

Origin of Human Library Concept in Vedic Knowledge System: Some Evidences

S. Navaneethakrishnan¹, M. Balakailasanathasarma²

Introduction and research problem

All cultures have found ingenious ways to pass on their knowledge systems, through developing formal and informal ways of communication and preservation. When examining some significant ways in which India preserved and transmitted its knowledge, it was noted that India's oral tradition has followed both fixed and floating patterns of transmission, in codified and un-codified forms. While the knowledge is contained in the Vedas, its ancillary branches have been transmitted through an established, meticulous code of memorization.

Human library is a concept where the human beings are treated as books for reference purpose. The first human library was developed in Copenhagen in the spring of 2000 as a project for Roskilde Festival by Ronni Abergel, his brother Dany and colleagues AsmaMouna and ChristofferErichsen. Human Library Organization has helped the Human Library movement to grow steadily across the world, and today, it is estimated that the Human Library has been presented in more than 70 countries around the world, most of them in partnership with local organizers. The purpose of this research study was to identify the evidences to prove the origin of the human library concept in the Vedic knowledge system.

Methodology

An interdisciplinary study was specially focused on this area in a different point of view to develop a new idea for debate. Using a mixed method viz., exploratory research method and descriptive research method, this study explains the identified elements of the Vedic knowledge system as like as human library concept.

Discussion, results and conclusions

In contrast, the preservation of large portions of the Vedic corpus has been carried on for centuries through a complex, highly codified method of transmission. An elaborate, highly sophisticated and foolproof mnemonic and idealistic methods were

1. Senior Asst. Librarian, Library, University of Jaffna

2. Senior Lecturer, Department of Sanskrit, Faculty of Arts, University of Jaffna

used to instruct and memorize these compositions, which eliminated or decreased the danger of losing words, syllables or accent. The extraordinary effort of memorization emphasized correct pronunciation (*aksharasuddhi*), correct duration of utterance (*matrasuddhi*), and correct intonation of accents (*svarasuddhi*). This oral tradition was kept incredibly fail-safe because it needed the intact safeguarding of a vast magnitude of verses. There were different recitational devices that helped in remembering these texts. The basic step was *Samhithapatha* followed by *padapatha*, direct recitation of the Vedas splitting them wordbyword, slowly graduating to the next level called *krama* where the first word of the mantra is added to the second, the second to the third and so on, until the whole verse is completed. This method enabled the student to know the individual words, and combine words in recitation and the changes that occur in the sound that occur in the word as a result of the combination. While *samhitha*, *pada* and *krama* are in the natural order of recitation, there are also indirect methods called *vikrti*, which follow eight increasingly complex patterns of memorization such as *jata*, *mala*, *sikha*, *rekha*, *dhvaja*, *danda*, *ratha* and *ghana*. This elaborate system was developed with the purpose of preserving the purity of sound, word, pronunciation, intonation, pitch and sound combinations of the verses of the Veda and to facilitate the absorption of massive amounts of data as oral memory.

Findings of this study identified *Veda ṛishes* as the first human libraries, who received the spiritual knowledge from god, preserved it in their memory, and disseminate it to the society. While the codified system of handing down, Vedic corpus became dependent on an organized system of learning through the *Guru-Sishya* tradition, the narrative-performative tradition of recitation carried on the dissemination of Vedic knowledge system.