to understand the true nature of the Brahman. It is also called *māyā* because it connotes the wonders of creation which can baffle most beings. In short whatever there is in the entire Universe other than the Para Brahman and the Ātmans are part of *Prakriti*.

So when you encounter a living being anywhere and at any time, it should be clear to you that you are no different from that living being except for the gross body which is ,after all, made up of insentient or inert matter. Inert matter cannot experience pleasure or pain. The conscious entity that is the *ātman* is the enjoyer or the entity who experiences. When you hurt an animal, the *ātman* inside that animal, which is absolutely similar to the *ātman* within your own body, experiences pain even as you would if you were to be subjected to the same torture. When you cut off the head of an animal, the *ātman* within that animal will feel that moment of terrible, unbearable and searing pain which your own *ātman* will surely experience if the same knife or the axe were to come into contact with your own neck.

We may conclude by emphasising the following points:-

- All ātmans are alike irrespective of the nature of the bodies being occupied at any point of time.
- The ātman's own qualities, tendencies, and karmas determine what type of body it will assume after the present body is destroyed.
- The Paramātmā or the Supreme Ruler of the Universe is the inner-self and controller of every single jivātma. The Paramātmā is the ever present witness of all actions, pleasures and pain. Ordinarily, He would let the Law of Karma take its natural course.

The Nature of Sacrifices

The Meaning of *Yajna*

In order to understand the nature and origins of animal sacrifices in Hindu religious practices, it is essential to know the true nature of sacrifices in general as mentioned in Hindu Scriptures.. The Sanskrit word '*yagnya*' or 'sacrifice' has a number of meanings depending upon the context. It could mean either 'a sacrifice', or 'a sacrificial rite', or 'an act of worship', or 'a pious or devotional act (one of the five every householder has to perform)', or 'of Agni', and lastly 'of Vishnu'. A sacrificial rite instituted according to the Vedic rules with all the necessary approved

ingredients and performed according to the prescribed order of actions and in accordance with the Shastras is called a 'yagnya' and not otherwise.

The Aim of a Yagnya or Sacrifice

The basic aim of any *yagnya* or sacrifice is to secure our well-being through the worship of the Gods or the Supreme Being. Man does not have the power to control every aspect of his life. There are times when he must seek divine help to overcome his difficulties or to secure some desired objects of enjoyment or seek that which is conducive to his good. Why did God establish the system of sacrifice which made it possible for man to invoke divine help for the realisation of various ends?

In the Bhagavad Gita ^{3/10}, Sri Krishna explains to Arjuna, *"In the very beginning of creation, Prajāpati (The Lord of All Beings) having created man along with sacrifice said –'By this sacrifice you shall grow and prosper. Let this sacrifice be the yielder (the divine cow Kāmadhenu) of the coveted objects of desire."* But was the concept of a sacrifice propounded by the Supreme Lord merely to enable human beings to fulfil their personal desires and enjoyments? Āchārya Sri Rāmānuja in his Gita Bhashya commentary on this verse says, *"In the very beginning of creation, He, the Lord of Beings, saw the utter helplessness of all beings in their conjunction with insentient matter that had no beginning, bereft of the distinctions of name and form, and submerged in Himself. He foresaw that they would be incapable of attaining the major ends of human existence. Being supremely compassionate and desirous of helping them, He created them together with the expedient of the sacrifice so that they may perform sacrifices as His worship and told them: 'By this sacrifice shall you prosper and multiply. May this sacrifice fulfil your supreme object of desire called moksha (final liberation from worldly existence) and also your other desires that are in conformity with it.'" That then was the real aim of the Para Brahman when He created human beings together with the expedient of the sacrifice. As we shall see, human beings ran into problems when this god-given expedient was misused for personal ends that were not in conformity with the highest aim.*

How should this expedient of sacrifice given to man by the Supreme Lord be used to prosper and progress towards the main goal? Sri Krishna reveals to Arjuna in the Gita ^{3/11}, *“By this, nourish the Gods and let those Gods nourish you in turn. Thus nourishing one another, you shall attain the highest good.”* Āchārya Adi Sankarāchārya describes this highest good as liberation through the attainment of knowledge or of heaven. Āchārya Sri Rāmanuja says that the highest good is *moksha (final liberation)*. The Mahānārāyanopanishad ^{78/10} also speaks of sacrifice as the means of liberation for the seekers of the highest good.

Sri Krishna clarifies further in the Srimad Bhagavad Gita ^{3/12} that he who enjoys all the objects of desire bestowed by the Gods without offering them anything in return is but a thief. What happens to such a thief? Regarding this, Āchārya Sri Rāmānuja says in his commentary in the Gita Bhashya ^{ibid}, *“The purport is that such a person becomes unfit not only for the supreme ends of human endeavour but goes downwards towards purgatory (naraka).”* In the next verse ^{ibid 3/12}, Sri Krishna Paramātma tells Arjuna, *“Pious men who eat the remnants of sacrifices are freed from all sins. But the unholy ones, who cook only for their own sake, incur sin.”* What is the meaning of this word of caution given by the Lord? Āchārya Sri Rāmānuja clarifies this point in his Gita Bhashya ^{ibid} as follows, *“But they are evil-minded who acquire for their own selfish use all the things which the Supreme Being, abiding as the Self of Indira and all the other Deities, has given them for worshipping Him; and instead use it for feeding themselves (for their own ends) – such persons eat only sin. Turning away from the vision of the Self, they cook (use the materials of the sacrifice) only for being led to Naraka (Hell).”* Thus if the sacrifice has a selfish motive or the objects of desire sought therein is not in conformity with the highest good, no part of it will be acceptable to the Gods who will consequently be deprived of their due share. Thus the performer of the sacrifice will be deemed a thief as stated by Sri Krishna. He will incur sin. The killing of sentient beings in a sacrifice is sinful and against dharma and hence unacceptable to the Gods. A share of such a sacrifice will therefore never be accepted by the Gods as it is not conducive to the highest good.

The Para Brahman alone brings about the fruition of all the rituals of the Vedas as declared by Sri Krishna Paramātmā in the Gita^{15/15}. If a sacrifice is against the Shāstras or if it is against Dharma, it will not please the Para Brahman. The performer of an animal sacrifice who hopes for some objects of desire after killing animals would consequently be branded a thief and would incur further sin.

The Transient Nature of the Fruits of Sacrifices

Any sacrifice performed against the injunctions of our Shāstras and against Dharma would be sinful. Such a sacrifice will not only bear no fruits but the performer will suffer terrible consequences as we shall see later. If so, what is the nature of the fruits that we hope to get from sacrifices done according to the Shāstras and Dharma? The truth is that all the fruits we may secure from valid sacrifices are transitory except one. We shall see what it is, a little later. Sri Krishna Paramātmā points out to Arjuna in the Srimad Bhagavad Gita^{8/16} that, *“All the worlds from the realm of Brahma downwards are subject to return, Arjuna. But on reaching me there is no return.”* Elsewhere in the Gita^{9/21}, the Supreme Lord says, *“Having enjoyed the delights of the vast worlds of Heaven, they return to the world of mortals when their merits get exhausted. Thus, those who follow the vedic rituals and are drawn by desires, come and go.”* What is the meaning of the Lord's words “come and go”? Āchārya Sri Rāmānuja writes in the Gita Bhashya^{ibid}, *“.....After enjoying the trifling and transient pleasures of heaven, they return to smasāra (wordly life) again and again.”* In the Bhagavad Gita^{7/22&23}, Sri Krishna Paramātmā says, *“But the objects of desire, sought by men through the worship of various Gods in different forms, are in reality granted by the Supreme Lord alone, though the fruits, gained by such men of small understanding, are limited.”* Thus the fruits of all sacrifices are finite and transitory in nature but one. What could this one fruit be? This will become apparent shortly.

Sri Krishna gives Arjuna more insights into the nature of worshippers and the ends they have in mind in the Gita^{9/ 23-25} when He says, *“Even those devotees, who with due faith in their hearts, worship other Gods (with some personal motives), worship Me alone, O Arjuna, though not in accordance with the Shāstras. I am the only*

enjoyer and the sole Lord of all Sacrifices. They do not recognise Me in My true nature; hence they fail. Devotees of Gods go to the Gods. The worshippers of the Manes go to the Manes. The worshippers of the Bhutās go to the Bhutās. And those who worship Me come to Me.” Commenting on these verses, Āchārya Sri Rāmānuja in his Gita Bhashya has written – *“Those who worship other Gods attain them. After experiencing limited and transitory enjoyments with their Gods, they either return to Samsāra or are destroyed along with their Gods at the time of universal dissolution. But worshippers of the Supreme Lord attain Him, who is without a beginning or end, who is omniscient, whose will is unfailingly true, who is a boundless ocean of innumerable auspicious attributes and whose bliss too is of limitless joy. They do not return to Samsāra. Such is the meaning.”*

Two mantras from the Brhadāranyaka offer some clues as to the fruits of sacrifices. The first ^{ibid 6.2.15} outlines the process by which, those who meditate upon the Satya Brahman go through a complex process to the Worlds of the Hiranyagarbha. This mantra concludes as follows, *“They become perfect and well in those worlds of Hiranyagarbha dwelling there for many superlative years. They return no more (to this World).”* The second mantra ^{ibid 6.2.16} tells us how those who perform sacrifices to attain anything in this world or the next go by a complex process via the manes to the moon. When their past merits are exhausted, they return to the Earth where they are born again in order to perform more rites to rise again to the higher worlds and thus verily keep rotating.

If all the fruits to be gained from sacrifices are limited and transitory what should we seek through sacrifices? The Chāndogya Upanishad ^{.Upa.7.23.1}, says, *“That which is infinite or the highest alone, is happiness. There is no happiness in anything finite or small.”* We should seek through sacrifices that which is infinite, eternal and from which there is no return to the repeated bondage of human existence or samsara. It is clear that rather than seeking perishable objects of enjoyment such as heaven, etc it is best to seek the Para Brahman and thereby secure final liberation from the cycles of birth, death and rebirth. This is the highest good for a human being.

Thus we see that the sacrifice is an expedient to be used by human beings for securing the highest good. One can also seek by means of sacrifices such objects of desire as are in conformity with that aim. Better still; the objects of desire sought through sacrifices should facilitate the attainment of the highest good. There is no place in any sacrifice for selfish ends or enjoyments which are not in accordance with the shāstras. The performance of a sacrifice should also be in accordance with shāstras and dharma. **Therefore, there is no place for any sinful acts like the slaughter of sentient beings like animals in a sacrifice.**

The Mode of Conduct of Sacrifices

What is the procedure for performing a sacrifice? What are the ingredients to be used in a sacrifice? Both the method and the ingredients to be used will depend upon the category of the sacrifice and within each category the exact type of sacrifice as ordained in the Shāstras. There are two broad categories of sacrifices mentioned in our Scriptures namely external and internal, as follows:-

1. External Sacrifices are those which use material substances and are directed towards securing some tangible material end or object of desire which can only be experienced externally. The results of such sacrifices are generally the attainment of the World of the Manes (Pitraloka) and the Moon. External sacrifices are relatively mechanical in their conduct.
2. Internal sacrifices are those which use no material substances but employ concepts, thoughts, faculties, emotions, powers etc and the aim of such sacrifices is to attain non-materialistic ends. Internal sacrifices aim at the attainment of the Worlds ranging from that of that of the Gods (Devaloka) to that of Hiranyagarbha (Brahmaloka) and final liberation.

The External Sacrifices

Every sacrifice sanctioned by our Shāstras has its own rules and regulations. *Yagnyāyudhas* are the various implements used in sacrifices. These are at least 43 in number. We need not go into the details of each instrument. Here we will consider only the most important elements.

The *yajamana* is the most important element of the sacrifice. He is the performer of the sacrifice undertaken. The benefits accrue to him. The next element in an external sacrifice is the *vedi* or altar in which a physical fire is lit and maintained for the duration of the sacrifice. The Mundakopanishad^{1.1.2 & 1.2.5} says, “When *the sacrificial fire has been well-kindled and the flames begin to move, then pour the oblations between the two portions of the fire. He, who performs the sacrifice by offering the oblations into these radiant flames at the appropriate time, these (oblations) like the rays of the sun, verily take him to the place where the one Lord of the Gods resides.*”

There are two reasons why the consecrated sacrificial fire is pivotal to the performance of a sacrifice according to the Hindu Shāstras. One is because Lord Agni is the most important part of the vedic sacrifice being the deity who supervises over the elemental fire. The Mahānārāyanopanishad^{76/1} declares that Agni is born on the days of the sacrifices as the protector of men in general and of those who offer sacrifices, in particular. The Mahānārāyanopanishad^{79/9} says that the great sacrificial fires are indeed the three-fold knowledge leading to Godhood and that the sacrificial fires are the supreme means of liberation.

Then there are the oblations to be offered into the consecrated fire. What are these? The Mahānārāyanopanishad^{12/7} speaks of clarified butter as the oblation which will invoke the presence of the Gods and delight them. The Mahānārāyanopanishad^{40/4} also mentions about the fuel for the consecrated fire in the form of unbroken currents of clarified butter which kindle the splendour of the holy fire. The Mahānārāyanopanishad^{50/1} further says, “*Kindling the consecrated fire with chips or small sticks of wood, may I attain both the worlds. Having attained the prosperity of this world and the next, I shall cross over death.*” Then there are the herbs and mantrās.

To sum up, the main components of vedic sacrifices are the sacred fire, the oblations and the mantras. Sri Krishna Paramātmā himself confirms this in the Srimad Bhagavad Gita ^{9/16}. **It should be noted that Sri Krishna Paramātmā does not mention any living being as the oblation to be offered in a sacrifice.** It is very clear that all the elements of the external vedic sacrifice are made up of non-sentient inert matter except for the *mantras* and the *yajamāna* who is the master of the ceremony and deemed to be the one performing the sacrifice though the priests assist him in the conduct. The killing and offering as oblation of sentient beings at a sacrifice is against the shāstras and violates dharma. Such a sacrifice is sinful and fraught with grave consequences.

The *yagnya* or sacrifice is essentially an act of worship. One may worship the Para Brahman directly or indirectly through other divinities. Provided it is done in accordance with the Shāstras and is not adharmic, such worship goes to the Para Brahman alone as stated in the Gita ^{9/23}. The Para Brahman or the Supreme Being has made His worship very easy, for He has said ^{ibid.9/26}, “*Whosoever offers Me with true devotion a leaf, a flower, a fruit or even some water, I accept such offerings made with devotion by one who is pure of heart*”. Out of compassion for human beings, the Supreme Lord has made it so simple to worship Him. He has recommended the use of common, easily available inert materials for his worship. He is easily satisfied by this. **He has not asked for the sacrifice of sentient beings to appease Him.** When it is unnecessary to resort to costly and complicated sacrifices sanctioned by the scriptures because of the transitory nature of their fruits, is it not foolish to perform sacrifices wherein animals are killed when such sacrifices are sinful and against both the Shāstras and Dharma?

The Inward Nature of Sacrifices

The *yagnya* is in essence a spiritual practice as it is a form of worship. The *yajmana* must be competent to perform the *yagnya*. Ill treatment of animals by the *yajmana* is a sign of incompetency for spiritual practices as pointed out by the Atharva Veda Samhita ^{19.48.5} in this mantra, “*Those noble souls who practice meditation and other*

yogic ways, who are ever careful about all beings; who protect all animals, are the ones who are actually serious about spiritual practices.”

In a sense, sacrifices using the consecrated fire, oblations and mantras represent the external aspects of *yagnyās* which have some object of desire in mind. Sri Krishna Paramātma tells Arjuna in the Bhagavad Gita ^{4/25 -29} of various types of sacrifices which are internal in nature. He says ^{ibid}, “*Some yogins resort only to the sacrifice related exclusively to the Gods.*” Ācharya Rāmanuja in his commentary in the Gita Bhashya clarifies that such a sacrifice takes the form of worship of the Gods and the meaning of the Lord’s statement is that such yogins have steadfast devotion only to this form of sacrifice. Lord Krishna says in the same context that, “*Others offer the Self as sacrifice by the Self itself in the fire of Brahman.*” Āchārya Sri Sankarācharya in his commentary elucidates that the offering of the Self by the Self in the fire of Brahman is nothing but the realisation of the Brahman without any limiting adjuncts.

Sri Krishna tells Arjuna about other types of sacrifices ^{ibid} wherein the sacrifices are conceptual involving no tangible material objects. He speaks of those who offer as oblations like hearing and other senses in the fire of restraint; of others who offer as oblations the sense objects such as sound etc into the fires represented by the corresponding senses; of still others who offer as oblation the functions of the senses and the activities of the vital breaths into the Yoga of the restraint of the mind, and of those who perform sacrifices through sacrifice of wealth, through austerities or yoga; and through scriptural study and acquisition of right knowledge. And there are some of restricted diet who are devoted to the control of the breath, sacrificing the inward breath in the outward breath and vice versa. In all these sacrifices mentioned by Sri Krishna Paramātma, the effort put in, the self-control exercised, the self mortification or torture undergone, the vows taken, the apprehension, the anxiety, and the suffering experienced during the course of the sacrifice are on the part of the *yajamāna* of the sacrifice alone and none else. **No other living being is made to suffer in any way.**

The superiority of the internal type of sacrifice over the material sacrifice has been confirmed by Sri Krishna Paramatama in the Gita ^{4/33}. With reference to bhakti or devotion, Sri Krishna has declared ^{ibid 10/25}, “*Of sacrifices I am the sacrifice of Japa.*” And with reference to knowledge, the Lord has declared in the Uddhava Gita ^{11/23}, “*Of sacrifices, I am the study of the Vedas.*” Both these types of sacrifices so dear to the Para Brahman are non-materialistic and internal in nature. No material substance let alone a living being is to be offered as the oblation in these sacrifices!

The internal nature of a true sacrifice in which the *yajamāna* offers something of himself without causing any pain or suffering to any living being other than himself is stressed by the Krishna Yajurveda ^{Prana Upanishad 46-8.} which says, “*non-violence is all the offerings necessary and renunciation is the priestly honorarium. The final purification is death. Thus all the Divinities are established in this body.*” What this means is that a life dedicated to non-violence and renunciation is one big sacrifice and such a sacrifice eventually leads to a divine destiny.

The Inner Yagnya

As stated earlier, the concept of the yagnya in general envisages a system instituted by the Supreme Being in which the Gods and other powers of the Universe can be invoked to the aid of man. While the outer yagnya is designed to yield certain objects of desire, the inner yagnya is not connected with any external benefits.

There are certain conditions for any type of *yagnya* to be successful. One is that the particular deity should be invoked by reciting the appropriate mantras with faith and full knowledge of its deeper meanings. The other is that the *yajamāna* must be internally fit in all respects. As we shall see, sometime in our history, both these vital aspects were misunderstood and misinterpreted. The spiritual aspects gave way to the ritual aspects. The rituals themselves became more and more materialistic and corrupted in practice. It was inevitable that this trend should, sooner or later, culminate in the adoption of various sinful and futile sacrifices of which animal sacrifices is the most glaring example.

The immediate aim of the inner *yagnya* is the perfection of all the faculties of the *yajmana* who has resolved to perform it. These faculties include the physical aspects of the human body as well as the mental aspects such as intuition, intelligence, foresight, powers of reasoning and discrimination, a range of emotions, passions, attitudes, and ideals. All these may be collectively thought of as parts of the subtle body of the *yajamāna*. If the *yajamāna* is internally unfit to receive the powers that the invoked deity has resolved to plant in him, the deity will not act and the *yajamāna* will feel no effect whatsoever and the *yagnya* will be a failure. On the other hand, if the *yajamana* is internally fit in all respects, the deity invoked will duly plant the germ of his power which will grow steadily to yield the desired benefit.

The inner *yagnya* is essential for preparing the body and the mind and making it fit to receive the powers poured down by the invoked deities. The Taittirīya Samhitā mentions details of several inner *yagnyas* like *darshapūṛṇamāsau*, *agniṣṭoma* etc., which are in the first kāṇḍa. Once one of these *yagnyas* is properly done, the body will become fit to receive the powers or the benefits which the deity can transfer. These inner *yagnyas* involve the use of the *ṛk mantrās*, *yajus mantrās* or *sāma mantrās*. In the inner *yagnya*, all the actions and their effects are directed towards various aspects of the subtle body of the *yajamāna*. In this context, the *yajamāna* is not the human body with its external manifestations and actions but the very self or the soul. There is no need for any external or material offerings such as those used for external *yagnyas*.

The Nature of the People who Perform Sacrifices

What is the general nature of the people who resort to sacrifices which are sanctioned by the Shāstras? The Srimad Bhāgavatam ^{7.15.47} clarifies that *karmas* or actions recommended in the Vedas are of two kinds: *pravrutta karmas* (those that turn the mind towards worldly objects) and *nivrutta karmas* (those that draw the mind away from the external world and turn it inwards). The Srimad Bhāgavatam ^{7.15.47-49} clearly classifies all the external sacrifices as *pravrutta karmas* which are conducted

with material substances. What is the outcome for an ātman who performs *pravrutta karmas*? The Srimad Bhāgavattam ^{7.15.50-51} states that after death, such an ātman is clothed in an ethereal body made up of the subtle modifications of the material substances thrown by him during his lifetime as oblations in the sacred fire. It then goes by the *dhumamārga* or the dark path in gradual stages till it reaches the moon-world. There it enjoys various pleasures and in doing so, exhausts the merits which brought that ātman to that world in the first place. The ātman then begins its downward fall until it is reborn on the Earth to begin the never ending cycle of rebirths.

This is duly corroborated by the Shruti text in Chāndogya Upanishad ^{V.10.3-6}. Sri Krishna Paramātma also confirms this in the Bhagavad Gita ^{8/25} in these words, “*Smoke, night, the dark fortnight, the six months of the southern course of the sun – the Yogin who takes this path reaches the light of the moon and returns.*” In his Gita Bhashya ^{ibid}, Āchārya Sri Rāmānuja writes, “*The terms starting with smoke denote the world of the manes. And here the term Yogin means one who is associated with good actions.*” So if an ātman performs *pravrutta karmas* which involve good actions, that an atman after death ascends by stages to the moon-world where it enjoys certain pleasures and then falls back to the Earth and is reborn. It must be noted that *pravrutta karmas* with good actions are transitory and perpetuate the bondage of rebirths. What about ātmans who perform *pravrutta karmas* associated with bad or sinful actions? As we shall see in the section on the Nature of Animal Sacrifices, such ātmans not only do not get the objects of desire sought but undergo fearful tortures and retribution in *naraka* or hell.

What about *nivrutta karmas*? The Srimad Bhāgavatam ^{7.15.50-53} tells us that, on the other hand, those devoted to *nivrutta karmas* offer sacrifices in the form of ritual acts in which they offer various aspects of themselves in the fire of the senses which has been lit by the knowledge of the Self. Such a man merges his senses in the mind which represents the thinking faculty which means that the senses are brought under the control of the mind enlightened by knowledge. He further merges the mind in speech; the speech in the body of articulate sounds which is merged in the sacred Om which merges in the *nāda* (the divine universal resonating sound) which is

merged in the *prāna* (the vital life-force) and finally the *prāna* in the Brahman. *Nivrutta karmas* have no material objects of desire to be attained. **No materials are used in the performance of this highest form of sacrifice. No animal is sacrificed. No pain or suffering or anxiety or apprehension is caused to any sentient being except perhaps that experienced by the *yajamāna* or the performer of the sacrifice himself.** It is entirely internal in concept and execution. No sin is attached to such karmas which have the goal of liberation in mind. The path followed by the soul of a person who has performed *nivrutta karmas* is the bright path. Here the soul of the deceased gradually ascends to the abode of Brahma (the Creator) and there having enjoyed the pleasures of that realm, finally attains liberation along with Brahma. This is corroborated by the Chāndogya Upanishad Sruti Text ^{5.10.1-2} and the Bhagavad Gita ^{8/24}.

The *Gunas* also play a part in the motivating the *yajamana* to decide upon the objects of desire or enjoyment or remedy or some higher end to be sought and to perform sacrifices accordingly. This has been discussed in detail in the Chapter on The Nature of Animal Sacrifices. In the case of animal sacrifices which are illegitimate, sinful and against the Shastras and against Dharma, apart from the factors discussed here, the divine or demonic natures present in human beings also come into play. This has also been discussed in the same Chapter.

The Symbolic Nature of Sacrifices

It is important to always bear in mind that the Vedas use symbolism to convey complex ideas in familiar terms. The Aitareya and the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishads leave no room for doubt that the use of allegories or symbols is an essential aspect of the Vedas. The Aitareya Upanishad ^{3.14} says, “*The Deities or Gods prefer to be discreetly concealed (parokṣhapriyaḥ).*” This means that the Gods do not reveal themselves openly and they have to be experienced indirectly. The Vedas are not amenable to direct analysis and contemplation without experiencing its truths. The

Chāndogya Upanishad ^{7.7.1} declares, “*Understanding is surely greater than contemplation. The Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sāma Veda and Atharvaṇa as the fourth, Itihāsa-Purāna as the fifth.....(all this) one understands by understanding alone (vignyanena eva). Worship understanding.*” Thus if one were to approach the mantras with cold logic, and form literal interpretations of its symbolism based on grammar and superficial analysis, one is likely to miss the true import of the Vedas.

Unfortunately, the importance of correctly understanding and interpreting the symbolism in the Upanishads has not been appreciated by scholars who have the knowledge and mental skills but lack the spiritual element so vital to probe its inner meanings. The Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upanishad is one of the principal Upanishads. It is widely quoted in Vedāntic literature. The very first mantra begins with the description of the sacrificial horse as follows, “*Om. The head of the sacrificial horse is verily the dawn, the eye of the sacrificial horse is the sun, the vital force the air, the open mouth the fire named Vaishvānara, the trunk the year.....*” It should be clear that this *ashva* (horse) has nothing to do with a physical four legged living horse.

We give some examples of vedic symbolism which can be misleading if interpreted literally. The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa ^{2.6.3} says, “*The yajamana is the sacrificial altar, he is the stone or the rock. Agni is the womb of the Gods. Born from the offerings made through Agni to the womb of the Gods, the Yajamana acquires a body of gold and rises upward to the worlds of Heaven.*” The Taittiriya Samhita ^{1.6.7.4} says, “*The yagnya is vajra (thunderbolt of Lord Indra); man’s enemies are want, desire or thirst for objects and passions (kṣhud). In that (yagnya), he fasts and does not eat (i.e., he does not surrender to those desires) and forthwith destroys that enemy ‘want’.*”

In the Taittirīya Samhitā (brāhmaṇa passages) there are several such allegories. Here are a few to illustrate the point. “*The sacrificial cake purodāsha is the yajamāna, the offering (āhuti) is the pashu (the baser instincts and faculties).*” ^{ibid 1.5.2.10} “*the sacrificer is the sacrifice.*” ^{ibid 1.7.6} “*The Yajamāna offers all he has, all that he is to the Gods. . . . Agni is all the Gods. . . . he offers himself as the pashu of the Agni Shomīya rite. The Gods make him perfect.*” ^{ibid.1.2-1.4} . In such passages, literal interpretations would be quite off the mark.

The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa ^{11.11} makes it clear that the *yagnya* is essentially a mental exercise. All the chants and rituals in the form of physical actions must really be anchored in mental constructs and resolves. This is because all speech and action are rooted in thought as stated in the words, “*manasā vai yajñas tāyate manasā kriyate*”. The term *tāyatemana* means to extend the range of the mind (*vistāryate*) according to Sāyana.

In conclusion, the following celebrated passage from the Mahānārāyanopaniṣad ^{80.1} is a classic example of symbolism used by the Vedas in which literal interpretations would be erroneous indeed. It begins as follows:-

“In the case of the sacrifice being performed by one who has already attained supreme knowledge (vidusha), the yajamana is his own Self (Ātma), His faith is his wife; his body is his sacrificial fuel (idhma); his chest (amura) is his altar (vedi); his hairs are his holy grass; the Veda he has learnt is his tuft of hair; his heart is his sacrificial post (yūpa); his desire (kāma) is his clarified butter (ājyam); his anger is the base instinct (pashu) to be immolated; his askesis (tapa) is his fire; his sense-control (dama) is his immolator (damaḥ shamayita); his gifts are his dakṣiṇā; his speech is his hotṛ priest; his breath (prāṇa) is his udgātṛ priest; his sight is his adhvaryu priest; his mind is his brahman priest; his hearing is his agnīd priest; the span of his life (dhriyate) is his consecration (dikṣha); what he eats, that is his oblation; what he drinks, that is his drinking of soma juice; when he delights himself, that is his upasad rite; when he walks, sits and stands those are his pravargya rites; that which is his mouth is his āhavanīya fire; that which is his utterances (vyāhṛti) that is his offering of oblation (āhuti); that which is his knowledge (vijñana), that is what he sacrifices (juhoti); when he eats in the afternoon and forenoon, that is his samidhoma (oblation of fuel in the fire); the three divisions of the day forenoon, midday and evening relating to him are his savanas; the day and night are his darshapūṣamāsa sacrifices; the half- months and the months are his chāturmāsya sacrifice; the seasons are his animal sacrifices; the samvatsaras

and the parivatsaras are his ahargaṇa sacrifice; the total sacrifice is, indeed, his sattra; death is the avabhṛtha or completion of his sacrifice. That person.....”

THE NATURE OF ANIMAL SACRIFICES

Introduction

Why are animal sacrifices conducted even though it is cruel, sinful and the consequences are terrible? This is because of two beliefs as follows:-

- One is that such sacrifices yield certain fruits of desires.
- The other is that the killing of animals at sacrifices is sanctioned by our Shāstras.

Both these beliefs are false. The Shastras forbid the killing of a living being in any sacrifice for any reason whatsoever. According to Hindu Scriptures, any sacrifice in which a sentient being is subjected to pain, injury or is killed is a sin. Such a sacrifice will not bear any fruits. Further, the performer of an animal sacrifice will suffer terrible consequences.

The Origins of Animal Sacrifices in Hinduism

The Vedas or Samhitas are the oldest sacred texts of the Hindus. The sole aim of the Vedas has always been to lead mankind to the highest good which is moksha and the realisation of the Supreme Self. In order to help the common man, caught in the grip of *māyā*, to focus his mind and body on the spiritual path, the concept of rituals was introduced. And for the performance of rituals in an orderly and

disciplined manner, the Brahmana texts were prepared at a later period. The Brahmanas, which came after the Samhitas, are prose texts which discuss the technical details of the solemn sacrificial rituals as well as many connected themes with commentaries on their meanings. Each of the Brahmanas is associated with one of the Samhitas or its recensions. The Samhitas have never advocated animal sacrifices. Their only aim has always been to reveal the mystic path to attain the highest state, namely the realisation of the Para Brahman. Then how did animal sacrifices creep into Hinduism?

The Vedic hymns are the direct perceptions of our ancient Rishis discovered by them in states of samādhi. How could these divine perceptions be conveyed to mankind to help them lead better lives and make spiritual progress? There were three formidable conceptual challenges in this context. The first great challenge was how to give a tangible form in a human language to esoteric spiritual secrets which were essentially beyond ordinary comprehension or experience. The second challenge was how to express due gratitude and adoration of the Gods for their benevolence. And the last challenge was how to make those divine perceptions, so beneficial for mankind's highest good, easy for comprehension by the common man. Here again, the Rishis sought divine help in their states of Samadhi and the mantras received by them met the three challenges admirably. As a result, the words came out of their own accord without any effort on the part of the Seers, and the words were a mixture of the simple as well as complex meanings, the obvious and the hidden, and the open and deeply secret imports. The incorporation of esoteric as well as exoteric meanings in the mantras was not the result of any human effort, deliberate or calculated. It came as a divine revelation communicated to the Rishis in the extra-sensory state.

Thus it was discovered, very early in our vedic history, that the Mantras of the Samhitas received by the Seers of the Truth had a triad of meanings. These have been traditionally recognised since a long time as falling into three categories. Firstly, the spiritually highest and esoteric meanings (*ādhyātmā*); secondly, the meanings related to the Deities (*ādhidaiva*); and lastly, the meanings related to the ritualistic aspects (*adhiyagnya*). Thus the esoteric meanings were incorporated to convey

the esoteric truth which was the main aim of the Vedas. The meanings reflecting praise of and gratitude to the Gods were incorporated into the mantras as an aid to the spiritual disciplines of devotion and adoration. The meanings connected with the ritual aspects were incorporated into the mantras to help ordinary people to focus their mind and body in spiritual practices so as to gradually gain a better understanding of the esoteric spiritual truths. To enable ease of comprehension by ordinary people and to hold their interest, the mantras contained symbolism or allegories so that the most secret spiritual concepts could be introduced to the common man in simple and familiar terms. It will be seen that this symbolism taken literally by the ritualists lead to the wrong premise that the vedic mantras sanctioned animal sacrifices. It was also a convenient justification that suited the craving for eating flesh and primitive blood-lust.

Sometime in the Middle Ages when our culture had become decadent, ritualism gained more importance than spiritualism. The Vedas began to be looked upon as the authority for ritualism, intellectualism, and materialism rather than as a storehouse of spiritual wisdom. For instance, the Mimāsakas gave more importance to the Brahmanas which were composed by the priests in the form of ritualistic tracts or appendages to the Samhitas. While superficially extolling the greatness, glory and antiquity of the Vedas, they completely ignored their true imports. As a result of the trends set in motion by the Mimānsakas, strangely enough, the Samhitas became secondary to the Brahmanas thus reversing the values assigned by the original compilers of the revelations contained in the Vedas. One of the staunchest proponents of the mimāmsaka ritualism was Sāyana, a great scholar, who lived in the 14th century AD. He did not accord the Samhitas an independent status but viewed the Samhitas as an appendage to the Brahmanas in total negation of the wisdom of the ancient Seers of Truth. Unfortunately, this view prevails even today.

The Bhashya written by Sāyana on the Rig Veda Samhita effectively presented the secondary ritualistic aspects to the detriment of the primary spiritual aspects. Modern students and scholars of the Vedas, both in India and abroad have been brought up in the tradition which views the Rig Veda Samhita only in the light of

Sāyana's Bhashya. Sāyana ignored the esoteric aspects and concentrated exclusively on the ritualistic aspects of the mantras. Many of his interpretations were quite literal. Thus there arose a common and fairly widespread perception that the sacrifice of animals in vedic rites is sanctioned by the Hindu Scriptures. As mentioned earlier, animal sacrifices crept into Hindu religious rituals because of the literal interpretation of the allegorical symbols in the mantras by materialistic ritualists to justify their blood-lust and their desire to eat the flesh of animals. Let us discuss some examples of such literal and totally wrong interpretations of the vedic mantras which have been put forward to justify animal sacrifices.

According to Sāyaṇāchārya, several portions of the Taittiriya Samhita deal only with animal immolation. The supporters of Sāyana justify the validity of Sāyana's interpretations on the strength of his profound knowledge of grammar. In fact, this is the very weakness or flaw in Sāyana's interpretations. Any approach to the understanding of the import of the mantras purely on the basis of grammar is to deny any chance of understanding the esoteric and spiritual imports of the mantras. Consider *anuvākās* 1.3.8 to 1.3.11 which according to Sāyana refer to animal immolation. A careful reading of each verse in these *anuvākās* reveals that the claim of the ritualists is unwarranted. All the verses can be viewed as describing the *yajña* occurring in the subtle body of the *yajamāna*. One of the aims of the inner *yajña* is the perfection of all the parts of the human body, both the subtle and the gross aspects. The procedure is to recite a mantra asking the organ to ascend to the inner heaven, become charged with the higher energies, become more perfect and then descend to the earth. Asking the organ to go to heaven (which is within us) does not mean that the body is to be dismembered.

It may be noted that the apparent reference to the offering of the *vapa* (diaphragm) of the animal into the fire in these *anuvākās* also does not mean that an animal has to be slaughtered, cut open, its diaphragm removed and then offered as an oblation into the fire. This is another example of a literal ritualistic interpretation based on vested interests without understanding the true esoteric import of the relevant mantra. During the exercises of *prāṇāyāma*, the diaphragm becomes contracted and falls into the fire in the *jaṭhara* (stomach, the so-called *jaṭharāgni*). Those who

declare that the relevant *anuvākā* implies that the physical *vapa* or diaphragm of animal is to offered as oblation into the physical fire of the altar stomach. are either ignorant of or have forgotten the detailed procedure of *prāṇāyāma*. This is an example of a totally wrong literal interpretation of a vedic symbolism/ In this connection, Shabara has mentioned in his commentary on the Taittiriya Samhita 2.1.1, “*prajāpati ātmano vapām udakkhidhat*” or “*prajāpati* offered his own *vapa* into the fire”. It is obvious that Prajāpati or the Creator has no physical body or physical *vapa* to offer. It is clearly symbolism used by the mantra to describe a complex concept in simple and easily perceivable terms.

The title of *anuvāka* 5 refers to the search for the sacrificial post *yūpa* (*yūpa chedhanam*). *Yūpa* is described as the octagonal wooden post which is used in the external ritual for tying the animal to be immolated. This is a symbolic picture taken from the external and familiar world to explain the nature of the corresponding immolation that will take place in the inner world. In the external sense, the search is for the correct *yupā* satisfying the requirements of the type of wood, shape etc. In the inner *yajña*, the *yajamāna* himself is the *yūpa*. In the Brāhmaṇa texts which ritualists consider as the sole authority, this *anuvāka* is actually titled "the search for the sacrificial post *yūpa* in the inner body'. It is incorrect to suppose that the mantra calls for the search of a wooden post for tying up and dismembering the *yajamāna* himself. What it implies is that the Seer should search for and locate the subtle *yūpa* which will anchor and support the inner being in the impending inner *yagnya*.

The title of *anuvāka* 6 is interpreted by the ritualists to mean the setting-up of the *yūpa* (*yūpa- sthāpanam*). In this *anuvāka*, it is clearly stated that the *yūpa* in question is hidden in the mid-world within. Consequently, in the context of the inner *yajña*, the act of setting-up or establishing the *yūpa* is by the contemplation and adoration of the *yūpa*. It is a sacrificial post to which the animal within the man is to be tied symbolically. It does not mean a physical post to which a sentient being is to be tied before being killed.

According to the literal interpretations of the ritualists lead by Sāyana, *anuvāka* 7 deals with the procedure for bringing the animal to be killed or immolated and *anuvākās* 8, 9 and 10 deal with the modes of cutting up the animal (*vishasanam*), the

separation of the parts, the offering the vapa (diaphragm) of the animal as the oblation to the fire, and the offering of the intestines of the animal into the fire (*vasāhoma*) respectively. If these mantras are read carefully keeping the esoteric spiritual thrust of the Vedas always in mind, it will become apparent that the mantras speak of the symbolic separation of the various organs of the human *yajamāna* and offering each organ to the higher powers for rendering it pure and perfect. Physical dismemberment of the living body is not implied anywhere. In his commentary on the Shukla Yajur Veda Vājasaneyi Samhitā, Swami Dayananda Sarasvati has derived the grammatical meanings of the Taitriya Samhita mantras 1.3.8 to 1.3.11 and shown that they can be interpreted as dealing with dharma without involving any animal killing.

The Mahabharatha AP ^{115.43} mentions that, “*The eater of the flesh, who kills an animal in the name of Vedic Yagnya or justifies that it is a requirement of the Yagnya, is a sinner and he will be the one to dwell in hell.*” Atharavveda ^{75/5} declares that only the foolish and stupid people offer oblations with animal parts.

The People who Conduct Animal Sacrifices.

In animal sacrifices, sentient beings are killed after subjecting them to great anxiety, mental and physical torture, and unbearable pain before eventual death. Who are the people who conduct such sacrifices year after year and birth after birth even though it is sinful and against the Shāstras and against Dharma? Who are the people who are willing to risk terrible consequences in the false belief that such sacrifices will yield desirable fruits? Why are they so ignorant and foolish as to perform karmas that lead to bondage when they could have worked for liberation? What is the inner nature of such pitiable people? In order to understand the nature

of animal sacrifices, it is useful to know something about the nature of those who conduct animal sacrifices. Our Shāstras give us an insight into the answers to all to these questions.

The Divine & the Demonic Human Beings

In the Srimad Bhagavad Gita^{16/6}, Sri Krishna Paramātma has classified all human beings into two broad categories viz the divine and the demonic. The Supreme Lord ^{ibid}^{16.2-3} has mentioned certain excellent qualities of human beings who belong to the divine type. Of these, there are five which have a bearing on the nature of the persons who perform animal sacrifices. These are “*ahimsa*” (non-injury), “*daya bhuteshu*” (compassion for all beings), “*aloluptvam*” (freedom from desire), “*mārdvam*” (a sense of shame) and “*adroham*” (freedom from hatred). What are the deeper meaning of these four terms? Ācharya Sri Rāmānuja in his Gita Bhashya ^{ibid} has defined these terms as follows, “*Ahimsa is the deliberate avoidance of being the cause of injury to others. Daya bhuteshu means one’s inability to stand the suffering of others. Aloluptvam means freedom from the desire for sense objects. Mārdvam means absence of harshness and being worthy of association with the good. Adroham means non-interference with others which means absence of interference in the actions of others according to their wishes.*”

Thus, if you possess the qualities of both *ahimsa* or non-injury and *daya bhuteshu* or compassion for all beings, it would be impossible for you to deliberately hurt, let alone kill, animals for any reason. If you possess *aloluptvam* which means that you are free from the desire for the sense objects, there would be no motivation in you to conduct animal sacrifices in the false belief that it will give desirable results. You cannot slaughter an animal for any cause if you have the quality of *mārdvam* which means total absence of harshness, and lastly, if you possess the quality of *adroham*, you can never bring yourself to drag an animal against its wishes from its normal activities and subject it to unbearable pain and death. Therefore, those who have a divine nature will never conduct animal sacrifices under any circumstances. The Bhagavad Gita^{16/5} declares that the divine destiny leads to liberation

On the other hand, in the Bhagavad Gita^{16/4&7}, Sri Krishna Paramātma has described certain qualities found in humans who are demonic by nature. Of these, three concern the nature of those who indulge in the killing of animals for any reason. These qualities are “*darpaḥa*” (arrogance); “*krodhaḥa*” (wrath or anger); and “*agnyānam*” (ignorance). Ācharya Sri Rāmānuja in his Gita Bhashya^{ibid} has clarified the real meanings of these terms as follows: “*darpaḥa or arrogance is the elation caused by the pleasures of the sense-objects and the consequent inability to discriminate between what ought to be done and what ought not to be done; krodha or wrath is the sense of antagonism causing injury to others; agnyānam is the inability to differentiate between noble and low forms of conduct and principles and also between what should be done and what should not be done.*”

Thus *darpaḥa* intoxicates the senses and prevents you from discriminating between merit and sin. Possessed by the quality of *krodhaḥa*, a person is ready to injure others. *Agnyānam* or ignorance prevents you from realising that animal sacrifices are against the Shāstras and are sinful with terrible consequences. Therefore, these three qualities of the demonic type deprive a person of the ability to discriminate from right and wrong conduct and between sinful and meritorious deeds and their consequences. Such a person will not hesitate to injure or kill an animal for his own gain irrespective of the consequences. Sri Krishna Paramātma^{BG.16/7} has this to say about demonic people, “...*they perform sacrifices in name only, with ostentation, and not according to the Shāstras.*” Sri Krishna Paramātma has clearly stated in the Bhagavad Gita^{16/9} that men of a demonic nature are lost souls of feeble understanding who do cruel deeds for eventually destroying the world. He has further said^{ibid.16/10.14} that their pride is insatiable, their vows are impious, and they take pride in slaying others.

We have seen that men with divine qualities born for eventual attainment of liberation will never perform an animal sacrifice as it involves the killing of a sentient being. On the other hand, men with demonic qualities are likely to perform animal sacrifices. The Gunas also give as a clue as to the type of person who is most likely to perform animal sacrifices.

The Three Gunas

Prakriti or phenomenal nature works through three primary operating principles or tendencies called the *Gunas*. These *Gunas* are called *Sattva*, *Rajas*, and *Tamas*. The entire universe is made up of these three *Gunas*, which permeate everything including all sentient beings as well as non-sentient matter. In fact the very creation of the Universe, its subsequent evolution and finally its dissolution are all carried out by means of these three *Gunas*.

Sri Krishna Paramātmā mentions the *Gunas* for the first time in the Bhagavad Gita^{2/45}. With reference to human actions, we could think of the *Gunas* as ‘attributes’. All the three *Gunas* are present in every human being but in varying proportions based on the cumulative effects of all our past actions. Each particular combination or proportion of the three *Gunas* present in a person has a unique influence on his or her inherent tendencies, likes and dislikes, desires and aversions, thoughts, actions and so on and ultimately his or her future. Sri Krishna Paramātmā has said in the Bhagavad Gita^{14/5}, “*Sattva, Rajas and Tamas are the Gunas that arise from Prakriti. They bind the immutable self in the body, O Arjuna.*” In his Gita Bhashya^{ibid}, Ācharya Rāmānuja has clarified that the *Gunas* can be known only through their effects. In its pristine state, the self is not conjoined with the *Gunas*. But when the self resides in a body, the *Gunas* bind the self because the self is subject to the limitations of the body it is residing in. In order to understand how these *Gunas* influence us, it is necessary to know their individual natures. In the Srimad Bhagavad Gita^{14/6}, Sri Krishna Paramātmā has described the *sattva* guna as follows:-

“Amongst them, Sattva being pure, is luminous and brings no harm O Sinless One, it binds through attachment to happiness and attachment to knowledge.”

The term “purity” has been defined by Sri Rāmānujāchārya^{Gita Bhashya ibid} as that which is free of those qualities which veil light and happiness. And not only does *sattva* cause no harm but it gives good health and well-being. Sri Krishna

Paramātmā has defined the rajas guna in the Srimad Bhagavad Gita ^{BG.14/7} as under:-

“Know rajas to be of the nature of passion, born of hankering and attachment, O Son of Kunti, that binds the embodied one through attachment to action.”

Ādi Sankarāchārya says in his commentary ^{ibid} that the term “hankering” is the longing for things not acquired and the term “attachment to action” implies deep attachment to actions or the determination to perform actions related to seen or unseen objects. So the rajas guna impels a person to perform actions which he or she believes will secure some objects of desire. The tamas guna has been defined by Sri Krishna Paramātmā ^{BG.14/8} as follows:-

“On the other hand, know that tamas, which deludes all embodied beings, is born of false knowledge, O scion of the Bharatha Dynasty. It binds through negligence, laziness, and sleep.”

Āchārya Rāmānuja ^{Gita Bhashaya.ibid} defines ‘false knowledge’ as ‘*knowledge contrary to the true nature of things*’ and ‘negligence’ as ‘*inattentiveness which causes one to perform works other than what ought to be done*’. The tamas guna veils the intellect and makes people short sighted. Such people suffer from delusion, ignorance, negligence and excessive sleep. These qualities make them perform bad karmas which make them sink lower and lower in bondage.

The three gunas are inseparable like the different threads of the same fabric. That is why all three are present in every sentient being. However, the proportions of the three gunas will vary in every individual according to past actions. Depending upon the preponderance of a particular guna, different human beings follow different goals in life. Thus people whose personality is predominantly satvik tend to have happiness, piety, or *moksha* as the goals of their lives and abide by Dharma which is the ancient and eternal Law of Piety, Compassion, and Disciplined Living. They show signs of knowledge and enlightenment. They follow the benevolent dictates of

the Scriptures, the Laws of the Land, and lead peaceful lives consistent with the Dharma. For these reasons, satvik people never perform animal sacrifices.

Rajasic people are energetic and restless. Their goal is artha or material wealth and possessions. To attain their goal, they pursue very down to earth policies. The acquisition of wealth and power gives them happiness. To them the means are less important than the goals. They show signs of greed and the desire to appropriate the possessions of others. They lack tranquillity and satisfaction. They are unaware of the fact that out of those who spend their whole lives in pursuit of possessions and power, very few succeed and they too eventually lose it all. Their levels of happiness or sorrow go up and down. When the rajas guna is predominant in an individual, the hankering for some object of desire or the other is so great and the attachment to actions so strong, that a person is unlikely to be deterred even if the action contemplated is sinful like the performance of animal sacrifices.

People, whose personalities are predominantly tamasic, show signs of delusion and ignorance. They are unable to discriminate between right and wrong. They are careless, negligent and reckless. They indulge in acts which bring them sorrow and further bondage like the performance of animal sacrifices because they are under the delusion that it will give desirable results. Likewise, such persons are ignorant of the fact that killing sentient beings is a sin and that the consequences are terrible. Thus in people in whom the tamas guna happens to be predominant, both delusion and ignorance may act together to make them indulge in cruel, sinful, and useless acts like animal sacrifices.

The Killing of Animals

Introduction

The killing of animals goes against man's fundamental emotions of compassion and non-injury towards other living beings. All major religions advocate compassion. Great sages, saints and philosophers have always recommended compassion and non-injury as ideals of model conduct on the part of man. These two fundamental

noble emotions in human beings have played a large part in the development of organised and law-abiding societies in which each man refrains from injuring or killing the other. This has helped the growth of civilisations and the dominance of man over the planet. But if man does not extend the concept of civilised behaviour to other sentient beings, his own existence will, one day, come to a painful end.

There is a Golden Rule which every religion, every philosophy, every code of conduct supports. It is based on truth that if some action is likely to cause you unhappiness, pain, injury or pose a threat to your own life, you have no justification at all for taking the same action against other living beings. The Mahabharata ^{18.113.8} says, *"One should never do that to another which one considers as injurious to one's own self. This, in brief, is the rule of Dharma. Other forms of behaviour are due to selfish desires."*

This Rule represents a simple code of conduct which is based on the highest level of morality and ethics. In the Bible ^{Luke 6:31}, it is stated, *"Do unto others as you would have them do to you"*. Epictetus was a great Greek Philosopher who lived from AD 55–AD 135. His teachings were noted down and published by his pupil Arrian in his Discourses. Philosophy, he taught, is a way of life and not just a theoretical discipline. Here is a quotation from Epictetus:-

"What thou avoidest suffering thyself seek not to impose on others."

Compassion and Non-Injury

If you understand the real nature of compassion and non-injury, you will appreciate how important these two higher qualities of man are for his own security, growth and prosperity in harmony with the rest of the creatures who have inherited this Planet along with man. Let us first turn to our Scriptures.

The Concept of Compassion & Non-Injury in the Hindu Scriptures

Our Scriptures regard Ahimsa as the highest Dharma. The Mahabharata ^{18.116.37-41} says, *"Ahimsa is the highest Dharma. Ahimsa is the best Tapas. Ahimsa is the*

greatest gift. Ahimsa is the highest form of self-control. Ahimsa is the highest form of sacrifice. Ahimsa is the highest power. Ahimsa is the highest friend. Ahimsa is the highest truth. Ahimsa is the highest teaching.” Let us analyse this profound statement in the Mahabharatha. If ahimsa is the highest dharma as stated therein, then the opposite of it would be the most reprehensible action any human being could undertake. If ahimsa is the highest form of sacrifice, then the animal sacrifice which involves ahimsa from start to finish must be the lowest and most despicable of all types of sacrifices. The power of ahimsa has been demonstrated in our times by Mahātma Gandhi. Ahimsa is the highest friend because *hinsa* is the worst enemy. Ahimsa leads you to the highest good whereas *hinsa* leads to suffering and bondage.

The Vedas and other Hindu Shastras advocate compassion and non injury to animals. In the Srimad Bhagavad Gita^{12/13-14}, Sri Krishna Paramātma has included friendliness and compassion amongst certain qualities of a karma yogi which are dear to Him. This means that if you perform actions which are without friendliness and compassion, you are not a karma yogi who is dear to the Lord and such karmas performed by you will never yield the desired results. All actions devoid of friendliness and compassion are against the Para Brahman’s very nature and He would not like them. After all He is the one who dispenses the fruits of all worship and all sacrifices?

In the Srimad Bahagavad Gita^{10/5}, Sri Krishna has declared that amongst certain most desirable and excellent qualities to be found in beings; whose original source can be traced directly to the Supreme Lord, and which have arisen from His own divine nature, non-violence is one such quality. This means that non-violence is one of the inherent qualities of the Supreme Being and must necessarily be a divine quality of the highest order and conducive to the highest good. What is non-violence? In the Gita Bhashya^{ibid.}, commenting on this verse, Āchārya Sri Rāmanuja has defined non-violence as follows - “*Non-violence is the avoidance of being the cause of sorrow to others*”. Sri Krishna Paramatma has enumerated in the Gita^{13/7} certain qualities which are worthy of being acquired by human beings as such qualities are the means for securing the knowledge of the Self and thereby the highest good. Non-injury is one of these qualities.

The Srimad Bhagavatam ^{7.15.8} states that there is no better virtue than the abstinence of violence to living beings in any manner involving mind, speech or body. In the Uddhava Gita ^{6/26&29} when Uddhava asks the Lord as to what kind of a Sage He prefers the most, the Lord replies, "*Compassionate with enmity towards no creature.....same to all, and benefactor of all beings.*" In the Mahabharatha ^{18.115.8}, it is stated, "*Those high-minded and noble souls who desire to acquire beauty, perfect limbs, long life, understanding, mental and physical strength and memory should abstain from acts of injury.*" One can never hope for *moksha* or final liberation from the endless cycles of birth, death, and rebirth if one takes the life of a sentient being for according to the Manu Samhita ^{6.60}, "*By not killing any living being, one becomes fit for salvation.*" The realisation that the Creator of the Universe and the Supreme Lord exists in human beings and animals alike is the one true knowledge which will help man attain the highest good. In this context, the Mahabharata ^{18.116.37-41} says. "*He who sees that the Lord of All is ever the same in all that is - immortal in the field of mortality - he sees the truth. And when a man sees that the God in himself is the same God in all that is, he hurts not himself by hurting others. Then he goes, indeed, to the highest path.*"

The Isavāsya Upanishad ^{Verse 6} says that the wise man who perceives all beings as not different or distinct from his own Self in any way, and his own Self as the Self of every being, he does not, by virtue of that perception harbour any animosity towards any being. The term used in this Upanishad is "na vijugupsatꣳ". This implies that such a man does not develop the emotions defined by "vijugupsatꣳ" which is a Sanskrit word which has complex emotional overtones like animosity, rejection, hatred, cold-blooded attitude, and total indifference. It is therefore impossible to inflict pain on an animal if you have this perception of the identity of selves between your Self and the Self of that animal you are thinking of sacrificing in the mistaken belief that killing sentient beings in a sacrifice will fulfil certain desires.

The Srimad Bhāgavatam ^{7.15.8} says, “*The best Dharma to be observed for everyone is that one should not hurt other beings even in one’s thoughts.*” In this context, some sayings of great men are as follows:-

- *To my mind, the life of a lamb is no less precious than that of a human being. I should be unwilling to take the life of a lamb for the sake of the human body.* Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948)
- *What is the good way? It is the path that reflects on how it may avoid killing any creature.* Tirukural 324
- *What is virtuous conduct? It is never destroying life, for killing leads to every other sin.* Tirukural 312, 321

Compassion & Non-Injury in Western Philosophies & Religions

Pythagoras was a great mathematician, mystic philosopher and scientist who made significant contributions to philosophy and religious teaching in the late 6th century BC. He said, “*For as long as men massacre animals, they will kill each other. Indeed, he who sows the seeds of murder and pain cannot reap joy and love.*”

Christianity is based on compassion. The Bible’s ^{Exodus 20:13} commandment is, “*Thou shalt not kill.*” The close relationship and equality between man and animals is stressed by this statement in the Bible ^{Ecclesiastes 3:19}, “*Even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath, so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast.*” The killing of cattle is condemned by the Bible in this saying ^{Isaiah 66:3}, “*He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man.*” St John Chrysostom (347-407) stressed on the common source of man and animals in this statement, “*The saints are exceedingly loving and gentle to mankind, and even to brute beasts ... Surely we ought to show them [animals] great kindness and gentleness for many reasons, but, above all, because they are of the same origin as ourselves.*”

We assume that we can do whatever we like with animals because of the false belief that animals have been created for our purposes. Rabbi Moses Ben Maimon (1135-1204) declared that, “*It should not be believed that all beings exist for the sake of the*

existence of man. On the contrary, all the other beings too have been intended for their own sakes and not for the sake of anything else.” He also stressed that animals have emotions like us in this statement, *“There is no difference between the pain of humans and the pain of other living beings, since the love and tenderness of the mother for the young are not produced by reasoning, but by feeling, and this faculty exists not only in humans but in most living beings.”*

The presence of men without compassion towards animals poses a danger to humanity as pointed out by St. Francis of Assisi (1181-1226) in this saying, *“If you have men who will exclude any of God's creatures from the shelter of compassion and pity, you will have men who deal likewise with their fellow men.”* The French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) declared, *“If I am obliged not to cause any harm to my fellow creature, it is not so much because he is a reasonable being but because he is sensitive; and since this quality is common to both beast and man, it must at the very least give the former the right not to be ill treated needlessly by the latter”* (Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men, 1755). This great thinker recognised the rights of animals to live in peace.

The German Philosopher, Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) ^{The Basis of Morality, 1841} declared that compassion for any suffering creature is at the very foundation of morality. He wrote ^{ibid} that, *“Man's three fundamental ethical incentives, namely egoism, malice and compassion, are present in different and incredibly unequal proportions. In accordance with them, motives will operate on men and actions will ensue.”* Schopenhauer himself defined compassion as the incentive to alleviate the pain and suffering of another being or to otherwise promote the well-being; malice as the incentive to do harm to another being; and egoism as the incentive to increase the well-being of oneself. According to him, the selfishness of man personified by his egoism is the main opponent of the incentive of compassion, because egoism makes up the majority incentive of every individual. This is similar to the three gunas discussed earlier. The desire to perform an animal sacrifice is the outcome of the conflict in the mind of man between the incentive of compassion for animals and the incentive to promote one's own interests by sacrificing animals to

obtain personal enjoyments. The danger is that in this conflict between incentives, egoism helped by malice may emerge as the victor over compassion and compel the individual to perform cruel and sinful acts like animal sacrifices for his own well being.

Schopenhauer viewed the world as one organism of which all living entities form individual parts. He strongly propounded that once you help another part of the world organism, you are, in effect, helping yourself. Conversely, if you harm another part, you are eventually harming yourself. Therefore, he said, "*Injure no one; on the contrary, help as many as you can*". Modern ecological studies show that all parts of the world are deeply inter-connected and inter-dependent. Any action, good or bad, in one part of the eco-system has a corresponding effect upon the whole system. This applies to the slaughter of animals in general and animal sacrifices in particular.

The Respect for Life in Jainism

Ahimsa is the cornerstone of Jain philosophy and religion. In Jainism, violence towards others is equivalent to injuring one's own self and adversely affects the *ātman*'s (soul's) own ability to attain *mokṣa* or final liberation. Jains have extended the concept of *ahiṃsā* not only to humans but to all forms of life including animals, plants, micro-organisms, etc. Jain philosophy firmly believes that all life is sacred and everyone has a right to live fearlessly to one's maximum potential. Living beings need not fear anyone who has taken the vow of *ahiṃsā*. Jains believe that *abhaya-dānam*, which is the unconditional guarantee extended to all life that they can live without fear, is the supreme charity that a person can make.

As stated above, the respect for all life irrespective of the form, shape or type of body, is one of the essential tenets of Jainism. The following quotation from the *Acaranga Sutra*^{Ācāraṅga Sūtra, Jain Sutras Part I, Sacred Books of the East, Vol. 2} should give you a fair idea of the core of the philosophy of Jainism:

"Nothing which breathes, which exists, which lives, or which has essence or potential of life, should be destroyed or ruled over, or subjugated, or harmed, or denied of its essence or potential. In support of this Truth, I ask you a question - "Is sorrow or pain desirable to you?" If you say "yes it is", it would be a lie. If you say, "No, It is not" you will be expressing the

truth. Just as sorrow or pain is not desirable to you, so it is to all which breathe, exist, live or have any essence of life. To you and all, it is undesirable, and painful, and repugnant."

Kshullaka Jinendra Varni, one of the best known Jain Scholars of the 20th century, is famous for his pioneering five volumes *Jainendra Siddhanta Kosha*. He played a significant role in the compilation of the *Saman Suttam* which is a religious text created in 1974 by a committee consisting of representatives of each of the major sects of Jainism to reconcile the teachings of the different sects. After a gap of nearly two thousand years following the composition of the Tattvartha Sutra by Acharya Umasvati, this was the first Text to be recognized and accepted by all Jain sects. Here are some quotations from the *Saman Suttam* which makes it very clear that all Jains have the highest respect for living beings in any form:-

"All living beings wish to live and not to die; that is why unattached saints prohibit the killing of living beings". Suman Suttam , verse 148

"Just as pain is not agreeable to you, it is so with others. With the knowledge of this principle of equality treat others with respect and compassion." Suman Suttam , verse 150

"Killing a living being is the killing of one's own self; showing compassion towards a living being is showing compassion to oneself. He who desires his own good, should avoid causing any harm to a living being". Suman Suttam , verse 151

The Slaughter of Cattle

The Hindu Scriptures venerate the cow. The cow is a mammal of the genus Bos, such as an ox, cow, or buffalo. The Mahabharat ^{Shantiparva 262.47} says, *"The very name of cow is aghnya (not to be killed) indicating that they should never be slaughtered. Then, who could slay them? Surely, one who kills a cow or a bull commits a heinous crime."* Apart from the word *aghnya*, the vedic lexicon Nighantu,

gives many other synonyms of *gau* (cow) of which two others are *ahi* and *aditi*. Yaska the commentator on the Nighantu, defines these three names of the cow as follows:-

Aghnya means the one that ought not to be killed under any circumstances.

Ahi means the one that must not be slaughtered for any reason..

Aditi means the one that ought not to be cut into pieces.

These names occur very often in vedic literature while referring to cattle. Their implied meanings shows the respect accorded to the cow in Hindu Scriptures. The Rig Veda ^{8.101.15} exhorts us, "Do not kill the cow. The cow is innocent and aditi." The Yajurveda ^{13.49} forbids the killing of cows giving the reason for it as follows, "*Do not kill cows and bulls that always deserve to be protected.*" The Yajurveda ^{12.73} reminds us that *aghnya* cows and bulls bring us prosperity. Not only are cows to be protected but their proper care is to be ensured as it bestows benefits upon man as mentioned in the Rig Veda ^{1.164.40} or the Atharva Veda ^{7.73.11 or 9.10.20} as follows, "*The aghnya cows which are not to be killed under any circumstances, must be allowed to keep themselves healthy by the availability of pure water and green grass, so that we may be endowed with virtues, knowledge and wealth.*" The Rig Veda ^{1.164.27} has this to say about the cow, "*A cow which is aghnya brings us health and prosperity.*" The Atharva Veda ^{11.1.34} declares that, "*The cow is the fountainhead of all bounties.*" One of the essential needs of cattle is water, and the Rig Veda ^{5.83.8} says , "*There should be excellent facilities for pure water for the aghnya cow.*"

The Rig Veda ^{7.56.17} equates the slaughter of a cow to murder by declaring that "*The killing of a cow is the same as the murder of a man.*" The Yajur Veda ^{30.18} is more strident when it comes to dealing with those who harm cows for it says, "*Destroy those who kill cows.*" Similarly the Atharva Veda ^{1.16.4} clearly says, "*If someone destroys our cows, horses or people, kill him with a projectile of lead.*" The Rig Veda ¹⁰⁻⁸⁷⁻¹⁶ calls upon the people to burn the head of the person who kills a cow. The Atharvav Veda ^{Kand 12/5} prescribes exemplary punishment for cow killers and discusses protection and care of cows and its progeny for promoting agriculture.

The whole of the 28th Sukta (Hymn) of the 6th Mandala of the Rig Veda sings of the glory of the cow as follows:-

1. Everyone must ensure that cows remain healthy and not subjected to any misery.
2. God blesses those who take due care of cows.
3. Even our enemies should not use any weapon against cows
4. No one should ever slaughter the cow for any reason.
5. Cows bring prosperity and strength.
6. If cows are healthy and contented, men and women shall also be free of diseases and shall duly prosper.
7. May the cows eat green grass and drink pure water. May they not be killed for any reason so that they may continue to bring prosperity to us.

The Chārvakas were atheists with a philosophy at variance with Vedanta. They did not believe in any after life. They believed in naturalism and sensual indulgence. They believed in enjoyment and merry making without any code of conduct. Their philosophy of religion did not cater to the human need for devotion and divine protection and hence did not become popular. Yet they had some very incisive comments on rituals. The Chārvakas ^{Chārvakadarsana, Sarvadarsanasangraha of Vidyaranya Madhava} ridiculed priests for cutting trees for sacrificial posts by declaring, "*If one could reach heaven by cutting trees, destroying the plants, indulging in violence, and spilling blood and scattering flesh in the sacrifice, who else is qualified to reach the hell !*" Another sarcastic comment by Chārvakas ^{ibid} was directed at the comments made by the priests that the animal being immolated would reach heaven. They asked, "*If a beast slain in the Jyothishtoma rite will itself go to heaven, why then does not the sacrificer forthwith offer his own father? If the Sraddha produces gratification to beings that are dead, then why do they not send food down below to those who are standing on the house-tops?*" Although the Chārvaks were ignorant of the real aims of the internal yagnya, and their approach to life was devoid of any spiritual or higher truths, their ridicule of animal sacrifices was justified.

The Yajur Veda ¹⁹⁻²⁰ says that one who sacrifices animals attains only to animal-hood and then goes about pleading “*do not kill animals and do not kill the cow.*” The Rig Veda ¹⁻¹⁶⁴⁻⁴⁰ recommends the worship of cow for good luck and fortune. Thus there is ample proof that our Scriptures accorded great importance to cattle and directed the people to look after their cattle properly, to protect their cattle and to take stern action against the killers of cattle.

Ahimsa in Buddhism

Ahimsa or non-violence is one of the five principles of virtuous behaviour or ethics which the Buddha taught his followers. He also declared four vices which every human being should avoid at all costs for happiness and emancipation. The destruction of life was one of the four vices mentioned by the Buddha. The Buddha laid stress on universal kindness and compassion. Here are his words on kindness (metta sutta):-

May all beings be at ease.
 Whatever living beings there may be;
 Whether they are weak or strong, omitting none,
 The great or the mighty, medium, short or small,
 The seen and the unseen,
 Those living near and far away,
 Those born and to-be-born,
 May all beings be at ease!

The Dhammapada is an important text of Buddhism. It consists of 423 verses in Pali uttered by the Buddha on some 305 occasions for the benefit of a wide range of human beings. The following utterances of the Buddha highlight his compassion and respect for all forms of life:-

He who destroys life, he digs up the very roots of his life. (Dhammapada, 246-247)

The wise who hurt no living being, and who keep their body under self-control, they go to the immortal nirvana, where once gone they sorrow no more. (Dhammapada, 225)

A man cannot be a great man just because he is a warrior and kills other men. In truth, because he hurts not any living being, he is called a great man. (Dhammapada,405)

All beings tremble before danger, all fear death. When a man considers this, he does not kill or cause to kill.

All beings fear before danger, life is dear to all. When a man considers this, he does not kill or cause to kill. (Dhammapada, 129-130.)

Animal Emotions

Introduction

We can cause sorrow to others provided they have the capacity to experience emotions. In the case of animals, one may well ask whether animals also feel happiness or sorrow, pain or pleasure and such emotions as human beings do. Are animals indifferent to love, affection, kind treatment? Conversely, are animals immune to ill treatment, tortures, injury, extreme pain and painful death? Do animals suffer joy, elation or anxiety, fear, apprehension and panic? We see in our daily lives countless examples of happiness, joy and sorrow as well as pleasure and pain felt by animals according to the treatment meted out by human beings. Our Scriptures confirm the fact that the conscious entity or *jivātama* in every sentient being is alike and that all sentient beings experience emotions. Our *Shāstras* forbid cruelty to animals in any manner let alone killing them for any reason whatsoever. Modern scientific studies have also conclusively proved that animals experience a range of complex emotions similar to those in human beings. In the final analysis, no human being can disregard the evidence before his or her eyes. Let us first examine the modern viewpoint.

The Modern Viewpoint on Animal Emotions

Take the actual case of a three-month-old baby which died in its mother's arms in the early part of Aug 2008 ^{Sunday Times 24 Aug 2008}. For hours the mother, Gana, gently shook and stroked her son Claudio, apparently trying to restore movement to his lolling head and limp arms. People who watched were moved to tears — despite the fact that Gana and Claudio were “only” gorillas in Münster zoo, northern Germany. Others, who were not direct witnesses to the tragedy, were also deeply affected. A British woman, who read about Gana's loss online, posted this comment: *“From one bereaved mother to another — Gana, you are in my thoughts. My baby boy died last June and you wouldn't wish it on any form of life.”* Some scientists and others questioned the haste in attributing human emotions to animals. In response, many of those who commented on Gana's story online took a strong stand against this attitude on the part of certain scientists, asking angrily how “experts” could be so idiotic. *“Have they not heard a cow calling for days when her calves are removed?”* asked one. Others described how dogs and cats had become “depressed” by the death of their own kind — and indeed by the loss of human companions. These people might have countered the sceptics by asking the question *“Haven't we been rather slow to recognise that animals have emotions?”*

The question concerns our fundamental attitude towards other species. If animals have feelings, it would be difficult if not impossible to justify animal experiments in laboratories, or exhibiting them in zoos for the entertainment of human beings, or using them on farms and other industries without any restraint, breeding them to meet our demands for various animal products and so on. In any case, it is quite impossible to justify the slaughter of animals in animal sacrifices under any circumstances. Marc Bekoff, Professor of Biology at the University of Colorado is the co-founder with the Primatologist Jane Goodall of the Group of Ethologists for the Ethical Treatment of Animals. The Sunday Times ^{ibid} mentions about sceptical behaviourists who often ask him, *“How do you know that dogs and elephants feel joy or jealousy or embarrassment?”* Bekoff replies: *“One retort is to say: how do you know they don't? Darwin said there was continuity in evolution, so the differences between species are differences in degree rather than differences in kind. They're shades of grey. If we feel jealousy, then dogs and wolves and elephants and chimpanzees also feel jealousy. Animal emotions are not necessarily identical to*

ours but there's no reason to think they should be. Their hearts and stomachs and brains also differ from ours, but this doesn't stop us from saying they have hearts, stomachs and brains. There's dog joy and chimpanzee joy and pig joy, and dog grief, chimpanzee grief and pig grief."

It is not just large mammals that are intelligent and have emotions. Some birds, for instance, have evolved cognitive abilities far more complex than those of many mammals. Dr Nathan Emery, a neuropsychologist at Cambridge University's department of zoology, suggests that in their cognitive ability, corvids — the bird family that includes crows, ravens, rooks, jackdaws, jays and magpies — rival the great apes and might well be considered "feathered apes". Studies show that birds understand many words. They show emotions like fear, frustration, impatience, amusement. One magpie repeatedly set up booby traps to surprise humans and showed joy when it was successful. Birds have even been observed showing such feelings like empathy and tenderness. To Bekoff, the great distinction between living beings is whether they have eyes: *"The eyes tell it all. If we can stand it, we should look into the fear-filled eyes of animals who suffer at our hands, in horrible conditions of captivity, in slaughterhouses and research labs, fur farms, zoos, rodeos and circuses."* Animals dragged towards the sacrificial sites display fear and panic which can be easily seen in their eyes.

Maneka Gandhi is a well known advocate of animal rights and proponent of compassionate behaviour towards all animals. She has written about animal emotions in the Kashmir Observer Jan 5, 2009 as follows, *"Are humans the only ones who cry? Ask anyone who has seen a street dog lose even one of her puppies to a passing car or to the beating of a passerby. The night is filled with her howls as she mourns her baby. Have you seen the tears of the cow as she runs desperately behind the cart that is carrying her calf away to slaughter? I have and it is like a permanent open wound inside my heart. When I stop a truck from taking buffaloes illegally to slaughter and fifty jumbled creatures stumble out from a space meant for eight, I see their faces wet with the tears of fear and pain."*

It is not just human babies that cry when their mothers don't feed them. Monkey babies cry out to their mothers when they are hungry and when they are being weaned away from being breast fed, they tend to cry more and more. Just as children cry when they are frightened or hurt, chimpanzees cry for a long time if something terrible is happening to them, but when they are picked up, they stop. Since all animals and birds share the feelings of love, care, motherhood, pain, territorial possessiveness and intelligence, it is natural that they will also feel the emotions of depression, loss, fear and all the nuances in between.

All animals can shed tears. Studies have found that young mammals and birds cry with distress when they are separated from their mothers. When an elephant dies, the entire group surrounds it and weeps. When a baby is hurt, the mother will not leave it – even if it means sitting on a railway track. Dogs can experience chronic depression through their feelings of helplessness at being repeatedly hurt. Do animals cry? Of course they do. You simply have to look into their eyes to know. What hurts you hurts all animals equally. If you understand this, you will activate that part of your brain that supplies compassion – and it is the same part that supplies intelligence. There is so much evidence that those scientists that refuse to believe that animals cry just like us, show how badly we have misinterpreted everything about this planet.”

In conclusion, we may say that there is well documented scientific evidence that animals have emotions. Marc Bekoff ^{New Scientist Issue 2605} has quoted a number of observed incidents in which animals have clearly demonstrated different emotions like pleasure, pain, empathy, spite, grief, gratitude which are complex human emotions. Are these not part of the range of human emotions?

The Viewpoint of the Shāstras on Animal Emotions

Our Shāstras clearly state that jivātma or the Self or the Soul in any animal is identical to that in any human body and all sentient entities experience emotions. Sri Krishna

Paramātmā has said in the Bhagavad Gita ^{13/20} that, *“Prakriti is said to be the cause of creation of the body and the organs of sense perception and action. The Self is said to be the reason why pleasures and pains are experienced.”* It is but natural that the Self which is in the nature of pure consciousness should be the entity which experiences emotions such as pleasure and pain. The Self is the seat of all feelings and cognition of experiences. The Self in any human body or in any animal body are identical. That is why man and animals experience a range of emotions which may not be identical but comparable. Animal emotions of fear and panic, for instance, may not be the same as that of human beings but it is quite distressful and unpleasant in any case.

This is confirmed by the Srimad Bhagavatam ^{Book 7, dis. 15, verse 8} which describes how animals grow increasingly apprehensive during the course of an animal sacrifice as follows:- *“Beholding a person making preparations for a sacrifice using animals and other materials, the living entities (animals) brought there for the purpose of the sacrifice become increasingly apprehensive and fearful thinking that this merciless person who is without any compassion and who derives satisfaction in killing living beings, will surely kill us.”*

The Atharva Veda ^{3.30.1} sets the standards for human love as follows: *“Love each other as the aghnya cow loves its calf.”* This is a solid proof that the Vedas accept the fact that animals have emotions.

The Consequences of Animal Sacrifices

The results of all lawful sacrifices performed in accordance with the Shastras and Dharma are transitory in nature because the objects of desire are themselves temporary. It is therefore futile to perform karmas like sacrifices which, in any case, give limited and transitory results and perpetuate bondage by repeated re-births. However, if one is still keen to perform a sacrifice, why not perform it in accordance with the Shāstras and Dharma and in the manner prescribed? *Why be so foolish as to perform adharmic karmas like animal sacrifices which are against the shāstras*

and which not only do not give the desired results but are full of terrible consequences? What are these consequences?

It is stated in the Srimad Bhagavatam ^{SB Book 5, Dis.2, Verse 32} that, “ *In their lives, those who have actually tortured in the woods or in their villages, innocent creatures desperate to survive, by first winning their trust and confidence through various allurements, and when they have come near, transfixing them with iron-pins or tying them to stakes, and then treating them as toys in a game – will recollect their sins when their own bodies are similarly transfixed after death during the course of the tortures arranged by Lord Yama (in the hell called Sulaprotā), during the course of which they will be tormented by hunger and thirst and will be assailed on all sides and at each and every step by vultures, quails and other birds with sharp and pointed beaks.*”

The Srimad Bhagavatam further states ^{ibid verse 33}, “*Again those people who being venomous by nature like serpents actually molest living beings here (in this life), themselves fall into the hell called Dandasuka after their deaths, where O King (Parikshit), five and even seven hooded serpents approach them and devour them as they would devour rats.*” Nourishing oneself and one’s family through actions which involve hostility towards living beings like performing animal sacrifices to fulfil certain desires or killing animals for any other purpose is dangerous indeed, for the Srimad Bhagavatam ^{ibid verse 10 & 11} clearly says that such a person falls into the hell called “Raurava” after death because of the sins resulting from such hostility. There the very creatures killed by that person in the previous life are born as Rurus in the other world and during the course of tortures arranged by Lord Yama, kill the same person in precisely the same manner in which they too had been killed. Hence they speak of that region as the “Raurava” which means the Abode of Rurus who are creatures far more ferocious and venomous than snakes.

It is but fair that one should experience the same torture and pain as one has inflicted on another jiva whether in a human or animal body. After all, the essential characteristics of every jiva especially the attributes of awareness and consciousness and its relationship with the Paramātmān are identical in all Jivas irrespective of the body it may be occupying at a given time. So think again before

you cut the throat of an animal in a sacrifice or for any other reason. If you do, you will not only not get the desired results but you are bound to experience, the same anxiety, the same agony and the same pain which the animal must have felt when your knife or sword cut through its throat. The bottom-line is that dharma protects while adharmā punishes.

Ultimately, a man's desires shape his destiny as this famous verse from the Brhadāranyaka Upanishad ^{IV.4.5} tells all of mankind to remember and take heed:

You are what your deep, driving desire is.
 As your desire is, so is your will.
 As your will is, so is your deed.
 As you deed is, so is your destiny.

Man's Relationship with Animals

What should be the nature of man's relationship with animals? What do our Scriptures say about it? What are the views of our Sages & Saints, Philosophers and other Great Men & Women on how we should treat other living beings? When dealing with animals, most people behave in an irresponsible manner largely due their ignorance of what is right and what is wrong, their lack of accountability, and awareness of the consequences thereof. Who are we accountable to for our treatment of animals? According to our Scriptures, we are accountable to God and Dharma propounded by God as The Code of Right Conduct for the benefit of human beings. According to modern science, we are accountable to the Laws of Nature. According to philosophers, man is accountable to humanity and the code of conduct that defines human values. Whatever it may be, there is a price to pay for the cruelty or ill-treatment or killing of the living beings who have inherited this Planet with the same rights as human beings. Every creature has a role to play in the welfare of the Planet Earth. The world will be a better place if more and more people are made aware of the norms they are expected to follow in dealing with other sentient beings.

The Views of our Scriptures on Man's Relationship with Animals

The Srimad Bhagavatam ^{7.14.9} urges a householder desirous of practicing right conduct to treat animals as though they are his own children. It also urges ^{ibid 7.14} the householder to use the resources earned through his vocation to daily worship the Purusha (The Supreme Being) in the form of Gods, the Rishis, human beings, the animal kingdom, the manes, and his own self. The modes of worship enjoined by Sri Krishna says in the Uddhava Gita ^{VI.43}, *‘One should worship me in the Sun through vedic hymns, in the fire through oblations of ghee, in the best of the Brahmanas through hospitality, and in cows with grass etc., My friend.’* In the Uddhava Gita ^{XIII.43}, *the Lord says that, “The duties of a monk are control of the mind and non-injury, those of a householder are the preservation of the lives of animals and the performance of sacrifices....”* This is proof that killing of animals and sacrifices is regarded as incompatible by the Supreme Being. In fact, Sri Krishna advocates in the Uddhava Gita ^{XXIV.8} certain excellent forms of religion which practised with faith will enable a man to conquer death. Of these practices he says ^{ibid.16 & 17}, *“Ignoring the derisive laughter of one’s friends and discarding the merely physical view of things based on considerations of birth, status etc., as well as shame, one should prostrate oneself on the ground before every creature be it a chandala, a cow, an ass or a dog.”* These examples have been given by the Lord to illustrate His philosophy of respect for all creatures.

And what is the best mode of worship for any householder? The Lord of the Universe declares in the Uddhava Gita ^{ibid.24}, *“This looking upon all beings as Myself in thought, word, and deed is, to My mind, the best of all methods of worship.”* This is not a unilateral pronouncement on the part of one who is competent in all respects to do so. Yet the Supreme Purusha uses the words “...to My mind” in keeping with his policy not to interfere blatantly in the system of karma set in motion by Him. It is left to mankind to take heed or otherwise.

And who is the best of devotees of the Supreme Being? The answer is contained in the Srimad Bhagavatam ^{11.2.45} which says, *“He is the foremost of the Lord’s devotees, who sees himself established in all creatures as in the Lord (Himself) and sees (all) creatures established in his own Self as in the Supreme Divine Soul.”*

The Shukla Yajur Veda Samhita^{36.17-18} defines what our approach to life should be in the profound declaration to be made by the common man as follows: *“To the heavens be peace, to the sky and the earth; to the waters be peace, to plants and all trees; to the Gods be peace, to Brahman be peace, to all men be peace, again and again-peace be also to me! O earthen vessel, strengthen me. May all beings regard me with friendly eyes! May I look upon all creatures with friendly eyes! With friendly eyes may we regard each other!”*

The protection of animals is not confined to cattle alone, for the Rig Veda Samhita^{10.37.11} says, *“Protect all our species, two-legged and four-legged. Supply both food and water for their needs. Along with us may they also increase in stature and in strength. Save us from harm throughout all our days, O Powers that Be!”* Lest man show partiality to some animals, the Taittiriya Samhita^{IV-4-10} says, *“One shall take care of all quadrupeds.”* It also says^{ibid II.3.14} that, *“One shall be auspicious to all animals.”* It behoves human beings with greater intelligence to tolerate animals as advised by the Chandogya Upanishad^{II.18.2} that, *“One shall not find fault with animals.”*

Thus we see that the Hindu Scriptures contain valuable injunctions to human beings to follow a righteous and compassionate code of conduct so that they may prosper together with all animals.

The Real Meaning Of Animal Sacrifice In The Worship Of Goddess Kali

Swami Chidananda^{Orissa Review Nov 2008.p.5. Dash} has said that the aspirant who wishes to strive for spiritual emancipation and moksha should first eradicate the baser and brutal qualities present in human nature in general. Symbolism in our Scriptures involving animals is based on this very concept. References to animal sacrifices in the vedic mantras have this aim in mind that man should first sacrifice all the base and ignoble aspects of his nature and then begin his spiritual journey. We have already seen how literal interpretations of the vedic mantras by those who believed

only in rituals and wished to use the expedient of the sacrifice to satisfy their material desires led to the conduct of actual animal sacrifices by certain sects of the Hindu faith..

In certain Vaishnavi sects, the animals to be sacrificed are made out of black gram paste. These animals are sacrificed at the altar of the Devi or Mother Goddess in the purely symbolic forms of animals. Such a symbolic sacrifice represents the vow taken by the devotee to sacrifice the base instincts present in the devotee which are impediments to spiritual emancipation. But the aspirant must first identify the brutal instincts or baser aspects of his character called the lower *gunas*.. How can this be done? Self analysis is not easy for most people, firstly, because human beings are basically extroverts by nature and the mind moves outwards far more easily than inwards. Secondly, man's powerful ego-sense, makes it difficult for him to confront and accept the unpleasant aspects within himself. Thus true self-introspection is very difficult.

Gurudev Chidananda Maharaj ^{ibid}, therefore says that as the practice of self analysis is difficult, the aspirant is advised to submit himself to his Guru who will guide the aspirant correctly. The Guru will fulfill, to a great extent, the role of Mother Kali in helping the aspirant to destroy the vicious tendencies that are obstructing the aspirant's spiritual life. The aspirant will then understand the esoteric meaning of Kali Puja. In such a situation, Kali Mata will manifest Herself as a divine force in the form of a dynamic will. The aspirant will then begin to fight the evil tendencies within him with great force.

Two manifestations of this fight are *tapacharya* and *titiksha*. In *tapacharya*, the aspirant practices spiritual activities like *Puja*, *Archana*, *Upasana*, *Japa*, Meditation and such other practices which bring the mind under firm control annihilating the rajasic and tamasic *gunas* like lust, greed, hatred, anger and so on. *Titiksha*, on the other hand, involves various spiritual acts like sacrificing mentally those things which attract the mind most. **This is the true animal sacrifice to be done in the worship of Goddess Kali Mata.** This is the significance and the meaning of worship of Kali in the spiritual life of an aspirant. Thus, to reach the higher levels of divine

consciousness, we have to transcend the baser aspects of human nature. This process by which we sacrifice all our brutal instincts is the real Narabali or the Human Sacrifice and not the killing of a human being. In Durga Saptasati, the killing of the demons Madhu, Kaithaba symbolic of the annihilation of the undesirable aspects of human nature. Likewise, the killing of Mahisāsura represents the killing of the rajogunas in man. The killings of Shumbha and Nishumbha along with a host of asuras or demons like Raktabija represent the destruction of human vanity and egoism.

CONCLUSION

Sacrifices sanctioned by the Vedas are of two kinds. One is the external sacrifice which is done to secure some object of desire to be enjoyed in this life or the next which is transitory and which leads endless cycle of births and deaths or repeated bondage in worldly life. . The other is the internal sacrifice whose aim at purification of the mind and body and permanent fruits like the eventual liberation from worldly existence.

Hindu scriptures say that the *ātman* in an animal and that in a human being are absolutely alike. The *ātman* is the reason why emotions like pleasure and pain are experienced in the embodied state. Animals have emotions comparable to that of human beings. Compassion is one of the noble qualities of man which all religions, philosophers and thinkers and great men hold in high regard. The killing of animals goes against the God-given emotion of compassion. Our Scriptures prescribe a heavy punishment for the torture or killing of innocent animals.

Animal sacrifices are against the injunction of our Shastras. It is also against Dharma. The practice of killing animals crept into some parts of Hinduism due to literal and totally perverse interpretation of vedic symbolism. Animal sacrifices will not yield any fruits whatsoever. Those who torture or kill animals have to pay a heavy price for their sins. People with baser rajasic and tamasic gunas indulge in

animal sacrifices. A large majority of Hindus respect animals and do not perform any kind of sacrifice in which sentient beings are involved in any manner.