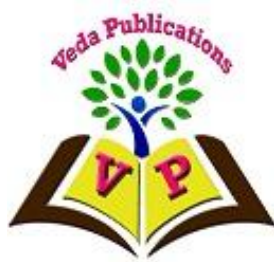


**VEDAS-THE IDENTIFICATION, IMPORTANCE AND NEED FOR HUMANITY**

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The concept of the Vedic dharma is that the four Vedas are the boost of true knowledge. Study of the Vedas is essential. The Vedas contain the seeds of all knowledge. Vedas are the oldest books in the library of man. There is no bar or restrictions of country, period, caste, creed, sex or color for the study of the Vedas. Knowledge of Vedas is for all human beings, any discrimination in studying, reciting, teaching or learning the Vedas is not only unacceptable but condemnable too.

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INTRODUCTION

At the time of the advent of Swami Dayananda the four Vedas were confined only to a handful of pandits and were not accessible to the masses, and were prohibited for the ladies and the shudras as a whole. A proverbial saying in the name of Shrutis was coined as "stri shuudro naadhiiyaataam" (i.e. the Vedas are prohibited for the ladies and the Shuudra). In fact there is not shruti like this. Pandits who had monopolized the

Vedas, never encouraged the commentary of the Vedas in the language of the masses. Those Pandits had declared that a demon named shankhaasura had taken the Vedas to the underworld (paatala). Even those Pandits who had crammed the Vedic mantras, mostly did not care to know the meanings of mantras, and had restricted the use of the mantras to cramming or to recitation only and had declared that the mantras lose their significance and importance if their meaning is attempted, they bear fruit only by recitation. Swami Dayananda who was



great and incomparable scholar of the Vedas observed this sad situation and came to the conclusion that one of the most important cause of the down trodden and lamentable condition of the Hindus was that they had been deprived of the knowledge of God, i.e the Vedas. He had initiated a number of reform movements but he laid great stress on the wide preaching of the Vedas.

IDENTIFYING THE VEDAS

The Vedas contain the seeds of all knowledge. Vedas are the oldest book in the library of man. They are the basis of all dharma, philosophy, culture and elements of all dharma. The knowledge contained in the Vedas is declared limitless. It has been possible because each mantra has several meanings. The Vedas were bestowed to the first four primeval rishis and from them it has passed on from generation to generation by oral transmission till now, and hence is called shruti.

Most of the scriptures suffer from the fact that much matter has been added later on to the original books as a sort of adulteration. Mahabharata, for example, itself contains a verse saying that once it had twenty four thousand verses. Now it is made up of over a hundred thousand verses. Examples can be multiplied in regard to several other works also.

But the position is quite different in regard to the Vedas. The Vedic mantras are so rigidly controlled by several means like the rules of Chhandah Shhastra (metrics) and the mantras are numbered so carefully that no adulteration has been possible. Some recitation texts of the mantras were created to keep the Vedic texts absolutely free from adulteration. Swami Dayananda founder of the Arya Samaj, has accepted the four Vedic humans collections of mantras (the Samhitaas) as self-evident, asserting that no other evidence is required to prove or attest what is contained in the Vedic mantras. All other scriptures are stated to be acceptable only to such extent as their version is attested by or is confirmed by or is in accordance with Vedic mantras.

As the sun shines by its own light, and needs no other source of light to illuminate it, so the Vedas are self-relevant and need no other evidence to support their observances. But as moon shined not

by its own light, but shines by the reflection of the sun's light, so all other scriptures are acceptable only if supported by the Vedic Samhita (mantras) The word veda is derived from the root 'Vid' which means knowledge, power gain and meditation. In the Rig-Vedaadi-Bhaashya-Bhumika (Introduction to the commentary of the Vedas) Swami Dyaananda accepts that the scope of the Vedas is not limited to knowledge only but covers the areas of power, gain and meditation also.

1. THE RIG VEDA

From the point of view of knowledge, the Vedas are indivisible, but on the basis of subject-matter etc. the Vedas are four, viz, the Rig Veda, the Yajur Veda, the Saama Veda and the Atharva Veda. Rik is a derivative from the root 'rich Stutau' (to praise) meaning "Satuvanti padaarthaanaam, guna-karmaswabha-avaan yayaa saa Rik. Rik chaasau vedashcha Rig-Vedah" i.e. one which contains attributes, functions and nature of all material objects is Rik, and the container of true knowledge is Veda. Man needs to know the attributes of the objects first of all and hence this aspect has been enlightened first of all in the Rig Veda.

In the earlier times 1127 shaakhaas of the four Vedas including the four original were available. But during the medieval period the ancient literature was ruthlessly destroyed. Libraries were burnt by foreign invaders. So most of the ancient literature is not available now. The four original Vedas and some shaakhaa tests have been reserved. The original Rig Veda is also known as Shaaklya Samhita.

2. THE YAJURVEDA

The word Yajush is derived from the root 'yaj' which means worship of God, company of learned and noble persons and charity. Rig Veda discusses the attributes of objects and the yajurveda describes the procedure and knowledge of making their proper use. There are two schools of Yajr veda (sampradaaya) viz. the shukla. Yajur Veda and the Krishna Yajur Veda. Shukla Yajur Veda has two Shaakhaas known as the Maadhyandina Samhita and the Kaanva Samhita. The former, viz, the Maadhyandina Shukla Yajr Veda Samhita is the original veda. All other available mantra texts of the Veda are its Shaakhaa texts, i.e. explanatory texts.

**3. THE SAAMA VEDA**

This is derived from the root 'sho antakarmani'- The attributes of objects have been described by the Rig Veda and the procedure and knowledge of their proper use have been mentioned in the Yajurveda. The Saama veda contains to what extent and up to what limit the objects will yield result. Mantras of the four Vedas are mostly in poetry and some in prose. The Saamaveda mantras have the speciality of being sung musically.

4. THE ATHARVA VEDA

Derived from the root "Tharvati-shcharati-karmaa." Whatever is left from the Rig, the Yajur and the Saamavedas, has been described in the Atharva veda. It also describes how to preserve and protect, and the doubts have also been discussed (from Rig-Vedaadi Bhaashya-Bhuumikaa).

The mantras of all the four Vedas have been numbered most systematically and thus their quantitative authenticity has been decided, so that an adulterated mantra cannot be introduced in any part of any Veda in the beginning, in the middle or at the end. Further letters of each mantra have also strictly been counted as per rules of metrika and not a single letter may added or deleted.

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY OF THE VEDAS

Study of the Vedas is essential, along with other factors, for the attainment of God'

One who labors in the study of works other than the Vedas gets Shuudratva with family. "It means the study of the Vedas has the supreme importance."

Though the period of life to study is the Brahmacharya Ashrama (stage of celibacy and student life) yet even after entering the family life, there should be no slackness in the study of the Vedas. When the students used to leave the teacher's abode after the completion of the study period, in his valedictory address (samaavartana) the teacher used to say-

Speak the truth. Follow the dharma. Never be sluggish in the study (of the Vedas)

God never dies and never decays. This is clear indication from Veda itself that the knowledge is from God, it is immortal and ever new.

There is no bar or restrictions of country, period, caste, creed, sex or colour for the study of the Vedas. God in the Yajurvedic mantra says, I bestow this knowledge of the Vedas for all persons, similarly you also preach it to all including the Braahmanas, the Kshatriyas, the Vaishyas, the Shuudras, servants, ladies and even persons lower than shuudras". Hence knowledge of Vedas is for all human beings, any restrictions imposed by ignorant or selfish persons is against God Himself and hence all discrimination in studying, reciting, teaching or learning the Vedas is not only unacceptable but condemnable too.

THE NEED OF THE ENLIGHTENMENT OF THE VEDAS

Since the origin of man on earth, he has made wonderful progress in the field of knowledge and sciences. The different subjects of sciences and other knowledge have been-bifurcated into numerous branches and sub-branches, and most of them have such an explosion of knowledge that the life of man seems too short to study fully even one branch or sub-branch of a subject. As a result of this art knowledge, man has been successful in making large number of inventions and is still progressing tremendously and the thirst for further knowledge to make more and more experimentation to obtain new inventions, is constantly on the increase.

An inquisitive person may naturally have desire to know where is the original source or seed of this so vast a tree of knowledge and science. A gardener by his efforts, turns a seed into a plant and a plant into a big tree, but all the gardeners of the world and all the scientists if pooled together cannot make much from a plant, even a leaf of a tree or a blade of grass. A farmer can produce thousands of wheat grains from one, but science has yet to succeed to make a seed or grain of wheat in the laboratory. The gardener got the seed of the plant, or the farmer obtained the seed grain of wheat from extra human efforts-this fact is evident and needs no further proof or logic.

This logic also stands true for all knowledge and science. We will have to deduce that man got the original source of knowledge from extra human sources. Just as man can develop a seed into a plant but cannot grow plant without a seed and cannot



create a seed; in the same way be his experience and efforts, man can develop knowledge but cannot create the original source. Man obtained the seed or original knowledge from somewhere outside the domain of human efforts.

By the lapse of years of age of a person, he may gain maturation, but not inculcation of new knowledge. Man has been on this earth since several hundred centuries, or more, but even today, in dense forests and remote secluded areas like islands, we find races of man who are almost totally devoid of knowledge and science, where human life is no better than animal life and no culture or civilization has yet developed there. This is because people of those races have had no source of origin of knowledge. A child in spite of maturity of age, cannot obtain any knowledge if he has no access to sources imparting knowledge. A boy deaf by birth does not listen to any sound, so he cannot speak any meaningful word, unless taught by modern methods of teaching deaf and dumb children. Experiments have also been made where normal children were totally cut off from society and were brought up by deaf and dumb mid-wife and nurses. Those children could not learn to pronounce a single meaningful word. We conclude therefore, that knowledge cannot be obtained automatically by human efforts only without the source or origin being outside the learner's domain.

This fact stands more true for abstract and highly intelligible subjects pertaining to topics like God, soul, philosophical subjects, virtue, vice, prescribed duty and prohibited acts, ethics and scriptures where original source of knowledge has to be from outside human efforts.

The teacher teaches a student and thus the knowledge is imparted. This process has been going on from one generation to the other since times immemorial. For a student of today his teacher, parents, society, play ground, friends' circle, radio, television and newspapers etc. are the main sources from which the child learns. If we go back to generations, we will have to arrive at that generation of man when he had none of the above mentioned sources of getting education—say the first generation of man on earth, who or what was the source of knowledge for him? That source should

have been the original or the first source and could not be from any human being.

CONCLUSION

For this original source of knowledge, followers of different religions claim their scriptures. Zindavasta, the Bible, the Koran and the sacred books of other ancient civilization are regarded as knowledge received from God by the Persians, the Christians, Muslims and other religions respectively. The concept of the Vedic dharma is that the four Vedas are the boost of true knowledge. In the first principle, it has been established with clear logic and evidences that the Gracious, Almighty, Formless God, for the well being of his immortal viz the humanity at large bestowed knowledge at the time of emergence of human being on this earth.

It has been accepted indisputably that the Veda are the oldest books in the library of man, and hence only Vedas are the True knowledge bestowed by God.

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