

THE HOLISTIC APPROACH OF THE VEDAS FOR THE PEACE OF SOUL

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Shri Rishi Kumar Mishra in his book “ Before the beginning and the End” said: Although scholars in the post Mahabharata ages invested considerable time and energy in the study of philosophy, grammar, logic, astronomy, literature and so forth, a comprehensive and profound study of the Vedas continued to suffer.

Comprehension of the whole became weak and preoccupation with parts began to dominate. (Sic Mine)

This weakness, regarding comprehension of the whole and dominance of preoccupation with parts., resulted in dualism-dualism of soul vs. body, consciousness vs. nature and individual vs. individual. This dualistic approach led to the preference of one over the other; some who preferred body or nature, became materialists and others who preferred soul or consciousness, denied the simple pleasures of nature in the name of spiritualism.

(1) HOLISTIC APPROACH

As against this dualistic approach, is the Vedic approach of non-dualism, which is another name for the holistic approach. In this approach, neither this world nor the other world is to be neglected and neither the body nor the soul is to be over-looked. The other world is not separate form this world, but is only its continuation.

The trinity of ksara aksara and ayyaya are but three stages of one purusa at adhyatmika level; agni, vayu and aditya are three stages of one deva at adhidaivika level; the earth, the atmosphere and the finnament are the three levels of one loka at adhibhautika level and the body, mind and intellect are three levels of the same prakrti consisting of tamas, rajas and sattva.

When we are able to realise this unity underlying the diversity, the duality between knowledge and action, and between mundane life and immortality disappears. The actions dealing with the mundane asper of life occupy an eaquality important status with the knowledge, which deals with innotaly. This is what the Yajurveda said: “One who devotes himself to knowledge and action both, simultaneously, he gets over death by action and attains immortality by knowledge. Death stands for change, immortality stands for stability; both go together. The difference between the sentient and the insentient is not of fundamental nature, the sentient beings have senses, whereas, the insentient have no sense except that of touch. This means obliteration of distinction between nature and soul. Not only that, there is no distinction between individual and God. All plurality merges into non-daul one Brahman.

(2) FOUR ENDS OF HUMAN LIFE

Broadly speaking, we have two aspects of life-the external and the internal. On the other hand, we have four constituent of our personality-the body, mind, intellect and soul. The first two of these are associated with our external life, the last two are associated with internal life. According to these four constituents, there are four ends of human life-the physical objects (including money) are needed for the body, fulfillment of desires is the demand of main, dharma or righteousness is the attribute of intelligence and liberation is the domain of soul.

(3) MATERIAL ASPECT

Out of the aforesaid four constituents of personality, body is the grossest money is the main support of body. Food, clothing and shelter are the necessities for preservation of body. Min requires not only necessities but comforts and luxuries also. Mind is subtler than the body grosser

than the intellect. Body and mind together represent the material aspect of life, technically known as abhyudaya. This is the secular aspect of life.

(4) TRIVARGE

Intellect acts as a check for the unbridled activities of body and desires of mind. Without this check, there would be anarchy in life and society. Dharma means service before self. This spirit of dharma is required even by secularists like the communists. A Marxist. When he opposes exploitation, hoarding and inequality he, in fact, speaks of dharma in his sense, dharma is very much concerned with the mundane life. It is, therefore, included in the triad (trivarga) of dharma, artha and Kama.

(5) SUMMUM BONUM OF LIFE

This triad, however, is incomplete without the fourth end of human life viz., liberation. Whereas, the triad is concerned with prakrti, liberation is the demand of purusa. Liberation is the summum bonum of life, the other ends of human life are the menas towards that end.

The concept of four-fold varnas and four-fold asramas is based on the above-mentioned four-fold division of the ends of human life.

(6) FOUR ASRAMAS

Srama is exertion. Any exertion for achieving any end of human life is asrama, provided that we have the benefit of all in view with no petty selfish motive. Moreover, the ultimate end of all our efforts should be self-realisation.

- (i) In the first asrama, an individual is expected to make himself physically fit, mentally alert and intellectually rational so as to enable him to face the struggle of life with confidence.
- (ii) In the second asrama, he is enjoined to fulfill his legitimate desires of wealth, sex and fame.
- (iii) In the third asrama, he devotes himself mainly to a contemplative life of righteousness.
- (iv) By practice of righteousness, he ultimately realizes his true self in the fourth asrama. Though all the ends of human life are to be pursued in all the asramas, yet, a particular asrama is predominantly devoted to one of the ends of human life.

(7) FOUR VARNAS

- (i) The sudra varna bring worldly prosperity to the society by his physical labour. Worldly prosperity pre-supposes more production. Which is possible only by more labour.
- (ii) The vaisya varna takes the responsibility of distribution of the production so as to fulfill the necessities of different sections of the society as per its desire this requires, not so much of physical labour but mental acumen.
- (iii) The ksatriya varna represents the administrator's class, which regulates the labour class and the business community by unbiased and intelligent use of administrative power. There should not be exploitation of the working class nor should the business community indulge in any such anti-social activity as hoarding. A ksatriya handles a weapon so that there is no cry of lamentation from the weaker section of the society. In short the ksatriya, as an administrator administers justice in the society and, as a warrior, protects the country from foreign aggression. He, thus, acts as an armour, and is, therefore, called varman

(armour). The business community, representing the general public, is protected by him and is, therefore, called gupta (protected).

- (iv) Knowledge leads to liberation, which is the summum bonum of life. Whereas sudra produces wealth (artha), vaisya fulfills the requirements of the society (kama) and ksatriya administers justice (dharma), the brahmana liberates (moksa) by imparting knowledge. He is called sarman (via carman = skin) because he protects the society from disintegration by uniting it through the knowledge of sastra, just as, the skin protects the flesh, marrow and blood etc. within the body from disintegration by holding them together. Brahmana establishes the moral order through the use of physical force (sastra) against anti-social elements, both of them should go together.

(8) FOUR VEDAS

Thus we have a four-fold vedic culture aiming at four ends of human life, through four division of life (asramas) and society (varnas). This quacomplete is associated with four Veda as follows.

- (i) The Rgveda is associated with the visible aspect (murta) i.e. artha.
- (ii) The Yajurveda is associated with dynamism (gati) which leads to fulfillment of desires (kama)
- (iii) The Samaveda is associated with luster (tejas) culmination into righteousness (Dharma)
- (iv) The Arharvaneda is the Brahma-veda or the veda of knowledge which leads to liberation (moksa). Let us elaborate this brief outline into some detail with appropriate quotations from the Vedas.

(8.1) RGVEDA

The visible aspect of a culture (or rather civilisation) is represented by the material and the physical, which is associated with Rgveda. Rk is born of agni the source of energy, without which no material production is possible. Agni is the protector of body as also the bestower of wealth. Physical labour alone can assure a wealthy society. The labour class is the son of the soil. Therefore the labour class is the son of the soil. Therefore the labour class as well as the earth are said to have been born of the foot of the personified god. Just as the foot upholds the body, the labour class upholds the society. If the labourer were not to produce the consumer's articles, the society will remain uncivilized. People roaming naked without clothes and in the open without houses would form only a primitive society. Clothes and houses are the products of the labour class only. Labour class has to work hard for producing the articles of use. A student is also required to lead a hard and austere life so that he can prove useful for the society after completing his education.

(8.2) YAJURVEDA

The dynamism, associated with yajus, requires mental acumen. Amongst the deva, dynamism is best represented by vayu. Vaisya community, by moving around, accumulates wealth through business. Amongst the asramas, the householder enjoys all the pleasures of life, using his mind as the axle of the chariot of his life. Whereas, the idleness of body is to be conquered by a life of hard work, the fickleness of mind is to be controlled through upasana. Success in worldly life depends upon hard work with a concentrated mind.

(8.3) SAMAVEDA

Whereas, hard work and concentration are necessary at a personal level, maintenance of law and order is also necessary for the society. Maintenance law and order is dharma. The ksatriya class is responsible for this maintenance of law and order. The luster, required for this is to be derived from samaveda. Which is represented by aditya at the adhidaivika level. Sama is the vital energy, the aditya. Associated with aditya, time is the supreme luster. Ksatriya has the luster of valour, whereas, vanaprastha has the luster of tapas. Ksatriya maintains the law through the use of administrative power, whereas, vanaprastha does the same through his moral power. These two, together, control through dharma, the unbridled play of money power and licentiousness in the society.

APARA AND PARA

Here ends, the Tray of Rk, Yajus and Sama represented by tamas, rajas and sattva, the three constituents of prakrti i.e. the body, mind intellect. This is covered by apara vidya. Physics, psychology and logic, associated with body, mind and intellect respectively, fall under this category.

Then comes the forth, the transcendental aspect of soul, associated with Atharvaveda, also known as the brahmaveda. Whereas, apara vidya is concerned with what is bound by time and space, para vidya deals with what is beyond time and space. Apara can be conceived by mind and expressed in language, whereas, para is beyond mind and speech. Apara is science, para is spiritualism. Apara is presided over by agni, payu and aditya; that are the three forms of agni. Spiritualism is presided over by soma. Agni and soma together make the world.

(8.4) ATHARVAVEDA

Atharvaveda is the brahmaveda. Brahma embraces all devas . he is the supreme creator. Brahmana is one who knows brahma. Soul being above intelligence & is beyond its control. Consequently brahmana is not to be subjugated by ksatriya & czkg.kksjktU;% L;kr~. He is ruled over only by soma, which symbolizes immortality. This immortality alone is perfect; the body, having nine doors (i.e.senses) and encircled by three guna, is always imperfect and therefore mortal. The soul is all pervading; only, one who realizes the self, is freed from the fear of death. This is what is known as sannyasa. We can, thus, trace the origin of the four purusarthas, four asramas and four varnas in the vedas, that embody the seed of all Indian civilization and culture, which is based on a holistic paradigm.