

48. For all mankind

With a few virtues only but with scholarship vast

What good can one do? What honour can one gain?

With ten acres of land on which no crop can grow

What can one gain ?

'Tis enough, if one has a fertile patch.

Embodiments of Love,

The Rig Vedha, the first among the four, has come down to us in exactly the same way that it was recited in the past. It is a far-spreading tree, with many branches. Of the 25 that once existed, only two are now available. But, these have been preserved intact by means of an elaborate system of memorisation, by which while one set of pupils recite seriatim, another does so back for forth; a third with alternate syllables omitted, etc. The techniques have distinct names like *Jada*, *Maala*, *Shikha*, *Dhandha*, *Ratha*, *Dhwaja*, *Ghaana*, etc..

The reality in man is laid down as *Praana* (Vital Energy), in the *Rig Vedha*. But, this is inconsistent with the view also found therein that *the Aathma* which is embodied in man and all living beings is eternal Universal Consciousness having no attributes or characteristics or modes. The *Rig Vedha* speaks of three bonds that encumber *man*---*Adhyaathmic*, where *Aathma* means the person and *adhyaathmic* bond refers to the illnesses and diseases that affect the person, physically and *mentally*-*Aadhibhouthic* bonds bring about pain and suffering through involvement with other living beings, especially poisonous insects, scorpions, wild animals, etc. *Aadhidaivik* bonds cause terror and loss by what can be called 'acts of God', against which man is helpless, such as floods and drought, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, avalanches, thunderbolts and meteors. The *Rig Vedha* prescribes means to overcome or modify the consequences of these calamities, by achieving progress in physical, mental and spiritual fields of activity.

Karma is to be regulated by Dharma

The *Rig Vedha* is primarily concerned with *karma* and is part of the *Karma kaanda* (the path of action, to attain the Absolute). There are three stages in the soul's journey to its source: *Karma*, *Dharma* and *Brahma*.

Karma is the sincere discharge of one's duty, as laid down in the scriptures and as beneficial to our standard and status. Through karma done for some benefit in view, man progresses towards karma with no benefit in view, so that he does it as a rightful obligation, undeterred by defeat or unaffected by success. He does karma, regulated by *dharma* (virtue).. Then, his consciousness is purified and elevated and can help him to become aware of his Reality as the Self which includes all, *Brahman* (Omni self).

Without bud and bloom, no fruit does emerge

Without tiny fruit, may be trite and tender,

No taste of sweetness can grow and gratify.

The flower is *karma*, the tender fruit is *dharma* and the taste which gratifies is *Brahman*. The bud blossoms through devotion and the fruit emerges into virtue and ripens by the acquisition of the

awareness of One. The three are inevitable ingredients. To give you a familiar example, the coconut chutney you make at home has four ingredients: salt, chillies, tamarind and the kernel of the nut. To procure all these, clean and pure, in the required quantities, is *karma*, the path of action. To put them together and press them into a paste is also *karma*, part of the Path. Then, you put a little on the tongue to discover whether it tastes aright, as the genuine chutney. This is the Path of *dharma*. When you find that if a sprinkle of salt would make it authentic, you add it, at this stage. Or, if it is more, you mix with it some more saltless paste, until it is just right. And, you derive delight, as a reward. That is the stage of joy, of contentment, the end of desire, *Brahman*.

Being born, brought up and grown in age is *karma*; we realise that to live for oneself is not the way to happiness. We take to the path of *dharma* or virtue, sacrifice, service. But we discover that involvement with problems does not give lasting joy. So, we turn towards the ever-lasting Source of Peace, Harmony and *Delight---Brahman*, God.

***Vedhas* have universal validity**

The *Vedhas* teach not only *karma* (rites, rituals, vows, sanctifying observances) but also *dharma*. In fact, it is said that the *Vedhas* are the roots which feed *Dharma* and hold it *fast---"Vedhokhilo Dharma moolam."* Since *dharma* is the sustainer of the entire world and Law regulates the Cosmos, *Vedhas* have universal validity. There are latent as well as patent forces that urge every particle or wave in the Cosmos. When they are operating in coordination, all is well. But when they are unbalanced and operate without equilibrium, disorder and disaster are caused. For example, the sun, the moon, the earth, the fire, air, water, all these have to maintain a balance in order that order reigns. When the environment is disturbed or distorted, danger is imminent. Water is contaminated, man suffers physical and mental illnesses thereby. Science and technology boast of their achievements in conquering the five elements---space, air, fire, water and land. They are dealing with them as if they are playthings amenable to their whims. They do not deal with them as means for the peace and prosperity on the earth, for all its inhabitants. Their attempts to analyse and take advantage of the five elements are resulting in fatal pollutions and natural disasters like droughts and even earthquakes. The five elements have to be adored and treated reverentially, as the *Rg Vedha* directs. Worship them in humility. Then, they would reward you with plentiful power. Today, that reverence has disappeared in the greed for exploitation.

Sleep is a short death, death is a long sleep

Things that confer joy can also confer grief, when their real nature is not understood. The counsel of the wise calms our mind and enthuses our hearts. But, sometimes, it may disturb the mind and depress the heart, when we feel it is denying or discouraging our pet plans and pleasures. But, the quality of the counsel is, on both occasions, wisdom. For example, showers of rain are comforting, and therefore, quite welcome. But the drops, sometimes, turn into hailstones and hit hard causing pain. They too are the same material, welcome in another form. Within minutes, the stones run as water on the ground, and become desirable gifts.

Peace is inherent in man. When ego becomes egoism, the *Aham* becomes *Ahamkaar* by enfolding itself in a form. 'I---pure and simple, maintained pure and simple---is still 'being'; it 'becomes' when the I identifies itself with something other: I am a man, I am a monk, I am a student.

The 'I' has become an 'ism', has put on a form, a vesture, which it is loath to give up, the *akaar* which has rendered it *Aham-kaar*, egoist!

When you are in bed, asleep, dreaming and wandering through varied escapades and experiences, what has happened to the body which you had fostered as you yourself?. And while in deep sleep, where have all the levels of consciousness taken refuge? Sleep is a short death: death is a long sleep. You, the 'I' in you, endow the inert material vehicle called body with consciousness. You are the Cosmic Consciousness, God, temporarily in the role of 'I'. The body-mind-complex is the instrument to be utilised for that role, Use it for furthering God's purpose, executing God's will. This is the message of Rig *Vedha*.

Another mistaken idea some people entertain is that they can kill themselves by suicide or *Aathma-hathya*. So, they plan to punish and destroy the body which is inert and incapable of initiative. The mind has to be punished, for the despair which overwhelms the will to live is caused by the erratic mind, not the body. Delve into the vagaries of the mind, learn to direct it along straight paths and emerge as the victor over despair.

***Vedhic* hymns have great potency**

The hymns of the *Rig Vedha* have been used down the ages to sanctify widely different events and experiences of man, spiritual and apparently secular. The distinction is artificial, for all of life has to be spiritualised. When the boy is initiated into *Vedhic* studies or the recitation of the *Gaayathri* and other *manthras*, when some one has to be blessed on some happy occasion, when a wedding has to be ceremoniously performed with the invocation of God, and when the body is buried or burnt after the soul has left, the *Rig Vedhic* hymns are chanted. They have great potency and arouse beneficial thoughts on reciters and listeners.

The seers who saw the hymns of the *Vedha*, chanted and communicated them. They were 403 in number. Vashishta is the foremost of them, with 104 hymns which he visualised. There is a story about the sage Bharadhwaaja who sought to visualise all that has to be known through the *Vedhic* Voice of God. He prayed to the Lord of Heaven, Indhra, to give him longer and longer leases of life but Indhra, after obliging him more than once, laughed at his tenacity and said, pointing to a huge mountain range facing him, "All that you have mastered so far is but three handfuls of sand, from these peaks. How can you ever master the *Vedha* fully?" But, the sage did not wince. He said, "I shall bear the burden gladly". Burden in Sanskrit is *Bhaara* and bearing is *Bhara*. So, he was known as Bharadhwaaja. Vaamadeva and Agasthya are the other seers of note, whose visions helped the origination of 56 and 27 hymns or sookthas. Vishwaamithra has contributed another 56.

Accept blame as medicine and benefit by it

Vishwaamithra was able to hand down the potent *Gaayathri Manthra* to posterity. His name means "Friend for All" "Well-wisher for the world." It was the *Gaayathri* that entitled him to earn that name. *Rig Vedha* is entirely the product of the insight of such sages. Every name you use for God, every illustration we imagine of His Glory, are in the *Rig Vedha*. Raama, Krishna, Sai, Ishwara, are all the very essence of the glory it describes, though you may not recognise the sources. *Manthra* means "words that save those who meditate on them." So, whatever is uttered with such intention becomes holy, charged with love for fellow-men, for the world, for the elements.

Rig Vedha teaches the lesson of serenity. Praise is like rosewater scent; when it is sprinkled on you, suffer it but don't drink it---that is to say, accept it and thrive on it. Blame is like a medicine. Examine yourselves whether you have the illness and if you have, accept the blame and benefit by it. Serenity is a divine virtue. All the *Vedhas* are intent on helping man to become aware of Divinity in him and all around him. Picture for yourselves the peace that seers gained by that awareness, and yearn to learn the lessons the *Vedhas* treasure, for all mankind irrespective of caste, creed, race or nationality.

Dashara Discourse, Prashaanthi Nilayam, 20-10-1982.

Gandhi said, 'My India is the India of villages '. The freedom that has been won and the prosperity that is looked forward to can be ensured only when the villagers are free and prosperous. And this depends in its turn on the freedom and prosperity of each family in the village.

Now, there is no unity, no mutual co-operation, no love between the four or five brothers in the family; everyone is at cross purposes with the rest. How then can the village enjoy freedom and peace and prosperity? And what to speak of the country when the condition of its villages is so bad?

Every person seeks positions of authority, without trying to deserve the authority by means of the qualifications necessary to use it in the tight way. Of course if a person has good intentions and full capabilities and the vision of the Divine, he can well seek authority and discharge it well. But, we seldom see any one thinking of one's duty; everywhere people are after the acquisition of positions of authority.

Sathya Sai Baaba