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Eternal?**

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# Who Wrote The Vedas? Are They Eternal?

## Article of the Month – November 2010

For those bathing in the shower of their grace and delighting in their wisdom, the Vedas are but a manifest form of God's compassion. Containing knowledge on subjects beyond the domain and reach of human intellectual capability, the mere word Veda itself sends up a thrill through the spine, and there arises from the bottom of one's heart a feeling of immense gratitude and affection for the Divine Creator from whose breath have emerged these guiding words of wisdom.

The depth of the faith people have in the Vedas is amazing. This is not restricted to India where such a faith is universal, expressed one way or the other. Even in foreign lands we see many men and women diligently trying to establish Vedic traditions in their native places. It is obvious that there is no penalty for them for not following the Vedic rules; even then, they continue to work hard to try and obey them. The roots of the Vedas are thus too deep and tenacious to be judged only summarily.

Why do people have so much respect for the Vedas? If it had been our direct experience that following them would invariably lead to material happiness and not obeying would definitely lead to sorrow, perhaps this deep respect would have been justifiable as an act of fear and awe. However, it is not so. We cannot establish any direct connection between material happiness and following the Vedas. On the contrary, we see many societies which have no contact with the Vedas but are materially more prosperous. Even amongst the followers, prosperous people may not have much faith and people with immense faith may not be prosperous at all. In fact, many times we see people with faith facing many difficulties in their lives. In this way, we see that faith in the Vedas and acting according to their instructions do not appear to have any direct connection with material prosperity. Given the modern way of living, obsessed as it is with the material aspects of life, it is surprising that the allegiance to the Vedas still continues, ingrained in us in an unexplained, deep-rooted manner.

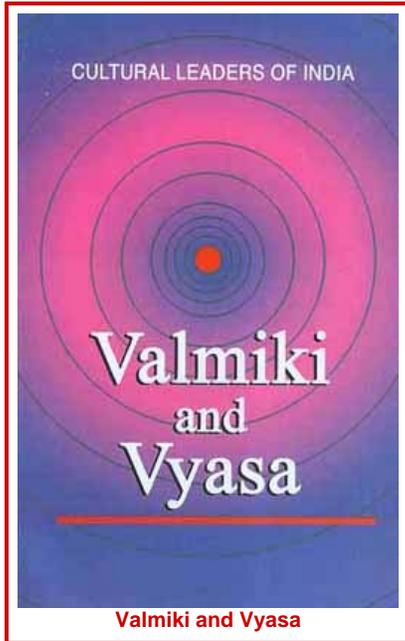
### **What is the Reason for this Supreme Faith in the Vedas?**

The reason is simple enough: The Vedas are not man made. It is impossible to associate any human being with their authorship. Then who made them? Before proceeding logically to establish the authorship of the Vedas, let us remember one simple definition: God is one who is responsible for all those things for which we are not responsible. Therefore, Vedas must be the work of God. However, many find it difficult to believe this. Towards this end, the following objections are raised:

**Objection:** Vedas contain both prose and poetry; therefore, whoever composed these should be deemed their author.

**Reply:** But we have never heard any composer's name being associated with the Vedas.

**Doubt:** Maybe people have forgotten their names because the composers lived a long time back.



**Resolution:** The Sanskrit poet Kalidasa who lived more than 2000 years ago is well known as the author of the play Abhijnana Shakuntala. The name of Vyasa, who lived more than 5000 years ago, is on the lips of every Indian child as the author of the Mahabharata. Valmiki, whose date is so ancient that it is not known to anybody, is widely known as the author of the Ramayana, and his birthday is celebrated throughout India even today with much fanfare. How is it possible that only the author of the Vedas is not known, and that tradition has never ever ascribed authorship of the Vedas to anybody at all?

**Objection:** Even in the case of folk songs sung throughout India, no one knows the author. For simply this reason, you cannot claim that these folk songs too are not a creation of man (Apourusheya).

**Resolution:** There is a world of difference between the Vedas and folk songs. Folk songs are not only very short in length but also very short lived unlike the Vedas. They do not conform to grammar rules. Sometimes they do not even have a formal structure. Many a times they are light hearted and banter-like in nature. However the Vedas are vast and deep, and have a profound structure. Therefore, there is no scope for comparison here.

**Doubt:** But every hymn of the Vedas contains in its beginning the name of a sage (Rishi) who composed it, along with the name of the god eulogized in that particular hymn and also the meter (chhanda) in which the hymn is composed.

**Reply:** The Rishis cannot be the composer of the hymns because of the following reasons:

### **Musical Structure of the Vedas:**

Consider music of very famous Indian composers like Purandaradasa (around 1500 AD), and Tyagaraja (1800 AD). They have composed songs in various raagas (musical modes) and tala (rhythms). However, within this short period of

time, both the mode and rhythm of their compositions have undergone a sea change. Indeed, such a change has not taken place in the musical structure of the Vedas.

There are six aspects in the musical structure of the Vedas:

- a). Varna: The actual alphabets.
- b). Swara: The musical notes.
- c). Matra: The extension of a letter during its pronunciation.
- d). Bala: The stress of an alphabet.
- e). Sama: A special rendering.
- f). Santana: A non-stop recitation over a certain length.

Consider for example the Matra. It is defined by the duration of a peacock's sound. Recently, acousticians have recorded Vedic recitation from traditional pundits and also notes of the peacock. On comparison, the intervals coincide upto an accuracy of nanoseconds. That is, the musical structure has remained unchanged since time immemorial. This would have been impossible if the Vedas had been the composition of human beings.

## **The Vastness of the Vedas**

There is another reason to draw this conclusion. The Vedas are unimaginably vast. Patanjali, the founder of Yoga, whose date even by the harshest critics is never placed after the birth of Christ, has written a monumental work on grammar called the 'Mahabhashya.' There he gives a bibliography of the Vedas. He laments that in his time there remained only 21 branches of the Rigveda, 31 of the Yajurveda, 1000 of Samaveda, and 9 of the Atharvaveda. In each of these branches there are further four divisions each called: Samhita, Brahmana, Aranyaka and Upanishad. Out of these branches in vogue 2000 years ago, we now have remaining today only the following: 1 in Rigveda, 3 in Yajurveda, 2 in Samaveda, and 2 in Atharvaveda, a grand total of eight. In order to recite all these existing 8 branches, it needs about 300 hours. So, to recite the Vedas that existed at the time of Patanjali would have required about 40,000 hours. This is too much immense and cannot be the creation of any one individual.

**Doubt:** This is true; however, the Vedas are not the creation of a single person. There may have been several composers accounting for their vastness. Do we not see the same thing in the Internet today, what with its billions of pages, authored by millions of people over an extended period of time?

**Resolution:** This statement is not correct because it gets refuted in the light of the fact that though the Vedas are so vast, there is not a single contradiction in them. Had they been the creation of several people belonging to different places and composed at different times, there should have been contradictions. It is a universal experience that no two human beings agree on all issues at all times.

**Objection:** What you are saying is not true. There are lots of contradictions in the Vedas. At one place it is said, "Never give up karma", at another "Give up karma". One says. "The world came from vacuum". Another doubts this by

saying "How can the world come from vacuum?" At a third place it is said, "The world came from God." These are certainly contradictions.

**Resolution:** This objection is not valid. Consider the following example: A man walking outside a house heard a ladies' sound from within: "Son, please drink milk, it is very good for your health. Do not insist on eating this fried potato, it is not good." In the evening, going by the same way he heard the same woman's voice: "Why are you insisting on milk? What is in it except water? Potatoes are ready, eat them." At another time he heard her saying: "You are continuously sitting and studying. Go out and play for sometime." Later he heard her say: "Why are you always playing here and there like an idle dog? Sit down and study. If you go outside again, I will thrash you."

These statements are certainly contradictory. Hearing them one can conclude that there are many people in the house who have a lot of difference of opinion between them and that the lady who has spoken these words is very quarrelsome. Your conclusion about the Vedas is also like this. The moment you encounter such statements in the Vedas it would be immature to straightaway label them as contradictory.

The correct thing obviously would be to compare the contexts in which the various statements have been made, and only then venture to interpret them. For example, in the above illustration, after investigation it turned out that the woman was dissuading a small child from eating fried potatoes and insisting on him to take milk, while a grown up child was being offered potatoes. One studious boy was being encouraged to go out and play, while an errant one was being forced to sit down and study. Interpreted in this contextual way, everything falls beautifully into place and there remains no contradiction at all.

Similarly in the Vedas, karma is prescribed for those who have attachment to the body. Those who have no attachment are advised to give it up. The statement that the world came out of nothing is only a metaphor to signify that the root cause of the world is extremely subtle. Therefore, the descriptions are to be understood as different levels of clarity. This is there in every field of knowledge. In science too, don't we first tell the child that the electron goes around the nucleus in circles. It is only after a certain stage that the more complicated concept of probability path is explained. It is the same here. Therefore, we assert that there are no contradictions in the Vedas.

### **Scientific Truths in the Vedas:**

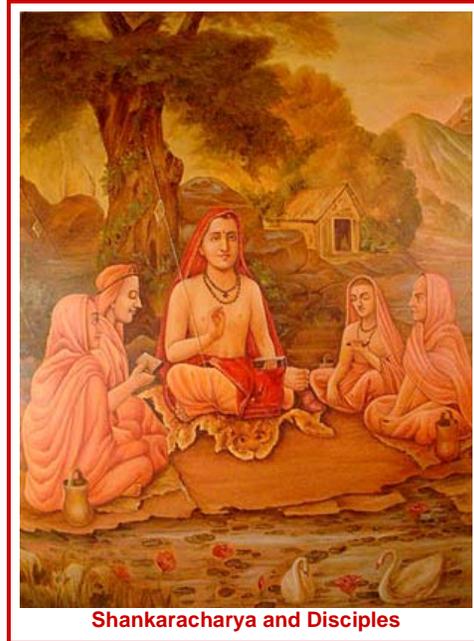
Another reason why the Vedas cannot be man made is that many of the very recent and remarkable discoveries of science are already mentioned in them. Some crucial examples are as follows:

1). What came first, the seed or the tree? After a lot of investigations botanists have found out that the tree appeared first. Based on this, they have even evolved methods of growing a tree straight through a part of the tree instead of through the seed. This is what is called 'Tissue Culture'. Now, notice a mantra in the Chandogya Upanishad: "It is only the tree which is the seed of the tree. So

also, the bird is the seed of the bird, and not the egg.”

This means that in the process of creation it was the tree that appeared first, rather than the seed. While commenting on this mantra the great Shankaracharya asks the following question: “When it is a matter of common observation that it is the seed which is the seed of the tree, how can the Vedas say that the tree is the seed of the tree?”

Then he replies, giving a heuristic proof of the Vedic statement: “Yes, if the Vedas depended on our intelligence, they could not have made the statement. But remember, the Vedas are an independent source of knowledge. Moreover, don’t we see that many plants are born without seeds, though no seed is born without a plant? Therefore, we cannot doubt the Vedic statement.” What the big scientists have discovered after a lot of investigation with great effort, has been casually mentioned in the Vedas.



2). The Atharvaveda and the Puranas assert that there are seven islands in the world. From our present knowledge we know that these are Eurasia, Africa, South America, North America, Australia, Greenland and Antarctica. Till the year 1911 however, only six islands were known to the world. Antarctica was discovered only on 14th December 1911. Then how can the Vedas which certainly existed before 1911 say that there are seven islands in the world? The only answer to this question is that God who created the seven islands certainly knew this and therefore He could tell it through the Vedas.

There are several other secrets of nature which have come to sight only recently through scientific discoveries, but are already mentioned in the Vedas. Talented scientists with their penetrating intelligence have made these discoveries with unparalleled efforts through subtle experiments. How is that the Vedas speak about them? It would be ridiculous to say that the Rishis wrote them after conducting experiments or analyzing them by inference. By inference is it possible to say that there are seven islands on the earth? This number cannot be arrived at by any logic. Therefore, the only satisfactory explanation is that the One who is responsible for this creation is also responsible for the Vedas.

**Objection:** The information mentioned in the Vedas is not always scientifically accurate. At one place in the Vedas it is said that the world is flat, which is obviously against the facts.

**Answer:** Can you please tell where exactly in the Vedas does this statement occur?

**Objector:** I have not seen it, but many people say this.

**Resolution:** We too have heard this kind of speculation before. However, nowhere in the Vedas have we come across any such statement anywhere. In this context it is very important to observe that the earth is often called in the Vedas as 'bhu-mandala', which obviously means circular or spherical. In fact, the cosmos itself is termed as 'brahmanda', meaning it is oval or egg-shaped. The Vedas are not only precisely accurate in the information they provide, but also there is impeccable effectiveness in the method they use to disseminate their wisdom. Additionally, the remarkable feature of the Vedas is that even though they dwell on issues beyond the comprehension of the human mind, nevertheless, all their assertions are verifiable either through inference or actual experience.

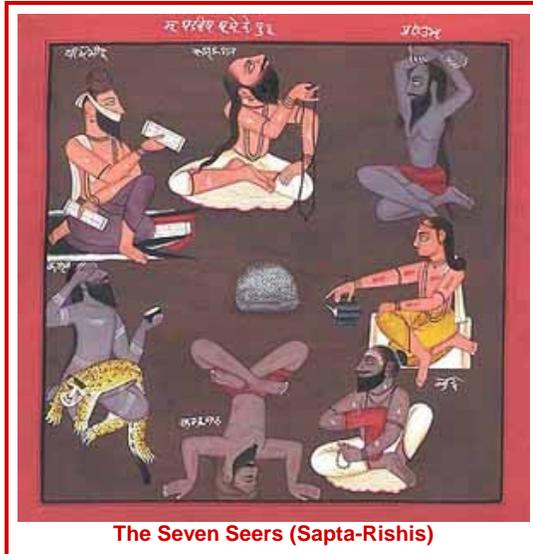
In the foregoing discussion, it has been demonstrated logically that the Vedas could not have been composed by human beings. The reasons are five:

- 1). The author's name is not known.
- 2). Their musical structure is unaffected over time.
- 3). They are very vast.
- 4). They have no contradictions in spite of their vastness.
- 5). Recent discoveries have already been mentioned in them.

If the Vedas are not man made, then the questions are "Who is responsible for them? And how do we come to know of them?"

The answer according to the Vedas is:

God creates the world in the following sequence: akasha (sky), vayu (air), agni (fire), jala (water), prithvi (earth), plants, seeds and finally human beings and animals. This creation lasts for one kalpa (4.32 billion years), and then it goes into dissolution before being created again. This cycle of creation and dissolution is eternal.



In each creation, the human beings born in the beginning are those who were immensely spiritually evolved in the previous creation. For example in the present creation these are Manu, his wife Shatarupa, the seven sages (Sapta-Rishis) and many others.

These people, unlike us, remember their past by the grace of God. They also remember by His grace the Vedas that they themselves had learnt in their previous lives. They give birth to children some of whom are of high prowess who too remember some part of the Vedas. Further, these Rishis also teach the Vedas to later generations. In this way, the Vedas come to our knowledge. Such a Rishi is called a seer, i.e. one who sees the mantra (mantra-drishta). Their names appear in the beginning of each hymn, along with the name of the god the hymn is addressed to and the meter in which it is composed. Vishwamitra, one of the seven Sapta-Rishis, is the seer of the famous Gayatri Mantra. Can anybody ever suggest that Vishwamitra is the creator of the Gayatri Mantra?

Thus, it is obvious that these sages are not the composers of the hymns and this is the reason why devotion to the Vedas continues intact; they are but God's explicit communication to humans.

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### References and Further Reading:

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- Bharati, Swami Paramananda. Lectures on Vedanta (80 MP3 Files).
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*This article is based almost entirely on the teachings of Param Pujya Swami Paramanand Bharati Ji.*

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We hope you have enjoyed reading the article. Any comments or feedback that you may have will be greatly appreciated. Please send your feedback to [feedback@exoticindia.com](mailto:feedback@exoticindia.com).