

Brahminical Thought and the World

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The theory of evolution based on basic premises such as “survival of the fittest” pervades human thinking today given the era of modern science. But Kenneth Clarke in his widely acclaimed television series ‘Civilization’ describes certain events in the history of mankind that can not be explained by evolution, for example, the origin of the ‘spirituality’ in India, sudden appearance of civilizations (Mesopotamia, Egypt, Indus valley) and the miracle of Ionia and Greece where philosophy, science and art flourished unlike before. The intellectual leadership by ‘brahmans’ in India that led to spiritual enlightenment is unparalleled in the history of human civilization. The highest support for morality enshrined in the ancient scriptures, the Vedas, is again unparalleled for the day, and even today in human civilization. The word ‘Veda’ means knowledge revealed by God Brahma and, therefore, the Vedas (Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda, Atharvaveda) form the backbone of Indian philosophy. The concept of “Dharma and Karma” is supreme, eternal and all encompassing for all times to come. The world without one will be like a body without soul. An analysis of the contributions of the brahmans to the world thought is for scholars to engage but an attempt is made here to provide some perspective that awakens the brahminical spirits.

The ‘Kathopanishad’ enlightens mankind about the ‘Atman’ or soul that resides in the body of living beings, a realization of the imperishable nature of this bodiless spirit casts off all grief. One can only marvel at the relationship between a soul and the divine

spirit described in 'Isavasyopanishad' that can lead one to sublime heights where distinction between self and non-self disappears. The 'Gayatri' mantra from the Vedic times is recited to this day by millions for its mystical potency and spiritual underpinnings. Such brahminical thoughts outlined in the 'Upanishads' and other holy scriptures have made human progress feasible and provide hope for the future of mankind. Lizelle Reymond in her book 'To live Within' provides a glimpse into the psychological pilgrimage of a western mind into spirituality in the Indian traditions that led her to experience and feel that spirituality exists in the heart of all life. In her previous book 'My Life with a Brahmin Family', she experienced that laws to spiritual growth are as exact as anything science has discovered in external nature. The spiritual intelligence can be tasted in the midst of life, and not necessarily apart from it. The Spiritual inkling is likely to continue to shape future of mankind and stay as a corner stone of human thinking, values and aspirations.

The most ancient 'Rigveda', probably the earliest book that humanity possesses, mentions and discusses 'Hiranyagarbhaya' about the origin of universe. While western scholars translated 'Hiranyagarbhaya' as 'golden embryo' in English language or in more popular lexicon as 'Big Bang' explaining the origin of the universe, its original description finds its roots in the brahminical thought. The 'Taittiriya Upanishad' states, "Out of Brahma, which is the higher self, came space; out of space, air; out of air, fire; out of fire, water; out of water, earth; out of earth, vegetation; out of vegetation, food; out of food, the body of all humanity." Such an ancient scripture explaining the origin of life is indeed consistent with the tenets of modern science today. The origin and practice of

medicine lies in 'Ayurveda', one of the oldest scientific medical systems in the world that aims at promoting health and longevity with a holistic touch. The 'Samkhya' through its branch of the philosophy of 'Yoga' is most popular and best known across the globe. As for law and justice, 'Manusmriti' is the world's oldest social system that gave order to the society and, also, defined laws for the household. The indo-european languages, including English find their root in 'Sanskrit', the mother of the languages. Therefore, the words "Sanskrit, sanskriti and sanskar" are closeted together not without reason but are at the root of brahminical thoughts and a major contribution to the human civilization.

The tradition of brahminical thinking have continued to inspire the coming generations and produced such great thinkers as Chanakya whose 'Niti Shashtra' finds universal relevance. The brahminical influence spread to American shores as well and produced 'Men of Letters' of 19th century that included Oliver Wendell Holmes, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and James Russell Lowell. These writers had their origin from socially exclusive New England families of aristocratic and cultural pretensions who considered themselves as 'Brahmin' originally as a humorous reference to 'Brahman', the highest caste of Hindu society. Nevertheless, these Brahmins made Boston the literary capital of America in their day and influenced the American literary taste until 1890s. Given the brahminical traditions and 'Sanskara', it is likely that brahminical thoughts will continue to enlighten the human civilization as these have all through to the day.