

Human Values and Social Inequality**Avijit Pandit**

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Abstract:

Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, Kavayas, Natakas, Epics as well as the whole Sanskrit Literature has given much importance to human values. The makers of Sanskrit literature have a clear vision about the life which is undisturbed and pious. They know how a man can make his life happy by following human values. Life without human values is meaningless and sinful. That is why the Sanskrit writers have filled their works with human values like truth, charity, service to humanity, self-control, patriotism [Respect towards mother and mother land], respect forwards elderly people, God-fearing nature etc. Human values define a person. Human values are the criteria for judging right and wrong, righteousness and unrighteousness. Adhering to these values is a characteristic of humans. Otherwise, what is the difference between humans and animals ? Even animals enjoy life-sustaining essential activities like eating, sleeping, fearing and mating. It is through righteous behaviour that a person, even a social animal, is called a human. Human values are qualities that encourage the all-round and ultimate progress and development of the individual and society and do not hinder the development of other animals. Just as human values were promoted in the Vedic era and social inequality was established, in the same way, the decline of human values and social inequality are being manifested in the present era as well. A lifestyle based on human values makes the society peaceful and corruption-free. Without human values world peace unimaginable. Only the practice of human values can protect humanity from this horror.

Keywords: Human Values, Degradation, Discrimination, Civilization.**Introduction:**

The Vedas are the first available texts not only in Sanskrit literature but also in world literature, from the Vedas to the present day, the entire Indian thought is reflected in the Sanskrit literature. The welfare of all mankind is possible only through the moral expression of human values. The ancient sages wanted to enlighten the entire world with the light of human values, so they composed the great scriptures. Humans are evolutionary animals, and humanity is replaced by environmental impositions on this animalistic nature. This sense of humanity gives birth to the developed essence of human values, and man develops himself in his own inner being. That is, the relationship between human values and humans is the same as the relationship between *Abayaba* and *Abayabī*. There is no person in the world who does not have a sense of value expressed in them. Because, in the same way that the darkness of ignorance falsely portrays knowledge or material existence as false and presents it as acceptable, and achieves the destruction of ignorance through the manifestation of knowledge, values are also revealed. Social issues based on jealousy, selfishness, religious reform, political context, and class or ethnic discrimination are presented as obstacles to this revealed being. In the present struggle-oriented scientific age, there are many anxieties, agitation, hatred and unrest of the mind dancing. The decline in human values is the reason for this. The need for these values is greater today. Western scholars on moral values say that in societies

constantly changing in various social systems and civilizations, the preservation of morality or moral values is the unbroken chain that connects the ancient world with the modern world. Over time, human values and inequality in society have been defined as the single most important cause of social degradation, and in order to find a way out of this, humans have emerged as the embodiment of humanity throughout the ages. People have realized that the ultimate goal of human life is to illuminate the world and life with the light of the Supreme *Brahma* by creating a balanced environment based on values in the midst of social degradation. A person with good senses and mind is the best creature among the living beings, a mind free from impurities is the organization of human values. Human spiritual wealth and all natural resources are gradually enriched by environmental consciousness. Unbridled greed and a class-based view of each other lead to the erosion of human values. From a divine perspective, it is appropriate to share the goods of consumption among all. Because the desire for more wealth or accumulation of wealth is not beneficial to human society. To make this world beautiful and healthy, people need to work continuously. A life of work makes people live long and healthy. As a result, the environment becomes beautiful and beneficial, and human values are preserved, therefore, it is said in the *Īsopaniṣad* –

īśāvāsyamidam sarvam yat kinca jagatyām jagat /

tena tyaktena bhuñjīthā mā grdhah kasyasiddhanam //¹

kurvanneveha karmāṇi jijīviṣecchatamsamāḥ /

evam tvayi nānyathetoasti na karma lipyate nare //²

The Vedas are the foundation of religion, and along with them, the memory of those who know the Vedas, the virtue of the noble, and the satisfaction of the conscience are also sources of religion. This statement establishes the importance of the Vedas as the foundation of all religious principles and practices. The fourth *Puruṣārtha* emphasizes the primacy of religion as a value everywhere. The desire for wealth is not rejected at all, but is accepted as contrary to religion –

vedoakhilo dharmamūlam smrtiṣīle ca tadvidām /

ācāraścaiva sādḥūnāmātmanastuṣṭireva ca //³

The personal, socio-economic values specified by the moderns have been incorporated everywhere in Sanskrit literature. These values are collected in the form of proverbs in the four Vedas. We should adopt thoughts that do not hinder progress and be ready to protect and enrich ourselves like gods every day, so says the *R̥gveda* –

ā no bhadraḥ kratavo yantu viśvato adabdhāso aparītāsaudbhidaḥ /

deva no yathā sadamid vridhe asannaprāyūvo rakṣitāro dive dive //⁴

Great and good ideas, wherever they are or by whom they are said, are acceptable and should be received with sincerity by people. This supports the statement that a good proverb is acceptable even to children, acceptance can be in the case of old ideas as well as new ideas. *brahmanaḥ kośoasi medhayā pihitaḥ / śrutam me gopāya⁵* - it is a prayer in which one asks God to bless oneself with the possession and preservation of knowledge. It is a Vedic prayer for the preservation of wisdom and knowledge, and is often used as the motto of educational institutions. Not only should it be held, but that knowledge should be enhanced by study and preaching. The bond of friendship strengthens the sense of social values, as we

find mention of in the *R̥gveda* – *Na sa sakhā yo na dadāti sakhye* ।⁶ Give, take, tell a secret, ask a secret, eat with, and feed another. These six actions are the characteristics of a true friend -

dadāti pratigrhnāti gr̥hyamākhyāti pr̥cchati ।

*bhunkte bhojayate caiva śadvidham pr̥tilakṣanam ।*⁷

It conveys the message of full coexistence of *Sumanah*, always in cooperation with each other in social life, which is urgently needed today. Because life is often plagued by struggle, hatred and so on. Therefore, there is a lack of values such as harmony, peace and love. Their importance is defined in the Vedas, states that we should all work together with one mind and one purpose for the welfare of all at all times. We always want to hear the good news from everyone's mouth, we want to see the good of everyone, we don't think of anyone's harm. Mentioned in the *Yajurveda* that

om bhadraṃ karṇebhiḥ śṛṇuyama devāḥ ।

*bhadraṃ pashyemakṣabhiḥ yajatrāḥ ।*⁸

May all be happy, may all be free from disease, may all see well-being and may none suffer from sorrow. It wishes for peace and universal well-being, the same idea is found in the *Bṛhadaranyakopaniṣad* - Om Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinaḥ, Sarve Santu Nirāmayāḥ । Sarve Bhadrāṇi Paśyantu, Mākaścid

Duhkhabhāḡ Bhavet ॥ We should have a friendly attitude towards all people and have a pleasant attitude towards them all –

mitrasyāhaṃ chakṣuṣā sarvāṇi bhūtāni samīkṣe ।

*mitrasya chakṣuṣā samīkṣāmahe ।*⁹

Many many verse of Vedas teaches us to pray for a friendly view of each other, which generates goodwill and compassion towards all living beings. The mind is the root source of emotions such as hatred and conflict. It has been said that the mind is the cause of bondage and liberation for human beings. One should think in such a way that auspicious thoughts always appear in the mind, '*tanme manah śivasankalpam astu*'¹⁰ is a part of the Shiva Sankalpa Sukta of the *Yajurveda*, which prays for controlling the mind and directing it toward good thoughts. This mantra emphasizes understanding the powers of the mind and channeling them in the right direction. One should earn money through hard work and efficiency, but it should be used for the welfare of others and upliftment of the society, which will bring progress and prosperity in life.

śatahastāḥ samāharaḥ sahasrahastāḥ samkīraḥ ।

*kṛtasya kāryasya ca iha sphātim samāvahaḥ ।*¹¹

While wealth acquired through religious paths should be enjoyed and Lakṣmī should be honoured, the Vedic sages pray that all wealth acquired through sins should be destroyed immediately – '*ramantām pūṇyā lakṣmīḥyāḥ papīstāanīnaśam*'¹². Many many statement of vedas is the root source of the mantra of peace which is proclaimed everywhere in the Vedas and Upanishads, may peace be established among all people. There are three kinds of peace – superphysical, superdivine and spiritual. The main goal of human life should be to reach the path of ultimate divinity through the practice of human values. Different religions, philosophies, and traditions may take different paths to reach the truth, but ultimately they all

lead to the same basic vedic truth, This ancient Vedic mantra holds the key to universal spiritual unity. The Divine may be called by many names and forms across different cultures and faiths, but there is only One Supreme Truth behind them all -

indram mitram varuṇamagnimāhuratho divyaḥ sa suparṇo garutmān /

ekam sad viprā bahudhā vadanti, agniṃ yamaṃ mātariśvānaṃ āhuḥ //³

At the beginning of civilization, when people lived in groups, they presented an example of the harmonious union of intentions, hearts, and minds –

samānī va ākūtiḥ samānā hradayāni vaḥ /

samānamastu vo mano yathā vaḥ susahāsati //⁴

However, in the desire to survive, they declared jihad by declaring group differences as enemies, and from that day on, social discrimination and inequality took the form of discrimination. In the spread of civilization, the Indus Valley Civilization, namely the Harappan and Mohenjo-daro civilizations, attained the status of advanced civilizations. Naturally, the primitive animalistic social class-caste-gender discrimination was applied. Where social communities or class divisions are seen. For example, priests, merchants, artisans and bonded laborers or slaves. Looking at the existence of this social stratification or class division, it can be said that the embryonic existence of the later caste-based structure was revealed during the Harappan civilization. However, although this form of discrimination did not take a clear form in the heyday of ancient Indian Aryan civilization, the appearance of class and caste or caste differences is observed in the era of *Rgvedaḥ*. In the *Akṣasūktāḥ*¹⁵, the strong desire of people to play dice in the then society and its terrible resulting degradation are observed. And this game has been accepted as a form of social injustice. That is, the hierarchical organization of the upper class of the society with the wealthy and the lower class of the poor is evident. This distinction between the rich and the poor gives rise to the class division in the economic sphere of the society at the initial stage. Again, with the discovery of the agricultural production system and the progress of that production system, the Vedic society gradually transitioned from the earlier tribal society based on equality to a society based on rank or wealth inequality. The attempt of the writers to divide society into these four castes of Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra is merely idealistic, though not realistic. In ancient India there were two castes, *Āryaḥ* and *Anāryaḥ*. The *Āryaḥ*s took the defeated *Anāryaḥ*s as slaves, used the *Anāryaḥ*s as their own property. The main basis of the difference between them was the colour of the body and social customs, that is, anthropological and cultural -

brāhmaṇāsah pitarah somyāsah śive no dyāvāprthivī aneḥasā /

pūṣā nah pātu duriṭād rtāvrdho rakṣā mākir no aghasamsa īśata //⁶

The *Rgvedaḥ* uses the word *Brāhmaṇaḥ* as auspicious and the word *Kṣatriyaḥ* as a title for the gods, especially *Mitraḥ*, *Varunaḥ* and *Ādityaḥ*.¹⁷ The word *Kṣatriyaḥ* is also used to refer to kings or noble persons.¹⁸ It should be noted that the words *Vaiśyaḥ* and *Śūdraḥ* are mentioned only in the *Puruṣa-Sūktāḥ*.¹⁹ The superiority of Brahmins is spoken of in the *Taittiriya Samhitā*²⁰ and the *Atharvaveda*.²¹ Contradictory ideologies are also found in Vedic literature. In the Vedic period, slaves or indentured servants were under the complete control of their masters. It is mentioned in many hymns-praise hymns of the Vedas that these slaves were also included in the offerings made to God. And if all the references are

found about maidservants, it is seen that Aryan men considered maidservants as concubines, not as wives. Of course, the *R̥gvedaḥ* mentions the Aryans producing children in the wombs of maidservants. Again, childless widows were entitled to produce children through their brothers-in-law; which is known as the *Niyoga-Prathā* system.²² It is clearly mentioned in the *Mahabharata*; which is a symbol of sexual humiliation of womanhood. In the post-Vedic era, when social inequality led to the degradation of human values, this inequality was presented in a different way. The inequality between the upper and lower classes in society became evident. As a result of gender inequality in society, women were subjected to extreme physical and mental oppression. Due to the imposition of gender discrimination on the highest category of virtue and action, a critical moment was created in society. As a result, the proper development of virtue and action was not achieved. Although the attempt to overcome such a social situation may have taken many, the improvement in the fate of a limited person took a very fruitful form. For example, *Vedavyasa*, born of a prostitute's daughter, *Vaśiṣṭa*, the son of a prostitute, etc., became a great sage, revered as a teacher of the scriptures, through spiritual practice. That is, respecting the qualified and helping the unqualified to attain qualification is in accordance with the *Dharma*. Honouring someone merely by looking at their birth is a sign of foolishness. If someone is born in a *Brahmana* family and behaves like a *Śūdra*, or if the opposite is seen, then the *Brahmana* will attain *Śūdra* status and the *Śūdra* will attain *Brahmana* status, it is mentioned in the *Śānti Parva* of the *Mahābhārata* and the *Padma Purāna*. Even as a result of undesirable activities like selling daughters, drinking alcohol, adultery and even infanticide, the Brahmins of that time were not expelled or degraded from society. Which form is same as in our society in the field of politically or financially powerful people. But other sections of society, who are innocent, virtuous and religious, were easily subjected to oppression and persecution. In *Āryakavya*, just as the story of *Ekalavya* giving *dakṣiṇā* to his guru shows respect and devotion, the degradation of human values based on caste discrimination is also observed to the extreme. And countless people are victims of social discrimination. Where humiliation of women and class discrimination are also widespread. In order to change this trend of social degradation, the God *Śrīkṛṣṇa* tried to awaken human values through the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*, by denying the birth-based discrimination and through the ancient philosophy of distinction of qualities and actions. So *Śrīkṛṣṇa* said that

cātur-varnyam mayā sṛṣṭam guna-karma-vibhāgaśaḥ |

tasya kartāramapi māṃ viddhyakartāramavyayam | 1³

To control the society in the face of discrimination, *Yajñavalkya Samhitā* formulated various policies, which gained prominence over time and helped in the change of eras. Indian society is deeply divided, there is so much disunity, isolation, and chaos in the society. In today's society, the oppression of the strong over the weak or *Mātsyanyāya* has always taken on a practical form. Social inequality was equally highlighted in the *Arthaśāstra* and *Manusamhitā*. At that time, the clear image of the ruling and exploited classes openly declared, degradation of human values was possible. But, all the principles that were essential in the field of social organization and control were fully developed in the *Yajñavalkya Samhitā*, *Arthaśāstra*, and *Manusamhitā*. To accelerate the pace of awakening human values, *Viṣṇuśarmā* awakened society by composing the *Pañcatantram* in the form of teaching the princes about ethics. With the change of time, in order to restore the inequality of society, *Nārāyaṇśarmā* gave a new form by imitating ancient morality, which was a transitional form of human values, but due to lack of education, social reform did not take a possible form. In the course of time, foreign nations like Shakas, Kushans,

Huns etc. Invaded India and established settlements, adopted Brahmanical-Buddhist religions and acquired Hinduism, as a result, various streams of human values were witnessed. This stream of values provided new resources to the independence movement of subjugated India. Raja Rammohan Roy, Vivekananda showed special cooperation in the formation of values by overcoming social inequality.

Conclusion :

The soul, mind, intellect, and consciousness of man have come to various stages of gradual expression and through the selection of the fittest, the creation, change, and destruction of the diversity of life in the world have also been achieved in an equal manner. The class or racial arrangement that is observed among all the living beings in the world should be the same in the human field as is desirable and scientific. In the scientific consciousness, man is the best of the animals in the world, therefore superiority is expected from such beings, no discrimination or distinction of any kind. Yet, over time, man has elevated himself to the status of a violent animal. Today, standing in the 21st century, man thinks of himself as a progressive, well-informed, thoughtful person, with the ability to transform the world, but in reality, it has not been justified. Even though he paints himself in the colors of civilization, the real color has faded, the environment has polluted, which is the pollution of valuelessness. From which we will have to find the way of liberation through this thought that we are all human beings. A lifestyle based on human values makes the individual, family, society and nation healthy, peaceful, radiant and corruption-free. Without human values, universal brotherhood, humanism, equality, human rights, love, sacrifice, world peace, international cooperation and friendship are unimaginable. Today humanity is terrified by the prospect of a world war. Only the practice of human values can protect humanity from this horror.

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