

Vedic wisdom is real

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Vedic Science is the science and technology of consciousness, intelligence, and super consciousness. It is, both ancient and modern, relevant to the core metamorphosis of technology. Veda means knowledge, and Vedic Science is the science of knowledge, self-referral knowledge, the knowledge of consciousness, and the knowledge of Natural Law, the intelligence that governs the universe.

Based on the ancient Veda and Vedic Literature which has been maintained in India, a wide-ranging science and technology has emanated bringing us far-reaching and effective applications in many fields, including education, government, defence, health, management, economics, agriculture, and architecture.

The core foundation of Hindu belief is that Vedas contain source of all knowledge – physical or metaphysical. However in last 100 odd years, this belief has come under scrutiny due to the advances that modern science claims to make.

Vedas not being dogmatic in nature and containing eternal truths, do not try to spoon-feed us. Thus Vedas would contain seeds for all forms of knowledge and would urge humans to explore further.

“I am in the Light;

The Light is in me;

I am the Light.”

The jnani who has realised thus will surely become one with Brahman.

The Vedic literature is the most ancient in the world. It is a treasure house of wisdom.

It has contributed to the all-round development of man. The Veda is the first-ever book in human history. It is the birthplace for human culture and the basis for all kinds of powers. All branches of learning have their origin in the Veda. All dharmas and virtues have sprung from the Veda. The Veda is endless, unfathomable, indefinable, and blissful. The word Veda is derived from the Sanskrit root Vid, meaning knowledge of jnana. Easwara jnana (knowledge of the Lord) is Veda. Atma jnana (knowledge of the Self) is Veda.

Brahma jnana (knowledge of the supreme Absolute) is Veda. Adwaitha jnana (non-dual knowledge) is Veda. Veda is vijnana (knowledge par excellence). All these terms are synonyms for Self-knowledge or Atma jnana. The divinity of the Veda is all-pervasive and has eight aspects of splendor, viz., 'sabda Brahma-mayee' (sound Brahman), 'charachara mayee' (movable and immovable), jyothirmayee (effulgence), vaangmayee (speech and literature), nityaananda mayee (everlasting bliss) paratpara mayee (transcendental), maya mayee (delusion), and sree mayee (prosperity). This is indeed the Prajnanamaya Brahma (constant integrated awareness). It does not pertain to one individual, one place or time. It is universal. Knowing that it is not possible for ordinary people to understand such sacred Vedic literature, Sage Vyasa compiled it into four volumes.

The Veda consists of three "kandaas" or Cantos, namely, Karma Kaanda (cantos dealing with rituals and other actions), Upasana Kaanda (cantos of devotion), and Jnana Kaanda (cantos of wisdom). The human starts with actions, recognising that the human body is meant for achieving dharma (righteousness) through karma. When one goes on performing good karmas, one will in due course become fit for understanding Upasana bhakti dharma (devotional practices). When one worships God over a period of time, with love and in a spirit of dedication, spiritual contemplation, divine contemplation and divine awareness, one grows, one goes nearer the divine heart. One attains the final stage of Jnana through consistency and constancy.

On the whole, karma, upasana, and jnana may be considered as three aspects of one process, comparable to the flower, the raw fruit, and the ripe fruit respectively. Since the common people cannot understand and practise the teachings of the Veda, subsidiary literature has been created later in the form of Puranas (mythological treatises) and Ithihasas (epics), so that even the lay people can practice karma, upasana, and jnana.

The end of the Veda is Upanishad, which is therefore, called Vedanta. The Upanishads have named the three paths of karma, upasana, and jnana as yogas. The essence of karma yoga is to dedicate all actions to God or to perform all activities as offerings to the Lord, for His pleasure. Upasana yoga consists of loving God whole-heartedly and with trikaranasuddhi i.e., harmony and purity of thought, word, and deed. It is not true upasana if one loves God for the sake of achieving his worldly desires.

It should be love for love's sake. The followers of jnana yoga consider the whole universe as the manifestation of God. Believing that Divinity resides in all beings in the form of Atma, is called Jnana. Students may wonder how there can be Ekatwa (Oneness) when there are so many different forms and names, different kinds of behaviour, and different doctrines etc. This doubt can be cleared by considering the example of an ocean. In the fathomless ocean, there are numberless waves. Each wave is different from the other in its size, shape, etc. and it looks as though there is no connection between one wave and another. But a little thinking will reveal to you the fact that they are all different manifestations of one and the same water, and also that they are not different from the ocean. In the same manner, all the different names and forms in the universe are the waves or manifestations of the one and the same ocean of Sath-Chith-Ananda (Existence-Awareness-Bliss). Hence, the essence of all manifested beings is only Sath-Chith-Ananda, despite the superficial or apparent differences in names and forms and their behaviour.

The Bhagavad Gita, which came into existence later, is the essence of the Upanishads. However, it deals with the path of karma, upasana, and jnana in three shatkas. Each shatka comprise six chapters, thus making up the total of eighteen chapters in the Gita. The first shatka deals with the path of karma, the second one with the path of upasana, and the third one with the path of jnana.

To sum up, the Veda gave rise to the Upanishads, which in turn gave rise to the Bhagavad Gita, which serves as a practical guide for human conduct. The Bhagavad Gita is not the property or monopoly. It is the word of God and is, therefore, a universal scripture. There is only one God for all, although there may be different religions and different names and forms of God. In whatever name and form one may worship, it reaches the one and only God. There is only one sun. There are no separate suns like American sun, British sun, Chinese sun, Indian sun, Pakastani sun, and so on. Each country may see the sun at a different time. Just because all of them cannot see the sun at the same time, it will be foolish to think that there are different suns for different countries. Vedas have very vast, profound and deep meanings. The gurus or preceptors of ancient times used to adopt stern measures and enforce strict discipline while teaching the Vedas to their students. That is why the Vedas have survived till today, successfully withstanding the onslaught of time. No one claims authorship for them.

They are called Sruthis or knowledge acquired through hearing. Since time immemorial, the Vedas have been coming down through a succession of gurus and disciples through the process of hearing. The gurus used to utter the mantras with particular intonations, which were prescribed for the purpose and scrupulously followed by the disciples. The gurus of those days were selfless, pure-hearted, and overflowing with love for their students, but unsparing in the matter of discipline among the students. The students too were generally observing the required discipline very scrupulously. If anyone disobeyed the master, he would be summarily dismissed from attending the classes. The gurus would never tolerate any student who was guilty of one or more of the akara panchaka arishtas or the five transgressions beginning with the letter "A," viz., alakshyam (negligence), avinayam (disobedience), ahamkaram (ego), asuya (jealousy), and asabhyata (lack of social etiquette).

Vysampayana was the foremost among the disciples who learnt the Vedas from the Sage Vyasa. Vysampayana sanctified his life by implicitly obeying his guru and by learning his lessons studiously and thoroughly. After completing his studies, Vysampayana established a Gurukula—for teaching the Veda to his disciples. By Gurukula is not meant a separate institution with its own set of rules and regulations like the present day schools and colleges. The guru's house itself constituted the Gurukula. Whatever kind of food the guru ate was given to the disciple as prasad—holy food. The disciple should stay with the guru day and night. One disciple by name Yajnavalkya joined Vysampayana's Gurukula. He had a keen intellect and could learn his lessons very fast. The guru was also highly pleased with him. People who knew Yajnavalkya began praising him with the result that he developed ahamkaram (ego) followed gradually by alakshyam (indifference) and asabhyata (lack of decorum.) Vysampayana noticed these lapses on the part of Yajnavalkya. One day, he called him and told him sternly, "Yajnavalkya! You don't deserve to stay in this Gurukul any longer. You must leave this place immediately. Before you leave, you must return all that you have learnt from me." Accordingly, Yajnavalkya, who recognised his own shortcomings, vomited all that he had learnt from his guru. His vomitings were eaten by tittiri birds, and the latter began chanting the Upanishad, which was therefore named as Taittiriya Upanishad. There are two traditions or sampradayas in the Veda, viz., Brahma sampradaya and Aditya sampradaya. That which was vomited by Yajnavalkya came to be known as the Brahma Sampradaya, also called the Krishna Yajur Veda.

After leaving the Gurukul of Vysampayana, Yajnavalkya sincerely repented for his delinquency and atoned for it by giving up food and drink and practised Suryopasana (Sun worship) ,undergoing severe austerities by way of penance. Pleased with this penance, the Sun God appeared before him in the form of Vaaji and told him, “My child! What is past is past. You should guard yourself against such lapses in future. Betraying the guru or God is highly dangerous. Be careful hereafter, I will now teach you the Vedas again.” So saying, the Sun God taught him the Vedas. The reason for the Sun appearing in the form of Vaaji was that Yajnavalkya’s forefathers always used to do anna dana (free distribution of food), so their family got the name Vaajasam. The Veda taught by him was also called by the alternative names of Sukla Yajur Veda, Vajasas Khanda, and Aditya Khanda. Yajur Veda has been divided into two. For this reason, although the Vedas were originally four in number, they have subsequently become five, namely Rig Veda, Krishna Yajur Veda, Sukla Yajur Veda, Sama Veda, and Atharvana Veda. Recognising that the Sun appeared before him as Vaaji and taught him the Vedas because of the free distribution of food by his ancestors, Yajna; valkya gave primary importance to anna daana in his teaching which, among others, included the following:

“There is no gift higher than the gift of food and no God higher than the parents. There is no truth higher than japa and thapas (reciting the holy Name and doing penance). There is no dharma higher than compassion and no gain higher than the company of the good. There is no enemy more dangerous than anger and no disease more serious than indebtedness. There is no death more horrible than ill-fame and no wealth more valuable than fame. There is no ornament more beautiful than smaran (remembering God through chanting His names).” Yajnavalkya, moreover, emphasised specially in his teachings to his disciples the extreme importance of service to parents and guru, as well as anna dana (free distribution of food). Students! we began these classes on the holy Ekadasi day—day eleven of the lunar fortnight, and we are also concluding the classes on this Ekadasi day. Hence, you should consider all these classes as Ekadasi Vratam (observance of the vows of Ekadasi). During the fortnight, you have had the valuable opportunity of listening to the lectures from highly distinguished speakers, with rich experience behind them. What they taught you with wholehearted zeal and enthusiasm you have listened carefully with much interest and faith. But what is more important than listening is to put into practice at least some of the things you have learnt and thereby to set an example for others to follow.

You must always remember the five life-breaths relating to the Vedas, which I mentioned earlier. You should avoid these five things: (1) indifference to what the guru, parents, and other elders teach you, (2) disobedience to the aforesaid, (3) ahamkara (ego), (4) jealousy or envy toward those who are better off, and (5) violating the social etiquette or decorum.

This is the essence of the sacred Vedanta. What has been given to you is the nectar obtained by the churning of all the holy scriptures—Sastras, Puranas, and Ithihasas. You are the future leaders, pleaders, and patrons of Mother India. You should lead exemplary lives, treading the path of sathya truthfulness and dharma righteousness and virtue. Under no circumstances should true devotees deviate from this ideal path. The Vedas have taught about two kinds of dharma: vihita dharma and nishiddha dharma (prescribed dharma and prohibited dharma); in other words, the Do's and Don'ts for regulating one's life. Unfortunately, today, the prescribed things are being given up and the prohibited things are being taken up. This is sheer folly and ignorance. The prohibited things should be rejected, even though you might have taken lots of trouble to acquire them. For instance, you have purchased from the market a big mango fruit for five rupees. Just because you have spent five rupees on it, will you eat the skin outside and the stone inside the fruit? No, no. You will eat only the pulp and reject both the skin and stone. Similarly this world is like a fruit, and you have to accept what is good in it and reject what is bad for you. Lack of Self-confidence is the main cause present-day problems like foul play, injustice, losses, failures, sorrow, and pain. People do not believe in themselves, not to speak of believing others. First of all, one requires to develop Self-confidence, and that in turn will give self-satisfaction. Without self-satisfaction, one cannot have contentment. Once one has gained self-satisfaction, then automatically one shall be ready for self-sacrifice. Needless to say, where there is self-sacrifice, there will be Self-realisation naturally axiomatically. We should undertake sathkarmas (good actions) which lead to chitta suddhi (purity of mind). Where there is purity, there will be jnana siddhi (dawn of wisdom). These are all within us only. One need not search for them anywhere outside. Furthermore, the Gita teaches us to take at least one of the nine modes of bhakthi (such as sravanam, kirtanam, etc.). God does not consider how wealthy or how learned you are; He is concerned only with the sincerity and purity of your mind and heart and about how whole-hearted and genuine your love is. Valkimi was a hunter.

Nanda was an untouchable. Kuchela was a pauper. Dhruva and Prahalada were mere lads of five years. Sabari was a tribal woman, illiterate and uncivilised. But all of them had won God's Grace in abundance, because of their wholehearted devotion, love and surrender. Follow the example of Sabari, who always thought of Sri Rama and His happiness, and dedicated all her thoughts, words, and deeds to Him alone, so much so that every action of hers was transformed and sublimated into the highest thapas (penance.) In this manner, if you offer everything to the Lord, you will naturally be prevented from engaging yourself in bad actions or evil ways in your life.

Some citations of the Vedic clauses:

Rig Veda 10.22.14

"This earth is devoid of hands and legs, yet it moves ahead. All the objects over the earth also move with it. It moves around the sun.

In this mantra,

Kshaa = Earth (refer Nigantu 1.1)

Ahastaa = without hands

Apadee = without legs

Vardhat = moves ahead

Shushnam Pari = Around the sun

Pradakshinit = revolves

Rig Veda 10.149.1

"The sun has tied Earth and other planets through attraction and moves them around itself as if a trainer moves newly trained horses around itself holding their reins."

In this mantra,

Savita = Sun

Yantraih = through reins

Prithiveem = Earth

Aramnaat = Ties

Dyaam Andahat = Other planets in sky as well

Atoorte = Unbreakable

Baddham = Holds

Ashwam Iv Adhukshat = Like horses

Rig Veda 8.12.28

“O Indra! by putting forth your mighty rays, which possess the qualities of gravitation and attraction-illumination and motion – keep up the netire universe in order through the Power of your attraction.”

Rig Veda 1.6.5, Rig Veda 8.12.30

“O God, You have created this Sun. You possess infinite power. You are upholding the sun and other spheres and render them steadfast by your power of attraction.

Yajur Veda 33.43

“The sun moves in its own orbit in space taking along with itself the mortal bodies like earth through force of attraction.”

Rig Veda 1.35.9

“The sun moves in its own orbit but holding earth and other heavenly bodies in a manner that they do not collide with each other through force of attraction.

Rig Veda 1.164.13

“Sun moves in its orbit which itself is moving. Earth and other bodies move around sun due to force of attraction, because sun is heavier than them.

Atharva Veda 4.11.1

“The sun has held the earth and other planets”

Rig Veda 1.84.15

“The moving moon always receives a ray of light from sun”

Rig Veda 10.85.9

“Moon decided to marry. Day and Night attended its wedding. And sun gifted his daughter “Sun ray” to Moon.”

Rig Veda 5.40.5

“O Sun! When you are blocked by the one whom you gifted your own light (moon), then earth gets scared by sudden darkness.”

Pursuit of Truth

Real science consists of an objective pursuit of truth through observation and experimentation. It occurs apart from any beliefs or preconceptions about what it is going to find. It is based upon reason and direct perception, in which the reality is allowed to reveal itself to the unbiased eye.

However, the universe we live in is a multidimensional reality from the subatomic to the supragalactic in the realm of physics alone. Biology, medicine, psychology and the social sciences require different perspectives and approaches to deal with appropriately. On top of these are subtle forces and influences, extrasensory, occult and spiritual that many people claim to experience as well and have developed special methods of working with.

Besides any knowledge of the external world is the knowledge of the internal world, the perennial quest for Self-knowledge or knowledge of our true nature, as evidenced by the most primary and important of all life's many questions, "Who am I." This inner quest or inner science can be very different in approach than the outer sciences.

From an Indian perspective, we can call this inner science of Self-knowledge, 'yogic science'. Traditional Yoga and Vedanta also has its goal as the objective pursuit of truth. But it aims at the supreme truth - which is the eternal - that truth which never changes. It regards relative truths - up to and including the very existence of the external world itself - as ultimately an illusion because these eventually, at one time or level or another, are found not to be valid. This yogic science aims not just at the knowledge of the world but an understanding of Knower.

Science and Spirituality in India

In India, science and spirituality have always gone together. Spirituality through Yoga and Vedanta has always been conceived of as a science, a way of knowledge to be approached with reason and experimentation through Yoga and meditation leading to the direct perception of truth. Other Indic systems of thought like Buddhism and Jainism have shared similar views.

Veda itself means knowledge, deriving from the Sanskrit root 'vid' meaning to know, to see or to cognize. The Vedas are called Vidyas which means ways of knowledge or perception (a term cognate with Latin video!).

The Vedas we might say are the Vidyas or videos of the sages shown on the inner screen of the meditative mind. They were said to have been cognized by the human mind in tune with the universal Being or Brahman.

The Vedas address all aspects of existence through Dharma, the natural laws that uphold the universe, which reflect not only matter and energy but life, mind and consciousness. As such, the Vedas constitute what could be called a science in the modern sense of the word and much more. We can find among the Vedic sciences a whole range of sciences from astronomy and chemistry to psychology and surgery, extending to astrology and to the science of Yoga itself. We can call this integral approach to both the spiritual and material sciences as 'Vedic science.'

Unlike medieval Europe, traditional India never saw a conflict between science and spirituality. It never suppressed science or art in favor of religion. Rather its arts and sciences developed in harmony with spirituality. However, it did discriminate between the material and the spiritual sciences.

The Higher and Lower Knowledge

This the Mundaka Upanishad makes this clear. "Two sciences are to be known, the higher and the lower. The higher is through which the eternal is known." The lower knowledge consists of the outer forms of knowledge through which the transient factors are known, the aspects of name, form and action. The higher knowledge is Self-knowledge through which the nameless, formless being is known.

This division of the higher and lower forms of knowledge reflects the Vedantic definition of reality as that which is eternal and the transient as an illusion. Because of this orientation, historically in India the inner or spiritual science gained the greatest attention, though the outer sciences were not neglected. The lower sciences, moreover, can similarly be divided into two groups. The first are the usual material sciences like astronomy and medicine such as formulated in modern science. Second are what could be called 'occult' sciences like astrology and Vastu, which modern science has generally neglected or rejected, which suggest subtle influences of intelligence pervading the forces of nature. While the Vedic mind never saw a real division between these two types of outer sciences (for example, Vedic Jyotish includes both astronomy and astrology), since the modern mind does, it is important to note this distinction.

In the Vedic view, one can approach the outer sciences with an inner vision and turn them into inner sciences as well. In this way, the outer sciences can become inner sciences. That is why we find such diverse subjects from astronomy and mathematics, to music and even grammar defined as paths of Yoga or spiritual paths. We find the same groups of Vedic seers working with and developing the outer as well as the inner sciences from the most ancient times, not finding working with one to necessarily be contrary to working with the other.

It remains possible to approach such outer sciences as physics as spiritual paths or paths of Yoga. They can be part of an inner science of Self-realization if one uses them to connect to the universal Being and Consciousness within the world and within ourselves. Much of modern physics is heading in this direction as it looks for an underlying consciousness to explain the underlying unity of the laws of physics.

Some scholars have said that this Indian emphasis on spirituality prevented the outer sciences from developing in India, since the outer sciences were not given the same priority. But we must remember that the dark ages in India came later than in the West, with repeated foreign invasions and conquests disrupting the country from 1000 AD to 1800 AD. Had this not occurred India would have likely played a greater role in the development of modern science. Today we find many scientists coming out of India and many of these feel quite in harmony with Yoga, Vedanta and Buddhism as well as with modern science.

The Correct Means of Knowledge

Science rests upon a definition of what constitutes the right means of knowledge through which something can be known. Science, like the classical philosophies of India, recognizes the validity of sensory perception and reason as the main means at our ordinary disposal for gaining authentic knowledge about the world and about ourselves.

Yet science is not content with what the senses present us as reality, any more than the mystic or yogi is, though science builds upon rather than rejects what the senses show. Science has created a vast array of special instruments and equipment from microscopes and telescopes that can greatly increase the range of our physical senses.

It has added other instruments like radio telescopes which bring in information about the universe from means that are related to but outside the scope of our ordinary senses. It has created special computers to extend the range of computation as well.

While Vedic science recognizes the importance of sensory perception and reason, it considers that there is another, more reliable and internal source of knowledge, particularly necessary for understanding the inner or spiritual world. This is the direct perception of the silent or meditative mind.

Vedic thought holds that the best instrument of knowledge is the silent mind. This allows the mind itself, like an unflawed mirror, to directly reflect reality inside oneself. The mind becomes a reliable instrument of direct knowledge beyond the limitations of the senses. This silent mind is clearly defined in the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali and other texts as the state of samadhi. When the mind is in a state of peace and balance it becomes capable of directly perceiving the nature of things, which is consciousness and bliss. This is *samadhi-pramana*, samadhi as a means of knowledge in yogic thought, which opens up the inner world of the mind as clearly as our eyes open up the outer world of the senses.

In Vedic science, the meditative mind in 'trance'. To contemplate is appropriate for knowing the inner reality. Pure consciousness, God or Brahman, after all, is beyond name, form, number, time, place and person or it would just be another object or entity in the outer world. That which comprises the totality but is not limited by the totality cannot be examined by the instruments that work to provide knowledge of limited things. This does not mean that examining the brain waves of meditators and other scientific experiments of this order are not of any value but that these are secondary and indirect means of knowing the internal reality, like trying to examine a person through their body as reflected in a mirror, rather than examining the body directly. We must employ the right instrument of knowledge to gain adequate knowledge something useful, and beautifully worth exploring. For example, the appropriate instrument for knowing the universal Being is not a limited instrument which looks externally, like a telescope, but the silent mind that is able to see within. Observe, watch, and enjoy the glory of the divine beauty.

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