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Yajurveda on the Human Mind

Dr. Harish Chandra,
B. Tech. (IIT Kanpur),
Ph. D. (Princeton, USA)
Dayananda Institute of Vedic Studies
6-1-103/85 Abhinav Colony, Padmarao Nagar,
Hyderabad 500 025, India
Tel: + 91 (040) 2751 0256, 3114 1808, Fax: 2751 0256, Email:
divayes@eth.net

Abstract: Six consecutive mantras in Yajurveda (Chapter 34, 1-6) have the common ending with *tanme manah* *œivasañkalpamastu*, 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 *daivya manah* – prime mover for the overall functions that I (the soul) may desire while living in the world.
- 2) The *yak^oa manah* – that enables me to influence the world by way of karma through the five organs for action.
- 3) The *prajôana manah* – that enables me to acquire real time knowledge from the outside world through the five organs for knowledge.
- 4) The *am^ota manah* – that is repository of knowledge with its memory.
- 5) The *pracetas manah* – that obtains the intuitive knowledge.
- 6) The *dh^oti manah* – that drives me through the world as a skilled charioteer (*sârathi*).

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 Vâyu, Sâmaveda to Âditya and Atharvaveda to Añgiras. 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 other piece of knowledge is acceptable only if it is in accordance with the Vedas. Patañjali, the author of *Yoga-Darçana* declares God as the primary teacher for all of us: *sa pûrvo^oâmapî guru? kâlenânnavacchedât. Bâdarâyâda, the author of Brahmasutra declares the existence of God because knowledge exists in the world: ûâstrayonitvât. In his view, man discovers knowledge (and thus, generates ûâstra) 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 *vijôana*, the spiritual knowledge, Yajurveda primarily deals with karma, Sâmaveda is similarly concerned with *upâsanâ*, and Atharvaveda on *jôana*, the knowledge of general kind – vide *Yv 4.1 (... ksâmâbhyâm santaranto yajurbhî râyaspo^oeâa sami^oâ madema ... i.e. we should live happily through devotion to God as taught in gveda*

and Sâmaveda 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 consecutive mantras appearing in Yajurveda (Chapter 34, 1-6) having the common ending of *tanme manah* *œivasañkalpamastu*, 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 (*Yv 34.1-6*) describe the following different facets of the human mind.

1. The *daiva manah*:

Yajjâgrato dûramudaiti daivam tadu suptasya tathaivaiti Dûrañgamam jyoti^oâm jyotirekam tanme mana? ûivasañkalpamastu

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 overall 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 *yak^oa manah*:

Yena karmadyapaso man^oido yajñe kròvanti vidathe^ou dhirá?
Yadapúrvam yak^oamantah prajānām tanme manah
úvasaṅkalpamastu

The *yak^oa 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*, through 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 *prajāña manah*:

Yatprajāñamuta ceto dh^otíuca yajjyotirantaram^otam prajāsu
Yasmanna^ote kim cana karma kriyate tanme manah
cevasaṅkalpamastu

The *prajāña 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 *am^ota manah*:

Yenedam bhūtam bhuvanam bhavi^oyat parig^ohītamam^otena sarvaam
Yena yajñastāyate saptahotā tanme manah
cevasaṅkalpamastu

The *am^ota 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 *am^ota manah* (undying mind). There is another meaning of *am^ota 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 *saṅsakāra*) 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*:

Yasminn^oca? sāma yajñū^oi yasmin prati^ophitā rathanābhāvivāra?
Yasmiñcittam sarvamotam prajānām tanme manah
cevasaṅkalpamastu

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 (*Yogascittav^ottinirodhan* – Patañjali) then one may achieve the state of *samprajāñā samādhi*. 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 *dh^oti manah*:

Su^oārathirāvāniva yanmanu^oyāñnētyate-bhīūubhīrōvājina-iva
H^otprati^opham yadajiram javi^opham tanme manah
cevasaṅkalpamastu

The *dh^oti manah* – that only drives me through the world as a skilled *sārathi* (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 Kāphopani^oad and then much later by Gītā.

CONCLUSION:

These six mantras (Yv 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.