

## ASVAMEDHA

Sankarsana das did not have many disciples. He preferred not to take too many students, because (he said) a guru with many disciples is really a guru with no disciples. When we made the odd trip into Vrindavan to visit the temples, he would get really cross when he'd see foreign swamis with huge crowds of initiates following them. "This is not Vedic," he would growl. "Look, in *Mahabharata*, when Arjuna and his brothers go to study with their guru, are they among one hundred other students? No, the guru takes four or five students at a time, ten at the most, and makes them his focus. But these damn Yankees," (and he'd wave at a saffron robed fellow), "they tell people to follow them and that they will take on their karmas – but that's not Vedic at all! No one can take on your karmas, the best that they can do is give you some attention and help you overcome your own karmas. If gurus could take on the karmas of the world, then how the hell did the British colonize India? These Americans collect devotees like a child collects baseball cards or marbles, it is just a game for their own egos. Worse, they ask for *dakshina* for the privilege of following them. What a disgrace, and it offends Krsna. Do not think it will go unpunished – it will not go unpunished."

But that is not to say that he did not have any disciples. He did have a few loyal students, like my old friend Ramkrsna das, and others that would occasionally visit him to ask his blessing or his help, or sometimes just his advice. On one particular afternoon, when nothing special was happening, we heard a car rumbling along the muddy road which led

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to Sankarsana's small home. Soon, through the trees, you could see a very expensive silver Cadillac coming towards us. I did not know the license plates of India very well back then, but one of my godsisters told me afterwards that the car was from Mumbai. The car parked, and the driver got out and opened the passenger door. First, an incredibly stout man emerged from the car, with all the ponderous dignity of a man of great importance. He was almost bald, and looked to be about the same age as Sankarsana. A strikingly pretty younger woman, who cannot have been more than mid-twenties, followed him. I assumed she was his daughter, but later afterwards learned that she was his wife. The door of the house opened, and my guru stepped out into the sunlight, squinting against the sun's glare. When he saw the guests who were making their way towards him, a broad smile played across his face. He looked genuinely happy to see them, and barked out a gruff welcome to the old gent. The gent boomed out a reply, and moved to embrace Sankarsana. My guru seized his guest, very warmly, and he acknowledged the pranams of the younger lady with the usual near-embarrassment with which he accepted the due obeisances. Shows of fawning deference always made him uncomfortable, as he insisted such displays were a medieval Muslim custom, and not native to Vedic culture. It was clear that the lady did not know whether to bow or to shake hands, but Sankarsana quickly moved to take her hand and ushered them into the house, calling for the devotees to bring tea and refreshments.

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Sankarsana did not invite his students into the house to visit with the guests, and once the refreshments were brought for the guests, the devotees were sent out of the building also. The guests cannot have stayed more than an hour, which I found surprising, as the drive cannot have been a short one. Before the guests left, the old gent had the driver bring several packages from the back of the car, and I distinctly recall one of them being a good-sized crate of expensive brandy. Sankarsana accepted these gifts with a very grave demeanor. The gent appeared to be very grateful for whatever conversation had taken place, and he was practically chortling as he made his way back to the car – and he even gave the young lady a playful pat on her rear!

Sankarsana gave an amused snort as the gent began to ponderously lower himself into the car, and he turned to me and winked.

“Those people, they are horse-fuckers!” he smirked.

Needless to say, I was a bit taken off guard by this particular expression.

“Sorry, what’s that?” I asked.

“I mean that they are very rich. Oh, he is very successful. Big business man, he has a lot of money. Nice house, nice car, very pretty wife. She is greedy like him, she married him for his money. She has a boyfriend, I think, but her husband does not really care, as long as she is discreet. They are very attached to this world, and so he asks Lord Krsna

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and Lord Siva to give him material success. Well, he has been my student for a long time, and I despair of him reaching moksha, but I can at least help them get some nice things here and now.”



“But why did you call them both horse-fuckers?” I asked in a puzzled tone.

“Jai Krsna, you are very young,” growled my guru in an amused tone. “You tell me – what is the *Asvamedha*?”

That much I knew. “The *Asvamedha* is the Vedic horse sacrifice, which is performed for kings and princes that wish to make their kingdom legitimate. It is only rarely performed today, as it’s said to be complex.”

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“Oh, it is complex, it is complex – but how do they sacrifice the horse?” my teacher asked quizzically.

This I did not know, I admitted.

He chuckled, in that sordid way he sometimes affected.

“The ceremony took a year and three days. For one year, a white stallion had to roam freely throughout a territory. So they had to protect the animal from thieves and robbers. Some sages say that the horse was a symbol, that it used to be a prince instead, but that is just hearsay. After the year had passed, there was the sacrifice ceremony. On the second day of the ceremony, the raj would ride in his chariot, pulled by the stallion and other horses. Then the wives of the raj would anoint the stallion with musk, on the head, the flanks, and the phallus, as if it was getting married. Some texts say that they had to massage the phallus to excite the stallion. The attendants would put up a tent, like for a wedding, and the chief queen was dressed as if for a wedding. Then the stallion was smothered with silk curtains, because you did not want to harm the horse or wound it, it has to be perfect. Then, while the stallion was still warm and erect, the queen had to fondle it and mount it, calling it her husband.”

“You are not suggested that she actually – ah – that she fucked the horse?” I asked, understandably horrified.

“Oh, she fucked the horse. She fucked the horse very good. The ritual demands it.”

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I refused to believe it, of course. So he brought me inside, and pulled two books from his dusty shelves where he kept the White and Black Vedas.

“This is the *Apastamba Srauta Sutra* and this is *Taittiriya Samhita*, they are part of the Vedas. Not ‘Vedic literatures’ like those fake swamis say – these are the real Vedas from Vyasa.”

He searched for a passage and passed me the *Taittiriya Samhita*.

“Can you read the Sanskrit?” he asked.

At that point, I could make out a few words, but some of them were not familiar. He scanned the page, and started reading in Sanskrit, with his deep, rich voice:

*krsyai tva ksemaya tva  
rayyaf tva pdsaya tva  
prthivyai tva ntariksaya tva dive tva  
sate tva sate tva*

Then in English, he translated:

You for ploughing, you for inhabiting,  
You for riches, you for increase,  
You for earth, you for air, you for heaven,  
You for existence, you for the void.

And then more:

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*vasubhir devebhir devataya  
gayatrena tva chandasa yunajmi  
vasantena tvartuna havisa dlksayami*

As the devas being deity,  
As the gayatri being the meter, I yoke you,  
As the spring the being oblation, I consecrate you,

“The Queen, she is talking to the horse while she is rubbing him with nice musk. She is telling him why they are going to sacrifice him, and telling the listeners too. But that is not where it stops.”

He started to chuckle. “Then she starts to talk dirty to the stallion, she tells him it is time for fucking. Oh! you don’t believe me? Well the Vedas read:

*a’ham ajani garbhadham a tvam ajasi garbadham  
tau saha caturah padah sam pra sarayavahai.*

Which means:

Come on, stallion! Mate with me, you stud! I’m asking you sweetly for mating: let the two of us get busy and entwine our limbs.

And after she says this, in case there is any doubt left, the pujari (priest says):

*ut sakthyor grdam dhehi  
anjim udanjim anv aja*

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*ya striram jivabhojano  
ya asam biladhavanah  
priya strinam apicyah  
ya asam krsne laksmani  
sardigrdim paravadhit.*

In English, it means:

Bring the cock betwixt the thighs,  
drive along the erect and wet one  
which is women's live pleasure,  
which is their penetration,  
women's deep secret  
which has hit the clitoris,  
in the dark-haired cleft.

“Then,” he concluded, “they would butcher the stallion and offer the meat and blood to the sacred fire, like any yajna.”

“And the queen?” I asked in a quavering voice, expecting the worst.

“Oh, she was probably sore for a few days, and the *raj* would have fucked her good and hard as soon as the ritual was over, in hopes of begetting a strong prince on her.”

I must have looked appalled, and Sankarsana just started laughing and laughing. “Oh, you Americans!” he barked. “You think religion is all prudish. What is wrong with you? Religion is dirty and sordid, and Krsna is dirty and sordid



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too. Why, didn't you see his name in there? *ya asam krsne laksmani* – It is figuratively Sanskrit for “women's pleasure”, but it is literally *Laksmi's Krsna*. You see? Krsna is in the Vedas, but you have to read the dirty parts with horse-fucking to find him. Oh Krsna, you are a naughty boy!” He started to laugh again, so hard that he began to cough and turn red.

When he finally calmed down, he told me sit down on the couch. He put the books back on the shelf, and he told me to get two glasses from the kitchen. I did so, and when I came back, he had opened a bottle of the brandy which the gent had brought.

“*Maharaj*, I understand that the ritual is nasty, but what does that have to do with your guest and his wife?”

He frowned at me. “Didn't you hear anything I just explained? He is a *raj*, she is a queen.”

*Ugh*. I was aghast.

“You are not suggesting,” I said slowly, “that they actually performed the *asvamedha*.”

“Why not?” he asked, “is it not in the Vedas?”

“Well yes, but she actually fucked a horse?”

“Oh she did. He did too, he fucked a young mare, the dirty fellow. You see that in the Vedic commentaries as a

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supplementary practice to the main rite, while they are butchering the stallion afterwards.”

“But who would even perform that ritual today?” I asked, and I confess I was morbidly curious.

“Oh, son, listen to me carefully. All joking aside, this ritual is in the Vedas. It is a holy rite, it is sastra – do you not understand? It is not dirty, it is a terribly sacred thing. The only ritual as holy is the *purushamedha*, and you have heard me speak about this already. Listen, when Lord Kalki comes, he will perform the *asvamedha* himself. Let me be clear, and do not misunderstand me: Lord Kalki will have his wives sexually caress a stallion, and he will expect his wife to fondle its cock and mount it for hard sex. It will happen, and that is sastra. That is the dharma. Visnu might order us to do things that are transgressive, but that is only because we do not properly understand the significance.”

“So that older fellow, he actually had a horse roam for an entire year, and then had that – that ritual performed for him?”

“Yes,” said Sankarsana very soberly, “and I assisted at the rite, though the main pujari was a well-respected fellow from Mumbai.”

“But the cost?”

“Immense,” he admitted.

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“So why?” I asked.

“Gold breeds gold,” he intoned, as if it were a proverb. “Look, he spent a great deal of money to sponsor the ritual five years ago, and he was almost a millionaire then. Today he is a multimillionaire, and he might become a billionaire. Who knows?” He shrugged. “I feel badly for him, though, since this is not what I would have liked for him.”

“But you are always saying “*artha, dharma, kama, moksha,*” I said, “and *artha* is wealth.”

“Artha is wealth, and artha is good,” he said, “and besides, Laksmi is wealth. Krsna is married to wealth. But Krsna does not want us to lose sight of Him in our quest for wealth. I worry that this fellow has gotten so fond of his gold that he no longer cares if his pretty wife is fucking her boyfriend. That is not proper kama, and there are bad karmas in play. But I am trying to get them back on the right path. At least the asvamedha will have removed some bad karmas tied to the artha, and there may be hope for him yet. I will never give up on any of my students, even the bad ones.” He chuckled. “And I have a lot of bad ones!”

He slapped me affectionately, and I did not protest too much.

“What should you learn? Clearly, religion is not the clear-cut system of public performance that we often take it to be. Religion – and I mean Vedic religion – is and always has been a dark business. Real ritual is transgressive, in that it

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violates the boundaries of *maya*. If ritual feels mundane, then it is just play-acting. But speaking honestly – and I mean genuinely very directly and simply – the Vedic rites are all very terrifying. That fellow – when he saw his wife splayed across the belly of the stallion, and its cock making its way into her womb, do you think he felt normal? No, he will never forget. And how do you think he felt when he had to mount a mare? When he put his organ into its yoni? I can't imagine, but he was probably terrified. They will never forget that day. Never. Not until they die. That ritual changed them as people, they could never again make love without thinking about that sacrifice. You see, it's not the horse that suffered, it was them. By fucking horses, they gave up part of their humanity, and joined themselves to the world of beasts and asuras. In that moment that they experienced orgasm (and the text says that they have to), they were almost rakshasas. Neither man nor beast, understand? So when you do sacrifice, look for the hidden cost."

"But does it work?" I insisted.

"Oh, Jai Krsna, yes of course. Look, Visnu does not give false rites in the Veda. The shastra is very clear: he who performs the ritual shall have the cosmos recognize their sovereignty. Do you see? If someone undergoes that rite, then the universe itself has to adjust to recognize that those people are not normal people like you or me – those people are really kings and queens, and so the universe will treat them accordingly.

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“So it’s worth it?” I asked?

“Well, that depends on what you think is worthwhile in this universe. I could do the ritual and make a lot of money, but I don’t want money. I just want to spend my days here, chant some rounds, please Lord Sankarsana, and then go down to Patala when all is said and done.”

He smiled gently, and he patted me again on the shoulder, and ushered me outside. “Go do your chores,” he said, “and try to not think about this too much. It will only distract you from Krsna.”

And he was right, of course, and in time it seemed less shocking. But Krsna likes to shock us, He wants to shock us, to help us break free of this world of maya, and to get back in touch with Him, no matter what the cost.

