Social Harmony in Vedic Literature

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Rigveda is the perennial and eternal source for studying the structure, composition and organizational patterns of Indian family. Family, the first and fundamental unit of the society was controlled and disciplined by the head of the family members. The family is eulogized as the parents of the earth outlining the importance of it in the Vedic texts. In the Rigveda, we do not find mention of the word 'Samaj' used in the modern sense; however we get synonyms of the word Samaj. A nation is basically built upon society and society is nothing but conglomeration of families. Indian culture does not approve of the existence of an individual self or person. When the question arises what happened to various limbs such as mouth, arms, thighs, legs etc., of Almighty, the 'Primeval Force of Creation' (Virat Purusha or Brahman)? While manifestation of power and divinity of Almighty is praised in manifold ways, there is no reference of any single person or element created from Virat Purusha. Suktakara clearly states that a Brahmin was born from his mouth, a Kshatriya from his arms, Vaishya from a thigh, and Shudra from his feet. Referring to Chaturvarna through the said mantra, the sage has presented the form of 'Samaj Purush' before us and has denied the existence of any individual self or entity (Purusha). This is a perennial and eternal vision that no person can survive in his personal form or self, and no physical self or element can stop the mind from suffering and from being unhappy.

It is very unfortunate to observe that a group of so-called modern social scientists who used to mislead people by saying that the Vedic Sages uphold the theory of the origin of the Shudras (the feet of Virat Purush) which is an example of discrimination towards the Shudras. They should know that the Vedas are self-

contained, but these were compiled by Maharishi Vyas. Hence Maharishi Vyas is popularly known as Ved Vyas. According to modern interpretation of the word 'Shudra', Ved Vyas himself belonged to Shudra community. If the sages had intention to humiliate Shudras by propagating the theory of the origin of Shudra as stated above, then it should also be known to every learned person that the face of same Virat Purush is shown as heaven, navel is as universe and feet as earth. Can anyone say here the status of the earth has been degraded? Therefore the argument given above that 'Shudras were selectively dishonoured' do not hold water. The entire Veda is devoid of distinctions and modern evils. The Vedas contain no mention of either word, casteism or caste. It cannot be denied that a few disvalues like jealous, malevolence, violence, etc., arise in the human mind and due to which bitterness, hatred are also seen in society. Due to some flaws of our education system and lack of ancient virtues in the society, Indian society accepted Western model of development which brings materialistic worldviews embedded with selfish attitudes. Today there is a need to study Vedic literature which has holistic idea of life. In Indian society, the roots of discrimination and evils lie in everyday caste-class conflicts and prejudices which are deeply ingrained. The aim of this paper is to demonstrate through the prism of Vedic literature that India is an equitable, non-discriminatory, harmonious and prosperous nation.

Prof. Badrinath Shukla observes that 'inequality or feeling of being unequally treated' is the natural instinct of man. It is the natural aspiration of every human being to excel in force, education, finance etc. than others. It is neither possible to curb this tendency nor is it in the interest of humanity, but the socially created artificial inequality that prevails in humans today has to be understood correctly. This artificial inequality results from the structural and organizational error of society and governance, such as income inequality, unequal distribution of wealth in the society and inequality of educational opportunities and facilities. Consequently some families prosper and become affluent and some families become impoverished. The second type of inequality is a natural equality and it is obtained as a result of prior actions, such as sex, colour, form, intelligence, etc., are derived from birth (ascribed status). Several measures have been taken to remove artificial social inequality all over the world. In our country too, from time to time, efforts are made by social, political institutions to bring equality in

every aspect of life. Sometimes the socio-cultural environment of society and nation gets vitiated and the situation becomes tensed when efforts undertaken for ending inequality. Thus, while removing inequality the unity and integrity of our social structure and nation should not be endangered. The easiest way to bring parity is to eradicate injustice and social discrimination, for which every person has to imbibe a sense of self-respect and respect others like a virtuous person. This work may not be possible only through the implementation of governmental laws and in this regard contemplation of Vedic studies and Vedic mantras (hymns) might bring social equality. Vedic mantra has great social, moral and cultural significance and it pervades individual and social sphere of life. Therefore there is a need to revisit our traditional scriptures in modern context with a view to instilling virtues in new generations.

There is a gulf of differences between the nationality of India and the nationality of England and America. Apteji writes that the nationality of England is such that if it is necessary for the happiness of the people of England, then they will be ready to fight with everyone else. America's nationality is also such that they do not hesitate to make atomic bombs to make Americans happy and safe. They do not hesitate to make wealth by robbing others. Our nationality is so unique and different from other nationalities because it ardently follows and preaches 'Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah' (Let the entire world be happy). The scriptures have also preached for 'bestowing compassion upon the downtrodden grieving people, friendship with the common people and feel joy and happy for prosperous people. Everything originated from God; therefore, it is a great virtue to treat every living being and non-living element as a form of God. Provisions of laws, rule of law and various mechanisms for justice and punishment of a nation are devised for public welfare, not for exploitation, just like a teacher who disciplines his students. Whatever the type, nature and function of a nation or state, if the spiritual, moral and social values of the society are high, then it will be congenial for the people. In the absence of these values, no matter how high the status of a nation is, there will be competition and conflicts among individuals and groups for vested interests and selfish ends. The system of governance in Europe and America is democratic but still there remains discord. On the contrary, India shows signs of excellence in state system and functionaries. If the power of a state and its nature of governance are considered there

are manifold types of state formations such as monarchy, aristocracy and democracy etc. But if we keep the factor of happiness or prosperity of the people in the center stage, then no theory of statehood will be valid if the state and government is run by unintelligent and mischievous people. Happiness of the tenants is key factor and this was the thumb rule of governance in ancient Indian and all these political principles were derived from Vedas. Hence Pvt. Max Dunker writes that among all the nations of the earth, the ancient Indian nation system was the best.

Not only in modern India, but in many countries of the world, the propagation of socialist polity is visible, and in this context it becomes natural to question whether socialism existed in the ancient Indian polity. Was there a complete lack of human compassion in Indian culture? Did our ancient sages not propagate the national communal sentiments while carrying out a blissful and peaceful life? In this regard Vedas and other ancient scriptures provide satisfactory answers and there are evidences of justice, equality, unity and integrity which were given utmost importance in Indian national life. It would not be an exaggeration to say that we Indians have been the promoters, propagators and disseminators of socialism since ancient times. The hymns of the Rigveda are the precursor of real socialism. The sage says (the mantra/hymn of the Rigveda), "O men, you should live together and recite hymns together. Let you all possess the same mind." Just as the gods used to receive their share together without contention, similarly, you also together accept your share gracefully. Again in one verse it was said that your effort and perseverance should be one; your heart and mind should work in harmony. The mantra commands that the mantra should be same and universal. Moreover unity is not achieved only by the unison of minds; on the contrary integrity of our ethos, thoughts, fellow feeling, justice, dialogues, discourses etc., is immensely required. If heart does not cooperate with mind, then the success remains skeptical because we all are revealed from one mantra. Ancient Indian socialist economy put religious sanctions both in production (income) and consumption. It has been our dharma (spiritual duty) and belief that both the King and citizens must have optimum share of dividends devoid of any form of greed and amassing wealth by exploiting the needy people.

Due to the lack of nationalism and national consciousness, our country faces misery. We are still backward though we consider ourselves intellectually and spiritually rich. In the absence of a

wholesome Indian education as well as absence of knowledge of ancient scriptures, sometimes our children become hostile to our rich cultural values and legacy. In other nations of the world, there may be good socialist thinkers, and doctrines which are applied in time to time. Scholars like Marx etc., might have different isms and socialist thoughts and they might have been successful to guide their own culture and nation. And it must be accepted that these scholars should receive due recognition and honour for their great contributions to society, and in this context regular discourses on their thoughts and ideas should be held in India. But it is noteworthy that Marx, Mao Tse-tung and others had applied their ideologies in their culture and nation across the time and situation. However, Indian culture is of different in nature, form, and circumstances. In such a given situation, question may arise whether we can be able to restructure our social system and values in the model of those socialist interpretations which are quite unfamiliar to our culture and people. With this skeptic mind Swami Karpatriji said, 'Almost the entire population of Indian manual and non-manual workers are believers of god and they ardently follow various religious rituals. They adore the values of Ramayana, Bhagavata, Gita, feel blessed listening the tale of Satyanarayana (Lord Bishnu), and perform religious chant (kirtan). The Communists incorporate this section of the people in their socio-economic movement by offering them only economic benefits such as bonus, salary and allowances etc. If they understand that the Communists do not believe in God, religion and scriptures, then they never accept their invitation. However, if any theocratic party fulfills their basic needs and demands, then they will surely be with this party. Every worker also wants freedom, wants to do charity, and wants to leave his property for his children and grandchildren. If he knows that in the communist state inherited property is not considered as the natural property right of their children and grandchildren, then he will think twice before joining the party. This is not blame, not propaganda, but the only reason fits here is the diversity of our culture and tradition.

The contribution of the entire society is necessary in the process of socio-economic, political and religious harmony and prosperity. According to Dr. Vijay Sonkar Shastri, economic stratification like social stratification is an essential sub-system of the entire social system of every society. The classes in society are created on the basis of division of labour which requires specialized

workforce due to rapid economic expansion and unprecedented development in economic affairs. In fact, this class based stratification has its own limitations as the existence of this social system depends on the execution of the designated work. If the person executes his economic activities and engages in social interactions with others at the end of the day, then he should behave in equanimity with other members of the society who perform different economic activities just like members of a family behave with each other. There are many people in the society who derive satisfaction working in industries, agriculture and farming, protection of cow, commerce etc. Some are manual workers who toil day and night and some earn using their intelligence. All these people wholeheartedly participate in nation-making process and thereby a nation becomes a living and blissful entity.

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Rig-Veda, 6/70/6

ब्राह्मणोऽस्य मुखामासीद्वाहू राजन्यः कृतः।

ऊरू तदस्य यद्वैश्यः पद्भ्यां शूद्रो अजायत॥ Rig-Veda, 8/7/16

परिसंवाद, भारतीय चिंतन की परम्परा में नवीन संभावनायें (सामाजिक समता संबंधी संगोष्ठी का विवरण), संपा. द्विवेदी प्रो. राधेश्याम, सं. सं. वि. वि.वाराणसी, 1981

आप्टे उमाकान्त केशव, भारतीय समाज चिन्तन, पृ. 42

संगच्छध्वं संवदध्वं सं वो मनांसि जानताम्।

देवा भागं यथा पूर्वे सञ्जानाना उपासते ।। Rig-Veda, 10/191/2

समानी व आकूतिः समाना हृदयानि वः ।

समानमस्तु वो मनो यथा वः सुसहासति ।। Rig-Veda, 10/191/4

समानो मन्त्रः समिति समानी समानं मनः सह चित्तमेषाम् ।

समानं मन्त्रमभि मन्त्रये वः समानेन वो हविषा जुहोमि ।। Rig-Veda, 10/191/3

अकृत्वा परसंतापमगत्वा खलमंदिरम।

अनुल्लन्घ्य सतां वर्त्म यत्स्वल्पमपि तद्बहु: ।। Shangarav-paddhati Samhita

अकृत्वा परसंतापमगत्वा खलमंदिरम।

अनुल्लन्घ्य सतां वर्त्म यत्स्वल्पमपि तद्बहु: ।। Shangarav-paddhati Samhita