

justification for denying their title to *Brahmajñāna*, pure and simple. He also declares in favour of the view that Deities are *embodied beings*, and as such they also are entitled to that Supreme Knowledge of Brahman which leads to *Mokṣa*, Liberation.

(D) ARE WOMEN ENTITLED TO PERFORM SACRIFICES ?

In connection with the question of Persons entitled to perform Sacrifices, there have been two wide exclusions ; *Women* and *Śhūdras* have come to be excluded from the performance on some-what vague grounds, specially as regards *Women*.

*Sutras* 6.1.6—20 deal with the case of *Women*.

The question has been raised in connection with the general Injunction ‘*Svargakāmo yajēta*’ (‘Desiring Heaven, one should perform Sacrifices’). Is this Injunction meant for the *Man* alone or for *Man* as well as *Woman* ?

The *Prima Facie View* is that—‘As the word used in the text, ‘*Svargakāmaḥ*’ is in the masculine, the Injunction should be taken as restricted to the *Male* alone. This is the view that has been held by the Sage *Aitiśhāyana*, says the *Sūtra* 6.1.6 ; a somewhat unusual form of stating the *Pūrvapakṣa*.

The *Established Conclusion* is that *it is the whole Genus*, the whole Human Community, Male as well as Female,—*that is entitled*, under the Injunction, *to perform Sacrifices ; because there is no ground for distinction ; hence the Woman also should be regarded as entitled to perform Sacrifices*,—says *Sūtra* 6.1.8. This view has been stated in the *Sūtra* as sponsored by *Bādarāyaṇa*.

As the question of ‘Equal Rights’ is a moot question even today, we shall devote some attention to the arguments that have been adduced on both sides.

The argument against *Women’s* right to perform Sacrifices may be thus summed up :—(a) “To *men alone* should the title to perform sacrifices belong, as they alone possess property ; as a matter of fact, *Man* alone possesses wealth, not *woman* ; and wealth is necessary for sacrificial performances. *Women* cannot possess wealth, because they are bought and sold, —sold by their father, and bought by the husband. That is, having been sold by the Father, the *Woman* does not have any right over his property ; and having been bought by the husband, she cannot have any right over his property. The ‘buying’ and ‘selling’ referred to here is in view of the *Ārṣa* form of Marriage, where the Bridegroom has to give to the Bride’s

father a Cow and a Bull. There are several other Vedic texts which show that Women are actually bought and sold ; there is the text, for instance, which says,—‘If, upon being *bought* by the husband, the woman has dealings with others, etc., etc.’—(b) It might be argued that the Woman may acquire the required wealth on her own account by means of spinning, cooking and such arts. But what she earns will not be her own ; it belongs to her husband ;—यत् ते समधिगच्छन्ति यस्य त तस्य तद् धनम् says *Manu*. (*Sūtras* 10-12.)

The answer to this argument is as follows :—The desire for results is equally present in the woman also. As regards her having no wealth of her own, this absence of property is based upon the authority of the *Smṛti* (of *Manu* quoted), while her title to the performance of Sacrifices would be based upon the Vedic text—if she fulfils the condition of having the ‘Desire for Heaven’. From this we conclude that if the woman desires the results that have been mentioned as following from the Sacrifices, she should not mind what the *Smṛti* has said regarding her not having property, she should proceed to acquire wealth and perform to Sacrifice. (*Bhā. Sū.* 13). As a matter of fact, however, the *Woman is actually connected with property*—says the *Sūtra* (14) ;—this is clear from the following words addressed to the Bridegroom at the time of marriage—धर्मं चार्थं च कामे च नातिचरितव्या ‘In matters relating to Duty (religious acts), to *property* and to *pleasure*, she should not be ignored’. All that *Manu*’s declaration—that ‘the woman has no property’—means is that ‘the wife should not behave as if she were independent of her husband’.—(*Bhāṣya*, Trs., p. 981). As regards the ‘Sale’ that has been spoken of in regard to the wife, Marriage is a purely religious function, it is not a *Sale* in the ordinary sense of the term ; an article is said to be ‘sold’ only when its price is a fluctuating factor,—sometimes more sometimes less ; in the case of the Marriage however, the so-called ‘price’ is a fixed item—‘a hundred bullocks’ for instance, for the girl, irrespective of her being ugly or handsome. Lastly, there is a Vedic text indicating that Women do have property ; this text is पत्नी वा पारिणायस्येष्टे ‘The Wife is mistress over the household property.’ (*Sū.* 16 and *Bhāṣya*.)

We have seen that the Man and the Woman both possess property and are therefore equally entitled to perform Sacrifices. The next question that arises is—Is the Man alone or the Woman alone, entitled to perform Sacrifices? Or are both to perform them only *jointly* ?

This question has been dealt with by *Sūtras* 6.1.17-21.

The *Prima Facie View* is that each of them should perform the Sacrifice separately; because the Injunctive Word that lays down the Sacrifice—

'*Yajeta*'—is the singular number, and due significance must attach to this Number ; whereby only *one* person should perform the Sacrifice at a time, and there should not be any joint performance by any two or more.

The *Established Conclusion* however is as follows :—*Though both the Man and his wife, possess property, their action should always be joint, because of the declaration to that effect. (Sūtra 6.1.17).* This 'declaration' is contained in such texts as (a) 'In matters relating to Duty, Property and Pleasure, she shall not be ignored' ; (b) 'Religious acts should be performed jointly'. there are some Sacrifices again which must be performed by the Man and his wife *together* ; such for instance, as the two important Sacrifices of *Darsha—Purnamāsa* and *Jyotistoma* ; at both these Sacrifices, oblations are laid down as to be offered and of the Clarified Butter that has been 'examined' by the Sacrificer and his Wife ; and the performance of such Sacrifices would be defective if either the Man or his wife did not participate in it. Nor can the Man performing the Sacrifice associate *any* Woman he likes with himself ; because the texts definitely assert that the Man should be associated with the woman who is his '*patnī*', and the Patni is his *married wife*, in regard to which the Man has been exhorted '*to do jointly with his wife* all those acts that need associating with a woman'. As regards the Singular Number in the Injunctive Word '*yajeta*', if stress were meant to be laid upon this Singular Number, how could the Sacrificer associate with himself as many as sixteen Priests? Further, the functions of the *Wife* at the performance are entirely different from those of the *Sacrificer* himself; so that by performing her own specified functions, the Wife does not disturb the *singleness* of the Husband. It is absolutely essential too that the Sacrifice should be performed by the Husband and the Wife *together*, because the wealth that is used at the performance of Sacrifices belongs in common to the Husband and Wife ; hence the Sacrifice should be performed by both *jointly* ; or if, either of them is unwilling, it should not be performed at all. There are certain acts in the way of personal Embellishments which may be done by the Man by himself, and no associating of the Wife is necessary there ; to this category belong such acts as the *shaving of the head*, the *wearing of the Gold ring* and so forth. As regards the argument that the Wife being a purchased commodity, her 'ownership' over property cannot be real—this has been answered already ; as a matter of fact, the idea that 'the Wife is a purchased commodity and is not entitled to own property' is based upon Smṛti, while the idea that *She owns property* is based on Vedic texts; and further, it is by virtue of her 'desiring the result expected to follow

from the Sacrifice' that the Wife is entitled to its performance. From all this it follows that both the Man and his Wife are *jointly* entitled to the performance of Sacrifices. (*Bhāṣya*, Trs., pp. 983—986).

The next question that arises is—Is the Wife to do all that the Husband does ? or are her functions restricted ?

The *Prima Facie View* is that as the Sacrifice is performed by both *jointly*, all the functions laid down as to be performed by the 'Sacrificer' should be performed by the Wife also; because she is as much a 'Sacrificer' as the Husband.

The *Established Conclusion* is as follows :—*To the Wife appertain only such functions as are specifically laid down for her. She has to do also the 'Invoking of Blessings' and observe 'celibacy'.* (Sūtra 6. 1. 24);—and the reason for this is that the Vedic text distinctly lays down these acts as to be done by her, and in matters relating to *Dharma*, the Vedic text is our sole guide; and for the same reason she is to do also the 'Invoking of the Blessings' and also observe 'celibacy'. The reason given for all this distinction is that *She is not equal* (Sūtra 24); that is, *She does not stand on the same footing as the Husband*—says the *Bhāṣya* (Trs. P. 994).

From what has gone before, this 'inequality' would appear to be in reference to the fact that there are some details that can be performed by the Man alone, and others again that can be performed by the Wife alone. The *Sūtra* does not make any mention of the Woman being not entitled to *study the Veda*. The Commentators however, from the *Bhāṣya* downwards, have explained the 'inequality' of the *Sūtra* to mean that 'the Husband is a *Male* and hence *learned in the Veda*, while the Wife is a *Female*, and hence *not so learned*' (*Bhāṣya* Trs. p. 993); and *Kumārila* goes a step further and offers a different interpretation of the words of the *Sūtra*; he says;—“The term *Ashīh* literally stands for those Vedic *Mantras* in which blessings are invoked—such as *Āyurdā agnē āyurmē d'ehi*”; but in view of the fact that the Wife is not learned in the Veda and hence would not be able to recite the said *Mantras* with the proper accent etc., the term '*Āshīh*' should be taken as standing for *Embellishments*, such as *bathing, anointing, applying collyrium to the eyes* and so forth; the term '*celibacy*' also should be taken as standing for *freedom from passions* of all kinds". (*Tupīkā*). The *Bhāṣya* (Trs. P. 993) proceeds—What happens is this :—(a) There are certain details subserving the purposes of the Sacrifice which have been declared as to be performed by the 'Sacrificer', and as in all these texts

the 'Sacrificer' is mentioned by means of a name in the Masculine Gender, these details would be performed by the *Man*, not by his Wife ; (b) then there are certain details subserving the purposes of the Sacrifice which have to be performed with Mantras ; and these also could not be performed by the *Wife*, as she does not possess the requisite knowledge ; nor can these texts themselves be taken as indicating the presence of such knowledge in women ; as such indication would be justifiable only if the performance were impossible in the absence of such knowledge in the *Wife* ; as a matter of fact, however, even in the absence of such knowledge in the *Wife*, the performance in question could be carried out by the *Husband* himself ; hence there is no justification for assuming such knowledge in the *Wife*, and thus treating an exception to the general rule that prohibits *Vedic Study* for women. Hence it follows that the details requiring the reciting of *Mantras* should be performed by the Husband, not by the Wife. (c) As regards the 'Invoking of Blessings' and the 'Celibacy', these subserve the purposes of the Performer ; so that these could not be regarded as complete if done by only one of the couple ; because if only one of these did them, the Embellishment of the other would remain defective. In the texts enjoining these details, the 'Sacrificer' does not figure as the *Subject*, hence the Gender of the word has no significance : which means that these have to be done by both—the *Man* as well as his *Wife*. (d) What has been specifically laid down as to be done by the *Wife*, e.g., 'Examining of the Clarified Butter',—has to be done by her alone. From all this it follows that on account of this 'inequality' the *Wife* does not stand on the same footing as the *Husband*.

(E) IS THE SHUDRA ENTITLED TO PERFORM SACRIFICES ?

The *Shudra* is not entitled to perform Sacrifices at all. The *Established Conclusion* on the subject has been thus formulated in the *Sutra* (6. 1. 26). *The Agnihotra and such Sacrifices can be performed by the three Higher Castes only, as in connection with the Fire-installation Rite, these three only have been mentioned ; the Shudra therefore can have nothing to do with Sacrifices ; specially as the Veda is related to the Brāhmana and the other two castes only.* The Fire-installation Rite has been enjoined in the text—"The *Brāhmana* should install the Fires during Spring, the *Ksatriya* during Summer and the *Vaishya* during Autumn' ; and there is no mention of the *Sudra*. Thus being without the duly-installed Fires, the *Shudra* cannot perform the *Agnihotra* and such other acts. The *Āhavanīya* and other consecrated fires being not available for the *Shudra*, he cannot be entitled