

## PalArch's Journal of Archaeology of Egypt / Egyptology

### Significance of the Vedic Ethos and the Universality: A General Study

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**Nayana Goswami: Significance of the Vedic Ethos and the Universality: A General Study --  
Palarch's Journal Of Archaeology Of Egypt/Egyptology 17(9). ISSN 1567-214x**

**Keywords: ethos, human resource, indologists, reformation, universal value**

#### ABSTRACT

The Vedic culture occupies an important role in the Indian tradition and Philosophy. The socio-religious heritage of Indian people is based on the Vedas, the oldest and sacred scripture of the entire world, which reflect the way of life, culture and Philosophy of ancient India. Indian has one of the richest civilisations of the ancient world. The word *Veda* means the great knowledge and the gems of Vedic Treasure-house should explore to reform the Indian Identity. Although it is not so easy task, but many Indologists both eastern and western have been done their scientific and significant works on the Vedic concepts of religion and philosophy, and their spiritual, moral, social and scientific value.

So that, the theological hidden thoughts of the Vedas can be understood by the scholars and students of the Vedic or non-Vedic field of study. The human ethics and ideological value of ancient Indian Society is clearly observed in the Vedic age, which is Universally and traditionally rich. For the development of the human resource and its ethical value, we should have acquired the actual meaning of the Vedic thought. In this Research Paper, it has been focused to analyze the basic concept of the Universal value and ethos of Vedic literature in different directions of a society and its significance to the social reformation.

#### 1. Introduction

The Vedic scriptures are the precious store-house, which reflect in the culture and civilization of ancient India. The reformation of Indian cultural heritage is based on the Vedic tradition. The word *Veda* denotes a deeper thoughtful meaning, which carries the Indian Philosophy in a scientific manner. . The term *Veda* is derived from the root *vid*, means 'to know' with the suffix either *ac* or *ghañ* ( $\sqrt{vid} + ac / ghañ$ ). It indicates that it is the source of the sacred and ultimate knowledge of human-life. The *Veda* is also known as *Āgama*, *Chandas*, *Śruti*, *Apauruṣ eya*, etc. Although the *Veda* is mainly denoted as the origin of religious thought, but also of the four principal objects (*puruṣ ārthas*)

of human life, viz., *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma* and *mokṣa*. The great ancient scholars Kātyāyana and Āpastamba define the meaning of the *Veda* as -- *mantrabrāhmaṇ ayorvedanām adheyam*/ (*Āpastambaśrautasūtra*, 24.1.31).

It is stated that, there are two portions of the *Veda*, i.e. *Mantra* or *Samhitā* and *Brāhmaṇa*. The *Mantra* or *Samhitā* indicates the metrical portion of the Vedic hymns, which is the collection of hymns, prayers, etc. Again, the *Brāhmaṇa* portion includes the *Brāhmaṇa*, *Āraṇyaka* and *Upaniṣad*. The *Brāhmaṇa* contains the prose texts of sacrificial rites and ceremonies. Again, the *Āraṇyaka*s are the forest text and the *Upaniṣad*s are the secret teachings, which are the basic source of Indian Philosophy. Here, the *Mantra* or *Samhitā* and *Brāhmaṇa* are under the *Karmakāṇḍa*, the department of the sacrificial ceremonials. Again, the *Āraṇyaka*s and *Upaniṣad*s are under the *Jñānakāṇḍa*, the department of the supreme knowledge. Basically there are four types of Vedas, viz. the *R̥gveda*, the *Yajurveda*, the *Sāmaveda* and the *Atharvaveda*. Among these the *R̥gveda* is the oldest literary scripture of the world literature. The *R̥gveda* is the collections of praising hymns of gods. The *Yajurveda* contains the sacrificial formulae of various sacrifices. The *Sāmaveda* is the song book of the Vedic rituals. Then, the *Atharvaveda* deals with the charms and chants to be used for offensive and defensive purpose. The Vedic literature includes the four Vedas and the six *Vedāṅgas*, the supplementary texts, which are very important to the better understanding of the Vedas. Without the knowledge of the *Ṣḍvedāṅgas*, the six limbs of the *Veda*, viz. *Śikṣā* (Phonetics), *Kalpa* (Science detailing Vedic rituals and disciplines), *Nirukta* (Etymology), *Vyākaraṇa* (Grammar), *Chandas* (Meters) and *Jyotiṣa* (Astronomy), one cannot achieve the proper meaning of the Vedic concepts of ethos and values reflected in the Vedas.

The *R̥ṣi*s or seers of the Vedic literature have revealed the Vedic hymns and mantras, which represents the theological and pious ideological views on the various aspects of the Universe. In simple word, the *r̥ṣi*s of the Vedas are the revealers of the Vedic fact as well as the communicator between divine knowledge of the Vedic hymns and common-masses. The Indologists both eastern and western have composed several works on the Vedic thoughts and Philosophy. Among them, Max Müller, H.H. Wilson, A. Weber, R.T.H. Griffith, M. Bloomfield, M.M. Williams, W.D. Whitney, H. Oldenberg, M. Winternitz, A.B. Keith, Dayananda Saraswati, Sri Aurobindo, R.G. Bhandarkar, P.V. Kane, etc., are very famous scholars in the field of Indological Study.

The Vedic literature is the oldest scripture of human knowledge, which have transmitted from one generation to the next by word of mouth, from teachers to the disciple. The Vedas are revealed between about 1500 BC and 1000 BC during the Vedic civilization of ancient India. The glorious history of Aryan civilization has been clearly observed in the Vedic literature. Although, the *Veda* is considered as a religious literature but for intense knowledge and principle, there is an immense prospect of implementation for institutional and socio-cultural purpose. In the modern period of twenty first century, the people

of India still owe to the seers of then ancient period. It means that the scientific and significant thoughts of the Vedic ethos have an Universal value, which should be explored to reform and identify the glorious Indian cultural heritage. The Socio-cultural, spiritual, ethical, etc., are scientifically valuable elements of the Vedic theological concepts. This is the key factors, which denote the Universal value of the Vedic literature as well as the Vedic ethos. A deep study on the Vedic concepts is quite essential for proper understanding the significances of the Vedic Universality as well as the human values.

## **2. Objectives**

The foremost emphasis of this research paper is a general study to understand the Vedic concepts or thoughts focusing different aspects of Universal values as well as the human values, which established the Indian traditional culture as an ideal one. And also to understand the significance of the Vedic era and transformation of the Vedic thoughts with special reference to the Vedic ethos and the Universal values with the present circumstance.

## **3. Methodology**

This research paper is based on the analytical and descriptive type of research methodology. The findings of the research study are collected from two types of data sources, i.e. the primary source and secondary source related to the Vedic culture and tradition. The Original text books of the Vedic literatures are taken as the primary sources and a few rest reference books are as the secondary sources, while the related literary works on this particular subject are not found.

## **4. Relevance of the Vedic Ethos and the Universality-**

The Vedic ethos refers the meaning of the moral beliefs and thought of the Vedic era. Again, the Universality implies a value considered as common for all or almost all mankind. The Vedic ethos and the Universality signify the prominence that designates the moral physiognomies of responsibility, secularism, respect, etc., related to all creations of the Universe, which refers the concepts about the communal things. Thus, the term Universality implies the behavioural standards of morality and ethics learnt from the Vedic tradition that are quite necessary to live in a harmonious and peaceful society till now. In this age of globalization, the Universal values are more needed for better understanding about the human values.

The Vedic literature and culture is the imperative contribution by Aryan civilization of ancient India. The Vedic tradition is based on scientific knowledge and observation, which carries the glory of Indian culture and heritage, until the end of time. It brings the factualism and values of human life, due to which the *Veda* or Vedic literature reaches the heights of excellence with the consequence of era. Based on these Vedic ideals and thought, the world literary scenario emerges in later stage.

Again, the ancient education system of India, which is based on the *Veda*, has been a source of inspirations to all educational system of the world. The study of the Vedic texts and allied literature gives the complete knowledge of the way of life. According to the *Taittirīyopaniṣ ad*, during the convocation in Vedic period, the preceptors instructed to their disciples about the moral duties to be followed, and it is enjoined that one should never neglect the Vedic study and teachings -- *svādhyāyappravacanābhyām na pramaditavyam* (*Taittirīyopaniṣ ad*, 1.11.1.). Again, from the Vedic age, the parents are honored as the god and also a guest should be treated as his god, i.e. be one, showing respect to father and mother and treating the *Atithi*, i.e. guests and men as your god -- *pitṛ devo bhava/ atithidevo bhava* (*Taittirīyopaniṣ ad*, 1.11.2.).

Although, the modern technical knowledge has a great importance in order to the social aspects; but also it makes much more inspirations to adopt our own traditional values. The knowledge, intelligence, spirituality, etc. have always believed an important place in Indian society, which are based on the Vedas. The educational tradition of Vedic age has the social, moral and spiritual values that can make the development and reform the human-life. The Vedic educationists or the seers held the moral, aesthetic and spiritual values which are the products of realization of truth (*satya*), good (*śiva*), beauty (*sundara*). The unity, integrity, self-confidence, etc. are the main salient features of the Vedic traditions. Here, it may be mentioned that in the oldest famous Vedic scripture the *Ṛ gveda*, we have to find about the universal-unity as follows -- *saṁ gacchadhvaṁ saṁ vadadhvaṁ saṁ vo manāṁsi jānatām iti//* (*Ṛ gveda*, 10.191.2.). It means that for a collective harmonious life, people will go together, will work together, will speak together, think together, and agree together.

According to Manu, the entire Vedas is called the root-source of the *Dharma* – *vedo'khilo dharmamūlam/* (*Manusmṛ ti*, 2.6). Usually, the term *dharma* means religion, law, usage, practice, custom, virtue, duty, right, justice, morality, etc. The word *dharma* is definitely related to *Karman*, i.e. action or duty. As the best creation of the cosmos, human beings are bound to maintain the social responsibility to all beings. Although, the performance of the sacrificial rites in the early Vedic period is the familiar meaning of the word *dharma*, it, thereby signifies the duties and responsibilities of the people. As because, the Vedic sacrifices are directly related to the action. Every good action performed with selfless spirit should be taken as covered by the term *yajña*, i.e. sacrifice. The *yajña* is not only a Vedic ritual, but, it is a wide term that covers all good acts including prayers, associations, offerings, etc., which make a complete way of human life. The benefits of performing the *yajñas* may be multitude. A deep study of the sacrificial ceremonies is quite essential for proper understanding of the Vedic cultural activities. The Vedic *yajñas* are performed for ethical development and community welfare. Indeed, the sacrificial rituals purify the environment as well as the human body and mind. The *Śatapathabrāhmaṇ a* clearly states that *yajña* is the best deed in the world -- *yajño vai*

*śreṣ ṭ hatamaṁ karma / (Śatapathabrāhmaṇ a, 1.7.1.5).* This type of spirit of collectiveness is very much needed in our present materialistic society, which is afflicted with the negative spirit of selfishness and egoistic consciousness. The man making education was duly emphasized in the Vedic tradition. The value oriented educational culture of the Vedic age has to be acquired for the upliftment of Indian Identity as well as the Universality.

The culture of language and literature is the mirror of a cultured society. For the better understanding about a society we have to acquire the knowledge of economic-social-political-cultural sides of a particular society. The Vedas are the origin of Indian heritage, and for that reason we have to know about the source of Indian tradition and culture and their socio-cultural reformation. In this context the scholars are usually states that -- *vinā vedam vinā gītām vinā rāmāyaṇ ikathām / vinā kavim kālīdāsam kutra syāt bhāratiyatā //*

Before the five thousand years ago of this twenty first century the ṛ ṣ is, i.e. seers or the scholars of Vedic age have established an environment of scientific and traditionally value-oriented education system in the field of political, educational, cultural, economic, medical science, etc. Because of some problems, the actual knowledge had not spread-out in the ancient period among the common people. But in the present day the theological concepts of the Vedic thoughts are clearly spread-out all over the world. Although, it is not so easy task, but many Ideologists both of Vedic ethos and their spiritual, moral, philosophical, social, religious and scientific value. There are many theories are perceived in the Vedas and Vedic literature about the Astronomy, Physics, Engineering, Aeronautics, Chemistry, Metallurgy, Mathematics, Arithmetic, Geometry, Medicine, Ayurveda, Botany, Agriculture, Irrigation, Ecology, Cosmetics, Art and Culture, Yoga, Geography, Architecture, Politics, Warfare, Phonetics, Computers, etc. In the *Ṛ gveda*, the reference related to the Test Tube Baby is mentioned, which is the great instance regarding the achievements of the modern Medical science – *satre ha jādāniṣ itā namībhiḥ kumbhī rataḥ siṣ icatuḥ samānam/ tato ha māna udiyāya madhyāta tato jātamṛ ṣ imāhurvasiṣ ṭ ham// (Ṛ gveda, 7.33.13)*

Again, the Vedic literature is the authentic eternal and Universal literature. The important subject-matters about the human life and Universe, we have noticed in this valuable scripture of the world. The moral, intellectual, cultural, social, economic, political, ethical knowledge are collectively found in this scientifically authentic treasure-house of Vedic literature. Now-a-days the Vedas and the whole Sanskrit literature have been called as the ideal of the mankind. In the *Īsopaniṣ ad*, we have found a verse about the eternal truth of human life that we should enjoy our life by sharing and giving, which brings the most happiness to our mind -- *īśā vāsyamidam sarvaṁ yatkiṁca jagatyām jagat / tena tyaktena bhūñjīthā mā gr dhaḥ kasya sviddhanam //* (*Īsopaniṣ ad*, 1.1). Again, we, the best creation of the Universe, have the ultimate responsibility and should be kind and grateful to all beings and the Nature as

one family -- *ayam nijah paro veti gan anā laghucetasām / udāracaritānām tu vasudhaiva kutumvakam//* (*Hitopadeśa*, 1.3.71).

## 5. Conclusion

Thus, we have seen about the Universality of Vedic traditions and culture. This study has an immense scope of future study which may unfold several new dimensions of Vedic concepts. This is an over view study of fundamental context which may lead a new beginning to understand of Vedic concepts in modern context of the Universal value. In the ancient India, although the Vedas are considered as a religious literature but for its instance knowledge and principle there is an immense prospect of implementation for institutional and socio-cultural educational purpose. The scientific and the Universal value oriented ethos of the Vedic literature have several aspects to analyses and understand. The actual meaning of the Vedic ethos is very essential for the sustainable development and reformation of human race in the modern context.

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