

## Chapter-V

### *Artha* as a Value Concept

The term '*artha*' refers to both the wealth and the political economy and as such covers both the economic and the political values. All value-theories and theories of normative ethics are centered round the concept of human self and his desires and interests. All of them can be brought under the head of *Kama*. Hence, in the words of Prof. Hiriyanna, 'They, *Artha* and *Kama* are the useful and agreeable and represent the lower values.'

Before dealing with the *Artha*- value proper, it will be better to deal with the Vedic outlook on life and the world. The Vedic outlook on life is integral and comprehensive. Even the literal meaning of the Vedic hymns shows that the Vedic people were interested both in secular as well as spiritual values, both in the individual as well as social reality. Theirs was not an other-worldly and escapist religion. There is no place for pessimistic trends like that of Schopenhauer in Vedic philosophy and religion. Unlike Schopenhauer and other pessimists, the Vedic people prayed for a life span of hundred years and even more. According to Schopenhauer, it is impossible for a man to be completely happy and, hence, in the mood of extreme pessimism, he becomes an advocate of the will to die. On the contrary, the Vedic people were advocates of the will to live and the will to conquer. They appear to be very cheerful and heroic in their lives ordinarily beset with obstacles and struggles. In leading a cheerful and heroic life, they would not be depressed. They would rather pray for God's help in securing earthly ends than indulge in depressive moods.

The Vedic hymns are not religious in totality because there are hymns that are secular and treat of social themes. Their constant prayer is the prayer for a life of hundred years full of strength, health and wealth. But it was not a prayer for mere biological survival.

They also aspired for psychological existence that is genuinely human. Human existence must be a life of vigour and victory. It must be free from misery and humiliation. They would not tolerate the idea of being conquered by others or being victims of circumstances. Hence, the Vedic prayer:

*Tat caksur devahitam purastat sukramuccarata pasyema saradh satam jivema saradah satam. (Rgveda 7.66.16)*

(Let me see for 100 years the luster that benefits the gods and is revealed before us. Let me live for 100 years).

Similar prayer is found in the *Atharvaveda* and *Sukla Yajurveda* in which important statements have been added to the *Rgvedic* prayer:

*Adlnah syama saradah satam (White Yajurveda 36.24)*

*Nandama sardah satam*

*Ajl tah syama saradah satam (Taittiriya Aranyaka 4.42)*

*Buddhyema saradah satam (Atharvaveda 19.67.3)*

The sage further prays for a life of hundred years, which is full of joy. He desires to be invincible. There is a desire to be free from any kind of domination. He does not want to be vanquished by others. There is also the prayer for vigour, power of speech, strong lungs, powerful eyes and ears, strong arms, energetic hearts, etc. the objective was to seek a healthy and happy life, without fear and wants, without poverty and slavery. They also aspired for the life of strength and prosperity. Thus, there is no trace of negative, defeatist and reverence for defeatist and escapist approach and outlook in the Vedic philosophy. For this benediction they are grateful to the Almighty. This attitude of gratitude and reverence for various manifestation of the Godhead is expressed in the Vedic hymns. But their prayers are not the prayers of the idlers or lotus-eaters. They are the prayers of heroic people. They

try to achieve their ends by their own endeavour and heroism. It was their firm faith that both the earthly and spiritual ends must be secured by personal toil and efforts. Accordingly, the *Rgveda* says: *Nu rte srantasya sakhyaya devah*. God helps and supports only him who works hard and sweats to his utmost capacity. God helps those who help themselves. Even the earthly values, viz. *Artha* and *Kama* (prosperity, profit, political ends, success or pleasure, or emotional satisfaction and aesthetic enjoyment) must be legitimately realised. The Vedic people not only have positively prayed for wealth and prosperity, pleasure and progeny, they also have positively expressed their hatred for slavery, miserliness, greed and diseases. They also positively prayed for prestige and position in society. The call to banish poverty was given long back by the *Rgveda* (10.155.1). The need for achievement as stated above was very dominant in the Vedic Age. But it requires health as well as constant human effort and as such they aspired for wealth and prosperity. There is a famous episode in the *Aitareya Brahmana* (33.3). This *Brahmana* belongs to the *Rgveda* itself. In this episode, Indra advises Rohit to make efforts and toil to achieve the objectives of life (*caraiveri caraiveti*). Indra admonishes Rohit:

Is there any one who has earned wealth without hard work? Remember, the idle man is a sinner. God helps those who entertain higher aims. Therefore, I ask you to work and achieve the goal. An idle man who always sleeps is the emblem of *Kaliyuga kalih sayano bhavati* (the age of all round degradation, one of the four epochs).

The Vedic philosophers believed in four cultural cycles, which can be realised by human beings. Cultural achievements depend on human efforts. When the thought to achieve something enters the human heart, it is the sign of *Dvapara Yuga* (second stage – *sanjihanastu dvaparah*). In the third stage (*Tretayuyga*), he tries to move in order to achieve

higher and higher values (*krtam sampadyate caran caraivalti*). Thus, man is the maker of his age. Further, Indra says,

“Just see a bee collects honey by moving from flower to flower. The birds enjoy fruits by flying from tree to tree. Does the Sun expect rest or respite even for a moment? (*carunvai madhu vindati caransvadumudumbaram suryasya pasya sremanam yo ra tandrayate caran caraiveti*). Hence, strive to obtain human ends (*caraiveti*)”.

Thus, the Sun is placed before us as an ideal model of selfless activism. The passage gives us a robust philosophy of activism. Thus, even being realistic, the Vedic seers were progressive idealists. They would struggle for existence, for better existence and try to come out with success and victory. They would not allow any encroachment upon the society from within or without. They would pray God to help them to kill their enemies but they would help those who would be friendly to them (*Rgveda* 8.40). They would not like to be idle or in fear. One of the seers says,

“Let me go ahead without fear. The sun and the moon, the day and the night, go on without rest or fear. Similarly, let me proceed ahead”. (*Atharvaveda* 5.20).

Even in earthly life, they valued the pairs of values of light and liberation, liberality and love. With labour they would like to achieve their earthly ends and thus, to get freedom from their worries, poverty and environmental and social slavery.

### Vedic Society and Secular Progress

The value of *Artha* is to be understood in its various dimensions. The words *Sampatti* and *Dhana* are not to be understood in the crude sense of the food only. In its true sense, *Artha* is a nourishing and fulfilling value. *Dhana* should lead to *dhanyata*. There are references to ornaments and gold, various types of vessels and vehicles in the Vedas.

Moreover, there are also references to various professions and vocations. There are descriptions of overseas trades. Even such references show that the Vedic people were not barbaric nomads. They were well settled in society. Hence, there are references to social norms. Therefore, Wilson rightly observes:

“It has been a favourite notion with some of the eminent scholars that the Hindus of the period of the compositions of the Vedic hymns were a nomadic and a pastoral people. This opinion seems to rest upon the frequent solicitations for food, horses and cattle, which are found in the hymns and is unsupported by any more positive statements. That the Hindus were not nomads is evident from the repeated allusions to fixed dwellings, villages and towns and we can scarcely suppose them to have been in this respect behind their barbarian enemies, the overthrow of whose numerous cities is so often spoken of. A pastoral people they might have been to some extent but they were also perhaps in a still greater degree an agricultural people as is evidenced by their supplication for abundant rain and for the fertility of earth and by the mention of agricultural products, particularly barley. They were also a manufacturing people, for the art of weaving, the labors of carpenter, the fabrication of golden and of iron nails are alluded to and what is more remarkable they were maritime and mercantile people”.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, the Vedic people were very much advanced and civilized. There are references to social institutions like marriage, family and social classes in the *Rgveda* itself. There are also moral gems scattered through out the collections of Vedic hymns. There are highly philosophical hymns in the *Rgveda* itself. Even Max Muller compares the thoughts contained in them to the philosophical thoughts of Plato and Kant. A.R. Wallace, a contemporary of Darwin, compared the Vedic seers to the best religious teachers and poets

of the world. Wallace was an advocate of the theory of evolution or Spencerian Progressivism. While writing on the Vedas, he says, 'In the Veda, we find the essential teaching of the most advanced religious thinkers.' Further, he says:

“we must admit that the mind which conceived and expressed in appropriate language, such ideas as are everywhere present in the Vedic hymns, could not have been inferior to the best of our religious teachers and poets to our Milton, Shakespeare and Tennyson”.<sup>2</sup>

Marriage was a well-established social institution in Vedic times. Marriage was just not a contract. But, on the other hand, it was to be treated as a sacred bond. Hence, the Vedic seers and sages had placed before society intimate and ideal conjugal life between man and his wife. But those who have assumed the theory of evolution as true even of the social institution and the development of moral and spiritual ideas cannot tolerate the view that the most primitive Vedic people were cultured and civilized to this degree because they believed that a primitive society cannot but be a barbaric society. The Marxists who accept various stages of society from primitive communism to the dictatorship of the proletariat see only primitive communism in most ancient societies. Hence, they fabricate fantastic ideas to interpret the Vedic terms and concepts. Dange's work "*India from Primitive Communism to Slavery*" is a standing example of this distortionist approach. Dange has distorted the meanings of the words like '*yajna*', '*Brahman*', etc. to show that the Vedic society was nothing but a form of primitive communism. Such a society is without any moral and social norms as Dange could see:

“.....well fed and well drunk, the Vedic people slept round the fire in promiscuity in the early days or retired with their selected pairs to their huts. When later on, the pairing family developed in the commune household man was pleased and so was

*Agni*. Thus, the Brahman, the commune lived and laboured, enjoyed, and multiplied".<sup>3</sup>

But even a cursory reading of the Vedic hymns shows that the people were living in a society of well-established social institutions and social norms. So many similes in the Vedas refer to the intimate relations between husband and wife. The Vedic literature itself shows that the Vedic people were highly developed; their language is highly developed. Can one imagine the primitive and the most backward society, which has produced highly philosophical hymns like *Asya Vamasya* and *Nasadiya hymns*? It is not for nothing that the Vedas have been recognized and respected as doubtlessly authoritative, at least, in the spiritual matters. The seeds of later dharma and philosophical schools can be traced to the Vedas.

### *Artha* as an Economic Value

There is a positive outlook towards wealth in the Vedas. *Artha* as an economic value was never to be divorced from social commitments and responsibilities. Hence, it was a social value. When wealth is pursued for its own sake, it radiates a degrading effect on the personality of man. Because of worship of money, man gets depersonalized and dehumanized. He loses the sense of emotional values of personal affection and aesthetic appreciation. According to R.H. Tawney, 'functionless property values neither culture nor beauty. It cannot make nor can it create'.<sup>4</sup> Gradually, such wealth becomes a disvalue both for the individual and the society at large. Goldsmith's warning 'where wealth accumulates man decays', comes true. Even Julian Huxley, the great biologist, has given the warning against converting the legitimate pursuit of wealth and material pleasure into the worship of money and the cult of crude hedonism. In his work '*Humanist framework*', Huxley observes:

“Once we truly believe that man’s destiny is to make possible greater fulfillment for more human beings and fuller achievement by human societies, utility in the customary sense becomes sub-ordinate. Quantity of material production is, of course, necessary as the basis for the satisfaction of elementary human needs, but only up to a certain degree. More than a certain number of calories or cocktails or T.V. sets, washing machines per person is not merely unnecessary, but bad. Quantity of material production can only be a means to a further end, not an end in itself”.<sup>5</sup>

The Upanishads had clearly given this warning thousands of years ago *Na vittena tarpaniyo manusyah*- material wealth cannot fully satisfy man. Hence, Huxley rightly asks us to abandon the pernicious habit of evaluating every human project solely in terms of its material utility or profit.<sup>6</sup>

Accumulation of wealth in the hands of a few is socially dangerous. It is both an effect and cause of social as well as economic exploitation of the masses. This is a great defect of what is called capitalist social order. A capitalist is one who exploits every human calamity as an opportunity to exploit the people. Thus, the vulture-like mentality is developed. Against this danger, the Veda commands: *Ma grdhaḥ kasyachit dhanam*. (White *Yajurveda* 40.1) i.e., do not covet anybody’s wealth. Do not be envious and jealous of others: *Na krodho na camatsaryam na lobho nasubhamatih* (*Srisukta, Rgveda*). Wealth by itself was never condemned by Vedic sages and seers. On the contrary, they solicited gods for the sake of wealth. They wrote hymns on wealth and prosperity (for instance *Srisuktam*). They never pursued wealth for its own sake. They always treated it as a source of individual and social welfare. Its social significance was never overlooked. There are, therefore, hymns in praise of personal charities. Vedas enjoin upon us to earn and spend wealth in the right way. Let a man think well on wealth and strive to win it by the path of law and by worship.



And let him, take counsel with his own inner wisdom and grasp with spirit still greater ability. Hence, in one of the Rg Vedic hymns economic and hedonic egoism is condemned as a sin.

*Moghamannam vindate apracetah satyam bravimi vadha it sa tasya Naryamanam psyati no sakhayam kevalagho bhavati kevaladi (Rgveda 10. 117.6)*

Similarly, the verse in the Yajurveda (40.1) further enjoins upon us to enjoy upon us to enjoy wealth with renunciation and restraint '*ten tyaktena bhunjithah*'. The same thought or attitude is expressed in one of the verses of the *Bhagavadgita*:

*Yajnasistasinah santo muccante sarvakilbisaih,*

*Bhunjate te tvagham papa ye pacantyatmakaranat. (Bhagavadgita 3.13)*

Those who enjoy wealth and food by themselves are sinners. Personal charity was accepted as a social value. It was also given spiritual foundation. Hence, it would stop the rot of commercialization of human relations and the emergence of what Tawney calls 'acquisitive society'. Thus, wealth was not only an economic instrument but also an instrument of social harmony. Modern thinkers and economists like R.H. Tawney and F.F. Schumacher<sup>7</sup> insist on the dictum that the wealth is a good servant but a bad master of society. In this context, R.H. Tawney writes, "property is moral and healthy only when it is used as a condition not of idleness but of activity and when it involves the discharge of definite personal obligations. Thus, it should be based on the principle of function".<sup>8</sup>

The following four propositions can be held with reference to the significance of the wealth:

1. Wealth is the foundation of civilization and culture.
2. Wealth is meant for self-indulgence and self-aggrandizements.
3. All wealth is theft:

4. Wealth is an aid to creative work and social service.

The first two propositions advocate purely materialist axiology. The third proposition was stated by Proudhon. This view of Proudhon is a result of his reaction against exploitative nature of capitalist society. Proudhon condemned wealth as theft. Nobody can deny the value of wealth in satisfying the elementary human needs. Hence, not all property can be theft, Wealth collected through illegal and immoral means and used for personal self-aggrandisement only at the cost of the producer, is certainly a theft.

Such an egoistic attitude towards wealth is certainly despicable. But unfortunately modern economists encourage avarice and greed. Keynes, for instance, in 1930, stated:

“The time for valuing ends above means and preferring the good to the useful has not yet come. For at least another hundred years, we must pretend to ourselves and to everyone that fair is foul and foul is fair, for foul is useful and fair is not. Avarice, usury, and precaution must be our gods for a little longer still. For only they can lead us out of the tunnel of the economic necessity into daylight”. Such an outlook towards wealth makes ethical values irrelevant in It makes economics a science of naked selfishness of economics”.<sup>9</sup>

Such acquisitive and selfish orientation towards wealth is condemned in the Vedas clearly. They accepted the fourth proposition, namely, wealth personal efforts and used to promote social and spiritual goals duties of man of man to earn wealth and to give away as much as possible in the form of personal charities. Thus, *Atharvaveda* enjoins upon us the duty: ‘*Satahasta samahara sahastrahasta sankira. (Atharvaveda 3.24.5)* earn and collect wealth with hundred hands and give it away with thousand hands. Earn and liberally use it for the good of all. It helps both the giver and the recipient. It halts the process of accumulation of wealth and commercialization of human relations. Inasmuch as *Dana*

(liberality) for the ancients was a potent instrument of social harmony and economic balance in society, it was insistently and repeatedly advocated and praised by the Vedic poet philosophers.

Trying to understand this phenomenon in present context, it would mean that there was a moral ceiling on both wealth as well as the expenditure of it. Miserliness is repeatedly condemned in the Vedas. To summarize, wealth must be earned through personal efforts. It must not be abused. It must not also be accumulated. It must be enjoyed in a way, which is not opposed, to righteousness or moral values and wealth must be positive used for the good of all. Hence, the insistence on *istapurta* and *dana* as social duties. Thus, not only that there is fine relation between ethics and economics but economics for the Vedic people was a part of social and moral philosophy. Wealth is necessary to lead a life free from economic insecurity. But it should not become a means of the satisfaction of merely egoistic impulses. The Vedas have always warned us against self-indulgence. The glory of the Vedas is that they never overreacted, viz., morbid asceticism, i.e., condemnation of wealth as such. They were men of positive outlook towards the world and wealth. But the pursuit of wealth must be regulated by rightness. (*Rgveda* 10.31.2.)

The pursuit of secular values must be tempered with righteousness and moral values. So, the Vedic injunction to give away money and wealth. Notwithstanding their positive outlook towards wealth, they never preached materialistic value theory. Their comprehensive axiological outlook includes both secular as well as used for the good of all has elevating effect on human beings. It helps to get rid of narrow-mindedness and the petty selfish egotism. Thus, one's personality is expanded. This approach towards wealth defuses social tensions and brings about social integration. The same attitude towards wealth is given expression by Kalidas in his description of the rulers of Raghu-dynasty. Kalidas says,

“These rulers accumulated wealth in order to serve society: *Tyagaya sambhrtarthandm*”.  
(*Raghuvamsa* 1.7).

The very concept of human person is conditioned by the awareness of higher values. Man develops his personality as he strives to realize values. At the same time, he must have the consciousness of the distinction of values into instrumental or contributory and end-values or consummatory values. Vedic axiology being integral and comprehensive, the secular values were aspired only for the sake of their contribution to social service and maintaining spiritual integrity. In this sense, wealth was conceived as an instrument to fulfill one’s socio religious duties (*istapurta*). Thus, the pursuit of realization of *Artha* as a value received direction from the higher values of *Dharma* and *Moksa*. Secular values, therefore, were oriented towards higher values. In this way, Vedic economics was regulated by spiritual outlook – (*Isavasyamidam sarvam*) (White *Yajurveda* 40.1). This approach implicitly accepts the ‘divine ownership of property’. It avoids ‘private property theory’ as well as the view that the property belongs to society. Gandhi’s doctrine of trusteeship is directly traceable to this Vedic verse. Gandhi himself always stressed the spiritual significance and social implications of this verse. According to him, this single Vedic verse gives us the very essence of Vedic philosophy and religion. Commenting on the opening verse of *Isopanisad*, a part of the *Sukla Yajurveda Samhita* Gandhi says:

“If all the upanisads and other scriptures happened all of a sudden to be reduced to ashes and if only the first line in the *Isa-upanishad* were left in tact in the memory of Hindustan, Hinduism would live forever”.<sup>10</sup>

With this attitude, the man of wealth and power becomes a mere trustee of them. Such a trustee cannot use them for personal advancement. He has to use them for the welfare of and fulfillment of human beings. Such an approach is incompatible with the artificial

multiplication of wants and the concept of production for profit. This approach can check economic egoism as well as unrestrained consumerism. Thus, the Vedic axiology shows wealth its proper place in the scheme of human values. Such an axiology makes economics, therefore, cease to be a science of selfishness and becomes a science of altruism and benevolence. Wealth earned with this attitude is fit to be called 'Sree' because it makes the world absence of social enmity and hatred, absence of greediness and ill-will, absence of malice and jealousy- *Na krodho na ca matsaryam no lobho na subhamatih*. It is rightly said that we have enough for our needs but not enough for our greed. Hence, greed is discouraged and condemned.

The values of liberality and love are very profusely applauded. Such an attitude towards economic values cannot encourage what Russell calls 'possessive instincts'; on the contrary, it promotes creative instincts as well as appreciative and co-operative tendencies in man. Thus, even economic values can be made to contribute to the stabilization of the society provided they are harnessed in the service of and the fulfillment of human beings. Wealth must also be earned righteously: The means of the satisfaction of human desires cannot be earned in any other way. Purity in earning income and wealth is stressed. *Atharvaveda* (4.33.1) states '*Rrayim susugdhih*'. Let the wealth come in a purified form, that is to say, let it come in legitimate and moral ways. Hence, even *Manusmriti* has given prominence to the purity of wealth:

*Sarvesameva saucanam arthasauca paramsmrtam*

*Yo 'rthe sucih sa sucih na mrdvari sucih (Manusmrti 5.106)*

*Alabdham caiva lipseta labdham rakset prayatnatah*

*Raksitam vardhayet caiva vrddham patresu nih ksipet. (Manusmrti 7.99).*

The purity of wealth is the purity among purities. It is a genuine purity. Mere bodily cleanliness is not purity. Earn that which is not yet obtained. Preserve with efforts whatever is obtained; increase it further. When it increases, let the surplus be given away to the deserving persons and institutions. Thus, the 'acquisitive' tendency is never encouraged by the Vedic seers. They always stressed the social value of wealth. Hence, the great sages and seers are seen praying for wealth. Thus, to quote R.H. Tawney, "What gives meaning to economic activity is the purpose to which it is directed".<sup>11</sup> Hence Schumacher also advises the economists to study meta-economics. According to him, "Economics must derive its aim and objectives from a study of man and major part of its methodology must be derived from the study of nature".<sup>12</sup> He also wants to revise ends and to give a secondary place to material things in the life-style because the logic of production is neither the logic of life nor logic that of society. It is a small and subservient part of both.<sup>13</sup>

The great sages were deeply involved in social life and the propagation of higher ideals among the masses. Their words are characterized by the social as well as divine quality, which can come from a highly developed man. So the *raison d'être* of *artha* lies in promoting and sub serving social and spiritual values. It therefore, remains, at the most, an instrumental or contributory value. It can never be conceived as an intrinsic end-value.

### *Artha* as a Socio-political Value

*Artha* as an economic value was never to be divorced from social commitments and responsibilities and, therefore. It was a social value too. There are also references to 'varna system' in the Vedas. Of course, it was it was a functional arrangement. It was not a rigid caste system. There was no untouchability or social segregation in the Vedic society. Social mobility was also there which gave the society its dynamic character. There are references to the concept of motherland. Indian tradition shows that the country was always regarded by

the Indians as *Karmabhumi* (i.e., a land of action) and not as a *Bhogahumi* (i.e. a region of enjoyment). There is a famous hymn (*Prthivi sukhta*) in the *Atharvaveda* in which the earth is addressed as mother. Similarly, is a famous prayer (*Abrahman*) in the *Yajurveda* which can be definitely shown to be a Vedic national song (White Yajurveda 31.22). In this song, there is a prayer for men of learning, men of valour as well as life of health and prosperity etc. They had developed thoughts about administration and political economy of the state. In the *Rgveda*, the King is addressed as *Visastva sarva vanchantu* (*Rgveda* 10.173) may the subjects wish you to be the ruler.

This shows that there was some understanding between the king and his people. There is a mention of the king by the people. In '*Sataptha Brahmana*'. In the *Aitareya Brahmana*, which is a *Brahmana* of the *Rgveda*, the monarch says, "If I have at any time betrayed my duty, then let my merit that has been accumulated through *istapura* karma (religious rites and good deeds) be destroyed at once". (*Altareya Brahmana* 8.15). This shows that there was a constitutional monarchy in ancient times. In the *Rgveda*, there is a reference of paying the taxes to the king (*Rgveda* 10.173.6) According to Jaisval,

"the regular tax as a royal due had already developed. No one else but the king alone was entitled to it. It shows that the state as an organism was realised as early as Vedic times".<sup>14</sup>

There are references to *Samiti*, *Sabha* and *Vidatha*. According to B. Hardas, *Samiti* represents modern parliament; *Sabha* is the same as legislative assembly and *Vidatha* is the association of intellectuals who determine military and religious matters of the state. (*Atharvaveda* 6.87.88). This shows the existence of some sort of constitutional monarchy in the Vedic times. The king might not be directly elected by the people but he was elected by the *Samiti*, the parliament of the *Sabha* to elect the king.<sup>15</sup> According to Barnett, the king

was elected at least nominally by the assembly of free men in the Vedic times.<sup>16</sup> Hence, Spellman rightly says, “The idea of oriental despotism was not, in theory at least encouraged in Indian political philosophy”.<sup>17</sup> Even Megasthenes remarks that when the failure of heirs occurs in the royal house, Indians elected their sovereign on the principle of merit. There was nothing higher than *dharma*. A.S. Altekar, in his article ‘Vedic society’ refers to the existence of republic tradition down to the days of Alexander’s invasion of India. Further, he says, ‘republics were not unknown to the Vedic age though they were rare’.<sup>18</sup> It is interesting to note that this republic tradition continued in Punjab even in later times. At the time of Alexander’s invasion, there were several republics in Punjab. *Rgveda* (3.4.2) refers to the fact that *Visas* elected the king (*Tvam viso vrnatam rajyaya*). According to the *Atharvaveda* (2.14.81), the king to be crowned must be elected by the *Visas*. Let the enemies challenge you. We have elected you (*Atharvaveda* 3.3.6) According to Altekar several families constituted *Visas* and several *Visas* constituted *jana*.<sup>19</sup> According to others, *Visa* means the people. Thus, in both the interpretations of the term *Visas* the elective principle is upheld. These considerations show that at least sometimes, the kingship was elective.

*Atharvaveda* (3.3.1) implicitly refers to the restoration of a deposed or an exiled king. The king residing in some other region is asked to come back like a ‘syena bird’ (*Atharvaveda* 3.4) there is a reference to the elective principle. The king is told that he has come to his state or nation. There is an explicit verse (*Atharvaveda* 3.4.2) to the democratic model of government. Democracy is a government by the consent of the people.

*Tvam viso vrnatam rajyaya tvamimah varsman rastrasya Kakudi srayasva tato na ugro bibhaja vasuni.* (*Atharvaveda* 3.4.2). Let the people accept your rule over this state. Let the five types of people accept your rule. Occupy this highest position in



the State. Let your government be strong enough and fully distribute the wealth among the people.

Thus, the concept of socio-economic justice is intimately related to the function of the government. In the fourth verse of the same hymn, the king is asked to aim at the just distribution of the wealth.

The concept of *Virat* is the concept of a kingless state not in the sense of anarchy, but in the sense of pure democracy. According to Altekar in such states coronation was offered to the whole population.<sup>20</sup> The 13<sup>th</sup> hymn of the 7<sup>th</sup> kanda of *Atharvaveda* is also very important in this connection. According to the first verse of this hymn, the *Sabha* and *Samiti* are the daughters of the benevolent king. Both must unanimously profit the king. In this hymn the king expresses his mind, “Whomsoever I meet should instruct me. O protectors, I will speak appropriately in the conference of meeting”. The parliament is called *Narista*. The king further says,

‘Let your members speak to me on the footing of equality. Let them speak the truth. Let them give their consent without fear or favour. I get the energy and knowledge from those who are present in the parliament. O Indra, make me a participant of this parliament. O members, of the parliament, let your minds not wonder away to any other subject. I bring them back. Let them pay attention to me.’

Commenting on this, Satavalekar says that the *Sabha* and *Samiti* are called daughters because they fall outside the power and authority of the king, ‘*dure hita duhita*’ (*Nirukta* 3.1.4). They are beneficial, provided they are outside the control of the king. According to Satavalekar, *duhitrgamana* is nothing but the king’s encroachment on the powers of the *Samiti* and *Sabha*. Commenting on the word *Narista*, because (i) it is desired or liked by the people or their leaders (*Naraih ista*), (ii) that which does not destroy anybody or no one can

harm it, (iii) it protects both the people and the King (*Na rista*). The probability of the existence of the elective principle is certainly greater in the early Vedic period than in later time. According to K.P. Jayaswal, one hundred and seventy-third hymn of the *Rgveda* is an election hymn. In this connection, Spellman remarks “the spirit of the passage accords better with the views of Jayaswal.”<sup>21</sup> After coronation, the king is required to take the oath before the priest. Take away everything if I pray thee false. Rules according to *dharma* and for the welfare of the people. (*Aitareya Brahmana* 8.15). Hence, Spellman rightly says,

“The doctrine of royal absolutism and capriciousness did not find favour with the theorists of our period. The king had obligations to his people –the paramount of which was protection. Even the king was not above Dharma. The need of *Danda* by which he punished, would also punish the unrighteous king”.<sup>22</sup>

The king could neither claim divinity nor had he any prerogatives. Tyrants were expelled or destroyed. Kingship was purely a human *Sanstha* (institution). Divinity could not be any excuse for tyranny. *Nahusa* and *Ven* had to pay the price of unjust and unrighteous rulership. Thus, the right to revolt against or change the unjust king was sometimes exercised by the people. Thus, both kingship and rebellion must have moral justification.

In this regard, it is appropriate to mention an episode<sup>23</sup> in the life of Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Once, a ticklish question was put to Tilak. The answer he gave is very appropriate to the Divine right theory of king. Lokamanya Tilak was up in arms against the British rule over India. Hence, one gentleman asked “Are you not doing irreligious job in working against the emperor of India who according to your scriptures is an embodiment of divinity?” “Yes, Sir”, retorted Tilak, “The king is no doubt a part and parcel of the Godhead,

but so is every member of the subject people, for, is not the soul a chip from the same block of Brahman"? Tilak further, said,

"I challenge anyone to point out any text which lays down that the yoke of tyranny of a ruler whoever he may be, be quietly borne? The divine king, as soon as he ceases to be divine".

So in our scriptures we come across instances of tyrants who were overthrown by the people. The king Ven, for instance, was dethroned by the sages of his times. Thus, in Vedic politics, security, self-government, equality, justice were the important political values. The authorities were to protect the social order by protecting social values and morals. The main function of the government was to protect the social order by protecting social values and morals. The main function of the government was to protect the innocent and good and to punish the bad and the anti-social elements. The head of the state was to constantly look after the welfare of the people and try to fulfill their legitimate aspirations. Thus, the government must be both strong and good but even the strong and benevolent government must be constitutional.

Spellman, therefore, rightly says that constitutional monarchy was accepted lest there should be anarchy that represents what is known as *Matsya Nyaya* (the analogy of the stronger fish devouring the smaller ones or what is called 'dog eat dog way of life'). Thus, social harmony was accepted as the condition of individual perfection. Social harmony was accepted as the condition of individual perfection. Social harmony was accepted as the condition of individual perfection. Social harmony was considered as an echo of cosmic harmony or *Rta*. There is both natural and moral order in the universe. Because of this principle of *Rta* the political power was meant to create and maintain conditions conducive to the performance of duties and to the realization of various human values. Hence,

*Yajurveda* (22.25) says, "That nation is excellent where spiritual power and temporal power move together in harmony. Even Gods with *Agni* move there." In the words of Sri Aurobindo:

"The State, the sovereign or the supreme political authority was an instrument of coordination and a general control and efficiency; and exercised supreme and not an absolute authority, for in all its rights and powers, it was limited by the law and by the will of the people and in all its internal function only a co-partner with the other members of the socio-political body".<sup>24</sup>

Thus, the law is above the sovereign. It is necessary to curb the powers of the kingship. The state and the society are not the ends but the means to an end. They must facilitate the realization and the perfection of the individuality of each man. The socio-economic structure of society must be so maintained and stabilized that there will be no socioeconomic injustice; and positively the natural talents of the citizens will be developed and social demands will be fulfilled.

Even the concept of nation was developed within the Vedic period. The word '*Gana*' means a group, a republic and the '*Ganapati*' was the head of the republic. Even the word *Jesta* suggests headship or leadership.

There are various types of Vedic states. There are various words *Samrat*, *Samrajya*, *Ekarat*, *Adhiraja*, etc. *Ekarat* is the sole ruler of the people. *Adhiraja* is the head of the kings. *Satapatha Brahmana* (5,1,1,13) distinguished a king from an emperor, the performer of *Rajaysya Yajna* was a king while the performer of *Vajasan ya Yajna* was an emperor. *Altareya Brahmana* refers to various grades of sovereignty, such as '*Samrajyam*, *Buojyam*, *Vairajyam*' etc.

## The Nature of Monarchy

Thus, it can be definitely said that the concept of monarchy in the Vedic times was constitutional in character. It was subordinated to the will of the people and the principle of dharma. There was the tradition that during the coronation ceremony the king could say. “*Adandyo ‘smi adandyo’ smi-* I am not subject to the law. I cannot be punished by the law. I am above law” The officiating priest pointing him his real position would say. “*Dharmadandyo*” si. “*Dharmadandyo*” si-O king. Even you are subject to the law of *Dharma*. In case you misbehave, even you are subject to the law of *Dharma*. In case you misbehave, even you cannot escape from the clutches of law.” The Vedic monarchy was also a benevolent monarchy. The king was concerned with the protection and the welfare of the people. Hence, *Yajurveda* (6.31) records the prayer of the Vedic ruler and the prayer is “Let my subjects be satisfied, my herds be satisfied, my people be satisfied, let not my people be needy”. This prayer of the Vedic ruler is elaborated in the famous couplet in kautilya’s *Arthasastra* (1.9.16)

*Prajasukhe sukham rajnah prajanam ca hite hitam Natmapriyam hitam rajnah prajanameva priyam hitam.*

(Disinterested service of and catering to the interest of the people was the positive concern of the king).

Thus, the king must protect the innocent and punish the wrong, the desperadoes. He must also practice the cardinal virtues of self-restraint, truth fullness righteousness, fortitude, etc.

Hence, according to some thinkers, *Arthasastra*, the science of wealth and polity, is an *Upaveda* of the *Atharvaveda*. Its aim is to secure and preserve power over the earth. But if there is a conflict between the *Arthasastra* and *Dharmasastra* the latter must prevail

(*Yajnavalkyasmṛiti* 11.21.). *Arthasastrattu balavat dharmasastram iti sthitih.*<sup>25</sup> Thus, *Arthasastra* was a branch of *Dharmasastra*. Of course, the word *dharma* is not to be confused with the word 'religion'. It has a wider connotation. It means the ethical and spiritual values such as duty, law, justice, and righteousness. All our economic pursuits and political objectives must be compatible with these values. Thus, both power and pelf are tied to socio-spiritual obligations. Therefore, whatever was the form of the government, it was never arbitrary and unrestrained.

*Dharma* was above both the king and the people. Thus, *Artha* is not only the material prosperity of a single individual but also a material prosperity and stability of the whole nation. In this sense, it was a controlled and just economy. It restrains the egoistic self-aggrandisement with respect to the secular ends such as power and the pelf as well as fame. Hence, the gratification of urges like hunger for power was accepted as a legitimate goal to be pursued assiduously but not at the cost of social and moral values. In *Chandogya Upanishad*, the ideal socio-political order is described as reality in the kingdom of *Asvapati* who confidently proclaims:-

*Na me steno janapade na kadaryo na madyaph Nanahitagnirnavidvan na svairi svairini kutah.* (*Chandogya Upanishad* 5.11)

In the *Mahabharata*, *Santiparva* (59.14) also the ideal society is visualized by *Bhisma* who says:

*Na rajyam na ca dandyo na ca dandikah Svadharmena prajah sarva raksantisma parasparam.*

The best government is one that governs the least. It means the government must aim at a social order, which will require no need of external authority such as government to rule over the society.

Thus, the ideal social order is one, which is literally self-governed. Each individual is dutiful, responsible and self-controlled one who is devoted to higher values the pursuit of which is individually elevating or self-perfecting and, therefore, satisfying and socially integrating with the Marxist ideal of the higher phase of the communism in which the state will wither away or in the words of M.N. Roy, the state will at least scatter away and will be conterminous with the society. In such a society social role is understood as a form of mission (*vrata*) or in the words of *Gita*, a *svadharma* of life. This view makes social roles both pleasurable and honourable.

Thus, *Artha* was treated as one of the foundational values. But its instrumental character was rightly recognized and upheld by the Vedic philosophers. *Artha* as means of satisfying man's desires and *artha* as a power to safe-guard the moral order in society was rightly pursued as divorced from its socio-moral in society was rightly pursued as a value. But it was never pursued for its own sake and hence never divorced from its socio-moral functions. Hence, the *Atharvaveda* sought the basis of a nation (*Rashtra*) in the higher values: *Satyam Brhat Rtam ugram diksa tapo brahma yajnah prthivim dharayanti* (*Atharvaveda* 12,1,1). Honesty and integrity, bravery and austerity, wisdom and respect for the great and good sustain the world. Unless, the people and the leaders actively hold these values in high esteem, a society cannot attain stability and saturation.

## References and Footnotes:

1. Quoted in Gopalacharya. *The Heart of Rgveda*. Bombay; Somaiya Publications, 1975, p. 443.
2. Quoted in Dharmadeva Vidya Martanda. *Vedon ka yathartha svarupa*. New Delhi; Jana Gyana Prakashan, 1972, p. 59.
3. S.A. Dange. *India from primitive communism to slavery*. Bombay; People's Publishing House, 1949, p. 46.
4. R.H. Tawney, *Acquisitive society*. The Fontana Library, London; Coilins, 1966, p. 79.
5. Huxley (ed.). *The humanist framework*. London; Allen and Unwin, 1961, p. 52.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
7. E.F. Schumacher. *The small is beautiful*. New Delhi; Radhakrishna, 1977, p. 20.
8. R.H. Tawney. *Op. cit.*, p. 79.
9. Quoted in Schumacher, *op. cit.*, p. 20.
10. Quoted in V. Raghavan. *The Indian heritage anthology of Sanskrit literature*. Bangalore; Indian Institute of Culture, 1956, p. 51.
11. R.H. Tawney. *Op. cit.*, p. 42.
12. E.F. Schumacher. *Op. cit.*, p. 42.
13. *ibid.*, p. 276.
14. Quoted in B. Hardas. *The glimpses of Vedic nation*, translated by S.S. Apte. Madras; Sri Kamakoti Pub. House, 1967, p. 494.
15. Quoted in J.W. Spellman. *Political theory of ancient India*. Oxford; Clarendon Press, 1964, p. 93.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 50.



17. *Ibid.*, p. 54.
18. A.S. Altekar. *Vedic society*. In *Cultural heritage of India*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Vol. 1, 1958, p. 233.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 229.
20. A.S. Altekar. *Op. cit.*, p. 233.
21. J.W. Spellman., *Op. cit.*, p. 20.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 25.
23. D.M. Brown. *Indian political thought from Ranade to Bhave*. University of California, 1961, pp. 82-83.
24. Quoted in C. Kulkarni. *Vedic foundation of Indian Culture*. Bombay; Sri Dvaipayana Trust, 1973, p. 127.
25. Quoted in P.V. Kane. *History of Dharmasastra*, Poona; Bhandarkar Oriental research, 1930, Vol. 1, p. 87.