

Two day (02 day) National Seminar on
“VEDIC WISDOM FOR COSMIC HARMONY”

In collaboration with the Universal Vedic Research Institute, Thiruvananthamali, Tamil Nadu

29 – 30 April 2024

Concept Note

Everything in this cosmos coexists in a state of perfect harmony. Dharma, the eternal cosmic laws that hold and sustain everything in order and harmony was revealed to humanity by the Vedic Rishies. The spiritual foundation and material view of Indian life was conditioned by this dharma centric world view. In the grand quest that humankind has undertaken ever since the dawn of thought for peace and harmony, the contribution of Vedic wisdom has been by all standards the most distinctive and sublime. It has provided ideas and ideals, moral and spiritual values, beliefs and practices, and patterns of behavior—individual and social—on the basis of deep insight into the rhythm of cosmic order and Mother Nature. It would be certainly beneficial to the whole humanity if those sublime ideas are reiterated in their pristine purity so that the discerning human mind can evaluate and emulate them. In the words of profound scholar F. Max Muller, “So great an influence has the Vedic age exercised upon all succeeding periods of Indian history, so closely is every branch of literature connected with Vedic traditions, so deeply have the religious and moral ideas of that primitive era taken root in the mind of the Indian nation, so minutely has almost every private and public act of Indian life been regulated by traditional precepts that it is impossible to find the right point of view for judging of Indian religion, morals and literature without a knowledge of literary remains of the vedic age. “ (History of Sanskrit Literature, P.8)

Relevance of Vedic Wisdom

Vedic wisdom is characterized by integral, holistic and spiritual view of Reality and a way of life based on that. It advocates fundamental unity of all existences, both animate and

inanimate, (*Sarvam khalvidam Brahma*). Every existence is at bottom spiritual, pulsating with life and consciousness (*Etadatmyamidam sarvam*). Everything in this cosmos has common source and sustenance (*Tajjalan*). In fact whatever existed, whatever exists and whatever shall come into existence, all are manifestations of the same Divine Being, declares the Purusa Sukta of the Rgveda. The Isavasyopanisad of the Yajurveda states that in this mutating world every element is divine and is permeated by the Divine. It is one, unitary, self-existing principle (*Tadekam*) which expresses Itself diversely, says the Nasadiya Sukta of the Rgveda. It is also experienced and expressed diversely (15). This is the grand Vedic vision. Of course, these sublime ideas and noble practices are witnessed in other cultures as well and are to be reckoned with. Good ideas and practices never collide; they only supplement and reinforce one another. Therefore the Rgveda exhorts, “Let noble thoughts come to us from all over the universe.”¹⁶

Right from the dawn of human civilization India has projected the lofty ideals of cosmic harmony, unity and universal fraternity treating the whole world as one family (*vasudhaiva kutumbkam*). Expressing the pious longing of universal happiness and harmony (*Sarve bahvantu sukhinah*) the Vedas and the Upanisads inculcate the attitude of self-sameness everywhere (*samadrsti*) and realization of universal well being (*sarvabhuta hita*).The Gita enjoins us to see the self in all beings and all beings in the self. It exhorts us to get engaged in the welfare of all (*lokasamgraha*), hating and malicing none and with friendship and compassion for all. The Vedic prayers are never for an individual self. All prayers are for universal wellness.

The Atharvaveda (XIX.67) has this prayer, “Let we see hundred springs. Let we live for a hundred years. Let we know for hundred years. Let we progress for hundred years. Let we prosper for hundred years. Let we be useful to all for hundred years. Let we even go beyond hundred years.” It says that “To awake and arise and to march ahead is the mark of every living being.” (V.30.7) So it exhorts, “Ascend high towards zenith, taking the earth and the nation onwards in the march. Rise to affluence. Have offspring. Soar high to immortality. Rising high, touch the highest point of splendor.” (XIII.1.34)

All the four Vedic Samhitas call for ennobling the whole world as there cannot be partial and peace-meal practice of virtues. Everyone has to follow the path of *Rta* , otherwise deviation from this will affect universal peace and harmony. Everyone should be friendly to one another. The Yajurveda (XXXVI.18) wishes , “ Let all look at us with friendly eyes and let we look at them with friendly eyes.” This mutuality of love and fraternity expresses fundamental unity of the whole universe and interdependence of every part. No one can afford to have enmity with others without endangering peace.

Vedic Yajna and Cosmic harmony

Of all ethical ideals and practices the Vedas have laid down for the attainment of the material wellness and spiritual perfection, the yajna assumes pivotal significance. It is pivotal to the Vedic thought and which is regarded as central to the cosmic process as well. It is the most significant concept employed by the Vedic seers to explain the cosmic process. The whole cosmos is in the form of yajna, says the Ṛgveda. This concept like many other such concepts expresses the nature and functioning of Reality. Reality is impregnated with inexhaustible fund of energy that flows out in a rhythm and order. Yajña stands for the process of that self-expression of the Reality. It is representative of the dynamism of life vibrant in Reality. This is the supreme message of the Puruṣa sūkta of the Ṛgveda. The same is elaborated in the Yajurveda XXXI.14.

The Ṛgveda begins with a reference to yajña through which the Reality unfolds itself as Agni, which is the highest Light and which leads us upward and upward. The beautiful opening words of the Ṛgveda are supremely inspiring. “Agnimide purohitam yajñasya devamṛtvijam.” In fact the Yajurveda is a wonderful treatise of yajña which is treated here in its manifold forms. It is most unfortunate that the Yajurveda and along with it the concept of yajña have been mistakenly identified with its exterior ritualistic and ceremonial form ignoring the fact that yajña has been defined in the Yajurveda (I.1) as the best form of action (Śreṣṭhatamāya karmaṇe Yajño vai Śreṣṭhatamam karma), the form which is enunciated in the Īśāvāsyopaniṣad which is its concluding 5 and culminating part. The same has been reiterated in the Śatapatha Brahmana (1.7.1.5) and Taittirīya Brahmana

(III.2.1.4). It is the ideal form of karma whether it emanates from the Cosmic Being (Virātapuruṣa) or from finite individual beings. The Yajurveda declares that it is the very naval around which the entire cosmos rotates. (Yajño viŚvasya bhūvanasya nābhih. XXII. 62) All enlightened beings act in the form of yajña which alone ensures righteousness, says the Yajurveda. (Yajñena yajñamayajantadevāstani dharmāṇi prathamānyāsan. XXXI.16). Concerning yajña three very serious and pertinent questions can be asked, viz., what is the ātmā of yajña, what is its prāṇa, and what is its sārā. And the replies to be given are that the ātmā of yajña is collective enterprise (sāmudāyikam karmam), its prāṇa is sacrifice (svāhā) of narrow self or ego, and its sārā is renunciation of self-interest (idam na mama). All the three are highly suggestive and significant. They reveal the real spirit and meaning of yajña. A single individual never performs yajña. It is a corporate act. All those who participate in it are yajñabandhu (Ṛgveda IV.1.9). It presupposes an integral and organic life or mutual relatedness and mutual dependence, a life of cooperative coexistence. This is how the meaning of yajña as „sangatikaraṇa“ can be understood.

The essence of yajña is annihilation of ego, a self-transcendence, and an existence for the sake of others. It is a collective act and therefore its result is also to be enjoyed collectively in a distributive manner as prasāda.

The concepts of ṛta, dharma, satya, yajña, tapas, dāna etc, are fundamental to the Vedic view of life but unfortunately we have forgotten their original meaning and significance. It is high time that we revisit the Vedas and cull out all that is noble and profound in them and put the Vedic gems like yajña before the humanity. We may remind ourselves of the Ṛgvedic exhortation of Agastya to Lopamudra, his wife, “Na mṛṣāŚrāntam yadavanti devā visvā itsṛadhō abhyaŚnvava. Jayāvedatra Śatanīthamājim yatsamyāncā mithunāvabhyajāva”, which means that our efforts will not go in vain. We have exerted ourselves together in harmony to realize them. We shall triumph in all conflicts in the world on account of mutual cooperation (I.179.3). And hence, the significance of the present national seminar. We may conclude by the Upanisadic dictum, “Uttiṣṭha jāgrat prāpya varānnibodhata”

Sub themes

1. Vedic wisdom, Sanatana dharma and Yugadharma.
 2. Vedic view of cosmic harmony
 3. The importance of Yajna in restoring and sustaining cosmic harmony
 4. Vedic knowledge systems – contemporary relevance
 5. Vedic wisdom: a guide to the material spiritual pursuit of human life
 6. Vedic wisdom and the organization of society, economy and polity
 7. Vedic wisdom and Hinduism of today-faith, practices worship Systems-
Compatibilities and Incompatibilities
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Call for Papers

A limited number of participants will be invited for the Seminar. Those interested in participating should send (preferably by email) an abstract (500 words) of the proposed paper in Hindi,/English only along with their C.V. (One page) directly to **Professor K. Gopinathan Pillai, Fellow, IAS, Email: gopikgopi@yahoo.com** Mobile: 9447784067 and copy to **Shri Prem Chand, Librarian/Academic Resource Officer (AC), Indian institute of Advanced Study, Shimla on his Email: aro@ias.ac.in** Tel: 0177-2831385

The last date for submission of abstract (500 words) is till 15th March 2024 05:00 PM. The Institute intends to send Invitation letters to selected participants by the 31st March, 2024. It is the policy of the Institute to publish the papers not proceedings of the seminars it organizes. Hence, all invited participants will be expected to submit complete papers, hitherto unpublished and original, with citations in place, along with a reference section, to the Academic Resource Officer, Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla–171005 by 15th April, 2024.

The IAS, Shimla will be glad to extend its hospitality (**free hospitality is provided only to the Seminar participant**) during the seminar period and is willing to reimburse, if required, rail or air travel expenses from the place of current residence in India, or the port of arrival in India, and back.

Note: Plagiarism is a serious academic offence and the Institute reserves the right to cancel the selection /participation of a candidate found guilty at any stage.