

Vedic Dharma: A Glorious Theory of Universal Humanity

Prof. D. N. Pandeya*

A sublime glow of word *dharma* makes all people belonging to all walks of life so much thrilled and vibrated that they find themselves in a whirlpool of confusion and in this very state of meager state of their education and understanding they hesitate not even a bit to comment upon, the great word of *dharma*. The other reason behind it is illusion and self set image of the *dharma* by people who know only extrinsic serviceable aspect of *dharma* applicable to and suitable for them and for their customary activities. When they find the different faith, customs and activities in other community of people related to *dharma*, they either feel averse to their faith or count it atheistic community. This very weakness of human beings generates problem in our society.

To avert this scum of the clean water of *dharma*, the Vedic seers¹ of the past have gifted us the concept of Vedic *dharma* that emerges out from the Vedic studies² in the injunctive light of the Vedic rituals. But, it is here remarkable to see that the Vedic education – the spirit of Vedic *dharma* opens a gate way of आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः to enter the Universal religion that teaches all human beings in general, how to live the value oriented life³.

* Dean, Faculty of Veda & Vedang, Shree Somnath Sanskrit University, Veraval.

¹ कर्मणाञ्च विवेकार्थं धर्माधर्मौ व्यवेचयत्।

द्वन्द्वैरयोजयञ्चेमाःसुखदुःखादिभिःप्रजाः॥मनुस्मृतिः1.26

² स्वाध्यायविधिः—जैमिनीयन्यायमालाविस्तरः

³ The eternal *Sanātana Dharma*, the way of life, I practice, teaches me to believe not in the survival of the fittest, but in the glorious idea: *Sarvebhavantu sukhinah*—may all beings be

The Research paper fixes its target to make it clear that the Universal *dharma* is a serviceable practice of received Vedic knowledge. It is here worthy to mention that to acquire the complete knowledge and understanding of that Universal *dharma*, the basic education of the Veda would be a first fruitful step. The paper tries its best to reach its objective hypothesized above, through the points mentioned here under:

Vedic studies and Dharma

In brief, *dharma* in the terms of *Meemamsa Philosophy*, is verily the proper sense of the Vedic literature^४. To understand this proper sense of the Vedic *Mantras* and *Brahmanas*^५ the detail study of Vedangas^६ is also most important, so that through the etymological and contextual operative system of the Vedic semantics, one may milk out the inner property of the Vedic literature related to *dharma*. Defining the Vedic *dharma*, the Meemamsa philosophy promulgates- '*Chodana laxano artho dharmah*'^७. This is closely connected with the first Sootra

happy.— 'To abolish religion would be to tear the very heart of humanity—page-16, Many Paths: One Goal, by J.P. Vaswani Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd.

४ वेदार्थ एव धर्मः- अर्थसंग्रहः, अर्थालोक-टीका, (पंडितराज पट्टाभिरामशास्त्री। संपादनम्- प्रो.वाचस्पति उपाध्यायः, अर्थालोकलोचन-हिन्दीटीकासहितः, चौखम्बा प्रकाशन)

५ मन्त्रब्राह्मणयोर्वेदनामधेयम् – स्वामी करपात्री जी—मन्त्रब्राह्मणात्मकस्य वेदस्य पर्यालोचनया वेदस्वरूपमतिगहनं प्रसिद्ध्यति। तस्यैकदेशमादायैवाचार्यैः स्व-स्वग्रन्थे लक्षणानि विहितानि। पूर्णो वेदस्वरूपविचारस्तु तत्र न कृतो दृश्यते। तस्मात् मन्त्रब्राह्मणात्मकान् वेदानाश्चित्य मुख्यवेदस्वरूपं विवरीतुमेषः प्रयत्नः। द्र.वेदस्वरूपविमर्शः-स्वामी करपात्री जी।

६ साक्षात्कृद्भर्माण ऋषयो बभूवुः। ते अवरेभ्यः असाक्षात्कृद्भर्मेभ्यः उपदेशेन मन्त्रान् संप्रादुः। उपदेशाय ग्लायन्तः अवरे बिल्मग्रहणायेमं ग्रंथं समाम्नासिषुर्वेदं च वेदाङ्गानि च । द्र.निरुक्त, 1,6,20 (निगमनिरुक्तव्याकरणादीनि पदपदार्थनिर्णये साहाय्यमाचरन्ति, वेदस्वरूपविमर्शः)

७ It means injunctions read In the Brahmic literature such as स्वाध्यायः अध्येतव्यः, अग्निष्टोमेन स्वर्गकामो यजेत that inspire common men to perform the various vedic sacrifices. Some modern scholars hesitate to chant the sentence cited above finding smutty sense therein, but Swami Kajpatiriji says- अक्षीलत्वं हि न शब्दस्य नियतो धर्मः। वक्तृबोधव्यभेदेनैव शब्दस्याक्षीलार्थकत्वं परिगण्यते।- वेदस्वरूपविमर्शः-पृ.20-25

of *Jaimini – ATHATO DHARMA JIGNASA*. This aphorism of the Meemamsa philosophy that inspires the aspirants of the Vedic *dharma* to have the proper study of the Vedic literature in the light of prescribed rules of Vedic studies for students. The rules and other serviceable disciplines are prescribed in the Shiksha Vedanga and Pratishakhays- such as प्रयतः, शुचिः, भोजनं मधुरं स्निग्धम्, योजनान्न परम्, and the like^८. It is here important to mention that the Vedic studies is not a mere formal studies based on fixed curriculum, emerged from certain books, but accompanied with a few rules related to moral disciplines and health education^९ to make a person suitable for our social and natural environment. Specially, in Shiksha Vedangas^{१०} a list of rules related to daily routine of Vedic-studies for aspirants have been prescribed. The Gurukul was the centre for Vedic studies where in guardianship and observation of a perfect Vedic teacher students were bound to follow these rules. The natural atmosphere^{११} and beauty of nature spread over the *Ashramas* and *Gurukulas* was convenient for their proper growth and academic development in their proper life stage of study that also made them strong mentally, and free from other deficiencies of health. This very system of education was automatic instrumental to keep the students on the right tract of

^८ वाजसनेयिप्रातिशाख्य-1, 20-25,

^९ प्रकृतिर्यस्यकल्याणी दन्तोष्ठौ यस्यशोभनौ।

प्रगल्भश्चविनीतश्च स वर्णान्वक्तुमर्हसि॥

आम्रपालाशबिल्वानामपामार्गशिरीषयोः।

वाग्यतःप्रातरुत्थाय भक्षयेद्दन्तधावनम्॥

खदिरञ्चकदम्बञ्च करवीरकरञ्जकौ।

एतेकण्टकिनःपुण्याःक्षीरिणश्च यशस्विनः॥

तेनास्यकरणेसौक्ष्म्यं माधुर्यञ्चैवजायते।

त्रिफलां लवणाक्तां वै भक्षयेच्छिष्यकैःसदा।

क्षीणमेधाजनन्येषा स्वरवर्णकरी तथा॥ द्र.याज्ञवल्क्यशिक्षा-32-38

^{१०} याज्ञवल्क्यशिक्षा-श्लोक,106-121,

^{११} सर्वेशिलोच्चयाःसर्वाःस्रवन्त्यःसरितःपुण्याहदास्तीर्थाणि ऋषिनिकेतनानि गोष्ठक्षेत्रपरिष्कन्दा इति देशाः

(मेधयानि) बौद्धधर्मसूत्र-3,10,12-17.

humanity^{१२}. This was the special training of the Vedic dharama for the Vedic students in past to teach them the lesson of life value of human beings of all walks of life. It deserves to mention here that the Vedic students^{१३} in their first phase of study, in Vedic period, used to take the Vedic-*Mantras* by their heart. And this very digested impression of the original Vedic *Mantras* generated an inside constructive power in youth of the Vedic period and consequently humanitarian qualities were seen in practical affairs of their daily routine works. This was a diagnostic way of problem solving method of human beings taught to the Vedic students by their Gurus in Ashramas^{१४}. Because of that the Vedic seers were able to produce so many role models for the betterment of our nation. Hence it comes that the *dharmā* in the reference of Vedic studies starts from the very prime stage of education in practical form. Today's problem related to sanitation and clean-green land could not arise at that time due to the natural affection of the Vedic students with the plants, medicinal groves and with wild life^{१५}. Therefore, it comes that the Vedic dharmā starts from the Vedic studies and during the period of studies, the vedic students know the life system of all creatures and their tender age and graceful innocence gives not occasion to find gulf between human beings and flora and fauna^{१६}. Because of the phenomena of the idea of the Vedic *dharmā*, the Meemamsa philosophy gives a very good idea of creative energy or

^{१२} See note -3,

^{१३} There existed previous to the Sootra period , a body of literary works propagated by oral tradition—see Ancient Sanskrit Literature - by Max Müller, and the introductory part of *Baudhayana Dharmasootra*, edited by Umesh Chandra Pande.

^{१४} See the hymn of *Vishwamitrādisamvad* Rigveda-3|33 - Ye divine , vast, all soothing waters! Heaven and Earth, wide Eather! Let us render homage unto Brihaspati with offering hail-*Shatpathbrahmana*- translated by Egging, edited by F.Max Müller.

^{१५} यस्मिन् वृक्षे मध्वदःसुपर्णा निविशन्ते-ऋ.1,164,22.

^{१६} Yajurveda-36,17.

Bhavana^{१७}. This very *Bhavana* pays a key role in *Meemamsa* philosophy and indirectly it influences the human beings who are inclined to the *Vedic* sacrifices.

Therefore, it comes that the Vedic *dharma* is a result of *Vedic*-studies that has been said in the terms of *Artha and yajna*^{१८}. In effect the word *dharma* is read in the Vedic Mantras, that is explored by the *Meemamsa* philosophy. It flows in to three basic streams termed as material oriented, divine oriented and spirituality oriented dharmas.

The material phenomenon of the Vedic *dharma* appears in the forms of rules and regulations of human life, social management and the like^{१९}. This very aspect of the Vedic *dharma* has been described comprehensively in the *Smriti*- literature and *Puranas* also, while the divine aspect of the Vedic *dharma* is closely related with the rituals and the sacrificial activities. The aim of the *dharma* related to the human society is to keep society on the right track of humanity to make people personally developed with good qualities^{२०}. The aim of the divine aspect of the Vedic *dharma* is to develop divine qualities in people to lead them up to the rank of divinity. This is a perpetual development of human personality through the way of divinizing the practical affairs of human beings what are delineated in *Vedanta philosophy* at large^{२१}. This is the second stage of human beings who want to climb up to the world of spirituality through their good works and restrain over their senses. In this stage of life, human beings gradually proceed to pervade the world.

^{१७} Arthasamgrah, p.2, Translated by G.THIBAUT, Chaukhamba Publication, Varanasi.

^{१८} Arthasamgrah, commented by Pttabhiramshastri, edited and translated in Hindi by Prof. Vachaspati Upadhyaya.

^{१९} It is enumerated in *Smriti*-s exclusively; see *Samskarsarah* by Dalpatimharaja SampurnanandSanskrit University Publication, p.21.

^{२०} Geeta- 3\10-11

^{२१} *Vedantasara*, by Sadanandyogi and Brahmasootra तत्तु समन्वयात्-ब्र.सूत्र1,4 , -स्वात्मधर्म एवसंस्तिरोभूतो मोक्षःक्रियात्मनि संस्क्रियमाणे अभिव्यज्यते।शां.भा.

The third but the most valuable stage of the *Vedic dharma* that touches the spiritual world is the centric aim of it and to some extent the *Samkhya philosophy* also has supported this in the words of धर्मेण गमनमूर्ध्वम् = it means through the following of the way of *dharma* one can enjoy the paramount stage of life^{२२}.

Besides the above mentioned merits and contribution in the mental development of human beings the Vedic- studies oriented *dharma* makes people much more competent to take decision in difficult matter. This has been suggested by the commentaries of the न्यायमाला विस्तर^{२३} as such – अर्थनिर्णयिकं शास्त्रम्। Though it has been delineated in the context of ritualistic phenomena of the Veda but our Vedic seers in a brief statement of few words picture out all shades of thought. This very decision making aspect of the Vedic *dharma* has been well defined by the *Smritis* as following-

यमार्याः क्रियमाणं हि संशन्त्यागमवेदिनः।

स धर्मो, यं विगर्हन्ति तमधर्मं प्रचक्षते।^{२४} (नृसिंहप्रसादः)-

It means the conduct or activities being done by people are appreciated or recommended by the perfect scholars of the Vedas is *dharma* and the works being practiced by common men depreciated by them are called *adharmā*. Here *Aagamvedinah* means the knower of Vedas. Therefore it has been proved that the *Vedic dharma* is the *dharma* of educating human beings to translate the received knowledge of the Veda-s in to action using their discretionary mental power.

Qualities of the Vedic Dharma

The Vedic *dharma* is an eternal way of life that makes people active and dutiful. This is the प्रवृत्तिसंज्ञकधर्म means impeller to the domestic and social prescribed duties that includes all the customary functions and inclination towards specific religious faith. Its result is prosperity in material life. Also it reminds the

^{२२} Samkhyakarika- 44.

^{२३} *Jaimininyayamalavistara*- 1/1/1 by Mayana - Chaukhamba Publication

^{२४} Sanskarsarah – Page 7

Mantra of Ishopanishad in which it is said that we should live here in material world with action plan of duties towards societies.

The second category of *dharma* is निवृत्तिसंज्ञक^{२५} means the *dharma* that teach us withdrawal of mental inclination with material world and leads human beings to the spiritual world of emancipation or eternal bliss.

It is here worthy to mention that again this category of *Vedic dharma* fluxes into philosophical and spiritual streams. For instance, we can see the पुरुषसूक्त and नासदीयसूक्त and the like in Vedic literature in which, in brief, all the concepts of Indian philosophy and to some extent the ideas of all the eminent schools of world religions are summed up.

Critical Approach to the Definitions of Dharma

As we know that the Vedic *dharma* is very nicely defined by a *Mantra* itself that runs thus - यज्ञेन यज्ञमयजन्त देवास्तानि धर्माणि प्रथमान्यासन्।^{२६} = the Vedic deities performed the sacrifices with the sacrificial articles and what they did was a unified form of *dharma*. Here this shows that whatever they performed in the name of sacrifice – further it was treated as the main feature of *dharma*. This very thing came to be conceptualized as a definition of *dharma* as such—यागादिरेव धर्मः^{२७}. Here it is noticeable that this is the वेदार्थः, as it is said वेदा हि यज्ञार्थमभिप्रवृत्ताः। It means the Vedas came to light, only for the performance of the sacrificial activities. But it has a deep sense of all good activities for human beings. That's why three types of actions in Veda have been suggested in a *Mantra*, commenting upon which, Mahidhar (a great commentator of 16th century) says that the Vedic sacrifice is a supreme act^{२८}. So it is proved that all the duties for society, acts in

^{२५} *Ibid*, p.23

^{२६} *Shuklayajurveda* – 31/16

^{२७} *Arthasamgrah*, the word आदि includes जपः, तपस् दान etc.

^{२८} See the commentary of Mahidhar on the first *Mantra* of *Shuklayajurveda* – Chaukhamba Publication.

general and religious performances laid down by scriptures are approved by the Vedas, because *Smritis* are the vehicles of the Vedic ideas as it is said — पूर्वविज्ञानविषयं विज्ञानं स्मृतिरुच्यते।

पूर्वज्ञानाद्विना तस्याःप्रामाण्यं नावधार्यते ॥ It means traditional subjects of science that influxes through the ages is called scriptures or *Smritis*. Without the knowledge of previous status of science the authenticity of posterior scriptures could not be entertained. Here obviously it is remarked that there is a natural inter connection between the *Veda* and the *Smriti* literature. Besides this the definitions of *dharma* cited above are very significant and bear deep idea that can be felt in other schools of religion of the world. For instance, to some extent we can see the similar points of the mythology and sacrificial activities in world religions^{२९}. Hence, it comes that the perception of the Vedic seers about *dharma* has a great sense that by and large seems glittering in many a schools of world religion and religious books in their own words and terminology^{३०}. In Indian culture it is supposed that the Vedic activities related to *dharma* are well defined in the scriptures of India. Hence It is here remarkable to take to our notice that the *Smriti* literature and the other associated manuals of the Vedas are very sincere to elaborate the cardinal theory of the same and by that way the Vedic *dharma* embraces all the humanitarian disciplines preached by the world religious role-models who have time to time, developed and directed their religious life systems separately. But this is the special phenomenon of the Vedic *dharma* that instead of imposing any blame^{३१} and picking hole in other mansion of religious prophets it talks in plain words about the world humanity, the world peace and prosperity and gives no room to difference in religious faiths on the ground of community, continent, cast, creeds and ranks assumed by imperfect religious personages. For the better management of society it suggests some divine ideas to apply to our

२९ Samskersar – p.33.

३० Religious worship was the foundation of the great cultural system of the world, p.11, Many Paths: One Goal

३१ धर्मं यो बाधते धर्मो न स धर्मः कदाचन। अविरोधीतु यो धर्मः स धर्मः सद्भि रूच्यते ॥-- संस्कारसारः, पृ.29

society as per requirement on the basis of perusal of them as our past seers याज्ञवल्क्य, पराशर and the like did in the light of age need. Because of that special inclusive religious theory of the Vedic literature it stands as a light post on the circle of our way of life system silently only, to guide human beings and says to fix their goal of life and to approach their destination.

Special Sheds of Thought

It is here worthy to delineate that the main purpose of the Vedic *dharma* is to teach human beings that there are three types of *dharma* related to the three types of human life known as material life, divine and spiritual life which are naturally interlinked^{३२}. The Vedic *dharma* prescribes various rules and religious customary activities clothed in seers and divine sermons for all the three types of life. This is the right way of human beings that makes felt the human life value experienced earlier by our fore fathers and the seers of the days. It means, in opinion of the research paper these three aforesaid lives constitute an idea of perfect life for human beings.

Going through these perfect life factors people start their material life to develop it in to divine life and then having been won over the fear^{३३} of the darkness of death naturally enjoy the bliss of absolute perfection of his inside existing supreme soul. This is the utter most purpose of the Vedanta philosophy. With a bit of change in the philosophical terminology this idea may be attached with other Indian and world philosophical aims also.

Some Special Sermons of the Vedic dharma

The first and foremost message of the ritual oriented dharma of the Vedic literature comes to our sight as the shelter providing device for peace prosperity and giver of supreme bliss – the main purpose of the Vedant philosophy. It means to step in the studyfield of the Vedant philosophy in firsthand the knowledge of the Vedic *dharma* is most necessary – as it is said by सदानन्दयोगी- अधिकारी तु

३२ अथातो धर्मजिज्ञासा-मीमांसा, अथातो ब्रह्मजिज्ञासा – ब्रह्मसूत्रम्, १.१.१

३३ ईशोपनिषद्-11

विधिवदधीत वेदवेदाङ्गत्वेन^{३४} etc. It means an aspirant of the Vedant philosophy needs not only the ready knowledge of the Vedic *dharma* but its practice also in order to easy approach to the philosophical perusal and exercise of the guidelines prescribed for aspirants. The exercise of the Vedic *karmas* prescribed as नित्य, नैमित्तिक and the like in scriptures purge out the heart and mind of the aspirants of the Vedanta philosophy. If once heart and mind of human beings purified the way to spiritual practice will be free from stumble block and uneven level in society. All human beings will live brotherly and friendly without fear and favor. This type of inclusive *dharma* also pays sincere attention on the ecological balance extending great respect towards nature and its huge natural extant in the forms of rivers, mountains, sky and the like. This very above mentioned ecological views have been enumerated in Vedic literature in detail in the various hymns of the *Rigveda* and in other schools of the Vedic literature related to five gross elements as such- hymns related to the earth, clouds, fire, wind and water. This is the greatness of the Vedic *dharma* and glorious phenomenon of it that it stands as a store house of all religious thoughts, ethics and morality to develop human beings up to the rank of divinity and spirituality in which stage all ways of religions merged in to the one nest of humanity. This is the heaven dreamed by the seers of the Veda.

^{३४} वेदान्तसारः-अधिकारिप्रकरणम्।