

SECTION III. (*Continued.*)

CHAPTER IV. (*Continued.*) Sub-Section (II.)

THE SACRIFICES MENTIONED IN THE YAJUR-VEĀ.

The significance of various yajñas or sacrifices.
—The five daily sacrifices or the pañcāmahāyajñas, and the bali-vaiśvadeva, the bali-pradāna and the bali-bhūta.—Ashva-medha, gō-medha, nara-medha, ajā-medha and māhiṣha-medha.—Agni-hotra, vājapeya, dīkṣhā.

This highest or ‘spiritual’ knowledge is subserved by, is built upon, the ‘action’ of sacrifices,¹ expounded in the *Yajuh*, to understand and properly perform which action, again, knowledge

¹The Samskr̥t word yaj, to sacrifice, to offer up, to give or devote to the service (of some cause of good), as well as its English equivalent ‘sacrifice,’ to render sacred, to consecrate to some purpose or to the will of a higher being—seem both to have equally narrowed down in significance in latter days. But there is a tendency arising again to restore them to their original breadth of significance, to recognise that no work can be done, no living form newly created or nourished and no effete form destroyed without yajña or sacrifice conscious or subconscious, on the part of some individual being of high order or low.

is necessary. Without such knowledge, the objects meant by the words *aśva*, *medha*, and others, those concerned with 'the five great daily sacrifices,' or with the rites relating to 'the sacrifice for all creatures,' etc., would not be understood rightly. In other words, action depends on knowledge and knowledge on action, and both on desire, all in inseparable relation; and *mukṭi* by *karma* alone is impossible, as it is impossible by *jñāna* alone, or by *ichchhā* alone. Every sacrifice, *karma*, should be made and done with knowledge, *jñāna*, and with universal love, *bhakti*, also.

Aśva means that whereby the *jīva* approaches, *ashyate*, comes up to, all beings, *i.e.*, cognition¹; and *medha* is the *act* of cognising or knowing. The performance of an *aśva-medha* is therefore the making, the acquiring, of knowledge for the good of all beings. Hence too are *aśvas* offered up to the fire. *Aśvas* are objects, things, word-meanings, born of knowledge (*i.e.*, intellectual objects, ideas, or,

¹ Hence the organs, primarily of sensation, the senses, and secondarily of motion or action. In the current *Upaniṣads* the senses are often referred to as the horses which have to be controlled. The *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* speaks of the *uśhā*, the dawn, (the morning-time of life, the period of acquiring knowledge) as the head of the sacrificial horse.

generally, objects of cognition); the offering of them is the pouring of them into the fire of *Brahman* (*i.e.*, the assigning to them of their proper places in the *Svabhāva* of *Brahman*, the interpreting of them in terms of the Absolute). Hence such statements as that such-and-such study brings the fruit of a hundred or a thousand *aśva-medhas*. And thus we see how the *aśva-medha* subserves *mokṣha*.

The five great daily sacrifices, *mahā-yajñas*, have a similar significance. It is the *dharma*, the chief duty, of the household life, that the householder should take food himself only after having performed the five great *yajñas* and made *bali*, an offering of edibles into the fire. The significance of these five *yajñas*, generally, is the dealing with all the possible transactions of life with the constant consciousness that all beings are *Brahman*, that mine and thine are naught, that all belongs to all. Such transactions fall into five kinds: the first is the business, the work, of 'procession,' 'may I become many,' multiplication; the second is the realisation of all these many as being *Brahman*; the third is the understanding of the necessity for all this; the fourth is the following out, the due performance, of one's own special routine and assigned duty; the fifth if the doing good to all, the service of all, in every possible way. *Yajña* is 'that which is fit and proper to do,' *karṭum-*

yogyam. By this fivefold yajña, the fallacy, the heresy, the illusion, of separateness is destroyed gradually. Such is the primary duty of the householder, and hence the need to know the truth of Brahman before entering the household wherein the avoidance, the expiation of the five daily sins, sūnā¹, by the five daily yajñas, is possible and necessary.

¹ The current interpretation of these five daily sacrifices is of course different from the metaphysical one given here. The sins, sūnā, slaughtering-places, are not interpreted in the text; but they may well be supposed to be the opposites of those acts of merit which constitute the sacrifices, acts of exclusiveness, separateness and selfishness. The current view of these daily sins and their expiatory sacrifices is as below: A. (1) sweeping (2) husking (3) grinding (4) cooking and (5) watering, all which operations involve the slaughter of animalcules and insects. B. (1) study (2) hospitality to guests (3) oblations to the departed ancestors (4) offerings to the devas and (5) giving of food to insects and animals. It should be borne in mind that the metaphysical interpretation does not contradict or conflict with the current and literal one, any more than the existence of a general law conflicts with particular instances of its working.

An explanation of them sometimes given is that the first sacrifice, that to the devas, is the recognition of the interdependence between the physical and

Bali-praḍāna is the offering up of action. All balī, i.e., action, effort, should be offered up to the Vishvêdevas, should be regarded as done by the Whole and not by one's own small self.

The devas of the vishva, the world, are all jīvas, i.e., the totality of jīvas, from the atomic to the infinite-seeming. Indeed this host of jīvas is itself called vishva. For such reasons are the five mahā-yajñas, bali-vaishva-ḍeva, and bali-praḍāna prescribed for the householder¹. The distinction between the last two is that the latter of them is directed towards individuals and the former to the all. These five mahā-yajñas commencing with the

super-physical worlds, and the rightful co-operation of their inhabitants with each other. The sacrifice to the ṛṣhis is the steady pursuit of study with a view to the teaching of others; that to the pitṛs is the recognition of the past and the endeavor to hand on the legacy, enriched, to the future; that to men, the feeding of the poor; that to bhūtas, the kindly tending of animals. Each of these duties should be performed every day, and thus the householder comes into and maintains right relations with his surroundings. (A. B.)

¹ The *Praṇava-vāda* seems to regard bali-vaishva-ḍeva and bali-praḍāna as distinct from the five daily sacrifices; modern custom mixes them with the five.

personal and selfish, *svārtha*, end in duty for duty's sake, *paramārtha*. Hence has it been declared that the service of guests and travellers and worthy *yaṭis*, *brahmachāris* and *sannyāsis*, in the five ways, leads gradually from egoism to disinterestedness, and the householder acquires an increasingly generous nobleness of character, abandons all calculations of personal results, and comes to regard the whole world as one family, without distinction of mine and thine; in every 'this' and 'this,' he sees the I, the universal I alone, and not the personal, and thus realises the AUM.

It is true that cognition, desire, action and their summation are only four, while we have five kinds of *yajñās*; this is because of the *aḍhiṣṭhāna*, the substratum.¹

Cognition, desire and action correspond respectively to *bali-vaishvaḍeva*, *bali-bhūṭa*, and *bali-praḍāna*. The *Āṭmā* is the first; it is the great *ḍeva* or Over-lord of all the World-process, and all is for it. The *Samsāra* is the *bali-bhūṭa*,² the *Anāṭmā*

¹ The meaning is not clear, but see the paragraph on *māhiṣa-meḍha* *infra*.

² The *bali-bhūṭa*, not before mentioned, is probably intended to cover the five *mahā-yajñās*. The text is far from clear on these points. Just before, it has been stated that *bali-praḍāna* is the offering up of all action to the *Vishveḍevas*

that 'binds' with the words, 'me,' 'thee,' and so forth. The Negation is the *bali-praḍāna*, connecting the others together.

These three are the daily sacrifices of the householder, and the steady performance of all duties as subsidiary to them brings unshakable knowledge to him. The *agnihoṭra*-duty is covered by these three. All this world should be offered up, reduced, brought into *agni* which is light, *i.e.*, all the world should be comprehended in the light of *Brahman*. The 'offering up' is the burning up of personal desire. What has been offered up into the fire, *i.e.*, performed without personal desire, in the light of universal reason, as a matter of duty, reaches all beings, and is for the good of all. In another sense, also, objects cast into the fire assume new forms and reach subtler *jīvas* of other worlds or planes. Transmutation of the forms of objects is one result of all *yajñās*. The rites of *yajña*, well-performed, reach to and affect the best and subtlest beings; hence the ordainment to offer up the 'most excellent'¹ objects, rice, butter, and so on.

which would seem to identify it with *bali-vaishvaḍeva*; and in the current view *bali-bhūṭa* is only one of the five great daily sacrifices.

¹ In the hurry and bustle of life where 'familiarity breeds contempt' instead of affection, men's minds grow coarse and callous and superficial,

The five meḍhas or sacrifices, by the performance of which and of agni-hoṭra, etc., the jīva attains to the highest goal, are: the gō-meḍha, the ashva-meḍha, the nara-meḍha, the ajā-meḍha, and the māhiṣha-meḍha.¹ These and the vāja-peya, the agni-hoṭra, and the three karmas or rites of dīkshā bring happiness.

and lose the finer instincts and more ethereal susceptibilities of the simpler and deeper child-nature. To understand the appropriateness of the qualification 'most excellent,' we have to put ourselves in the attitude of the Manu who ordains that the food that nourishes life shall be honored and eaten with reverence. And what things more 'excellent' than milk and butter, the produce of the mother-instinct of the cow, and the food-grains, the produce of the mother-instinct of the Earth. King Midas, of the old Greek story, who regarded gold as the 'most excellent' object, realised his error too late when, under the boon he had craved and received at the hands of the gods, his food was turned to gold at his touch. Those who have suffered from famine know the 'excellence' above all things of the food that gives them life. Also, special articles have special *super-physical* merits and excellences.

¹ These five are known as the naimiṭṭika, or 'for special reason or occasion' in contra-distinction from the five *daily* sacrifices which are known as the niṭya or 'constant,' 'daily.'

Gō-meḍha is the sacrifice of sound (the sanctification of speech); it signifies the giving or making intelligible of gā or speech by the meḍha or intelligence; it is the giving to all of the science of sounds or words. As said before, ashva-meḍha is the accumulation of all knowledge for the use of all. Even the 'deniers,' nāstikas, who believe the world to be without an Īshvara and without Ātmā, who think that whatever is is of itself, and neither was nor shall be, *i.e.*, who confine themselves to the present moment and refuse to trace any causes and motives for anything into the past or the future, even they actively endeavour to impart their opinions to others. For if all this samsāra is self-accomplished and without any cause or motive, what is the use to them of entering into this advisory relation with others? Indeed, they do not act up to their views and thereby prove the fallacy of the latter. They find themselves compelled to recognise relations between things; otherwise all advice, counsel and conversation between human beings, such as they also recognise the validity of and themselves indulge in, would be impossible. It appears thus that ashva-meḍha ought always to be performed; and, indeed, is necessarily and always being performed in greater or lesser degree by every one even without special or conscious effort on his part.

The transcendental consciousness, inherent in everything, 'May I become many,' is always manifesting itself in the fact of the exposition and propagation by every one of his own views for the acceptance of others. Especially is it the duty of kings to perform this sacrifice; for they are the guardians of dharma, indeed they exist only to guard it; and their prime duty is to provide for the giving to all of such instruction as will enable each to perform his dharma.

Nara-meḍha is the link between the preceding two. Nara is the name for that which is the support and substratum of all, and that is icchā which holds together all; therefore the sacrifice which makes fruitful the mutual dependence of the two others is the nara-meḍha.¹

The go-meḍha corresponds to the A; the ashva-meḍha to the U; the nara-meḍha to the M; and the ajā-meḍha is the samāhāra. When there is born the consciousness that nothing is born and nothing dies then is the ajā-meḍha performed; ajā means etymologically

¹ Compare the theosophical view that desire is predominant on the astral plane which is connected with the āpas-tatṭva, 'water,' 'parjanya,' 'clouds,' and that our present human consciousness is mostly astral; and Manu's statement that "the waters are called nārāḥ, and are the abode of him from whom our present life springs and who is therefore called Nārāyaṇa."

the unborn. Thereafter comes the fifth or māhisha-meḍha, which is ever performed by Brahmā and is ever connected with all things.

Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Rudra, Mahā-Viṣṇu and others perform these five yajñas and the world manifests in consequence. They correspond to cognition, desire, action and summation, and, fifthly, the transcendental adhishthāna, substratum,¹ known as the Praṇava. All these

¹ If we may hazard a guess as to the meaning of this fifth, it seems to be something like this: however much we may endeavour to define and declare the Absolute in words there always remains behind something which is recognisable only by and in the silence of the sub- or supra-consciousness (for the obvious reason that *the whole* cannot be comprehended by a *part*); if we say that the consciousness or the World-process or the Absolute is triple we, as a matter of fact, think only of a limited *whole*, a system, made up of similarly circumscribed three, and, therefore, we find that there is a fourth also, of the nature of summation; but when we have expressly stated this summation, it becomes, not identical with the totality of the three *but* a fourth, side by side with, besides, and other than the three; and then we have to resort to a fifth as the summation of the four; but if we should expressly state this fifth its fate would be the same and we should have to sub-consciously think of a sixth, and so on.

meḍhas, yajñas and kriyās are included in Aham-Eṭaṭ-Na. The mähisha-meḍha is included in the Negation, 'there is no fruit to be looked for, nothing to be done, all is born of Svabhāva'. Included in the Not-This together with the Aham is the ajā-meḍha, the summation and the combination of *is* and *is-not*. Included in the Eṭaṭ is the nara-meḍha.¹

The ashva-meḍha is the combination of I-This and This (?). The I alone, the supreme sound, the Shabḍa-Brahman is the go-meḍha.²

Because of this significance of the yajñas is it declared: He who, gaining knowledge,

¹ This seems to be put from some other standpoint, as an alternative view, for, just before, nara-meḍha has been connected with ichchhā which corresponds to the Negation.

² In the modern view these sacrifices mean, respectively, the bull-sacrifice, the horse-sacrifice, the man-sacrifice, the goat-sacrifice and the buffalo-sacrifice. One allegorical view interprets these as the sacrifices of the various animal passions typified by the various animals, pride, restlessness, selfishness, lust, anger, etc. Another superphysical explanation, brought out in theosophical literature, is that in very exceptional circumstances, a human soul happened to have become tied to an animal body, as a punishment, and it was set free by the destruction of that body at one of these sacrifices, by special ceremonial.

giveth it to others, he is the wise man and virtuous, and he knoweth the dharma. This imparting of knowledge to others is the first karma. Conduct in accordance with the knowledge gained is the second. The accomplishment of wishes by means of good conduct is the third. There is no conduct, good or bad, no knowledge and no ignorance, all is Brahman, embodied Saṭ-chiṭ-ānanda—to realise this is the fourth. The fifth is constant endeavour for the good of all. And all this together is mokṣha. Not to perform these sacrifices is to incur sin, for he who gives not to others the knowledge gained by him, in him the jñāna aspect of the Ātmā is distressed, narrowed, atrophied, and all his action vitiated. For this same purpose of spreading knowledge do all incarnations take place; and by such yajña-sacrifice alone the world was born, exists, and shall continue.

The significance and purpose of agni-hotra, vāja-peya and dīkṣhā are similar. Agni-hotra, is the offering up, into the fire of Brahman, of what has been acquired, by oneself. In the vāja-peya, while the acquired is offered up, the unacquired is striven after and sought. Dīkṣha, initiation, is the connecting together of the agni-hotra and the vāja-peya in this relation, viz., that the acquired and the unacquired are all the same in all-time and

all-space, and that Brahman includes all. Dīkṣha is the instruction, 'if this is done, such will be the result, this is the right thing to do on this occasion.'

The agni-hotra corresponds to the A; vāja-peya to the U; dīkṣhā-karma to the M; and the totality of all these is samskāra, initiation, consecration, which corresponds to the summation.

To those in the household, action is the bringer of mokṣha. The five mahā-yajñas and bali-vaishva-deva, etc., are the nitya-yajña, the constant or daily sacrifices. The five meḍhas and agni-hotra, vāja-peya, dīkṣhā, etc., are the naimiṭṭika or occasional, performed because of special reason, occasion. He who passes through this high samskāra attains Brahman. The former corresponds to A; the latter to U; to M corresponds the a-naimiṭṭika which is neither, but which is the whole of the duty of the system of castes and life-stages that is summed up in the AUM. Samskāra, sacrament, is the cause of differentiation (of physical and superphysical qualifications of special kinds).¹

¹ This and the next para indicate still another aspect of these initiations, that of 'occult ceremonies' whereby the ranks of the hierarchies, the spiritual rulers and guides of evolution are recruited. There is nothing mystical or even obscure in these matters

Rṣhis, maharṣhis, mahāṭmās, brāhmaṇas, yogīs and devas come to yajñās and give teaching according to their power. Such indeed is the fruit of all assemblages of the good, and hence the saying that Bhagavān himself dwells in the 'assembly'. The place of yajña is the place of such gatherings, and such places only are tīrthas, holy places, for, by going to them and listening to the teachings given and practising them, jīvas 'cross over' (the etymological meaning of tīrtha being a crossing-place, a ford, a ferry) that is to say, pass beyond doubts and illusions.

even though they are not public. Their nature seems to be the same as that of the preparations, tests and examinations for and installations in various offices in the various departments of the outer physical life of a nation; but the details are of course very different.