



THE NEED FOR INTEGRATED LINGUISTIC INTERPRETATION OF ANCIENT INDIAN DISCOURSES AND OBJECTS OF CULTURE

Dr.Sajan.R

M.A,B.Ed,L.L.B,Ph.D H.O.D, P.G. Department of History, N.S.S. College, Manjeri, Malappuram, Kerala

ABSTRACT The possibility for the plurality of interpretations of ideas and concepts in ancient literature, classical *darsanas* and artistic objects belonging to ancient India becomes clear when they are examined by contemporary seekers having different orientations of intellect and inclination. Some seekers sing in praise of them but others look down upon them. The need of the hour is a balanced, incisive and integrated approach lightened by the insight of scholarship. Conflicting nature of responses should be connected with the absence of the necessary attempt to comprehend the object under study in its totality. Once the precise significance of concepts *maya* and objects of art is sought and properly comprehended, totality and wholeness of vision will become clear. Vedic hymns were direct expressions of religious rituals leading to spiritual awareness. Those who sidestep from metaphysical implications and translate concepts and theories literally miss the precise significance. As a consequence, poetic sublimity and spiritual significance of *vedic* verses were ignored by European scholars who tried to find things of rational interest in them. Composers of *vedic* verses were seers and thinkers who had access to mystic and hidden truth. Using multi-semanticism of words, languages was handled by *vedic* sages to represent subtle mystical experience. The ingenious method of using language in *vedic* hymns made it linguistic representations having perennial freshness and lasting value. Hence, there is the necessity of integrated reading of ancient discourses and artistic objects for the comprehension of the totality existing as the undercurrent of Indian culture.

KEYWORDS : Culture, Literature, India, Vedic, Mauryas, Guptas, British, Civilization.

The interface between ancient Indian cultures as represented in literature, systems of knowledge like *darsanas* and epics in stones like temples in Konark and Khajuraho and modern mind pursuing it as part of its attempt to comprehend the past as well as the present produces possibly diametrically opposite responses and reactions. Some sing in praise of it whereas some others find it as fit for sneer or contemptuous treatment. One possible reason for the conflicting nature of responses is the fact that the subject of study is not accorded a sincere attempt to understand it in its totality. Hence ancient Indian culture signifies different things to different people, depending on the point of view and the range of involvement.

Generally speaking, scholars as well as laymen from western hemisphere evaluate the key note of Indian culture as charged with other worldly preoccupations leading to the practice of self-denial. This is evident from the popularity of words like *maya*, *nirvana* etc. Also, those who cannot see the minute details as well as the grand design regard the multitude of gods and *darshanas* as intoxicating celebration of paganism. One has to perceive the precise significance of symbols and comprehend the razor sharp distinctions of terms in *darshanas* to fully understand the totality and wholeness of vision represented in objects, texts, monuments and philosophies or *darshanas* in Indian traditions.

The distant phases of ancient Indian culture have vital and life giving links with the history of different ancient cultures. In the treatise titled *The Nature of Culture*, Kroeber came up with illuminating comment that ancient "Oikoumene" means the "inhabited", thereby representing the total habitable world at that distant age. The Greeks in classical period used the expression to refer to vast tracts of land stretching from the Pillars of Hercules to the Indian Ocean. The expansive region under this became the space where Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, Rome, Persia, China, India, Cambodia, Japan, Crete and Europe existed. It must be constantly borne in mind that there was continuous interaction among these vast tracts of land inhabited by people speaking different languages. The extent to which classical Greek knowledge relied on historical antecedents in other countries has been explored extensively in *Black Athena* by Martin Bernal. It is obvious that the Greek sculpture influenced Gandhara sculpture. The craft of paper making travelled from China to Europe making the recording of spoken language and knowledge in such a way that millions of people could benefit out of it. Eventually the invention of printing press created what is called the 'Gutenberg galaxy' by Marshall McLuhan. Kroeber is of the view that the 'Oikoumene' was the space where all higher cultures took its birth, evolution and growth. The development of farming, building up of towns, emergence of kingship and attendant mode of administration and the evolution and perfection of language and literature occurred in these regions.

The culture and civilization during the Harappan and the *vedic* phases eventually resulted in a commingling of both, but minute aspects of this mixing of ideas, practices, forms of communication and social and religious rituals remain an area of enquiry fit for controversy. Vedic hymns might have been direct expressions connected with religious rituals. Europeans scholars as well as Indian scholars who have been trained in their tradition of pure and often literal scholarship have, knowingly or unknowingly, done a palpable injustice to the metaphysical implications embodied in the hymns of the *Rigveda*. In other words Indian pundits and priests regarded the Vedas as a source of mythology and sacrificial ceremonies and the European scholars tried to find in things of rational interest like history, myths and popular religious ideas. Hence the "spiritual interest and its poetic greatness and beauty" were not given due care, as Sri Aurobindo states in *The Secret of the Vedas*.

The composers of the Vedic hymns were not just shepherds and wanderers in search of medicinal plants, but they were thinkers and prophets. In fact they were *rsi*, *dhira*, that is, seers and thinkers. As Aurobindo states; "These singers believed that they were in possession of a high, mystic and hidden truth, claimed to be the bearers of a speech acceptable to a divine knowledge and expressly so speak of their utterance, as secret words which declare their whole significance only to the seer, and to those who come after them the Veda was a book of knowledge, and even of the supreme knowledge, a revelation".

As for the meaning of the expression secret words which reveal their significance only to the seer, it has to be understood as the fact that in ancient languages, words are multi semantic in meaning. That is, they have whole or undivided meanings which must be understood in its totality or wholeness. It is clear from the Latin word spirits which implies wind, breath, and spirit. The Vedic seers used words of this category with one of their meanings in the forefront and others being in the background. Hence, when others try to comprehend the meaning of it, only the initiated person can really comprehend the mystical or psychological meaning. In other words, by effectively using the multi-semanticism of words, language was handled in the secret way there by keeping the subtle and mystical experiences away from the uninitiated people. This ingenious technique of using language by the *vedic* seers have rendered ancient symbols and myths verbal artifacts having perennial freshness and enduring relevance. In reconstructing the History of the ancient India, this aspect of perception is to be always borne in mind for having a total and integrated picture of the subject of enquiry.

To take certain revealing examples, *agni* in the *vedas* is fire as well as the psychic fire within human beings. The *gous* or cows are the animals called cows as well as rays of divine light. *Indra* is a warrior god as well as divine will. Hence, it is easy to measure the sublime range of their

mystical poetry. Interpretation is the light of primitive anthropomorphism is a gross distortion of the implied significance of the sublime perception represented in these verses by the *vedic* sages.

The central features of Indian culture as it evolved down the centuries are the existence of unity and complexity. During the historic periods when India experienced absence of stability and consequent weakness as can be broadly seen from 1000 A.D to 1300 A.D, the social and political factors became so complex with the result that the sense of unity suffered serious decline. It is interesting to note that a sort of political unity was imposed on the complexity and variety of India during the colonial rule implemented in India by the British.

It is to be noted that during the days when India reached pinnacle of glory as exemplified in the ages of the Mauryas and the Guptas, Ashoka or Samudraguptha, that Indian culture experienced its full blooded growth, there by retaining a sense of unity and complexity. Now a days, it seems that India passess through historic period when the complexity and variety effectively pose challenge to the sense of unity. It is widely held that our constitution will provide necessary orientation and act as a beacon in giving a sense of direction to overcome challenges so that national unity will prevail. The constitution as a document embodying political vision and the principle of justice represented in modern idiom is the one sure anchor to overcome challenges and problems in order to realize the essential unity of India. Hence in India's search for unity, the document called the constitution of India effectively becomes the medium and the agency to realize the aim by providing the necessary foundation built in modern idiom and languages.

References

1. Sri.Aurobindo, 1959, The Foundation of Indian Culture, Pondicherry.
2. Kroeber, 1972, The Nature of Culture, London.
3. Raghavanlyer(ed)1965, The Glass Curtain between Asia and Europe, Madras.
4. Kroeber,A.C.A,1962, Roster of Civilization and Culture, Aldine publishing company,Chicago,U.S.A.
5. Vivekananda,1963, Complete Works of Swami Vivekanda, vol.iv, Birth Centenary edition.
6. Mulk Raj Anand, 1963, Is there a Contemparrary Civilization, Asia.