

Vedas - A Brief Introduction

Dr. M. G. Prasad

What are the Vedas ? Vedas deal with an in depth knowledge of themes like Supreme God, Soul, the Divinities, Nature, Life, Right Action and the such. The word 'Veda' is formed from the root 'Vid' which means 'to know' or 'to receive'. Vedas are essentially an integrated library of knowledge which sets unbiased reference to which humanity can look towards for guidance and conduct of life. So, 'Vedas are a repository of knowledge'.

How did the Vedas originate ? The sages who intensely pursued the objective to understand life and the universe received the knowledge through revelation by divinities. The sages who heard and reflected on the revelations chanted them as mantras with purity and sincerity. It can be said that the vedas came in the form of mantras originated by the pure causal energy which is not constrained from the limitation of the gross material as source. The vedas are also considered as the breath of the Supreme Being. Thus, the origin of the Vedas (whose truth is established in Nature) is attributed to the supra-rational Intelligent Being rather than the human intellect and feelings. So, the Vedas have originated from a level which transcends the level of human creation.

Features of the Vedas : The Vedas in the form of mantras got transferred orally from the sages to the disciples who in turn transmitted them orally through chanting to the next generation. This tradition of precise and clear memory-based oral communication between guru (teacher) and the shishya (disciple) ensured the transfer of the vedas till the advent of writing of the Sanskrit language. The organization of the vast Vedas into four major branches namely the Rig, Yajur, Sama and the Atharvana Vedas is attributed to the great sage Veda Vyasa, around 3700 B.C. Currently, only a small portion of the original vedas in Sanskrit are available.

The veda mantras have three features, namely Rishi (sage), Chandas (metre), and Devata (divinity or God). These features indicate that a mantra was perceived in a Chandas by the inspiration of God. Thus, mantras can be perceived as vedic statements with certain special acoustic features, the contemplative repetition of which provides strength to the mind in times of weakness and elevates mind towards divinity and knowledge. So, the vedas have eternal and experiential features.

Relevance of the Vedas : Seeds are essential for the successful growth of a tree in terms of yielding delicious fruits, strong branches and the such. We nurture the roots with water, fertilizer, props and the like to obtain a strong tree and delicious fruits. Similarly, the Vedas are referred to as the roots of knowledge from which the tree as universe and life is perpetuated. Hence, the relevance and importance of the Vedas are as the seeds that influence education and knowledge which are essential to understanding Life in the Universe. Any level of inquiry into the Vedas will help in furthering one's understanding of Life, its purpose and values. It is in this context that the Vedas, with their eternal and universal theme are relevant to any human inquiry.

References :

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