

RIDDLE NO. 14

FROM AHIMSA BACK TO HIMSA

“From Himsa to Ahimsa” is only a part of the story of Ahimsa. There is another part of the story which can only be described, under the heading “From Ahimsa back to Himsa”. The second part of the story will be clear if only one were to note the religious practices of the Tantras and Tantraism to which a reference has already been made.

The essentials of Tantrik worship are the five Makars. These five Makars consists of:

1. The drinking of wine and liquors of various kinds ... (Madya);
2. The eating of meat (Mansa);
3. The eating of fish (Matsya);
4. The eating of parched or fried grain (Mudra);
5. The sexual union (Maithuna).

It is unnecessary to say at this stage anything about Maithuna or Sexual intercourse having been made an element of religious worship.

It is sufficient to take note of Madya and Mansa.

With regard to the first four of these acts the Tantras prescribe twelve sorts of liquors, three sorts of wine, and three sorts of meat. Pulastya, one of the ancient sages who is the supposed author of certain law-books, also enumerates twelve kinds of liquors, as follows:

- “1. Liquor extracted from the bread fruit (panasa), called Jack-liquor;
2. From grapes (draksha);
3. From date-palm (kharjuri);
4. From common palm (tali), or toddy;
5. From coconut (narikela);
6. From sugarcane (ikshu);
7. From Madhavika plant;

The chapter seems to be a continuation of the previous chapter on ‘Ahimsa’. There are six typed pages with few corrections and having the title written by the author himself- Ed.

8. Long-pepper liquor (*saira*);
9. Soap-berry liquor (*arishta*);
10. Honey-liquor (*madhuka*);
11. A kind of rum or liquor prepared from molasses, etc. (called *Gaudi*, or sometimes *Maireya*);
12. Arrack, or liquor prepared from rice and other grain (*sura* or *Varuni*, or *paishti*).

Besides the above twelve kinds of spirituous drink others are frequently mentioned, for example, *Tanka*, made from wood-apple, *Koli*, made from the *jujbe*; and *Kadambari*; the last being the favourite beverage of Bala-Rama.

The meat may be that of birds, beasts, or fish. The parched grain is eaten, like dry biscuit, as a relish with the wine and spirituous liquors. The drinking of each kind of drink is supposed to be attended with its own peculiar merit and advantage. Thus one liquor gives salvation, another learning, another power, another wealth, another destroys enemies, another cures diseases, another removes sin, another purifies the soul.”

The Tantrik worship had gone deep into Bengal. Referring to his own experience Rajendra Lal Mitra says¹:

“I knew a highly respectable widow lady, connected with one of the most distinguished families in Calcutta, who belonged to the Kaula sect, and had survived the 75th birthday, who never said her prayers (and she did so regularly every morning and evening) without touching the point of her tongue with a tooth-pick dipped in a phial of arrack, and sprinkling a few drops of the liquor on the flowers which she offered to her god. I doubt very much if she had ever drunk a wine-glassful of arrack at once in all her life, and certain it is that she never had any idea of the pleasures of drinking; but, as a faithful Kaula, she felt herself in duty-bound to observe the mandates of her religion with the greatest scrupulousness. That thousands of others do so, I have every reason to believe. In some parts of Bengal, where arrack is not easily accessible, such female votaries prepare a substitute by dropping the milk of a coconut in a bell-metal pot, or milk in a copper vessel, and drink a few drops of the same. Men are, however, not so abstemious, and the Tantras ordain a daily allowance of five cupsful, the cup being so made as to contain five tolas, or two ounces, i.e. they are permitted to take ten ounces or about a pint of arrack daily”.

This Tantrik worship was not confined to the small corner of Bengal. As is pointed out by Mahamahopadhyaya Jadaveshwara Tarkaratna²:

¹ Rajendralal Mitra — Indo-Aryans Vol. pp. 405-6.

² Quoted by Avalon in his principles of Tantra Part-I. Introduction p. XXXVIII.

“Just as the Bengalis of the higher castes are divided into Shaktas, Vaishnavas, and Shaivas, so it is with the peoples of Kamarupa, Mithila, Utkala, and Kalinga, and the Kashmirian pandits. The Shakti Mantra, Shiva Mantra, and Vishnu Mantra, are each Tantrik. Amongst Dakshinatyas, Mahamahopadhyaya Subramanya Shastri, and many others, are Shaktas. The late Mahamahopadhyaya Rama Mishra Shastri, Bhagavatacharya, and many others, were and are Vaishnavas. Mahamahopadhyaya Shivakumara Shastri, and a number of others, are Shaivas. In Vrindavana there are many Shaktas as well as Vaishnava Brahmanas, though amongst the higher castes in Maharashtra and other Southern Indian countries, Shaivas and Vaishnavas are more numerous than Shaktas. Followers of the Pashupata and Jangama cults are Shaivas whereas those of Madhavacharya and Ramanujacharya are Vaishnavas. Many in the North-West are initiated in the Rama-Mantra, which is to be found only in the Tantra. It is still more remarkable that, according to this author, the pandas of Shri Purushottama are all Shaktas, and the priests of Kamakhya Devi are all Vaishnavas.”

Although it is not possible to give the exact date when the Tantras and Tantra worship came into existence there is no doubt that their date is after Manu. This fact makes the rise of the Tantra worship a matter of great surprize. The Tantras not only lifted the prohibition enacted by Manu against wine and flesh but they made drinking and flesh eating articles of faith.

The surprising thing is the part that the Brahmins have played in furthering the Tantra and Tantra worship. The Tantras had no respect for the Vedas. The Tantrikas said that the Vedas were like a common woman open to all but that the Tantra was like a high-born woman kept secluded. The Tantra was never repudiated by the Brahmins. On the other hand they recognized it as a fifth Veda. So orthodox a Brahmin as Kulluka-Bhatt the celebrated Commentator on Manu Smriti says that Shruti is of two kinds, Vaidik and Tantrik. Not only did the Brahmins not repudiate the Tantras but actually promoted the Tantrik worship. The Matrika Bheda Tantra makes Shiva address his wife Parvati as follows¹:

“O sweet speaking goddess, the salvation of Brahmanas depends on drinking wine. I impart to you a great truth, O mountain born, when I say that the Brahman who devotes himself to drinking and its accompaniments, forthwith becomes a Siva. Even as water mixes with water, and metal blends with metal; even as the confined

¹Quoted by Rajendralal Mitra in Indo-Aryans Vol. p.

space in a pitcher merges into the great body of the confining vessel, and air mingles with air, so does a Brahman melt into Brahma, the universal soul”.

“There is not the least doubt about this. Likeness to the divinity and other forms of beatitude are designed for Kshatriyas and others; but true knowledge can never be acquired without drinking spirituous liquor; therefore should Brahmans always drink. No one becomes a Brahman by repeating the Gayatri, the mother of the Vedas: he is called a Brahman only when he has knowledge of Brahma. The ambrosia of the gods is their Brahma, and on earth it is arrack (or liquor distilled from rice); and because one attains through it the condition of a god (*suratva*), therefore is that liquor called *sura*.”

Why did the Brahmins repudiate father Manu and start again drinking liquor and flesh eating which Manu had stopped? This is a riddle.

