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Significance of the Tenth *Maṇḍala* of the *Ṛgveda*

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Abstract

The Vedic literature is the oldest Indo-European literary monument, where the cultural heritage of the people of the then Indian society is reflected. The four Vedas are said to be the ultimate sources of knowledge. Everything related to the Indian way of life has its roots in the Vedic lore. Among these four monumental works, the *Ṛgveda* is said to be the most important as well as the oldest one. This *Veda* furnishes the knowledge of the religion, faith, ethical and secular aspects of the Aryan people. During the *Ṛgvedic* period, the Aryans had developed a unique culture and an ideal civilization. Among the ten *Maṇḍalas* of the *Ṛgveda*, the Tenth *Maṇḍala* is very much significant in different aspects. This *Maṇḍala* is regarded as the latest addition to the *Ṛgveda*. The subject-matter, language and style of the Tenth *Maṇḍala* are different in many aspects. It contains most of the dialogue hymns, didactic hymns, secular hymns and the hymns dedicated to the Abstract deities. The language and diction of the hymns are natural and simple in comparison to the other nine *Maṇḍalas*. To know about the socio-cultural, religious and philosophical aspects of the *Ṛgveda* the Tenth *Maṇḍala* gives sufficient information.

The method of treatment adopted in the present paper is chiefly analytical and descriptive. A humble attempt has been made here to impart an acquaintance with the significance of the Tenth *Maṇḍala* of the *Ṛgveda*.

Key Words: Aryan, Society, Language, Secular, Religion.

The earliest and the most important record of the religion and the institutions of the Aryans, is the *Veda*. Indisputably, the oldest of all the works of the Vedic literature is the *Ṛgveda-Samhitā*, usually called simply the *Ṛgveda*. In the *Ṛgveda*, there are ten *Maṇḍalas* of varying length excepting that the Tenth contains the same number of hymns as the First. The Tenth *Maṇḍala* of the *Ṛgveda* appears to be a later appendage. It contains subject-matters on various aspects. The hymns of this *Maṇḍala* are quite different from the other nine *Maṇḍalas* in different aspects. The Tenth *Maṇḍala* gives more precisely the knowledge of religion, faith, ideas, secular and philosophical aspects of the Aryan people. Its language and subject-matter show that it is later in origin than the other *Maṇḍalas*. Both its position at the end of the *Ṛgveda* and the fact that the number of its hymns (one hundred and ninety-one) is made up to that of the First *Maṇḍala* indicate its supplementary character. As the Tenth *Maṇḍala* appears to be a later addition of the *Ṛgveda* it is very much significant in different aspects.

Most of the dialogue hymns are found in the Tenth *Maṇḍala*. The *Samvāda* hymns of the *Ṛgveda* were described by Oldenberg as *Ākhyāna* hymns, representing the oldest form of epic poetry.¹ The most famous of these dialogue hymns is between Urvaṣī and Purūravas.² This hymn contains the

germs of a legend which is related in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa*,³ later mentioned in the *Mahābhārata*⁴ and in the *Viṣṇu Purāṇa*.⁵ It is also the earliest form of the story which in the classical period formed the subject of Kālidāsa's drama *Vikramorvaśīyam*. Another valuable narration is found in the dialogue between Yama and Yamī.⁶ This hymn belongs to the type of creation myths found all over the world where human race is stated to have created from the union of twins, i.e. the first human pair to which the imagination is bound to trace the origin of mankind.⁷ There are many dialogue hymns in the Tenth *Maṇḍala* of the *Ṛgveda*, the contents of which are somewhat perplexing. Some other important dialogue hymns found in the Tenth *Maṇḍala* are *Saramā Paṇi Saṁvāda*,⁸ *Vṛṣākapi Saṁvāda*,⁹ *Indra Vasukra Saṁvāda*¹⁰ etc. These dialogue hymns contain a story; and they possess a dramatic element. This group of hymns has a special literary interest as foreshadowing the dramatic works of later age. The dialogue hymns of the *Ṛgveda* contain different kinds of myths, legends and varied stories. These hymns are said to be the earliest form of dramatic literature in India. Hertel tried to prove that these were really speeches belonging to some dramatic performances connected with the religious cult.¹¹ L.von Schroeder extended support to his view.¹²

Hardly a score of the hymns of the *Ṛgveda* are secular poems which are especially valuable as throwing light on the earliest thought of secular nature and civilization of India. One of the most noteworthy of them is the long Wedding-hymn¹³ of the Tenth *Maṇḍala*. This hymn gives loaded of information relating to marriage custom prevalent in the Ṛgvedic society. In this hymn, there are remarkable thoughts couched in a most emphatic language that enable one to understand the concept of conjugal love as it was visualized by the ancient seers. There are five funeral hymns,¹⁴ which are more or less concerned with funeral rites. These hymns yield much information about the funeral usages of those early days. A study of the funeral hymns indicate that the systems of cremation and burial were prevalent at that time.¹⁵

Among such secular hymns, some are didactic in nature. The didactic hymns, which are aimed at infusing the spirit of cultivating the righteousness into the minds of the people, are relevant to the present day society also. Out of a number of hymns of a didactic character, the Gambler's lament¹⁶ is a monologue. The hymn begins with the praise of dice as an irresistibly enticing game providing infinite pleasure, exhilarating like a drink of *Soma*. The poet goes on to describe the pitiable condition to which the gambler is reduced. The description of his wretched misery is expressed in extremely restrained language. The hymn ends with a note of sincere regression and advices to other gamblers to resist the fatal temptation and engage in cultivation for a living.,¹⁷ The purport of this hymn is to show gambling as a social evil under the seize of which gamblers are fall into the pitiable conditions. Another secular hymn known as *Jñānasūkta*¹⁸ praises wise speech. It gives importance of knowledge. Moreover, there is another hymn,¹⁹ which is known as *Dānastuti* or hymn in praise of the liberal donors. According to Winternitz, these *dānastutis* occupy a kind of intermediate position between religious and secular poetry.²⁰ The poems of this group may be regarded as the forerunners of the sententious poetry of later Sanskrit literature.

There are a number of hymns in the Tenth *Maṇḍala* of the *Ṛgveda* which show a gradual growth of the philosophical speculation in those times. The hymns which consist of speculations on the origin of the world through the agency of a creation called by various names are distinct from any of the ordinary gods and they are quite philosophical in nature. The *Puruṣasūkta*²¹ of the Tenth *Maṇḍala* is remarkable as the entire hymn is cosmogonic. It records the creation of the universe. In this hymn, the gods are the agents of creation, while the material out of which the world is made is the body of a primeval giant named *Virāṭ Puruṣa*. This hymn not only presupposes a knowledge of

the three oldest Vedas, to which it refers by name²² but also for the first and only time in the *Ṛgveda*, mentions the four castes.²³ Regarding the *Puruṣasūkta* A.A. Macdonell remarks, 'It is in fact, the starting point of the pantheistic philosophy of India'.²⁴ The *Nāsadīyasūkta*²⁵ begins with the description of the time before the creation. Macdonell holds that it is the starting point of the natural philosophy which developed into the *Sāṃkhya* system.²⁶ This hymn is most important in the history of the philosophy of India.²⁷ The *Vāksūkta*²⁸ of the Tenth *Maṇḍala* is the embryo from which has issued the later Indian philosophical thought of the Upaniṣads and *Vedānta*. K.C. Chatterjee holds that it is probably this hymn gave rise to the idea of Śabda-Brahman.²⁹ In the *Hiraṇyagarbhasūkta*,³⁰ Hiraṇyagarbha is established as the first originator of world, all powerful and lord of all.³¹ Here the creator is not only described as the one god above all gods, but is said to embrace all things.³² This germ of pantheism developed through the later Vedic literature till it assumed its final shape in the *Vedānta* Philosophy, still the most popular system of the Hindus.

The advance of thought during the period of the *Ṛgveda* from the concrete towards the abstract is noticeable in the depiction of the abstract deities, which enhance the importance of the Tenth *Maṇḍala* of the *Ṛgveda*. There are so many abstract ideas which are mentioned as devatās, viz. Śraddhā,³³ Dakṣiṇā,³⁴ Araṇyānī,³⁵ Nirṛiti,³⁶ Anumati,³⁷ Asuniti,³⁸ Manyu,³⁹ Tvaṣṭṛ,⁴⁰ Dhātṛ⁴¹ etc.

The Tenth *Maṇḍala* of the *Ṛgveda* vividly reflects the socio-cultural aspects of the Vedic Aryans. Valuable data regarding the Education system of Vedic Aryans were portrayed in the Tenth *Maṇḍala*. The position of women during Ṛgvedic period was nicely portrayed in the Tenth *Maṇḍala*. As mentioned earlier information regarding four castes of the people are attached in this very *Maṇḍala*.⁴² The Wedding hymn⁴³ provides the information about the custom of marriage ceremony, different forms of marriage prevalent at the Ṛgvedic period etc. The Tenth *Maṇḍala* also alludes to rites connected with funeral ceremony.⁴⁴ These hymns focus the customs and manners of the Aryans regarding the disposal of the dead body. Ṛgvedic society was based on ethics and morality. It lays stress on speaking of truth and follow righteousness.⁴⁵ Liberality is highly praised in the Tenth *Maṇḍala*.⁴⁶ Hospitality was considered as the primary duty of the house holder.⁴⁷ The Tenth *Maṇḍala* ends with a message of unity.⁴⁸ Various information regarding the everyday life of the Ṛgvedic people, viz. food and drinks, dress and ornaments, occupations etc. were enjoined in the Tenth *Maṇḍala*.

To know the political condition of the Ṛgvedic society Tenth *Maṇḍala* of the *Ṛgveda* gives sufficient information. It provides information regarding kingship,⁴⁹ duties of king⁵⁰ etc. It also furnishes materials about some royal personalities like *Grāmaṇī*,⁵¹ *Viśpati*,⁵² *Senānī*⁵³ etc. Different machineries of the king, viz. *Sabhā*,⁵⁴ *Samiti*⁵⁵ and *Vidatha*⁵⁶ were also discussed in this very *Maṇḍala*.

The *Ṛgveda* is said to be the source of religion propagated by the Vedic seers. It depicts an earlier stage of beliefs based on the personification and worship of natural phenomena. Various natural phenomena like various herbs,⁵⁷ forests,⁵⁸ rivers⁵⁹ etc. are worshiped in the Tenth *Maṇḍala*. Female divinities like Vāk,⁶⁰ Rātrī,⁶¹ Śraddhā,⁶² Sūryā⁶³ etc. take the foremost place in this *Maṇḍala*. Abstract deities which occupy an important place in the *Ṛgveda* are also belonging to the Tenth *Maṇḍala*. Not more than thirty hymns are concerned with subjects other than the worship of gods or deified objects. About a dozen of these, almost entirely confined to the Tenth *Maṇḍala*, deal with magical practices, which properly belong to the *Atharvaveda*. Their contents are diseases,⁶⁴ against a demon destructive of children,⁶⁵ or enemies,⁶⁶ or rival wives.⁶⁷ A few are incantations to preserve life⁶⁸ or to procure offspring.⁶⁹

The diction of the hymns of the Tenth Maṇḍala is, on the whole natural and simple, free from the use of compounds of more than two words. Considering their great antiquity, the hymns are composed with a remarkable degree of metrical skill and command of language. The *Anuṣṭubh* metre is profusely used in the Tenth Maṇḍala of the *Ṛgveda*. M. Winternitz holds that in ancient poetry the *Anuṣṭubh* is by far less popular than the *Gāyatrī*. Later it is the other way about the *Anuṣṭubh* becomes the usual verse and from it is developed the *Śloka*, the actual metre of epic poetry.⁷⁰ The language of this Maṇḍala is different from the other nine Maṇḍalas in respect of simplicity and vocabulary. Besides Metres other elements of poetry, i.e. figures of speech are scattered throughout the Tenth Maṇḍala. The alaṅkāras, which are noticed in the Tenth Maṇḍala are *Upamā*,⁷¹ *Rūpaka*,⁷² *Utprekṣā*,⁷³ *Drṣṭānta*,⁷⁴ *Arthāntaranyāsa*,⁷⁵ *Udātta*,⁷⁶ *Artthāpatti*,⁷⁷ *Parivr̥tti*,⁷⁸ *Sahokti*,⁷⁹ *Virodha*,⁸⁰ *Vyatireka*,⁸¹ *Ākṣepa*⁸² etc. Sentiments are also immersed in the Tenth Maṇḍala of the *Ṛgveda*. Use of Erotic sentiment⁸³ and Pathetic sentiment⁸⁴ enhances the beauty of the Tenth Maṇḍala.

After a careful study of the Tenth Maṇḍala of the *Ṛgveda* it can be stated that this Maṇḍala is significant in various aspects. A thorough study of the Tenth Maṇḍala definitely bears the uniqueness of it. The philosophical hymns of the Tenth Maṇḍala are regarded as the basis of the later development of Indian religion and philosophy. The high ethical values, which were inculcated by the people of the then Indian society, are emphatically propagated in the Tenth Maṇḍala of the *Ṛgveda*. The didactic hymns have a great contribution towards the moulding of righteousness in the minds of the people of present-day society also. The dialogue hymns contribute a lot in the development of the later dramas which is discussed above. Thus, the Tenth Maṇḍala of the *Ṛgveda* which furnishes the rich data in searching the socio-cultural, ethical, religious and other aspects pertaining to the Ṛgvedic period is regarded as the very important source of study.

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6. *Ṛgveda*., 10.10
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8. *Ṛgveda*., 10.108
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10. *Ibid.*, 10.28
11. Winternitz, M., op.cit., Vol, 1, p.92
12. Vide, *Ibid.*, p.93
13. *Ṛgveda*., 10.85
14. *Ibid.*, 10.14-18
15. *ye agnidagdhā ye anagnidagdhā madhye divaḥ svadhayā mādayante/tebhiḥ svarālasunīmetām yathāvaśaṁ tanvaṁ kalpayasva//Ibid.*, 10.15.14 Also vide, *Ibid.*, 10.18.10-12
16. *Ibid.*, 10.34
17. *akṣairmā divyaḥ kṣimitkṛṣasva vitte ramasva bahu manyamānaḥ/ tatra gāvaḥ kitava tatra jāyā tanme vi caṣṭe savitāyamaryah// Ibid.*, 10.34.13

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19. *Ibid.*, 10.117
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21. *Ṛgveda.*, 10.90
22. *tasmādyajñāt sarvahuta ṛcaḥ sāmāni jajñire/ chhandāmsi jajñire tasmādyajustasmādayāyata// Ibid.*,10.90.9
23. *brāhmaṇo'sya mukhamāsīdbāhū rājanyaḥ kṛtaḥ/ ūrū tadasya yadvaiśyaḥ padbhyām śūdro ajāyata// Ibid.*,10.90.12
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32. *prajāpate no tvadetānyanyo viśvā jātāni pari tā babhūva/ yatkāṁaste juhūmastanno astu vayam syāma patayo rayīnām// Ibid.*, 10.121.10
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35. *Ibid.*, 10.146
36. *Ibid.*, 10.59
37. *Ibid.*, 10.167.3
38. *Ibid.*, 10.59.5-6
39. *Ibid.*, 10.83, 10.84
40. *Ibid.*, 10.110.9
41. *Ibid.*, 10.190.3, 10.167.3
42. *Ibid.*, 10.90.12
43. *Ibid.*, 10.85
44. *Ibid.*, 10.14-18
45. *triryātudhānaḥ prasitīm ta etvṛtaṁ yo agne anṛtena hanti/tamarcisā sphūrjayanjātavedaḥ samakṣamenam grṇate ni vṛndhi// Ibid.*,10.87.11
46. *Ibid.*, 10.107.8-11
47. *moghamannaṁ vindate apracetāḥ satyam bravīmi vadha itsa tasya/nāryamānaṁ puṣyati no sakhāyam kevalāgho bhavati kevalādī// Ibid.*, 10.117.6
48. *Ibid.*, 10.191
49. *Ibid.*, 10.43.2, 10.40.3, 10.78.1, 10.109.3
50. *Ibid.*, 10.153.3,5, 10.173.2, 10.75.4
51. *sahasradā grāmānirmā riṣanmamnuḥ sūryeṇāsya yatamānaitu dakṣiṇā/ Ibid.*, 10.62.11
grāmānīḥ grāmānām netā dhanavatvena teṣām kartā.../ Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 10.107.5
52. *atrā no viśpatiḥ pitā purāṇā anu venati// Ibid.*, 10.135.1
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56. *Ibid.*, 10.12.7, 10.85.26, 10.92.2
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 58. *Ibid.*, 10.146
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 60. *Ibid.*, 10.125
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 69. *Ibid.*, 10.183
 70. Winternitz, M., op.cit., Vol, 1, p.55
 71. *R̥gveda.*, 10.4.6, 10.40.12, 10.64.8, 10.147.5 etc.
 72. *na vā u devāḥ kṣudhamidvadham dadurutaśitamupa gacchanti mṛtyavaḥ/uto rayiḥ pṛṇato nopa dasyatyutāpṛṇanmarḍitāram na vindate// Ibid.*, 10.117.1
 73. *Ibid.*, 10.146.1, 10.73.11
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