

Vedic Solution to the Complexities of Human Life

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Human society is a creation of our ancestors with an objective of cultivating a civilized and enlightened human race. However with the passage of time the social fabric became complex giving rise to various complications. Primary objective of moral growth shifted to monetary growth initiating a race for materialistic development. The epidemic of materialism put enormous pressure on present generation impacting their mental health and behaviour. The rising expectations, highly competitive attitude and unabated desire for constant happiness have made life tough for today's generation. The haste of achieving everything in minimum time forces them to lose touch with their family and community and pushes them towards a maze of isolation and loneliness. They become the victim of unprecedented race of success that deprives them of inner peace and contentment. The ancient vedas value the power of collectivism and emphasize on the importance of family system and community life. Positive connection with fellow beings and with the natural environment supports in maintaining balance within and with the outside world. Interaction helps in coping with adversity by regulating emotions and controlling desperation. Togetherness fosters a sense of security and acceptability in the

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society creating a safe environment where bonding and sharing leaves no space for anxiety, loneliness and distress. Our family system and cultural identity are our strongest support system. Vedic teaching of living together in harmony is the solution of many present day problems. However with changing scenario we may modify things according to modern requirements.

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The present era of dynamics has metamorphosed the society and its norms; transforming human life, relationships and behavioral pattern; and thus causing inexplicable challenges for the society. Today's hyper progressive modern society is determined to set up a new social and familial system with redefined roles and goals. The younger generation with new ideology and vision is pressing for a quick and complete change in social environment while the elders yearn to cling to their own old tested theories, refusing to accommodate any of the new ideas. The process of transition triggers profound confusion, disillusionment and pain, paralyzing the existing order and obstructing the agenda of alteration. Unavailability of well defined systemic scheme for living a blissful life intensifies the complexities of life. For evolving a happy, healthy and peaceful society, there is a need of mutual understanding and coordination. From earliest periods enormous time and energy was consumed in formulating an ideal way of living that laid down the foundation of a meticulous social, political and economic structure, aiming at utilizing the full potential of every member of society. The legacy thus inherited should not be rejected without a thorough examination of its merits and demerits.

India, being one of the earliest civilizations of the world, has a bearing upon the various phases of progression from ancient times till date. A sincere study of our scriptures provides the vision of our forefathers about the mental, physical and spiritual growth of individuals and society. They designed an ideal routine for every individual that would have helped them in leading a life full of positive energy. Along with performing their daily household duties the masses were encouraged to witness the epiphany of gods through their routine salutations. Gods were invited to suppress the powers of darkness- the demons- who were bent upon confusing and disturbing the humans either by sabotaging their material possessions or by ruining their piety and positivity. Their upward journey was further nurtured by leading them towards the path of superior understanding

of divine consciousness that encompasses the entire universe. All beings are participant of the supreme cosmic sacrifice, offering oblations and gaining variety of experiences that would unfold the mysteries of life and prepare them for the ultimate union with the Supreme Being. The knowledge of the reality that gods and demons both reside within the beings; giving them the taste of goodness and evil, right and wrong, morality and sin; helps in the evolution of their soul. Hymns of enlightenment increase the gods within, killing the demonic forces and making the journey of life smooth and pleasant leaving little scope for confusion and complexities.

The present article represents my effort to find out the utility and relevance of vedic way of life for the modern world. Vedas are often called the books of action. They illustrate a society where people discharged their worldly responsibilities balancing individual and societal interests. They approached the gods for the fulfillment of their wishes as they believed that the gods had the power and energy to control the whole cosmic order. However they were aware that the universe worked under some laws that were the guiding principles for human beings. If the mankind followed the laws, there would be peace and order otherwise things would deteriorate disturbing the entire creation. If human beings wanted to master their lives they should connect to the rest of universe. The deities were the part of universe and the vedic seers instilled trust in masses by suggesting that gods could deliver everything if human beings had the potential of receiving them. Life is tough and challenging and our survival depends on our ability to dismiss the demonic forces and increase gods within.

Today's generation is witnessing an unprecedented lust for perfection and an unabated desire to conquer men and nature. Both perfection and excellence have been natural aspiration for men since ages. But extraordinary passion for supremacy is self destructive. Its easiest prey is the vulnerable youth of modern day, aspiring to create a perfect world of their own- a world without pain, loss or sorrow and a life full of luxuries. Their exposure to the outside world of sense and objects forces them to be a part of an unending race for money. Those who succeeds becomes the role models for the society but what about those who fails the test. They are under tremendous pressure, fighting for their identity and trying hard to fulfill the aspirations of family and society. Failures shake their self confidence resulting in the influx

of fear, phobia, anger, negativity and insecurity. Modern lifestyle, with its moral inadequacies, provides no solution to these challenges. That is why a whole lot of dissatisfied and frustrated youngsters have mushroomed the society. It is the duty of society to channelize their energy and to direct them towards more purposeful options in life. Personal evolution and emotional attunement plays vital role in minimizing the misery of disoriented individuals, healing their mind and soul.

The great Vedas hold the solution of many of our present day problems. The word veda; derived from the Sanskrit root 'vid', meaning 'to know'/'to find'; itself reveals the purpose of composing the ancient books of wisdom. Our ancestors devoted countless centuries to find the path that would lead the world towards truth, knowledge and righteousness. Conscious equilibrium between the material requirements and celestial objectives is the best way for living a balanced life. The suggested modus operandi is the gradual enhancement of human intellect from initial stage of self discipline and ethical conduct to the next stage of development of consciousness and eventually reaching to the final stage of supreme wisdom. Let the youth be encouraged to search the treasure named vedas and enrich themselves with a new vision about right conduct, right knowledge and right action. Vedas are the collection of hymns, composed by learned sages for invoking the deities. They invited the gods to the yajnas, offered oblations and asked for their protection and favour. There are diverse views about the nature of Vedic deities. The principal deities (surya-sun, vayu-air varuna-water, prithvi-earth, usha-dawn) being similar to the elements of nature, create the impression that vedic people, were the worshippers of nature gods and goddesses. But not all the deities were linked to the elements of nature. It is quite possible that vedic people worshipped various sources of energy present in the universe as the functioning of entire cosmological order depended on them. Their importance was accepted and valued because we cannot survive without them. Energy flows from outer space to inner world connecting one to the other and balancing the whole system of creation. Every individual should play his part in maintaining the connection because if the connectivity and balance is blocked it will disturb the entire system resulting in the onset of various physical, mental and emotional problems. It is the essence of vedic way of life and the fact that it survived for thousands of years itself determines its potential.

Vedic wisdom is the need of the hour for the present state of complexity and confusion where on one hand there is overall growth and prosperity while on the other there is distress and depression. Problems so deep cannot be solved in anguish; lot of patience and perseverance is needed to fix the issues. Firstly we have to stop taking life as a crisis situation. Secondly there is a need to frame new yardsticks amalgamating the ancient axiom with modern perspectives. Thirdly community oriented mindset should be given weightage over individualistic approach. To begin with close proximity with extended family, that has become a rare phenomenon in today's world, is to be re-established for healthy mental and emotional growth. Children who grow up in a closed environment miss the love and care of grandparents, guidance of uncle and aunts, bondage of cousins. Absence of intimacy with extended family results in emotional vacuum. In their later lives they carry feelings of insecurity, anxiety and loneliness resulting in lack of confidence and low self-esteem. Further the Individualistic attitude needs to be checked from the very beginning as it tends to dictate autonomous social behaviour where needs of individuals are given priority over the needs of family and society. This type of self centeredness should be condemned and corrected. That will increase positivity in society enhancing good thinking and creating a buffer against disease and stress. It will take lot of time, energy and patience to achieve the goal. We should introduce the ancient family structure to our children and help them to connect with their family even though following the modern lifestyle. Many hymns of Vedas give glimpses of the same; where family, kinsmen and clan were highly valued for structuring a closely knit society. Together they could survive and together they could fight against the evil. A Rigvedic hymn says that when Indra proceeded for war he was accompanied by his kinsmen.¹ Their involvement was precious for a king as he could rely more upon his relatives than paid soldiers. At another place veda speaks of a house inhabited by mother, father, master of the family and kinsmen² suggesting that in their day to day affairs family members supported each other, looking after the elderly members and nurturing the young ones. This is the very idea when a newly married vadhu (daughter in law) was instructed to take charge of family and keep her father in law, mother in law, brother in law and sister in law under her command.³ The term Shasan used here does not necessarily exhibit control or authority exercised by daughter in law; it is about

transferring family responsibilities to the younger generation by the elders, gracefully accepting the shifting of role. Parents, siblings, friends and relatives were looked after by the householders who served them with same love and affection with which they served the gods.⁴ Looking after the kinsmen was appreciated not only by society but also by gods who would turn against the family if it acted otherwise.⁵ Vedic gods were not divine mythical powers ready to punish the helpless masses they were the carrier of positivity whose presence was necessary for leading a meaningful life.

A family, living in close contact, not only enjoyed a strong support system but also protected as well as controlled each other. A man going away to some distant place leaving behind his family was not allowed to leave without the prior consent of his parents, sons, brothers and friends.⁶ Every individual who owned a family was expected to analyze the outcome of his absence on the future of family. He could not just go away upsetting the lives of his near and dear ones. Therefore he had to consult the family before taking any major decision. The power of family is further revealed in another hymn where a gambler was disowned by his father, mother, brother and wife for his misconduct.⁷ Anyone violating the norms of society had to bear the consequences. It was the duty of whole family to lead him towards right path either by persuasion or by punishment. If nothing worked they would sever relations with him till he changed his ways. Awareness of the fact that the family and kinsmen would not support or tolerate the unjustified behaviour helped in maintaining discipline in society. Vedic people did not challenge the authority of family and society for family bonding could save the society from disuniting.

Man was considered incomplete without family and family was incomplete without kinsman and relatives. Relationships formed the foundation of family system, supporting the entire set up as a pillar of strength. Vedic man valued every relationship for living a life of substance in this world and also in the world above that is the world of virtue. They asked gods to let the householders follow them; with their wives, brothers and sons; upto the world in the skies where there existed the luminous realm of heaven.⁸ Proceeding to the attractive world of light and virtue all alone, leaving the family behind, was perhaps a distasteful idea for them. Probably the very idea inspired Mahayan Buddhists when they aimed to row a larger boat for carrying greater number of people towards the path of salvation. Vedas

considered it the duty of every individual to look after other beings. Inactivity and insensitivity would damage the entire framework of human civilization where the survival depended on mutuality.⁹ Vedic people did not appreciate indifferent unresponsive individuals¹⁰ who were always entrapped in their own world, unconcerned towards the pleasure and pains of others. Active and energetic men were cherished by gods¹¹ and men alike for their involvement in addressing the issues concerning other members of society. Vedas believed that god is within man¹² watching his journey and helping him if he chose to struggle with the negative forces. His battle with sin, misery, distress and disorder was supported by them if it was done in the larger interest of humanity rising above the inherent self absorbed approach.

Helping the weak and needy was the social responsibility of privileged ones who by doing so not only served the underprivileged but also saved the community from otherwise inevitable downfall. Rigveda warned the rich in no uncertain terms that if they would not look after the poor both of them will perish gradually.¹³ Rich and poor, strong and weak, bold and timid were the part of society. They should learn to co-exist by protecting one another or the entire system would collapse. To develop humanitarian attitude one had to understand the need of community welfare and promote selflessness above individual gains. Therefore vedic people prayed the gods to save them from malignity.¹⁴ To achieve the greater purpose they enlightened the people through hymns of wisdom restricting the onslaught of malice, anger, hatred, apathy and conveying the message that they exist to empower and encourage those who are bereft of hope and happiness. Vedic vision of universal welfare is the extension of community welfare. Men being the part of universe cannot dissociate themselves from it. Their own progress and wellness is interlinked with the welfare of others. All biotic and non biotic creations play equally important roles in the realm of nature. Their lives are interdependent connecting each one of them to the well functioning of the others. The most important issue is how they treat each other. Men should work in harmony with everyone around them developing warmth and intimacy not only with the inhabitants of earth but also with the entire creation. Superior intelligence, wider vision and broader perspective makes human beings the centre of the cosmic order. Their ability to adapt the changing surroundings helps them in their

survival and constant evolution, placing the responsibility of imparting the knowledge of the value of harmonious living on them.

Vedic teaching of living together in harmony is the solution of many present day problems. Togetherness fosters a sense of security and acceptability in the society creating a safe environment where bonding and sharing leaves no space for anxiety, loneliness and distress. Multigenerational interaction and bonding contribute to a stable social environment improving the quality of life. Lack of personal interaction can at times be exhaustive and depressing especially for Indians as we are not used to live a life of separateness. An unaccompanied individual who depends exclusively on his own efforts in taking decisions and fixing priorities is often under tremendous pressure. Unlike west we value togetherness over independent living. We should not blindly follow the western lifestyle ignoring our social orientation without preparing the strategy to face the changed scenario. According to western perspective living alone is liberation and solitude is freedom but we are not accustomed of living in isolation. In the present era of globalization we are exposed to multiple life patterns and mindset. But our social life and cultural identity is our strongest support system. To find a workable solution between western concept of self expansion and Indian practice of togetherness we should follow a middle path balancing collectiveness and independence. The Vedas clearly suggest that besides being independent entity every individual is an integral part of family, society and cosmic order. Therefore, to find the solution of various modern day problems, it is incumbent upon them to live in peace with their own self and with others. 'May you live in harmony, speak in one voice, let your mind be in agreement, May your purpose be the same, May your intentions and objectives be alike.'¹⁵

References

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9. RV.1.120.12.

10 RV. 10.86.16.

11 RV. 1.100.11; YV15.51.

12. Yajur Veda, 17.31.

13. RV.1.120.12.

14. RV.10.57.1.

15. RV.10.191.1-4.

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