

Ethnobiological Analysis from Myth to Science XVI: *Pancha Yajnya* (Five Sacrifices) as Reflected in the Ten Commandments of Bible

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ABSTRACT The Vedic age *Panchya Yajnya* (Five sacrifices) philosophy is lucidly presented in the Ten Commandments of Bible, Old Testament. Flow of the knowledge from divine source to common man through Moses as teacher, is a process of *Rrushi Yajnya* (sacrifice for knowledge). This is followed by other sacrifices: religious devotion (*Deva Yajnya*), conservation of biodiversity (*Bhoota Yajnya*), care for parents (*Pitru Yajnya*) and social interactions (*Nrru Yajnya*). The whole theme in Bible is presented in this communication with compare and contrast with Bhagavad Gita and Manusmruti.

INTRODUCTION

The scientific philosophy of human ecological responsibility since the Vedic age is regarded as five sacrifices (*Pancha Yajnya*), is to be performed every day by each and every householder of a society. One should sacrifice for his knowledge (*Rrushi Yajnya*), for the ecological factors (*Deva Yajnya*), for his parents and ancestors (*Pitru Yajnya*), for the biodiversity (*Bhoota Yajnya*) and for his fellow human beings of his society (*Nrru Yajnya*). This Vedic based philosophy depicted in Manusmruti was analysed from various angles (Padhy 2008 a,b,c,d,e; 2011; 2020a) earlier. In the present communication an attempt is made to find out the cream of five sacrifices in religious epic Bible.

THE HOLY BIBLE

Bible is significantly divided into two parts – Old Testament and New Testament. The Old Testament has 39 books written in Hebrew and Aramaic languages which reveals how God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and various ways. The New Testament contains 27 books, written in Greek which speaks – all that Jesus began to do and to teach. More to add here that, there are many synchronized concepts on Genesis and endeavour for conservation of Biodiversity depicted in Bible and ancient epics of India (Padhy 2006a,b). This encouraged to search out the theme of Vedic age *Pancha Yajnya* philosophy in Bible, particularly in the Ten Commandments.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

The second book of Old Testament is known as EXODUS (EX) means a departure or a marching out. It records how the people of Israel were freed from Egyptian bondage which they had suffered for more than four hundred years, since the time of Joseph. Their leader during their years of deliverance was Moses. Exodus contains God's Law and many instructions about worship.

The Israelites left Egypt and after three months they came to the Desert of Sinai. They camped there in the desert in front of a mountain. From the mountain Moses received a divine message to come above. Moses was a God realized personality who stood as the communication link between Lord and common people. Through Moses the Lord ordered that, He would appear on the third day from that day and asked everyone to be clean, alert and watch for his instructions remaining at the foot of the mountain.

On the third day morning there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain. Suddenly, a very loud trumpet blast which trembled every one of the camp below. The whole mountain was covered with smoke and the Lord descended on it in fire.

The Lord called Moses to the top of the mountain along with Aaron and all others were instructed to be limited at the foot around.

God spoke all these following words to Moses – The Ten Commandments (adopted from Holy Bible, New International Version, published by

International Bible Society, New Jersey, USA), EX/1-17:

- 1) I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me.
- 2) You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath, or that is in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to the thousand generations of those who love and keep my commandments.
- 3) You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.
- 4) Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labour and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your man servant or maid servant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.
- 5) Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.
- 6) You shall not murder
- 7) You shall not commit adultery.
- 8) You shall not steal.
- 9) You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour
- 10) You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his man servant or maid servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour.

FIVE SACRIFICES

The concept of five sacrifices are not directly reflected in the Ten Commandments as in Manusmriti (Padhy 2013), but the basic theme is very well depicted which is discussed as follows:

Rrushi Yajnya

Sacrifice for the source of knowledge, its best utilisation and impartation is a great job in life. Moses received the knowledge of commandments from God at the top of the mountain, a coordinated fact like the conversation of the Bhagavad Gita between Sri Krishna and Arjuna in the mid of Mahabharat war field. Vyasa Deva scribed Gita in Sanskrit poetic form five thousand years ago for the whole human society and he is regarded as Jagat Guru – teacher of the world. Moses carried the knowledge from Lord to common people and educated them as their Guru – Teacher. The way he carried out this great work is reflected in the DEUTERONOMY (DE) book of Bible.

- DE 5/31: The Lord said to Moses: You stay here with me so that I may give you all the commands, decrees and laws that you are to teach others to follow.
- DE 5/32: Moses told to every one: The Lord has commanded you; do not turn aside to the right or to the left, follow these perfectly.
- DE 6/2: The Lord has directed me to teach you to observe the commandments, so that you, your children and their children will have faith on God and enjoy long life.
- DE 6/3: Be careful to obey the commandments so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey. God has promised you.
- DE 6/5: Love the Lord with all your heart, your soul and your strength.
- DE 6/6: These commandments that I give you today are to open your hearts.
- DE 6/7: Impress these commandments on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home, when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.
- DE 6/8: Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.
- DE 6/9: Write them on the door-frames of your houses and on your gates.

From the above presentation, it is very clear that, Moses tried his best to educate the common man regarding God's teachings. It is a burning example of *Rrushi Yajnya* that he performed

selflessly as per the divine wish. In course of time as a scholarly tradition, Moses authorised Joshua to carry out the teaching profession with the following references from the book NUMBERS (NU) and DEUTERONOMY (DE).

NU 27/15,16. Moses said to the Lord. May the God, the spirit of all mankind, appoint a man over this community, one who will lead them out and bring them in? He will be the shepherd of Lord's people like Sheep.

NU 27/18. Lord said to Moses, Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit.

DE 31/1,2,6,7,8. Moses went out and spoke the following words to all Israel:

"I am now a hundred and twenty years old and I am no longer able to lead you. Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or terrified. God will never leave you nor forsake you. Then Moses summoned Joshua before people and said to him: "be with these people and guide them. The Lord himself will be with you".

All the above events coordinate with the Great Indian Sanskrit Saying:

Guru (Teacher) *Brahma* (power of creation), *Guru Vishnu* (Power of maintenance i.e. all pervaded), *Gurudeva Maheswara* (power of destruction); *Guru Sakhyata Param Brahma* (Guru is directly the supreme Lord imperishable), *Tasmai Sri Gurabe Namah* (we bow to that great guru – guide, the Lord).

India has a great tradition of *Guru-Seshya* since the Vedic age. For example in Gita, God has said:

This imperishable knowledge of Yoga, I declared to Vivasvat; Vivasvat taught it to Manu, Manu told it to Ikshvaku. Thus the knowledge transmitted in regular succession and the royal sages knew it (Gita 4/1,2).

Similarly, Lord's teaching to Moses reached further to common people through Joshua and name of eight prophets to carry the divine knowledge is reflected in the Old Testament of Bible. They are David, Jeremiah, Amos, Micah, Hosea, Malachi, Zechariah, Nahum.

In New Testament, the knowledge from divine source reached Jesus, the son of God. Teachings of Jesus spreaded through twelve apostles: Simon (named Peter), Andrew (brother of Simon), James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James (son of Alphaeus), Simon (called Zealot),

Judas (son of James) and Judas Iscariot. The above sequence for the flow of knowledge in both the Testaments reflect the process of *Rrushi Yajnya* in Bible.

Deva Yajnya

In India, the philosophy of *Tantra* is widely spreaded which has the meaning that, 'the knowledge which is spread to save' (Bernard 1989). *Tantra* represents manifestation. The super natural power, an universal concept, got manifested to perform different functions; an ecological spread over. In Vedic age, the nature was worshiped. In different manifestations of the nature such as – sun, moon, rain, air, water, earth, plants, animals the presence of a conscious energetic personality was realised, named as *Devataa*. These ecological factors were recognised with a mythological personality, designed scientifically holding different weapons and provided with an animal vehiculum. The weapons represent the modus operandi of the powers and the animal vehiculum symbolize the nature of the corresponding *Devataa*. Throughout India different forms, names and powers of *Devataas* can be observed (Padhy 2008d).

In the Ten Commandments (I-IV) idol worship is strictly discouraged. This is an indirect evidence that, before the written of old Testament there was prevalence of idol worship culture in the western world. In ancient Greek religion we come across 12 important Gods and Goddesses (1) Zeus (God of the Sky), (2) Hera (Goddess of marriage, mother and family), (3) Poseidon (God of the Sea), (4) Demeter (Goddess of Agriculture), (5) Ares (God of war), (6) Athena (Goddess of wisdom, war and arts), (7) Apollo (God of Archery, music, poetry, medicine), (8) Artemis (Goddess of the moon), (9) Hephaestus (God of blacksmiths and fire), (10) Hermes (God of trade, thieves, travellers, sports), (11) Aphrodite (Goddess of love, beauty, pleasure and procreation) and (12) Dionysus (God of line, grape, cultivation, fertility and religious ecstasy). They are known as main Olympian Gods and Goddesses and have their corresponding Roman names. In addition to them there were minor Gods. Most probably for the first time voice is raised against idol worship in Old Testament during that time. Moreover, establishment of the idols of Jesus Christ and mother Mary, use of the cross, construction of a Church or Masjid in a particular

design, worship facing towards a specific direction in a particular posture, rites like Baptization and Sunnat, stone throwing to devils are different symbolic processes adopted similar to different God worships.

Bhagavad Gita has also not encouraged the worship of various *Devataas*, but such devotion is not considered as sin or as in vain:

The Worshippers of Minor Gods

SriKrishna said:

Whose wisdom
has been carried away,
by material desire,
worship demigods
following particular rites,
prompted by own nature.

Whatever the celestial form,
one desires to worship them.
I make his faith steady,
on that deity, of the devotee.

Men with intellect diversified,
worship a particular demigod,
with faith and devotion endowed.
The desires
that one obtain,
actually are
my ordination.

The fruits of such worship
are temporary with finite,
god worshippers, go to Gods
My devotees, enter my infinity.

Gita: Chapter 7 /20-23

xxx xxx xxx xxx

Even those devotees
endowed with faith
worship other Gods,
actually worship me
with some motive
following wrong methods.

Gita: 9 /23 (Padhy 2020b)

In the third commandment it is mentioned that, "One should not misuse the name of Lord". In Gita SriKrishna has told:

"Never repeat this wisdom (of Gita) to the cynical, the blasphemous and faithless" (Gita 18/67) (Lal 1965).

The fourth commandment refers a Sabbath day (the seventh day / Sunday) as the holy day for rest and offering of prayers. In a Hindu calendar year, very specifically such days are mentioned and in fact, some one becomes conscious on that day to carry out a worship process and devotion. The whole process of *Deva Yajnya* is nicely focused in the first four commandments.

Moreover, there are evidences that, Jesus had lived in Kashmir practicing meditation. This fact is reflected in a manuscript written in the Tibetan languages that is preserved in a monastery situated at the height of 14,000 feet in the Himalayas. It was later translated by a Russian writer Nicolus Notovitch and then into English and published as "The Unknown Life of Jesus Christ". It is claimed that, the garb which Jesus wore was a traditional Kashmiri garb, his hairstyle was also Kashmiri and the miracles that he performed are well known Yogic miracles. Jesus Christ left Asia Minor for the unknown period of his life when he was thirteen years of age and that he lived in the valleys of Kashmir until he was thirty. All these facts and the photograph of the Shrine in Kashmir where Jesus is said to have lived, is reflected in the book "Living With The Himalayan Masters" (Rama 1999).

Pitru Yajnya

Honouring the father and mother is emphasized in the fifth commandment, is the basic theme of *Pitru Yajnya*. In Indian social system, every family carries a specific surname and a *Gotra* (Padhy 2010). The *Gotra* is the name of the original ancestor or sage who gave the name to a family. From modern genetic point of view *Gotra* aims towards the 'Y' chromosome, the male factor remains unaffected through generations. In Indian *Pitru Yajnya*, a house holder is expected to conduct *Tarpana* (offering of water) and *Vasswadeva Pujaa* (offering of food) every day to respect his late parents and elders. Every year one is expected to perform *Ssraadhha* (death anniversary) of his father and mother or any other relative with specific rituals to remember them (Padhy 2008b).

In the Vedic age epic Manusmriti (II/145) it is said that, "The father is a hundred times more venerable than the teacher, but the mother a thousand times more than the father" (Buhler 1886).

Negligence to parents and elders in society and lack of physical and social security in old age are growing more and more throughout the world. We must learn to respect God's commandment "Honour Your Father and Mother".

Bhoota Yajnya

The Sixth commandment "You shall not murder" focus towards non-violence. The literary meaning of murder is unlawful premeditated killing of one human being by another. Bhagavad Gita has focused:

SriKrishna says:

I am the life in all living beings (7/9)

I am equally present in all beings (9/29)

I am the self-seated in the hearts of all beings (10/20; 15/15)

I am the seed of all life (10/39)

I support all creatures by my vital energy (15/13)

The Lord dwells in the hearts of all beings, causing them to revolve as though mounted on a machine (18/61).

More to add here that, throughout the world in all religious epics like – Veda, Smruti (ethical law books), Gita, Mahabhaarata, Ramayana, Holy Bible, Quran, Jain and Buddhist philosophy have focused that non-violence is the basic ethical restriction to protect the Biodiversity. In this context the Gandhian view of non-violence says that, non-violence is not essentially regarded for all biological life, it is rather the non-exploitation of sentient creatures. Gandhi understood that, non-violence is a mental behaviour. It means the absence of ill will (Gandhi 1950). In this regard a review by the author (Padhy 2018) needs to be referred. *Ahimsa* (no-violence) should also equally be extended to plants (Padhy 1999). The non-murder commandment of Lord strongly stands with the conservation of Biodiversity, the basic theme of *Bhoota Yajnya*.

Nrru Yajnya

Man is a social animal. Society is his niche, his relationship with other human beings is the link of the social chain and the composite interaction of human beings within themselves and with the surrounding physical and biological environment constitutes the human ecology.

Conservation of one's relationship with members of the community to maintain societal harmony is highly essential. Family is the micro-environment, where human interaction is initiated that complements to the scope of the society. In Manusmruti, a householder is advised as follows (Manu: IV/179, 180):

"Let him not have quarrel and conflict with his father, his mother, with female relations, with brothers, with his sons, and his wife, daughters, with even his servants, with his domestic priests, with his teacher, with maternal uncle, with guests and the dependent infants or aged persons or sick man, with learned elite, with his paternal and maternal relations and with sweet relatives (connected by marriage)."

The last four commandments clearly focus on the social relationship of a person the basic theme of *Nrru Yajnya*. In a wider sense, material sacrifice for others, charity and mobility with any human being have greater social implication from the point of sustainable ecology. Moreover, one should extend his services for the needy, guest, a poor, a diseased or a victim of natural calamity. The basic theme of *Nrru Yajnya* strictly concerns to sacrifice for others and obligation for society and mankind.

LAST LINES

It is really interesting to discover the Vedic age theme of five sacrifices in the Ten Commandments of Bible. Both Christianity and Islam have full faith on the Old Testament.

The ecology of our planet has two important factors – Abiotic and Biotic. The abiotic factors are regarded as Gods, needs to be protected (worshiped) – the *Deva Yajnya*. Biotic factors are broadly divided as Humankind and Biodiversity. The later one needs conservation by the former – *Bhoota Yajnya*. The humankind has its initial environment; the family, where respect and care for elders is essential with fostering of the next generation – The *Pitru Yajnya*. Man enters to study atmosphere during initial phase of life; where he interacts with his teachers and educates self – The *Rrushi Yajnya*. Every human being has his social interaction throughout the life and responsibility – The *Nrru Yajnya*. Let it be any religious epic, the basic theme of each one is same for the humanity.

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