

THE PARADIGMS OF AMBIVALENCE: DECONSTRUCTING THE BOARDERLINE BETWEEN SPIRITUALISM AND MATERIALISM IN RIG VEDA

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Abstract

This dissertation aims to deconstruct the borderline between spiritualism and materialism in the Rig Veda which are binary oppositions. These binaries offer a rigidity of discursive categorization. Putting objects and concepts in watertight compartments often subverts the fluidity of in-between's and allows the privileging of one over the other. In the landmark paper, "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences", Jacques Derrida undertook a caustic critique of the binaries, nature/culture and bricoleur/engineer as used in the works of Levi-Strauss. Here the fault is not with the notion, but with the categories. Deconstruction thus extends the significance to this recalcitrance to the entire conceptual system of philosophy. Similarly rereading the Rig Veda, perhaps the oldest text in the world on the basis of the canons set of western metaphysics can be viewed as a movement towards some kind of a reductionism. The very notion of 'material/spiritual' itself is part of a western legacy that reduces a holistic and all comprehensive vision of life to be categorized under two labels. In this paper, first chapter deals with the materialistic religion in Rig Veda. The second chapter is the blending of Magic, Religion and Science in Vedic thoughts. The third chapter is Materialistic cosmogony in Rig Veda. In the fourth chapter we can see the confrontation between the agents of materialism and the forces of spiritualism in Rig Veda. Finally, we conclude by attempting to deconstruct the borderline between

spiritualism and materialism and proves that there is no such borderline between them and Rig Veda is a blending of materialistic and spiritualistic thoughts. . In this deconstructive reading we look for the meanings in the text that stand in conflict with what is held as the main theme in traditional interpretation.

Introduction

Boundaries are often the strategies of power, ways of ignoring reality rather than endorsing it. They disrupt the free play of elements within a structure and offer cut and dried divisions between discursive entities. Western metaphysics works on the existence of such borderlines between binary oppositions which are mutually exclusive. Thus, in the binary, man/woman, man is what the woman is not and vice versa. The same is the case with materialism/spiritualism. Here, what interests me most is neither materialism nor spiritualism, but the bar that separates both. Is the bar natural? Does the subjectivity of the person(s) who impose(s) such a bar really matter? Is it only a cultural and discursive construct? How far is it

successful to apply such a logo centric logic to Eastern culture and philosophy? The present dissertation endeavors to find an answer to these enigmatic questions.

The aim of this study is to deconstruct the borderline between spiritualism and materialism in the Rig Veda which are binary oppositions. The binary opposition is a pair of related terms or concepts that are opposite in meaning. In Rig Veda the binary oppositions i.e., Materialism and spiritualism overlap and share some common elements. It is a paradigm of ambivalence. Ambivalence is a term first developed in psychoanalysis to describe a continual fluctuation between wanting one thing and wanting its opposite. It also refers to a simultaneous attraction toward and repulsion from an object, person or action. In Rig Veda we can see the ambivalence of spiritualism and materialism, here spiritualism is 'decent red'.

French philosopher Jacques Derrida inaugurated the theory of deconstruction in his essay "Structure, Sign and Play in Human Discourse". His writings are both a continuation and a critique of Structuralism. Structuralism has told us that we have a way of conceptualizing our experience in terms of polar opposites, which is called binary oppositions. We get to know what is good by contrasting it with what is evil. These oppositions build hierarchies in which one term in a pair is privileged. By finding out the binary oppositions in a work we can know something about the ideology advanced by it. Derrida observes that this neat pairing of opposites advanced by Structuralism does not work that way. The two oppositions overlap and share some common elements. The example of the 'objective' and 'subjective' would prove the point. Language does not operate in any tidy way. It always overflows with contradictions and associations that we carry. It is replete with opposing ideologies.

Western metaphysics always operate in binaries. These binaries offer a rigidity of discursive categorization. Putting objects and concepts in watertight compartments often subverts the fluidity of in-between's and allows the privileging of one over the other. Some major binaries which are fundamental to western epistemology are: day / night; God / Daemon; man / woman; nature / culture etc. A close observation of these binaries may reveal that one element in the binaries is always privileged over the other. This may be the hidden agenda set by some power structure. In his landmark paper,

“Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences”, Jacques Derrida undertook a caustic critique of the binaries, nature / culture and bricoleur / engineer as used in the works of Levi-Strauss. Everything in any discourse be placed under either nature or culture. However, Levi-Strauss encounters a scandalous threat to this opposition in the notion of ‘incest prohibition’. Since incest prohibition is both a norm and universal, Levi-Strauss refuses to conform it to either side. Here the fault is not with the notion, but with the categories. Deconstruction thus extends the significance to this recalcitrance to the entire conceptual system of philosophy.

Similarly rereading the Rig Veda, perhaps the oldest text in the world on the basis of the canons set of western metaphysics can be viewed as a movement towards some kind of a reductionism. The very notion of ‘material / spiritual’ itself is part of a western legacy that reduces a holistic and all comprehensive vision of life to be categorized under two labels. Indian philosophy has never attempted to endorse an oppressive order or cut and dried determinants on any aspects of life. The absence of the binaries in Indian philosophy upholds its flexibility and fecundity.

A deconstructive reading looks for meaning in the text that stand in conflict with what is held as the main theme in traditional interpretations. Deconstruction does not resolve the tensions between them into a unity or harmony. Instead, it sustains and even promotes such tensions, because it is the nature of the language not to get resolved. Ideological conflicts and instabilities constitute the very fabric of language. In a strict sense, nobody ever deconstructs a text; it deconstructs itself. Meanings are always disseminated and any deconstructive reading of text catches a fleeting moment of this dissemination.

The first specimen of Indian literature is represented by the Vedas, that record the reaction produced by the man to the sights and sounds of nature, - to the beauty of the creation and latent harmony of things in the morning of human civilization. There are four Vedas – Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda, Atharva Veda. The four Vedic texts are called Samhitas or collections, said to have been made by the sage Vyasa (the name means ‘a compiler’) roughly between 1700 – 1100 BC. Among the Vedas, Rig Veda occupies a prominent place. Rig Veda consists of ten suktas. Total

number of verses in the Rig Veda is 10,580. The number of words in the Rig Veda is 1,53,826 and the number of letters is 4,32,000. The Rig Veda generally speaks, the foundation of the three other Vedas. The whole of the Sama Veda except 104 stanzas is derived from the Rig Veda. The Yajur Veda has about 30 percent of Rig Veda verses and the Athava Veda about 16 percent.

There is a strong and widely prevalent notion that materialism belongs to western thought and culture and that we Indians are basically spiritualistic in outlook. Hence the term “Indian Materialism” may sound paradoxical. Professor Stance rightly points out: “Materialism is ingrained in all men. We Eastern and Westerns, are born materialists” (Stance: *A Critical History Of Greek Philosophy*, 79). In fact a survey of the Indian Philosophical system clearly points out that materialism was never unknown to our thinkers and it undoubtedly had its day in India. Indian philosophy has had an extremely long and complex development and we find varieties of thoughts – skepticism, materialism, pluralism, dualism, naturalism, along with the idealism of different forms.

Materialism as such is a philosophical system – a rationally organized theory. But a systematic thought cannot grow all of a sudden. It can only develop through the process of evolution, and at every stage it runs parallel to the cultural pattern of the human race. Hence the archaic element of materialism is to be found in the beliefs and practices of the primitive people and it has been detected in all ancient records of mankind. Though we may hesitate to call it as a materialistic philosophy in the modern sense, because of its archaic nature. Yet it forms the necessary basis from which materialistic ideas grew and crystallized into speculative materialism of the modern age. We may call this earliest stage ‘proto-materialism’. (Swami Prabhavananda: *Spiritual Heritage of India*)

In Vedic literature we can find that Vedic *race* did not renounce the world and went to the forest for penance and meditation, but they are practical men of the world who owned large herds of cattle, cultivated fields, fought against the enemies in times of war and prayed to their gods for wealth, cattle, progeny, victory, etc., I.e., For definite, concrete objects satisfying practical necessities

of life and ensuring material security and prosperity. They were closer to the mother earth, we're not able to distinguish between 'material' and 'spiritual'.

Many eminent scholars have tried to collect what they would call the gems of spiritual wisdom from the Rig Veda. But some others have tried to view the text from a purely materialistic point of view. They quote a few 'slokas' from the ancient text which uphold the values of a materialistic existence. Thus we are encountering a dilemma: whether to view the text as spiritual or material. Here, like Levi-Strauss we are forced to conclude that 'this too is a scandal'. Is that so? The real dilemma arises from the process of categorization. Life is a totality, a differential flux that can never be mastered by using such categories as spiritual and material.

The origin of spiritualistic thoughts of India is generally traced to the Rig Veda. Spiritualism, which culminates in the idea of god or supreme spirit, is supposed to be rooted in the process of personification of nature. Naturalism begins with what is called personification of nature. Thus to explain the movements, functions, or operations in nature, some sort of will, agency, or power, analogous to that of man, was ascribed to it. This is found in the primitive forms of interpretation of nature, such as animatism, animism etc. In the animistic phase, we find that element in nature is considered as spirits and they are worshipped. These spirits may be classified as (a) those belonging to natural objects as mountains, lakes, trees, birds, animals, etc., (b) The spirits of the dead and (c) the great nature spirits like those residing in different aspects of nature, such as sky, sun, moon, earth etc.

A history of spiritualism involves the history of the process of refinement of de-materialization of the soul until the idea of a pure soul as the supreme reality is realized. Similarly, a history of naturalism involves the history of the gradual emancipation of matter from the tyranny of souls until the supremacy of the former over the latter, as the ultimate ground of the explanation of everything including the latter, is reached.

Swami Dayananda, the founder of the Arya Samaj projects a materialistic view, which seeks to reestablish the Veda as a living religious scripture. Swami Dayananda, himself a great Sanskrit scholar, it is possible to interpret the Vedas in

diverse manners. Dayananda's interpretation of the hymns is governed by the belief that the Vedas represent an assemblage of religious, ethical and scientific truths; he expresses the opinion that by a true understanding of the senses of the Vedas it is possible to arrive at all the scientific truths, that are being discovered by modern research, as also those that are likely to be deciphered in the future.

Sri Aurobindo analyses the Vedic text from the standpoint of spirituality, and in his view, it contains universal, eternal, and impersonal truths, and consequently a harmonious blending of god-base and spiritual interpretations alone is competent to bring out the real import of the Vedas. He gives an altogether different explanation of sacrifice and says that the process of sacrifice refers really to the perpetual on-going sacrifice continuing in the inner structure of man, in which all egoistic and materialistic desires are consumed in the fire of divine energy burning in man, striving to attain the highest state of evolution.

In this paper, first chapter deals with the materialistic religion in Rig Veda. The materialistic characteristics of Vedic religion are analyzed from the prayers of Rig Veda. There are prayers for rain, food and bodily welfare, for youthfulness, prolonging of life, for relief from poverty and attainment of wealth etc.

The second chapter is the blending of Magic, Religion and Science in Vedic Thoughts. It deals with the role of magic-religious phenomena in the growth of ancient Indian science, the traces of the scientific achievement of the Vedic people in the fields of Astronomy, Metallurgy, Chemistry, Mathematics, Medicine and allied sciences.

In the third chapter we can see the confrontation between the agents of materialism and the forces of spiritualism in Rig Veda. Indian literature conceives of the Veda as the highest type of eternal knowledge, - knowledge that does not centre round certain facts or principles alone, but assumes the form of a distinct energy competent to effect revelation of the entire creation. Thus, the energy that is identical with Truth, and which, in its turn, is identical with the Veda manifests the entire creation, which naturally becomes resplendent with the light of divine consciousness. Finally, we conclude by attempting to deconstruct the borderline between

spiritualism and materialism and proves that there is no such borderline between them and Rig Veda is a blending of materialistic and spiritualistic thoughts.

Materialistic Religion in the Rig Veda

In Vedic religion, we can find a materialistic attitude towards the objects of worship. The fear of death being the predominating element and the Vedic people is devoid of the reverence, devotion and love, which establish an inner spiritual harmony between the worshipper and the worshipped. The unique, incommunicable tranquility of the soul, a prevailing feature of worshipping God in his truth and righteousness is absent in the Vedic religion. By Vedic religion gods are worshipped from the utilitarian point of view and rituals are performed not to please the gods for their own sake, but so that they may be pleased to bestow upon the worshipper the material benefits, which are the main aim of worshipping.

The materialistic characteristics of Vedic religion are evident from an analysis of Vedic prayers as given below:

Prayers for Rain: For a person with pastoral and agricultural economy, rain is one of the most urgent necessities of life. It enriches the pasture lands and enables the soil to produce food in abundance. Hence the Vedic hymns are full of prayers for rain. 'Parjanya' is the god of rain. Other gods are also invoked for rain. 'Indra', as 'Vrtrahan', is often praised for his victory over the demon and for releasing water. The following are a few examples:

“O Mitra- Varuna whomsoever ye favour,

To him the rain with streamed down from heaven....

We pray rain for the rain, I ever active ones...

And by the Asuras magic power cause heaven to rain...

ye hide him in the sky with cloud and flood of rain

And water drops, Parjanya! Full of sweetness flow...

(Rig Veda. IX 49.1, 65.3, 96.1)

Prayers for Food and Bodily Welfare: In the Rig Veda there are hymns in praise of Food:

“Now will I glorify Food that upholds great strength?
By whose invigorating power
Trita rent Vrtra limb from limb. O pleasant Food,
O Food of meat, then have we chosen for our own
So be our kind protector thou. Come hitherward to us,
O Food, auspicious with auspicious help
Health- bringing, not unkind, a dear and guileless friend
(Rig Veda I 165.15).

Prayers for Youthfulness:

“O Agni breaks not our ancestral friendship.
Sage as thou art, endowed with deepest knowledge.
Old age, like gathering cloud, impairs the body:
Before that Eveil become nigh protect me.

(Rig Veda I 71.10, Rig Veda VII 71.2, 5).

Prayers for Medicine: The Vedic people, keen for preservation of bodily health, youthfulness and for long life, knew that medicine is an indispensable thing. Hence prayers for medicine is frequently found in the Rig Vedic hymns

The attitude of the Vedic people towards life is, the, found to be wholly materialistic. A zest for this mundane life and an intense desire for material wealth and riches is a striking characteristic of the majority of the Rig Vedic hymns which is illustrated in the following examples:

Prayers for Relief from Poverty and Attainment of Wealth: The economic condition of the Vedic people was that they had to go through a considerable hardship and anxiety to make both ends meet. From the internal evidences we find that Vedic Rsis sees no glory or dignity in poverty

“O Indra well pleased with these bright flames,
And with these Soma drops, take thou away our poverty
With steeds and Kine..Thrice, O ye Asvins,
Bring us abundant wealth.. Thrice grant ye us prosper,
Send to us bounty manifold, O Indra
Lasting our life time,
Grant riches bestowing thousands, we call Indra”

(Rig Veda V 51.11-15)

Vedic people gave human qualities to Vedic gods. There is a horizontal relationship between man and god. Thus we find that there is no absolute difference between gods and man in Vedic literature. From the internal evidence of the Rig Veda we find that gods are often addressed as men. For example, Agni is called the ‘manliest hero’, ‘most heroic’ and ‘most manly’(Rig Veda I 77.4). Indra has all the weaknesses and, at the same time, the strength and valour of man.

The Vedic gods have a beginning like human beings. In general, they are described as the offspring of heaven and earth. Some gods are said to have been born from Airdi, some from water and some from the earth. We can say that Vedic gods are glorified human beings with human motives and passions. There is a relation of co-operation and friendliness among the Vedic people and their man – like gods whom they fashioned in their own likeness.

“Ye O ye gods, are verily our kinsmen;
As such, be kind to me who now implores you.

(Rig Veda X 66.14, 65.3).

In the Vedic religion, we find a horizontal relation between gods and men and are pronounced because it is marked by the relation of reciprocity or mutual co-operation, a relation of bargaining. Men need things which gods possess and gods depend on men for food and drink. Hence the Vedic people always expected a fair exchange from their gods. Thus Vedic religion was utilitarian in character, and the relation between gods and men is pragmatic. The composers of the Vedic hymns frankly admit that for the sake of wealth, prosperity, protection, etc., They pray to their gods.

The Blending of Magic, Religion and Science

The materialistic thoughts and outlook of primitive mind find their expression in the magico – religious beliefs and practices of primitive religion. This magico – religious phenomenon, not only characterizes primitive religion as materialistic but also contains the germs of the scientific theories and achievements of ancient civilization. We can see many reasons of the blending of the religious and magical ideas in Rig Veda. They are as follows:

One of the reasons of the blending of the religious and magical ideas in the primitive religions is that the ‘personal gods’ are not necessarily the object of worship. Anything is invoked which is supposed to have power over the courses of natural things and events, including human life. The Vedic people as found in Rig Veda, did not worship gods, but rather ‘powers’ operating in nature where they had to struggle and survive.

Another cause of the blending of magic and religion is the fact that in the Vedic religion, including that of the Rig Veda, fear and anxiety predominate over faith and love and consequently the attitude of self–assertion prevails over self-surrender. The prevalence of fear and anxiety in the Vedic consciousness is revealed by the Vedic terminology and the lack of confidence and trust in the gods. The Vedic demon is the embodiment of every fear and dread, every illness and calamity.

The uncertainties and insecurity of life swayed the mind of the Vedic people with hopes and fears. The Vedic people were so keenly conscious of the evil powers that one of the main aim of prayer and sacrifice was to drive away, destroy,

or to divert them towards the destruction of enemies. Even all gods are not benevolent in the Vedic religion. There is also a malevolent god like Rudra, who is entreated not to do any harm. The interesting thing to note is that the same entreaties are made even to the so-called benevolent gods. The idea of whimsicality in gods is not ruled out and even Varuna is not free from deceit. In spite of all the hymns of praises to Indra and utterances that he protects his worshippers there are passages showing lack of full confidence or trust in him. For example: “o Indra does not cast us away..Do thou no harm to our yet unborn offspring.. Slay us not Indra, do not thou forsake us. Steal not away the joys which we delight in”

(Rig Veda VIII 46.1)

We have already referred to the horizontal relationship between men and gods. In such relationship of reciprocity, a mutual dependence is indicated. The belief in the magical efficacy of sacrifice, characterizing the post Rig Vedic texts had its root in the Rig Veda itself. Speech and sacrifice were regarded by Vedic people to have high potentialities which enabled man to perform ‘mystery deeds’ without the help of the gods, and thus man could become not only independent of the gods but also could achieve the status of gods.

In the Rig Veda, there are references of the magical efficacy of the Manthra. We find several incantations against venomous reptiles: “Biters of shoulder or of limb, with needle – strings, most venomous/ unseen wherever ye may be, vanish together and be gone”(Rig Veda I 191.7)

Magic has a major role in the development of ancient Indian science. There is an intimate relationship between magic and science. Tracing the history of science, it has been shown that science did not sprout and grow on an open and healthy prairie of ignorance, but in the noisome jungle of magic and superstition. We have already seen that the primitive man was a hard boiled realist and a tough minded materialist. Hence his belief in and practices of magic are but the expressions of the most primitive materialistic thoughts which can properly be called the archaic materialism. Obviously, this archaic materialism, finding its first expression in the magico-religious phenomena, is bound to contain the germs of science or pre-science.

In the first stage of science, we find no clear cut demarcation between magic, religion and science. In the absence of the distinction between the sacred and secular, all the three categories, magic, religion and science, were blended together into a complex of magico – religious phenomena which, arising from the practical necessities of life, was the earliest attempt of man to interpret nature and search for the causes of natural phenomena and, thereby, to attain that power which would ensure survival by enabling men to regulate the causes of nature.

Science and magic started as a necessity for man's survival in the struggle for existence. Both represent man's reaction to and interpretation of nature and both aim at discovering causes of natural events and controlling them by human will. The distinction between them lies in the fact that magic has no theoretical background other than analogy or symbolism. Being the product of an immature phase in the evolution of human reason, it fails to discover the real causal connection among natural events; in other words, it fails to distinguish between causes- imaginary and real. Science, on the other hand, has been able to do so only through a process of unfolding of the reasoning faculty of man along with the accumulation of the a posteriori facts of experience in the course of a long period of history. Again man, in the primitive stage, was too close to his immediate environment to have a detached view and wide comprehension of nature. Hence, in his interpretation of nature, though he starts with the rational laws of causality and uniformity of nature, he commits the fallacies of mal-observation and non-observation. Thus his generalization is bound to be barren and futile, and his magic rites consist of an illusion technique instead of the real one. Thus the illusory technique of magic is a necessary stage for the development of the real technique of science.

The positive achievement of the Vedic period consists in laying down the foundation of astronomy, metallurgy, chemistry, mathematics, medical sciences and biology- all of which, later, in the classical period, flowered into the full-fledged branches of the ancient science of India. Contributions of the Vedic Indian in the above branches of science may briefly be summarized as follows:

Astronomy- as Weber points out, the Vedic astronomy was in a very elementary stage, the observation of the sky being still wholly confined to a few fixed stars, especially to twenty seven or twenty eight constellations and to various phases of the moon (Weber The History of Indian Literature p. 246). In Rig Vedic period, the year was reckoned to have three hundred and sixty days divided into twelve months of thirty days each (Rig Veda I 164.11)

On the origin of this branch two motives can be made out: practical and religious. Having pastoral and agricultural economy, the Vedic people must have been completely dependent on the mercy of various natural forces such as rain, drought, flood, storm and snowfall - all of which are more or less governed by the cycle changes of seasons. Hence, from the sheer force of necessity, they had to observe and learn the ways of stars, sun and the moon and associate the knowledge, thus gained, for the practical necessities.

Chemistry- the process of smelting metals inevitably led to some crude understanding of the chemical process of combustion. There are evidences in the Rig Veda that they knew about the process of tanning of leather and hides (Rig Veda VII 5.38). There is mention, in the Vedas of a number of fermented drinks and food such as Soma, sura as well as curds. The art of dyeing their garments red, purple and brown was also known to the Vedic Indians.

Mathematics- there was a highly developed numerical system from the early Vedic period (Rig Veda III 6.15, IV 32.18). 'Dasan' or ten forms the basis of the numerical system developed at a very early stage. They had the knowledge of the signs of numbness, some fractions, such as 'Ardha', 'pada', 'safe', and 'koala', denoting, $1/2$, $1/4$, $1/8$, and $1/16$ respectively (Rig Veda X 90.4).

The Confrontation between the Agents of Materialism and Forces of Spirituality

The Vedic literature is a literature which gives the call to posterity to surrender itself at the altar of Truth: it is repeatedly said that, those who try to propitiate the Absolute with the help of the Vedic mantras really make an attempt to

surrender themselves along with all their actions at the altar of the highest Truth. The Rig Veda describes the eternal journey of man to the empire of truth, and since in this the man has gotten support from Agni, representing the divine energy and Indra, representing the power of the divine mind. In Vedic deities we can a materialistic side as well as a spiritualistic side. There is a confrontation between spiritualism and materialism in Rig Veda.

Even though in Rig Veda we can see many hymns praising Agni for material prosperity there is definitely a spiritual incarnation in it. The Vedic literature conceives of Agni as the grand and perfect bridge between the heavenly region and the earthly abode. As a matter of fact, Sri Aurobindo describes Agni as the mediator between earth and heaven. Agni being the result of the entire existence is regarded as the navel knot of the earth. Agni is produced through rubbing of two pieces of woods which are technically known as "Aranis" in the language of Vedic literature. This process of rubbing two pieces of woods for producing fire is not mere a materialistic act, but it has a spiritualistic significance and it is symbolic in nature. What is intended is that through conscious spiritual activities, the gross consciousness is to be rubbed, so that the divine force lying dormant in the mind of man can be aroused and can be utilized for the purpose of making the man's march towards fulfillment successful. Thus, the divine force burning in the soul of man, whose physical form constitutes the beautiful vessel of spiritual energy, it is said, alone is competent to energise the man and to guide him from lower levels of existence to the higher and higher levels of bliss and glory.

The ordinary fire blazing in the man's hearth and home is nothing but an external manifestation of this divine force. The light emitting from fire is really knowledge and constitutes veritably the soul of man. Physical fire in no time consumes the fuel and converts the fuel into the ashes of fire: similarly the aroused spiritual consciousness consumes the physical mold as also thoughts concerning the empirical world of existence in no time and converts the man into a veritable god. This fire consumes all the sins, - all the deficiencies of the man and transform him into pure consciousness. It is not without reason, therefore, that Agni is described as the veritable fire purified, sustaining itself with spirituality.

The man, whose physical frame has not been purified and hardened by the fire of spiritual energy is unable to hold divine bliss and experience it with delight. The container that has not been burnt and solidified by spiritual fire continues to remain brittle and, consequently, is unable to contain the nectar of 'Soma', which is nothing other than divine bliss and joy. The Rig Veda draws the line of demarcation between the raw container of the ordinary man and the baked container of the spirituality advanced, and asserts with all emphasis that, when spiritual fire bakes the physical mould of man, it becomes able to retain divine joy, enabling the man to taste it with delight.

Since fire is associated with Sacrifice, and Sacrifice cannot be conducted without kindling the fire, it is necessary at this point of time to understand the implication of the sacrifice or the 'Yajna', so frequently referred to in the Rig Veda. Vedic literature conceives of 'Yagna' as the continuous flow of march towards higher and higher plains of the entire life is a great sacrifice. As a matter of fact, Yaksha describes 'Yajna' as the purity of action carried out by ultimate truth- as the process on which the entire cycle of creation rests. The Satapatha Brahmana approaches the concept from a different angle and proclaims that 'Yagna' is nothing other than the process of surrendering with devotion and profound urge of the spirit one's entire possessions to the Grand and the Infinite. In the view of Sri Aurobindo 'Yagna' refers to the process of complete surrender at the altar of the Almighty, - the process of sacrificing the truncated ego and all physical considerations.

Sacrifice, therefore, constitutes the gateway to man's transformation into a divine being,; it creates a situation in which the superman can come down to earth and establish his empire. To quote the words of Sri Aurobindo,

“Sacrifice is the outer symbol of an inner work, - an inner

The interchange between the gods and men, - man giving

What he has, the gods giving in return the horses off

Power, the hordes of light, the heroes of strength to be

His retinue, winning for his victory in the battle with

The hosts of darkness, Vritras, Dasyus, Panis”

(Sri Aurobindo: *Hymns to Mystic Fire*, p. XII)

The traditional explanation accepts same as a plant, and in its attempt to describe the process of the ritual of sacrifice proceeds to say that the juice of the plant is to be extracted by pressing the plant with slabs of stones and the juice extracted thereby is to be offered to fire as an offering to the gods. In conformity to this explanation that the Vedic deities and rituals, all are symbols and that, the deities are only different aspects of the same comprehensive Truth, which represents the goal and fulfillment of the human journey and the sacrifice is nothing but an internal sacrifice continuing permanently in the mind of the man. Sri Aurobindo describes Soma as the elixir of immortality, the bliss of divine glory or supramundane delight, that flows as a gift of god from above.

All this discussion on Vedic deities, who are actually the pathfinders in the human journey to fulfillment shows that Sri Aurobindo has interpreted the Vedic Sacrifice as the sacrifice perpetually being conducted in the mind of the man, in which all his base desires and propensities are being consumed in flames and has explained all gods also as ingredients necessary for performance of sacrifice from the standpoint of this process of mental and spiritual purification.

Conclusion

Deconstruction is not synonymous with ‘destruction’. It is in fact much closer to the original meaning of the word ‘analysis’ which etymologically means ‘to undo’. The deconstruction of a text does not proceed by random doubt or arbitrary subversion, but by the careful teasing out of warring forces of signification within the text (*The Critical Difference* p190 Barbara Johnson). The text can be read as saying something

quite different from what it appears to be saying. It may be read as carrying a plurality of significance or as saying many different things which are fundamentally at variance with, contradictory to and subversive of what may be seen by criticism as a single 'stable' means. The deconstructive reading aims of unmasking internal contradictions or inconsistencies in the text, aiming to show the disunity which underlies its apparent unity.

In the universe, there are no fixed points or absolutes, so that the universe we live in is 'decentred' or inherently relativistic. From the primitive days onwards man has a desire for control. When we trace the history of metaphysics we can find that one centre is replaced by another centre. Human understanding is structured by the world of appearance, and we always escape to this illusory world from the world of reality. The notion of 'structure' has presupposed a centre. The centre governs a structure, but is itself not subject to structural analysis (to find the structure of centre would be to find another centre). We desire a centre; it guarantee being as presence. Our physical and mental life centres on an 'I'. this is the principle of unity that underlines the structure of all that keeps happening in the world.

Derrida calls this desire for a centre 'logo centrism'. 'Logos' (Greek for word) carries in it the concentration of presence. Logo centrism is the belief that the first and the last things are the 'logos', the word, the divine mind, the infinite understanding of God. A spoken word is closer to the original thought than a written word. The privileging of speech over writing is 'phonocentrism'. Logo centrism and phonocentrism are both governed by the human desire to point to a central presence at the beginning, and at the end. It is this longing for a centre that spawns hierarchical oppositions: the superior term belongs to 'presence' or the 'logos'. Speech has its full presence, felt and heard at once, while writing is secondary, and therefore, contaminated speech. Western philosophy according to Derrida, has always supported this hierarchy in order to preserve this concept of presence. This traditional hierarchy of binary oppositions has infected all systems of thought including literature, criticism of art, in fact, the whole culture.

The spiritualists and the materialism are mere constructs of the human mind to translate flux in two stable identities. Man constructs these categories to create a stable identity. The material world is a play of different forces in contention which can be understood by using categories. We try to conceptualize our experience in terms of polar opposites, which is called binary oppositions. The oppositions build hierarchies in which one term in a pair is privileged.

The tendency of logo centric nature of man to categorize Rig Veda as a spiritualistic or materialistic text is decentred here. There is no such centre. In the earlier chapters we find the contradicting ideas of the materialistic attitude of Vedic people and the spiritual significance of their sacrifice and rituals. The materialistic attitude of Vedic people is very clear and religion here, is a means of achieving the mundane value or goal. The instinct of self-preservation or the life instinct, thus, played an important role in Vedic mind. The will to live positively aiming at material prosperity and negatively aiming at the destruction of anything that stands in the way of enjoyment of life is very prominent in the Vedic prayers and sacrifices. At the same time the spiritual significance of sacrifice is also evident. We can see an urge of humanity move from a lower level to a higher level and ultimately to reach steadily the place of enlightenment, where Absolute Truth shines in its own splendor. In Rig Veda we also find the blending of magic, religion and science. We can find an intermingling of science and magic and this points to the tendency of the Vedic mind for the quest of power.

Conceiving life in its totality is the way of the entire conceptual system of the Indian philosophy. The Indian way of life does not teach us to reject the material existence of man. The borderline between the so called spiritual and material existence is a metaphoric construct that permits the free play of concepts within a totality. The 'spiritual' always defines itself in terms of its other, the 'material'. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines 'spiritual' as 'concerned with the human spirit, rather than the body or physical'. The body and the physical belong to materialism. Here the question is, 'Can the spirit exist without its abode, the body?' It is evident that both the 'spiritual' and 'material' complement each other in a certain dialectic of 'supplementarity'.

The borderline between materialism and spiritualism is deconstructed here. In Rig Veda there is no borderline between spiritualism and materialism. From the above chapters, it is proved that there is no borderline and we see a blending, overlapping and conflicts between the contradictory constructs; materialism and spiritualism. In this deconstructive reading we look for the meanings in the text that stand in conflict with what is held as the main theme in traditional interpretation. The text itself is not aware of these contradictions and the deconstruction does not resolve the tensions between them. Deconstruction is not a dismantling of the structure of a text, but a demonstration that it has already dismantled itself.

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