

Philosophy of wisdom and Indian culture

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Philosophy is a search for wisdom. It is such a discipline which cultivates wisdom as the knowledge of basic principles known by the intellect. The great philosopher Socrates opines that “the only true wisdom is in knowing you know nothing”. Aristotle holds the view that “knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom”. Einstein once said wisdom is not a product of schooling but of the life-long attempt to acquire it. Similarly, Alfred Lord Tennyson mentions that “knowledge comes, but wisdom lingers”. TS Eliot also asserts that “where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?”

These different views entail the relation between wisdom and knowledge. The former indicates the use of knowledge in a practical and productive manner. On the other hand, the later is the accumulation of facts and information. Moreover, in a wider perspective, wisdom is primarily dealt with the internal sources like introspection, thinking, analysis, judgments, etc. In contrast to this, knowledge deals with the external sources such as books, classroom, lectures, video, etc. It can be inferred from the

above distinction that the former (wisdom) cannot be acquired without the later (knowledge), although the later can be acquired without the former. In this context, we can mention the relationship between a lame and a blind. The lame man directs the blind man to go ahead and the later shoulders the former and become successful in such a cooperative manner in order to reach their destination. Similarly, the relationship between wisdom and knowledge can be inferred in this way – wisdom without knowledge is lame and knowledge without wisdom is blind. Therefore, in a very specific and significant way, it can be asserted that wisdom is the fruit of knowledge. Thus, the relationship of knowledge and wisdom can be compared significantly to a tree and its fruit.

From the ancient times to the present era, India’s wisdom has a great value, which can be traced through the *Vedas*, *Upanishads*, epics, scriptures, etc. The *Rigveda* is considered the oldest work in the world. The *Vedas* inspire us to pray not only for ourselves but also for the whole creation. As for instance, the Vedic seer through chanting a mantra prays to the Almighty to bless us to be able to see good things, hear

good things, have healthy physique and a strong body to complete the age bestowed on us by the world.

The Vedic seer also teaches us to be receptive to good thoughts. It is not important wherefrom these thoughts come; what is significant is that these thoughts would help us to develop our inner strength and self-confidence. The *Vedas* hold the view that the mother is the primary teacher of a child while the father is the secondary one. Regarding the question of what should to be the qualities of a teacher, *Rigveda* in this context significantly points out that a visionary can find a path. Thus, the duty of a teacher is to search a path. Once the path is fixed, others can follow it.

Indian wisdom reminds us that this world is for all good and noble and emphasises on the welfare of all. And God is considered the protector of the world. It also shows that we cannot blame others for the erroneous results of our day-to-day activities. We are the main cause of the ills happening in this world. Our ill thoughts or perceptions are the cause of the bad effects that emerge in our life.

Our Vedic wisdom teaches that the whole world is our family. That is why, *Rigveda* lays stress on the fact that a person should look after another man in every way. It also teaches us to behave with animals

like our family members. Indian culture demands that we should not be confined to ourselves, rather we should think of the welfare of the entire world. That is why, the Vedic *rishi* asks not only for his needs but for the needs of others as well. This teaching is not only for physical needs, but also for developing the good mental qualities like valour, perseverance and love. The seer of *Yajurveda* prays to the lord to bless him so that others look at him as their friends. This idea of friendship is an idea of true love. This mantra clarifies that if we love others, others will love us. It does not tell us what to do if others do not love us.

In the context of peace, the *Atharvaveda* bids farewell to fear – “May the earth, sky and heaven make us fearless. Let us be fearless whether we are behind or forward, either up or below, let us be fearless on the sides of our known friends and unknown “not friends”. Let us have fearlessness from known things or unknown things that have happened due to our mistakes. Let us have fearlessness from the right of detachment and the day of inclination. Let the collective desire of all help me.”

The Vedic wisdom is the backbone of our Indian culture. It gives us moral support for emotional integration. The *Vedas* mention that

Ekam sad vipra bahudha vadanti. It implies that truth is one although people call it by different names. The *Vedas* are made understandable to us by our *Upanisads* and the *Upanishads* had their key in the *Gita*. As a result, many cultures came into existence in India. These different cultures teach us to find unity in diversity by finding out the good points in others cultures and cultural works.

There are various ways of worship in our culture. God is love, mercy, compassion, truth, etc. One worships Him as merciful, the other as compassionate, the third as truth and the fourth as an embodiment of love. No method of worship seems to clash with one another. Although various religions have various ways of worship, yet there is one uniformity at the root and that is the realization of one’s self, attainment of love of God, and achievement of the knowledge of the self.

Hence, it is a significant point of our culture which demands to integrate all the methods of worship to know and understand the uniformity or oneness present among the different forms of worship. Therefore, there is no second thought in the Indian mind regarding the Indian culture that is rooted in our Vedic wisdom which has been given to us by the Vedic seers.