

QUESTIONING ANTIQUITY AND SACRIFICE IN AMISH'S CHARACTER SHIVA

Anamika Saha & Hemalatha. k

Research Scholar, K. Gurukul Kangri University, Dehradun, Uttarakhand, India

ABSTRACT

Sacrifice is believed to be as old as the culture. Just like Hinduism, no one could trace back the origin. But it is present everywhere; both in nature and culture. Nature has the infinite life cycle going on forever through the process of substitution but all living species leave their progeny in this world. This progeny carries the energy of the past generation. In this process, the most crucial point or truth that is fixed is the finiteness or death. This chain of substitution of finite contributes to the infinite.

Sacrifice is a cultural feature of substitution as Wendy Doniger attempts to define it as, “the act of giving up something in order to receive something of greater worth.” (207, On Hinduism). In this minimal definition, we see two crucial elements: priority and hierarchy. Something has to be given up for the sake of something else that may or may not be present in front of us. The desire to possess absent things is prioritized over the present or accessible possessions over that which is present or accessible. It is the natural behavior of valuing the absent over the present that colors our priority. The natural behavior of human beings tends to value the absent rather than the present. The whole cycle of life is a series of giving up the present for a (probably) better future. The present comes to us a binary of the absent but the absent presents a much more complex and incomplete study. Understanding the absent because it does not exist, it is an abstract idea. Complex arouses the curiosity and vice-versa, thus succeeding in occupying the higher position in the binary hierarchy.

KEYWORDS: *Nature and Culture , Energy of the Past Generation , The Natural Behavior of Human Beings*

Article History

Received: 21 Dec 2018 | Revised: 29 Dec 2018 | Accepted: 02 Dec 2019

INTRODUCTION

‘Sacrifice can be categorized under the absent as we search for absent or unattainable over what we have already. The term denotes the cultural “aspect” cultural, as I have said earlier. Nature has never provided any term but the chain of the function of infinity through cultural sacrifice that is infinite as it carries the fission and fusion of life and death. Also, it is a very long and difficult sentence, not clear. As Doniger has carefully noted, “Sacrifice has even been identified as the origin of civilization itself in the classical works of modern sociology and psychology by Émile Durkheim and Sigmund Freud, and there is a certain sense in which all life- human and non human, cultural and natural- might be regarded as a series of deaths and rebirths, that is, as a continuous process of sacrifice.”(207)

It has been claimed for centuries that sacrifice is infinite because this has always been wandering in the wilderness untamed, yet it is the strongest element of hierarchy. In Hinduism, both Vedic and non -Vedic, sacrifice has been

performed, accepting and following the hierarchy. We will find various sacrifices, beginning from human sacrifice to that of a goat. But however, human sacrifice is unacceptable because the sacrificer is performing the act as a bargain for the sake of the absent. If the sacrificer himself walks towards the absent literally, the bargain fails practically as there will be no one at the receiving end of the bargain. But the hierarchical rules state that the sacrificer should be sacrificed for the completion of the lack and fulfilling the bargain. This dilemma is being solved by the substitution- the same substitution that has pioneered nature to the infinite. Instead of the sacrificer itself, they sacrifice the substituted victim that becomes both the sacrificer and the sacrificed. As Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss stated, “the very nature of sacrifice is ‘dependent, in fact, on the presence of an intermediary, and we know that with no intermediary there is no sacrifice.’ (Sacrifice: Its Nature and Function)

In Indian mythology, there are multilayered flexibility and tautology that has made the present more complex to understand. It has opened up many windows of understanding that may or may not be acceptable in the cultural group of the present. The idea of substitution does not stand alone; it holds the hand of time too. The culture ages ago may not be the culture today, irrespective of the signifier culture in both the cases. Human sacrifice, for instance, was once a culture in Hinduism but today its homicide. It is really difficult for the culture to gain permanence with time and of course, substitution. But permanence provides the culture the respect of antiquity on the other hand. It is really difficult to trace the boundary of the dual perception but it contributes.

In the contemporary culture of India, the badge of antiquity has been adorned to Shiva in Amish’s Shiva Trilogy. He has been presented as a perfect man, whom “the legend turned to the God.” But it contains another layer that is necessary to be peeled off: Shiva as the one who is being sacrificed. He is the hero of the series; simultaneously he was the victim-that has been sacrificed by the sacrifice, the society (empires).

Firstly, to understand this new layer, we have to understand our elements: the society as the sacrifice and the hero Shiva as the paradoxical figure to who sacrifice is being offered as well as the victim who is being sacrificed. Society is constructive and hence, culture. It provides as well as demands something in return for its infinite existence. Meluha was colored with the pride of both antiquity and perfection (or antiquity hence, perfection). The very idea is constructive and finite and demands something for infinity. It has demanded the myth of Neelkanth or the blue throat. As soon as Shiva, the victim arrived in the sacrificial scaffold of Meluha, the finite sacrificer associated their victim with the criteria they have created for a sacrificial victim, colored with the lust of infinity.

The juncture when Shiva proved himself to be the victim unknowingly, based on the criteria of the constructive myth of Neelkanth to be the one who is assumed to be a foreigner with the blue throat, is the point of anagnorisis of sacrifice. The compulsion of the victim to be a foreigner is similar to the difference as well as the similarities that we associate with the victim in the entire ritual of sacrifice. As Doniger has stated that the performer of the sacrifice substitutes him with an animal which is paradoxical in nature. The animal is not human which maintains the gap between two different species but the signification of the victim connects the two. This connection blurs the gap elevating the Other more superior, pure and powerful. Similarly, Shiva belongs to a tribe alien to the Meluhans. But he is the man with blue throat erases all the fractures between the binaries and its association with the divine characteristics advances him to be sacred, superior, pure and powerful, just like the animal above.

The characteristics embellished on the victim are also selective and uses the signification of sacred. This signification associated with the ordinary elevates automatically towards extraordinary. This shifts the center from the God

to whom the victim is being offered to the victim itself. Declaring it sacred automatically molds the victim as a unique dominant power without whom the entire ritual of sacrifice is incomplete and impossible.

Shiva had accepted the post of the blue throat after many influences forced upon him. The psychological pressure that had colored Shiva has metamorphosed to be the driving force of his entire journey. Driving force is tricky within the self: the force and the metamorphosis. It changes its course insidiously without making us realize, though everything happens in front of our in driyas. This instantaneous locomotion from the one whom one sacrifices to the sacrificed victim unable the participants (with or without conscious or subconscious choice) to trace the substitution consciously. Shiva is flexible, a shapeshifter. He played most of the roles without making anyone realize, from the characters around him to the readers themselves. Once he was a mere participant of the sacrifice, and then turned to be the God and then the sacrificed victim. And in the series simultaneously, he was like the horse of the Ashwamedha yagna in which he was victorious over every empire his feet kissed the soil.

In general, we substitute human with an animal for sacrifice. But Amish played the game another way round. He altered the course of the rotation of loop of substitution by turning the animal to a human. Shiva's quest to know the truth of Somras is similar to the quest of desiring the undesirable or inaccessible. The act of sacrifice itself was replaced with Somras by Shiva as he was flawed.

"Substitutions may be made before beginning an obligatory sacrifice, and the reasons for doing so include, as in the case of apad dharma, various exigencies in times of distress or the unavailability of certain required materials."(222, On Hinduism)

Shiva became unfit for the sacrifice as he was no longer for the Meluhans: he became too common. He had carried the knowledge of the alien world and hence cannot be purified. He had duped the criteria of the victim to be pure. Since he had experienced the other worlds, he is untamed like the beginning. The only difference was the consciousness- it became impossible to manipulate that consciousness. Hence it was replaced by the boon turned to Evil Somras. It was pure and elevated: passed the antiquity since Lord Manu. The final sacrifice was accepted by everyone. And hence, he turned himself to the God to whom Somras was sacrificed.

The sudden substitution from living to the non-living challenges the hierarchy. Though the hierarchy is self-contradictory in the Vedic rituals of the sacrifice, Doniger has presented two kinds of substitution: a condensation upward and condensation downward of the synecdochic reductionism. The substitution of the single victim representing the whole is being described by her as

"synecdochic reductionism (whereby a part of the whole represents the whole) but differs to what kind of part is made to represent the whole." (223)

The constant shifting in the signification structure from Meluhans to the Chandravanshis to the Nagas to the Brangas has contributed to the overabundance of the signifieds. Hence the concatenation of substitution that has been denominated by the signified Evil has passed the antiquity of the series (the time is the time of the text).

A condensation upward is "the encompassment of the condensed essences of the lesser within the greater" whereas the condensation downward is "the essences of the superior which are then reprised within inferior 'equivalents'". (223) Condensation upward was the situation when the myth was replaced by Shiva, substitution of the abstract by a physical signifier. Through various complexities, the signifier has been connected to the signified itself. But to generate

and nourish the infinity, a physical signifier is not necessary. It has created a new demand for something metaphysical: something that can never perish. This can only be replaced by a relic: the Somras. The somras has itself passed the antiquity of purity and divinity. And consequently, the sacrifice of the mythical relic is contradictory in nature; its essence flows upward as well as downward condensations. The myth of somras has elevated it from being a relic to something divine, but simultaneously, it is merely a relic. The substitution is smart and complete, and henceforth, successful execution of the ritual of divine sacrifice.

Shiva is both the sacrificer and the sacrificed-he is the center who is paradoxical, that is to say, inside and outside of the cosmos. Shiva is also called Rudra. There are more than a hundred names that signify Shiva. All those names, naming the few, Kapalin, Nilakanta, Jagadguru, Aghora, Purusha, Mahaushadi, carry the very essence of being sacrificed or to sacrifice. For instance, if we put the signifier Neelkantha (I have chosen specifically this as Amish's 'Neelkanth' plays a vital role in his fiction) under microscopic scrutiny following the myth of this signification in which Shiva had consumed the Halahala venom to save the world during the Amrit Manthan or the churning of the milky sea, it was obvious in this myth that Shiva has saved the world by sacrificing himself. But Shiva is beyond death; he is an energy that cannot be destroyed. In Sri Rudram, it has been clearly stated that Shiva is the cosmos or beyond it. Technically, the halahala is a mere drop of venom for him that was probably created by him to teach the world. In that case, sacrificing himself by consuming the venom is a dramatization of the idea of sacrifice in which he was not sacrificing himself technically as he is beyond the cosmos. As Sri P.R. Ramchander in his translation of 'Sri Rudram suggests the multiple meanings of Rudra in the Introduction, "Ritam (dam) Samsaara dukham draava yat iti Rudrah. He destroys the sorrows of the world i.e. (Rudra). Rodati Sarvamantakala The one who makes one to suffer."(3) "Ritya Vedarupaya, dharmadinava-loka yati praayateeti vaa Rudrah.

In the form of speech, brings out the importance of the meaning of words i.e. (Rudra). Ritya Pranavarupaya svatmanam prayateeti Rudrah.

In the name of pranavah (OM) He makes one realize him.

Rudrorontiti satye rorupamaano dravati pravashati martyaaaniti Rudrah. In the form of truth, he enters human." (3)

And most evidently in the shloka below, "Ritam Sabdam Vedaatmaanam Brahmans dadati Kalpaadaaviti Rudrah. Rudra presented Vedas to Brahma at the commencement of Kalpa. Rudra also means the persons created by Rudra as Sadrusha."(4)

In the above shlokas, we come to a hypothetical conclusion of Rudra as the creator of everything, even the truth. Sacrifice is a path to attain the truth, which is a smaller circle to reach the highest. Further, he says "Taam bhakti draavayati. He is even capable of driving away that Shakti (energy)." (4) Here 'that' refers to the teja (light) and Ruth (gravity/ the mysterious energy that binds all other forces).

This shloka argues the power of Shiva who can control the energy, which is the very nerve of the entire cosmos. Swami Vivekananda has stated in his introduction of Patanjali Yogasutra transliteration,

"There is no such thing as motion in a straight line. Every motion is in a circle... A straight line, infinitely projected, must end in a circle. Therefore, this idea that the destiny of man is progression ever forward and forward, and never stopping, is absurd." (4, Patanjali Yoga Sutras)

To dramatize this absurdity, Siva Purana has created as well as personified various characters like Daksha to drill the idea of sacrifice. Daksha, the Prajapati, son of Lord Brahma, father of Shiva's wife Sati, is the multilayered character. He is the personified version of sacrifice just like Shiva himself in the episode of Samudra Manthan. But Daksha's idea being the sacrificed figure is different from the previous one. Most of the Indologists including Doniger and Ramesh Menon's retelling of Siva Purana, has focussed exceptionally in the incident. In chapter ten of the first part titled 'The Beginning: Rudra, Sati' in Ramesh Menon's *Siva: The Siva Purana Retold*, Siva replaces Daksha's head with the head of the goat after the calamity of Sati denouncing her body and the bloodshed in the palace of Daksha is a crucial dramatization as well as suspending the base in the minds of the readers/devotees through picturization. In every sacrificial ritual, an animal is being sacrificed. This myth concretes as well as advocates the idea of sacrifice. To justify this absurd circle of sacrifice, Shiva states in his Purana (that has written as well as narrated by multiple intellectuals),

"Let Daksha be revived. Let him have the head of a goat."(69) so that he can be sacrificed in every dramatization of sacrifice that will be performed in the world. It is a boon as well as a curse given by Shiva to Daksha.

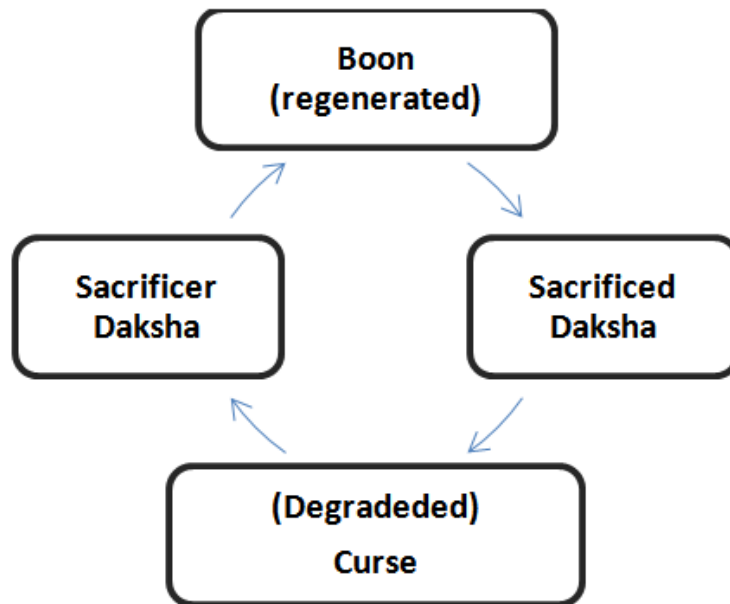


Figure 1: Idea of Daksha's Circle of Sacrifice

REFERENCES

1. *Antarmahal*. Directed by Rituporno Ghosh. Performance by Roopa Ganguly, Soha Ali Khan, Jackie Shroff, Abhishek Bachchan, Rituporno Ghosh Productions. 28 October. 2005
2. Derrida, Jacques. *Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences*. n.p.: n.d. Print
3. Doniger, Wendy. *On Hinduism*. New Delhi: Aleph Book Company, 2013. Print.
4. Frye, Northrop. *Myth, Fiction and Displacement*. n.p.: n.d. Print.
5. Kastenbaum, Robert. Michael Symons. *Sacrifice*. www.encyclopedia.com/philosophy-and-religion/other-religious-beliefs-and-general-terms/religion-general/sacrifice. web.
6. Menon, Ramesh. *Siva: The Siva Purana Retold*. New Delhi: Rupa Publications India, 2006. Print.

7. *Pattanaik, Devdutt. 7 Secrets of Shiva: From the Hindu Trinity Series. New Delhi: Westland ltd, 2011. Print.*
8. *Ramachander, P.R. Sri Skanda's Warriors of Light (trans.). Śri Rudram (Vedic Hymn of Adoration of God Siva in the form of Rudra). 2016. www.skandagurunatha.org/works/. web.*
9. *Tripathi, Amish. The Immortals of Meluha. New Delhi: Westland ltd. 2010. Print.*
10. *The Oath of the Vayuputras. New Delhi: Westland ltd. 2013. Print.---, The Secret of the Nagas. New Delhi: Westland ltd. 2012. Print.*