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Relevance of the glorious teachings of the Vedas in Modern age: A Realistic Approach

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The *Veda* is acknowledged as the earliest available literary composition of humanity. The *Veda* contains the sacred knowledge, -- knowledge of highest spiritual truth of which the human mind is capable and its relationship with the world and the individual and collective life in the world and on the earth. Besides, it is the fountain head or repository of all knowledge and wisdom, an outline of the whole universe covering of all the matters relating to animate and in-animate. It is so called, because of every matter contained therein, informs of a man of human life called the law of righteousness to understand which there is no other valid means or the proof. The *Veda* inspires the law giver, as it is called the code of laws. It teaches all kinds of laws to the entire humanity for their prosperity in various fields. Hence, it is called a code book of all laws.

But it is specially called a moral code for humanity; because, the moral law, which reminds man of his position in nature, is given in the unparalleled

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code of universal ethics of the hoary *Veda*, whose melodious music indelibly impresses it on the mind. Its study for a sufficiently long time habituates the mind to it in dealing with the concerns of daily life. Man, then does not act like dumb and driven cattle, but goes about as a responsible member of society.

The *Veda* is a big ocean of treasure of moral and spiritual teachings. It teaches ethical values and moral obligations towards gods, seers, Brahmins/teachers, mother and motherland. The human being should always follow the moral and spiritual advices of the *Veda* for his well being as well as for the true prosperity of the mankind.

In the *YajurVeda* it is said that the Supreme Lord or *ĪDa* is the Creator and ruler of this universe and hence the Supreme self is the controller of the individual self. One should feel obliged towards God for this multifarious and unique creation. He has created everything for the enjoyment as well as sustenance of human beings. So, every universal being has the proper right to live better and enjoy the great creation of the Lord. But being the Supreme ruler, He puts some moral restrictions in the way of living as well as enjoyment of life of the human beings. It is obvious that we are social beings and should live amicably in the society. The religious duties and obligations of every man should be well maintained. It is advised that the human beings should be helpful, merciful towards others. Hence, the *mantra* says:

ईशावास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किं च जगत्यां जगत्।
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्य स्विद्धनम्॥¹

All this—whatsoever moves in this ephemeral world are enveloped by the God-- *ĪDa*, the Supreme Lord of this universe. Enjoy the good things of life as gifts of God. Do not covet the wealth of any one, i.e. what belongs to others.

It is a clear indication to the human being that his existence is due to the Grace of God. And for his smoothly maintenance He has provided everything, i.e. food, cloth and other valuable things. But the question arises, whatever he is enjoying being thought that it is his thing or property but in reality, it is not true. It means all the enjoyable things, i.e. house, food, ornaments; property, etc. do not belong to him permanently. Hence, these (movable and immovable) enjoyable things (*dhanam*) belong to God; although, it is being created for us to enjoy, but we have no right to misuse the wealth of God. So, it is said that '***tena tyaktena bhuñjithā***'. After '*tyāga*'—renouncing for others, one should enjoy. Moreover, one should not have any attachment towards this unreal wealth. Whatever one has gathered or earned out of that a major portion should be given to poor & needy persons or helpless persons and the rest wealth would be enjoyed by him. Hence, it is the moral as well as religious duty of a wealthy man to extend support to the poor people and pay gifts to the desired persons. However, after performing these moral obligations towards financially backward persons of the society one should live his life in a better order.

Further the *Veda* advises that only by accomplishing religious *karmas* like performance of various sacrifices, render free service to the desired people, pay gifts to see the happiness of others, etc. one should wish to live a hundred years in the society. *Karma* should be the main basis of our existence without which life has no value:

कुर्वन्नेवेह कर्माणि जिजीविषेच्छतं समाः।

एवं त्वयि नान्यथेतोऽस्ति न कर्म लिप्यते नरे॥²

In this world, one should desire to live a hundred years, a life, by performing energetic actions. For a man, this is the way to be free from the attachment to actions, because there is no other way to this consummation.

Therefore, one should desire to live by doing only such deeds or *karmas* as Agnihotra, five great sacrifices (*pañca-mahā-yajña*), etc., which are enjoined by scriptures. The Vedic advices are: one should not hanker after his life or death, and should go to the forest to maintain ‘*sanyāsa dhrama*’ in proper period of his life. This should be the real aim of his life. The human beings are advised to follow the seven rules of conduct established by the Vedic seers and wise persons. The verse says:

ससमर्यादाः कवयस्ततक्षुस्तासामेकामिदभ्यंहुरो गात्।

आयोर्हं स्कम्भ उपमस्य नीळे पथां विसर्गे धरुणेष तस्थौ॥³

The seven pathways fixed by the great wise men are really help a person to get all prosperity in the world. He is a sinner who deviates from any one of them. Agni is the protector of life from serious sin or moral offence. Hence, a man should follow the cosmic law as well as rules of conduct established by our ancient seers.

The *Veda* further advises to keep distance from passion / lust (*kāma*), anger (*krodha*), covetousness (*lobha*), delusion / infatuation (*moha*), pride (*mada*), and enviousness/ hostility (*matsara*). Because these six disorders (*vikāras*) must provoke a being to commit any sin or to behave abnormally, this is harmful for him. The six wicked elements should be elevated from mind and

heart, otherwise the life of a person would move towards hell. This thing is nicely exemplified in the *ēgveda* as:

उल्लूकयातुं शुशुलूकयातुं जहि श्वयातुमुत कोकयातुम्।

सुपर्णयातुमुत गृध्रयातुं दृषदेव प्र मृण रक्ष इन्द्र॥⁴

The nature and special quality of different animals/beasts are mentioned in this *mantra*. Owl is a lustful or amorous bird while the owlet is an angry animal. The nature of owl and owlet, viz. *moha* and *krodha* should be totally destroyed and ignored by the human beings. Secondly, the nature of dog and cuckoo, viz. *matsara* and *kāma* should also be properly destroyed. Thirdly, the nature of eagle and vulture, viz. *mada* & *lobha* is not even favorable for human being. Hence, all ill-minded spirits and thoughts of these animals and birds must be fully destroyed. Otherwise, the smooth spiritual journey of the human being would be hampered and finally stopped.

Desire for a good and auspicious life has always and everywhere been a human aspiration. The Vedic seers always seek and pray for receiving auspicious powers and thoughts from the God. The *ēgveda* rightly says:

आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतोऽदब्धासो अपरितास उद्भिदः।

देवा नो यथा सदमिद् वृधे असन्नप्रायुवो रक्षितारो दिवे दिवे॥⁵

May the auspicious powers and thoughts come to us from every quarter, which are unmolested, unhindered and always victorious? The gods ever may stay with us to protect us from day-to-day problems and help us to achieve prosperity.

Here, it is advised to the human beings that God is the bestowal of all things and hence pray Him to receive all materialistic pleasures as well as eternal happiness.

The Vedic moral teachings are essential for the sanctification of *vāk*, *manas*, heart and other senses of every human being. The man may hear good and sacred speeches and see excellent things. He should enjoy his life by worshipping gods with purity and serving to the great scholars with true devotion. In the words of *Veda*:

भद्रं कर्णेभिः शृणुयाम देवा भद्रं पश्येमाक्षभिर्यजत्राः।

स्थिरैरङ्गैस्तुष्टुवांसस्तुनूभिर्व्यशेम देवहितं यदायुः॥⁶

A man should think better, hear better and do better for himself and for others. His speech should be soft and sweet, because, Goddess Lakṣmī lives in lofty and purified speech. Secondly, sweet speech is a bond of unity and friendship. It is a medium of expression of (our) thoughts and feelings to the gods, pités and men, through worship, Ḍrāddha, and general conversation, respectively. The word is represented as the product of meditation, love and common concern.

Regarding the merits of smooth expression of views, the *Veda* advises:

सक्तुमिव तितउना पुनन्तो यत्र धीरा मनसा वाचमक्रत।

अत्रा सखायः सख्यानि जानते भद्रैषां लक्ष्मीर्निहिताधि वाचि॥⁷

The wise persons always express their speeches or words through wisdom, like men cleansing corn in a cribble. Thus, friends know and recognize each other's friendship and good fortune (Īrī) lives in their speech for ever.

Hence, it is obvious to speak sweet words or to be soft spoken for receiving good fortune and prosperity.

As the universe is created by God, so the whole world should be treated as a family (*vasudhaiva kuḌumbakam*). So, in this God's creation all the human

beings should be one and united (*saigha Daktau kaliyuge*). Let us meet together, talk together and work together for the well-being of our society.

सं गच्छध्वं सं वदध्वं सं वो मनांसि जानताम्।⁸

Besides, for universal friendship, equality & brotherhood, *Veda* rightly teaches us as:

समानो मन्त्रः समितिः समानी समानं मनः सह चित्तमेषाम्।

समानं मन्त्रमभि मन्त्रये वः समानेन वो हविषा जुहोमि॥

समानी व आकृतिः समाना हृदयानि वः।

समानमस्तु वो मनो यथा वः सुसहासति॥⁹

Being the words of God *Veda* teaches all to maintain a healthy, peaceful and spiritual life in the society.

Like *Vedas*, the words of Upanisads are also very useful in our day-to-day activities. One cannot negate their teachings as the seers of Upanisads had a right approach to educate people in a proper direction in a way of their spiritual journey, i.e. towards liberation. The *BéhadāraĀyaka UpaniṌad* preaches self-restraint, generosity and compassion. It is said that the gods, demons and men all had gone for enlightenment to their common father Prajāpati (Creator of the Universe), and he honestly instructed them with one single syllable, 'da'. The gods understood it as self control (*dama*), the demons as compassion (*dayā*), and men as charity or gift (*dāna*). In the words of UpaniṌad:

दाम्यत दत्त दयध्वमिति तदेतत् त्रयं शिक्षेद्दमं दानं दयामिति।¹⁰

For the human beings Prajāpati advises to offer gifts to the poor and desired persons. Thus, gift (*dāna*) is essentially a human virtue, because man being a social being must think of others around him and come to their aid by

curtailing his own enjoyment. Hence, man transgresses his own *dharma* or rather, goes against the inherent law of his nature if he hoards everything for his own enjoyment and is not charitable in his disposition.¹¹

The *BéhadāraĒyaka UpaniŌad* also teaches to perform pious deeds for getting good results:

पुण्यो वै पुण्येन कर्मणा भवति पापः पापेनेति।¹²

The commentator Ākarācārya explains the nature of pious act (*puĒya-karma*) and sinful act (*pāpa karma*) as:

तस्मात् पुण्यो वै शास्त्रविहितेन पुण्येन कर्मणा भवति, तद्विपरीतेन विपरीतो भवति पापः पापेन।¹³

The *Chāndogya UpaniŌad*, expresses the ethical basis of the UpaniŌadic doctrine through a simile, as water does not stick to the leaf of a lotus-flower, so evil actions do not stick to him who knows this self.

यथा पुष्कर पलाश आपो न श्लिष्यन्त एवमेवंविदि पापं कर्म न श्लिष्यत इति।¹⁴

After completion of the Gurukula education some moral advices are given by the teacher to the disciples as an essential part of their daily duty. These moral as well as spiritual teachings are nicely presented in the *TaittirĒya UpaniŌad* as:

सत्यं वद। धर्मं चर। स्वाध्यायान्मा प्रमदः। आचार्याय प्रियं धनमाहृत्य प्रजातन्तुं मा व्यवच्छेत्सीः। सत्यान्न प्रमदितव्यम्। धर्मान्न प्रमदितव्यम्। कुशलान्न प्रमदितव्यम्। भूत्यै न प्रमदितव्यम्। स्वाध्यायप्रवचनाभ्यां न प्रमदितव्यम्।

देवपितृकार्याभ्यां न प्रमदितव्यम्। मातृदेवो भव। पितृदेवो भव। आचार्यदेवो भव। अतिथिदेवो भव। यान्यनवद्वानि कर्माणि तानि सेवितव्यानि। नो इतराणि।.....।¹⁵

It means, always speak the truth. Practice virtuous deeds (*dharma*). Don't neglect to study the *Vedas*. Having properly offered the desirable wealth or intended gifts to the teacher do not stop the line of progeny. There should be no carelessness or negligence about truth. One should not deviate from religious activities. No one should be careless about his self protection. One should not be careless to perform the auspicious acts. Never be negligent about the study and teaching (of the *Dāstras*).

The duties towards gods and manes must be performed. In no way they are to be ignored. The mother should be worshipped as goddess. Similarly, the father, teacher and guests are also to be honoured and duly worshipped as gods. Besides, perform those acts which are not blamable, but pious and praiseworthy. The actions of ours should be commendable one which is prescribed by the *Dāstras* and scriptures.

It is to be noted that these moral and ideal teachings of the UpaniṠads are not only meant for students but for all. Human beings are rightly advised by the seers of the scriptures to follow the glorious spiritual and moral teachings of the *Vedas* and UpaniṠads for attaining eternal peace, happiness and healthy life. Hence, obviously *Veda*, the word of God is a moral code of the entire humanity. There is no doubt that the *Veda*'s sacred knowledge is useful for all the human beings of the world. It never sees any caste and creed, as knowledge is meant for all. However, it is up to the man to use the general as well as sacred knowledge of *Veda* in its everyday life. Therefore, it can be concluded that the human beings of

the world can live better in the society through the Sacred knowledge of the *Vedas*.

References:

1. *Yajurveda*, cf. *ĪḍopaniḌad*, 1.
2. *ibid.*, cf. *ĪḍopaniḌad*, 2.
3. *ḡveda*, X.5.6.
4. *ibid.*, VII.104.22.
5. *ibid.*, I.89.1; cf. *Yajurveda*, XXV.14.
6. *ibid.*, I.89.8; cf. *Yajurveda*, XXV.21.
7. *ibid.*, X.71.2.
8. *ibid.*, X.191.2.
9. *ibid.*, X.191.3-4.
10. *BḡhadāraĒyaka UpaniḌad*, V.2.3.
11. *Studies in the UpaniḌads*, Govindagopal Mukhopadhyaya, Pilgrims Book Pvt. Ltd., Delhi, 1st edition, p. 141.
12. *BḡhadāraĒyaka UpaniḌad*, III.2.13.
13. *ibid.*, commentary of ĪaĒkarācārya.
14. *Chāndogya UpaniḌad*, IV.14.3.
15. *Taittirīya UpaniḌad*, I.11.