Yajurveda on the Human Mind

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Abstract: Six common mantras in Yajurveda (Chapter 34, 1-6) have the common ending with tanne manah aivasakalpamastu, i.e. May my mind bear positive thoughts (resulting in everyone’s well being). They describe different facets of the human mind such as:

1. The dayāya manah – prime mover for the overall functions that I (the soul) may desire while living in the world.
2. The yate manah – that enables me to influence the world by way of karma through the five organs for action.
3. The prajñā manah – that enables me to acquire real time knowledge from the outside world through the five organs for knowledge.
4. The amṛta manah – that is repository of knowledge with its memory.
5. The pracetā manah – that obtains the intuitive knowledge.
6. The dhīṛī manah – that drives me through the world as a skilled charioteer (sārathi).

INTRODUCTION:
The Vedas are the oldest books in the human library. The traditional Indian view is that the Vedas are revelation of God in the very beginning of the human life on the earth. The four persons of the very first generation were revealed the mantras contained in the Vedas – “gveda to Agni, Yajurveda to Vāyu, Sāmaveda to Āditiy and Atharvaveda to Arghiras. The seminal knowledge that man started with is contained in the Vedas. As the sun is the primary source of light to us, likewise the Vedas are the primary source of knowledge. This view has been supported by the long tradition. And, the Vedas are therefore declared to be infallible and eternal. Indeed, every piece of knowledge is acceptable only if it is in accordance with the Vedas. Patañjali, the author of Yoga-Darśana, declares God as the primary teacher for all of us: sa pārāśārman guru? kālēmānava niveditā. Bādarāyana, the author of Brahmāstra, declares the existence of God because knowledge exists in the world: uśāstrasvatan. In his view, man discovers knowledge (and thus generates uśāstra) because God has provided him with the primary source of knowledge in the form of Vedas. Otherwise, how could man follow intellectual pursuits if there were no Vedas to begin with? It is as simple as our inability to see if there was no sun to throw the light on the objects to be seen.

It is generally understood that the four Vedas deal with the following four faculties of human endeavor: gveda is primarily concerned with niṣṭhā, the spiritual knowledge, Yajurveda primarily deals with karma, Sāmaveda is similarly concerned with upāsanā, and Atharvaveda on ānāma, the knowledge of general kind – vide Yo 4.1 (… “ksāmābhishyām santanta yajurvī rājaśpo eca sami’ī madama …i.e. we should live happily through devotion to God as taught in “gveda and Sāmaveda and through the karma guided by Yajurveda). For obvious reasons, there is overlap in the treatment.

Human mind has been an object of intrigue for the human beings since time immemorial. Firstly, it’s so subtle and swift. Secondly, we are constrained to study our mind through the mind only. However, the Vedic philosophy does give us some hope because it encourages us to see ourselves as the soul inhabiting the body. Thus, both body and mind are its instruments. With the soul being the seat of consciousness, the mind becomes an instrument like the body is albeit a subtle one. Thus, theoretically, it becomes possible for us to study the mind as we study the body.

MY MIND:
Vedas being the primary source of all true knowledge, it is of natural concern to us to know what the Vedas tell us about the human mind. The present paper is based on the six common mantras appearing in Yajurveda (Chapter 34, 1-6) having the common ending of tanne manah aivasakalpamastu, i.e. May my mind bear positive thoughts (resulting in everyone’s well being). The genitive reference in the form of “my mind” is similar to what one would say about “my body.” This is significant that the “me” is different from the mind and that is why the mind is referred to as “my mind.” The same has been made further clear in the last mantra where the functions of mind have been described through a chariot and the soul is the passenger, while the mind and its components are playing different roles of the driver and chariot. Thus, the study of mind in the Vedic philosophy has a very distinct purpose. Being the subtle instrument of ours, we must be able to keep it in good health, and more importantly, it must remain subordinate to the presiding entity – the soul. Hence, there is a great emphasis in the six mantras that we should be able to utilize the mind in a positive direction. Since it has enormous powers, if we fail to guide it in a positive direction then the same mind can lead to our downfall. More the control I have on the mind, more I can utilize its powers.

THE HUMAN MIND:
The human mind has many powerful characteristics. Indeed, because of its superior characteristics only, the human beings happen to be superior to all other species though we may have inferior characteristics to that of many other species in the body domain. The aforementioned six mantras (Yo 34.1-6) describe the following different facets of the human mind.

1. The daiva manah:
Yujjñāta dūramudaiti daiśaṃ tathu suptasya tathāvaṃtī
duṣṭaṃ jyoti’ām jyotirekam tanne mana? uivasakalpamastu
The mind has been referred to as the daiva manah – the mind with subtle and divine powers. It gives an impression as if it travels fast and wide while we are in the waking state and even so when we are asleep. Of course the mind doesn’t travel out of the body system; it remains within our body structure. But the meaning highlights the ability of the mind to bring to our attention what is far away from us in a tiny fraction of a second. It does so when we are awake and even when we dream while asleep. The mind has been referred to as jyoti, i.e. with its own luster. All the organs for knowledge function because they bring in their knowledge and submit the same to the mind. Only because the mind has the capability to present the incoming knowledge to the presiding entity, it transmits the incoming knowledge to the soul and the soul becomes aware of the same. That is to say, the fine properties of the five senses are dependant upon the subtleness and
swiftness of the mind. While the senses are five in number, the mind over all is one only to which all the five senses converge. The first mantra describes the mind as the prime mover for the overall functions that I (the soul) may desire while living in the world with its enormous subtle powers. Also, my different states in a day such as those of the waking, dream and deep sleep states are due to the functions of the mind. If the mind is connected to the body then I am awake. If it disconnects itself from the body but remains connected to the soul then I am in the dream state. And, if it disconnects from the soul too then I am in deep sleep. So, the activity level of the mind determines my different states.

2) The yakṣa manah:
Yena karma-yapanam man”ido yajite krovaneti vidatthu dhīrā?
Yadapūrvaṃ yakṣamantah prajāmāṃ tanmē mana? uivasāṅkalpamastu
The yakṣa manah – that enables me to influence the world by way of karma through the five organs for action. It is highlighted that the most illustrious people do their karma, including the noblest ones called yajña, by letting the mind alone. It is the mind through which the soul is able to perform any karma. The karma performed by a human being is the most visible sign of his being and that is dependent upon the mind. Performance of karma is the first category of its functions.

3) The prajñāna manah:
Yatprajñānāmuta cetā dhi”tūccha yajjīvatitaram t’ām prajāsu
Yasanna”te kim cāna karma kriyate tanmē mana? uivasāṅkalpamastu
The prajñāna manah – that enables me to acquire real time knowledge from the outside world through the five organs for knowledge. The second category of our activities pertains to the acquisition of knowledge. Our five senses for sight, sound, smell, taste and touch bring knowledge from the outside world. The same is picked up by the mind for onward transmission to the presiding entity, namely the soul. Then I become aware of that particular piece of knowledge. It is further highlighted in this mantra that no karma can be performed without the mind, including the implicit acts related to acquisition of knowledge through the five senses. It should be appreciated that even an act of seeing requires the mind to pay the attention of the sight to the desired object, say by tilting the neck in a particular direction, exercising the eyelid to focus on the object, etc. – karma by itself. Then only the acquisition of knowledge through the senses becomes possible. Here, the word ‘karma’ includes the acts of perception. Perception through five senses is a conscious act with mind fully participating.

4) The amṛta manah:
Yemadhram bhūrnam bhūcam bhavi”yat parig”hitamam”tena sārnam
Yena yajjāstāyate saptahōtā tanmē mana”h uivasāṅkalpamastu
The amṛta manah – that is the repository of knowledge with its memory. The real time current knowledge so acquired and all the acts performed in the past, including its decision-making process are stored in the memory. The mind is capable of keeping the past knowledge and action stored for time immemorial, and hence its name of amṛta manah (undying mind). There is another meaning of amṛta manah that upon death it does not die the way the body dies, which is left behind by the soul. Rather, the mind accompanies the soul with the impressions (called saṅskārā) embedded into it. That is to say, it is as immortal as the soul is. However, it is said that once the soul is emancipated from the bondage of the life and death cycle then the soul is separated from the mind too. Yet, for all practical purposes, it can be said that the mind is immortal as the soul is. The mantra states the powers of the mind that it is capable of bringing the present, past and future to the soul. The present and past are easy to understand. The future events too are predicted by the mind with the help of the knowledge it has acquired in the present and past.

5) The pracetas manah:
Yasmini”ca? sāma yajjāvi”yasmini prati”phāti rathandabhāvavā?
Yasmino’cit’manvam sarvamotam prajānām tanmē mana”h uivasāṅkalpamastu
The pracetas manah – that obtains the intuitive knowledge. The consciousness is the inherent and intrinsic property of the soul. The soul is able to lend its consciousness to the entire body through the mind only. Furthermore, when the mind is de-linked from the body and all its functions have been subdued (Yogasūkha tīrthorādhā – Patañjali) then one may achieve the state of samprajñāna samādhī. In such a state, one can obtain the intuitive knowledge from the Infinite consciousness of God who is omniscient and omnipresent. The mantra refers to the origin of the Vedas in the human mind of the chosen few of the first generation of the mankind. Even now, one who is able to penetrate into the deeper faculties of the mind and subdue its functions following the Yoga practices may be able to obtain the intuitive knowledge of superior quality.

6) The dhīti manah:
S’atrīnātanāva yammanu”yahmenya”bhūubhīvavājī”va
Hi”tprati”phām yadājirn javi”phām tanmē mana”h uivasāṅkalpamastu
The dhīti manah – that only drives me through the world as a skilled sārētha (charioteer) does. This mantra highlights that the mind is ever present as a charioteer – the passenger may go to sleep but the charioteer can never do so. Its ever presence is necessary as is demonstrated even when we go to deep sleep. In deep sleep, it seems that the mind too is totally inactive. But the truth is that one faculty of the mind is indeed awake, otherwise how could a person in deep sleep ever be awakened. This mantra is the origin of the analogy of the soul being the passenger in a chariot. This analogy has been borrowed by Kaṭabhajana’ad and then much later by Gītā.

CONCLUSION:
These six mantras (Yp 34.1-6) form the basis of what can be called as the Vedic psychology. Its salient features are listed as follows.

1. The soul is the seat of consciousness.
2. The mind is its subtle instrument.
3. It enables the soul play its role of jñātā, bhoktā and karttā.
4. It helps us acquire knowledge, take decision, and do karma.
5. It is extremely fast and swift.
6. It stores the knowledge for future use.
7. It is capable of obtaining intuitive knowledge from its ultimate source.
8. It can guide us in the journey that the life is.
9. No derogatory term for mind has been used though the same appears to have entered into the literature in the middle ages.