

ĪGVĒDIC SOCIETY AS REFLECTED IN AKĀSĪKTA

Pushpalatha P.V.

Research Scholar

Deptt. of Sanskrit Sahitya

SSUS, Kalady

Email: puthusserytatha@gmail.com

Abstract

Vedas are the most ancient books in the world. The origin of the word 'Veda' is from the root word 'vid' which means 'to know'. Vedas were not written by Āis in its actual sense, on the other hand they were visualized by them. NiruktakīraYiska has pointed out that Vedas are the Dharma which appeared in the minds of MahaĀis.

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Pushpalatha P.V.,

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Introduction

Vedas are the most ancient books in the world. The origin of the word 'Veda' is from the root word 'vid' which means 'to know'.¹ Vedas were not written by Rishis in its actual sense, on the other hand they were visualized by them. Niruktakaravyasa has pointed out that Vedas are the Dharma which appeared in the minds of Maharishis.²

Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda are the four Vedas. Among them Rigveda is considered as the most ancient text. What we find in Rigveda, is the comprehensive realization of human life.

In the Rigveda, there are 1028 hymns in total and 10552 stanzas including Valikhilyas.³ They are divided into ten Mandalas. Each Mandala to Suktas and Mantras. In all the ten Mandalas, there are 85 Anuvakas, 1017 Suktas and 10472 hymns excluding Valikhilyas. Again, there is another division prominently accepted in Kerala, where traditional Rigveda learning is practiced as Anuvakas, Adhyayas and Vargas. As per the division, Rigveda contains 8 Anuvakas, 64 Adhyayas, 2006 Vargas and 1017 Suktas and 10472 Iks.⁴

For every Mantra, there is a Chandodevati, Mantras are usually recited. In Vedas, there are seven important metres.⁵ Among the available Vedas interpretation and he belonged to 14th century AD.

The Akashta found in the 10th Mandala is an outstanding Sukta of the Rigvedic poet and who upheld the values of life immersed with nature. It reflects the visionary and social life of the people of those days effectively. The deities of this Sukta which was recited by the sage Kavan is Akasha forming and Kitava. This Sukta is celebrated as the repentance of a gambler who was tempted by the game, became an addict to it. Scholars also the exhortation to get rid of gambling and to turn to farming, which is heard entirely different from the general trend of Rigvedic Suktas without praising any of the usual deity. As per this interpretation the context of the Sukta can be summarized as follows:

akashaairdivyashaktimitkasha
vitteramasvabahumanyam |
tatragyevaakitavatatrajy
tanmevicasavitryamarya ||⁶

During the period of Rigveda, we cannot conclude gambling as a popular amusement.⁷ Thus it cannot be termed as the repentance of a gambler. One shouldn't feel the unnatural in the former interpretation because later in Yudhishtira-Nala stories found in Indian Epics we learn that they lost all their wealth, kingdom and wives just because they were immersed in gambling deeply. But the fact is that in the social atmosphere of Rigveda such interpretation doesn't get sufficient support.

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This Sĕkta is the product of a social atmosphere in which man switched on from the social environment of the pastoral life to the first stage of settled life and of farming.

For the word AkĀa it is not merely having the meaning ‘gamblingchip’ on the other hand it has the meaning related to weights and measures, and for the word Kitava it have the meaning like gambler, betrayer, deceiver, one who is fake it, etc.⁸ The word AkĀa more denotes its meaning in connection with measurement than ‘gambling chip’. When we consider this importance, we get some deep insight into the terms and conditions of production, distribution and transaction prevailed in the society during Īgvedic period.

Kitava in AkĀasĕkta is hated by all. The wife and the mother of the wife hate him. He is not even allowed to beg as he is being ignored by society. As a good-for nothing aged horse on sale, he is subjected to total discard of the society. Nobody is even prepared to give food to him. Shivering at night, he sleeps near some fireplace. ‘We don’t know him, take this tied up guy anywhere.’ His own father, mother and brothers in one and the same voice turns against Kitava. Kitava’s wife, owing to agony, begging and wondering all over and bearing acute mental sorrow, is being discarded by everyone. The mother who disowns, Kitava’s relationship, is in utter despair. Kitava goes to other’s houses at every night to earn his livelihood. Nevertheless, the chinkling sound of AkĀa attracts Kitava to the gathering. When he realizes that wives of other men were happy and contented and their houses were attractively furnished- ‘my wife is desperate, my house is in disorder.’ He becomes distressed. In great repentance, Kitava turns a new leaf in his precious life. ‘Oh AkĀa, who is the leader in your great gathering, who is the king and winner among you, I fold my hands for him.’ From this day onwards I won’t hide wealth, ten folding and straightening my ten fingers, I swear, oh, Kitava, don’t play with AkĀas. Do farming, rejoice in the wealth you earn from farming. You get many cows while farming. the wife becomes prosperous and happy. This secret of goodness all-persuasive sun has informed me many a time. ‘Oh AkĀa, be friendly with me. Make me happy. Don’t be angry with me. Let your anger be upon my enemies.’

Thus when we take the word ‘AkĀa’ with the meaning of the scale by which measurement is determined, and the word Kitava as spendthrift, deceiver the merit obtained for the meaning of this Sĕkta is inestimable. *Īgveda* period unveils a society having a life style endowed with fellowship. Each and every one in the society toils together and whatever products they gain, bring in common and they divided and take each one’s part. In this division, AkĀas are indicators determining the measurement. Through this division, AkĀas are the images of justice and truth. While sharing cheating and deceit are not permissible. The

chinkling sound of AkÅa attracts all the people to the assembly. They reach the assembly and become satisfied after getting their deserving share.

This fellowship which was full of only truth and justice started deteriorating during the last period of *Ígveda*. The first place of *Ígveda* bore testimony for the drumming of division of classes. Injustice and fraud began gradually. Greed to acquire undeserving wealth for his own contentment came to man's mind. When such deceivers (Kitavans) who try to increase their share of wealth by showing artificiality are caught, they may perhaps be the division makers themselves and thus they become ridiculed before the society. They will be hated by their wives, relatives and the society as a whole. By repentance and penance they become purified. They again work and earn their lost name and status. AkÅasfkta will not get such wider meaning being described merely as a recognized amusement.

The importance of the moral of AkÅasfkta is identified when the gambler leaves cheating and deception leads a virtuous life. Literature is not merely a story of reality. AkÅasukta proves that it is a message carrier which is capable of leading the society in the right direction. The hints in AkÅasfkta makes it clear that agriculture was given prominence in the social conditions prevailing during that period. AkÅas stands for as the symbol of truth and justice. The gambler who introspects him own bitter experience in life by which men, after leading irresponsible lives, comes to reality is the synopsis of AkÅasfkta.*****

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(Footnotes)

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- ² Dr.Kunjunni Raja, Dr. M.S. Menon, *SamskĒtasjhityacaritraĒ*, Kerala Sahitya Academi, Trissur, 1990.
- ³ āaunakçyaSĒkt;nukramaGika.
- ⁴ Paleli Narayanan Namboothiri, Dr. C. M. Nilakandhan, *Vedakira, a''a½*, VatakkeMathamBrahmaswam Publishers, Trissur, 1995.
- ⁵ G;yatri, UÀ,ik, AnuÀ¶ubh, BĒhatç, Pa'kti, TriÀ¶up, Jagati.
- ⁶ *Īgveda*, X, 34.
- ⁷ One of the reason that the SĒkta is a later addition is this fact.
- ⁸ Monier- Monier Williams, *Sanskrit- English Ditionary*, Motilal BenarasiDass Publishers Pvt. Limited, Delhi, 1899.