

REVELATIONAL STATUS OF VEDAS

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Abstract

This article throws light on the Revelational Status of Vedas which are considered to be the most sacred books of Hinduism. Hinduism is dated 3500 years old religion. Trimurti is its basic belief. This very article is a detailed account of the meaning of the word 'Veda', its etymology and the compilation period. Veda means 'knowledge of what was unknown before'. This word seems to serve as a synonym of 'sacred knowledge'. The compilation history of Vedas has been a cause of dispute among researchers. Indian traditions date the Vedas to about 4000 B.C. The article discusses in detail the teachings of Vedas and in the light of these teachings, we can evaluate the Revelational Status of Vedas. These teachings are similar to that of the Holy Quran. The concept of Oneness of God, Worship, Prophethood, life Hereafter, and other moral values and their comparison with other revealed books is handy in this context.

Key word: Trimurti, Veda, Revealed, Holy Books, Orientalists, Sacred, Nirashans

Hinduism is the only one religion with so many sacred books, that are authentic too, than any other religion of the world. This large number of books confuses the followers and they always remain in a fix "which book should they follow and why"? Finding themselves in a blind alley, some followers have a blind faith in their books and even the reasons are unknown. In this very article, we have tried to help them analyse their faith in Vedas other sacred books to some extent. Vedas are the sacred religious scriptures of Hindus and to compare them with the standard of revealed books (The Holy Quran, Bible, Psalms, Taurah) seems vague. But to satisfy them, our answer is that

"We regard Bible, Psalms and Taurah as revealed books, although they are not found in their original text and the available collection has undergone many changes with the passage of time".

As on the basis of non availability of original texts of bible, Psalms and Taurah it does not seem reasonable to call them non-revealed texts. Similarly on the grounds of non availability of original text of Vedas one should not dare to say Vedas non – revealed books. To cut a long story short it can be said that they may be revealed texts.

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Before starting the discussion about the revelational status of vadas, it is necessary and helpful to give a complete introduction of the mentioned scriptures.

Meaning & Root of the word Veda:-

- Veda means knowledge. (1)
- From the root 'vid', to know; knowledge, with the connotation of revelation. (2)
- The origin of the word 'veda' is 'vid' which means to know, to think, to ponder, to consider, to attain. Veda: (Sans Veda, knowledge; of wit, latin vindere, to see, greek oida I know) (3)
- Veda means knowledge of that which was before unknown. (4)
- Veda means 'sacred knowledge', Veda is derived from 'vid' which means to know, to discern, intimate knowledge of God, highest form of mystical experience verbal meaning of the word 'veda' is knowledge. (5)
- The Vedas (Sanskrit veda 'knowledge') are a large corpus of texts originating in Ancient India. They form the oldest layer of Sanskrit Literature. (6)

We see that the word 'veda' is more or less a synonym of 'sacred knowledge', now we see its meaning according to its usage. Opinions have varied concerning the definition of the Veda. Kautilya, in the Arthashastra ascribed to the fourth century B.C. states that 'the three Vedas, Sama, Rig, and Yajus, constitute the triple Vedas. Veda is a collective term used for triple Vedas or triple sciences including Rig Veda, Yajur Veda and Sama Veda.

Some of the facts as follow regarding "The Vedas" as revealed books. Rig Veda is the oldest book in the world. It had been written from 1500BC to 900BC. Not a single person attempted to write it rather the age of its compilation and the named of its writers are ambiguous. Whereas literal meaning of "Veda" is "Ilm" knowledge. There is not aspect common between the literal meaning of "Veda" and its process of compilation. So much so, there are, at present, 21 scripts of Rig Veda, 42 of Yajar Veda, one thousand of Saam Veda and 12 of Athar Veda, in custom. Whereas there is the only sacred book "The Quran" for each Muslim sect.(7)

Manazir Ahsan Gillani has written about the historical reality and value of "The Vedas". Where were they revealed? In which languages, whether in prose or poetry, were they revealed? In which age and at what places were they revealed? Answers to such questions are still looking for words. (8)

When we compare, at this point, the historical and revealed value of "The Vedas" with "The Quran", even the orientalist are bound to admit the supremacy and the truth of "The Quran". Instead we quote some Muslim scholar; we prefer to quote the research of famous orientalist R.V.C. Bodley.

"Neither is the work a compilation of traditions or reports of what Mohammad is supposed to have said. It is the actual text as dictated by him day by day and month by month, during his life time. It is the reflaction of this mastermind".(9)

Most of these utterances were copied more or less faithfully during Muhammd's lifetime and were collected together in authoritative form not long after

his death. The Koran, therefore, closely represents Muhammad's ideas and teachings and to a considerable extent his exact words. No such detailed compilation of the teachings of Christ has survived. Since the Koran is at least as important to Muslims as the Bible is to Christians, the influence of Muhammad through the medium of the Koran has been enormous. It is provable that the relative influence of Muhammad on Islam has been larger than the combined influence of Jesus Christ and St. Paul on Christianity. On the purely religious level, then, it seems likely that Muhammad has been as influential in human history as Jesus. (10)

Sir William Muir Writes: And so true a mirror is the Koran of Mohammad's character, that the saying became proverbial among the early Muslims, his character is the Koran. (11)

Compilation History:-

The compilation history of Vedas has been a cause of dispute among researches. But according to this dispute, this period dates from 2000 B.C. to 1200 B.C.

The date of their compilation, as well as the place have been the object of major scholarly disputes. Indian traditions dates the Vedas to about 4000 B.C. and assumes a north west Indian Origin. Western scholars since Man Muller, assume a date of 1500-2000 B.C. and consider them the products of nomadic invaders of India from the are of southern Russia. (12)

The date commonly given for the recension of the Rig Veda (which is the oldest of the lot) is 900 B.C. (13)

They got their present form between 1200-200 B.C. and were introduced to India by the Aryans. For the oldest of these, the Rig Veda, the estimates of competent scholars vary from 4000 to 1000 B.C. about 2000 B.C. being a conservative estimate. (14)

In the light of above discussions we can say that Vedas is a term used for the most sacred and ancient books of Hinduism and greatly respected by Hindus and are taken as revelational books by Hindus. So now we can challenge the revelational status of Vedas in the light of following discussion.

Our religious scholars and many others hesitate to regard Vedas as religious sacred books and further more revelational. They are right on their part, because mere presence of concepts of God, worship, Prophethood, life hereafter and other moral values in the teachings of Vedas is not enough to vindicate them revelational texts. But we can say that Vedas may be revelational books. At least, those parts (extracts) are certainly revelational which predict about the prophethood of Holy Prophet (PBUH) even thousands of years ago. But we cannot even consider Vedas the fabricated (changed) form of revelational book on the basic of these basic concepts. We need undefiable proofs to regard Vedas having the status of Bible Taurah and Psalms. The reasons are given in the following:-

- i) Contents of a revelational book like the Holy Quran are the greatest evidence of its being revelational and true.
- ii) The Holy Quran has a mentioning of Bible, Taurah and Psalms, but has no account of Vedas.

iii) We are still hesitant to take available texts of Bible, Taurah and Psalms as sacred and revealed. (15)

As far as the first reason is concerned we shall discuss it in detail. But as an answer to the second reason we shall quote here a verse of the Holy Quran.

وانه لفي زبر الاولين

“No doubt, it is in the scriptures of early people”. (16)

The literal meaning of the word “Zubur” is “scattered texts”. The definition fully applies to Vedas as Hindus, who are the nation with the very first Shariah, claim Vedas to be the earliest (Very first) knowledge. So we can say that The Holy Quran is not devoid of the mentioning of Vedas.

Now we analyse the revelational status of Vedas in the light of the standard that the contents a revealed book are the greatest proof of its being true and revelational. The message c seems very much same and close to the spirit of Islam. We just need to give (17) profound look.

- a) Praises be to the creator of the world (Rig Veda 1-18-5)
- b) The giver and merciful (Rig Veda 1-34-3)
- c) Guide us to the path beneficial to us (Yajur Veda 16-40)
- d) The Owner of Great Earth and Heavens.
- e) May He (Ishwar) help us (Rig Veda 1-10-1)
- f) Pramatma creates all creatures (Atharva Veda 1-19-7)
- g) Pramatma does not eat, arranges food for others (Rig Veda 20-124-1)
- h) There is no image possible of His (Yajur Veda 3-22)
- i) The laws of God never change (Rig Veda 10-24-1)
- j) None can dare to change His Laws. (Atharva Veda 5-1-18)
- k) O Parmeeswar! Thou art the first and the Greatest who knows (Rig Veda 2-31-1) (18)

Here we would like to strengthen our statement that Hinduism may be a revelational religion and Vedas may be revelational texts by quoting some other extracts of Vedas containing the same teachings as that of Islam about basic beliefs including Oneness of God, Prophethood, and the life hereafter.

In Yajur Veda, Ch 32, V 3 it is quoted.

सुलभः सुव्रतः सिद्धः शत्रुजिच्छत्रुतापनः ।

न्यग्रोधोऽदुम्बरोऽश्वत्थश्चाणूरान्ध्रनिषूदनः ॥ ८८ ॥

He has no image, no form. (19)

Yajur Veda Ch. 40, V 9 suggests

Those, who worship natural objects (wind, water, fire etc.) dwelt in darkness and ignorance. The message still goes on in the words.

No one gave birth to him. He deserves our all prayers and worship.(20)

Rig Veda, the oldest and most sacred of the lot attributes God with the following:-

- a) Donot worship any one except Him. All praises be to him.

- b) All praises for Him, who has none to equal Him, who is alone (21).

Sama Veda Book II, Ch. 6, V 8, predicts about the Holy Prophet (PBUH) in the words.

रविविरोचनः सूर्यः सविता रविलोचनः ॥ ९४ ॥

अनन्तो हृतभुग्भोक्ता सुखदो नैकजोऽग्रजः ।

अनिर्विण्णः सदामर्षी लोकाधिष्ठानमद्भुतः ॥ ९५ ॥

“Ahmed was granted with eternal laws by God. I enlightened myself from Him (Muhammad) as one takes light from the Sun”. (22)

The account of Holy Prophet (PBUH) in Rig Veda is given in the following words.

O beloved Nirashnas (Muhammad), the one with sweet and impressive communication, the one who offers sacrifices, I make they scarifies a means of approach. (23)

In Rig Veda there is a mentioning of Holy Prophet (PBUH) 16 times using the word Nirashnas (Muhammad as its meaning) Yajur Veda mentions 10 times, Athrava Veda 4 times and Sama Veda once. 31 times collective repetition of the name of Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH). (24)

The mentioning of Noah in Vedas is with the name of ‘Manu’ and it is 75 times in number i.e 51 times in Rig Veda, 2 times in Yajur Veda, 14 times in Atharva Veda and 8 times in Sama Veda. (25)

The third basic belief of revealed books is about the life after this world. Vedas do not seem to be devoid of it.

- a) O Agni, this mortal man will get life again. (Rig Veda)
b) Your followers will serve God with their charity and besides that you will enjoy the joys of heaven. (Rig Veda)
c) For those who are sinners, there exists a place with bottomless depth. (Rig Veda) (26)

Atharva Veda Book 4, Ch. 34, V No.6 describes Heaven in the words.

There flow streams of butter, honey, milk and curd which cause an increase in comfort. These can be accessed by strengthening the soul through different methods.

‘Swarg’ and ‘Narakas’ are the words used for Heaven and Hell respectively in the Vedas samhita. The announcement made in Rig Veda, Book 4, Ch. No.5 is

अधृतः स्वधृतः स्वास्यः प्राग्वंशो वंशवर्धनः ॥ ९० ॥

भारभृत् कथितो योगी योगीशः सर्वकामदः ।

Those, who violate the rules of God and go against, will be casted in fire. (27)

Can we regard Vedas as revealed books on the basis of mere presence of concepts about Oneness and life hereafter? No. And as far as the moral aspect of

Vedas and other scriptures of Hinduism is concerned, we must not forget the fact that moral values have been a necessary part of all religions whether they are revealed or non-revealed.

Now we take the third reason for being hesitant to call Vedas revelational texts. As we said earlier that many scholars of our religion hesitate and doubt the revelational status of the available texts of Bible, Taurah, and Psalms. When they are asked, the feed back comes that they are not original and are fabricated texts.

Another justification made by Maulana Ubaidullah Sindi has helped a great deal to solve the problem. He says

“Our scholars usually consider that original Taurah and Bible have disappeared, so they are not willing to think the books as sacred ones. This belief produces a bad result that when The Holy Quran urged people of the Books to follow their Books and blamed them for not following their Books, Our scholars fell short from the apt exegesis of them”. (28)

Here we have tried to refute the charges which prohibit us calling the Vedas sacred and revelational books.

A Major Difference:-

What we have discussed earlier reveals to us the similarity of teachings about basic belief (Oneness of God Prophethood and life hereafter). The discussion concludes and make the two religions with the same working as its core (root). But a major difference, inspite of all similarities is strong enough to challenge all similarities.

Dr. Zakir Abdul Karim Naik in his book “Islam and Hinduism” writes.

The difference between Islam and Hinduism is of apostrophe’s.

Muslims say Everything is God’s.

Hindus say Everything is God.

Hindus believe in the philosophy that everything is a part of God. What does this mean? It means everything is God, Trees, The Sun, The moon, snake, and humans all are God. On contrary to this the Muslims say everything is not God rather God is the master of everything. The two nations can be united if and only if there is any possibility of eradicating the difference of Apostrophe s (‘s). (29)

The Holy Quran Says

تَعَالَوْا إِلَىٰ كَلِمَةٍ سَوَاءٍ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكُمْ أَلَّا نَعْبُدَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ

“Come to the truth which is common between you and us”.

“Worship none but Allah”. (30)

Both religions, we analyse, preach this truth with the utmost similarity.

Conclusion:

In the light of all mentioned discussion it may be humbly concluded that Vedas are no doubt the most sacred texts of Hindu religious literature. Four Vedas (Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva) constitute the Veda Samhita (collection). Rig Veda is considered

the oldest of the lot and this Veda contributes for the bulk of other Vedic texts. We are too much familiar with the teachings and spirit of Islam and in this article the writer has tried to sum up the teachings of Vedas. The comparison between the two reveals that they (Vedas) are closest to the spirit of Islam. On these basis it can be concluded that Hinduism, if taken as a pure religion, may be a revealed religion and Vedas, the most sacred books of Hinduism, may be revealed texts for being closest to the spirit of Islam.

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