

VEDIC VALUES

Dr. Hema K. Kshirsagar



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Dr. Hema K. Kshirsagar

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FOREWORD

Indian culture is one of the richest and most diverse of its kind in the world as it has stimulated the growth and development of several philosophical systems and religious thoughts. This culture has exercised considerable influence over the spiritual life of the people all over the world.

The oldest literature available with us are the Vedas. It was in the form of a lump before it's division. Bhagavan Vedavyasa has divided the lump of knowledge into four parts, i.e., Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva Vedas. The division was made with an intention as to make the Vedas to be understood by the readers and be followed by the readers and common public to make their lives a fruitful one by following the path of Dharma.

Vedic values written by Dr. Hema. K. Kshirsagar, is a wonderer treatise which carries good information about the values that are found in Vedas. The author has exemplified many values in brief but they are really good to be read by both elderly and children too.

Hope this book will reach the coffee tables of all the readers. Let our Ancient Culture reach the new generation, and make a pathway for their colourful future.

In the Service of Lord Venkateswara



Executive Officer,

Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams,
Tirupati.

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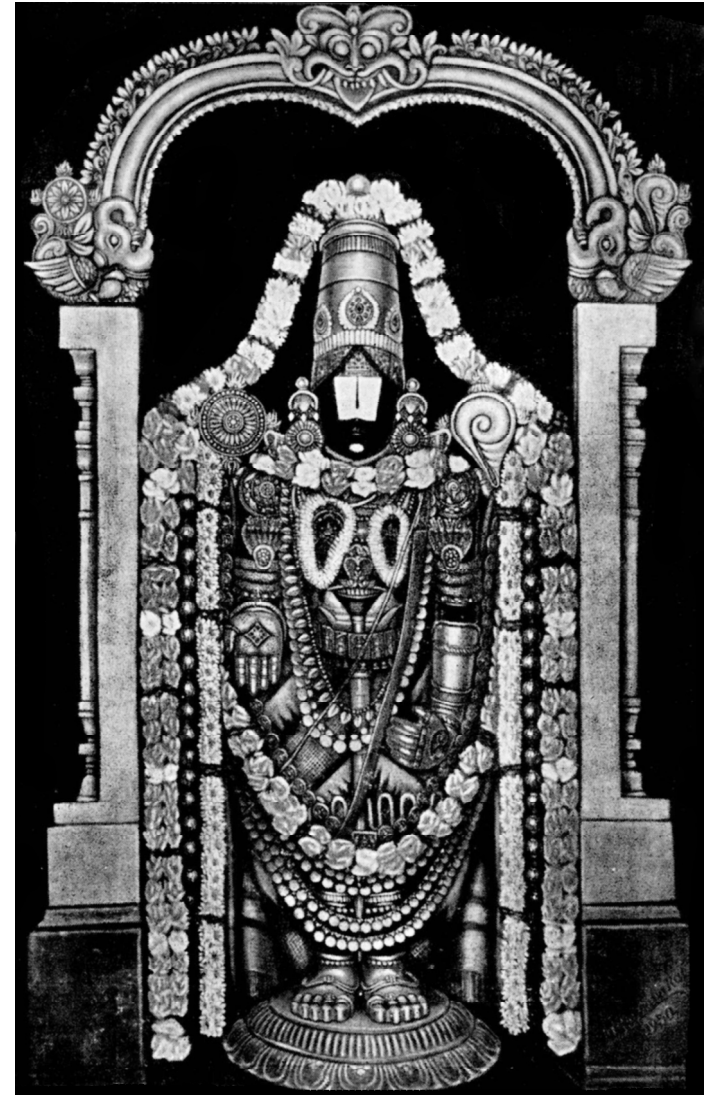
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My Word

The Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam has taken up publication of books under 'Ancient Indian Culture Series' for the benefit of the common reader. I feel proud and happy that the Devasthanam has entrusted to me the job of writing a book on Vedic Values'. 'Bhagavana Balaji' being our family deity, I accepted the invitation whole - heartedly. It is a golden opportunity for me to offer my 'Seva' in this form. It is our common experience that all are not aware of the treasure of our ancient literature like Vedas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, Upanishads, Puranas etc. This series is aimed at acquainting the common readers with the rich knowledge embedded in this literature. They will certainly feel proud of our heritage and culture. I hope this book on Vedic Values' authored by me will satisfy Devasthanam authorities and enlighten the readers as well. It will help the readers to understand the basic concept of Value' as richly illustrated in the ancient Vedic literature. Many of the Vedic Values have been accepted presently.

I am thankful to the Tirupati Devasthanam for assigning this job to me. I am also thankful to Dr. P. G. Lale, Dr. P. P. Apte, Dr. Bhagyalata Pataskar and Dr. K. K. Kshirsagar for the help they rendered to me. Suggestions and criticism are well-come.

Dr. Hema K. Kshirsagar





Vedic Values

Introduction

Vedas are the most ancient literature in the world. The word 'Veda' comes from the root 'विद्' which means to know. Hence vedas are the treasure of knowledge. Samhitas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads together are called 'Vedas.' They include the thoughts like creation and evolution of the world, various happenings in nature, human nature, physical and spiritual life of man etc. Vedic literature is the first jingling of the Veena in the hands of Goddess Saraswati. It is the foundation of Indian culture. It reveals the sublime life-style of Vedic rishis (seers). Their all-inclusive (सर्वसमावेशक) attitude is reflected in the 'विश्वेदेवाः सूक्त' when they say, 'आ नो भद्राः ऋतवो यन्तु विश्वतः'. It means 'Let good (auspicious) thoughts come towards us from all directions'. Their 'वाक्सूक्त' helps people to increase their confidence. Their 'शिवसंकल्पसूक्त' tells us as to how to make determination for good tendencies (सत्प्रवृत्ति) and good activities (सत्कर्म). The 'अक्षसूक्त' discards gambling and establishes the importance of hard agricultural work (i.e. dignity of farm labour). Thus this ancient literature guides people towards happy life. Positive thinking, desire for victory (विजिगीषा), joyful life - style, existence of God everywhere, love for nature are some of the characteristics of those people.

In short we can say that vedas are a compendium of knowledge. They are ancient most literature on this earth. Nobody knows when, where and how they originated. They are divine and so they are called 'अपौरुषेय.'

These Vedas have put forth (include) certain guiding principles leading towards happiness and prosperity. These principles in other words, are some 'do'es and don't's'. Vedas have given wise advice in the form of these principles. People should follow them to make their life successful. These principles are called Values. They were put into practice by the people during ancient time. Let us know about them in the following pages.

Arrangement of Vedas

There are four main Vedas. They are Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda. Of these four Vedas, Rigveda is the oldest one, not only 'oldest' among the vedas; but it is the oldest of all the available literature on this earth. It contains a mine of wisdom.

Rigveda

The Rigveda consists of 10 (ten) parts. They are called mandalas. Each mandala consists of number of hymns (i.e., सूक्ताः); and each hymn consists of a group of verses. These verses are called Riks. A Rik means a verse which is constructed according to vedic metres. Different hymns are dedicated to different deities. The

largest number of hymns is dedicated (addressed) to Agni. Indra, Agni, Marut, Varuna, Ushas, Ashwina etc. are the vedic deities, and hymns contain praise of deities. It is believed that originally all the vedas were one heap of knowledge. Maharshi Vyasa divided it into four parts called 'Vedas'. Hence he is called Vedavyasa (वेदान् विव्यास इति वेदव्यासः).

The hymns in the vedas are not constructed by human beings. They are believed to be 'अपौरुषेय.' They were revealed to different Rishis, hence those Rishis were called 'Seers'. The mandalas in the Rigveda are ascribed to various seers. It means that the hymns in that mandala were revealed to that particular Rishi. The mandalas 2 to 8 (Two to eight) are ascribed to Vishwamitra, Vamadeva, Atri, Bharadwaja, Vasishtha etc. Hence they are called 'Gotra - mandalas' (गोत्रमंडल). The hymns in the mandalas 2 to 7 (two to seven) are addressed to different deities. The mandalas 2 to 7 are the essence of Rigveda. All the hymns in the 9th (ninth) mandala are addressed to only one deity, i.e. 'Soma'. The other name of 'Soma' is 'Pavamana', so the mandala is also called as 'Pavamana Mandala'. The first and the tenth mandalas were added later on. The number of hymns in these two mandalas is the same i.e. 191 (one hundred and ninety one). So these two are supposed to be later as compared to the mandalas 2 to 7.

यजुर्वेद - This veda is the second among the four vedas. It is related to the rituals of sacrifice. It contains detailed

discussion of sacrifices and their rituals. There are different kinds of sacrifices, their special mantras, special rules, special order etc. यजुर्वेद is the collection of all these mantras, rules etc. There are two branches of यजुर्वेद 1) शुक्ल यजुर्वेद and 2) कृष्ण यजुर्वेद. Further there are many branches which are divided into chapters (अध्याय).

सामवेद - Samaveda is the third veda. Sama means song or praise. ऋक् and samas are closely related. ऋग्वेद, यजुर्वेद and सामवेद are directly related to sacrifice. Sacrifice requires variety of activities. Of them, chanting of ऋक् is done by the priest belonging to सामवेद.

अथर्ववेद - This is the last among the four vedas. अथर्व is the seer of this Veda, therefore its name is अथर्ववेद. It is also called as अथर्ववेद as it contains suggestions for defeating the enemy. There are nine branches of this veda.

Mahabharata - Some scholars hold Mahabharata as the fifth veda.

Ayurveda - Ayurveda is thought to be sub - veda; other sub-vedas are: Dhanurved, Sthapatya veda and Gandharva veda.

What is the theme of the Vedas?

The theme of the vedas is to explain to man the working of the cosmos and how humanity should shape its life to fit into the divine cosmic order. The

vedas explain the technology of the infinite cosmos; hence it is a pre-existing part of eternal divinity. So it is futile to fix the date of the Vedas, like trying to trace the date of the origin of the solar system.

* * *

Value

The word 'value' is derived from the Greek word 'valere' which literary means 'good' and 'beautiful.' In Mahabharata, the word 'dharma' is invariably used in the sense of 'value' or 'group of values' or 'morals. That which is good and beautiful will be 'true' also. Thus truth, beauty and good are the three main components of any value or dharma or sheela. In philosophic term this trio is mentioned as Sachhidananda (i.e. sat, chit and ananda) a popular attribute used for God, Brahman and Atman.

The term value is very difficult to define satisfactorily. But it can be described in terms of behaviour and virtues. Hence we can say that 'values are those qualities or characteristics which men should inculcate to make their individual as well as social life sublime.' These values or qualities are the indicators of good behaviour. People who follow these, cause to make the society stable. They help to develop healthy relations among the human beings so we can say that values are the virtues and moral principles that guide and shape human behaviour.

Vedic Values

Vedic values are the values that are put forth by the vedas (i.e. Samhitas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads) and were practised during ancient times. Many of them are practised even today. The four Purusharthas (पुरुषार्थ) were the highest object of life

and the concept of values was thought of as a means to achieve the Purusharthas. So moral behaviour was looked upon as a very important thing. Human efforts towards perfection was called 'morality'. The values are contained in the Nigama (veda) and Agama. According to veda (Nigama), 'salvation' is the ultimate aim of human life. Education (विद्या) helps to attain salvation. Hence it was described as 'सा विद्या या विमुक्तये।' and विमुक्ति means मोक्ष (salvation). This was the individual aim, and welfare of people at large (बहु-जन-हित) was the social aim.

Importance of Education

Importance of education was realised in India from very early times and utmost emphasis was laid upon 'acquisition of knowledge' and it was considered to be the third eye of man. A man without (spiritual) knowledge was considered as 'unwise', because knowledge was believed to be the means to attain 'salvation' which was the ultimate aim of life. It was believed that 'विद्या मोक्षाय कल्पते' or in other words 'सा विद्या या विमुक्तये।' It means that 'only that knowledge is real knowledge which leads to salvation'. This love of learning in India had a very early origin and a lasting and powerful influence.

विद्या अमृतं अश्नुते। (ईश.) ज्ञानं तृतीयं मनुजस्य नेत्रम्।

Aim of education

Preparing useful and refined members of the society, inculcating in them various moral, social,

cultural and spiritual values like piety, righteousness, formation of character, development of personality, civic sense, social duties was the aim of Education. Acquisition and preservation of knowledge and later on transmission of knowledge was very important. Character formation was of utmost importance. Simple living and high thinking was their aim.

Knowledge was considered to be the third eye of man, because he could learn much more through knowledge than through his direct experience. In India love for learning originated too early and it had a lasting and powerful effect on the people. Hence there is an uninterrupted flow of teaching and learning.

All-round development of students was the aim of education and the teacher was held in high esteem as he was the maker of an ideal social order.

Moral concepts (in the Upanishads)

Knowledge of Brahman, the ultimate principle was the highest object of human life (i.e. उत्तम पुरुषार्थ). The concept of values was thought of as a means to achieve the highest object. So moral behaviour was looked upon as a very important thing. Human efforts towards perfection were called morality. All beings in this world were thought to be on par.

Human mind consists of two types of tendencies- 1) God-like tendencies, and 2) demon-like tendencies. There is a constant struggle between these two types of tendencies. Victory over bad (demon-like) tendencies

is essential for happy life. So control over bad tendencies was a value. Sacrifice, devotion to God, charity, sweet tongue, non - violence, truth, self-control are all helpful to good tendencies. All the values help to build, develop balanced personalities and such balanced personalities contribute to build a stable society.

* * *

Brahmanas

Brahmanas are that portion of the Vedic literature which states rules for the employment of the hymns at the various sacrifices, their origin and detailed explanation with lengthy illustrations in the shape of legends or stories. Brahmanas are prose in form. Different activities in performing a sacrifice, along with the accompanied mantras and steps of worshipping are explained in Brahmanas. They came into existence after the samhitas. Different Brahmanas are related to different vedas e.g. Aitareya Brahman is related to Rigveda, Shatapatha Brahmana is related to Yajurveda, Jaiminiya Brahman is related to Samaveda.

Aranyakas

Aranyakas are the last portions attached to Brahmanas. They contain the basic (fundamental) principles and their hidden meaning. They also discuss the concept of spiritual philosophy. The ultimate principle is found in each and every being.

Upanishads

Upanishads are the philosophic treatises. They explain the values of fundamental principles of sacrifice and their hidden meaning. The supreme principle is found in each living being in the form of a small portion. The old upanishads explaining the value of philosophy are called as वेदान्त i.e. the last portion (end part) of वेद. Like Brahmanas and Aranyakas the upanishads too are related to particular vedas e.g.

- Brihadaranyaka upanishad is related to Yajurveda
- Chandogya upanishad related to Samaveda
- Aitareya upanishad is related to Rigveda

Some upanishads are officially included in Brahmanas. Some are not directly included but are related to respective veda as per their composer seer. Some are in prose form while some are in verse form. There are total 14 upanishads which are very important. Out of these 14, ten are labelled as दशोपनिषद्ऽः They are the main ancient upanishads. They are-

- 1) ईश 2) केन 3) कठ 4) प्रश्न 5) मुंडक 6) मांडूक्य 7) तैत्तिरिय
- 8) ऐतरेय 9) छान्दोग्य and 10) बृहदारण्यक

some of them are translated into German too. Some discuss active worldly life while some others advise for turning back upon worldly life. i.e. they advise renunciation of worldly life.

* * *

Correct Pronunciation and Memorisation

Correct pronunciation

Correct pronunciation and memorisation was of utmost importance during that period because it was the only means of teaching and learning. So also memorisation was the only means of preservation and transmission of knowledge because art of writing was not yet known. Education was imparted through oral tradition. The teacher (Guru or Acharya). taught his disciples orally and the disciples heard whatever the teacher taught, repeated the same over and over again and stored it in their memory. For this purpose they had developed certain methods (tricks) like repeating the portion twice, thrice etc. These methods were called as वर्गपाठ, घनपाठ, जटापाठ. vedas were preserved in this way, hence they are called shruti (श्रुति).

Memorisation was of two types.

- 1) Memorisation with understanding
- 2) Memorisation without understanding i.e. mechanical memorisation.

Of these two types, the first one that is memorisation with understanding was considered to be better, no doubt, but the other type that is mechanical memorisation also was equally important. Though without understanding the meaning, they could reproduce correctly all the words in their proper order and with correct pronunciation. Then the listener could

understand the meaning and he could interpret the portion. Thus they had to rely on memory as writing was not yet invented. Our ancestors have done this work so sincerely that the vedic literature is preserved in its original form and is handed over to us without the loss of a single letter. They thought this work as their pious duty towards Gods. So it was a very important value for them.

There is a story regarding the effect of wrong pronunciation. Indra and Vritra were enemies. Vritra was a demon. वृत्र's father (त्वष्टा) once wanted to perform a sacrifice. For that purpose he kept सोम in some secret place. When Indra came to know this, he searched out सोम and drank it. When त्वष्टा came to know this he was very angry and he threw the remaining सोम in the fire and said, 'Let इंद्रशत्रु be created out of this'. His purpose was to say, 'The destroyer of Indra'. But because of wrong pronunciation i.e. wrong accent the meaning of इंद्रशत्रु changed and it meant 'one whom Indra will destroy'. वृत्रासुर emerged from that sacrificial fire and ultimately Indra killed वृत्र. So he is called as वृत्रहा (वृत्रं हन्ति इति).

So a slightest mistake in pronunciation could cause a great calamity. Our forefathers did not commit any such mistakes and preserved the whole ancient literature very carefully.

* * *

Truth

Truth is the ultimate principle. That which cannot be refuted in the past, present or future is called 'Truth'. Speaking the truth is a virtue. 'सत्यं देवाः' means Gods speak the truth. But on the earth there is a constant fight between the 'truth' And the 'falsehood.' Ultimately the truth wins. So 'Truth' is a value.

The story of Satyakama Jabala confirms this. He was a young boy who wanted to learn. So he approached a Guru for his learning. Initiation i.e. thread ceremony (उपनयन) was an essential condition before starting education in those days. So Guru asked the boy about his father and his family. Satyakama replied as was told by his mother. He told that his mother was a wanton woman (स्वैरिणी) and hence she herself did not know the name of his father. But as his mother's name was 'Jabala', his name was 'Jabala' (जाबाल). Guru was convinced about the truthfulness of the boy and felt that the boy must be brahmin, and accepted him as his disciple.

It was believed that 'Truth' is the reflection of Brahma and man gets rid of 'Death' because of 'Truth.' Hence it is said 'सत्यमेव यजेत्' i.e. Ultimately the 'Truth wins'. It is our motto even today.

Truth has got its own power. It was at times tested also. When Rama asked Seeta to prove her purity, she prayed to the Earth Goddess in the following words,

'If I have not thought of any other person other than Rama, O mother Earth, please give me shelter in your belly'. Her words were true, so the Earth broke up and Seeta went inside the Earth. This was the power of truth.

There is another example of Lord Krishna who used his power of truth and rejuvenated Parikshita. i.e. made him alive again.

This Truth was a very important value in the life of people during vedic period, so we find the expressions like 'सत्यं वद' or 'सत्यं ब्रूयात्'. This is the eternal advice to the mankind.

Sarama - Pani Conversation (Rig. 10.108)

This is one of the famous conversation hymns (संवादसूक्ते) in Rigveda. There is a story in this hymn.

Panis were the enemies of Gods. Gods needed milk at the time of सोमपान i.e. When they drank Soma. They had many cows. Once the Panis stole away those cows and kept them hidden in a fort beyond the river Rasa. Gods deputed a female dog named Sarama to trace the cows. Crossing rivers she reached the city of Panis where she received a warm welcome. She advised Panis to return the cows. But the Panis didn't accept it. They tried to offer her bribe. She did not accept it. So they tried to threaten her but she was not afraid as she was confident about the strength of Indra. Sarama was firm. She was true to herself and loyal to Gods. This was a value. Stealing and bribing were

bad qualities. Later on, Gods defeated the Panis and brought their cows back. Even animals kept their words and did not fall prey to bribe. It shows how important were the values in those days!

नानृतवचने दोषः जीवनं चेत् तदधीनम्।

This is an exception to the rule सत्यं ब्रूयात् - 'Speak truth' The meaning of this exception is as follows.

सत्य means ऋत. असत्य means अनृत. न अनृतवचने दोषः means there is no fault in speaking असत्य if somebody's life is depending on that. 'चेत्' means 'If', 'जीवनम्' means 'Life' and तद् अधीनम् means "depending on that". If it is a question of life or death, then take shelter of असत्य (lie). you will not be blamed.

Once a hunter was chasing a cow. The cow was running very fast to save her life. Soon she went out of sight. The hunter came running and saw a Rishi sitting under a tree with closed eyes. The hunter asked the Rishi as to where (in which direction) did the cow go? Now it was a question of cow's life. So the Rishi pointed to the opposite direction, and thus saved the cow. In spite of the lie he spoke, he was not at fault according to the shastra. This also was a value.

* * *

Guru and Disciple

The disciple continued the tradition of his teacher. So he was the successor of the teacher. Therefore he was treated as own son by the teacher. The disciple also respected his teacher and was obedient. Teacher was the ideal of his disciples, hence he had to be perfect in his knowledge and teaching. His daily routine and behaviour also needed to be ideal because his disciples tried to follow him in every respect. The teacher was called आचार्य which means 'The one who is worthy to be imitated by the disciples.'

Self-restrain, deep knowledge, love for the disciples, self-study and pure character were the main qualities of a teacher. He was called Guru as his was a prestigious and honourable position in the society. So also he was called उपाध्याय. This word is derived from the root उप + अधि + इ (२ प) which means 'learning by sitting near the teacher. All these names meaning a teacher throws light on the personality, behaviour, social position of the teacher and the process of education too.

The students also needed to have certain qualities. They had inquisitiveness, faith in teacher, respect of teacher, perseverance, self-study, co-operation, politeness, sweet tongue, hard work, obedience etc. Ekalavya is a dazzling example of ideal disciple. He was the son of a Kirata King. He had heard of the fame of Dronacharya and wanted to learn archery from him. But Dronacharya refused to accept him as his

disciple. There is a story as to how Eklavya learnt archery and became an expert in that field.

Dronacharya was the teacher of Kauravas and Pandavas who were the princes from a royal family. Arjuna, one of the Pandavas, was his favorite disciple. Ekalavya did not belong to a high family so he was rejected. Being sad, he returned to his place, made a clay model of Dronacharya, worshipped the clay model and started learning archery in front of the model. Days passed by and he became an expert in archery.

One day Guru Dronacharya along with his disciples came in that forest. They had a dog which walked ahead of all. The dog saw Ekalavya and started barking at him. Ekalavya could not concentrate so he turned to the dog and shot arrows in the open mouth of the dog till his barking stopped. The dog returned to Dronacharya with mouthful of arrows and yet there was not a single drop of blood. Dronacharya was surprised to see it. When searched they found Ekalavya practising archery. When enquired he admitted that he had shot arrows. When asked about his teacher, he pointed at the clay model of Dronacharya. This skill and mastery in archery was achieved on the basis of his devotion to his teacher. So faith in Guru was very valuable. Faith in preceptor was the first and foremost condition for obtaining knowledge in general and spiritual knowledge in particular.



The Death

People in ancient times believed that Sun, Moon, Fire, Wind, Morning are all deities and they are immortal. Nectar is a drink which makes man immortal, but it is available in heaven only, so it is easily available for Gods. Hence Gods are immortal. Men wanted to become immortal so they wished to get the Nectar. For that purpose they needed to please Gods. And people tried to please Gods. And people tried to please Gods by performing sacrifices and offering Gods certain things through sacrifice. This was a value.

Death for some sublime purpose was a value. so those who sacrificed their life for the sake of country or society were not afraid of death. Philosophically, human body is meant for fulfilling duties. So performing duties without fail for the whole of life was considered to be a kind of value.

Human body is formed by the five great elements i.e. Earth, water, luster, wind and sky (पृथ्वी, आप, तेज, वायु and आकाश). After death, the respective parts of the human body merge into the five elements. This was the belief in those days and it is in present time too.

Death is also called as महानिद्रा (i.e. permanent sleep). or चिरनिद्रा because man never wakes up again. It is also called as permanent rest (चिरविश्रांति). Man faces innumerable hardships and tensions during his whole life and gets tired too much. The death gives him rest permanently.

The Death

Separation of body and life is called death. It is an inevitable stage in the life of each and every living creature. It is a kind of full-stop to our life. Nobody can avoid it (जातस्य हि ध्रुवो मृत्युः).

There are two types of death :-

- 1) अकालमृत्यु (untimely or premature death)
- 2) कालमृत्यु (Timely death i.e. death that occurs at proper time).

Of these two the अकालमृत्यु (i.e. the premature death) occurs due to disease, accident, poison, war, murder etc. It can be avoided by medicine, precaution, special care etc. Even worship of Lord Shiva who is also called as मृत्युंजय can help to avoid death. कालमृत्यु (i.e. timely death) is the natural death. It is due to diminishing power of limbs and life in old age. It is the last stage of all living beings.

People in ancient times believed that life is natural and death is unnatural, fearful but wonderful. They could not imagine as to what happens after death. They could not think beyond life and the present state. Hence they were afraid of death. So they hated death and wished for long life. They saluted Yama, the God of death and prayed him for immortality. They believed that he had control over death. Nobody knew the secret of death. Nachiketa a young brahmin lad was curious

about death and he got satisfied his curiosity through conversation with Yama.

The story of Nachiketa is found in the Kathopanishad. He was the son of वाजश्रवस्, who performed a sacrifice named 'विश्वजित्' and donated all his wealth with a desire to obtain the fruit of sacrifice. He donated to the priests, the cows that were aged, unable to yield milk and unable to produce calves. Thus the cows given as dakshina were useless. So Nachiketa thought that his father would not get the proper fruit of the sacrifice. He wanted to do something for his father. so he asked his father, to whom would he be given to. Father did not pay attention to his question. Nachiketa repeated the question thrice. Then father got angry and said, 'I am giving you to yama, the God of death.' So Nachiketa went to Yama. But Yama was not there at that time. so he waited there for three nights without taking any food. Yama granted him three boons on his return. By the first boon Nachiketa asked 'Let my father recognize me when I return home. By the second boon he asked for the sacred fire useful to obtain heaven. Yama granted both the boons.

By the third boon, Nachiketa asked about existence after death and yama explained to him in detail the whole philosophy behind it and told that 'body is perishable but Atma is non-perishable'. This is a vedic value. This story is known as 'यम-नचिकेता संवाद'. Yama

further told that प्रेय and श्रेय are two things before man. He who selects प्रेय gets entangled in the cycle of birth and death. He who selects श्रेय understands oneness of आत्मा and परमात्मा and achieves salvation.



Gurudakshina (गुरुदक्षिणा)

‘Guru’ means a teacher or a spiritual preceptor. ‘Dakshina’ means fees or some offerings given to Guru. In vedic times there were no schools as we have today. Students used to go to teacher's ashrama and live with him as a family member. The relation between the teacher and the taught was like that of a father and a son. He used to participate in the daily routine duties in the ashrama. Father and son relationship between the teacher and the taught was a value in those days. The student lived with his teacher for years together till his learning was complete. At the end before leaving for home, the student gave something to the teacher as a token of gratitude according to teacher's wish and student's capacity. It was called 'Gurudakshina'. Actually teacher did not expect anything in return of his teaching. But the student felt that he should give something to the teacher as a token of his gratitude.

Lord Krishna received education from Sandipani. As he was a divine figure, he could complete his education within a short period. After completion of education, he asked as to what Gurudakshina he should give. Sandipani told him to bring back his lost son. The son was kidnapped, at the time of bathing in the ocean by a demon named shankha. Krishna killed the demon and returned the son to the teacher. He was very happy and showered lots of blessings on Lord Krishna.

There is one more story on Gurudakshina. A student named Kautsa completed his education with his Guru Varatantu. He asked his teacher what Gurudakshina should he give. Guru refused to accept anything as he knew that Kautsa was very poor and could not afford to give Gurudakshina. But Kautsa insisted over and over again. So Varatantu got angry and demanded so many millions of gold coins as many vidyas he had learnt from Guru. Kautsa had learnt fourteen vidyas, hence he needed to give fourteen million gold coins. Where and how could he get this much amount? In those days great kings used to support the learned brahmins as they thought it to be their duty to support education. Kautsa had heard that king Raghu was well known for his generosity. So he went to Raghu, where he was well received. But he was worshipped with earthen utensils, because Raghu had recently performed a sacrifice named विश्वजित् and donated all his wealth. Kautsa lost all his hopes. So when Raghu asked him the purpose of coming, Kautsa hesitated but when Raghu insisted, he told the purpose. Not fulfilling the wish of the Atithi was discreditable, because 'अतिथिदेवो' was a value believed by all. Raghu requested Kautsa to wait for a day and he decided to attack Kubera the treasurer of Gods to obtain gold coins for Kautsa. Kubera was afraid and he showered gold coins in the hermitage of Raghu at night. Next morning he called Kautsa and said, "Take all this wealth

and offer it to your Guru as his Gurudakshina." "I will take only 14 millions and not a single coin more", said Kautsa. None of the two were ready to keep the excess wealth for themselves. This supports the value of the olden times.

* * *

Sacrifice

Performing a sacrifice to please the unseen powers in nature, was a value of life in Vedic times. 'Sacrifice' is praised and honoured right from the ancient vedic literature upto the present Indian literature. So it is essential to know the concept, the importance and the history of sacrifice etc.

The word यज्ञ (sacrifice) is derived from the root यज् which means to worship God, to connect people together and donate something to the younger generation. Hence honour, organisation and donation are the three principles on which the ritual यज्ञ is based. A sense of social responsibility is the concept underlying the यज्ञ so it is a very high type of activity.

Ancient Idea of यज्ञ

Human life was dependant on the natural powers. People believed that there is some super-natural power in nature which brings about good or bad things into human life. To please that supernatural power, the concept of यज्ञ first came into existence. The powers in nature were their deities and people offered something to them to please them. This was the origin of यज्ञ.

Agni was believed to be the mouth of the deities. Offerings were put into fire and the fire carried them to the respective deities. So performing sacrifice was a Value in ancient times.

The Heaven (स्वर्ग)

People in Vedic times had invented certain concepts, to make people behave in a good way and keep them away from bad things. Heaven and Hell were two such concepts which motivated common people towards good activities and restrained from the bad. Heaven was a place full of all comforts and happiness. Gods live in heaven. They drink nectar so they are immortal. There is कल्पवृक्ष i.e. wish-yielding tree in the heaven. It gives you anything you wish for. There is a cow called Kamadhenu. She also fulfils all your desires. There is a very beautiful garden called 'Nandanavana' in the heaven. The meritorious people on the earth go to heaven after death, and enjoy life in the heaven.

On the contrary there is the concept of Hell which is meant for various punishments for the sinful people who go there after death. Naturally people are attracted towards Heaven and so try to collect merit by doing good things and avoiding bad things.

To obtain heaven there is one more means and that is sacrifice.

The scripture says, 'ज्योतिष्टोमेन स्वर्गकामो यजेत।' It means that one who is desirous of securing space in the Heaven should perform the special sacrifice कृष्ण by name. So different sacrifices were recommended for different purposes. This was a value.

पुत्रकामेष्टी

This is the name of a sacrifice to be performed by one who is desirous to get own son (Legitimate son). पुत्र means son, काम means desire and इष्टी means sacrifice. Thus sacrifice was a means to please Gods and gain some boon to fulfill one's own desire.

Dasharatha was a famous King in the dynasty of रघु. He had three queens named कौसल्या, सुमित्रा, and कैकेयी, but he had no son. He was very anxious to get a son. So he performed the पुत्रकामेष्टि sacrifice and he got four sons - श्रीराम, लक्ष्मण, भरत and शत्रुघ्न. Thus fulfilling desires by means of sacrifice was a value in those days.

* * *

Dharma

‘जीवेम शतम्’ i.e. we will live (and enjoy life) for a hundred years was the ambition of people in ancient times. So they had thought of a life span of one hundred years. These hundred years were divided into four parts which were called Ashramas :

1) ब्रह्मचर्याश्रम 2) गृहस्थाश्रम 3) वानप्रस्थाश्रम 4) संन्यासाश्रम. Each ashrama had its specific duties. They were called as कृष्ण. The word ‘धर्म’ was originally related to आश्रमधर्म which meant the duties of a person according to his Ashrama or duties accepted by a person himself. The same meaning is suggested by the words राजधर्म i.e. duties of King, पुत्रधर्म i.e. duties of a son etc.

Actually duties and rights are the two sides of the same coin. Performing duties was a value in olden times. When duties are best performed, the rights come to you on their own. At present all are conscious about rights but not eager to perform duties. The word Dharma was defined as ‘धारणात् धर्म इत्याहुः’ which means that which preserves (sustains) society is called धर्म. In other words it is described as ‘धर्मो धारयते प्रजाः’, i.e., the Dharma protects the subjects, it supports the people.

In simple words we can say that it refers to moral rules, specific duties or accepted duties of a person.

When all the people follow these rules the society becomes stable and people become happy. Behaviour of good people was the foundation of Dharma.

* * *

Manusmriti

Manusmriti is the standard book on code of conduct next to vedas. It is the main support of behaviour and daily routine (कृष्ण).

वेदः स्मृतिः सदाचारः स्वस्य च प्रियमात्मनः ।
एतच्चतुर्विधं प्राहुः साक्षात् धर्मस्य लक्षणम् ॥

Veda, smriti, own good behaviour and good behaviour to our near and dear are the four definitions of dharma which is one of the four main objectives of human life (i.e. dharma, artha, kama and Moksha). These are related to the four stages of life (i.e., ब्रह्मचर्य, गृहस्थ, वानप्रस्थ and सन्यास).

Manu further says that all the people on this earth should learn their way of good behaviour from those who are born prior to them i.e. their forefathers.

According to Manu breaking a promise, not returning the debt, theft, demanding back the donation once given, not giving payment for work done, robbery are all bad things. Those engaged in these things should be punished. Thus they are values.

वशिष्ठ का धर्मसूत्र

Vasishtha was a Vedic seer who has the VII th Mandal of Rigveda to his credit. There are 104 suktas in that mandal.

धर्मसूत्र are the treatises which give standard decision regarding human behaviour. धर्म is good behaviour

which is to be inculcated and अधर्म is bad behaviour which is to be avoided.

These treatises contain the duties and rights of all the four Ashramas (i.e. ब्रह्मचर्य, गृहस्थ, वानप्रस्थ and संन्यास). वसिष्ठ का धर्मसूत्र contains discussion about hospitability (अतिथिसत्कार), defilement caused by birth or death (अशौच), duties of a student, donation, sacrifice, learning, pleasing God and avail desired things and crimes like drinking wine, killing a cow and deviation from the right path etc. Punishments were prescribed for the crimes. All these were values.



Women Education

In ancient time, women were allowed to take education. But there were no separate educational institutions specially for women. They were educated at home in the beginning and for higher learning they approached some well known teacher.

There are references in Vedas which tell us that women were expert in Medicine, in Ashwavidya etc. Apala, Ghosha, Vishvavara were the seers of Mantras. Learned women were of two types:-

- 1) ब्रह्मवादिनी - These were the women who did not accept गृहस्थाश्रम. They continued ब्रह्मचर्य and वेदाध्ययन.
- 2) सद्योद्वाहा - This was the second type of women who after completing learning accepted married life and गृहस्थाश्रम.

This is the proof that Women Education was available in Vedic time. Not only this but men and women had equal status from social, economical and religious point of view. मनु also has said 'पुत्रेण दुहिता समा।' It means that son and daughter are equal.

Education of Women

Man and woman were believed to be indivisible parts of the cycle of this world and had the position which the heart has in the human body. If the speed of the heart-beats Increases or decreases, the body becomes unstable and uneasy. Similarly anyone of

these two (i.e. man and woman) starts कृष्ण galloping or becomes too slow, the society becomes imbalanced.

गार्गी and मैत्रेयी were ब्रह्मवादिनीऽ. They could argue with the sages in the meetings of learned people. The society gave them due respect. गार्गी was present in the court of King Janaka at the time of a sacrifice. A debate assembly for philosophical discussions was arranged there. In that assembly गार्गी asked some questions to the great sage याज्ञवल्क्य. He could not answer her last question about ब्रह्म the ultimate reality. Thus she was a scholar.

मैत्रेयी - She also was a scholar. She was the daughter of King Mitra who was a friend of King Janaka. Famous scholar गार्गी was her maternal aunt. she loved मैत्रेयी very much. She brought up मैत्रेयी and educated her. In the philosophical debate assembly मैत्रेयी saw the sage याज्ञवल्क्य, who defeated many scholars. मैत्रेयी fell in love with him and married him. But she was never interested in worldly enjoyment. She was interested in the knowledge of ब्रह्म. याज्ञवल्क्य explained it to her and she was satisfied.

Thus women education was a value in those days. Hence freedom and opportunity for higher learning was available for women. Besides this, they believed that deities love to reside in the place where women are respected. (यत्र नार्यस्तु पूज्यन्ते, रमन्ते तत्र देवताः।)

Manu says if somebody's teacher passes away before his learning is complete, the student should

continue his studies with the son of the teacher or the wife of the teacher. This implies that the wife also was equally capable of teaching the student. His words are as follows

आचार्ये तु खलु प्रेते गुरुपुत्रे गुणान्विते।
गुरुदारे सपिण्डे वा गुरुवद् वृत्तिम् आचरेत्॥ मनु २.२४७

Unless गुरुपत्नी was well educated, how could she teach the students? This shows that women education was existing during that period.

Arundhati the wife of Vasistha was famous as a scholarly woman. Manu says that if a woman is not educated before marriage it was her husband's responsibility to educate her.

* * *

Compassion towards all beings - (भूतदया)

भूतदया means compassion towards all living beings on the earth. Everybody in this world wishes to get happiness. But while fulfilling this desire he may cause distress to others. This he should not do. All should have good feelings, kind behaviour, sympathy towards others. Distress can be of two types 1) physical 2) mental.

Any harm to body is physical distress and any harm to mind is mental distress. Not giving sorrow to others, not creating trouble for others is one aspect of compassion. The other aspect is helping others who are in distress. This is a value.

Keeping birds or animals in cages is troubling them. Throwing stones to animals is troubling them. We should not do this. On the contrary if we see some one in some calamity, we should help them. There is a story about such an incidence in the veda.

There was a king named Harishchandra. He had no issue. He longed to have a son. So he prayed to God Varuna and committed to sacrifice the same child to Varuna. This shows that the custom of offering a human being as an oblation to God in the sacrifice was in practice in those days. Of course it was a very bad custom. A child was born to the king. After some days Varuna came to the king and demanded his son. The father was very sad, and not ready to part with the son, he postponed sacrificing his son. The child

grew and became a youth. When he came to know about father's commitment he was not ready to be sacrificed and so he searched for a youth for his substitute. Luckily he got one. His name was शुनःशेष (shunahshepa). When the sage Vishwamitra came to know of this, he condemned the custom. He felt pity for शुनःशेष and rescued him. For that purpose he adopted शुनःशेष as his own son. This was the beginning of 'adoption.' So pleasing deities by means of sacrifice was a value in those days. At present it is not accepted. 'ज्योतिष्टोमेन स्वर्गकामो जयेत्' is a Vedic advice. According to Vishwamitra, good behaviour or good activities are those which are praised by the experts of scripture (आगम). They are called Uti and bad behaviour or bad activities are those which are condemned by the experts of scripture. They are called धर्म. The word धर्म did not mean religion. So compassion for all beings was and is a value.

In other words how to behave is धर्म and how not to behave is अधर्म. Society at large behaved properly due to fear of punishment by the unknown, unseen divine power. They also had a belief that man gets merit by doing good activities and man gets sin by doing bad activities. Meritorious man goes to heaven after death where gets lots of comforts and sinful man goes to hell where he is tormented for sins committed during life time.

Shvetaketu - (श्वेतकेतु)

श्वेतकेतु was an ancient philosopher born in the family of Aruna and Uddalaka. Hence he was also called as Aruneya and Ouddalaki. He is respectfully referred to in Upanishads and Mahabharat many a times. He was insincere in his childhood, so he started education late but completed it within 12 years. As a result he became very proud and insulted his own father. But father explained to him how he was wrong and then gave advice about knowledge of self. This advice is famous by the great preposition 'तत्त्वमसि'. Father told him that we must love knowledge and not wealth. This is a value, so also to be proud is a bad thing and to insult elderly persons also is a bad thing. Hence however learned we are we must be polite and we must respect elder persons. We must remember 'विद्या विनयेन शोभते' i.e. 'Learning shines by politeness.'

Pravahana Jaivali was the King of Panchala. He once called a meeting of learned people. Shvetaketu (श्वेतकेतु) and his father participated in that meeting. There they could not answer a question of Pravahana. They accepted their ignorance and became disciples of Pravahana for further studies. Thus accepting one's own ignorance and trying to remove it was a value.

Shvetaketu was a great thinker having social consciousness. He suggested many social reforms. He stated that Brahmin should not drink wine, and should avoid contacts with other's wife.

He also stated certain rules for the society. According to him men and women both should have the same test regarding character i.e., both should have spotless character. It was a value.

Husband and wife both must be loyal to each other. श्वेतकेतु established the marriage institution in the society. He was the founder of marriage system.

* * *

Dignity of Labour

God helps those who help themselves. This is a saying in English. It tells us that if people want to achieve something, to gain something, they themselves must work hard. If they simply sit in one place and pray to God, God will not come to do their work. But if they try hard, God will certainly help, or by suggesting something which would be helpful for their work. There is a parallel saying in the Veda. It says, 'न ऋते श्रान्तस्य सख्याय देवाः।' Here श्रान्त means tired by hardwork, सख्य means friendship, ऋते means except. So, the complete meaning is 'Gods do not make friends with people except the tired and hardworking people'. It means that Gods do not help the lazy people. Importance of hard work, dignity of labour is explained by this saying so dignity of labour is a value.

‘शरीरमाद्यं खलु धर्मसाधनम्’

For this hard work we need strength. To gain strength we need health. To maintain health we need exercises, which keeps us fit. This is बलोपासना. बल means strength, power, might or vigour and उपासना means worship, adoration, respect. So we must worship strength. If we are बलहीन i.e., devoid of strength we will be unable to do work, so we must always remember that healthy body is a means of fulfilling all responsibilities.

‘अक्षैः मा दीव्यः कृषिं कृषस्व’

अक्ष means dice. कृष्ण means 'do not' मा दीव्यः means do not play with dice. कृषि means agriculture. कृषस्व means plough the earth and do agriculture. Gambling is a bad habit. It is a vice so do not play with dice. Instead plough the earth sow the seeds, grow crops and be an agriculturist.

In Rigveda, there is a hymn named अक्षसूक्त. अक्षक्रीडा means द्यूतक्रीडा means gambling with dice. This game was regarded as a bad habit right from the Vedic period. In महाभारत also पाण्डव were defeated and had to face a series of calamities and ultimately a war broke between the पांडव and कौरव which led to complete destruction.

In the अक्षसूक्त, bad effects of gambling are described. The seer of this hymn was very intelligent but unfortunate. Once a man gets caught in the trap of a vice, it is very difficult to get rid of the same. He has narrated his bad experiences in this hymn and he is advising people to be away from gambling. They should not be attracted towards easy money in gambling. Instead they should do agriculture and earn money by hard work. Thus this is a value.

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The Cow

The cow was called 'अघ्न्या.' The word अघ्न्या means who was not to be killed. So a cow was not to be killed. This was a common rule. It was a value.

The cow was believed to be a holy animal. The cow and her milk are included in the religious activity. Her importance is accepted right from the Vedic times. She is praised in the Vedas. She is called अप्सरा (i.e., nymph in the heaven) in some metaphor. She is important and essential for a sacrifice as her milk, curds, butter and ghee are essential for a sacrifice. The cow was regarded as wealth and he who owned many cows was a wealthy (rich) person. Cows were regarded as a medium of exchange instead of coins (money). Cows were offered to priests as dakshina at the time of a sacrifice. Vedic people prayed to deities saying, 'May our cow-wealth (गोधन) increase.' Milk of a cow is a nourisher. Panis (पणी) were expert cow-kidnappers. So cow-rearing was a difficult job. Aryans also had found out certain tricks to identify their cows. Because of their utility, killing them was prohibited and the cow was called अघ्न्या. This was a value. In later days she was given the status of a deity.

वेदोऽखिलो धर्ममूलम्

अखिलः वेदः means the whole veda means all the four Vedas are the origin (source) of human conduct. Whatever was told in the Vedas were followed by men

as a rule. Here धर्म means आचार or duty as in the words पुत्रधर्म (duty of a son), राजधर्म (duty of a king) etc. There is one more quotation expressing the same meaning. It is श्रुति-स्मृति-सदाचारः धर्ममूलम् इति श्रुतम्। It means that श्रुति (veda), स्मृति (Law) and सदाचार (good behaviour) are the base of conduct.

रथ (a chariot)

There are references to chariots in the vedas. A chariot, its wheels, horses, reins etc., are described in detail. The spokes were called अराः and the metal ring around the wheel was called 'नेमि' (Ref. चक्रनेमिक्रमेण). This shows that the technology of wheel and vehicle was known in ancient time. It was a value.

* * *

Swearing by the Fire

Fire plays a very important role in Vedic tradition. Fire is known as grihapati i.e. the head of the house.

Fire is light and warmth to the household. He cooks food which provides strength and nourishment to the members of the family. Thus fire becomes the nucleus and the source of life and energy to the household, hence he is called Grihapati.

Fire is the embodiment of the sun on the earth and supplies the necessary energy to human industry and vehicles.

The Vedic culture gives prime importance to the Fire by placing him in the first place in all worships. (अग्निम् ईळे पुरोहितम्) Fire is important because it represents life, warmth and energy. No life, no movement is possible without fire. Another function of fire is purification by burning impurities.

Fire is the embodiment of divine light and energy, so he is the witness of every important occasion from birth to death. People take some oath in front of the fire which is taken as a binding for the whole of life.

Marriage

Vedic marriages took place in front of the sacred fire. Vedic mantras were recited by the priests at that time. The couple took certain oaths in front of the fire, which were to be followed through out their life. They were faithful to each other, they co-operated with each

other, established home together, brought up children together and lived happily together. Thus fire had a very important place (significant place) in the life of people in Vedic period. So also 'साप्तपदं मैत्रम्' was believed by the people in marriage as well as in daily life.

Seven steps around sacred fire help to join two hearts and two bodies. So 'सप्तपदी' leads to oneness of husband and wife.

Marriage system

There is one conversation hymn in Rigveda in which there is a story of यम and यमी. They were twin brother and sister. As they grew young, a desire for marriage developed in the mind of यमी, the sister. So she talked to her brother यम about it and requested him to marry her. यम did not like the idea so he did not accept it. On the contrary he convinced her that marriages of real brother and sister was not a good practice and will not be accepted by the society. There are references in Vedas that marriage system was well established during Vedic period.

There is a story about how marriage system originated. It tells us that the sky and the earth were together in the beginning. Later on they started going away from each other. They did not like this separation. So they said to each other, "Let us marry and live together". This shows that marriage institution had come into existence at the time of Vedas. There are

references of ideal couples Shiva-Parvati, Vishnu-Laxmi, Vasistha-Arundhati etc. Certain oaths were taken at the time of marriage in front of Fire, and they were followed throughout life. There was a ritual called सप्तपदी i.e. seven steps.

Husband and wife were to walk together for seven steps. It was called 'साप्तपदं मैत्रम्'. It means that if you walk seven steps with anybody you become friends. Husband and wife used to become friends for the whole life. Unless and until सप्तपदी is complete, marriage is not legal.

Pururava and Urvashi

There are certain conversation hymns (i.e., संवादसूक्ते) in Rigveda. According to some, these hymns are the seeds of later poetry and drama. There are in all 20 such hymns. Of them three are more important. They are as follows -

- 1) Pururava - urvashi samvada
- 2) Yama - Yami samvada
- 3) Sarama - Pani samvada

Pururava - Urvashi samvada - This sukta narrates the story of king Pururava and Urvashi. He was a human king and she was a nymph in the heaven. This is the first love story in the world. Both of them fell in love with each other. The king wanted to marry Urvashi. She gave consent on some condition. The king agreed. Their marriage took place. Later she gave birth to a

son. But when her condition was broken she left the king and returned to the heaven. Their love was real love and so they married each other irrespective of their status (i.e., human being and divine nymph). She was true to her words. So to keep one's words, to stick to one's promise was a value.

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Shodashopachara Puja (षोडशोपचार पूजा)

Puja means worship. whenever we worship Lord Ganesh or Lord Tirupati we offer 16 types of services to him. So it is called षोडशोपचार पूजा षोडश means sixteen (16) and upachara means services. We invite God, offer him a seat, then offer water to wash his feet and hands, then we offer water for bathing, then offer clothing etc. This concept of sixteen services has its origin in the पुरुषसूक्त. It is a famous hymn in the Rigveda. It contains 16 verses (ऋक्). This hymn explains how the whole universe was created from the limbs of that Purusha. The षोडशोपचार is the present day relevance of the hymn in the Veda. This is a value.



Obedience

Obedience was a very important value in Vedic times. Younger generation was to obey whatever was told by the elderly people. There is a story which explains this value.

There was a sage. His name was धौम्य (Dhaumya). He had three disciples. Their names were Aaruni, Upamanyu and Baida. Dhaumya wanted to test them. He called Aaruni first and said to him, "O dear! the bund of the field is broken due to heavy rains. So go there and do the needful to repair the bund." Aaruni went to the field and repaired the bund with stones and clay but it did not sustain. He tried thrice but was not successful. Ultimately he himself lay as a bund to obstruct the water. His teacher धौम्य waited for 2-3 days but Aaruni did not return. Worried as he was, he went to the field to see what had happened. He called out loudly and received a weak response, "sir, I am here, lying as a bund to stop water. Bund construction was impossible, Sir!" The teacher was pleased with his obedience and taught him all the knowledge.

Upamanyu was the second disciple whom the teacher tested. He asked Upamanyu to guard the cows. After 2-3 days the teacher asked him, "Dear Upamanyu, how do you feed yourself? you look fat." He answered, " Sir, I beg alms for that." The teacher said, "You should not eat alms without giving to me." So he gave alms to the teacher. The teacher did not give him

anything to eat. Still he was fat because he begged alms second time. The teacher objected. So he used to drink milk. The teacher objected again. Still he was fat because he used to drink the foam falling when calves were drinking milk. The teacher objected that too. So he could not get anything to eat. So he ate the leaves of the अर्क tree. As a result he lost his sight and while wandering here and there he fell into a well. The cows returned home in the evening but he did not. The teacher went in search of him and found him fallen into the well. The teacher invited अश्विनी to cure his eye-sight. They cured his eye sight. The teacher was pleased with his obedience and faith.

The third disciple also proved his obedience by pulling his plough as a bull. Thus the teacher was pleased with all the three disciple for their obedience. It was a very important value.

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The Three Debts

The concept of debts is called 'ऋणत्रय' in sanskrit. ऋणत्रय means 'three debts' or 'a group of three debts.' This is a basic concept in Indian sociology. In ancient time, it is found in तैत्तिरीय संहिता. It is as follows -

‘जायमानो वै नरः त्रिभिः ऋणवान् जायते’, ‘it means a man is born with three debts.’ These three debts are -

1) देवऋण 2) आचार्यऋण 3) पितृऋण

देवऋण - God supplies all the means of living. It is his favour to us. We should be grateful to him for that. We can express our gratitude by worshiping God, by performing religious rites like sacrifice etc. So our forefathers said ‘यज्ञेन देवेभ्यः।’ The debt to God is repaid by यज्ञ.

आचार्यऋण - आचार्य means teacher. In olden times the sages preserved knowledge and arts and transmitted them from generation to generation. Our culture developed through the preservation and collection of all the vedas, arts and knowledge. This is their favour to the mankind. So we must be grateful to the sages who are our first teachers (आचार्य). To express our gratitude we must study hard during ब्रह्मचर्याश्रम. (ब्रह्मचर्येण ऋषिभ्यः) आचार्यऋण can be repaid by अध्ययन and अध्यापन.

पितृऋण - This is the third ऋण We owe this to our forefathers who have continued the human race by giving birth to the next generations. Right from times unknown our forefathers have protected self and the

society by facing calamities. So they are called पितर i.e., forefathers. The term पितृ includes father, mother and all other forefathers. To show our gratitude towards them all, we should accept गृहस्थाश्रम and should contribute towards continuation of race by giving birth to the next generation.

This concept of three debts help to bind together the previous generations and the new generations. It binds the society also together. Hence feeling of gratitude, dutifulness and the concept of three debts are the Vedic values.

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Vedic sources of various customs

Ramayana is the first great epic in the world. The sage Valmiki has composed it. There is a story behind it, how the sage got inspiration. As a daily routine, one day the sage got up early in the morning and walked to the river Tamasa (तमसा) for bathing. On his way he saw a hunter who shot an arrow towards a couple of birds sitting on a tree, loving each other. One of the birds was shot down. The sage was pained at heart and from within him a curse came out in the form of a verse -

मा निषाद प्रतिष्ठां त्वम् अगमः शाश्वतीः समाः ।
यत् क्रौंचमिथुनात् एकम् अवधीः काममोहितम् ॥

O hunter! Let you never get any prestige in the society, as you have killed a क्रौंच bird from amongst the loving couple. Thus his grief (शोक) burst out in the form of a verse, and this was the beginning of the great epic Ramayana.

This incident took place early in the morning when Valmiki was going to the river Tamasa for bathing. It was his daily routine. This was the daily routine of all during Vedic time. What was the detailed routine? why was it so? what were its advantages? Let us see ahead.

Vedic Routine

They used to get up quite early in the morning at 4.30 a.m. and then went to a river for bathing. If no river was available then bathing was performed at home

with cold water followed by washing the clothes. Then they practised Suryanamaskara or other exercises for physical fitness. (i.e., quite early in the morning). After their exercise it was time for recitation and swadhyaya. This kept their knowledge fresh and they could add new knowledge too. All the focus was on recitation and memory. After swadhyaya, they took their breakfast which consisted of fresh cow-milk without sugar, boiled vegetables and cereals, fruits etc. and proceeded for daily work, took lunch at mid-day and supper at 7 to 8 p.m. About 9 or 9.30 was their time of retiring to bed. There was no bed tea, or bed coffee, no smoking, no drinking no bad habits. They started their day with pious prayers and ended their day with prayers again. This had cumulative psychological effect and they could go to sleep with calm mind. This routine kept them fit and alert physically as well as mentally.

Cleanliness

Cleanliness was a very important Value. Home where the human body lives and body (शरीर) where the soul (आत्मा) resides should be cleaned and washed every morning before daybreak. Similarly the courtyard in front of the house was swept, water was sprinkled and Rangavali was sketched at the entrance of the houses. It was a symbol of cleanliness. It was and is practised as a pious duty. Similarly the house-holder wore on his forehead a holy dot or sandal paste or holy ash (भस्म) which indicated his personal cleanliness. It was the marking of purity and the house along with

the people in it was ready to welcome who so ever came there.

Aukshana (औक्षण)

It is a special Indian custom practised at the time of welcoming a beloved person or at the time of bidding farewell to a loving person. While practising this custom, a silver dish with two holy ghee lamps (accompanied with blessing) and taken with Kumkuma and akshata (rice) and waved round the face of the loved one three times. It is a symbol of warm welcome as well as warm farewell. This activity has a magic effect of the loving thoughts of the dear- ones and the holy lights create a protective and guiding halo around the person concerned for his or her safety, prosperity and happiness.

shree (श्री)

Indians use to write श्री (shree) at the top of a letter. This श्री signifies many things. It signifies well-being and prosperity at the writer's end. It signifies truthfulness and honesty of the writer. Its absence suggests something inauspicious incident at the writer's end.

Touching the feet (पादस्पर्श)

Touching the feet of a deity, Guru, parents or elders by fingertips or placing one's head on the feet was a symbol of showing respect to the deity or elders. What is the principle behind this act? It is believed that the

head of the Guru is a dynamo or powerhouse of divine knowledge. Similarly the head of loving, protective parents and other elders is a similar repository of benevolent blessings and protective affection. While hands and feet are like the wires charged with that energy. This benevolent energy is transmitted through the touch, and the juniors get charged with the benign energy emanating from both hands and feet of the elder or the superior. Whenever juniors touch the feet of elders, the elders put their hand on the head of the juniors to give them blessings. Thus through the touch of feet and hand the good wishes are transferred to the younger people.

Dust of holy Feet

It is customary among the Indians to say, 'please shed the dust of your holy feet in our house.' This is a modest way of inviting a revered personality. It is a Vedic phraseology. The scientific principle behind such an invitation is that when a person visits any house, some particles of dust carried by his feet are left there. These particles are charged with holy man's blessings and divine energy which ward off evil influences.

Preambulation (प्रदक्षिणा)

Preambulation means going round a holy object, person or idol (deity) clockwise. It gives strength, sanctity, purity and inspiration of the divine object to the devotee. Even today we follow this custom by going round the deity whenever we visit a temple.

Suvasini (सुवासिनी)

Suvasini is a Vedic term signifying a happily married woman, a devoted wife, an affectionate and cheerful hostess, mother of several well - tended and bright children. Suvasini is the representative of mother Goddess शक्ति. Even today the term suvasini is in use for such a married woman.

Atonement (प्रायश्चित्त)

'To err is human and to forgive is divine.' This proverb tells us that human beings are liable to commit mistakes. 'No one is perfect. Now if a man commits some mistaken or does some thing wrong to others, he must feel sorry for that. He must beg apology for the mistake and should not commit it again. Saying sorry is a kind of atonement. It can also be self punishment for some mistake. There are different kinds of punishments (प्रायश्चित्त) depending on the graveness of mistake. These atonements are meant for keeping man away from mistakes.

The Eastern Orientation (पूर्वाभिमुखता)

पूर्वाभिमुखता means facing the East. Life in Vedic period began with a prayer to the rising sun and the sun - rises in the East. So we face the east for praying the sun. Our physical functions, our working day, our period of rest (i.e., night) are all dictated by the sun. so the east has got a special place in our life. The East and the rising sun are symbols of prosperity. Hence Eastern orientation has a special value in our culture,.

We try to build our houses facing the East. Whenever we start any good work or do any good activity we start it facing the East. We worship God in our house. That God too is kept facing the East. So Eastern orientation is a special character of Indian culture.

The symbols used in Vedic culture - The Lotus

Lotus was carved on the walls in ancient times. It was a pet Vedic symbol which puts forth an ideal of rising and standing above the mud, and slush of mundane life, radiating cool, soft fragrance, beauty, attraction and contentment all around. Consequently a great persons limbs or limbs of God are invariably referred to as lotus-face (मुखकमल), lotus-eyes (नयनकमल), lotus hands (करकमल) and lotus feet (चरणकमल). The limbs of a small baby are delicate, beautiful, full of life, soft so they also are called as lotus. There is a famous verse in this context. It is as follows :

करारविन्देन पदारविन्दं मुखारविन्दे विनिवेशयन्तम् ।
अश्वत्थवृक्षस्य पुटे शयानं बालं मुकुन्दं मनसा स्मरामि ॥

This is the description of baby Krishna. It's meaning is as follows -

He holds foot-lotus by hand-lotus and puts it in his mouth-lotus. I remember such Krishna who is lying on the leaf of the Ashwattha tree.

Idol worship (मूर्तिपूजा)

There was no idol worship during Vedic period. Those people recognised only good behaviour and

bad behaviour. (i.e., सदाचार and दुराचार). Good behaviour was praised and bad behaviour was blamed. They uttered sanskrit prayers, sounded bells and waved holy lamps. There is a scientific principle behind all this. The sound and the light are the two of the great elements which can cause the greatest and fastest electromagnetic ripples, thereby reverberating a distressed soul's anguished cry throughout the cosmos. The whole divine campus shaken out of its response, automatically swings into action according to the divine law enunciated by Lord Krishna.

The clay icons were prepared much later. They were worshipped and later on immersed in lakes or rivers. This tradition is found in our Ganesh worship at present.

Warding off the Evil (दुष्ट संरक्षक को मिटाना)

It is believed among the Hindus that the envious glance of even an ardent admirer, not to talk of ill-wishers, is regarded as causing trouble. It is found in Vedic practices too at times. Therefore it is not uncommon to see a devilish mark displayed on a newly constructed building or a worn-out shoe dangling. For the same reason a tiny black spot (speck) (looking like a mole) is delicately put on the face of an attractive child (baby) or a woman to deflect any chance of evil glance. At times when such precaution was not taken or despite such precaution the child or woman seemed ill at ease, the elderly lady of the vedic household used

mustard and salt remedy. It sounds superstitious but it works.

Ultimate Values (चिरंतन मूल्य)

There are a number of values which shape human behaviour, which guide human behaviour, and develop healthy relationship among human beings and bind the society together and make it stable. Of these values some are changeable according to time and place and generations. But there are certain values which never change. They are perennial, permanent, constant. They are called Ultimate values. They are satya, shiva and sundara (i.e. सत्य, शिव, and सुंदर) (i.e., Truth, Good and Beauty)

In other words they are called as moral, social and aesthetic values. In addition to these philosophers put forth one more value put forward is the “spiritual value”.

Aesthetic Values (सुन्दरम्) - are the values in the realm of beauty. The values that give us pleasure and happiness.

Moral values (सत्य) - are the values that help us to develop our character. They are the virtues which every individual must try to imbibe. They make man's personality transparent and attractive.

Social Values (सामाजिक मूल्य) - are the values or principles of behaviour in the society. Each individual is a member of the society. As a member he has certain rights as well as certain responsibilities or duties that

contribute to the good of the society. Shiva means good. So the principles which cause towards good of the individuals as well as society are the social values. Honesty justice, self-control, freedom, helping each other etc., make men good members of the society. And such good members are like lubricants which make the working of the society quite smooth. Hence such members are essential in each and every society.

Spiritual values (आध्यात्मिक मूल्य) - These values are helpful for individual progress, development and upliftment. Spirit means the ultimate principle of this world. It is called as ब्रह्म. Knowledge about the supreme spirit is spiritual knowledge. Trying for this spiritual knowledge is called the spiritual value. It is also called as metaphysical knowledge. It is discussed in the Upanishads. A person interested in this type of knowledge takes delight in contemplation of the supreme spirit. This is called spiritual value.

These values are like guiding star. They shape human behaviour and uplift human personality. So they have a special place in the life of an individual, society and nation. They are the foundation of any culture.

These values inculcate basic human qualities, develop right attitude towards self, society, environment, country and religion. It also develops liberal attitude, towards religion, language, caste and sex, proper use of leisure, increase social efficiency and adjustment. The product of all these is the ideal member of the society.

Good character (शील, चरित्र)

Good character was a very important value in those days. character means good behaviour. It consists of various qualities e.g. holy thoughts, respect for elders, sympathy, friendship, gratitude, dutifulness, sweet tongue and moral behaviour, respect for women, loyalty etc. In later times character is described as ‘शीलं सर्वत्र वै धनम्’, ‘शीलं सर्वस्य भूषणम्’, ‘If character is lost everything is lost.’ A characterless man never had any value in the society. Nobody gave him any respect. People looked down upon such a person. Thus character was a very important value in ancient time.



Donation (दान)

There are different kinds of people in the society. Some are good, some are bad, some are rich, some are poor, some are healthy, some are suffering from diseases, some people have capacity to help others but some are in need of help from others. Some are 'have's' and some are 'have-not's'. All good things are not steady. Conditions change. 'Have's' can become 'have-not's' and the vice versa too. Everybody should remember this and offer help for the needy. One way of offering help is to give donation. Donation can be of different types, like donation of money, food, clothes, food grains, physical help, medicine etc. One can create goodwill through such activities. Good will binds people together. One good turn deserves another. Donor's hand is always up. In nature also we find that the clouds who give water have high position in the sky and the ocean who stores water is below on the earth. His position is low. So one must try to give whatever one can. Giving i.e., donation is a value. It brings respect to the donor.

In addition to the concept of three debts, there is one more debt and it is social debt.

What is meant by ‘द’?

There is a story in Brihadaranyaka Upanishad which gives some moral advice. Gods, Men and Asuras were the children of the creator. They completed their learning for 12 years with Prajapati. At the end of learning period they requested Prajapati for some

advice. He gave them the letter, 'द'. All of them interpreted the letter 'द' in their own way.

Gods interpreted 'द' as 'द' i.e. self control or control over senses because they had not conquered their senses.

Men interpreted 'द' as 'द' i.e. donation, because being greedy they lacked in giving donations.

Asuras were cruel by nature. They did not show sympathy or kindness to others. So they felt that father must have advised them for kindness. Hence they interpreted 'द' as 'द' i.e. kindness, compassion.

All the three became aware of their faults and decided to compensate, remove the faults by self improvement. Thus self-improvement was a value. It is striving for perfection.

उषस् (Early morning)

In ancient times people worshipped nature. The sun, moon, rivers, trees, earth etc. were their deities because nature supplied everything necessary for their life. Early morning too was one of their deities. उषस् appears in the East when the day breaks, the sky is dazzling with light. उषस् is called the daughter of the sky. She is very beautiful and rich too. She gives inspiration to all. The whole world starts working at her arrival. Birds fly in the sky and go in search of food. Animals go out for grazing. People salute her auspicious light. People describe her beauty. She creates joy and happiness in the world. People are

eager to welcome her. She is a symbol of beauty and beauty is a value.

Vedic seers

We have seen that different seers have contributed towards the Vedic Samhitas. Let us know about them in short.

1) जमदग्नि

One of the seers of hymns in Rigveda He was born in the race of भृगुऋषि. He was a great sage. Two hymns in the ninth mandala of Rigveda and one hymn in the tenth mandala of Rigveda are assigned to him. He gave Vishwamitra one vidya called 'Sasarpari' and compensated his defeat by shakti the son of Vasistha.

He has praised Pavamana soma in the ninth mandala and he has praised Agni in the tenth mandala. He has called the creator of sky and Earth as त्वष्टा. He has stated that the offerings to gods given in agni should be accompanied with the word swaha (स्वाहा).

जमदग्नि was very short tempered. Renuka was his wife. Parashurama was his son. जमदग्नि was one of the famous Saptarishis (सप्तर्षि).

2) Gowtham (गौतम)

One of the seven famous sages (सप्तर्षि). He belonged to the Angirasa family. He learnt Brahavidya from Sanatkumara. He also learnt how to meditate Hansa and Paramhansa from sanatkumara. Ahalya the daughter (मानसकन्या) of Brahmadeva was his wife.

Shatananda was his son. He underwent penance for a long time. He advised yama as to how to discharge Pitruṛuna (पितृऋण). Once there was a famine for twelve years and Gautama saved sages by giving food to them.

3) Kashyapa (काश्यप)

He was a Vedic seer. He had his contribution towards Vedic Samhita. He was a priest in the sacrifice of Parashurama and was given the whole earth as Dakshina (दक्षिणा). He is the 17th sage among the 24 sages of Gayatrimantra. Kashyapa family was widespread. It was a famous family.

4) Agastya (अगस्त्य)

He was a Vedic seer. He created obstruction in the growth of Vindhya mountain. अगस्त्य was not his original name but was an attribute given to him for a great work done by him. He became famous by this name only. He was the son of Mitra - Varuna and real brother of Vasishtha. Lopamudra, the princess of Vidarbha, was his wife. The hymn no. 179 in the first mandala of Rigveda is assigned to Agastya. He was the oldest among all sages. Three great victories are recorded on his name: 1) Vindhya-Vijaya 2) Samudra-vijaya and 3) Indra-vijaya. He was the disciple of god shiva, the preceptor of vedic knowledge, and sage of divine power.

5) Atri (अत्रि)

He was one of the seven Vedic seers. The 5th mandala of Rigveda is known as Atri-mandala. 13

hymns in this mandala are assigned to Atri and others to his descendants. Atri was a great mathematician. He has described solar eclipse in the 40th hymn in the 5th mandala. He was expert in the activities related to sacrifice. According to him "Evening- time" was prohibited for sacrifice. He was popular among gods.

6) Vasishtha (वसिष्ठ)

He was one of the Vedic seers. He was the son of Gods Mitra-Varuna. His name was given to him with reference to his high divine qualities (virtues). He is the seer of the 7th mandala of Rigveda. The 104 hymns in this mandala are assigned to him alone. His hymns throw light on History and Geography. न्यूयं पात स्वस्तिभिः सदा नः। You protect us all the time, this was his constant demand. Two rivers Parushni and Yamuna are referred to in his hymns. He underwent penance near river Vipasha. The hymns of Vasishtha are mainly addressed to Indra, Varuna, Usha, Agni and Vishvedeva. They are specially famous from poetic point of view. Their language and similes in them are very appealing. The cult of Bhakti has its seeds in the Vasishtha's hymns addressed to Indra and Agni.

7) Viswamitra (विश्वामित्र)

विश्वामित्र too was a Vedic seer. The third mandala of Rigveda is assigned to Vishvamitra. As regards greatness, he is equal to Vasishtha and Bharadwaja. His biography (life story) is wonderful. He underwent hard penance for years together, he wanted to send

Trishanku to heaven along with his body. He freed Shunahshep tied to the Yupa as an oblation and accepted (adopted) him as his son. Originally he was a kshatriya but on the merit of his penance he became a brahmin and people started calling him विश्वामित्र.

विश्वामित्र was the leader of Kushika people. Sudasa was the king of Bharatas. Vasishtha was the priest of Sudasa. Sudasa wanted help of kushika people so he removed Vasishtha and made Viswamitra his priest. So there was enmity between Vasishtha and Viswamitra. Once Shakti the son of Vasishtha defeated Viswamitra in debate at a sacrifice. So Viswamitra learnt Sasarpri Vidya from Jamadagni and defeated shakti. Thus he was a powerful sage. Viswamitra protested against the human oblation in the sacrifice and stopped that tradition.

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Sangyana Sukta (संज्ञानसूक्त)

Just like ज्ञानेश्वर requested for God's favour in the form of Pasayadan, at the end of ज्ञानेश्वरी, similarly this hymn is a kind of Pasayadana at the end of Rigveda samhita. This is the last hymn in Rigveda. It expresses good wishes for all. May there be joy everywhere. All should be bound together by a common thought. Let your behaviour and your minds be one. Let your hearts be full with common emotion. Let your aim be one and the same and may you all achieve it with helping one another. Sit together, discuss things and then take decision. Try to understand one another which creates unity among you all. This unity will solve all your problems and lead you towards progress. This hymn suggests that all the world should be one.

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Importance of Knowledge

Normally old people (वृद्ध) are respected for their experience and knowledge. But the word वृद्ध is used in two senses. 1) वयोवृद्ध i.e. old on account of chronological age. 2) ज्ञानवृद्ध i.e. old on account of knowledge irrespective of chronological age. In sanskrit there is a saying which tells us.

न तेन वृद्धो भवति येनास्य पलितं शिरः।

It means that because his hair is grey he does not become वृद्ध i.e., ज्ञानवृद्ध. On the contrary

यो वै युवाऽप्यधीयान्तं देवाः स्थविरं विदुः।

He who inspite of being young is well educated, is called वृद्ध i.e., ज्ञानवृद्ध. (old regarding knowledge) by Gods. 'आचार्य पंचायतन' this picture may be cited as an example of 'तं देवाः स्थविरं विदुः।' Below the panchayatana picture, a verse is cited. It is as follows:

**चित्रं वटतरोर्मूले वृद्धा शिष्या गुरुर्युवा ।
गुरोस्तु मौनं व्याख्यानं शिष्यास्तुच्छिन्न संशयाः ॥**

It means that a miracle is seen under the banyan tree. A young man is the teacher there and disciples are all aged. The teacher is silent and the disciples have understood every thing.

अष्टावक्र

अष्टावक्र was a young philosopher. He was only twelve (12) years old. But he had achieved mastery over all the shastras. His body was curved in eight (8)

places, so he was named as Ashtavakra. Once he went to the court of king Janaka who was a great philosopher. There were a number of scholars in his court. When the scholars looked at Ashtavakra, they began to laugh at his deformed body. King Janaka pacified them and told them that the boy wanted to debate with them. The scholars were surprised. Ashtavakra explained to them that though the body is curved, the soul within it is not curved. Though a river is curved, the water flowing in the current is not curved. He won over them in the debate. King Janaka was much impressed by his knowledge, scholarship, intelligence and the quality of self control. He touched the feet of Ashtavakra and said, "O revered one, please accept me as your disciple and remove my ignorance by your advice. Please guide me." Ashtavakra was pleased and explained him the knowledge of various kinds and the principle of Atman too. So it is said that chronological age is not taken into account in - case of those who have well studied about Dharma. This is the example of the famous expression.

यो वै युवाऽप्यधीयान् तं देवाः स्थविरं विदुः॥

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Sham No Varunah (शं नो वरुणः)

Varuna is a vedic deity. Hymns assigned to varuna are less in number than hymns assigned (addressed) to Indra. This does not mean that Varuna is less important. In Rigveda, Varuna's moral qualities are more emphasised than his appearance. He sits in the high heaven and observes all the good and bad activities of men. He knows everything (सर्वज्ञ). The seers had deep reverence for his strength. He is the deity of water. So he controls all the water sources on the earth like rivers, oceans etc. His rules and regulations are strict and constant. Even gods could not break them. 'ऋत' was his universal law. शं नो वरुणः is the motto of Indian Navy because वरुण is the ultimate controller of water. The meaning of this motto is 'Let the God Varuna be our protector and well-Wisher'. This is a kind of prayer for the safety of all related to Navy. There was a strong belief that if we pray to God, he protects us, helps us. So this was a value.

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Idol worship (मूर्तिपूजा)

There are two main streams of Hindu Religion. One is निगमप्रामाण्य i.e., believing in the authority of Vedas. The second authenticity is आगमप्रामाण्य i.e. believing in the authority of आगम i.e. sacred knowledge.

The निगम culture was called यज्ञसंस्कृति, because the 'sacrifice' was at the centre of life. There is no reference to Idol worship in the Vedas. The sacrifice centred culture was customary for thousands of years. At the end of द्वापर युग, Lord Krishna brought in this आगम culture in which 'idol worship' was at the centre. This आगम culture was divided into two sub - divisions called as 1) वैखानस (Vaikhanasa) and 2) पंचरात्र Pancharatra. The Vaikhanasas developed the special preformance of idol worship within the inside of a temple. They used the Vedic mantras in this worship. At present the worship of God Tirupati takes place according to Vaikhanasa Agama. But no animal oblation is offered, though they continue होम etc. So it is only वेदमंत्रपूजा i.e. worship according to the mantras in the Vedas. But Goddess Padmavati at the Trichanura city is worshipped according to Pancharatra Agama. In that worship both Veda-mantras and tantra are used. It is described as 'वेदतंत्र - उभयोद्भूतैः मंत्रैः।' So Particular way of worship is a value and it is continued even at present.

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Conclusion

So far we have seen the meaning of the word Veda, and general information about Vedas. We have discussed the term value and its relation to vedas on one hand and to human life on the other hand. The values played a very important role in the life of men and their society. There are many sotries in the Vedas which explain and establish different values. Some of them are time-dependent (कालसापेक्ष) while some are place-dependent. But there are certain permanent values which do not change in relation to place or time. They are called ultimate values or eternal values. These values make human relations strong and blind the society together. They contribute towards progress of the society and happiness of human life. So we must try to understand the values and behave accordingly. They develop good thoughts in your mind. We have a rich heritage of values evolved through thousands of years together. We should respect it, preserve it and transmit it to the future generations. Those who have a divine past can have a bright future. We must be proud of our cultural heritage.

॥ इति शम् ॥

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