

Science and the 'AtharvaVeda'

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Modern science as we see today is mostly centered on the developments of scientific knowledge in the twentieth century and the last part of nineteenth century. But if we have a deeper insight into the overall development of science then we find that it is a result of the accumulation of scientific knowledge by man throughout the ages. Man has always been in search for the truth about various occurrences in nature. He performed various experiments and theorized ideas about these happenings and passed this knowledge from generations to generations verbally due to lack of proper scripture. Gradually people started recording their findings and their thoughts became more refined and appropriate towards explaining various phenomena and the later part of the story from Archimedes onwards is quite well known from what we call *History of science*.

But what needs special mention is whenever people speak about the History of science they mostly lay emphasis on the Greek civilization, the Western and European remains. But the rich content of the Indian and Chinese civilizations and their scientific knowledge is mostly forgotten. Highlighting the Indian culture here, we see that India had an exceptionally vibrant tradition way ahead of the Greeks or the Europeans and their scientific knowledge was much advanced compared to them. This can be discovered in the '*Vedas*' which are considered to be composed of knowledge in the pure form by the scholars and *pundits*. There are four in total- *RigVeda*, *YajurVeda*, *SamaVeda*, *AtharvaVeda*. Out of all the four the Atharvaveda is the youngest and the richest in terms of scientific knowledge. It deals with medicine mostly, Biology, Chemistry some physics and several other areas in spiritual education etc. The Atharvaveda is known by various names out of which Brahmaveda, Angiraveda, Atharvangirah and Khyetraveda are the important ones.

The content of the Atharvaveda is divided into 20 areas. There are about 731 hymns and 5987 *verses* in total. It is referred to by scholars as the key to the *Knowledge of Magic formulas*. As it was mentioned by M. Winternitz in his famous book '**History of Indian Literature**', "Many of these magic songs in the Atharvaveda are like magic rites pertaining to them, belonging to a sphere of conceptions which spread over the whole earth, even recur with the most surprising similarity in the most varying people of all countries. Among the Indians of North America, among the Negro races of Africa, among Malayas and Mongols, among the ancient Greeks and Romans, and frequently still among peasantry of the present day Europe, we find again exactly the same views, the same strange leaps of thought in the magic songs and magic rites, as have come down to us in the Atharvaveda of ancient India. There are numerous verses in the Atharvaveda, which, according to their character and often also their contents, differ just as little from the magic formulas of the American – Indian medicine men and Tartar Shamans as from the Merseburg magic maxim, which belongs to the sparse remains of the oldest German poetry." It may be mentioned here that among the other contents of the Atharvaveda, there are also concepts about *Holy magic* and *Black Magic* as was prevalent in those days. (Holy magic deals with the well being of man whereas Black magic is just the opposite). Though the concepts about various Gods, Goddesses, demons etc and their impacts on our day to day life are mentioned but the ways in which various treatments have been given are highly scientific and effective which are still practiced in some parts on India.

Hence with such rich scientific background of India, it can truly be considered one of the oldest, if not the oldest, civilization in terms of Science and culture and the Vedas are a key source to it.

[This article is contributed by our Consulting Editor, Madhurrya P. Talukdar. Madhurrya is at present a Masters' student in the Department of Physics, Tezpur University, He has till now authored 1 research paper in Nanoscience.]

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