



Message of the Ved꤁s in the Modern Context

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The most ancient books of the Hindus are called as Ved꤁s. The core of these books are the four collections of metrical revelations called mantras, named as Rig Veda Mantra Samhita, Yajur Veda Mantra Samhita, Sama Veda Mantra Samhita and the Atharva Veda Mantra Samhita. The mantra-verses total more than 20,000. They are dated 4000 B.C.E or earlier. These four collections along with the Brahmana books, Aranyaka books and the Upanishads constitute the Veda.

Every society has great respect for its ancient books. But Ved꤁s have to be respected and studied because the wisdom in it is highly relevant for the modern society also, even though we are far removed from the Rig Vedic society by several thousand of years.

In the five thousand years 4000 B.C.E to 1000 C.E Indians have excelled in several disciplines like grammar, medicine and healing (ayurveda), the mathematics including the binary numbers (the foundation of modern computers, the decimal system for integers, geometry etc. Now there is story evidence that the origin of mathematics may be traced to the Vedic books and the construction of altars.

Sri Aurobindo poses the question "What was as the basis of the incomparable public works and engineering achievement, the opulent and exquisite industries, the great triumphs of science, scholarship, jurisprudence and metaphysics seen in India" (The Brain of India).

The fundamental belief-system of the Vedic society is the answer. The consequences of this belief-system unravels new light on the four things which are relevant for any society namely

Work,
Enjoyment,
Progress,
Increasing the creativity and harmony in all our actions and interactions.

Veda declares that 'Work' is basically transforms the physical substance and mental substance from one form (r!pa) into another appropriate form. For instance cooking is converting the rice, vegetables etc into a palatable and edible form. We think of the agent of this change as the human cook and physical energies like fire. However Veda declares that the major agents are the cosmic powers called as Indra, Agni and the human beings are only minor players.

To understand this statement We have to become aware of the fundamental Vedic beliefs:

1. Everything in manifestation and in the cosmos beyond is represented by a web of Truth (*'tasya tantu;* 2.1.5).



This web has numerous nodes and each node is connected with all others, some loosely, some relatively strongly.

Every human being is a node in this web; similarly every living creature. Every society or a collection of persons is also a node. The cosmic powers Agni, Indra etc., are all special nodes in this web. This whole web is established, energised and pervaded by the Supreme Spirit, That One: (*ekam sat*) (11.4.15). The gods Agni, Indra are endowed with a variety of psychological powers which can be given by them to humans i.e., those humans who aspire to contact these gods. Every human being forms or modifies this web of yajña (*yajñam tanvate*) by his work (RV12.1.13) called as weaving (*samota*) (11.5.24).

Recall the Upanishad passage "All this is certainly Brahman (*sarvam khalu idam brahma*)" (Chhendogya U. 3.14.1); the mantras (8.48.2, 10.16.6) and (RV 10.125.6) are also relevant.

2. Every human being is empowered by That One. Human being is not an empty bucket. All the Gods are potentially in him (RV 11.8.32) ready to manifest their powers in him. The role of *prāṇa*, the cosmic life-energy, is very important for human beings and their environment.

3. In every action of a human being, he is not the only actor; the Gods or the cosmic powers are the major players

Work : Now we have really two modes of action.

(a) Action done as if the human being is the sole doer of work (the egoist mode).

(b) Recognising the dominant role of the cosmic powers.

According to the Vedic sages, the actions done by recognising the presence of the Supreme One or Spirit leads to a higher quality of the work in all its aspects like completeness, harmony with other works, accomplishment of the aim of the work etc., than the same work done in an egoist mode. Veda insists that this can be done in all actions like cooking, cleaning, eating, walking, conjugal relations, child-birth, handling the problem of rivals.

Enjoyment : Work leads to its own enjoyment the so called joy in work; work releases the delight called soma. By offering the delight back to the Cosmic forces, the quality of work also increases.

Progress : Our life is a journey We go on one peak of perfection to another as in a mountain climbing. Once we are at a peak, the cosmic power of Mind, Indira shows the next peak that has to be climbed.

Creativity and Harmony : The quality of work can be raised continuously step by step by involving the cosmic forces associated with both creativity and harmony such as Mitra, Sarasvati, the goddess of inspiration and Sarama, the Goddess of intuition. We have to appreciate the Vast and get rid ourselves of narrowness.

Summing up Vedas open new doors for releasing the vast inner potentials in us leading us to higher and higher levels of perfection, both as individuals and as members of a society.