

(b) The overemphasis on the ascetic way of life with its plethora of fasts, vows and monastic vairagya have their direct origins in Jaina, Boudha and Adī Shankara' s Advaitic movement respectively.

3. When Eurocentric education came to India along with the British and eventually independent states became an union then the popularity of English took over. Many non Indians intrigued by the bold thinking found in the many darshanas (visionary philosophies), frantically began to translate them into English. Many of these translators did not spend enough time or energy to study the cultural nuances of the land which is an integral part of any language. In their translations there is a serious handicap in that they have used totally confining English words to translate expansive Sanskrit words. These translators also relied heavily on local pundita-s. These pundita-s faithfully followed the texts as revealed by their teachers in their own language. Often their connection to Sanskrit was a mere committing- to- memory. A good example of this are the works of Arthur Avalon (John Woodroffe) on tantras.

4. When educated Indians at large decided to learn more about their religious heritage they resorted to these readily available translations in English. In doing so they fell into the trap of thinking and using the meaning of these texts in a very confined way. Many well known Indians though well meaning in their intentions have translated our texts in this confined way.

5. English translations written by Indians often contain strange sentence constructions that make it rather difficult to comprehend. This is due to the fact that the writer is thinking in his native language at that time and not in English.

It is a challenge to us therefore to go back to the meaning of these prayers and texts having rid ourselves of all the narrow meanings that we have become accustomed to. This means that we should spend more time thinking about the ramifications of the meaning of words. The best way is of course to expose oneself to translations done in Indian languages by well known institutions and writers. There are many good translations being produced in Indian languages and in English by Indian writers under institutions such as Gita press, Chowkhambha, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Aditya Prakashan and Deepti Publications. Pockets of small research institutions have sprouted all over the land that are doing excellent research work. eg Kalpataru Academy in Bangalore and Institute for Asian Studies near Chennai. The study of such texts coupled with familiarity with Sanskrit and finally testing the validity of these truths in our daily lives will ensure the revelation of the divine in and around us, as the Vedas proclaim.

VEDIC THOUGHT

Vedic concept of the divine is spontaneous. This is particularly so in the Rgveda. The other three Vedas do indicate a deliberate planning which the Rgveda does not. The Riks or stanzas of praise are conceptualisations of what the rishis spontaneously felt. The experience of Man, Nature, and the Divine is something that we today have to reason. For them it was a matter of intuitive, instantaneous experience. Having placed man on top of the evolutionary ladder we have become blind to the independent validity of the existence of all else in this network of Life. To catch a glimpse of this truth in simple practice one would have to go to live with indigenous and aboriginal people who are like disappearing dots from the face of this planet.

Modern man finds it hard to understand the Riks because he is looking at it with the glasses of a complicated mind. These glasses are made of a material in which history, legends, divergent philosophies and traditions are mixed up.

Vedic Sanskrit is very different from Pauranic Sanskrit. Gender and Number made no difference when words were used to denote the Divine within a single prayer. A single word has different meanings that hold good together and separate. The word always carries its essence which remains the same no matter what is said.

The Riks being rishi conceptualisations their creators were not mere poets. Their understanding went beyond the normal, beyond into the unspoken realm. They are Kraanta Darshees, with an extraordinary omniscient vision. They were Satya Shrutah, perfect receptors of the Truth. These truths are already in Mahaakaasa, the Great Beyond. With very fine tuned equipments namely a well integrated body with sharp mental faculties, these rishis caught these truths into their inner heart space or Daharaakaasa. These truths were then expressed in sublime outpourings through the medium of speech. These then are the indicators of truth known as the suktaah. These Riks interestingly have a double parallel value. Both aspects of the value are pertinent at the same time. Its baahya

Its baahya or outer value can be measured in our life by the result it produces. Its guhya or internal secret value in our inner life is known only to the "rishi mind". It is this double value that have rendered the Riks as Mantraas.

Some important terms to note in this suktam

We have selected a few terms that repeat often in this suktam. Other terms will be handled as they arise. To translate these therefore would be an act of inadequacy. For better comprehension it is best to paraphrase these stanzas and give word indicators.

jātavēda

A word for the fire created in the homa ceremony. It means "that which has been produced which informs" At the homa ceremony the fire was produced by kindling. The relationship of the hotr or the offerer then was that of one on the receiving end of knowledge. The knowledge giving medium was the fire produced. This was made possible by the proper conduct of the ceremony accompanied by the use and expression of relevant mantras. It also involved the use of proper ingredients for offering into the fire.

hiraṇya-Has a variety of meanings namely gold, golden, glowing and also means substance.

candra-Means moon and also pleasing.

lakṣmī- "That which makes a mark." It also means auspiciousness as the divine power and the tangible forms of it such as wealth/progress/prosperity/fullness/resources.

sūrya āditya-These terms refer to the sun. They also mean beautiful and blazing.

padma- "Born from earth". It could refer to the lotus flower. It also refers to the pure gold coin with the same name. It means the chakra in the human body. It can mean the ritual design or mandalam.

श्री सूक्तम् ओम्

हिरण्यवर्णां हरिणीं सुवर्णराजतस्राजाम् । चन्द्रां हिरण्मयीं लक्ष्मीं जातवेदो म आवह ॥१॥
hiraṇyavarṇāṃ harīṇīṃ suvarṇarajatasrajām . candrāṃ hiraṇmayīṃ lakṣmīṃ jātavēdō ma āvaha ..1..

om- the affirmation of truth

jātavēdō ma āvahaḥ- Oh fire (that which I have produced and which in turn informs me) ,bring to me lakṣmīṃ -that by which a mark is made, the divine auspiciousness. This divine auspiciousness is further described as

hiraṇyavarṇāṃ-that which is golden hued

harīṇīṃ-which is fleeting. Harini is also the word for "deer". The prancing golden flames easily suggests the swift movements of the deer.

suvarṇarajatasrajām-composed of golden dust i.e. made of gold

candrāṃ- pleasing. The moon has the unique capacity to please.

hiraṇmayīṃ- suffused with gold in and out.

The first stanza sets the tone of the suktam. Fire is the Witness beyond compare. This is a call to the Cosmos with fire serving as the witness and receiver of offerings. The request is for the bringing of auspiciousness. The chances are that in those days the homa was being performed for a king or a nobleman. These were then men who needed to make a mark in the world.

This auspiciousness is further described as being golden in hue. The nature of this auspiciousness as being never still is suggested by the word harini. The effect of this lakshmi is as pleasing as the orb of the full moon which is thoroughly suffused with the colour of gold.

तां मा आवह जातवेदो लक्ष्मीमनपगामिनीम् । यस्यां हिरण्यं विन्देयं गामश्चं पुरुषानहम् ॥२॥

tāṃ ma āvaha jātavēdō lakṣmīmanapagāminīm . yasyāṃ hiraṇyaṃ vindēyaṃ gāmaśvaṃ puruṣānaham ..2..
jātavēdō - oh fire

ma āvaha-bring to me

tāṃ - that

lakṣmī - auspiciousness

anapagāminīm -that will not leave or go away

yasyāṃ - by whose

hiraṇyaṃ - substance

vindēyaṃ - is obtained, mastered or acquired

gāmaśvaṃ- cattle and horses

puruṣān- men

aham- I

The second stanza clarifies what type of auspiciousness is requested. The auspiciousness should be one that will not leave me. Further it is by its substance that I can procure cattle, horses and men.

The fleeting nature of this lakshmi having been spoken of earlier, here it is specified as to the need for having it with us always .

"Ga" or cattle symbolises all provisions and amenities that we need to maintain a good life.

"Asva" or horse symbolises modes of travel as well as forms of energy that we utilise to get to places and to get things going.

"Purusha" or men stands for human support in the form of services that we consider necessary to achieve a good life.

The term hiranyam means gold and also substance. In that way hiranya garbha means not the golden ^{womb} egg as much as the embryonic substance from which this world has been created. Here we have a clear statement regarding the "royal metal" gold. Even to this day it is gold that is the standard of all transactions all over this globe. It is with wealth that all provisions, amenities, energy, modes of travel and services are obtained. The best example of wealth is indeed gold.

अश्वपूर्वा रथमध्यां हस्तिनादप्रबोधिनीम् । श्रियं देवीमुपह्वये श्रीर्मा देवी जुषताम् ॥३॥

aśvapūrvāṃ rathamadhyaṃ hastinādaprabōdhinīm . śriyaṃ dēvimupahvayē śrīrmā dēvī juṣatām . ॥३॥

upahvayē -I invoke or call upon

śriyaṃ dēvī- the divine source of auspiciousness

aśvapūrvāṃ- with horses in front

rathamadhyaṃ- with chariot in the middle

hastinādaprabōdhinīm -awakened by the sound of the elephants

mā juṣatām- may rejoicing happen to me (by)

śrī dēvī - the divine auspiciousness

Homa or Yagna is the ritual where Man and the Divine meet. It represents the outer offering and the inner ascent of Man on one hand and the outer acceptance and inner descent of the Divine. The ritual was determined by rules. It had the Yajamana who wished for the act. It had upto four types of Ritviks or officiators who performed the act. Each type had a specific function..

t

These were the Hota, the Adhvaryu, the Udgatrs and the Brahmanas all with distinct roles. Special altars were constructed, special seats were made. Special tools were used. The most important havis or oblation was ghee. The extracted juice Soma was also offered. Specific chants and actions were employed. There always was a clear cut reason for conducting this act.

The entire yagna and its constituents were symbolic for those who could appreciate it. It represented the inner offering of man and his faculties to the Divine. The organs of knowledge jnaanendriyas (sense systems through which we receive impressions) and the karmendriyas (such as mouth, hands feet etc by which we act or perform) were all coordinated and fully occupied in this one Great Act. Everyone knew and did only his part of the ritual thereby contributing to its smooth functioning.

When the term upahvaye is used then a sense of urgency prevails. The call is being made to shriyam, the cosmic source of auspiciousness. It is from this source that all of us are drawing our share of wealth and fullness. How can this source be awakened or accessed? By a chariot pulled by energetic horses, charging to the trumpeting of the elephants.

In Vedic terminology asva stands for horse, for speed and for energy. The chariot or ratha stands for the vehicle and its endeavours. The term hastinaada represents the vibrations of sound that impel. Very clearly then we have three essential features that indicate to man how to access the source namely, Sound-Motivation, Equipment_ Endeavour and Energy-Speed. With reference to man, his body and its employment or use would be the ratha. Self-motivation by urging the mind with goals would be hastinaada. Directing the body by energetically pursuing this goal would be putting the asva forward. It is with body's energetic efforts dancing to the tune of motivation that this accessing takes place.

Having accessed this shriyam the tangible result is shree in our lives. It is this shree that causes the rejoicing.

END OF PART ONE

SHRI SUVARNA REKHA JAYATU OM

TEXT-SHREE SUKTAM

RESPONSE -1

Please mark as T (true) or F (false) or D (doubtful)

QUESTION

1. It is not easy to find a one word meaning in English for the Sanskrit word Shree.
2. The power of Shruti manifests in its sound.
3. Amba House uses the Vedic approach to the meaning of the Shree suktam
4. Vedic concept of the divine is planned just liked the Purana-s.
5. Vedic sanskrit is same as Puranic sanskrit.
6. Suktas are indicators with a double value found only in the Vedas.
7. A single Vedic word has multiple meanings.
8. Amba House paraphrases Sanskrit texts rather than give only translations.

9. Jatavedah is a specific word used in connection with the fire of homa.
10. Lakshmi here means Goddess Lakshmi.
11. Even today in this modern age we need what Ga, Asva and Purusha stand for.
12. Hiranyagarbah refers to the embryonic origin of all crcation.
13. The royal metal gold is a symbol for wealth, auspiciousness and prosperity.
14. Shri and Shriyam mean the same.
15. The Homa was ritual act for thanking the Divine during the Vedic times.
16. Self motivation, proper direction of our body mind equipment and energetic efforts are all necessary to bring shree into our lives.

EMAIL RESPONSE

Simply give your NAME-COUNTRY- NAME OF TEXT- RESPONSE NUMBER- QUESTION NUMBER and enter T or F or D.

Send to vasanti.jayaswal@gmail.com