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Apocalypse as a Sacrifice: An Interpretation of Raimon Panikkar's Arguments on *Yajña*

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Abstract: Sacrifice (*yajña*) is considered to be one of the most mentioned words in the Hindu texts, and Panikkar understands it in relation to the preservation, continuation, and regeneration of the universe in existence. While Panikkar's interpretation of sacrifice focuses mainly on creation, this article extends his arguments to interpret the Hindu apocalypse as a *yajña* from four major angles, including the end of a *kalpa* and the concept of declining *dharma* in the successive *yugas*, the journey from the cosmological to the transcendental *brahman*, entire creation being the food of sacrifice, and the apocalypse as a reflection of the *yajña*. This study incorporates both *śruti* and *smṛiti* texts.

Keywords: Panikkar; sacrifice; apocalypse; Hinduism; *yugas*

1. Introduction

Raimon Panikkar, an intellectual, thinker, and proponent of interfaith dialogue, writes, "Creation is God's sacrifice, for not only does God bring it into existence, create it, but he also permits it to return to him again" (Panikkar 2019, p. 243).¹ In this article, I intend to expand on Panikkar's interpretation of creation as a sacrifice in Hinduism to argue that the Hindu apocalypse can also be understood as a sacrifice.²

I choose to employ Panikkar's interpretation of sacrifice and other Hindu texts at large because of the comprehensive study that Panikkar has conducted on *śruti* and *smṛiti* for around half a century.³ He spent his entire life unraveling the mystery of life and death. For research based on the apocalypse, in other words, the existence and the non-existence, Panikkar's arguments play a pivotal role. Panikkar's elaborate chapter on "Sacrifice: *Yajña*"⁴, under Section 3 on Blossoming and Fullness, in Volume 4 Part 1 on Hinduism, titled *The Vedic Experience: Mantramajari*, is particularly fundamental for this article.

Through this anthology, Panikkar has argued the validity of Vedas⁵ as a human experience in the present times when modernity and globalization have created a significant mark (Panikkar 2019, p. xxix), and in his notable chapter on "Sacrifice: *Yajña*", Panikkar deals with the essentiality of sacrifice in *śruti* by interpreting its forms and requirement. My argument is an extension of Panikkar's scholarly writings on sacrifice.⁶

2. The Hindu Sacrifice: *Yajña*

The practice of performing a sacrifice, translated as *yajña*, has been prevalent since the beginning of time in Hinduism, as mentioned in the Vedas. Ghanshyam Singh Thakur (2014) notes that it has been understood as generating a link between the earthly and the divine worlds and, most importantly, as a wish-fulfilling ritual. Panikkar states that it is one of the most frequently mentioned words in any religion but amounts to many different meanings across cultures and religions. According to Vedic literature, sacrifice (*yajña*) refers to a sacred act or an offering to the lords (Panikkar 2019, p. 238). Thomas Mathew Kollamkuzhyil elaborates in his comparative research on "The Concept of Sacrifice in Christianity and in Hinduism" that



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The word yajna is derived from the root 'yaj' which means to 'worship', to 'sacrifice', to 'bestow'. The worship can be in the form of oblations, a sacrifice unto gods. Yajna is also defined as the 'Tyaga' which means 'giving up', 'renunciation' or offering of a 'dravya' a specialized material to a (devata), a specific deity. (Kolamkuzhyil 2016, p. 25)

While Kolamkuzhyil's comment sheds light on the different connotations of *yajña* through the ages, Panikkar also interprets the various meanings of sacrifice in his writings. Although Panikkar's attention is more inclined toward the Vedic experience, he briefly mentions the post-Vedic personalized form of sacrifice, which came to be referred to as *puja* instead of *yajña* (Panikkar 2019, p. 243).⁷ It is important to note that regardless of the various understandings of sacrifice, Panikkar describes the basic characteristic of sacrifice as "an action that reaches where it intends to reach, that really and truly offers something, that stretches out and extends itself" (Panikkar 2019, p. 238). I believe that the creation and the dissolution of the world are two acts of sacrifice of the Absolute, wherein in the former case, the entire world comes into existence, and in the latter case, the world is ended to be regenerated.⁸ The sacrifice that leads to these events offers more than just creation and the apocalypse. The origin of beings accompanies a promise of life, fulfillment of goals and duties, and the hope of salvation (*moksha*).⁹ The apocalypse carries the possibility of not only transcending the cosmological to reach the divine and merge with the One but also the indispensable regeneration of the cosmic order (Panikkar 2019, p. 446). These are some of the major themes through which the connection between the apocalypse and sacrifice will be drawn in this article.

To understand the concept and working of sacrifice in Hinduism, it is indispensable to be aware of the order that governs any kind of sacrifice. At the times of origin as well as during the end times, the sustenance of cosmic order is generally mentioned in terms of an irrefutable element. *Rita* (ऋत) is translated as cosmic order, which is synonymous with sacrificial order. It can be said that *rita* is maintained by *rita*. Panikkar argues that *rita* is the point of origin of the entire order that governs not only any kind of sacrifice but also the universe and makes it flourish; it is the foundation of ardor, energy, concentration, and so on (Panikkar 2019, p. 240).¹⁰ Hence, every sacrificial act is upheld by the cosmic order and also upholds it. Cosmic order ascertains the proper working of a sacrifice, whereas sacrifice is understood to be behind the existence of all that exists, in whatever forms. Sacrifice is an activity that is performed by the Absolute and "Man" together to ensure the subsistence and, specifically, the existence of the world.¹¹ In Panikkar's words, "Reality subsists, thanks to sacrifice" (Panikkar 2019, p. 241).¹² Hence, *rita* pervades all existence; *rita* is what governs being and non-being at the same time.

This article will first interpret the creation of the world as a sacrifice using various Hindu texts, including the Vedas, Upanishads,¹³ Brahmanas,¹⁴ Manusmriti,¹⁵ and The Bhagavad Gita,¹⁶ and then argue the plausibility of the end times in Hindu theology as a form of sacrifice.

Panikkar's exploration of life and its continuance through regular sacrificial practices is evident when he remarks, "Sacrifice is that which preserves the universe in existence, that which gives life and the hope of life" (Panikkar 2019, p. 242). The *Rig Veda* is one of the fundamental texts within *śruti* that states the existence of the world emerging as a result of the sacrifice. In the *Purusha Sukta*, present in the *Rig Veda* (10.90), the *purusha*, also referred to as the primordial man, "sacrifices himself by dismembering himself and scattering around the necessary number of portions for the completion of the work of creation."¹⁷ He performs an act of self-immolation so that the universe may come into being (Panikkar 2019, p. 22). The following verses of the *Purusha Sukta*, translated by Panikkar, appropriately capture the sacrifice undertaken by the Absolute for creation:

यत्पुरुषेण हविषा देवा यज्जमतन्वत ।
वसन्तो अस्यासीदाज्यं ग्रीष्म इध्मःशरद्धविः ॥६॥

तं यज्जं बरहिषि प्रौक्षन्पुरुषं जातमग्रतः ।
तेन देवा अयजन्त साध्या ऋषयश्च ये ॥७॥

तस्माद्यज्जात्सर्वहुतःसम्भृतं पृषदाज्यम् ।
पशून्तांश्चक्रे वायव्यानारणान् ग्राम्याश्च ये ॥८॥

तस्माद्यज्जात्सर्वहुत ऋचःसामानि जज्जिरे ।
छन्दांसि जज्जिरे तस्माद्यजुस्तस्मादजायत ॥९॥

तस्मादश्वा अजायन्त ये के चोभयादतः ।
गावोःह जज्जिरे तस्मात् तस्माज्जाता अजावयः ॥१०॥

यत्पुरुषं वयदधुःकतिधा व्यकल्पयन् ।
मुखं किमस्य कौ बाहू का ऊरू पादा उच्येते ॥११॥

ब्राह्मणोऽस्य मुखमासीद् बाहू राजन्यःकृतः ।
ऊरू तदस्य यद्वैश्यःपदभ्यां शूद्रो अजायत ॥१२॥

चन्द्रमा मनसो जातश्चक्षुःसूर्यो अजायत ।
मुखादिन्द्रश्चाग्निश्च प्राणाद्वायुरजायत ॥१३॥

नाभ्या आसीदन्तरिक्षं शीर्ष्णो द्यौःसमवर्तत ।
पदभ्यां भूमिर्दिशःश्रोत्रात्तथा लोकाँ अकल्पयन् ॥१४॥

Using the Man as their oblation,
the Gods performed the sacrifice.
Spring served them for the clarified butter,
Summer for the fuel, and Autumn for the offering.
This evolved Man, then first born,
they besprinkled on the sacred grass.
With him the Gods performed the sacrifice,
as did also the heavenly beings and seers.
From this sacrifice, fully accomplished,
was gathered curd mixed with butter.
Thence came the creatures of the air,
beasts of the forest and those of the village.
From this sacrifice, fully accomplished,
were born the hymns and the melodies;
from this were born the various meters;
from this were born the sacrificial formulas.
From this were horses born, all creatures
such as have teeth in either jaw;
from this were born the breeds of cattle;
from this were born sheep and goats.
When they divided up the Man,
into how many parts did they divide him?
What did his mouth become? What his arms?
What are his legs called? What his feet?
His mouth became the brahmin;
his arms the warrior-prince,
his legs the common man who plies his trade.
The lowly serf was born from his feet.
The Moon was born from his mind;
the Sun came into being from his eye;
from his mouth came Indra and Agni,
while from his breath the Wind was born.
From his navel issues the Air;
from his head unfurled the Sky,
the Earth from his feet, from his ear the four directions.
Thus have the worlds been organized. (Panikkar 2019, pp. 22–23)¹⁸

This hymn clearly portrays that everything that exists is a part of the whole; the world was framed from the sacrifice of the primordial human being (Panikkar 2019, p. 22). Notably, Panikkar interprets this sacrifice as neither a completely divine act nor an entirely human activity but a cosmotheandric affair in which the divine, cosmic, and human all get involved to create the world. Panikkar defines the neologism, cosmotheandricism as

The cosmotheandric principle could be formulated by saying that the divine, human and the earthly—however we may prefer to call them—are the three irreducible dimensions which constitute the real, i.e., any reality inasmuch as it is real. It does not deny that the abstracting capacity of our mind can, for particular and limited purposes, consider parts of reality independently; it does not deny the complexity of the real and its many degrees. But this principle reminds us that the parts are parts and that they are not just accidentally juxtaposed, but essentially related to the whole. In other words, the parts are real participations and are to be understood not according to a merely spatial model, as books are part of a library or a carburetor and a differential gear are parts of an automobile, but rather according to an organic unity, as body and soul, or mind and will belong to a human being: they are parts because they are not the whole, but they

are not parts which can be “parted” from the whole without thereby ceasing to exist. (Panikkar 1998, p. 60)

I agree with Panikkar that the Absolute, human, and cosmos are relational and exist only through the continued survival of the next (Panikkar 2019, p. 21). It is this cosmotheandric property of the creation sacrifice that rules out the question of violence, otherwise unneglectable in the case of a sacrifice. When the sacrifice, the *purusha*, constitutes not just the human but also the divine and the cosmic element, can the sacrifice be deemed as violent? I would argue against this. As apparent in Panikkar’s description of the primordial human being,¹⁹ the sacrifice is not of a mere human but of the total reality. It is not violent but creative. As evident from the line, “With the sacrifice the Gods sacrificed to the sacrifice” (Panikkar 2019, p. 23),²⁰ the primordial human being became the sacrifice of the Absolute. *Purusha* self-immolates himself to bring forth creation in this world. The universal sacrifice does lead to the collapse of the primordial human being but also leads to his regeneration, which is mentioned in the *Shatapatha Brahmana* in a more detailed manner.

The *Shatapatha Brahmana*²¹ describes the origin of the world as a product of the cosmic sacrifice following a similar Vedic thread. Here, the primordial human being is referred to as the *Prajapati*. When *Prajapati* offers himself in the sacrifice to create all that exists, he ceases to have life. *Prajapati*’s condition is elaborated by Brian K. Smith²² in his essay “Sacrifice and Being” as “Prajāpati, the aboriginal unity and potential unifying principle, is broke down, ineffectual, emptied out and lying pathetically in a heap; his emitted parts, the constituents of the universe, are scattered in confusion and divergence” (B. K. Smith 1985, p. 75). He also highlights in his essay how *Prajapati*’s physical form is depicted in various texts, where he is referred to “as “milked out” (*dugha*), “drained” (*riricāna*), “exhausted” (*vrtta*), “diseased” (*vyājoara*), or most often “disjointed, fallen to pieces” (*visrasta*)” (B. K. Smith 1985, p. 74).

Panikkar argues how the creatures desert the *Prajapati* upon coming into being, as he does not exist anymore. This eventual abandonment after the creation sacrifice is mentioned as the primary reason behind *Prajapati*’s desire to be assembled back into his original form (Panikkar 2019, p. 25). This event is mentioned in the *Shatapatha Brahmana* as

When he procreated all beings and run through the whole gamut of creation he fell into pieces [...] when he was fallen into pieces, his breath departed from the midst of him, and when his breath had departed, the Gods abandoned him. He said to Agni, “Put me, I pray you, together again”. (Panikkar 2019, p. 26)

Prajapati is put back together through the means of another *yajña*. B. K. Smith (1985, p. 85) exclaims that “sacrifice is the expiation of the sacrifice.”²³ The spoils done by a sacrifice can indeed be corrected through a sacrifice only. This occurrence of *Prajapati*’s self-immolation, followed by his coming back to life, is understood by Panikkar as a sacrifice in which “*Prajapati* is at the same time the sacrificer, the sacrifice (the victim), the one to whom the sacrifice is offered, and even the result of the sacrifice” (Panikkar 2019, p. 5) Hence, it can be inferred that human being is the sacrifice. In other words, creation is the sacrifice. *Shatapatha Brahmana* (3.6.2.26) also states that all beings in this universe are meant to be a part of the sacrifice (Panikkar 2019, p. 238).²⁴

Lynn Thomas (1987, p. 57)²⁵ has argued that the hymns on *Prajapati* can be argued as highlighting the “cosmogonic significance of the sacrifice” through the linked processes of creation/destruction/re-creation, further displaying that “creation is inherently connected with the seeds of its own destruction.” In other words, creation and destruction are linked and relative. In order to create, *Prajapati* was eliminated. He feels emptied out and devoid of any life-breath the moment the creation sacrifice comes to completion. The creatures leave him as they are worried that He will devour them and want them to come back to Him. The fruition of creation leads to the *Prajapati*, the creator, being extinguished. He is subsequently brought back to life by *Agni* through another *yajña*. *Agni*, the primary element of performing a *yajña*, can be seen here in *Prajapati*’s sacrifice as associated with both destruction and creation, death and life. It is the same fire, when offered *ghee*, that burns and also paves the way for a new beginning. Panikkar (2019, pp. 220–23) refers to

Agni as “life-giving warmth”, one that brings “into existence the whole of reality”, and one that cannot be escaped and burns everything, converting it to light. He further writes that “Without light there is no life” (Panikkar 2019, p. 248). Light here refers to sacrificial fire, *Agni*. Sacrifice leads to re-creation in the sense of a renewal that it brings upon its performance after the immolation.

In addition to the *Shatapatha Brahmana*, hymns on sacrifice in relation to the creation on earth can also be found in *Kamayani*, a Hindi epic poem written by poet, playwright, novelist, and essayist Jaishankar Prasad. *Kamayani* was first published in 1936 and is believed to have deeply inspired not only the Hindi-speaking world but also the Western readers. The epic poem emerged at the heights of the *Chhayavaad* movement in India.²⁶ *Kamayani* is based on the great Indian deluge myth, which has its origin in the eighth chapter of the first canto of *Shatapatha Brahmana*. Commonly known as *Pralaya* in Hindi, the myth is one of the greatest ancient Indian legends; it talks about the flood that was sent by the Gods to cleanse the earth of all the lust, greed, laziness, pride, self-worship, and unchecked gratification that was enjoyed by the deities who presided on earth before the human civilization was established. After the Flood of Doom, everything was destroyed, and presumably, all were killed, leaving behind only Manu, often referred to as *ādi purusha*, the first human being.

The Hindi epic depicts the performance of *yajña* by Manu when he is living alone in his dwelling. It represents the revival of sacrifices in the new world post-destruction. The sacrificial offerings that are kept by Manu in the hope that someone might be alive besides him made him meet Shradha, in turn leading to the emergence of creation on earth. This is evident from the following verses of Chapter 2—Hope (*Asha*) in *Kamayani*:

जलने लगा निरन्तर उनका
अग्निहोत्र सागर के तीर;
मनु ने तप में जीवन अपना
किया समर्पण हो कर धीर।
सजग हुई फिर से सुर संस्कृति
देव यजन की वर माया;
उन पर लगी डालने अपनी
कर्ममयी शीतल छाया।
उठे सवस्थ मनु ज्यों उठता है
कृषितिज बीज अरुणोदय कान्त;
लगे देखने लुब्ध नयन से
प्रकृति विभूति मनोहर शान्त।
पाक यज्ञ करना निश्चित कर
लगे शालियों को चुनने;
उधर वहिन ज्वाला भी अपना
लगी धूम पट थी बुनने।
शुष्क डालियों से वृक्षों की
अग्नी अर्चियाँ हुई समिद्ध;
आहुति की नव धूम गन्ध से
नभ कानन हो गया समृद्ध।
और सोचकर अपने मन में
जैसे हम हैं बचे हुए;
क्या आश्चर्य और कोइ हो
जीवन लीला रचे हुए।
अग्निहोत्र अवशिष्ट अन्न कुछ
कहीं दूर रख आते थे;
होगी इससे तृप्त अपरिचित
समझ सजह सुख पाते थे।

His *yajna* was set perpetually blazing,
On the beach of the rolling sea.
Patiently Manu dedicated his life,
In austere penance of self-surrender.
Again the culture of the gods reawakened,
Performing *yajnas* for obtaining desires;
Its alluring attachment started casting,
The soothing shadows for worldly gains.
Manu gleamed full of strength and vigour,
Like the radiant sun, glowing in mid-horizon;
He beheld around with enchanted looks
The serene charm of Nature’s splendour.
Having resolved to perform ‘*Pak-Yajna*’,
He started gathering the paddy-stalks,
While the flaming fire was blazing,
Weaving in textures of curling smoke.
With the dry branches of the trees,
Was enkindled the sacrificial fire;
From smoky fragrance of new libation,
Heaven and earth obtained prosperity.
And he was musing within his mind;
Just as he had been spared to live,
It’s no surprise that some one also,
May still be alive, and full of life.
Some remnants of sacrificial offerings,
He would place at a little distance,
So that some stranger may be satiated.
This gave him some consoling delight. (Prasad 2014, p. 43)

Moving on, one cannot deny that any kind of sacrifice includes offerings, and these offerings act as the food of the sacrifice. The primordial human being offered in the sacrifice

signifies his position of being the food. The significance of food in the context of sacrifice is indispensable. There is no “reflection on the nature of sacrifice without mention of the essential part that food plays in it” (Panikkar 2019, p. 142). Panikkar argues that

A very special place is occupied by food, that life stuff that is material and spiritual at the same time, human, divine, and even cosmic, for everything in the universe “eats.” Furthermore, the law of eating is so central that not only does everything eat, but all things eat one another, eating being the symbol of the solidarity of the whole universe. We all grow together; we all eat one another. (Panikkar 2019, p. 112)

Prajapati has no option but to offer himself in the sacrifice due to the absence of food. I believe this act of the primordial human being to perform a proper *yajña* is sufficient to prove the paramount importance of sacrificial food. *Shatapatha Brahmana* mentions that sacrifice acts as the food of the Absolute. *Prajapati* aided this by offering himself as an oblation to the sacrifice. Further contemplation on food will be performed later with respect to the apocalyptic sacrifice.

In addition to this, *The Bhagavad Gita* also extensively elaborates on the function and significance of sacrifice, preserving not just the Vedic vision and the individualistic notions of the Upanishads but also introducing the fundamentals of love, *bhakti*, and personal relationships with the Gods (Panikkar 2019, p. 297). Lourens Minnema has succinctly described the varying connotations of sacrifice in his article titled “The complex Nature of Religious Sacrifice in the *Mahābhārata*, in the *Bagavadgita*, and in general”.²⁷

In chronological terms, it may be helpful to keep in mind that, roughly speaking, the Vedic, pre-Hindu (1200?–800 BCE), religion ritualistically addressed first the gods, then the sacrificial fire itself, cosmologizing it; subsequently, the early Hindu (800–200 BCE) *Upanishads* and the ascetic movements (Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain ones) internalized the ritual of sacrifice; eventually, the classical (150–0 BCE?) and medieval *Mahābhārata* epic and *Bhagavadgītā* devotionalized and both de-militarized and remilitarized the sacrifice. (Minnema 2008, p. 197)

The Bhagavad Gita primarily talks about sacrifice in terms of a sacrificial action. The Vedic idea of a ritual action, also known as a sacrificial action, is retained in the *Gita*. The sacrificial discourse spreads throughout the text, demonstrating the varying nuances of a sacrifice. Chapter 3—*Karma-Yoga*, presents that sacrifice emerges from action (*Gita* 3.14)²⁸ and sacrificial action is an act free from any attachment (*Gita* 3.9).²⁹ While mentioning the creation sacrifice of the *Prajapati*, Lord Krishna reminds Arjuna of *Prajapati*’s understanding of the sacrifice as a wish-fulfilling cow (*Gita* 3.10).³⁰ By the means of sacrifice, individuals please the lords as well as nourish them, inducing the sustenance of all beings as the lords nourish them in return. This sacrificial nourishment acts as an approach to “achieve the highest good”, liberation, or *moksha*. This is written in the *Gita* (3.11) as follows:

देवान्भावयतानेन ते देवा भावयन्तु वः
परस्परं भावयन्तःश्रेयःपरमवाप्स्यथ॥

You should nourish the gods with this so that the gods may nourish you; nourishing each other, you shall achieve the highest good. (Johnson 2008, p. 16)

This verse points toward the significance of food in sacrifices. Everything that is offered is a source of nourishment to the lords and vice-versa. Minnema (2008, p. 202) views this as paying back the received blessings to the lords as a form of social exchange. He writes, “Sacrificial gifts are obliging in both directions of the social exchange.”

Furthermore, Lord Krishna reiterates that every act of a person is considered sacrificial and does not bind him to the world if he is free from attachment and his thought dwells in knowledge. The following verses describe the various kinds of sacrifices, which include offering the *Brahman* to attain the *Brahman*, sacrificing to a particular deity, offering one’s material senses and breath through the power of discipline and restraint, sacrificing material substances, asceticism, and offering the inhaled breath into the exhaled breath and vice-versa (Johnson 2008, pp. 20–21). Lord Krishna remarks in *Gita* 4.33 that

श्रेयान्द्रव्यमयाद्यज्जाज्जानयज्जप्ररन्तप।
सर्वं कर्माखिलं पार्थ ज्ञाने परिसमाप्यते॥

Thus many kinds of sacrifices are stretched out in the mouth of Brahman. Remember that they are all born of action; knowing that, you will be liberated. (Johnson 2008, p. 21)

As previously mentioned, *The Bhagavad Gita* exclaims sacrifice as a way to attain peace and *moksha*, as sacrificial action directly reaches the divine. Minnema (2008, p. 207) highlights that inaction is not prescribed in this revelatory text, and Arjuna is advised that he “should devote all this actions to Krishna as a devotional sacrifice, for the benefit of Krishna’s plan with the universe (*dharma*) and for the sake of his own ultimate liberation (*moksha*).” Lord Krishna calls himself “the consumer of sacrifices and austerities” in *Gita* 5.29 (Johnson 2008, p. 25),³¹ once again signaling the property of sacrifice being the food of the divine. The ones who know Him as the greatest of all and in relationship to all that exists, including sacrifice, reach Him at the time of their demise (Johnson 2008, p. 35).³² Chapter 9 of *The Bhagavad Gita*, titled *The Most Confidential Knowledge*, presents Lord Krishna’s position in relation to the sacrifice. He says in *Gita* 9.16,

अहं कर्तुरहं यज्जःस्वधाऽहमहमौषधम्।
मंत्रोऽहमहमेवाज्यमहमग्निहं हुतम्॥

I am the ritual, I am the sacrifice, I am the offering to the ancestors, I am the herb, I am the mantra, I am the clarified butter, I am the fire, I am the oblation. (Johnson 2008, p. 42)

By declaring himself as the sacrifice, Lord Krishna further stresses the fact that all the sacrifices that are performed to any gods are really performed to Him; they reach Him as He is the “recipient of all sacrifices” (Johnson 2008, p. 43).³³ Moreover, by elaborating the three kinds of embodied faiths—purity, passion, and darkness—*Gita* 17.4 mentions that “The pure sacrifice to the gods, the passionate to spirits and demons; the others, men of darkness, sacrifice to disembodied spirits and the brood of malignant fiends” (Johnson 2008, p. 71).³⁴

The text mentions many facets of sacrifice at length, and one of the essential aspects that must be included here is the war as the sacrifice of the world leading to its regeneration. This accompanies the whole concept of Vishnu’s incarnation (*avatāra*), dissolution, and re-creation of the universe, which will be dealt with later in this article.

3. Apocalypse as a Sacrifice

I argue that if we contemplate upon the verse “One indeed is the sacrifice!” (Panikkar 2019, p. 238), mentioned in the *Jaiminīya-upanīsad-brāhmana*, in the context of end times in Hinduism, the plausibility of apocalypse being a sacrifice (*yajña*) becomes more intelligible. The works of Raimon Panikkar pave the way for such a study, allowing us to extend the realm of scholarship that exists on sacrifice. In this article, I examine the apocalypse as a performative sacrifice from four different yet related angles, which are as follows:

1. The end of a *kalpa* and the decline in *dharma* in successive *yugas*, leading to the arrival of Vishnu’s *avatāra* to eliminate evil and restore order;
2. A journey from the cosmological *brahman* to the transcendental *brahman*, to merge with the Fullness;
3. Creation being the food of sacrifice—everything eats and gets eaten up;
4. Characteristic nature of apocalypse as that of a Hindu sacrifice.

How is the concept of *avatāra* related to the argued apocalyptic sacrifice? To understand this, unraveling the cyclical nature of time in Hinduism is essential. Apocalypse in Hindu theology is an affirmation of the perpetual cycle of origin and dissolution. It is evidently different from the Christian notion as the Hindu tradition does not believe in a solitary beginning and end. Perhaps the usage of the term *pralaya/mahapralaya* is more accurate in the context of Hinduism. I will continue using “apocalypse” for the ease of readers. Panikkar views cosmic dissolution or cosmic disintegration, followed by regeneration, as representing apocalypse in Hinduism. What is interesting to note is that any

mention of cosmological eschatology occurs only in later texts, particularly in the epics and the *Puranas*, not in the classical *śruti* texts. Apocalypse or *pralaya* is referred to as the end of a *kalpa*, the day of *Brahmā*, which contains 1000 *mahayugas* (1000 *yuga* cycles). These cosmic cycles are elaborated in the *Manusmṛiti* (1.51-57) as translated by Olivelle (2004, pp. 16–17):

After bringing forth in this manner this whole world and me, that One of inconceivable prowess once again disappeared into his own body, striking down time with time.

When that god is awake, then this creation is astir; but when he is asleep in deep repose, then the whole world lies dormant.

When he is soundly asleep, embodied beings, whose nature is to act, withdraw from their respective activities, and their minds become languid.

When they dissolve together into that One of immense body, then he, whose body contains all beings, sleeps tranquil and at ease.

Plunging himself into darkness, he lingers there for a long time together with his sense organs and ceases to perform his own activities. Then he emerges from that bodily frame.

When, after becoming a minute particle, he enters, cojoined, the seminal form of mobile and immobile beings, then he discharges the bodily frame.

In this manner, by waking and sleeping, that Imperishable One incessantly brings to life and tears down this whole world, both the mobile and the immobile.

These cycles of life and death caused by the awakening and sleeping of *Brahmā*, also known as the day and night of *Brahmā*, decide the duration of the *kalpa* that consist of 1000 cycles of the four *yugas*, namely *krta*, *treta*, *dvapara*, and *kali*. A detailed account of cosmic time cycles is presented by González-Reimann in his article “Cosmic Cycles, Cosmology and Cosmography.” Olivelle (2004, p. 18) mentions how, apart from the decline in duration of each successive age, there is also a “progressive shortening taking place in each Age” with regard to the laws. While on the one hand, the *Puranas* refer to two kinds of destruction, *pralaya*, in the *Mahābhārata*, one is able to see a more mythological and historical narration of the apocalypse (González-Reimann 2009, p. 421). This decline in *dharma* is extensively mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*, especially in the conversation on *Kali Yuga* between Sage Markandeya and Yudhishthira, focusing on the stark decline in power, strength, and intelligence in people. Sage Markandeya describes the lack of moral order and *dharma* that will spread all over the world. As mentioned in *The Mahābhārata* (J. D. Smith 2009, p. 200), he describes that there will be no place for truth and sincerity, and this absence will result in the eventual shortening of the lifespans of the individuals. He further elaborates on the inexplicable increase in greed, anger, and desire in people. Thomas remarks on the nature of decline through the *yugas* by pointing out that the descriptive passages in the *Mahābhārata*

showed the decline running through them to follow a parallel course in the three interdependent spheres of society, nature and religion. It began to appear as if the decline was from a state of order, marked by properly maintained distinctions and boundaries, to a state of chaotic undifferentiation. (Thomas 1987, p. 220)

Thomas (1987, p. 69) further writes on the interrelation between the cosmic processes and the *avatāra* that “In majority of references the cycle of creation and destruction is orchestrated by a deity who stands outside it.” The *Mahābhārata* speaks at length about the excessive decline in morality and the impossibility of proper sustenance of the world before introducing the coming of the Lord *Kalki*, the *avatāra* of Lord *Vishnu*. The *avatāra* arrives with the exclusive function of ending evil and regenerating the world, in other words, reinstating the cosmic order. Lord Krishna also reveals the reasons and characteristics behind divine incarnations in Chapter 4 of *The Bhagavad Gita*, which deals with *Transcendental Knowledge*. The following verses extracted from the *Gita* 4.6-8 describe this:

अजोऽपि सन्नव्ययात्मा भूतानामीश्वरोऽपि सन्।
 प्रकृतिं स्वामधिष्ठाय संभवाम्यात्ममायया॥
 यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत।
 अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदाऽऽत्मानं सृजाम्यहम्॥
 परितराणाय साधूनां विनाशाय च दुष्कृताम्।
 धर्मसंस्थापनार्थाय संभवामि युगे युगे॥

Although I am unborn and have a self that is eternal, although I am lord of beings, by controlling my own material nature I come into being by means of my own incomprehensible power./ Whenever there is a falling away from the true law and an upsurge of unlawfulness, then, Bharata, I emit myself./ I come into being age after age, to protect the virtuous and to destroy evil-doers, to establish a firm basis for the true law. (Johnson 2008, p. 19)

The *avatāra* arrives as the deterioration of the moral order of the world is beyond repair. I, therefore, argue that the final war at Kurukshetra in the *Mahābhārata* can be analyzed as an apocalyptic moment where Lord Krishna, the *avatāra* of Lord Vishnu, is present to perform the sacrificial act of cosmic regeneration. Minnema (2008, p. 208) interprets the sacrificial regeneration in *Mahābhārata* as follows:

His incarnation could be understood as the intervention of a self-absorbed sacrifice but not as a form of divine self-sacrifice. Through total war, he is sacrificing the current universe for the sake of a new universe; he neither sacrifices himself nor identifies with the victim; on the contrary, as a *yogi* he dissociates himself from his sacrificial performance.

Being unattached to the entire act of war makes the action a sacrifice. This statement by Minnema highlights the transcendental nature of the *brahman*, which remains and is not affected by the cycle of life and death. The apocalypse garbed as a war between the *Kauravas* and the *Pandavas* in the *Mahābhārata* can be deemed as a sacrifice based on the properties of a sacrificial action, described in the revelation of Lord Krishna. In the light of this, this article reimagines the end of the world as a sacrifice. The analysis of Panikkar on sacrifice revolves around the notion that

Sacrifice involves both immolation and new life, and so it is with Man also. He is born, dies, and is reborn. (Panikkar 2019, p. 270)

Panikkar's statement highlights the cycle of creation and dissolution, which is regulated and sustained by *rita*. As any sacrifice is performed primarily for the maintenance of *rita*, the cosmic order, apocalypse also occurs because the world becomes disorderly, lacking in ethics and righteous actions. I agree with Panikkar that

Each sacrifice is a sacrifice of the whole of mankind and effects the regeneration of mankind. Each sacrifice is a salvation from the flood and is relevant for the fate of the whole human race. (Panikkar 2019, p. 445)

I believe Panikkar's mention of the flood, which González-Reimann characterizes as one of the destructive elements at the end of *Brahmā's* day (González-Reimann 2009, p. 421), indicates the necessity of dissolution for the regeneration of the humankind at large to maintain the cosmic order. Panikkar comprehensively stresses the fact that Man is the sacrificer as well as the sacrifice, as evidenced by the historical narratives (Panikkar 2019, p. 271).³⁵ It can be argued that the white sword of the awaited incarnation, *Kalki*,³⁶ at the end of the *kalpa*, offers the creation as an oblation to the sacrifice that takes place at the end times to regenerate the entire world. Apocalypse becomes the sacrifice of the world that originated from the *Purusha*, *Prajapati*, the primordial human being.

If the apocalypse is the end of cosmological time, where does it lead to? I argue that the apocalypse, the end of all that exists, is a journey from the temporal to the nontemporal. This argument is concentrated in the *Upanishads* that delve into the understanding of time and timelessness. Panikkar remarks that "The *Upanishads* begin with a criticism of time. Time is contingent, the earth dissolves, time is folded up. They follow with extolling the intemporal" (Panikkar 2019, p. 138). This exploration into the nontemporal presents the *Upanishadic* argument of pure transcendence. God remains when nothing does, as God is the point of origin and end of all; He is above time.³⁷ The apocalypse, the absolute ter-

mination of all, is a path toward the divine, pure transcendence, the intemporal, which remains. This takes us to the discussion of the two *brahman*s as put forth primarily in the *Maitri Upanishad* and described by Panikkar as

The *Maitri Upanishad* endeavors to build a bridge and speaks of two kinds of Brahman, of two aspects of ultimate reality, one temporal and the other nontemporal. The former is cosmological, it is thus related to the sun and to the year and belongs to that famous one fourth of reality that is manifest and graspable. The latter is that which remains when all else falls into ruin, the Brahman without qualities, pure apophatic transcendence. (Panikkar 2019, p. 138)

In continuation of this notion, it can be argued that at the end of each *yuga*, which is bound by time, the final apocalyptic sacrifice includes the offering of the cosmological *brahman* in order to reach the “pure apophatic transcendence”. While the former is transient and gets destroyed, the latter is eternal. The *yajña* is nourished by the cosmological *brahman* to merge all that exists into the total reality. The sacrifice aids the manifest to reach the unmanifest, to be manifested once again at the start of a new *yuga* (*Gita* 8.16-21).³⁸ I return to Panikkar, who refers to the *Mundaka Upanishad* to explain this further:

All things dissolve and come again into being because there is a point, the One, that is outside this dynamism. It is indeed this One that brings about the circular movement of the universe. (Panikkar 2019, p. 446)

This One can arguably be juxtaposed with Lord Krishna and his identification with imperishable time in *Gita* 10.33. He is time, but He is also beyond time. The following verse can be interpreted to reflect his transcendence as well as immanence:

अक्षराणामकारोऽस्मि द्बन्द्वःसामासिकस्य च।
अहमेवाक्षयःकालो धाताऽहं विश्वतोमुखः।

Of letters I am the letter *a*, and of grammatical compounds I am the conjunctive one; I am indeed undecaying Time, the arranger facing in every direction. (Johnson 2008, p. 47)

Even *Prajapati*'s disintegration and reintegration post-creation can be viewed as a phenomenon of moving back to the One, which fundamentally leads to the formation of all. B. K. Smith (1985, p. 77) conveys this by quoting Coomaraswamy.³⁹ He writes,

Coomaraswamy summarizes this two step cosmogonic process and the role of sacrifice in it when he writes, “And what is the essential in the Sacrifice? In the first place, to divide, and in the second to reunite. He being One, becomes or is made into Many, and being Many becomes again or is put together again as One”.⁴⁰

Therefore, each sacrifice has a function of union with the divine, and every sacrifice is an immolation. The *Shatapatha Brahmana* (10.2.3.27) resonates this notion when it says, “Sacrifice has only one foundation, only one abode, the heavenly realm” (Panikkar 2019, p. 275). At the end times, everything is immolated in this sacrifice to make the journey of the *atman* to the *brahman* possible. Panikkar describes the essentiality of sacrifice in the completion of this journey by explaining that

We have come into existence by a “jumping outside”, by a movement or “transgression” away from the undifferentiated whole, and it is specifically by sacrifice that we reintegrate ourselves into the total reality. (Panikkar 2019, p. 271)

Apocalypse, as understood in Hindu texts, is the end of everything to culminate in this journey, to return to the Fullness from which everything originated. (Panikkar 2019, p. 239).⁴¹

I argue that if we are part of an undifferentiated whole and merge into that whole at the end of time, we can indeed compare this merging with getting eaten up. Hence, once again, I devote my attention to the element of food in sacrifice to highlight how everything eats and also gets eaten. Food is the beginning and end of all, and this is accurately represented in the following hymn of *Taittiriya-upanishad* (2.2):

From food, indeed, are creatures born.
 All living things that dwell on the earth,
 by food in truth do they live
 and into it they finally pass. (Panikkar 2019, p. 147)

A similar understanding is also demonstrated in Chapter 3 of the same *Upanishad*, in a conversation between Varuna and his son, Bhrgu, revolving around the *brahman*. While answering Bhrgu's query, Varuna explains to him that *brahman* is "That from which truly all beings are born, by which when born they live and into which finally they all return" (Panikkar 2019, p. 148). After contemplation, Bhrgu realizes that *brahman* is nothing but food, as it is from food that all is born, because of which everything continues to exist and into which everything ultimately returns. Any kind of food that bestows one's soul and body with nourishment is understood as sacrificial food (Panikkar 2019, p. 142). Food is sacrifice, and sacrifice is what maintains the universe. Everything exists because of the primordial sacrifice; everything exists because of the quotidian performance of the sacrifice to sustain order and balance. When this idea is juxtaposed with the end times in Hinduism, it can be argued that everything is offered as an oblation to the final sacrifice. We all become sacrificial food in the apocalyptic rite of bringing the degenerative world to an end, renewing *rita*, and birthing a new world. Everything gets eaten up. Panikkar (2019, p. 143) describes the divine nature of eating by remarking that "There is no deeper unity than that produced by the eating of the other, just as there is no better love than that of being the food of the lover." Eating unites everyone not only in an earthly social manner, but it also takes us beyond the temporal. Food is divine; food is sacrifice; and we, as food, become the final sacrifice. This can be paralleled to the world getting absorbed into the Absolute, and hence, becoming One, without any other. And Krishna does mean this when he proclaims about his higher nature in *Gita* 7.6 that

Understand that this is the source of all living beings; I am the origin and dissolution of this whole universe. (Johnson 2008, p. 33)

Lastly, I would like to argue the possibility of apocalypse being God's sacrifice, situating it in the characteristic nature of a Hindu sacrifice, the *yajña*. Can the apocalyptic atmosphere be compared to the performative sacrifice, the *yajña*? Panikkar's argument on *rita* being the sacrificial order and also the cosmic order represents the systematic nature of a *yajña*. Kolamkuzhyil portrays the correct way of performing a Vedic sacrifice in his work. He quotes Klaus K. Klostermaier⁴² and S.N. Dasgupta⁴³ to highlight that

The efficacy of a sacrifice depended greatly on the "correct pronunciation of the mantra and the exact execution of the prescribed ceremony." The Vedic sacrifices had to be performed meticulously without any mistake. In Vedic idea the sacrifices were more powerful than the gods themselves. "The utterance of the chanting of hymns, with prescribed accents and modulations, poring of the melted butter in the sacrificial fire with exactness is the sacrifice". (Kolamkuzhyil 2016, p. 29)

The above statement depicts the proper way to perform a Vedic sacrifice. The chanting of the mantras should be performed while keeping the pronunciation and word formation in mind. Kolamkuzhyil (2016, p. 44) reiterates that "If the priest omits a syllable in the liturgy he is making a hole in the sacrifice."⁴⁴ There should be no interruption in the performance of *yajña*. As evident, there is an absence of movement when the sacrifice is being performed; everyone who is present there is involved. There is a deep silence in the recitation of the *mantras*, which ensures the proper initiation of a sacrifice. Thakur (2014, p. 1) argues for a peaceful environment borne out of a sacrificial setting as

Chanting mantras produces vibrations, which have stimulating and soothing effects on human beings and animals. Such vibrations reverberate and spread specific energy waves in the surrounding atmosphere. In *Yajñas*, the oblations are offered, accompanied by specific mantra chants (Sri Aurobindo 1972). They too will produce similar vibratory effects.

I argue that silence prevails in the sense of a complete non-existence of any kind of chaos. This can be seen in a similar vein to the silence in the chaos at the end times in Hinduism, where the chaos of everything coming to an end is at the same time the silence of the journey toward the Absolute, toward a true dialogue. At the Hindu apocalypse, the *avatāra* arrives to put an end to the indescribable evil that has spread across the entire world. To eliminate the disorderly state and restore order, the *avatāra* annihilates the evil. This chaotic order at the end of the *kalpa* can be juxtaposed with the continuous chanting during the execution of any sacrifice. While the sacrificial chants and rituals create noise, the proper implementation resonates an atmosphere of silence and inexplicable calm. Panikkar (2019, p. 36) argues that *vac* (Word/*śruti*) “existed unspoken at the beginning and in the same way she will exist unspoken at the end.” Panikkar’s argument depicts the silence of the Word/*śruti*, which can also be experienced during *yajña*. Also, this silence is not distinct from one at the end of the world when there is non-existence and a deep sleep.

4. Conclusions

This article has developed Panikkar’s arguments on the creation sacrifice to conclude that the Hindu apocalypse could also be interpreted as a sacrifice. I argue that Panikkar’s extensive writings on sacrifice cannot be contested because of the comprehensive engagement and arguments based on *śruti*. Panikkar’s interpretation of the Vedic experience to elucidate on sacrifice is a complex task that has not been undertaken by many scholars. This article has framed an argument connecting the Hindu sacrifice (*yajña*) with the end of a *kalpa*, imagining it as a journey from the temporal to the nontemporal world, wherein the cosmological *brahman* is sacrificed to reach the transcendental Absolute. The entire creation is viewed as the food for sacrifice, and the apocalypse as a reflection of the *yajña*. This reimagining of the Hindu sacrifice in the context of the end times also includes discussion on apocalyptic chaos, cosmic order, and silence. The research also opens up and encourages new scholarship on the Hindu apocalypse.

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Notes

- ¹ Raimon Panikkar (2 November 1918–26 August 2010), also called Raymond Panikkar or Raimundo Panikkar, was a proponent of interfaith dialogue, scholar of comparative religion, and a Spanish Roman Catholic priest. Born to a Spanish Roman Catholic mother and a Hindu Indian father, Panikkar had three doctorates: doctorates in Philosophy and Chemistry from the University of Madrid and a doctorate in Theology from the Pontifical Lateran University. He wrote extensively on inter-religious and inter-cultural dialogue, and all his works are documented in 18 books in 12 volumes of Opera Omnia.
- ² The term apocalypse is used throughout the article in the context of Hindu scriptures, denoting the destruction of the world in terms of the end of a *kalpa*, which is 1000 *mahayugas*, i.e., 1000 cycles of the four *yuga*. There are four *yugas*, namely *Kṛta*, *Treta*, *Dvāpara*, and *Kali*, as mentioned in the Hindu texts, such as the *Mahābhārata*, *Manusmṛiti*, and so on.
- ³ *Śruti* can be translated as “that which is heard”. *Śruti* are also considered divine revelations. Most of the ancient religious texts in Hinduism are called *śruti*, such as the Vedas. *Smṛiti* refers to “that which is remembered”. These texts are believed not to be delivered by divine powers, in contrast to *śruti*, and were verbally transmitted from one generation to another. For instance, *Manusmṛiti*, *Ramayana*, and *Mahābhārata*.
- ⁴ The term comes from Old French *sacrifise*, from Latin *sacrificium*, from *sacrificus*, from *sacer*, referring to sacred or holy. Sacrifice is known as *yajña* (यज्ञ) in Sanskrit. The title mentions “a Sacrifice” to emphasize the multiple meanings the term has across same and different traditions. For instance, a holy act, renunciation, and so on.
- ⁵ The Vedas are referred to as the primary revelations in Hinduism, also known as *śruti* श्रुति (that which is heard). There are four parts of the Vedas, generally described as belonging to four different schools: *Rig Veda*, *Sama Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, and *Atharva Veda*. The *Rig Veda* contains the highest number of hymns, also called *samhitas*, that are based on sacrificial rituals. Both *Sama Veda* and *Yajur Veda* contain some hymns from the *Rig Veda* and include chants and melodies, and hymns on sacrificial formula,

respectively. The *Atharva Veda* is entirely different from the other three *Vedas* as it revolves around prayers related to diseases, incantations, spells, and so on.

6 To read Panikkar's work on sacrifice, refer to Panikkar (2019), *The Vedic Experience*, pp. 238–303.

7 *Puja* refers to the daily worship ceremony performed by Hindus.

8 The regeneration of the world can be explained through the concept of four *yugas* (ages) in Hinduism, as mentioned in *The Mahābhārata* and explained later in the article.

9 *Moksha* in Hinduism refers to the liberation from the *samsara*, the cycle of life and death.

10 Refer to footnote 5, where Panikkar describes the etymology of *rita*. He writes, "The root word is *r-*, *ar-*, to put in motion, to move; the Indo-European root *ar-* means to fit, to arrange (the spokes in the wheel), so that *rta* would be that which is well arranged, the established norm, "truth", order, etc., always with a dynamic connotation".

11 Panikkar uses the term "Man" to denote human beings, both male and female, to distinguish them from the Gods. He writes, "Since the English language has not (yet?) introduced an *utrum*, as an androgynous gender, the pronoun will have to be the morphologically masculine." See Panikkar (2019), *A Vedic Experience*, p. xxix. I intend to use "human beings" in place of "Man" to incorporate a gender-neutral language.

12 Panikkar describes Reality in terms of cosmotheandric nature, which means that Reality has three dimensions: divine, human, and earthly. Refer to footnote 30 for detailed information on Panikkar's argument on the cosmotheandric.

13 Also known as the *Vedanta*, translated as the end of the *Vedas*. *Upanishads* are understood as containing the nectar of the *Vedas*, disseminated in the form of conversations between great masters and students. (Olivelle 2008)

14 *Brahmanas* are collections of *samhitas* on the performance of sacrifices and rituals.

15 *Manusmriti*, also known as *Manava Dharmashastra* or *The Law Code of Manu*, is among the most known legal authoritative texts of Hinduism. According to many scholars, the text was composed between the second century BCE and the second century CE.

16 *The Bhagavad Gita*, part of the famous Sanskrit Epic, *The Mahābhārata*, written by the seer, Vyaasa, is one of the most widely read Hindu religious texts in the Western world. The text is a conversation between Lord Krishna and Arjuna that takes place in the middle of Kurukshetra field before the war between the Kauravas and Pandavas is about to begin. *The Bhagavad Gita* has been understood as a philosophical text due to the large number of questions on life that it answers.

17 This article will use the translation of the Vedic hymns as translated by Panikkar and included in *Opera Omnia*, Vol IV, Part 1 on Hinduism.

18 This article only includes verses 6–14 of the *Purusha Sukta* to elaborate on the creation of all that exists through the sacrifice of the primordial human being.

19 Panikkar describes the *purusha* as "not simply another name for a heteronomous God, nor a mere euphemism for an autonomic individual Man, but the living expression of the ontonomic Man, that total reality of which we are a reflection, a reflection that contains the whole, indeed, but in a rather limited and all too often narrow way, God is not totally other than Man".

20 This is the first line of verse 16 of the *Purusha Sukta* as translated by Panikkar.

21 *Shatapatha Brahmana* is believed to be composed by Yajnavalkya, the father of Indian philosophy. It is a part of the *Shukla Yajurveda*. *Shatapatha* can be translated as "having a hundred paths", and *Brahmana* is a "description of sacred knowledge"; hence, *Shatapatha Brahmana* is a *Brahmana* of a hundred paths. This text is primarily known for introducing the myth of deluge in Hinduism and expanding on the creation myth. It elaborates on the sacrifices, rituals, and myths by providing scientific explanations for them.

22 Brian K. Smith was a professor emeritus of Religious Studies at the University of California-Riverside. He wrote extensively on Hindu and Sanskrit texts. Some of his major works include *Reflections on Resemblance, Ritual, and Religion* (1989) and *Classifying the Universe: The Ancient Indian Varna System and the Origins of Caste* (1994).

23 This statement is issued by Smith on the basis of Vedic ritualistic texts.

24 *Shatapatha Brahmana*, III.6.2.26: "All this, whatever exists, is made to share in the sacrifice".

25 Lynn Thomas is a senior lecturer in Religious Studies at Roehampton University. Her writings primarily concern the Hindu epic *Mahābhārata*. She is the co-editor of the book *Playing for Real: Hindu Role Models, Religion, and Gender* (2004), published by Oxford University Press.

26 *Chhayavad* movement (1918–1937), also known as a romantic movement in Hindi literature and poetry. This movement is remembered for the four pillars of Hindi literature: Jaishankar Prasad, Suryakant Tripathi "Nirala", Sumitranandan Pant, and Mahadevi Varma.

27 Lourens Minnema is an associate professor of Religious Studies in the Department of Philosophy of Religion and Comparative Study of Religions at VU University, Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Some of his major publications include *Tragic Views of the Human Condition* (2013).

28 W. J. Johnson (2008), *The Bhagavad Gita*, p. 16.

Gita, 3.14: अन्नाद्भवन्ति भूतानि पर्जन्यादन्नसम्भवः
यज्जाद्भवति पर्जनयो यजःकर्मसमुद्भवः।

"Beings exist through food, the origin of food is rain, rain comes from sacrifice, sacrifice derives from action".

29 *ibid*, p. 15.

Gita, 3.9: यज्जार्थात्कर्मणोऽन्यत्र लोकोऽयं कर्मबन्धनः
तदर्थं कर्म कौन्तेय मुक्तसंगःसमाचर ॥

“The entire world is bound by actions; the only exception is action undertaken for sacrificial purposes. Therefore, Son of Kunti, free from attachment, you should perform that kind of action”.

30 *ibid*, p. 16.

Gita, 3.10: सहयज्जाःप्रजाःसृष्ट्वा पुरोवाच प्रजापतिः
अनेन प्रसविष्यध्वमेष वोऽस्तविष्टकामधुक् ॥

“When he created creatures in the beginning, along with the sacrifice, Prajapati said: ‘May you be fruitful by this sacrifice, let this be the cow which produces all you desire’”. The usage of the term *kamadhuk* refers to the one who provides all that one desires. Here, referring to the wish-fulfilling cow, *kamadhenu*.

31 *Gita*, 5.29: भोक्तारं यज्जतपसां सर्वलोकमहेश्वरम्।
सुहृदं सर्वभूतानां ज्जात्वा मां शान्तिमुच्छति ॥

“Realizing that I am the consumer of sacrifices and austerities, the great lord of all the worlds, the companion of all creatures, he attain peace”.

32 *Gita*, 7.30: साधिभूताधिदैवं मां साधियज्जं च ये विदुः।
प्रयाणकालेऽपि च मां ते विदुरयुक्तचेतसः ॥

“And those who know me in relation to beings and in relation to the divine, as well as in relation to the sacrifice, have disciplined minds, and know me even in the hour of death”.

33 *Gita*, 9.24: अहं हि सर्वयज्जानां भोक्ता च प्रभुरेव च।
न तु मामभिजानन्ति तत्त्वेनातश्च्यवन्ति ते ॥

“For I am the lord, and the recipient of all sacrifices, although they do not truly recognize me, and so they slide”.

34 *Gita*, 17.4: यजन्ते सातत्विका देवान्यक्षरक्षांसि राजसाः।
प्रेतान्भूतगणांश्चान्ये यजन्ते तामसा जनाः ॥

35 Panikkar exclaims that “It is not only the cosmic *purusha* who performs the sacrifice and not only the primordial Man who can be termed as both sacrifice and sacrificer; the concrete human being also is said to be the sacrifice, and it is by sacrifice that he lives, because sacrifice links him with the whole of existence and enables him to perform all his duties as Man”.

36 Refer to the *Kalki Purana* for Lord Kalki’s appearance.

37 The *Shvetashvatara Upanishad* elucidates upon the intemporal existence of God. Time is a creature; hence, it comes to an end.

38 Johnson (2008), *The Bhagavad Gita*, p. 38. *Gita* elaborates on the journey from the manifest to the unmanifest and vice-versa with reference to Brahma’s day and night. These can be referred to in *Gita* 8.16-21: “Up to Brahma’s realm, Arjuna, the worlds come round again and again; but once I have been reached, Son of Kunti, rebirth is finished./Those men know day and night who know that a day of Brahma lasts for a thousand ages, just as a Brahma night ends after a thousand ages./As day dawns everything manifest emerges from the unmanifest; as night falls it merges back into that same designated unmanifest./This troop of beings, having come into being again and again, ineluctably merges back at nightfall; and at dawn it merges again, Partha./But there is another state of being beyond this unmanifest, an eternal unmanifest which, when all creatures are destroyed, is not itself destroyed./The unmanifest called ‘imperishable’ – that, they say, is the highest goal. Once attained, there is no coming back from it—that is my supreme domain”.

39 Ananda Coomaraswamy (1877–1947) was a historian and a philosopher of Indian art who was one of the first interpreters of Indian culture to the west. He contributed to Indian art in multiple ways. Some of his books include *The Dance of Shiva* (1918), *Time and Eternity* (1947), and *The Transformation of Nature in Art* (1934).

40 B. K. Smith (1985), “Sacrifice and Being”, p. 77. This is mentioned by Coomaraswamy (1941) in A.K. Coomaraswamy, “Ātmaya-jña Self-Sacrifice”, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 6, p. 396.

41 Panikkar writes, “In the beginning was Fullness, and from this Fullness everything came, that is, be-came, and to it everything will return”.

42 Klaus K. Klostermaier is a well-known German–Canadian scholar of Hindu and Sanskrit texts. His major books include *A Survey of Hinduism* (1989), *A Concise Encyclopaedia of Hinduism* (1998), and *Mythologies and Philosophies of Salvation in the Theistic Traditions of India* (1984).

43 S.N. Dasgupta, or Surendranath Dasgupta (1887–1952), was an Indian scholar of Indian philosophy and Sanskrit. His works include *Hindu Mysticism* (1927), *A Study of Patanjali* (1920), and *A History of Indian Philosophy* (1921).

44 This quote is extracted from the *Aitareya Brahmana*, 111, 11 (XI, 11).

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