CHAPTER XIII

WHAT MADE THE BRAHMINS BECOME VEGETARIANS ?

THE non-Brahmins have evidently undergone a revolution. From being beef-eaters to have become non-beef-eaters was indeed a revolution. But if the non-Brahmins underwent one revolution, the Brahmins had undergone two. They gave up beef-eating which was one revolution. To have given up meat-eating altogether and become vegetarians was another revolution.

That this was a revolution is beyond question. For as has been shown in the previous chapters there was a time when the Brahmins were the greatest beef-eaters. Although the non-Brahmins did eat beef they could not have had it every day. The cow was a costly animal and the non-Brahmins could ill afford to slaughter it just for food. He only did it on special occasion when his religious duty or personal interest to propitiate a deity compelled him to do. But the case with the Brahmin was different. He was a priest. In a period overridden by ritualism there was hardly a day on which there was no cow sacrifice to which the Brahmin was not invited by some non-Brahmin. For the Brahmin every day was a beef-steak day. The Brahmins were therefore the greatest beef-eaters. The Yajna of the Brahmins was nothing but the killing of innocent animals carried on in the name of religion with pomp and ceremony with an attempt to enshroud it in mystery with a view to conceal their appetite for beef. Some idea of this mystery pomp and ceremony can be had from the directions contained in the Atreya Brahmana touching the killing of animals in a Yajna.

The actual killing of the animal is preceded by certain initiatory Rites accompanied by incantations too long and too many to be detailed here. It is enough to give an idea of the main features of the Sacrifice. The sacrifice commences with the erection of the Sacrificial post called the Yupa to which the animal is tied before it

is slaughtered. After setting out why the Yupa is necessary the Atreya Brahamana proceeds to state what it stands for. It says:[1]

"This Yupa is a weapon. Its point must have eight edges. For a weapon (or iron club) has eight edges. Whenever he strikes with it an enemy or adversary, he kills him. (This weapon serves) to put down him (every one) who is to be put down by him (the sacrificer). The Yupa is a weapon which stands erected (being ready) to slay an enemy. Thence an enemy (of the sacrificer) who might be present (at the sacrifice) comes of all ill after having seen the Yupa of such or such one."

The selection of the wood to be used for the Yupa is made to vary with the purposes which the sacrificer. wishes to achieve by the sacrifice. The Atreya Brahmana says :

"He who desires heaven, ought to make his Yupa of Khadira wood. For the gods conquered the celestial world by means of a Yupa, made of Khadira wood. In the same way the sacrificer conquers the celestial world by means of a Yupa, made of Khadira wood."

"He who desires food and wishes to grow fat ought to make his Yupa of Bilva wood. For the Bilva tree bears fruits every year; it is the symbol of fertility; for it increases (every year) in size from the roots up to the branches, therefore it is a symbol of fatness. He who having such a knowledge makes his Yupa of Bilva wood, makes fat his children and cattle.

"As regards the Yupa made of Bilva wood (it is further to be remarked), that they call 'light'Bilva. He who has such a knowledge becomes a 'light' among his own people, the most distinguished among his own people.

"He who desires beauty and sacred knowledge ought to make his Yupa of Palasa wood. For the Palasa is among the trees of beauty and sacred knowledge. He who having such a knowledge makes his Yupa of Palasa wood, becomes beautiful and acquires sacred knowledge.

"As regards the Yupa made of Palasa wood (there is further to be remarked), that the Palasa is the womb of all trees. Thence they speak on account of the palasam (foliage) of this or that tree (i.e. they call the foliage of every tree palasam). He who has such a knowledge obtains (the gratification of) any desire, he might have regarding all trees (i.e. he obtains from all trees any thing he might wish for)."

This is followed by the ceremony of anointing the sacrificial post.[2]

"The Adhvaryu says (to the Hotar): "We anoint the sacrificial post (Yupa); repeat the mantra (required)". The Hotar then repeats the verse: "Amjanti tvam adhvare" (3, 8, 1) i.e." The priests anoint thee, O tree! with celestial honey (butler); provide (us) with wealth if thou standest here erected, or if thou art lying on thy mother (earth)." The "celestial honey" is the melted butter (with which the priests anoint the Yupa). (The second half verse from) "provide us" &c. means: " thou mayest stand or lie, provide us with wealth."

1. Atreya Brahmana II pp. 72-74.

2. Atrcy Brahmana (Martin Haug) II pp. 74-78

"(The Hotar then repeats :) "jato jayate sudinatve" &c. (3, 8, 5) i.e., "After having been born, he (the Yupa) is growing (to serve) in the prime of his life the sacrifice of mortal men. The wise are busy in decorating (him, the Yupa) with skill. He, as an eloquent messenger of the gods, lifts his voice (that it might be heard by the gods)." He (the Yupa) is called jata, i.e., bom, because he is born by this (by the recital of the first quarter of this verse). (By the word) vardhamana, i.e., growing, they make him (the Yupa) grow in this manner. (By the words:) punanti (i.e. to clean, decorate), they clean him in this manner. (By the words:) "he as an eloquent messenger, &c." he announces the Yupa (the fact of his existence) to the gods.

The Hotar then concludes (the ceremony of anointing the sacrificial post) with the verse "yuva suvasah parivitah" (3, 8, 4), i.e. "the youth decorated with ribands, has arrived; he is finer (than all trees) which ever grew; the wise priests raise him up under recital of well-framed thoughts of their mind." The youth decorated with ribands, is the vital air (the soul), which is covered by the limbs of the body. (By the words;) "he is finer, "&c. he means that he (the Yupa) is becoming finer (more excellent, beautiful) by this (mantra)."

The next ceremony is the carrying of fire round the sacrificial animal. The Atreya Brahmana gives the following directions on this point. It says[1] :-

"When the fire is carried round (the animal) the Adhvaryu says to the Hotar: 'repeat (thy mantras)'. The Hotar then repeats this triplet of verses, addressed to Agni, and composed in the Gayatri metre: Agnir Hota no adhvare (4.15.1-3) i.e. (1) Agni, our priest, is carried round about like a horse, he who is among gods, the god of sacrifices, (2) Like a charioteer Agni passes thrice by the sacrifice; to the gods he carries the offering, (3) The master of food, the seer of Agni, went round the offering; he bestows riches on the sacrificer.

"When the fire is carried round (the animal) then he makes him (Agni) prosper by means of his own deity and his own metre. 'As a horse he is carried' means: they carry him as if he were a horse, round about. Like a charioteer Agni passes thrice by the sacrifice means; he goes round the sacrifice like a charioteer (swiftly). He is called *vajapati* (master of food) because he is the master of (different kinds of) food.

"The Advaryu says: give Hotar! the additional order for despatching offerings to the gods.

"The Hotar then says : (to the slaughterers) : Ye divine slaughterers, commence (your work), as well as ye who are human! that is to say, he orders all the slaughterers among gods as well as among men (to commence).

Bring hither the instruments for killing, ye who are ordering the sacrifice, in behalf of the two masters of the sacrifice.

1 Atreya Brahmana (Martin Haug) II - pp, 84-86

"The animal is the offering, the sacrificer the master of the offering. Thus he (the Hotar) makes prosper the sacrificer by means of his (the sacrifcer's) own offering. Thence they truly say: for whatever deity the animal is killed, that one is the master of the offering. If the animal is to be offered to one deity only, the priest should say : *Medhapataye* 'to the master of the sacrifice (singular)', if to two deities, then he should use the dual 'to both masters of the offering', and if to several deities, then he should use the plural, 'to the masters of the offering'. This is the established custom.

Bring ye for him fire! For the animal when carried (to the slaughter) saw death before it Not wishing to go to the gods, the gods said to it: Come we will bring thee to heaven ! The animal consented and said: One of you should walk before me. They consented. Agni then walked before it, and it followed after Agni. Thence they say, every animal belongs to Agni, for it followed after him. Thence they carry before the animal fire (Agni).

Spread the (sacred) grass! the animal lives on herbs. He (the Hotar) thus provides the animal with its entire soul (the herbs being supposed to form part of it).

After the ceremony of carrying fire round the animal comes the delivery of the animal to the priests for sacrifice. Who should offer the animal for sacrifice? On this point the direction of the Atreya Brahmana is[1] —

"The mother, the father, the brother, sister, friend, and companions should give this (animal) up (for being slaughtered)! When these words are pronounced, they seize the animal which is (regarded as) entirely given up by its relations (parents, &c.)"

On reading this direction one wonders why almost everybody is required to join in offering the animal for sacrifice. The reason is simple. There were altogether seventeen Brahmin priests who were entitled to take part in performing the sacrifice. Naturally enough they wanted the whole carcass to themselves.[2] Indeed they could not give enough to each of the seventeen priests unless they had the whole carcass to distribute. Legally the Brahmins could not claim the whole carcass unless everybody who could not claim any right over the animal had been divested of it. Hence the direction requiring even the companion of the sacrificer to take part in offering the animal.

Then comes the ceremony of actually killing the animal. The Atreya Brahmana gives the details of the mode and manner of killing the animal. Its directions are[3] :

1. Atreya Brahmana (Martin Haug) II p. 86

2. As a matter of fact the Brahmins took the whole carcass. Only one leg each was given to the sacrificer and his wife.

3. Atreya Brahmana (Martin Haug) II pp. 86-87

"Turn its feet northwards! Make its eye to go to the sun, dismiss its breath to the wind, its life to the air, its hearing to the directions, its body to the earth. In this way he (the Hotar) places it (connects it) with these worlds.

Take off the skin entire (without cutting it). Before operating the naval, tear out omentum. Stop its breathing within (by stopping its mouth). Thus he (the Hotar) puts its breath in the animals.

Make of its breast a piece like an eagle, of its arms (two pieces like) *two hatchets, of its forearms* (two pieces like) *two spikes, of its shoulders* (two pieces like) *two Kashyapas, its loins should be un-broken* (entire); (make of) *its thighs* (two pieces like) *two shields, of the two kneepans* (two pieces like) *two oleander leaves; take out its twenlysix ribs according to their order; preserve every limb of it in its integrity.* Thus he benefits all its limbs."

There remain two ceremonies to complete the sacrificial killing of the animal. One is to absolve the Brahmin priests who played the butcher's part. Theoretically they are guilty of murder for the animal is only a substitute for the sacrificer. To absolve them from the consequences of murder, the Hotar is directed by the Atreya Brahmana to observe the following injuction[1] :

"Do not cut the entrails which resemble on owl (when taking out the omentum), nor should among your children, O slaughterers! or among their offspring any one be found who might cut them. By speaking these words he presents these entrails to the slaughterers among the gods as well as to those among men.

The Hotar shall then say thrice : O *Adhrigu* (and ye others), *kill* (the animal), *do it well;* kill it, O *Adhrigu.*

After the animal has been killed, (he should say thrice:) *Far may it* (the consequences of murder) be (from us). For Adhrigu among the gods is he who silences (the animal) and the *Apapa* (away, away!) is he who puts it down. By speaking those words he surrenders the animal to those who silence it (by stopping its mouth) and to those who butcher it.

The Hotar then mutters (he makes, *Japa);* "O slaughterers! may all good you might do abide by us! and all mischief you might do go elsewhere!" The Hotar Gives by (this) speech the order (for killing the animal), for Agni had given the order for killing (the animal) with the same words when he was the Hotar of the gods.

By those words (the *Japa* mentioned) the Hotar removes (all evil consequences) from those who suffocate the animal and those who butter it, in all that they might transgress the rule by cutting one piece too soon, the other too late, or by cutting a too large, or a too small piece. The Hotar enjoying this happiness clears himself (from all guilt) and attains the full length of his life (and it serves the sacrificer) for obtaining his full life. He who has such a knowledge, attains the full length of his life."

1 Atreya Brahmana (Martin Haug) II pp. 86-90

The Atreya Bramhana next deals with the question of disposing of the parts of the dead animal. In this connection its direction is[1]—

"Dig a ditch in the earth to hide its excrements. The excrements consist of vegetable food; for the earth is the place for the herbs. Thus the Hotar puts them (the excrements) finally in their proper places. *Present the evil spirits with the blood!* For the gods having deprived (once) the evil spirits of their share in the Haviryajnas (such as the Full and New Moon offerings) apportioned to them the husk and smallest grains, and after having them turned out of the great sacrifice (such as the *Soma* and animal sacrifices), presented to them the blood. Thence the Hotar pronounces the words : *present the evil spirits with the blood!* By giving them this share he deprives the evil spirits of any other share in the sacrifice. They say : one should not address the evil spirits in the sacrifice, and evil spirits whichever they might be (Rakshasa, Asuras, etc.): for the sacrifice is to be without (the) evil spirits (not to be disturbed by them). But others say: one should address them; for (he who deprives any one, "entitled to a share of this share, will be punished (by him whom he deprives); and if he himself does not suffer the penalty, then his son, and if his son be spared, then his grandson will suffer it, and thus he resents on him (the son or grandson) what he wanted to resent on you."

"However, if the Hotar addresses them, he should do so with a low voice. For both, the low voice and the evil spirits, are, as it were, hidden. If he addresses them with a loud voice, then such one speaks in the voice of the evil spirits, and is capable of producing Rakshasa sounds (a horrible, terrific voice). The voice in which the haughty man and the drunkard speak is that of the evil spirits (Rakshasas). He who has such a knowledge will neither himself become haughty nor will such a man be among his offspring."

Then follows the last and the concluding ceremony that of offering parts of the body of the animal to the gods. It is called the Manota. According to the Atreya Brahmana[2]—

"The Adhvaryu says (to the Hotar): recite the verses appropriate to the offering of the parts of the sacrificial animal which are cut off for the Manota. He then repeats the hymn : Thou, O Agni, art the first Manota[3] (6.1)"

There remains the question of sharing the flesh of the animal. On this issue the division was settled by the Atreya Brahmana in the following terms[4] :

"Now follows the division of the different parts of the sacrificial animal (among the priests). We shall describe it. The two jawbones with the tongue are to be given to the Prastotar; the breast in the form of an eagle to the Udgatar; the throat with the palate to the Pratihartar; the lower part of the right loins to the Hotar: the left to the Brahma; the right thigh to the Maitravaruna; the left to the Brahmanachhamsi; the right side with the shoulder to the Adhvaryu; the

1. Atreya Brahmana (Martin Haug) H p. 87
2. Atreya Brahmana (Martin Haug) II p. 93
3. Manota means the deity to whom the offering is dedicated.
1 Atreya Brahmana (Martin Haug) II, pp. 441-42.

left side to those who accompany the chants; the left shoulder to the Pratipashatar; the lower part of the right arm to the Neshtar; the lower part of the laft arm to the Potar; the upper of the right thigh to the Achhavaka; the left to the Agnidhara; the upper part of the right arm to the Atreya; the left to the Sadasya; the back bone and the urinal bladder to the Grihapati (sacrificcr); the right feet to the Grihapati who gives a feasting; the left feet to the wife of that Grihapati who gives a feasting; the upper lip is common to both (the Grihapati and his wife), which is to be divided by the Grihapati. They offer the tail of the animal to wives, but they should give it to a Brahmana; the fleshy processes *(manikah)* on the neck and three gristles *(kikasah)* to the Gravastut; three other gristles and one-half of the fleshy part on the back *(vaikartta)* to the Unnetar; the other half of the fleshy part on the neck and the left lobe *(kloma)* to the slaughterer, who should present it to a Brahmana, if he himself would not happen to be a Brahmana. The head is to be given to the Subrahmanya, the skin belongs to him (the Subrahmanya), who spoke, *svah sutyam* (tomorrow at the Soma sacrifice); that part of the sacrificial animal at a Soma sacrifice which belongs to Ila (sacrificial food) is common to all the priests; only for the Hotar it is optional.

All these portions of the sacrificial animal amount to thirtysix single pieces, each of which represents the pada (foot) of a verse by which the sacrifice is carried up. The Brihati metre consists of thirtysix syllables; and the heavenly worlds are of the Brihati nature. In this way (by dividing the animal into thirtysix parts) they gain life (in this world) and the heavens, and having become established in both (this and that world) they walk there.

To those who divide the sacrificial animal in the way mentioned, it becomes the guide to heaven. But those who make the division otherwise are like scoundrels and miscreants who kill an animal merely (for gratifying their lust after flesh). This division of the sacrificial animal was invented by the Rishi *(Devabhaga,* a son of *Sruta*). When he was departing from this life, he did not entrust (the secret to anyone). But a supernatural being communicated it to *Cirija,* the son of *Babhru.* Since his time men study it."

What is said by the Atreya Brahmana places two things beyond dispute. One is that the Brahmins monopolised the whole of the flesh of the sacrificial animal. Except for a paltry bit they did not even allow the sacrificer to share in it. The second is that the Brahmins themselves played the part of butchers in the slaughter of the animal. As a matter of principle the Brahmins should not eat the flesh of the animal killed at a sacrifice. The principle underlying Yajna is that man should offer himself as sacrifice to the gods. He offers an animal only to release himself from this obligation. From this it followed that the animal, being only a substitute for the man, eating the flesh of animal meant eating human flesh. This theory was very detrimental to the interest of the Brahmins who had a complete monopoly of the flesh of the animal offered for sacrifice. The Atreya Brahmana which had seen in this theory the danger of the Brahmins being

deprived of the flesh of sacrificial animal takes pains to explain away the theory by a simple negation. It says[1] :

> "The man who is intitiated (into the sacrificial mysteries) offers himself to all deities. Agni represents all deities and Soma represents all deities. When he (the sacrificer) offers the animal to Agni-Soma he releases himself (by being represented by the animal) from being offered to all deities.
>
> They say : "do not eat from the animal offered to Agni-Soma. Who eats from this animal, eats from human flesh; because the sacrificer releases himself (from being sacrificed) by means of the animal". But this (precept) is not to be attended to."

Given these facts, no further evidence seems to be necessary to support the statement that the Brahmins were not merely beef-eaters but they were also butchers.

Why then did the Brahmins change front? Let us deal with their change of front in two stages. First, why did they give up beef-eating?

II

As has already been shown cow-killing was not legally prohibited by Asoka. Even if it had been prohibited, a law made by the Buddhist Emperor could never have been accepted by the Brahmins as binding upon them.

Did Manu prohibit beef-eating? If he did, then that would be binding on the Brahmins and would afford an adequate explanation of their change of front. Looking into the Manu Smriti one does find the following verses :

"V; 46. He who docs not seek to cause the sufferings of bonds and death to living creatures, (but) desires the good of all (beings), obtains endless bliss.

"V. 47. He who does not injure any (creature), attains without an effort what he thinks of, what he undertakes, and what he fixes his mind on.

"V. 48. Meat can never be obtained without injury to living creatures, and injury to sentient beings is detrimental to (the attainment of) heavenly bliss; let him therefore shun (the use of) meat.

1 Atreya Brahmana (Martin Haug) II p. 80

"V. 49. Having well considered the (disgusting) origin of flesh and the (cruelty of) fettering and slaying corporeal beings, let him entirely abstain from eating flesh."

If these verses can be treated as containing positive injunctions they would be sufficient to explain why the Brahmins gave up meat-eating and became vegetarians. But it is impossible to treat these verses as positive injunctions, carrying the force of law. They are either exhortations or interpolations introduced after the Brahmins had become vegetarians in praise of the change. That the latter is the correct view is proved by the following verses which occur in the same chapter of the Manu Smriti. :

"V. 28 : The Lord of creatures (Prajapati) created this whole (world to be) the sustenance of the vital spirit; both the immovable and the movable creation is the food of the vital spirit.

"V. 29. What is destitute of motion is the food of those endowed with locomotion; (animals) without fangs (are the food) of those with fangs, those without hands of those who possess hands, and the timid of the bold.

"V. 30. The eater who daily even devours those destined to be his food, commits no sin; for the creator himself created both the eaters and those who are to be eaten (for those special purposes).

"V. 56. There is no sin in eating meat, in (drinking) spirituous liquor, and in carnal intercourse for that is the natural way of created beings, but abstention brings great rewards.

"V. 27. One may eat meat when it has been sprinkled with water, while Mantras were recited, when Brahmanas desire (one's doing it) when one is engaged (in the performance of a rite) according to the law, and when one's life is in danger.

"V. 31. 'The consumption of meat (is befitting) for scrifices,' that is declared to be a rule made by the gods, but to persist (in using it) on other (occasions) is said to be a proceeding worthy of Rakshasas.

"V. 32. He who eats meat, when he honours the gods and manes commits no sin, whether he has bought it, or himself has killed (the animal) or has received it as a present from others.

"V. 42. A twice-born man who, knowing the true meaning of the Veda, slays an animal for these purposes, causes both himself and the animal to enter a most blessed state.

"V. 39. Swayambhu (the self-existent) himself created animals for the sake of sacrifices; sacrifices (have been instituted) for the good of this whole (world); hence the slaughtering (of beasts) for sacrifice is not slaughtering (in the ordinary sense of the word).

"V. 40. Herbs, trees, cattle, birds, and other animals that have been destroyed for sacrifices, receive (being reborn) higher existences."

Manu goes further and makes eating of flesh compulsory. Note the following verse :

"V. 35. But a man who, being duly engaged (to officiate or to. dine at a sacred rite), refuses to eat meat, becomes after death an animal during twentyone existences."

That Manu did not prohibit meat-eating is evident enough. That Manu Smriti did not prohibit cow-killing can also be proved from the Smriti itself. In the first place, the only references to cow in the Manu Smriti are to be found in the catalogue of rules which are made applicable by Manu to the Snataka. They are set dut below :-

1. A Snataka should not eat food which a cow has smelt.[1]
2. A Snataka should not step over a rope to which a calf is tied.[2]
3. A Snataka should not urinate in a cowpan.[3]
4. A Snataka should not answer call of nature facing a cow.[4]
5. A Snataka should not keep his right arm uncovered when he enters a cowpan.[5]
6. A Snataka should not interrupt a cow which is sucking her calf, nor tell anybody of it[6]
7. A Snataka should not ride on the back of the cow.[7]
8. A Snataka should not offend the cow.[8]
9. A Snataka who is impure must not touch a cow with his hand.[9]

From these references it will be seen that Manu did not regard the cow as a sacred animal. On the other hand, he regarded it as an impure animal whose touch caused ceremonial pollution.

There are verses in Manu which show that he did not prohibit the eating of beef. In this connection, reference may be made to Chapter III. 3. It says :-

"He (Snataka) who is famous (for the strict performance of) his duties and has received his heritage, the Veda from his father, shall be honoured, sitting on couch and adorned with a garland with the present of a cow (the honey-mixture)."

The question is why should Manu recommend the gift of a cow to a Snataka? Obviously, to enable him to perform Madhuparka. If that is so, it follows that Manu knew that Brahmins did eat beef and he had no objection to it.

1 Manu, 209
2 Ibid, 38
3 Ibid, 45
4 Manu, 48
5 Ibid, 58
6 Ibid, 59
7 Manu, 70
8 Ibid, 162
9 Ibid, 142

Another reference would be to Manu's discussion of the animals whose meat is eatable and those whose meat is not. In Chapter V. 18. he says :-

> "The porcupine, the hedgehog, the iguana, the rhinoceros, the tortoise, and the hare they declare to be eatable, likewise those (domestic animals) that have teeth in one jaw only, excepting camels."

In this verse Manu gives general permission to eat the flesh of all domestic animals that have teeth in one jaw only. To this rule Manu makes one exception, namely, the camel. In this class of domestic animals— those that have teeth in one jaw only— falls not only the camel but also the cow. It is noteworthy that Manu does not make an exception in the case of the cow. This means that Manu had no objection to the eating of the cow's flesh.

Manu did not make the killing of the cow an offence. Manu divides sins into two classes (i) mortal sins and (ii) minor sins. Among the mortal sins Manu includes :

> "XI. 55. Killing a Brahmana, drinking (the spirituous liquor called Sura) stealing the (gold of Brahmana) a adultery with a Guru's wife, and associating with such offenders."

Among minor sins Manu includes :

> "XI. 60. Killing the cow, sacrificing for those unworthy to sacrifice, adultery, setting oneself, casting off one's teacher, mother, father or son, giving up the (daily) study of the Veda and neglecting the (sacred domestic) fire."

From this it will be clear that according to Manu cow-killing was only a minor sin. It was reprehensible only if the cow was killed without good and sufficient reason. Even if it was otherwise, it was not heinous or inexplicable. The same was the attitude of Yajnavalkya[1].

All this proves that for generations the Brahmins had been eating beef. Why did they give up beef-eating? Why did they, as an extreme step, give up meat eating altogether and become vegetarians? It is two revolutions rolled into one. As has been shown it has not been done as a result of the preachings of Manu, their Divine Law-maker. The revolution has taken place in spite of Manu and contrary to his directions. What made the Brahmins take this step? Was philosophy responsible for it? Or was it dictated by strategy?

Two explanations are offered. One explanation is that this deification of the cow was a manifestation of the Advaita philosophy

1 Yaj. III. 227 and III 234.

that one supreme entity pervaded the whole universe, that on that account all life human as well as animal was sacred. This explanation is obviously unsatisfactory. In the first place, it does not fit in with facts. The Vedanta Sutra which proclaims the doctrine of oneness of life does not prohibit the killing of animals for sacrificial purposes as is evident from II.1.28. In the second place, if the transformation was due to the desire to realize the ideal of Advaita then there is no reason why it should have stopped with the cow. It should have extended to all other animals.

Another explanation[1] more ingenious than the first, is that this transformation in the life of the Brahmin was due to the rise of the doctrine of the Transmigration of the Soul. Even this explanation does not fit in with facts. The Brahadaranyaka Upanishad upholds the doctrine of transmigration (vi.2) and yet recommends that if a man desires to have a learned son born to him he should prepare a mass of the flesh of the bull or ox or of other flesh with rice and ghee. Again, how is it that this doctrine which is propounded in the Upanishads did not have any effect on the Brahmins upto the time of the Manu Smriti, a period of at least 400 years. Obviously, this explanation is no explanation. Thirdly, if Brahmins became vegetarians by reason of the doctrine of transmigration of the soul how is it, it did not make the non-Brahmins take to vegetarianism?

To my mind, it was strategy which made the Brahmins give up beef-eating and start worshipping the cow. The clue to the worship of the cow is to be found in the struggle between Buddhism and Brahmanism and the means adopted by Brahmanism to establish its supremacy over Buddhism. The strife between Buddhism and Brahmanism is a crucial fact in Indian history. Without the realisation of this fact, it is impossible to explain some of the features of Hinduism. Unfortunately students of Indian history have entirely missed the importance of this strife. They knew there was Brahmanism. But they seem to be entirely unaware of the struggle for supremacy in which these creeds were engaged and that their struggle which extended for 400 years has left some indeliable marks on religion, society and politics of India.

This is not the place for describing the full story of the struggle. All one can do is to mention a few salient points. Buddhism was at one time the religion of the majority of the people of India. It continued to be the religion of the masses for hundreds of years. It attacked Brahmanism on all sides as no religion had done before.

1 Kane's Dharma Shastra II. Part II. P 776

Brahmanism was on the wane and if not on the wane, it was certainly on the defensive. As a result of the. spread of Buddhism, the Brahmins had lost all power and prestige at the Royal Court and among the people. They were smarting under the defeat they had suffered at the hands of Buddhism and were making all possible efforts to regain their power and prestige. Buddhism had made so deep an impression on the minds of the masses and had taken such a hold of them that it was absolutely impossible for the Brahmins to fight the Buddhists except by accepting their ways and means and practising the Buddhist creed in its extreme form. After the death of Buddha his followers started setting up the images of the Buddha and building stupas. The Brahmins followed it. They, in their turn, built temples and installed in them images of Shiva, Vishnu and Ram and Krishna etc.,—all with the object of drawing away the crowd that was attracted by the image worship of Buddha. That is how temples and images which had no place in Brahmanism came into Hinduism. The Buddhists rejected the Brahmanic religion which consisted of Yajna and animal sacrifice, particularly of the cow. The objection to the sacrifice of the cow had taken a strong hold of the minds of the masses especially as they were an agricultural population and the cow was a very useful animal. The Brahmins in all probability had come to be hated as the killer of cows in the same way as the guest had come to be hated as *Gognha,* the killer of the cow by the householder, because whenever he came a cow had to be killed in his honour. That being the case, the Brahmins could do nothing to improve their position against the Buddhists except by giving up the Yajna as a form of worship and the sacrifice of the cow.

That the object of the Brahmins in giving up beef-eating was to snatch away from the Buddhist Bhikshus the supremacy they had acquired is evidenced by the adoption of vegetarianism by Brahmins. Why did the Brahmins become vegetarian? The answer is that without becoming vegetarian the Brahmins could not have recovered the ground they had lost to their rival namely Buddhism. In this connection it must be remembered that there was one aspect in which Brahmanism suffered in public esteem as compared to Buddhism. That was the practice of animal sacrifice which was the essence of Brahmanism and to which Buddhism was deadly opposed. That in an agricultural population there should be respect for Buddhism and revulsion against Brahmanism which involved slaughter of animals including cows and bullocks is only natural. What could the Brahmins do to recover the lost ground? To go one better than the

Buddhist Bhikshus not only to give up meat-eating but to become vegetarians— which they did. That this was the object of the Brahmins in becoming vegetarians can be proved in various ways.

If the Brahmins had acted from conviction that animal sacrifice was bad, all that was necessary for them to do was to give up killing animals for sacrifice. It was unnecessary for them to be vegetarians. That they did go in for vegetarianism makes it obvious that their motive was far-reaching. Secondly, it was unnecessary for them to become vegetarians. For the Buddhist Bhikshus were not vegetarians. This statement might surprise many people owing to the popular belief that the connection between Ahimsa and Buddhism was immediate and essential. It is generally believed that the Buddhist Bhikshus eschewed animal food. This is an error. The fact is that the Buddhist Bhikshus were permitted to eat three kinds of flesh that were deemed pure. Later on they were extended to five classes. Yuan Chwang, the Chinese traveller was aware of this and spoke of the pure kinds of flesh as *San-Ching*. The origin of this practice among the Bhikshus is explained by Mr. Thomas Walters. According to the story told by him[1]—

> "In the time of Buddha there was in Vaisali a wealthy general named Siha who was a convert to Buddhism. He became a liberal supporter of the Brethren and kept them constantly supplied with good flesh-food. When it was noticed abroad that the Bhikshus were in the habit of eating such food specially provided for them, the Tirthikas made the practice a matter of angry reproach. Then the abstemious ascetic Brethren, learning this, reported the circumstances to the Master, who thereupon called the Brethren together. When they assembled, he announced to them the law that they were not to eat the flesh of any animal which they had seen put to death for them, or about which they had been told that it had been slain for them. But he permitted to the Brethern as 'pure' (that is, lawful) food the flesh of animals the slaughter of which had not been seen by the Bhikshus, not heard of by them, and not suspected by them to have been on their account. In the Pali and *Ssu-fen* Vinaya it was after a breakfast given by Siha to the Buddha and some of the Brethren, for which the carcass of a large ox was procured that the Nirgranthas reviled the Bhikshus and Buddha instituted this new rule declaring fish and flesh 'pure' in the three conditions. The animal food now permitted to the Bhikshus came to be known as the 'three pures' or 'three pure kinds of flesh', and it was tersely described as 'unseen, unheard, unsuspected', or as the Chinese translations sometimes have it 'not seen, not heard nor suspected to be on my account'. Then two more kinds of animal food were declared "lawful for the Brethren viz., the flesh of animals which had died a natural death, and that of animals which had been killed by a bird of prey or other savage creature. So there came to be five classes or

1 Yuan Chwang (1904) Vol. I. p. 55

descriptions of flesh which the professed Buddhist was at liberty to use as food. Then the 'unseen, unheard, unsuspected' came to be treated as one class, and this together with the 'natural death' and 'bird killed' made a *san-ching."*

As the Buddhist Bhikshus did eat meat the Brahmins had no reason to give it up. Why then did the Brahmins give up meat-eating and become vegetarians? It was because they did not want to put themselves merely on the same footing in the eyes of the public as the Buddhist Bhikshus.

The giving up of the Yajna system and abandonment of the sacrifice of the cow could have had only a limited effect. At the most it would have put the Brahmins on the same footing as the Buddhists. The same would have been the case if they had followed the rules observed by the Buddhist Bhikshus in the matter of meat-eating. It could not have given the Brahmins the means of achieving supremacy over the Buddhists which was their ambition. They wanted to oust the Buddhists from the place of honour and respect which they had acquired in the minds of the masses by their opposition to the killing of the cow for sacrificial purposes. To achieve their purpose the Brahmins had to adopt the usual tactics of a wreckless adventurer. It is to beat extremism by extremism. It is the strategy which all rightists use to overcome the leftists. The only way to beat the Buddhists was to go a step further and be vegetarians.

There is another reason which can be relied upon to support the thesis that the Brahmins started cow-worship, gave up beef-eating and became vegetarians in order to vanquish Buddhism. It is the date when cow-killing became a mortal sin. It is well-known that cow-killing was not made an offence by Asoka. Many people expect him to have come forward to prohibit the killing of the cow. Prof. Vincent Smith regards it as surprising. But there is nothing surprising in it.

Buddhism was against animal sacrifice in general. It had no particular affection for the cow. Asoka had therefore no particular reason to make a law to save the cow. What is more astonishing is the fact that cow-killing was made a *Mahapataka,* a mortal sin or a capital offence by the Gupta Kings who were champions of Hinduism which recognised and sanctioned the killing of the cow for sacrificial purposes. As pointed out by Mr. D. R. Bhandarkar[1]—

"We have got the incontrovertible evidence of inscriptions to show that early in the 5th century A. D. killing a cow was looked upon as an offence of the

1 Some Aspects of Ancient Indian Culture (1940) pp. 78-79.

deepest turpitude, turpitude as deep as that involved in murdering a Brahman. We have thus a copper-plate inscription dated 465 A.D. and referring itself to the reign of Skandagupta of the Imperial Gupta dynasty. It registers a grant and ends with a verse saying : 'Whosoever will transgress this grant that has been assigned (shall become as guilty as) the slayer of a cow, the slayer of a spiritual preceptor (or) the slayer of a Brahman. A still earlier record placing *go-hatya* on the same footing as *brahma hatya* is that of Chandragupta II, grandfather of Skandagupta just mentioned. It bears the Gupta date 93, which is equivalent to 412 A.D. It is engraved on the railing which surrounds the celebrated Buddhist stupa at Sanchi, in Central India. This also speaks of a benefaction made by an officer of Chandragupta and ends as follows: .. ... "Whosoever shall interfere with this arrangement .. he shall become invested with (the guilt of) the slaughter of a cow or of a Brahman, and with (the guilt of) the five *anantarya."* Here the object of this statement is to threaten the resumer of the grant, be he a Brahminist or a Buddhist, with the sins regarded as mortal by each community. The *anantaryas* arc the five *mahapatakas* according to Buddhist theology. They arc: matricide, patricide, killing an Arhat, shedding the blood of a Buddha, and causing a split among the priesthood. The *mahapatakas* with which a Brahminist is here threatened are only two : viz., the killing of a cow and the murdering of a Brahman. The latter is obviously a *mahapataka* as it is mentioned as such in all the Smritis, but the former has been specified only an upapalaka by Apastamba, Manu, Yajnavalkya and so forth. But the very fact that it is here associated with *brahma-hatya* and both have been put on a par with the *anantaryas* of the Buddhists shows that in the beginning of the fifth century A.D., it was raised to the category of *mahapatakas*. Thus *go-hatya* must have come to be considered a *mahapataka* at least one century earlier, i.e., about the commencement of the fourth century A.D."

The question is why should a Hindu king have come forward to make a law against cow-killing, that is to say, against the Laws of Manu? The answer is that the Brahmins had to suspend or abrogate a requirement of their Vedic religion in order to overcome the supremacy of the Buddhist Bhikshus. If the analysis is correct then it is obvious that the worship of the cow is the result of the struggle between Buddhism and Brahminism. It was a means adopted by the Brahmins to regain their lost position.

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