

A One-Day National Seminar
On
Vedic Sciences: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow
(6th April 2018)
School of Philosophy & Culture

The Vedas are believed to be the most ancient record of wisdom available to humanity. There is no consensus on the authors or the time of the Vedas. However, by any conservative estimate, they could be estimated of five thousand years old. There are four Vedas, viz. Rig, Sam, Yajur and Atharva. Each Veda consists of four parts: the *Samhitas* (hymns), the *Brahmanas* (rituals), the *Aranyakas* (theologies) and the *Upanishads* (philosophies). The collection of mantras or hymns is called the Samhita. The Brahmanas are ritualistic texts that include precepts and religious duties. Each Veda has several Brahmanas attached to it. The Aranyakas (forest texts) intend to serve as objects of meditation for ascetics who live in forests and deal with mysticism and symbolism. The Upanishads form the concluding words of the Vedas and are therefore called “Vedanta” or the end of the Veda. The Upanishads contain the essence of the Vedic teachings.

The Vedas distinguish between two types of knowledge (*vidya*), *para* and *apara*. Under the latter, all the practical sciences dealing with the world are included. *Para*, however, is the highest wisdom one can attain, and it concerns knowledge of the ultimate or the self. In general, the Vedas deal with various dimensions of human life.

The etymological link between the Vedas and science can be established from the fact that both the terms originate from their respective root, which means ‘to know’. Since, knowledge requires careful observation, the Vedas involve the observations of the seers on the nature, cosmic as well as human. The *Nasadiya Sukta* in *Rg Veda* (10:129) is one example where we find the expression of a speculative spirit of the Vedic seer who wonders about the origins of the universe. The poetic expression of the deep, unbiased questioning attitude of the Vedic seer could easily make any contemporary cosmologist proud. The Vedic seer wonders about the moment of creation when, logically speaking, nothing could have been, not even nothingness. The Vedic seer seems to be deeply aware of the intricate concept of creation and maintains an agnostic attitude towards it.

It is now understood that the Vedic civilization was not just tribes of nature worshipers, but rather had discovered the connection between the astronomical changes and happenings on earth. For instance, it is suggested that “the Vedic system of knowledge is based on equivalences (bandhu-) between the cosmic, the terrestrial and the physiological” (Kak 1997, p. 21). It seems that the Vedic seers were aware of astronomical events and organized their rituals in conformity to them. In order to make sense of the astronomical events, they would require a developed system of geometry and mathematics. Hence, the Vedic texts are seen as promising avenues of these disciplines. Other than these two sciences, the Vedas contain other disciplines, viz. Medicine, metallurgy and other crafts such as carpentry.

A nation can progress with confidence when the inspiration of growth is drawn from its intellectual and cultural heritage. The intellectual tradition of India is moored to the wisdom contained in the Vedas. Understanding the past is therefore important to assess one’s present and plan for the future. Given the upsurge of scientific and technological knowledge in the present era, India can draw confidence and inspiration from her Vedic past to meaningfully contribute to the world. A relook at the Vedic literature from the perspective of contemporary

scientific understanding of the universe is necessary to appreciate its richness in the present and to apply its insights for our future.

Papers are invited on the themes dealing with various aspects of the Vedic sciences. Topics of the conference include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Vedic mathematics
2. Linguistic dimension of the Vedas
3. Symbolism in the Vedas
4. Cosmology and Psychology
5. Astronomy
5. Ayurveda
7. Crafts

Contacts:

Dr. V.K. Tripathi, Head, School of Philosophy & Culture, varun.tripathi@smvdu.ac.in,
9419165772

Dr. Anil K. Tewari, Asst. Prof. School of Philosophy & Culture, ak.tewari@smvdu.ac.in
9419160804

References:

1. Kak, Subhash C. 1997. From Vedic Science to Vedanta. *Hindu-Christian Studies Bulletin* vo. 10.
2. Feuerstein, George. Kak, Subhash and Frawley, David. 2011. *In Search of the Cradle of Civilization: New Light on Ancient India*. Wheaton, Illinois: Quest Book, Theosophical Publishing House.