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Elements of social harmony in Rig veda

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Abstract

Vedic literature in Sanskrit has been serving the entire world in humanistic efforts. Sri Lanka is a nation of different religions and diverse cultures and has a tradition going back to several centuries. The Vedic literature is treated to be the oldest literature of the world. The Objective of this study is to identify some evidences of Social Harmony concepts in Rig Vedic Literature. This Study focused on Rigveda considering its early origin and recognition among the scholars. Mixed method including descriptive and analytical method is used to identify elements of concepts. This research presents a brief outline of the elements of social harmony, as we find it in ancient Vedic literature. Findings of the study prove that the Vedic literature speaks the ways of attaining spirituality by establishing a harmony with all beings. They built the treasure house full of human wisdom, social welfare, unity, peace and prosperity, instead of personal gain or internal prosperity at large. Vedic verses that prays for different aspects of the universal; happiness and peace. Among these elements, Universal pleasure, Collective actions of people, Stimulation of mental power, Path to wealth & happiness, Conservation of Resources, Enlightened people, Sharing of Wealth, Eco friendly life, Sustainable good life and Government, Gathered Long life, Happiness in mind and life are remarkable. These elements could be considered similar to current social harmony aspects.

Keyword: Social harmony; vedic literature; hindu ethics; rigveda

Introduction

Today's society requires a huge effort to move into higher levels of moral and social development. Sri Lanka is a nation of different religions and diverse cultures and has a tradition going back to several centuries. But, we have not been successful in bringing closer understanding and respect of each other's' cultures, customs, traditions and values. If the people live with peace in mind, it will lead to peace in society which ultimately paves way for peace at world level. Social harmony creates a harmonious and sustainable peace, beyond wars, terror and poverty. Sanskrit has been serving the human beings from time immemorial. The Vedic literature is treated to be the oldest literature of the world. They explore the Ethics of The Hindu Maita Susil Kumar (1963) [5]. This research presents a brief outline of the elements of social harmony, as we find it in ancient Vedic text -Rigveda.

Vedic Literature

Vedic literature in Sanskrit is not merely a religious literature, but a collection of knowledge, a vast treasure house of various disciplines like linguistics, mathematics, astrology, architecture and natural sciences like physics, chemistry, biology, botany, medical science, engineering, agriculture, horticulture, cosmology, ecology, aeronautics, navigation etc. This literature is divided into four main categories, the samhitās or "collections", most of which are in verse, and the commentaries or brāmaṇas, most of which are in prose appended to them as the most esoteric āraṇyakas (forest books) and upanishads. The three main samhitās are the Rīgveda, and Yajurveda and the Sāmaveda; and Atharvaveda, a later text, is sometimes listed as fourth. The earliest manifestation of spirituality is found in it. When the people of the other continents were under developed our Vedic seers contributed to Science, Technology, Astrology, Art, Culture, and High Philosophical order at all Radhakrisnan S (2005) [6].

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Social harmony

Social harmony is traditional concept which implies ideal society – absence of conflict and people cooperating with each other. One of the components of social harmony is the “democracy and rule of law” and “fairness and justice”. It reflects a basic concern in any society. Oxford Dictionary defines social harmony as “a society or human being is living together with other societies on the friendly or cordial manner”. Ministry of National language and social integration of Sri Lanka provides explicit definition for “social harmony as Peaceful interaction among members of social groups” UGC defines social harmony as “the creation of those conditions and relationships in society that enables the peaceful settlement of existing differences between different group in society or between such groups and the state” The concept of social harmony has an ecological dimension also. It offers greater potential for tackling the increasingly significant question of peaceful coexistence between man and nature. Social harmony is the cardinal value and the most treasured value of any culture UGC Report (2002)^[11].

Objective

The Objective of this study is to identify some evidences of Social Harmony concepts in Rig veda. This Study focused on Rigveda considering its early origin and recognition among the scholars.

Methodology

Mixed method including descriptive and analytical method is used to identify elements of concepts in selected Rig vedic text. Hypothesis of this study defined as Rig veda in Sanskrit has been serving the entire world in humanistic efforts like unity, peace, social harmony and prosperity which could be merely related to the concepts of Social Harmony in this modern world.

Findings

Findings of the study prove that the Rig veda speaks the ways of attaining spirituality by establishing a harmony with all beings. They built the treasure house full of human wisdom, social welfare, unity, peace and prosperity, instead of personal gain or internal prosperity at large. These elements could be considered similar to current social harmony aspects. Vedic verses that prays for different aspects of the universal; happiness and peace. Among these elements, Universal pleasure, Collective actions of people, Stimulation of mental power, Path to wealth & happiness, Conservation of Resources, Enlightened people, Sharing of Wealth, Eco friendly life, Sustainable good life and Government, Gathered Long life, Happiness in mind and life are remarkable. These elements could be considered similar to current social harmony aspects. These aspects are explained in detail.

Universal pleasure

Rita dharma or the universal duty is the inherent order of the cosmos. Rita is the underlying divine principle and universal law regulating nature. When we are in tune with universal dharma, and realize that we are an integral part of nature and not above it or dominating it, then we are in tune with our universal duty. One who knows this dharma will feel that they are guests on the planet with responsibilities to nature. Everything animate or inanimate that is within the universe is controlled and owned by the Lord. One should therefore accept only those things necessary for himself, which are set

aside as his quota, and one should not accept other things, knowing well to whom they belong Bose A C (1960)^[2]. Vedas declare that “May everyone in this world be happy, may everyone be free from disease, May everyone see prosperity, may none come to grief, Om! Let there be Peace! Peace! Peace!

ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः।

सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः।

सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु।

मा कश्चित् दुःख भाग्भवेत्॥

The completeness of human life can be realized only when one engages in the service of the Complete Whole. All services in this world—whether social, political, communal, international or even interplanetary—will remain incomplete until they are dovetailed with the Complete Whole. When everything is dovetailed with the Complete Whole, the attached parts and parcels also become complete in themselves Bose A C (1960)^[2].

Collective actions of people

Ancient thinkers had always preached about peace, universal friendliness, and harmonious living of all beings. From the family, there is the higher step to the society at large. One must not live for oneself alone. In the Vedic ideology the prefix Sam- is found to be attached to words indicating the collective actions of people. Similarly Samana (common) implies a collective relation. Sa-, and Saha- also have been used for the idea of union.

“O citizens of the world! Live in harmony and concord. Be organized and co-operative. Speak with one voice. Make your resolutions with one mind. As our ancient saints and seers leader and preceptors have performed their duties righteously. David Frawley (1994)^[3] similarly, let you may not falter to exercise your duties.”

सं गच्छध्वं सं वदध्वं सं वो मनांसि जानताम् ।

देवा भागं यथा पूर्वं संजानाना उपासते ॥ १०.१९१.०२
समानो मन्त्रः समितिः समानी समानं मनः सह
चित्तमेषाम् ।

समानं मन्त्रमभि मन्त्रये वः समानेन वो हविषा
जुहोमि ॥ १०.१९१.०३

समानी व आकृतिः समाना हृदयानि वः ।

समानमस्तु वो मनो यथा वः सुसहासति ॥
१०.१९१.०४

Rigveda X-191-2-4

Stimulation of mental power

Path of knowledge is an essential part of the Vedic religion. It is the path of the sage, who never accepts faith or belief as a substitute for his personal realization of the highest truth. This is the prayer for knowledge, for the power of the mind that leads to the realization of the highest truth. Higher mental

power (dhi) that leads to enlightenment we contemplate that adorable glory of the Deity, -that is in the earth, the sky, the heavens! May He stimulate our mental power?

तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि ।
धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ॥ ३.०६२.१०

Rigveda III -62-10

Path to wealth & happiness

Through good paths lead us to riches, Agni. God who knows every sacred duty. Remove the sin that makes us stray and wander. We will bring most ample adoration to you. Lead us a new to happiness, O Agni; lead us beyond all danger and affliction. Be with us a wide broad ample castle bless, prosper on their way our sons and offspring.

अग्ने नय सुपथा राये अस्मान्विश्वानि देव वयुनानि
विद्वान् ।

युयोध्यस्मज्जुहुराणमेनो भूर्यिष्ठां ते नमउक्तिं
विधेम ॥ १.१८९.०१

अग्ने त्वं पारया नव्या अस्मान्स्वस्तिभिरति दुर्गाणि
विश्वा ।

पूश्च पृथ्वी बहुला न उर्वी भवा तोकाय तनयाय शं योः ॥
१.१८९.०२

Rigveda I 189-1-2

There was a prayer "Like Sun and Moon. may we pursue in full prosperity our path, and meet with one who gives again, - who knows us well and slay us not.

स्वस्ति पन्थामनु चरेम सूर्याचन्द्रमसाविव ।

पुनर्ददताघ्नता जानता सं गमेमहि ॥ ५.०५१.१५

Rigveda V-51-15

Conservation of Resources

The Vedas advocate conservation of resources to take care of future requirements. They condemn poverty and give the clarion call to eradicate it.

One shall produce fair wealth for today and tomorrow. (Rigveda VI-71-6)

Poverty should be banished. (Rigveda X-76-4)

The Rigveda speaks of the man who has carried the day in the political assembly. All his friends are delighted with the man who has triumphed in the Council and returned in glory

सर्वं नन्दन्ति यशसागतेन समासाहेन सख्या सखायः ।
क्लिब्षस्पृत्पितृषणिहयषामरं हितो भवति वाजिनाय
॥ १०.०७१.१०

Rigveda X-71-10

Enlightened people

In Rigveda there is a prayer for the ideal son. God Soma gives a hero-son (Vir) who is fit for work (Karmanya), fit for the

home (Sadanya). Fit for the religious assembly (Vidathya), fit for the political council (Sabheya), and a source of glory to his father Sundar Raj. M (1983) [10].

Here is the ideal sample for the good citizen. A man must contribute beyond his individual sphere and contribute to collective life. Beyond the limited interests of the family and the social group there was the wider interest of the state, which was the concern of all the enlightened people.

सोमो धेनुं सोमो अर्वन्तमाशुं सोमो वीरं कर्मण्य ददाति ।
सादन्यं विद्व्यं सुभेयं पितृश्रवणं यो ददाशदस्मै ॥

१.०९१.२०

Rigveda I-91-20

Sharing of Wealth

The Vedas assert that there shall be proper distribution of wealth from the wealthy to the poor. They also condemn those who enjoy wealth without partaking it with others.

Let the rich satisfy the poor with a broader vision. One shall not be selfish and consume all by himself. One who eats alone is a sinner. (Rigveda X-117-6).

मोघमन्नं विन्दते अप्रचेताः सत्यं ब्रवीमि वध इत्स
तस्य ।

नार्यमणं पुष्यति नो सखायं केवलाघो भवति केवलादी

॥ १०.११७.०६

Rigveda X-117-6

Eco friendly life

The Vedas attach great importance to environmental protection and purity. They insist on Safeguarding the habitation, proper forestation and non-pollution. Earth, atmosphere, sky, sun, moon, stars, waters, plants, trees, moving creatures, swimming creatures, creeping creatures all are hailed and offered oblations Rig Veda (1896). They stress the need for protection and development of forests. Human beings have to safeguard the trees. They assert that the plants and trees are verily the treasures for generations.

The Vedas give the clarion call for non-pollution of the environment. They condemn in unequivocal terms those who pollute and defile the environment. Waters are invoked to be friendly to humanity. Waters and herbs should have no poison. (Rigveda I-23-20)

अप्सु मे सोमो अब्रवीदन्तविश्वानि भेषजा ।

अग्निं च विश्वशम्भुवमापश्च विश्वभेषजीः ॥

१.०२३.२०

Rigveda I-23-20

One should not destroy the trees. (Rigveda vi-48-17)

Trees are homes and mansions. (Rigveda x-97-5)

Plants and waters are treasures for generations. (Rigveda vii-70-4)

Sustainable good life and Government

Savitar, God, send far away all sorrows and calamities, and send us only what is good.

विश्वानि देव सवितर्दुरितानि परां सुव ।

यद्गदं तन्न आ सुव ॥ ५.०८२.०५

Rigveda V -82-5

Be with us; I have chosen you: stand steadfast and immovable. Let all the people wish for you. Let not your kingship fall away.

आ त्वाहार्षमन्त्रेधि ध्रुवस्तिष्ठविचाचतिः ।

विशंस्त्वा सर्वा वाञ्छन्तु मा त्वद्राष्टमधि भशत् ॥

१०.१७३.०१

Rigveda X-173-1

Gathered Long life

There is a request for long life. It is not to live alone but to live together with the society. A hundred autumns may we see that bright Eye, God-ordained, arise a hundred autumns may we live.

तच्चक्षुर्देवहितं शुक्रमुच्चरत् ।

पश्येम शरदः शतं जीवेम शरदः शतम् ॥ ७.०६६.१६

Rigveda VII-66-16

Happiness in mind and life

Here the prayer is for mental happiness.

"Send us a good and happy mind, send energy and mental power. Then-at your glad carouse-let men joy in thy love, Sweet juice!"

भद्रं नो अपि वातय मनो दक्षमुत क्रतुम् ।

अर्घा ते सख्ये अन्धसो वि वो मदे रणन्गावो न यवसे विवक्षसे ॥ १०.०२५.०१

Rigveda X-25-1

The brilliant presence of the Gods hath risen, the eye of Mitra, Varuna and Agni. The soul of all that moveable and immovable, the Sun hath filled the air and earth and heaven. Like as a young man followed a maiden, so doth the Sun the Dawn, refulgent Goddess: Where pious men extend their generations, before the Auspicious One for happy fortune.

चित्रं देवानामुदगादनीकं चक्षुर्मित्रस्य वरुणस्याग्नेः ।

आप्रा चावापृथिवी अन्तरिक्षं सूर्य आत्मा जगतस्तस्युषध ॥ १.११५.०१

Rigveda I-115-1

Discussion: Appropriateness of Vedic concepts to the current society

It could be concluded that throughout human history harmony was practiced as the oldest form of collective philosophy. Initially the religion was practiced to keep harmony with the all mighty. Later democracy was instituted to keep harmony between the government and its citizens. In democratic countries moral values and legal systems were developed to promote harmony in human interactions. It entailed with universal duties called as Dharma. Rig Veda (1972) Universal

duties are the duties irrespective of one's age, caste, or duties obligatory on man as man and not as a member of a particular community or social class. According to Dharmasastras there are ten sādharmaadharma or common duties of men and every individual residing in society needs to follow them.

They are

Steadfastness (Dhṛti).

Forgiveness (Kṣamā),

Application (Dama).

Avoidance of theft (Cauryābhāva),

Cleanliness (Śauca),

Repression of sensibilities and sensuous appetites (Indriyanigraha),

Wisdom (Dhī),

Learning (Vidyā),

Veracity (Satya),

Restraint of Anger (Akrodha)

Conclusion

The Sanskrit scholars, instead of caste, creed and regional feelings utter the message "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" for the human community, which is not available in any other language of the world. Ancient thinkers had always preached about peace, universal goodwill, and harmonious living of all beings. They were believers of love between human being and not war Sachithanatham, P (2015) [9]. The problems of hunger, occupation, literacy cannot be solved by declaring wars by one nation against the other. Therefore, from this point of view the Vedic literature is of great utility to us. We neglected the instructions of the scriptures, sometimes out of total ignorance of the contents of these works and at other times out of incapability to follow the real intention of the authors of these scriptures.

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