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Animal Sacrifice

Many learned Vedic commentators of India of the past and present agree that animal sacrifices in India are true and actual. Shankara and Ramanuja who were recognized as religious leaders of the past, both recognize the practice of animal sacrifices in ancient time.

In India during the Vedic period, saints observed Nara Medhya Yagnam (Cow body sacrifice), and Ashwa Medhya Yagnam (Horse body sacrifice).

The great scholar P.B. Kane has written volumes of books on Indian animal sacrifices.

Mahavira and Gowthama Buddha alienated themselves from Vedic animal sacrifices. It was during Buddhist rule in India, animal sacrifices to gods and goddesses were forbidden. But, even then, in many villages and small towns these animal sacrifices are still followed by people.

Many religious scholars are struggling to disprove and get away from the fact of ancient animal sacrifices during the Vedic period. They are seeking to write apologetic literatures, giving figurative interpretations to ritual accounts.

There is nothing wrong in spiritualizing the sacrifice (Yogna) for Yagna (sacrifice) indeed is the shadow of reality. At the same time one cannot deny the history of animal sacrifices in the Vedic period. One cannot discard the evidences of Rig Vedha 10th mandala, chapter 91 and Yazar Vedha chapters 22, 23.

The Bible too presents the accounts of many animal sacrifices, ordained by God under the Law of Moses. But here again, it is mentioned as shadow for the real sacrifice of God himself. The real and supreme sacrifice was to take place upon the cross of Jesus Christ.

Christians do not observe animal sacrifices. They believe that the Lord and savior Jesus Christ has fulfilled all animal sacrifices in his one and only sacrifice. My humble opinion is, disciples of the Vedanta would make a grave mistake if they deny the old heritage of animal sacrifices of the Vedic times. It does not mean that these animal sacrifices need to be revived again.

All animal sacrifices both in Vedic times in India and in Old Testament times in Palestine are shadows for the real sacrifice of God or Prajapatti (Prajā = People; Pathi = god, so God is called god of people).

The animal sacrifices are practiced even today in Indian Soil, though it is forbidden by the Government. Every home sacrifice many young lambs for their god. The pictures you are going to watch was taken in Tamil Nadu April 2002 in a small town.

Christians will surely understand that how the Jewish animals sacrifices has a place in Indian soil, because Jews migrated to India especially to South India even before the birth of Jesus Christ.

People in India still believe that by sacrificing an animal, the curses and sins of their family will be gone.

In Tamil Nadu, India, I have personally witnessed such animal sacrifices and often spoke to the people about the parallels of Old Testament and Indian Vedic scriptures, which were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. For many educated people it is an eye opener.

ATONEMENT FOR SINS

In the beginning, God allowed mankind to sacrifice animals, so as to make them understand that there is atonement for everyone's sins, as it is written in Thertirya Aranyaka verse 3, Sarvapapa pariharo raktha prokshna mavasyam" which means that the atonement is through shedding of blood only. Though the animal's blood is not a substitute, it was expected

d that man would repent and turn away from his sinful ways by seeing the animal, which is being sacrificed on his behalf . But mankind started practicing it just as a ritual, and thus came into condemnation.

If mankind were to be saved from this predicament, as Thertiriya Aranyaka 3rd verse says again, ". thad raktham Param atmena punyadana baliyagam" which means that-blood has to be through the sacrifice of God himself. The Purusha Suk ta says, there is no other way other than the sacrifice of Purusha Prajapati. Purushao vava yagna (Chandokya Upanisha d 3.16.1), God, the Purusha is the sacrifice.

Not only by acknowledging but also by accepting this sacrifice as one's own, and for one's own sake, the identity of one' s self with the Divine Self is achieved.

VEDIC REQUIREMENTS FOR THE SACRIFICIAL PURUSHA

The Rig Veda specifies ten important requirements for the sacrificial Purusha.

1. SHOULD BE WITHOUT A BLEMISH (NISHKALANGA PURUSHA)

Kaत्याayana Srautasootram describes in chapter six, that the water and fire were to be used for the purification of the animals, since blameless (defect less) animals are not available in this world.

2. THE PURUSHA HAS TO BE SEPARATED FROM OTHERS

While sacrificing the horse, the sacrificial horse is always separated from other horses. A bush of thorns is usually placed on the head of the horse of the horse to inform the people that this horse is separated from the sacrifice. Also the head of the horse is considered to represent the Purusha (Sathapatha Brahmana 13th kanda, 6.22).

3. THE PURUSHA HAS TO BE REJECTED BY HIS OWN PEOPLE

In Itareya Brahmana it is written that the sacrificial animal should be rejected by its father, mother, brother, sister and friends (2.16).

4. THE YAGNA PURUSHA HAS TO SUFFER SILENTLY

Rig Veda 5.46.1 says, "Like a horse I have yoked myself, well knowing to the pole. I seek neither release nor turning back".

5. THE PURUSHA HAS TO BE TIED TO A POST

In Satapata Brahmana it is written, never do they immolate an animal without tying it to a pole. "Na varute yapaat pasum alabhate kadachana (III -7.3.1)". It is important to tie the animal to a sacrificial pillar before it is sacrificed. This pillar is called "Yupastampa (sacrificial pillar)", which has now become a flag mast.

6. THE BLOOD OF THE SACRIFICIAL MAN SHOULD BE SHED

Bruhad Aranyaka Upanishad (3.9.28.2) says, "Tvacha evasya rudhiram, prasyandi tvacha utpatah, Tasmaattadarunnaat praiti, raso vrukshadi vahataat",
As the sap comes out of the cut tree, blood comes out of the Purusha who is cut.

7. THE SACRIFICED ANIMAL'S BONES SHOULD NOT BE BROKEN

In Itareya Brahmana 2.6 it is stated that the sacrificer separates the twenty-six ribs of the animal without breaking them

8. THE SACRIFICED PURUSHA SHOULD RETURN TO LIFE

The Bruhad Aranyaka Upanishad says, "Yad Vruksho vrukshano rohati, mulannavatharah punah, martyah svinmrutyuna vruknah, kasmaanmulaat prarohati, Retasa iti maavocata, jivatastat praja yate, dhanaruh a iva vai crau vruksho, anjasaa pretya sammbhavha",

which means, if the tree is cut, it will grow again from its root. But after the man (martyah) was cut off by death, from which root does he come forth? Do not say that has is from the ratas (seed or semen) because ratas comes from the one who lives. Remember this man is dead. But this man (Purusha) comes alive, on his own.

9. THE FLESH OF THE PURUSHA SHOULD BE EATEN BY HIS SAINTS

In Satpata Brahmana(5.1.1.1,2) we find that Prajapati gave Himself up to them, thus the sacrifice became theirs, and indeed the sacrifice is the food of the gods (saints).

10. THE SACRIFICE IS FOR ALL

Verse 8 in Purusha Sukta explains, Tasmaad yagnatsarvahutah, pasuntamscakre voayaryaa, naananyaan gramyaasca ye. By that sacrifice, all these originated: sprinkled ghee and all kinds of animals of the sky, forest and country. The significance of sprinkled ghee represents the original sacrifice.

Verse 9 of Purusha Sukta says: Tasmaad yagnat sarvahuta, nucha samaari jagnire, Chandaamsi jagnine, tasmaad yajustas naada jaayatah. From that sacrifice, Purusha offered everything that he had, including the Rig, Sama, Yazur Vedas and the Chandas (sacred writings).

HOW METICULOUSLY THESE VEDIC REQUIREMENTS HAVE BEEN FULFILLED IN JESUS CHRIST OF NAZARETH

1. JESUS CHRIST WAS WITHOUT ANY BLEMISH

In the Old Testament Bible it is written, "Do not bring anything with a defect, because it will not be accepted on your behalf"(Levi 22:20). "Whether male or female, present before the Lord an animal without defect " (Levi 3:1). The New Testament says, "In Him (Jesus Christ) there was no sin"(1 John 3:5).

2. JESUS CHRIST WAS SEPARATED FROM OTHERS

The Bible says, "the soldiers platted a crown of thorns, and put it on his head, and they put on him a purple robe" John 19:2, thus separating Him from others.

3. JESUS CHRIST WAS REJECTED BY HIS OWN PEOPLE

The Prophet Isaiah wrote, "He (Jesus Christ) was despised and rejected and they shouted to crucify him". Jesus said on the cross, "Eloi lama sabaktani", which means, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mathew 27:46).

4. JESUS CHRIST SUFFERED SILENTLY

"He was oppressed and afflicted, yet He did not open his mouth. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before the Shearer's is silent" (Isaiah 53:7).

5. JESUS CHRIST WAS TIED

Ps. 118:27 says, "Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar".

6. JESUS CHRIST'S BLOOD WAS SHED

This was fulfilled in Jesus Christ when he was nailed to the cross. "He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but entered the most holy place once for all by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption. Without shedding blood there is no redemption" (Heb 9:12,22).

7. JESUS CHRIST'S BONES WERE NOT BROKEN

In the Bible, Exodus 12:46 says that the bones of the animal should not be broken. Three hours after crucifixion, "when they (soldiers) came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs"(John 19:33).

8. JESUS CHRIST ROSE AGAIN FROM THE DEAD

"Him (Jesus Christ) God raised up the third day, and showed him openly" (Acts 10:40). "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first fruits of them that slept"(1Cor. 15:20).

9. JESUS CHRIST GAVE HIS BODY TO BE EATEN

At the last supper Jesus took the bread, gave thanks and gave it to his disciples saying, "Take and eat; this is my body. Then He took the cup, gave thanks, and offered it to them, saying, Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many, for the forgiveness of sins" (Mat. 26: 26,27).

10. JESUS CHRIST WAS GIVEN TO ALL

"He who did not spare His own son, but gave him up for us all, how will he not also, along with him graciously give us all things?" (Romans 8:32)

GOD PLAN FOR MOKSHA

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Romans 3:23.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:6.

For He has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. II Corinthians 5:21.

The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son cleanses us from all sin. 1 John 1:7. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Romans 6:23.

And according to the law almost all things are purged with the blood, and with out shedding of blood there is no remission. Hebrews 9:22.

But God commended his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John 3:16.

Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. 1 John 4:10.

That if you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved. Romans 10:9.

Or do you underestimate His wealth of kindness and tolerance and enduring patience, unmindful that God's kindness is meant to lead you toward repentance? But in line with your obstinacy and impenitence of heart you are treasuring up for yourself anger for the day of anger and the revealing of the righteous judgment of God, who will reward each person according to his deeds. Romans 2:4-6.

For there is no partiality with God. Romans 2:11.

So today if you hear His Voice, harden not your heart, but come boldly unto the throne of grace, that you may obtain mercy and pardon.

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. Acts 4:12.