

VEDIC LITERATURE AND ITS MODERN RELEVANCE: A HUMANISTIC PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Vedic literature, recognised as the foundation of ancient Indian civilisation, is not merely a compendium of religious rituals; rather, deep within it lies an eternal humanistic philosophy. The primary objective of this research paper is to identify the concepts of humanism reflected in Vedic literature and to evaluate their relevance against the backdrop of the complex social, environmental, and psychological crises of the twenty-first century. It demonstrates how concepts such as 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (the world is one family) or 'Amritasya Putrah' (Children of Immortality) can serve as guiding beacons for world peace, environmental protection, and the preservation of human values in the era of modern globalisation.

Keywords: Vedic Literature, Humanism, Universalism, Environmental Ethics, Modern Relevance, Upanishads.

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Introduction

In the history of human civilisation, Vedic Literature stands not only as the oldest extant written record but also as a luminous testament to the evolution of human thought. Contrary to the common perception that the Vedas are merely a collection of hymns praising deities and sacrificial rituals (Yajna), scholars of the 19th and 20th centuries, along with modern Indologists, have elucidated that a profound philosophy of life lies concealed behind these external observances. They did not view the Vedas merely as 'Nature Worship.' As Sri Aurobindo demonstrated, "The Agni or Indra of the Vedas are not merely natural forces; they are symbols of the dormant consciousness within man."¹

The central focus of this philosophy is not a supernatural deity, but 'Man' and his 'Ultimate Potential.' Thus, it can be posited that "Vedic literature is not merely a collection of mantras, but the history of the evolution of the thought and consciousness of the Aryan sages."² Humanism fundamentally prioritises human dignity, welfare, and rationality. It is a philosophical stance that accords the highest priority to human agency and well-being. In Vedic literature, this humanism is manifested at two levels: 1. The Pragmatic/Empirical Level, which advocates for communal living and social cohesion (found in the Samhita and Brahmana sections). 2. The Transcendental/Spiritual Level, which speaks of self-realisation and the union of the self with Brahman or the Ultimate Reality (found in the Upanishads).

While post-Renaissance Western Humanism views man primarily as an 'intellectual social animal,' Vedic Humanism regards man as a part of cosmic consciousness or a 'spiritual entity.' In the twenty-first century, as globalisation, technological advancement, and moral

degradation proceed in tandem, this anthropocentric interpretation of Vedic literature has acquired renewed relevance. This paper attempts to transcend traditional theological exegesis to uncover the philosophical dimension of Vedic literature that advocates for human mundane and spiritual ascension, and the establishment of fraternity with the entire cosmos.

Objectives

In the contemporary social order, individualism has reached an extreme, resulting in social alienation, depression, and environmental crises. Modern science views man as a 'machine,' while consumerism views him as a 'buyer.' In this context, questions arise: What is the true nature of man? What should be his relationship with society and nature? It is imperative to seek answers to these questions. The core premise of this paper is to demonstrate that the Vedic sages, thousands of years ago, envisioned a social order that is surprisingly compatible with modern democracy, socialism, and environmental consciousness. Furthermore, the objectives of this essay are:

- * To explore the nature of humanism in Vedic literature.
- * To analyse the role of the Upanishads in establishing the dignity of the individual.
- * To evaluate the modern utility of Vedic teachings in environmental protection and the establishment of social equality.

1. Definition of Humanism and the Vedic Perspective

Generally, by 'Humanism,' we refer to post-Renaissance Western philosophy, which prioritises human reason, intellect, and secular welfare over supernaturalism. However, the

concept of humanism in Vedic literature is far more profound and comprehensive. Vedic humanism does not view man merely as a 'social being' or 'rational animal'; rather, it treats man as a 'spiritual entity' and an integral part of the cosmos. When the Upanishad declares '*Tat Tvam Asi*' (Thou Art That), it proclaims the non-difference between the finite human entity and the infinite Brahman. Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan identified this as the foundation of 'Spiritual Humanism,' where every individual is a manifestation of the Ultimate Reality.³ Whenever Vedic sages sought the truth, they did so centring on human existence, suffering, and joy. Thus, it can be said that since ancient times, humanity, its culture, and civilisation have been preserved through the Vedas.

Although the Upanishadic era is marked as the fertile period of Indian philosophical thought, contemplation on human life and creation began as early as the Rigvedic era. While the thought of this era was primarily focused on unravelling the mysteries of cosmic creation, it also discussed the existential problems of human life. In this era, people worshipped nature and its elements as divine powers, seeking to propitiate them. This reflects not their supernatural concerns, but their mundane aspirations; their primary objective was to live happily and comfortably by appeasing natural elements as divine forces. In this sense, they were passionate about worldly life. The underlying motive of the Vedic sages behind nature worship was to feel a oneness with nature, to love it, and to preserve it. The Vedic sages uttered nothing that would instil fear in humans, suppress their enthusiasm, or diminish the joy of life. Therefore, the goal of Rigvedic religious thought was both physical and spiritual development.

The mantras and hymns of the Vedic period reveal the mindset of the people of that time. They were awestruck by the wondrous workings and miracles of nature and were compelled to believe in divine powers. They perceived phenomena like sunrise and sunset, rain, wind flow, and the twinkling of stars as manifestations of divine energy. Although they believed in the divine power of nature, they did not consider it transcendental. They believed that these deities, like humans, had family lives and human instincts such as love, jealousy, and enmity. These gods were anthropomorphic. They tried to please these gods through worship and sacrifice, asking in return for immortality, protection, worldly wealth, physical and mental strength, progeny, and intellect. It can be argued that the primary purpose of such religious rituals was not merely the servitude of the gods. Here, the principal aim was to make human life as happy and prosperous as possible through divine grace. This is why Dr. Radhakrishnan states that "the deities of that time were a medium for fulfilling human needs."⁴ Observation of Vedic hymns shows that man had a spiritual relationship with the gods and presented his demands to them with complete faith and without hesitation. Thus, Vedic literature clearly indicates the humanistic tendencies of that era.

The Rig Veda is considered the oldest poetry of mankind. The unity spoken of in the '*Samjñāna Sūkta*' of the tenth mandala of the Rig Veda can be regarded as the primordial form of modern democracy and socialism. It states:

"Saṁ gacchadhvaṁ saṁ vadadhvaṁ saṁ vo manāṁsi jānatām Devā bhāgaṁ yathā pūrve saṁjñānā upāsate"⁵ (Rig Veda 10.191.2)

That is, "May you move together (unity of action), speak together (unity of speech), and may your minds and resolves be one. Just as in ancient

times, the gods, knowing their share, accepted their offerings in harmony."

In this mantra, the sage does not prescribe the worship of a specific deity. He asserts that a society survives only when there is unity in its members' actions, speech, and thought. The call for unity here is not a political treaty, but a union of hearts. Avinash Chandra Bose has termed this 'Constructive Humanism.'⁶ The profound meaning of this mantra implies decision-making through discussion, much like modern democracy. According to the commentary of Sayanacharya, '*saṁ gacchadhvam*' refers to a 'Social Consensus' to reach a common goal despite differences of opinion—what is known in modern political science as 'Deliberative Democracy.' This is stated even more explicitly in the Atharva Veda:

"Sahṛdayaṁ sāmānyam adveṣaṁ kṛṇomi vaḥ! Anyo anyam abhi haryata vatsaṁ jātām ivāghnyāḥ." ⁷ (Atharva Veda 3.30.1)

That is, "I make you of one heart, of one mind, and free from hatred. May you love one another as the cow loves her newborn calf." Therefore, the formation of a society free from malice is the first lesson of Vedic humanism. The Rig Veda goes deeper, speaking of the equality of human thought and feeling:

"Samānī va ākūtiḥ samānā hṛdayāni vaḥ! Samānam astu vo mano yathā vaḥ susahāsatiḥ" ⁸(Rig Veda 10.191.4)

That is, "May your resolve be one, may your hearts be one, may your minds be one—so that your life may be beautiful and well-ordered." This is not for a specific community, but a call for the unity of all mankind. Here, Vedic humanism acknowledges the individuality of the human person but teaches him to dedicate himself to the

collective welfare. Here, mutual coexistence is given more importance than religious rituals, which may be termed the spiritual form of modern 'Collectivism.'

Many Western theologies have viewed man as a 'Sinner,' which weakens human self-confidence. Standing in stark contrast, Vedic literature declares man as:

"Śṛṇvantu viśve amṛtasya putrāḥ ā ye dhāmāni divyāni tasthuḥ." ⁹ (Shvetashvatara Upanishad 2.5)

Meaning, "Hear, O children of immortality, even those who dwell in the celestial regions." By declaring humans as 'Children of Immortality,' the Upanishads elevate them to a position of infinite dignity. The concept of 'Original Sin' prevalent in Christianity finds its theoretical counterpart in this mantra. In his 1893 Chicago address, Swami Vivekananda quoted this verse to vehemently oppose calling humans 'sinners,' labelling it a defamation of human dignity. In his view, this self-confidence is the highest form of humanism. This philosophy teaches that infinite power and potential are dormant within every human being. According to Swami Vivekananda, "Religion is the manifestation of the divinity already in man."¹⁰ The Upanishads view man not as a sinner, but as a part of Brahman. The Mahavakya (Great Saying) of the Chandogya Upanishad, "*Tat Tvam Asi*" (Thou Art That) and "*Aham Brahmasmi*" (I am Brahman) of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad place man on a pedestal equal to the Divine. When a person believes that infinite power resides within them, they no longer suffer from an inferiority complex. This is the supreme psychological tool for awakening a sense of self-worth. That is, in the Vedic view, service to humanity and service to God are not distinct. To respect a human being is to respect the Supreme Soul (Paramatma).

Vedic humanism does not believe in geographical boundaries or aggressive nationalism. The 'Bhumi Sukta' of the Atharva Veda states:

"Janam bibhrati bahudhā vivācasam nānādharmānam prthivī yathaukasam" ¹¹
(Atharva Veda 12.1.45)

Translation: "This Mother Earth, who bears people speaking different languages and following different dharmas (religions/customs), treats them all as residing in the same home." This mantra provides an ancient and powerful concept of India's national unity and diversity. Accepting this diversity is the Vedic teaching. Vedic literature speaks not only of spiritual liberation but also of a hunger-free and egalitarian society. The 117th Sukta of the 10th Mandala of the Rig Veda is extremely significant in this regard. Here, the sage Bhikshu Angirasa states unequivocally that the person who eats alone without feeding the hungry eats only sin. The Atharva Veda speaks of socialist distribution:

"Samānt prapā saha vo annabhāgaḥ..." ¹²
(Atharva Veda 3.30.6)

Translation: "May your place of drinking water be common, and may your share of food be shared." This implies that in a healthy society, food, drink, space, and even mentality should be shared by all. This section proves that in Vedic humanism, economic equality and service to the distressed are viewed as parts of spiritual practice.

Although the verse '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*' is found in the Maha Upanishad, its core resonance lies in the 'Bhumi Sukta' (12.1) of the Atharva Veda. Here, the sage addresses the Earth as 'Mother' and himself as 'Son' ("*Mata Bhumiḥ Putro'ham Prithivyah*"). Vedic sages did not divide humans based on any specific geographical boundary, caste, or colour. The Yajur Veda states:

"Mitrasyāham cakṣuṣā sarvāṇi bhūtāni samīkṣeḥ Mitrasya mā cakṣuṣā sarvāṇi bhūtāni samīkṣantām" ¹³ (Yajur Veda 3.66)

That is, "May I look upon all beings with the eye of a friend, and may all beings look upon me with the eye of a friend." This mantra expresses an attitude of friendship, equality, and love towards all creation. It prays that humans forget violence or malice and behave in a friendly manner towards all living beings, and in return, receive the same friendly gaze. This sentiment of friendship towards all humans, irrespective of caste, religion, or colour, is the ultimate form of Vedic humanism, which we may term 'Cosmic Humanism.'

The Vedas call man "Son of Immortality" and emphasise the feeling of friendship alongside equality. On this basis, everyone is equal; no one is high or low. Regarding social integration, the Yajur Veda states:

"Yathemām vācam kalyāṇīm āvadāni janebhyahḥ Brahma-rājanyābhyām śūdrāya cāryāya ca svāya cāraṇāya" ¹⁴ (Yajur Veda 26.2)

Translation: "May I speak these auspicious words to all people—to the Brahmin and the Kshatriya, to the Shudra and the Arya, and to my own people and the stranger." This concept of eliminating class discrimination and social caste highlights the ideal sentiment of a balanced society and universal welfare. This perspective teaches us to live a peaceful life and to practice kindness, love, compassion, and benevolence towards other beings. The search for social equality in the modern era has its root concepts already embedded within our Vedas.

Key Aspects of Humanism in Vedic Philosophy:

* **Dharma:** Vedic philosophy emphasises "Dharma," which includes ethical duties and moral responsibilities. This focus on ethical conduct highlights the importance of human action and its impact on society. Dharma is not merely a set of rules, but a framework for living a meaningful and fulfilled life, emphasising social harmony and personal well-being.

* **The Concept of Atman:** The Vedic concept of Atman highlights the divinity inherent within every individual. This recognition of the inner Self fosters a sense of human dignity and capacity. This Atman is the light of the Supreme Soul within every person, driving us toward self-realisation.

* **Focus on Human Potential:** Vedic texts, particularly the Upanishads, discuss the potential of human consciousness and the possibility of attaining spiritual liberation (Moksha). This quest for self-knowledge and spiritual development underscores the importance of human experience and the capacity for transformation.

* **Social Integration & Welfare:** Vedic society emphasised social harmony and the welfare of all beings. Concepts like '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*' demonstrate a universal outlook encouraging compassion and interconnectedness. This shows that Vedic philosophy possesses a strong social dimension, promoting the welfare of all mankind.

2. Humanistic Views in Specific Upanishads

Taittiriya Upanishad:

The Taittiriya Upanishad places significant emphasis on the process of learning and the acquisition of knowledge regarding the Self (Atman) and the Ultimate Reality (Brahman). The 'Shikshavalli' provides ethical and practical guidelines for students and teachers, highlighting the importance of lifelong learning and personal development. This focus on individual effort and

the potential for self-inquiry aligns with humanistic values. The ethical guidelines prescribed in the Shikshavalli are pivotal for a harmonious personal and social life. Instructions such as "Speak the truth," "Practice Dharma," "Do not neglect your duties," "Respect your teachers and parents," and "Treat others with respect and compassion" provide a framework for ethical conduct and responsible living. These teachings emphasise the importance of human relationships and social harmony, which are central to humanistic thought. By connecting the individual soul with the universal reality, the Taittiriya Upanishad provides a framework for understanding man's place in the vast universe, thereby elevating the significance of human existence.

Isha Upanishad:

*“Īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvaṁ yat kiñca jagatyāṁ jagati Tena tyaktena bhuñjīthā mā gṛdhaḥ kasya svid dhanam”*¹⁵ This opening verse constitutes the foundation of the Isha Upanishad. It asserts that whatever is changeable in this world is pervaded by Isha (God or the Supreme Entity). This concept recognises the importance of the world and life, evaluating human life as a part of that Supreme Entity. The Isha Upanishad emphasises duty by advocating the renunciation of attachment to the fruits of action. This teaching of detachment helps individuals rise above self-interest and greed, inspiring them to work for the greater human good. The instruction *“Mā gṛdhaḥ kasya svid dhanam”* (Do not covet anyone's wealth) upholds the principles of honesty and impartiality, which are the bedrock of a healthy human society. Although not explicitly stated, the concept of '*Īśāvāsyam idaṁ sarvaṁ*' fosters the realisation of oneness among all living beings. This generates feelings of mutual respect and compassion among humans, which are vital

components of humanistic values. In the Isha Upanishad, neither the exclusive pursuit of knowledge nor sole engagement in worldly activities is the path to liberation. Immortality is attainable only through the synthesis of both (Vidya and Avidya / Knowledge and Action). This concept highlights the importance of balancing learning with practical life.

Katha Upanishad:

The protagonist of this Upanishad, Nachiketa, displays an indomitable desire for knowledge and the courage to question Yama, the Lord of Death, regarding the truth—traits that exemplify humanistic values. The determination and inquisitive mind of a young boy highlight the human desire for knowledge and the infinite potential for self-improvement. The intellectual dialogue between Yama and Nachiketa proves that the profound truths of life can be realised through knowledge. Nachiketa's logical inquiries and Yama's sequential answers underscore the importance of reason and intellect. The Upanishad speaks of two paths—Shreya (the ultimate good) and Preya (the pleasant)—and advises choosing Shreya. The capacity to make this decision and the freedom to choose the right path are indicative of human conscience and intellect. In exchange for self-knowledge, Yama offered Nachiketa wealth, prosperity, and worldly pleasures; however, realising their transience, Nachiketa resisted those temptations. Nachiketa's character exemplifies steadfastness to truth and the transcendence of greed. While the primary objective of the Katha Upanishad is to impart spiritual knowledge and pave the path to liberation (Moksha), the human qualities, knowledge, ethical ideals, and desire for liberation described therein are critical elements of humanistic thought.

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad:

One of the principal teachings of the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is 'Aham Brahmasmi' (I am Brahman). This realisation declares the inherent divinity and infinite power within every human being, thereby establishing individual self-respect and significance. This Upanishad advocates for the acquisition of three cardinal virtues: Dama (self-control), Dana (charity), and Daya (compassion). These ethical qualities are essential for establishing peace and harmony in personal and social life. The importance of mutual respect and love is also evident in this text. The dialogue between Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi highlights the depth of marital relationships and the importance of mutual understanding alongside the acquisition of self-knowledge. Maitreyi, the wife of Yajnavalkya, asked him if immortality could be attained through wealth, to which Yajnavalkya replied that wealth cannot purchase liberation; immortality is attained only through self-knowledge. He taught Maitreyi that love is inspired by the Self (Atman), and the nature of the Self and Brahman is identical. The Upanishad also discusses the law of Karma:

“Yathā-kārī yathā-'cārī tathā bhavati Sādhukārī sādhubhavadī, pāpa-kārī pāpo bhavati Punyah puṇyena karmaṇā bhavati, pāpaḥ pāpena” ¹⁶ (Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.4.5)

That is, "As one acts and as one behaves, so does one become. The doer of good becomes good, and the doer of evil becomes evil." This implies that the fruits of action construct the human being. Through this, man is held responsible for his actions and is urged to pave the way for a better life and liberation through good deeds. This concept centres on human free will and ethical responsibility. Furthermore, this concept fosters a sense of equality and non-violence towards all beings and objects in the world. Since everything is a manifestation of the same Brahman, one

should not harbour hatred or jealousy toward any being. Indirectly, this conveys a message of peace and love to human society.

Chandogya Upanishad:

The Chandogya Upanishad contains aspects that signify a humanistic perspective. “*Tat Tvam Asi*” (“Thou Art That”)—this famous declaration is one of the most critical teachings of this Upanishad. It implies that the individual soul (Jiva) and the Supreme Soul (Brahman) are fundamentally the same. This realisation births a deep sense of interconnectedness among humans. When an individual realises that they are Brahman and that Brahman exists in others, respect, empathy, and love for others arise naturally. Recognising the inherent unity and value of all humans is a crucial foundation of humanism. While the Upanishad speaks of attaining self-knowledge, this knowledge is not an isolated or self-centred pursuit. Through self-knowledge, man realises the great truth, and consequently, a natural feeling of compassion for the world and living beings develops. This realisation inspires man to work for the welfare of others.

The humanistic aspect portrayed in the story of Satyakama Jabala in the Chandogya Upanishad delivers a stern message against the caste system and social discrimination of that time. Satyakama's mother, Jabala, was a maidservant, and he did not know his father's name. When Satyakama went to the hermitage of Sage Gautama to introduce himself, the sage was deeply impressed by his truthfulness. It was the custom of that society to accept only Brahmins of high birth as disciples, and no one was considered a Brahmachari until their paternity was revealed. However, despite not knowing Satyakama's paternal identity, Sage Gautama accepted him as a disciple solely based on his courage to speak the

truth. Maharishi Gautama declared, "None but a Brahmin can speak such a damaging truth; therefore, you are a Brahmin." Rabindranath Tagore wrote regarding this verse, "You are not a non-Brahmin, you are the best of the twice-born, you are born of the lineage of Truth." Man becomes great not by birth, but by action—even an illegitimate child, if truthful, deserves all the rights of a Brahmin. Satyakama Jabala was an illegitimate child, considered low in society, but by accepting him, Sage Gautama demonstrated that all humans, regardless of birth or social status, have the right to acquire knowledge and that their integrity should be respected. This story places greater emphasis on human qualities, particularly integrity, than on lineage or social status. This is a fundamental principle of humanism, where the worth of an individual is determined by their inherent qualities and actions.

From this discussion, it is evident that humanism in Vedic literature is not an abstract concept. It is embodied through the pursuit of unity, the recognition of the inherent divinity in man, and service to the distressed. The Vedic sages dreamt of a human being who is empowered by self-dignity and simultaneously believes in universal fraternity.

3. Relevance in Modern Context

While human civilisation has achieved extreme technological excellence in the twenty-first century, it is simultaneously immersed in an existential crisis. Environmental catastrophes, mental depression, social intolerance, and consumerist mentalities are consuming modern man. In this context, Vedic literature is not merely an archaeological artefact but a practical manual.

The greatest challenge of the modern world is climate change and environmental destruction. Post-Industrial Revolution Western philosophy

has viewed nature as an object for human consumption. In contrast, Vedic literature advocates for 'Deep Ecology,' where nature is not inanimate matter but a living entity. The Vedic Yajna is not merely an offering to fire; it is a symbolic process of maintaining the balance between man and the cosmos. Raimon Panikkar, in his book 'The Vedic Experience,' illustrated how this concept of Yajna is compatible with the modern ecosystem.¹⁷ In the 'Bhumi Sukta' of the Atharva Veda, nature is addressed as Mother. Just as we do not harm our mother, respecting nature as 'Mother' ensures we do not harm her. The core tenet of 'Deep Ecology,' introduced by modern environmentalist Arne Naess, is that every element of nature has 'Intrinsic Value,' regardless of its utility to humans. The Atharva Veda's Bhumi Sukta (12.1) recognised this 'Intrinsic Value' thousands of years ago by calling the Earth 'Mother.' Furthermore, the Atharva Veda states:

*“Yat te bhūmi vikhānāmi kṣipraṁ tad api rohatuḥ Mā te marma vivṛjyamam mā te hrdayaṁ arpiśamḥ”*¹⁸ (Atharva Veda 12.1.35)

That is, "O Mother Earth, what part of you I dig out, may that quickly heal (may plants grow rapidly on it). May I not strike your vitals; may I not pierce your heart." This mantra is an ancient example of environmental consciousness and respect for nature. It is the motto of modern 'Sustainable Development'—that one should not exploit nature without allowing for its regeneration. The Vedas permit the 'milking' of nature for survival but strictly prohibit its 'exploitation' or plunder. What modern environmentalists call 'Eco-centrism' today, the Vedic sages established thousands of years ago through the concept of 'Rita' (Cosmic Order).

Modern capitalist society has taught man, "The more the consumption, the greater the happiness."

However, this infinite demand is the root cause of modern stress, depression, and dissatisfaction. The first mantra of the Isha Upanishad is a panacea for modern psychology: it states '*Tena tyaktena bhuñjīthā*' (Enjoy through renunciation). This message of restraint and sacrifice can restore mental peace by controlling the infinite demands of a consumerist society. This view is also supported by humanistic Buddhist, Jain, and Gandhian philosophies. Here, 'renunciation' does not mean escaping the world, but living without attachment. In modern psychology, this is termed 'Detachment.' When one acts without expectation of the fruit (the Nishkama Karma of the Gita), mental stress decreases. The Katha Upanishad differentiates between 'Preya' (that which is temporarily pleasant) and 'Shreya' (that which is truly beneficial), stating that the ignorant run after the pleasant, while the wise choose the good and attain eternal happiness. Modern youth chase 'Instant Gratification,' which damages their long-term mental health. Vedic teachings instruct man to choose 'Shreya' or the path of long-term welfare. These teachings remain relevant today for liberation from the tyranny of a consumerist society.

Today's world stands on the brink of nuclear war. Divisions between nations and religious intolerance have reached extreme proportions. In this situation, the 'Shanti Mantra' of the Yajur Veda conveys a message of profound 'Cosmic Humanism.' It states:

*“Dyauḥ śāntiḥ antarikṣaṁ śāntiḥ pṛthivī śāntiḥ āpaḥ śāntiḥ oṣadhayaḥ śāntiḥ Vanaspatayaḥ śāntiḥ viśve devāḥ śāntiḥ brahma śāntiḥ sarvaṁ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ eva śāntiḥ sā mā śāntiḥ edhiḥ Om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ”*¹⁹ (Yajur Veda 36.17)

Translation: "May there be peace in the heavens, peace in the atmosphere, peace on earth, peace in

the waters, peace in the herbs, peace in the vegetation, peace among the divine powers, peace in Brahman, peace in all. May that peace come to me. Om Peace! Peace! Peace!" Here, peace is sought not just for humans, but for the entire cosmos. Vedic philosophy teaches that if the peace of nature or other beings is disturbed, human peace will also be disturbed. What modern international relations term, 'Collective Security', is the spiritual form of the Vedic Peace Mantra. It teaches that peace is not an isolated event; it is a holistic process.

Modern education is information-based, whereas Vedic education was value-based. The Vedas state, "*Sā vidyā yā vimuktaye*"—Knowledge is that which liberates. Today's education teaches skills for earning a livelihood but fails to teach how to be a good human being. The Vedic emphasis on the 'Teacher-Disciple relationship' and 'Character Building' can serve as a guide to stem the moral degradation of the modern education system.

While the humanistic aspect of Vedic literature is luminous, there is debate regarding the existence of verses indicative of the caste system or gender discrimination (such as certain interpretations of the Purusha Sukta). However, modern researchers believe that later Smritis, religious interpretations, and social superstitions obscured the original Vedic philosophy. True modernity and the development of humanity are possible only by rejecting bigotry and superstition and embracing this liberal and philosophical aspect of Vedic literature. Just as weeds exist alongside crops, some social superstitions may exist within the vast Vedic literature, but its philosophical essence is undoubtedly humanistic. The message of infinite human power and unity articulated in the Upanishads is eternal.

Conclusion

This research has analysed Vedic literature from a humanistic and philosophical perspective, rising above conventional religious rituals. Through this discussion, it is evident that the Vedic sages did not merely speak of transcendental liberation; they drafted an extraordinary blueprint for mundane welfare, social unity, and fraternity with the environment. The communism of the Rig Veda's 'Samjnana Sukta,' the 'sense of self-dignity' of the Upanishads, and the 'ecological consciousness' of the Atharva Veda prove that Vedic philosophy is fundamentally anthropocentric. To tackle twenty-first-century crises—such as war, terrorism, climate change, and mental degradation—modern science and technology alone are insufficient. A 'Paradigm Shift in Consciousness' is required. It is precisely here that Vedic literature is relevant. It teaches us that 'modernity' does not mean being severed from one's roots. Rather, a balanced and peaceful world can be built by synthesising Ancient Wisdom with modern science. As Swami Vivekananda said, "The union of Western science and Eastern Vedanta will be the religion of the future humanity."²⁰ This research paper is an attempt to re-establish the necessity of that union.

In conclusion, Vedic humanism does not belong to any particular religion or group; it is the heritage of all humanity. In today's divided world, where walls are being built between people, that timeless message of the Isha Upanishad—"Yastu sarvāṇi bhūtāni ātmanyevānupaśyati"²¹ (He who sees all beings in himself and himself in all beings)—can guide us in a new direction. Therefore, the study of Vedic literature is vital not only for scholars but for every conscious human being to ensure a healthy and beautiful future.

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