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Description of Module

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Objectives	To throw Light on the Various Aspects of Reality in the Vedas
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The Views on the Nature of Reality in the Vedas

2.1 Introduction:

Watched with Joy thy growth. But fate is strong-
 This the law- All things come back to the source
 They sprung their strength to renew.
 Then start afresh.¹

All the major religions of the world base their faith on some sacred books. Vedas are the revealed holy source of wisdom to the followers of Vedic religion. The receivers of the Vedas were great seers in hoary antiquity who had capacity to intuit truth directly.² The Vedas contain most profound informations of human effort to deal with the mysteries of life, language, world and reality. Their study is important not only from the viewpoint of Aryan culture or Indian culture but also from the viewpoint of world culture as a whole.

The term 'Veda' means 'knowledge' and is derived from the root 'vid' means 'to know' by adding the suffix ghañ in the senses of activity (bhāva), desire of object (karma) and efficient cause (karaṇa).³ So, 'Veda' means 'knowledge', 'content of knowledge' as well as 'the most efficient tool of knowledge'. The study of Vedas has potentiality of enhancing our faculties of understanding to comprehend any form of activity and knowledge. They also may help us to discover the right path to realize the unbiased supreme truths. The Veda is also called 'Śruti' because it is heard and hearing of it enhances our intelligence to understand the riddle of the universe and divine.⁴

There are four Vedas- Ṛgveda, Yajurveda, Sāmaveda and Atharvaveda. Each of the Vedas has four types of texts:

- i. the Saṁhitās or book of the collection of hymns.
- ii. the Brāhmaṇas or manuals of sacrifices, These texts also contain beautiful mythical stories to explain the hymns.
- iii. the Āraṇyakas or books for the contemplation in the forest.
- iv. the Upaniṣads or books dealing with transcendental wisdom (parā-vidyā).

According to the traditional understanding, all the above divisions together constitute the proper Veda. According to Swami Dayananda Saraswati (1824-1883), the founder of Ārya-samaj, Saṁhitās are more important than any other parts. They are in reality the Vedas, self-valid and self-

¹ Swami Vivekanand : To the Awakened India, *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekanand*, Vol. IV, Advait Ashram, Kolkatta, 1966, p. 387-388.

² sakṣātkṛtadharmāṇa ṛṣayo babhūvuḥ : *Niruktam*, Trans. by Siddhant Shiromani, V., (Gyan Mandal Varanasi, 1966), 1.6.

³ Musal gaonkar, Gajanan and Musalgaonkar Rajeshwar : *Vaidika Sāhitya Kā Itihāsa*, (Chaukhambha Sanskrit Sansthan, Varanasi, 1994), p. 4.

⁴ Saraswati, Swami Dayanand : *Ṛgvedādi-bhāṣya-bhūmikā* (Ed.) Yudhisthir Mīmāṃsaka, (A Modern Printers, Ajmer, 1967), p. 22.

luminous; all other parts contain only supportive materials for understanding them.⁵ The traditional understanding regards all these four parts as revealed Vedas.

In the handling of the sacrifices, four types of priest are needed- Hotā, who recites, the Ṛgveda, the Adhvaryu, whose job is to act in accordance with Yajurveda for performing the sacrifice, the Udgātā who chants the Sāmaveda and the Brahmā who is in charge of overall supervision of the sacrifice and has proficiency in all the Vedas. The Atharva-veda is concerned with śānti (removal of troubles) and puṣṭi (acquisition of the good things of life) and belongs to the sphere of the purohita (the domestic priest), as opposed to the ṛtvij (the priest officiating in the śrauta sacrifices).

There is much controversy about the original dwelling place, date of Vedic Aryans and Vedic hymns. The popular theory developed in the 19th century, on the bases of mythology and linguistic study by scholars like Roth, Henry Max Müller, Macdonell, B.G. Tilak and A.L. Basham that Vedic Aryans came from some place situated outside India. Some were of opinion that they destroyed the Indus-valley civilization and forced the Dravidians, who were supposed to be the predecessors of Aryans, to move towards South. But this theory is not getting much favour now. The researches based on genetic studies, satellite imagery and geological studies around 1980 appear to discredit this theory. Many articles published on Indian genetics in Nature and American Journal of Human Genetics discredit the distinction between Aryan and Dravidians races in India. The geological studies and satellite photos around 1990 appear to deny the theory of Aryan invaders.⁶ The river Saraswati is mentioned in ṛgveda, so the date of ṛgveda must not be later than 1900 B.C.⁷

We have talked about the time, place and date of Vedas from historical point of view. From the view point of traditional philosophy there are two major views; (i) the view of Mīmāṃsakas who maintain that Vedas are eternal. They are not created by any person or higher being (apauruṣeyavāda). The Naiyayikas maintained that Vedas are created by the Omniscient Creator (pauruṣeyavāda). Swami Dayanand Saraswati maintains that the Vedas are imparted to some deities in the beginning of creation. God imparted ṛgveda to God of fire, Yajurveda to God of air, Sāmaveda to Sun-God and Atharva-Veda to Aṅgirā and they are responsible for delivering Vedas to Brahmā.⁸

The teaching of Vedas is popularized by Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Sripad Damodar Satwalekar (1867-1968) and Sri Ram Sharma Acharya (1911-1990) in nineteenth and twentieth century by their writings in native languages for the sake of common masses. Sri Aurobindo (1872-

⁵ Saraswati, Swami Dayanand: *Ṛgvedādi-bhāṣya-bhūmikā* (Ed.) Yudhisthir Mīmāṃshaka, (A Modern Printers, Ajamer, 1967), p. 91-92.

⁶ Renfrew, Colin, *Archeology and Language : The Puzzle of Indian European Origins* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988, see also Kenover, Mark, *Ancient Cities of the Indus Valley Civilization* (Oxford University Press and American Institute of Pakistan Studies, 1998, Karanchi).

⁷ According to B.G. Tilak earliest Vedic hymns can be traced to 5000-3000 B.C. Max Muller is in favor of 1200-1000 B.C. See Tilak, B.G., *Arcitic Home in the Vedas*, (Reprinted Tessrs Tilak Bros. Poona, 1971), pp. 373.

⁸ Saraswati, Dayanand, *Satyārtha Prakāsha*, (Manoj Publiation 9th Impression, 2015), pp 246.

1950) and Pt. Madhusudan Ojha (1886-1939) have also contributed by their scholarly works on the Vedas.

2.1.2 The Teaching of the Vedas and Metaphysics

The Vedic scholars, in the past, interpreted the Vedas on the supposition that they contain a unitary doctrine or principle (ekavākyatā). Kautilya in *Arthasāstra*, describes clearly that the scope of Vedas or Trayī lies in distinguishing right action from wrong action in determining the duties of various classes constituting a society.⁹ Sāyaṇa, one of the great interpreters of the Vedas, agrees with him when he asserts that earlier parts of Vedas (Samhitās, Brāhmaṇas and Āraṇyakas) are concerned with the science of action or dharma while the latter part (Upaniṣads) are concerned with the doctrine of Supreme Reality (Brahman)¹⁰. The Vedas give us super-natural knowledge of the means for attaining our desired goals. It means that metaphysics is to be located in the Upaniṣadic portion. The Samhitās are mainly concerned with dharma or science of action for fulfilling our desire. They contain but pragmatic or contextual doctrines about reality from the viewpoint of desired goals. Sometimes many gods are invoked for a particular rite, while in the other context other gods are addressed in hymns. Metaphysical doctrines have no independent status apart from the goal of the rites.

The modern scholars- Indian as well as Western- are not satisfied with this view. Most of the scholars do not accept the traditional supposition that Vedas have a unitary principle. They view Ṛgveda, the oldest Vedic literature, itself as a fruit of the collective work of the seers running through many generations and have different ideas in different hymns. The Ṛgveda has 10 maṇḍalas (chapters). The 1st and 10th maṇḍalas which constitute nearly one-third of the Ṛgveda are considered to be later than the other portions.¹¹ The hymns which contain monotheism or monism or pantheism are found in these two maṇḍalas. The other maṇḍalas are pluralistic in their spirit. This view does not seem to be fully justified in the light of the evidence of the mystical experience of the seer Vāmadeva depicted in Brhadāraṇyaka (1.4.10) and Aitareyopaniṣad (2.1.5-6). Vāmadeva is the seer of the fourth maṇḍala of Ṛgveda.¹²

The heterogeneity of Ṛgveda is not accepted by scholars like Swami Dayanand Saraswati and Sri Aurobindo. Sri Aurobindo says, "The Ṛgveda is one in all its parts. Whichever of its ten Maṇḍalas we choose, we find the same substance, the same ideas, the same images, the same phrases. The Rishis are the Seers of the single truth and use in its expression a common language."¹³ Dr. C. Kunhan Raja has also produced cogent arguments to refute the heterogeneity of Ṛgveda.¹⁴ However, most of

⁹ Kautilya, *Arthśāstra* Ed. by Sashtri Udaya Veer, (Mehar Chand Lakshmandas, Delhi, 1969), 1.3-4.

¹⁰ vede pūrvottarakāṇḍayoh krameṇa dharma brahmaṇī viṣayaḥ. *Ṛgveda-bhāṇya-bhūmikā* by Sāyaṇa, tr. by Pandey, R.A., (Motilal Banarasidas, Delhi Varanasi, 1969), pp. 95.

¹¹ Sukthankar, V.S. (ed.), *Ghate's Lectures on Rigveda*, (Oriental Book Agency, Poona, 3rd ed., 1959), p. 62.

¹² Ṛgveda 4.26-27.

¹³ Sri Aurobindo, *On The Vedas*, (Sri Aurobindo Ashram Pondichery 1st Ed., 1965, reprint 1964), p. 62.

¹⁴ Raja Kunhan, C., (tr.) *Asya Vāmasya Hymn*, (Ganesh and Company, Madras, 1956), p. XIX to XXI.

the scholars like Max Muller etc. put forth their views on the basis of heterogeneity of the Vedic literature.

2.2.1 Modern Interpreters and Metaphysical Doctrines in the Vedas

Irrespective of the postulation of the homogeneous or heterogeneous character of Vedic Samhitās, most of the modern interpreters find a rich source of metaphysics in Vedas. Those who emphasize the unitary character, interpret Vedas as having a single metaphysical doctrine. Sri Aurobindo says, "The Veda possesses the high spiritual substances of the Upaniñads, but lacks their phraseology;"¹⁵ Swami Dayanand Saraswati establishes a type of theism in the Vedas based on the acceptance of three beginningless, eternal realities- God, self and nature.¹⁶ Pt. Madhusudan Ojha has also established the doctrine of the oneness of Reality which is both transcendental and immanent but he prefers to name it 'Rasa'. According to him there are ten different views mentioned and refuted in Vedas. All these views are summarily mentioned in the famous Nāsadiya-sūkta (X.129) of Ṛgveda which is as follows-¹⁷

1. Then was not non-existent nor existent: there was no realm of air, no sky beyond it.
What covered in, and where? And what gave shelter? Was water there, unfathomed depth of water?
2. Death was not then, nor was there aught immortal: no sign was there, the day's and night's divider.
That One Thing, breathless, breathed by its own nature: apart from it was nothing whatsoever.
3. Darkness there was: at first concealed in darkness; this All was indiscriminated chaos.
All that existed then was void and formless: by the great power of Warmth was born that Unit.
4. Thereafter rose Desire in the beginning, Desire, the primal seed and germ of Spirit.
Sages who searched with their heart's thought discovered the existent's kinship in the non-existent.
5. Transversely was their severing line extended: what was above it then, and what below it?
There were begetters; there were mighty forces, free action here and energy up yonder.
6. Who verily knows and who can here declare it, whence it was born and whence comes this creation?
The Gods are later than this world's production. Who knows then whence it first came into being?
7. He, the first origin of this creation, whether he formed it all or did not form it.
Whose eye controls this world in highest heaven, he verily knows it, or perhaps he knows not.

¹⁵ Sri Aurobindo, *On The Vedas*, (Sri Aurobindo Ashram Pondichery 1st Ed., 1965, reprint 1964), p. 384.

¹⁶ Saraswati, Dayanand, *Satyārtha Prakāsha*, (Manoj Publication 9th Impression, 2015), pp. 253.

¹⁷ Griffith, Ralph T.H. : *Hymns of The Ṛgveda*, (Ed.) Prof. J.L. Shastri, (Motilal Banarsidas, Delhi, reprinted, 1973, p. 633-634.

The above sūkta has earned universal praise for its free philosophical speculation and depth. Keith says, "This hymn is the finest effort of the imagination of the Vedic poet, and nothing else equals it."¹⁸ According to Pt. Madhusudan Ojha, ten different cosmogonic doctrines are summarily mentioned in the sūkta besides the principal thesis. The principal thesis is asserted in the second half of the second mantra. The ten cosmogonic doctrines are as follows¹⁹-

1. Sadasadvāda- Sat (real) originates out of asat (unreal).
2. Rajovāda- Material particles as the cause of the cosmos (ārambhaṇam tattvam ihocyate rajah).
3. Vyomavāda- There are two forms of vyoma- para and apara. Para is eternal while Apara is changing and the source of the world.
4. Apara-vāda- The word is the product of the function of higher and lower principles.
5. Āvaraṇa-vāda- It may be taken as Māyāvāda.
6. Ambhovāda- All creation proceeds from the infinite ocean of Varuṇa.
7. Amṛta-Mṛtyu-Vāda- Life and death together constitute the creative process of the cosmos.
8. Ahorātravāda- Time is the cause of the world.
9. Deva-vāda- There is a view that Agni and Soma are two essential divinities; Agni creates the Devas and Soma creates the Bhūtas.
10. Saṅśaya-Vāda- It is doubtful that any one knows in detail the logic of the origination and expansion of the universe.

According to Pt. Madhusudan Ojha, all these views have been refuted in the above sūkta and it is categorically asserted in the second half of the second mantra that there was only One Being in the beginning who was living or vibrating without breath. Tilak perceives in these lines the assertion of nirdharmaka Brahman which is beyond all predication, who is neither existent nor non-existent. The Ultimate Reality is beyond name and form. Pt. Ojha has preferred to use the word 'Rasa' for 'Brahman' and 'Bala' for functioning power.

2.2.2 Fetishism, Polytheism and Naturalism in the Vedas

Those who maintain the heterogeneity of Ṛgveda find different types of metaphysics in the Vedic-samhitās. Monier Williams remarks, "It is at once vaguely pantheistic, severely monotheistic, grossly polytheistic and coldly atheistic."²⁰ According to Western scholars, fetishism, polytheism, pluralism, henotheism, monism, monotheism and pantheism are also found in the Vedic Samitās. Max Müller remarks, "large number of Vedic hymns are childish in the extreme: tedious, low and common

¹⁸ Keith, A. B., *The Religion and Philosophy of The Veda and Upanishads*, (Motilal Banarsidas, Delhi, Reprint 1976, p. 437.

¹⁹ Ojha, Madhusudan, *Brahman-Siddhānta*, Ed. Agrawal. V.S., (B.H.U., Varanasi, 1961), pp. 09. Here preface by Prof. V.S. Agrawala and Summary by Pt. Giridhar Sharma Chaturvedi are also very much informative.

²⁰ Monier Williams, *Indian Wisdom*, (Rupa and Company, New Delhi, Reprinted, 2001), p. XXXIII.

place..... but hidden in this rubbish there are precious stones".²¹ According to him, "Metaphysical position asserted in Vedas is Henotheism or Kathenotheism".²² Most of the Western scholars think that the journey of religions begin with fetishism to be followed by polytheism and monotheism.²³ It is not possible to illustrate this theory in the context of the development of the Indian Religions as Jainism and Buddhism are not monotheistic. The worship of natural objects and animals is termed as fetishism by some historians of religion in 18th & 19th century. The development of sciences and technologies in 20th century has given space to philosophy in the post-modern age, the essential spirit of which seems to be very much similar to fetishism, polytheism and naturalism. Fetishism is the view that takes a natural object or an artificial object for adoration. We find hymns in the Vedas addressed to frogs (Rg. 7.103) and stones (Rg. 10.175). Deities are invoked in the Vedas such as Agni (fire), Sūrya (the sun), Uṣa etc. A Vedic seer says while describing Uṣa: "Behold her in her biune energy of earth and heaven, how she comes into being in her whiteness and discloses her body in our front. She follows perfectly the paths of Truth, as one who is wise and knows, and she hedges not in out regions."²⁴ Such mantras are the signs of naturalism in the Vedas. All these views have been criticized by previous religious thinkers because they do not find in them elements representing humanism or divine. Is the adoration of artificial objects or natural objects objectionable and non-sensical? The technological issues and environmental issues appearing in post-modern era are forcing us to take a different attitude towards nature and artifacts. Some scholars have linked monotheistic tendency with the tendency of dictatorship.

Environmental ethics finds that independent values to be located not only in the interest of sentient creatures which can feel pleasure and pain, but also in natural living creatures or in natural world in general.²⁵ The *Gaia* hypothesis is that the earth's crusts, along with oceans, atmosphere and biosphere is one system. According to Lovelock, instead of thinking of ourselves as living on inert planet that "supports" a biosphere, we should think of the whole earth as a single "superorganism".²⁶ The environmental science and its problems force us to take an attitude of reverence towards nature and natural objects. The fetishism and naturalism were doing the same works in the Vedic literature. Care for natural phenomena and natural objects are rooted in the spirit of fetishism and naturalism. The term god has been used in the context of hymns in a broader sense. The addressee of hymn is god. The addresser is a seer. When a hymn is addressed to frogs, the frogs are gods. Animals and plants play a very significant role in sustaining ecological balance. To view them as gods is to view

²¹ Max Muller, Fredirich, *On The Vedas*, (Reprinted, Sushil Gupta (India) Limited, Calcutta, 1956), p. 26.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 27.

²³ Max Muller, *Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion*, (Indological Books House, Varanasi, Reprinted, 1964), pp. 59.

²⁴ Rk v. 80.4 (tr.) Sri Aurobindo, *On The Vedas*, (Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondichery 1st Ed., 1965, reprint 1964), p. 542.

²⁵ *Encyclopedia Applied Ethics*, (Ed. in chief) Chadwick Ruth, (Academic Press San Diego, California, 1998, Vol. 2), p. 74.

²⁶ *Encyclopedia Applied Ethics*, (Ed. in chief) Chadwick Ruth, (Academic Press San Diego, California, 1998, Vol. 2), p. 335.

them as existing for their own sake. They are not simply means for satisfying human demands. They demand reverence from us. Sacrifices are performed not only to meet human demands but also to take care of natural order. We have started taking care of natural phenomenon in modern times out of fear. Our activities are producing menacing environmental effects of global climate change. In such a predicament we perform sacrifices out of fear. But Vedic seers were performing sacrifices because they believed in the godly nature of things. 'Sacrifice' in the limited sense means the offering of an article (of food or drink) in the name of a deity. In a broader sense it stands for harmony (saṁgatikaraṇa) and charity (dāna) too. Sacrifice is the nave of the universe (bhuvanasya nābhiḥ).²⁷

Scientists and poets have common characteristics. They are great observers of nature. We all perceive the nature but only some perceivers are scientists. In the same way only some perceivers of nature have poetic insight to realize that nature is capable of participating in the affairs of man like teacher or more than a teacher. William Wordsworth, in one of his poems 'The Table Turned'²⁸ says-

One impulse from a vernal wood
 May teach you more of man;
 Of moral evil and good,
 Than all the sages can.

She has a world of ready wealth,
 Our minds and hearts to bless;
 Spontaneous wisdom breathed by health,
 Truth breathed by cheerfulness.

In the above lines, Wordsworth says that nature is capable of teaching more than the sages. If that is so, then she is more respectful than sages. That is why the use of the term 'god' has been extended to anything which is capable of participating in our affairs similar to human beings. Yāska has taken sapta-ṛṣayaḥ (seven seers) as one of the synonyms of sun-rays.

2.3.1 Plurality of Gods and Unifying Principles

Plurality of Gods was not creating a menacing problem to Vedic seers as they were very much aware of inner connection among gods. Three ways seem to be adopted by them in order to highlight the inner connection among various gods; (1) By reducing the number of gods and accepting some gods as superior to other gods; (2) By discovering the unity in the function of various gods; (3) By understanding them as manifestations of the Supreme Reality.

²⁷ Rg, 1.16.4.35.

²⁸ *The Collected Poems of William Wordsworth*, ed. Antonia Till (Wordsworth Poetry Library reprint 2006, London), pp. 573-574.

2.3.1.1 According to Yāska, Etymologists (Nairuktāḥ) believe that there are three main gods, Agni on earth, Vāyu or Indra in the aerial region (antarikṣa) and Sūrya in the heaven. All other gods are simply the names and glory of these three gods.²⁹ Why these gods were taken superior to other gods? It is because these gods are presiding over natural phenomena which are very much essential to maintain the life on the earth. Air manifestly functions as having embodiment relation with not only man but also with other living beings. The embodiment relation, according to the philosophers of technology, is that relation in whom a technological artifact functions by being a part of our body.³⁰ Air also functions as being a part of living beings as they cannot survive in the absence of air. The other two gods Fire and Sun play a role of hermenutic relation in the interpretation of other natural phenomena or world. Hermeneutic relation is that relation where an artifact is used to interpret the world.³¹ Sāyaṇa remarks that there are two types of objects in the world.³² Some are revealed by others while some objects are revealers as well as revealed. Sun and Fire can be put in the second groups. The post-modern philosophers are very much critical of the dichotomy of subjective-objective developed in the age of enlightenment and modernity. They are not capable of doing justice to nature and artifacts. Most of the living beings are hybrids. We cannot conceive of our life without air. Air is the part of our being. We cannot understand the world in the absence of light. Fire and Sun are the sources of light and heat. That is why they are considered superior to other gods.

2.3.1.2 The Vedic seers have tried to discover the unifying principle in another way. The various gods are asserted as protectors of moral law as well as natural law. In the very first sūkta of Ṛgveda, Agni is taken as a guardian of Ṛta (goptā ṛtasya). Ādityas in general have been connected with Ṛtā and Mitra and Varuṇa belong to the class of Ādityas. That is why they were accepted as protectors of moral law and natural-order. They have placed spies for this purpose. The Sun is their spy in the day while stars are their spies in the night. They can punish the wrong-doers and also pardon those who are penitent or confess their guilt.³³ The new direction in the environmental ethics does not support the conception of traditional Western ethics as it is based on anthropomorphic principles. It derives morality only from the conception of man or from human point of view. A need of new type of ethics is felt whose rays also touch the frontiers of natural phenomena. From this point of view, Vedic doctrine of Ṛta is commendable. The laws of Ṛta are firm and resistless. For the good of living being Ṛta assumes forms infinite and beautiful.³⁴ They are pregnant with required energies for maintenance of social order as well as natural order.

²⁹ Chattopadhyaya, Ksetresacandra : *Vedic Religion*, (B.H.U., Varanasi, 1975), p. 16.

³⁰ Verbeck, Peter-Paul, *What Things Do*, tr. by Robert P. Crease (The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000), pp. 125

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 126.

³² *Rgveda-bhāṣya-bhūmikā* by Sāyaṇa, tr. by Pandey, R.A., (Motilal Banarasidas, Delhi Varanasi, 1969), pp. 10-11.

³³ Chattopadhyaya, Ksetresacandra: *Vedic Religion*, (B.H.U., Varanasi, 1975), pp. 49-53.

³⁴ Ṛgveda IV- 23.9.

2.3.1.3 The unity among various gods has been tried to be accomplished by postulating The Supreme Reality who is in some way responsible for the manifestation of various gods. The seers had tried to visualize The Supreme Reality in the following ways:

(i) **Descriptive Way:** This approach takes various gods as the various names of the same reality. The reference is One, but the senses are different. This is proclaimed by seer Dīrghatamas as follows:

They call him Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni and he is heavenly nobly-winged Garutmān.

To what is One, sages give many a title: they call it Agni, Yama, Mātariśvan.³⁵

(ii) **Exclusively Transcendental Way:** This approach we find in the Nāsadiya Sūkta.³⁶ The Reality is described beyond all duality. It is beyond existence and non-existence, beyond space and time and beyond mortality and immortality. The various gods were created in the process of creation alongwith natural phenomena.

(iii) **Pantheistic Way:** The Supreme Reality is perceived as indwelling cause of gods. The Supreme reality is transcendental as well as immanent. Gods came into existence in the process of the unfoldment of The Reality. It is said in the Puruṣa-sūkta,³⁷

“A thousand heads hath Puruṣa, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet. On every side pervading earth he fills a space ten fingers wide.

This Puruṣa is all that yet hath been and all that is to be. The Lord of Immortality which waxes greater still by food.

.....

The Moon was gendered from his mind, and from his eye the Sun had birth. Indra and Agni from his mouth were born and Vāyu from his breath.

Forth from his navel came mid-air; the sky was fashioned from his head. Earth from his feet, and from his ear the regions. Thus they formed the worlds.”

The same idea is also found in the R̥gveda (1.89.10) where Aditi (the boundless) is identified with all gods and all men, with the sky and air, in fact whatever has been or whatever shall be. The central point of pantheistic doctrine as pointed out by Prof. Hiriyanna, "..... is to deny the difference between god and nature which we have shown is the necessary implication of monotheism. God is conceived here not as transcending nature but as immanent in it. The world does not proceed from God but itself is God."³⁸

There are sixteen mantras in the Puruṣa-sūkta of R̥gveda. Puruṣa-sūkta of Śūkla-Yajurveda-samhitā contains twenty two mantras. In one of the mantra it is asserted by the seer that gods conveyed to seers that they will be favourable to those only who will be able to visualize their unity

³⁵ R̥gveda 1.164.46

³⁶ R̥gveda 10.129

³⁷ R̥gveda 10.90.1-2 & 10-90-13-14

³⁸ Hiriyanna, M., *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, (George Allen and Unwin, Indian Addition, Bombay, Calcutta, Madras, 1973), pp. 41-42.

by their indwelling cause- The Supreme Reality or The Supreme Person.³⁹ Splendour (śri) and richness (lakṣmī) have been conceived as the wives of The Supreme Person.⁴⁰ The seer of the sūkta proclaims that he knows The Supreme Person who is totally beyond darkness. Only by knowing that Person there is a hope of achieving victory over mortality. There is no other way to achieve immortality.⁴¹ The seer desires to have victory over all the regions of the universe with the help of the knowledge of The Supreme Person.⁴²

It is evident from the above descriptions that the goal of unity have been tried to be achieved by Vedic seers in a variety of ways. But whatever stand we may take, we cannot remain unimpressed by their constant effort to propose the unifying principle. The wisdom of Vedic saṅgītas, in the language of Gītā, lies in having sāttvika jñāna-in perceiving unity among varieties (avibhaktam vibhaktesu).⁴³

2.4 Is There Any Metaphysics in the Vedic Saṅgītas?

The Niruktakāra Yāska mentions and criticizes the view of Kautsa according to whom Vedic mantras (verses) or hymns of Saṅgītas are without meaning. Yāska has proposed a semantic interpretation of the Vedas, while Kautsa was in favour of giving syntactic interpretation. According to Kautsa, the sequence of mantras cannot be changed, nor can we substitute any other words having same sense. This shows that sequence of words is unique and important. In Vedas, we find- contrary and contradictory statements about the same subjects. It has been said there that Indra has no enemy but it is also asserted that he attained victory over hundreds armies. Rudra is 'sometimes' described as one, sometimes hundreds. Aditi is said to be all. Such types of statements are full of contradictions. In order to save Vedas from these charges it is better to take Vedic mantras in a syntactic way.

If the above view is accepted, we cannot establish any metaphysics in the domain of Vedic saṅgītas. A view similar to Kautsa has been taken in recent years by a renowned scholar Frits Staal (1930-2012).⁴⁴ His complete silence about Kautsa's view is surprising. According to Staal, ritual is pure activity without meaning goal. Taking clue from a school of formal logic which gives importance to syntax over semantics he has tried to interpret rituals as sequence of meaningless steps.⁴⁵

It is possible to synthesize syntactic as well as semantic approaches. The problem arises in the formal logic as well as in the case of scientific theories. There are approaches in scientific theories where it is maintained that it is possible to take a statement as a rule in certain context as well as a

³⁹ Śūkla-Yajurveda-saṅgīta 31.21

⁴⁰ Śūkla-Yajurveda-saṅgīta 31.22

⁴¹ Śūkla-Yajurveda-saṅgīta 31.18

⁴² Śūkla-Yajurveda-saṅgīta 31.22

⁴³ Gītā 18.20

⁴⁴ Staal, Frits, Ritual and mantras : Rules Without Meaning, (Motilal Banarasidas, PVT. Delhi, Ist Indian Edition, 1996). It is a very good book based on laborious collection of data regarding Vedic rites as well as on using powerful techniques of linguistic philosophy to analyze the data.

⁴⁵ Ibid, 122-123.

premise in the other context.⁴⁶ Kautsa and Staal are in favour of maintaining that the rules cannot be taken as premises. That is why they are proposing syntactic approach. But there is no contradiction in taking verses semantically in one context and syntactically in another context. Metaphysics in Vedic verses derives its evidence on the ground of semantic contexts. But it cannot be allowed to shut the syntactic use of Vedic verses in the rites and rituals if it is yielding good results.

Summary

The term 'Veda' means knowledge and it is believed that the study of the Vedas will guide us to choose right action and true knowledge in any domain (ātam ca satyam).

The traditional interpretations have been governed by the presupposition that Vedas contain a unifying metaphysical doctrine. They, therefore, interpret them as containing devavāda along with pantheism or monism or monotheism. Vedas contain references to many antagonistic doctrines. Pt. Madhusudan Ojha has recorded ten antagonistic doctrines and according to him all these views have been refuted in Vedas and the existence of non-dual Supreme Reality has been affirmed.

The modern interpretations by the Western scholars are based on the supposition of the heterogeneity of the Vedas. The study of religions show that religions begin with fetishism followed by polytheism and monotheism. The earlier hymns of the Vedas contain fetishism and polytheism while the latter hymns of the Vedas contain henotheism or monotheism or pantheism. The traces of fetishism, polytheism and naturalism in the Vedic hymns, seen in the light of post-modern development of environmental ethics and the philosophy of technology, are not the signs of their childish character but rather their strength.

In the recent times, a reputed scholar Prof. Frits Staal has given arguments similar to arguments of Kautsa against the meaningfulness of Vedic mantras. Kautsa does not find any meaning in Vedic mantras. In such a case possibility of metaphysics cannot be located in Vedic-saṁhitās. We have tried to synthesize the syntactic and semantic views so that the actuality of metaphysics in Vedic-saṁhitās may be located.

⁴⁶ Nagel, Ernst, *The Structure of Science*, (Indian Edition, Macmillan India Ltd. Delhi, 1984), pp. 188