



Thoughts for Human Rights in Vedic Tradition

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Abstract: Human Rights are one of the burning topics of the contemporary era. It is indispensable for 'good and qualitative human survival violation of Human Rights not only disturbs peace and harmony of the society and the country. The Vedas, which stand at the head of the entire Sanskrit Literature, is full of ideas. Which if adopted could be highly useful for protecting human rights of every individual. The present century has further vindicated the need to strengthen such protection due to the massive development in the realm of science and technology that emaciates common people and makes power wielders more powerful. The growth of the concept of Human Rights provides a fundamental basis for the substances of a harmonious living of individuals in the society everyone has to perform his or her duties this is the best way to protect Human Rights of every citizen. The Concept Human Rights as claimed by western countries is a western concept. But going through rich Sanskrit Literature one was bound to believe that this concept was already present in ancient India. Equal focus was to be given for performing duties. The seers were of the view that in one right lays other duties and vice versa. In this way, they are complementary to each other. 95 53 02 92 90

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Introduction: Human Rights are one of the burning topics of the contemporary era. It is indispensable for 'good and qualitative human survival violation of Human Rights not only disturbs peace and harmony of the society and the country. The Vedas, which stand at the head of the entire Sanskrit Literature, is full of ideas. Which if adopted could be highly useful for protecting human rights of every individual. The present century has further vindicated the need to strengthen such protection due to the massive development in the realm of science and technology that emaciates common people and makes power wielders more powerful. The growth of the concept of Human Rights provides a fundamental

basis for the substances of a harmonious living of individuals in the society everyone has to perform his or her duties this is the best way to protect Human Rights of every citizen.

Etymologically the term Veda is forming the Sanskrit root "Veda" 'to know a root which also appears in the Latin videre to see (Clayton 198:25) the word Veda means Knowledge (Chaitanya 1977:32). The Vedic Literature is the most ancient record of any people of the world and forms the source of the earliest history of the Indo- Aryan race nay mankind as whole (Krishnanari.1974:VII)



For Vedic seers the sense of right always emanates from selfishness whereas the sense of duty always generates selfishness. Therefore, all rights that evolved and become the values of Vedic culture were based on duties of every individual towards other individual. Upanishad literature forms the care of Vedic philosophy. The Upanishad have exercised a tremendous fascination over Indian mind right through the ages and evoked the admiration of scholars and philosophers of the west (Nikam 1974: VII). There are many examples, which explicitly show that Upanishad society was well aware about the fundamental rights.

In ancient Indian education, Social values were adequately recognized. According to the advait Vedanta Philosophy the relationship of universal brotherhood among all human beings is fundamentally established no laws are required for that (Bokil, 2001:31). Vedas preach the noble idea of friendliness in all. The Code of conduct as prescribed in Vedas is further of great value for the society (Sharma, 1999-2000:P51). With a view to fully comprehending the lofty ideals of our scriptures regarding H.R. and Duties, the article tends to highlight the following features of human rights.

1. Equality of Human Beings:

Vedas have established the fact that all human beings should be treated equally. So one has to realize that all the people should share the means of happiness equally. The Rig-Veda proclaims, "Man attains the position of God when he takes care of the racked, the sick people the blind and the cripple" (Keshwan, 2002:87). Emphasizing the concept of human rights, the Atharva (Anonymous,

2002) says, "All have equal rights over articles of food and water".

2. Respect to Ideologies of other people: Vedas teach to lead a life of tolerance and sacrifice. In practice, we find that different people follow different ideologies in light of their own sacred books. Vedas it is clear that as we have the right to observe our ideologies of our sacred books so people of all other ideologies are fully entitled to respect their conception.

3. Achievement of Happiness:

All laws of morality and social amenity are derived from this inner unity. Fellowship as depicted in Vedic Tradition is not restricted to the people of India only.

4. Education: Education enhances the glamour of our rights. Hence, all should be allowed to acquire knowledge from all corners of the world. Mahabharata (Vyasa, 1987) has declared that acquisition of knowledge and its dissemination to the next generation was one of the pious obligations of an individual. The Supreme Court in Mohini Jain's case (AIR 1992 SC 1850 at 1866) has highlighted this aspect.

5. Dharma as Protector of Rights:

Dharma is derived from the root dhru meaning to support, to hold together bear, carry maintain, Preserve etc (Apte, 1989:429). The basic meaning of dharma is the moral law. There is the Dharma of an individual Dharma of family, Dharma of the Society, Dharma of Nation, and Dharma of Human Being.

Position of woman in the field of Rights:

The Sanskrit Literature largely has fully recognized the importance of woman. It is very much shocking that at present



there is large-scale misbehavior towards the newly married brides for simple dowry and rampant cases of rape molestation and even slaughter of women. The importance of woman in a family has been proclaimed in many verses of Manu Smrithi (Manu, 2005:96-98). It says, "Women should be honoured and given ornaments by the father, the brothers and the husband desirous of their all-round welfare.

6. **Right to Opportunity:** This is very essential right for the development of the personality of all the individuals. Hence, the Sanskrit scriptures ask the states and governments for empowering all the individuals of the society to avail the opportunity for fully developing their position in the society.

7. **Right to Justice:** Sanskrit textual sources reveal that every individual has the right to secure justice. Having made the right to impartial justice as one of the fundamental human right guide lines were also laid down to ensure to the above ideas.

Conclusion: Vedas have, at large, delineated the concept of human rights and human behavior. The Supreme Court of India accepts this. Which says "Fundamental rights represent the basic values cherished by the people of this country since the Vedic times and they are calculated to protect the dignity of the individual and create conditions in which every human being can develop his her personality to the fullest extent" (Menaka Gandhi, Vs Union of India,1978(1), SCC248).

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