CHAPTER II

CATEGORISATION OF HUMAN WELFARE AND WELLBEING CRAVED IN THE ATHARVAVEDA

This chapter is a discussion on human welfare and wellbeing as mentioned in the *Atharvaveda*. Human welfare and wellbeing is a universal phenomenon. It is evident across various aspects of our life. Accordingly, educational welfare, economic welfare, environmental welfare, political welfare, women welfare and health care are discussed as found in the *AV*. The *Mantras*, charms, terms and concepts indicating welfare of human beings in any way have been discussed.

Before going into the aspects of human welfare and wellbeing craved in the *AV* it is a pre requisite to have an idea what the terms stands for. Because these two terms in present day are widely discussed by the scholars and simultaneously stressed for human development. In the days of *AV* the terms did not categorically noted but in presence the *AV* provides a very large space for the matter under consideration.

Welfare is a typical term that denotes various kinds of social spending allocated by government following industrialization in some nations. Prior to industrialization, assistance for the underprivileged was the responsibility of landlords, in feudal systems, private organizations, and (primarily) the Catholic Church. Such assistance to the underprivileged provided by through government intervention became known as ‘welfare’.

These assistance or reliefs came from government mostly in response to natural disasters—such as earthquakes, first and floods that led monarchical governments to feed people and rebuild homes. This helped them to preserve order. On this basis,

‘welfare’ may be defined as ‘providing assistance to those who are otherwise unable to feed, house or cloths themselves’. This definition of welfare is widely accepted by most countries and scholars who are related in any way to the welfare programs. Thus, welfare is considered to include redistributive policies and programs that enable the disadvantaged to reach a minimal level of existence within a national state. Welfare may come in various ways—housing assistance, income supplementation, in-kind goods and service provision, and public education. However, the programs and policies to provide these aspects of a minimal human existence may vary contextually. For example, income supplementation can consist of cash payments, tax credits, or child-care subsidies. Similarly, in-kind goods and services can include vouchers for food or subsidized medical care, and free job training or referral services.

From the administrative point of view, the nations have the freedom to make decisions regarding—

i) the financial commitment allocated for these programs.

ii) the kinds of programs to its poor.

iii) who is eligible to receive aid under the programs.

Several factors interact in producing fiscal outcomes and programmatic decisions made at the national level. Three types of variables explain and predict both the level of funding and the kinds of programs that are developed:

i) the system of political institutions in place.

ii) the attitudes among the citizenry and policymaking bodies toward the poor.

iii) the level of racial/ethnic heterogeneity within the polity.

The government of some countries views poverty as a trap. Such governments provide more generous and comprehensive welfare programs. Some other countries consider poverty as an effect of the laziness of the people. In such countries, less generous and comprehensive welfare programs exist. The correlation between public opinion and welfare policy is shaped by both the institutional arrangements and the degree of racial/ethnic heterogeneity in the country. The cross national analysis of welfare provision mostly focuses on states that are capable of providing welfare benefits domestically. Much less attention has been given in such analysis to the role of international or global organizations that attenuate dire situations in countries that are incapable at the national or local level of providing such services. A separate literature contends with the role of international organizations such as the World Health Organization, the International Monetary Fund, and the United Nations in the provision of welfare benefits to developing nations. Thus, it can be said that human welfare is a very broad and universal term.

The second chapter of the study aims at presenting various areas of human welfare and wellbeing craved in the *AV*.

Economic Welfare:

In the *Atharvavedic* society, people were agriculture-oriented. So, their life was dependent on agriculture. For sufficient harvest, they prayed to different Gods. They address to the Goddess of lightning to spare the stores of grain.[41] They seek blessing during the ploughing of the field and sowing the seed.[42] There is also the concept of

[41] यस्ते पृथु स्तनयित्नुर्य ऋष्वो दैवः केतुर्विश्वमाभूषतीदम् ।
मा नो वधीर्विद्युता देव सस्यं मोत वधी रश्मिभिः सूर्यस्य ॥ AV.vii.11

[42] लाङ्गलं पवीरवत् सुशीमं सोमसत्सरु।
उदिद् वपतु गामविं प्रस्थावद् रथवाहनं च प्रफर्व्यम् ॥ Ibid.iii.17.3
उच्छ्रयस्व बहुर्भव स्वेन महसा यव।

Pañcakṛṣṭi. The word *Pañcakṛṣṭi*, though explained differently by *Sāyaṇa* is taken by some to mean either rotation of five crops in the same field or the growing of five kinds of crops in different fields.[43] Another very common concept related to agriculture is *Sītā* (furrow).

Of all the terms, used in connection with agriculture, the commonest, perhaps, is *Sītā* (furrow). The word *Kṛṣṭi* in the *ṚV* denotes a person. It appears to imply that they were by and large agriculturists. Evidence of agricultural products like paddy, barley and sugarcane are found in the *Vedic* age. The *AV* mentions about use of the natural manure in the form of cow dung or of other animals.[44] The *ṚV* mentions about irrigation canals which were known as *Kulyā*.[45] The *AV* also describes about the excavation of a canal from a river.[46] The purpose of this excavation of canal seems to be irrigation. Thus, it is evident that the *Vedas* have many references which show that agriculture was hold as an important aspect of people.

Likewise, there are numerous charms related to cattle.[47] For instance, hymns for ensuring the prosperity of the cattle, praying the plant *Arundhati* for the protection of cattle.[48] Besides there are some charms such as prayers to secure attachment of a cow

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मृणीहि विश्वा पात्राणि मात्वा दिव्याशनिर्वधीत्॥ AV.vi.142.1

[43] आदधिकः शवसापञ्चकृष्टीः सूर्यैवज्योतिषापस्ततान। ṚV.iv.38.10

[44] संजग्माना अबिभ्युषीरस्मिन् गोष्ठे करीषिणीः।
बिभ्रतीः सोम्र्य मध्वनमीवा उपेतन॥ AV.iii.14.3-4

[45] आनोयज्ञंनमोवृधंसजोषाइन्द्रदेवहरिभिर्याहितूयम्।
अहंहित्वामतिभिर्जोहवीमिघृतप्रयाः सधमादेमधूनाम्॥ ṚV.iii.43.3

[46] AV.iii.13

[47] इमं गोष्ठं पशवः सं स्रवन्तु बृहस्पतिरा नयतु प्रजानन्।
सिनीवाली नयत्वाग्रमेषामाजग्मुषो अनुमते नि यच्छ॥ Ibid.ii.26.2
सं वो गोष्ठेन सुषदा सं रय्या संसुभूत्या।
अहर्जातस्य यन्नाम तेना वः सं सृजामसि॥ Ibid.iii.14.1; iv.21; vi.59

[48] अनडुद्भ्यस्त्वं प्रथमं धेनुभ्यस्त्वमरुन्धति।
अधेनवे वयसे शर्म यच्छ चतुष्पदे॥ Ibid.vi.59.1

to her calf,[49] prayer to secure the return of calves who have scattered to a distant place, formula in expiation of the birth of twin claves.

Besides cultivators, the *AV* also mentions that carpenter, goldsmith, weaver, barber, distiller of wine, woodcutter, labourer, fighter, dancer, hunter, fowler, butcher, beggar, userer, garland-maker, armour-maker, attendant, merchant, chariot-maker, metal-worker and craftsmen of various other kinds are found in the *Vedic* society.

The *AV* also mentions about the prayer of a dice-player for success at dice.[50] The merchants pray for good business and good luck while travelling. The word *Vaṇij* (*Vaṇik*) is used for the trade. Trade was a profitable institution. This has been indicated in the *Mantra* 'may the purchase and sale be profitable and fruitful'.[51] The *Mantra* describes that the medicinal herbs were bartered for *Pavasta* (sheet), *Dūrśa* (shawl) and *Ajina* (skin of deer). The *AV* emphasizes the need for having two qualities for achieving success in trade. They are *Caritam* (conduct and behaviour)—the purity of conduct and sincerity in behavior make a man trustworthy. This helps him to prosper in trade. Other qualities or successful trade were determination and diligence, which bring in prosperity.[52]

Educational Welfare:

The education of a student started with his *Upanayana* ritual (wearing holy threads). In the beginning, he was initiated into a pledge in the presence of fire that he would

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[49] यथा हस्ती हस्तिन्याः पदेन पदमुद्युजे ।
यथा पुंसो वृषण्यत स्त्रियां निहन्यते मनः ॥ AV.vi.70

[50] यथा वृक्षमशनिर्विश्वाहा हन्त्यप्रति ।
एवाहमद्य कितवानैक्षर्बध्यासमप्रति ॥ Ibid.vii.50.1

[51] इमामग्ने शरणिं मीमृषो नो यमध्वानमगाम दूरम् ।
शुनं नो अस्तु प्रपणो विक्रयश्च प्रतिपणः फलिनं मा कृणोतु ।
इदं हव्यं संविदानौ जुषेथां शुनं नो अस्तु चरितमुत्थितं च ॥ Ibid.iii.15.4

[52] Ibid.iii.15.4

forsake untruth and would adopt truth only. By chanting 'from untruth I march to truth',[53] he was initiated into the *Gāyatrī Mantra*.[54] The *YV* states the importance of the pledge by saying that man is initiated (determined) through it. Initiation leads to competence, which in turn generates respect and fidelity and through fidelity he achieves truth (the *Brahamana*, truth incarnate).[55] The aim of education is knowledge of self or spiritual knowledge. The pledge helps the man to attain knowledge of self or the *Brahman*.

The *AV* also deals with penance and initiation with a view to promoting human welfare, national progress, strength and vigour.[56] The *AV* at its outset takes up the subject of education. It is the duty of the teacher *(Vācaspati)* to impart education with a pure heart.[57] Discipline plays a vital role in education. The word '*ni yacchatu*' hint at it. The teacher himself ought to be disciplined and also keep his students in discipline.[58] A *Mantra* describes that the speech should be as vigorous and brilliant as the sun or the dawn.[59] This hints at the art of oration. A teacher ought to be self-restrained and celibate.[60] The teacher must be the master of speech, he should be a scholar of various subjects and possess knowledge of the properties of the five elements—earth, fire, air, space and water. The preceptor or the teacher is responsible to build up the life and character of his student and make him a real human being.[61] In

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[53] अग्ने व्रतपते व्रतं चरिष्यामि तच्छकेयं तन्मे राध्यताम्। इदमहमनृतात्सत्यमुपैमि ॥ YV.i.5

[54] भूर्भुवः स्वः तत्सवितुर्वरेण्यं भर्गो देवस्य धीमहि। धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात् ॥ Ibid.xxxvi.3

[55] व्रतेन दीक्षामाप्नोति दीक्षयाप्नोति दक्षिणाम्। दक्षिणा श्रद्धामाप्नोति श्रद्धया सत्यमाप्यते ॥ Ibid.xix.30

[56] ब्रह्म होता ब्रह्म यज्ञा ब्रह्मणा स्वरवो मिताः।
अध्वर्युर्ब्रह्मणो जातो ब्रह्मणोन्तर्हितं हविः ॥ AV.xix.41.1

[57] …..देवेन मनसा सह। Ibid.i.1.2

[58] Ibid.i.1.3

[59] उदुषा उदु सूर्य उदिदं मामकं वचः।
उदेजतु प्रजापतिर्वृषा शुष्मेण वाजिना ॥ Ibid.iv.4.2

[60] आचार्यो ब्रह्मचारी ब्रह्मचारी प्रजापतिः।
प्रजापतिर्वि राजति विराडिन्द्रोभवद् वशी ॥ Ibid.xi.5.16

[61] Ibid.vi.135.5

the *AV*, the teacher is described as Death (*Mṛtyu*), *Varuṇa*, *Soma, Oṣadhi* (medicine) and *Payas* (milk, water).[62] It means that the teacher is a strict disciplinarian and punishes his students; keeps his students away from evils and sin; is pacific and pleasing; gives peace to his students; eradicates evils in the students, provides soundness of body as medicines and gives food grains; and gives his students milk and water. According to *Yāska,* the teacher teaches conduct, accumulates wealth or grain, and develops the intellect of his students.[63]

The word *Pras* (one who questions, the plaintiff) and *Pratipras* (the respondent) used in a *Mantra* indicates that question-answer method of teaching was used.[64] The students asked questions which were answered by the teachers. This may also suggest debates and discussions. This shows that military education was also imparted.[65]

Educational welfare was also related to the qualities and duties of the students, which was dealt with in the *AV* in the *Brahmacāryasūkta*. The students had to observe celibacy and keep their lives self-controlled.[66] Four major qualities of a student have been enumerated: 1) *Samidhā*: He should become lustrous by performing morning and evening *Agnihotras*. 2) *Mekhalā*: He should wear girdle or threads around his waist. It symbolizes firm determination and commitment. 3) *Śrama*: He should work heard; and 4) *Tapas*: He should lead a life of penance. The student ought to earn

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[62] आचार्यो मृत्युर्वरुणः सोम औसधयः पयः।
जीमूता आसन्त्सत्वानस्तैरिदं स्वराभृतम्॥ AV.xi.5.14

[63] Nir.i.4

[64] नेच्छत्रुः प्राशं जयाति सहमानाभिभूरसि।
प्राशं प्रतिप्राशो जह्यरसान् कृण्वोषधे॥ AV.ii.27.1

[65] त्वया मन्यो सरथमारुजन्तो हर्षमाणा हृषितासो मरुत्वन्
तिग्मेषव आयुधा संशिशाना उप प्र यन्तु नरो अग्निरूपाः॥ Ibid.iv.31.1

[66] ब्रह्मचर्येण तपसा राजा राष्ट्रं वि रक्षति।
आचार्यो ब्रह्मचर्येण ब्रह्मचारिण मिच्छति॥
ब्रह्मचर्येण कन्या युवानं विन्दते पतिम्।
अनड्वान् ब्रह्मचर्येणाश्वो घासं जिगीर्षति॥ Ibid.xi.5.17-18

knowledge with rapt attention so as to assimilate the subjects studied.[67] He generates the following elements: 1) *Brahman*: He spreads *Vedic* knowledge. 2) *Āpaḥ*: He spreads diligence and assiduity (*Puruṣārtha*). 3) *Lokam*: He is devoted to public good. 4) *Prajāpatim*: He begets a lustrous and benevolent king. 5) *Parameṣṭhinaṁ Virājam*: He establishes the grandeur of the Supreme God.[68] This shows that a celibate was charged with an immense responsibility to ensure national and public good. At the end of his education a celibate was called a graduate after which he shines in the world and earns fame.[69]

The aims of education were also pertinent to educational welfare. The *AV* describes that while offering *Samidhā* to the fire, it is prayed that education related qualities (reverence, intelligence, attaining progeny and wealth, longevity and immortality,[70] living for a hundred years and remaining disease-free.[71]) be conferred on us. The study of the beneficent mother like *Veda* (*Vedamātā*) results in motivation to virtuous act, purity of conscience, longevity, vitality, progeny, livestock and prosperity.

The *AV* enumerates following courses of study: 1) *Ṛc* (The *ṚV*), 2) *Sāmāni* (The *SV*), 3) *Yanjūṅṣi* (the *YV*), 4) *Brahma* (the *Brahmaveda* or *AV*), 5) *Itihāsaḥ* 6) *Purāṇam* (*Purāṇas*, archaeology), 7) *Gāthāḥ* (stories in verse, eulogies) 8) *Nārāśaṁsī* (eulogies and life history of great donors).[72] All these courses are important for educational welfare. However, the study or recitation of the *Vedas* was prohibited in certain

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[67] इहैवाभि वि तनूभे आर्त्नी इव ज्यया ।
वाचस्पतिर्नि यच्छतू मय्येवास्तु मयि श्रुतम् ॥ AV.I.1.3

[68] ब्रह्मचारी जनयन् ब्रह्मापो लोकं प्रजापतिं परमेष्ठिनं विराजम् ।
गर्भो भूत्वामृतस्य योनाविन्द्रो ह भूत्वासुरांस्ततर्ह ॥ Ibid.xi.5.7

[69] तानि कल्पद् ब्रह्मचारी सलिलस्य पृष्ठे तपोतिष्ठत् तप्यमानः समुद्रे ॥
स स्नातो बभ्रुः पिङ्गलः पृथिव्यां बहु रोचते ॥ Ibid.xi.5.26

[70] Ibid.xix.64.1-4

[71] Ibid.xix.67.1-8

[72] तमृचश्च सामानि च यजुंषि च ब्रह्म चानुव्यचलन् ।
तमितिहासश्च पुराणं च गाथाश्च नाराशंसीश्चानुव्यचलन् । Ibid.xv.6.8, 11

specific circumstances and surroundings, such as under overcast sky, in too much shade, under clouded sun, near a field of green barley, very near to cattle, forest and water.[73]

Environmental Welfare:

Environment is surrounding the whole range of diversity in which we perceive experience and react to event and changes. The Environment Protection Act.1986 defines the environment as follows: 'Environment includes water, air and land and the inter-relationship which exists among and between water, air and land and human beings, other living creatures, plants, micro organisms and property'.[74] From the above definition, it can be briefly said that environment consists of two components namely biotic (living organisms) and abiotic (non-living materials) factors. In broader terms, environmental science is the science of complex interactions that occur among the terrestrial, atmospheric, aquatic, living the anthropological environments. It also includes the land, water, air, vegetation and the whole range of the social order. It concerns man's ability to adapt both physically and mentally to the continuing change in environment. Environment is dynamic and the changes occur even if there is no human meddling. But when an unfavorable alteration of our surrounding occurs as a byproduct of man's actions, through direct or indirect effects of change in energy patterns, radiation levels, chemical and physical constitution and abundances of organisms, it is called as environmental pollution. These changes may affect man directly or through his supplies of water and of agricultural and other products, his physical object or possession, or his opportunities for recreation and appreciation of nature. Therefore, the role of man is important for shaping the environment in perfect

[73] Āp Śs.xv.21.8
[74] www.envfor.nic.in/legis/env/env1.html

harmony. Environment and its protection have remained an important topic for discussion globally.

Our Indian life rotates around Indian literature contained in *Vedas, Upaniṣads,* Epics and the *Purāṇas* with *Dharmaśāstras* in the background. The *Vedas* deal with the knowledge of all sorts. They cover knowledge both physical and spiritual. Especially the *Vedic* views revolve around the concept of nature and life. In the *AV,* some other words are also used for *Paryāvaraṇa*, such as *Vṛtāvṛtā*,[75] *Abhīvāra*,[76] *Āvṛtā*[77], *Parīvṛtā.*[78] The visions of the beauty of life and nature in the *Vedas* are extremely rich and purely expressed. The symbolical pictures projected there remain close to life and nature. The *Upaniṣads* believe that the universe consists of five basic elements namely, earth or land, water, light or luster, air and ether.[79]

In modern *Sanskrit*, the word *Paryāvaraṇa* is used for environment, which etymologically formed as *Pari-Ā-Bṛ-Lyuṭ*, which is all around in our surroundings. The *Vedic* literature gives us the genuine principals to adjust with our environment and lead a spiritual life full of bliss. The *Vedas* gives sermons and methodology to keep the environment pure. The *AV* specially has dealt in detail about various aspects of environment and showed more concern for ecology.

The *AV* has well defined views on environment. It refers to three coverings of our surroundings as *Chandāṁsi*. Wise utilizes three elements, water, air and plants and

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[75] यस्यां कृष्णमरुणं च संहिते अहोरात्रे विहिते भूम्यामधि
वर्षेण भूमिः पृथिवी वृतावृता सा नो दधातु भद्रया प्रिये धामनिधामनि ॥ AV.xii.1.52

[76] विश्वमन्यामभीवार तदन्यस्यामधिश्रितम् । Ibid.i.32.4

[77] यदि स्थ तमसावृता जालेनाभिहिता इव । Ibid.x.1.30

[78] अविर्वै नाम देवतर्तेनास्ते परीवृता ।
तस्या रूपेणेमे वृक्षा हरिता हरितस्रजः ॥ Ibid.x.8.31

[79] …इमानि च पञ्च महाभूतानि पृथिवी वायुराकाश आपो ज्योतींषीत्येतानीमानि...Ai.Up.iii.1.3

herbs, variously which are varied, visible and full of qualities.[80] Holy magic for securing wellbeing, and spells for causing various types of harms to the adversary are also found in the *AV*. There are hymns of cosmogenic and theosophic character. There is very beautiful hymn addressed to the earth.[81] There are hymns for the glorification of the Sun, to *Kāl* (time) to *Prān*, the life principle.

In the *Bhagavad Gītā*, Lord *Kṛṣṇa* says that 'this *Prakṛti* of mine is divided eight fold thus: earth, water, fire, air, space, mind, intellect and also egoism'.[82]

The environment required for the survival of human beings consists of two aspects that are external and internal. The external aspects include earth, water, air, fire and space (*Pṛthvī, Āpaḥ, Tej, Vāyu, Ākāśa*) whereas the mind mainly constitutes the internal aspect. There is a natural balance between and among these constituents or elements and living creatures. Changes in the natural balance cause lots of problems to the living creatures in the universe. Therefore, an environmental balance is important for the welfare of the people.

Earth: A pledge is made that human kind shall secure the Earth against all environmental trespass and shall not let her be oppressed. A prayer is sung in one of the hymns for the preservation and conservation of hills, snow-clad maintains, and all brown, black and red earth, unhurt, unsmitten, unwounded, unbroken and well defended by India. In the *AV*, the earth is described in one hymn of 63 verses. This famous hymn called as *Bhūmisūkta* or *Pṛthivīsūkta*, indicates the environmental consciousness of *Vedic* seers. Earth is considered as representative of the universe (*Viśvaṁbharā*), containing all wealth (*Vasudhā)*, having gold bosom (*Hiraṇyavakṣā*)

[80]AV. xviii.1.17
[81] AV.xii.1
[82] भूमिरापोऽनलो वायुः खं मनो बुद्धिरेव च ।
अहङ्कार इतीयं मे भिन्ना प्रकृतिरष्टधा ॥ Bhagavadgītā, vii.4

and abode of whole world (*Jagato Niveśanī)*.[83] She is not for the different races of men alone but for other creatures also.[84] The hymn talks about different energies which are generated from the form of the earth.[85] Earth bestows on us with minerals, gold, silver. We should not unnecessarily dig the earth as laid down in 35th *Mantra* of *Bhūmisūkta*.[86]

In the *AV,* the earth has been given the place of a mother: 'Earth is my mother, I am her son'.[87] The concept of mother earth advocated in the *Vedas,* particularly in the *Bhūmisūkta,* is unique. It speaks of our intimate bond with nature, like that of child and mother. As man is entirely dependent upon her, he is considered as a part of the earth. The seers of this *Sūkta* pray to the earth as a mother who with her virtue of tolerance sustains 'children' of different temperaments.[88]

The *AV*[89] justifies the power of the earth to punish her children if they tread on the wrong path. She blesses those who are pure-hearted and follow right path as expected. This demonstrates that nature can punish us if we are negligent in our dealings with nature. The phenomena of global warming, deletion of ozone layer, irregularity of season cycle and others can be seen as punishment for our unrestrained, consumerism-induced behavior towards nature. Another verse of the *Sūkta* illustrates the duty of the children not to harm their mother, but show due respect: 'in daily life

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[83] विश्वंभरा वसुधानी प्रतिष्ठा हिरण्यवक्षा जगतो निवेशनी । AV.xii.1.6

[84] …त्वं बिभर्षि द्विपदस्त्वं चतुष्पदः । Ibid.xii.1.15; xii.1.45

[85] यत् ते मध्यं पृथिवि यच्च नभ्यं यास्त ऊर्जस्तन्वः संबभूवुः ।
तासु नो धेह्यभि नः पवस्व माता भूमिः पुत्रो अहं पृथिव्याः ॥ Ibid.xii.1.12

[86] य़त् ते भूमे विखनामि क्षिप्रं तदपि रोहतु ।
मा ते मर्म विमृग्वरि मा ते हृदयमर्पिपम् ॥ Ibid.xii.1.35

[87] माता भूमिः पुत्रो अहं पृथिव्याः

[88] मल्वं बिभ्रती गुरुभृद् भद्रपापस्य निधनं तितिक्षुः ।
वराहेण पृथिवी संविदाना सूकराय वि जिहीते मृगाय ॥ Ibid.xii.1.48

[89] Ibid.xii.1.48, xii.1.1

on earth whether we are sitting, standing or in motion, may our activity be such as would never cause injury or grief".[90]

She is prayed for joy, health, wealth, prosperity and glory. She is considered as the source of all creativity and man's growth and meaningful existence depends on her. The *Vedic* people desired to live a life of hundred years and this wish can be fulfilled only when environment will be unpolluted, clear and peaceful.

Water: Water is one of the elements of the environment which is essential to all forms of life. The *ṚV* classifies water as found in the environment in five forms: Rain water (*Divya*), natural spring (*Srāvanti*), wells and canals (*Khanitrimah*), lakes (*Svayamjah*) and rivers (*Samudrarthah*).[91] The *AV* classifies the water as drinking water, medicinal water, and stable water.[92] It also describes about the cycle of water that from ocean, waters reach to sky and from sky come back to earth.[93] In ancient India, water was considered as pure and an exhaustible gift of God. In the *Śa Br*. waters are regarded as nectars.[94] *Ācārya Suśruta* also regards water to be best among all food articles, and pure water to be life-giving and helpful to human body. The *Paippalāda Saṁhitā* of *AV* (1.1) contains a prayer for water, which states that water is good and useful for the universe. Water has been equated with life and breath. It is the nectar of the nectars.

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[90] उदीराणा उतासीनास्तिष्ठन्तः प्रक्रामन्तः ।
पद्भ्यां दक्षिणसव्याभ्यां मा व्यथिष्महि भूम्याम् ॥ AV.xii.1.28

[91] या आपोदिव्याउतवास्रवन्तिरवनित्रिमाउतवायाःस्वयञ्जाः।
समुद्रार्थायाः शुचयः पावकास्ता आपोदेवीरिहमामवन्तु॥ ṚV.vii.49.2

[92] शं न आपो धन्वन्याः शमु सन्त्वनूप्याः।
शं नः खनित्रिमा आपः शमुयाः कुम्भ आभृताः
शिवा नः सन्तु वार्षिकीः॥ AV.i.6.4

[93] अपः समुद्राद् दिवमुद् वहन्ति दिवस्पृथिवीमभि ये सृजन्ति।
ये अद्भिरीशाना मरुतश्चरन्ति ते नो मुञ्चन्त्वंहसः॥ Ibid.iv.27.4

[94] Śa Br.i.9.3.7

The *Ṛ.V* considers water as the element of welfare to all living beings.[95] It is beneficial for one and all.

Sun: According to *Ṛ.V*, sun is the soul of all which is moving and also of which is not moving.[96] It is the dispenser of darkness. *Vedic* seers pray boldly to the sun for bestowing plenty and prosperity on them. The *AV* mentions that the rising-sun destroys visible and invisible injurious effects of pollution.

Air: Air is considered as a vital element by the *Vedas*. The *Ṛ.V* of *Vāyu-sūktas* states that *Vāyu* or the air is the essence of all living beings. In the *Vedic* period, forefather sages established this fact by their *Mantra* as the *Ṛṣi* shows high gratitude towards *Vāyu* by designing it as his father, brother and friend. The *Vāyu* is the store-house of ambrosial. It has medicinal qualities also.[97] The *AV* also agrees that air is the support of all beings. It sings the praises of *Vāyu* and *Sāvitṛ*, who protect living beings and who surrounds the whole world. *Vāyu* is requested to set free from sin. Air or *Vāyu* is the principal deity of *Antarīkṣa*. According to *Śa Br*, the meaning of *Vāyu* is Sun. *Vāyu* is the string that weaves the rest of universe.[98] The ancient Indians knew the importance of air for human life and also for the atmosphere. No life on earth can exist without oxygen. So, the *Vedic* seers emphasized that the unpolluted, pure air is source of good health, happiness and long life. In this reference there is a *Mantra* in *AV*, 'Everyone, whether a human being or an animal, lives safely, where the purity of atmosphere (*Bhahman*) is maintained all around for the purpose of life'.[99]

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[95] योवः शिवतमोरसस्तस्य....॥ Ṛ.V.x.9.2

[96] .....सूर्य आत्माजगतस्तस्थुषश्च ॥ Ṛ.V.i.115.1

[97] वात आवातुभेषजंशंभुमयोभुनोहृदे। प्रणआयूंषितारिषत्॥
उतवातपितासिनउतभ्रातोतनःसखा। सनोजीवातवेकृधि॥
यददोवाततेगृहेमृतस्यनिधिर्हितः। ततोनोदेहिजीवसे॥ Ibid.x.186

[98] Śa Br.viii.7.3.10

[99] सर्वो वै तत्र जीवति गौरश्वः पुरुषः पशुः।
यत्रेदं ब्रह्म क्रियते परिधिर्जीवनाय कम्॥ AV.viii.2.25

Ākāśa: *Ākāśa* is the fifth physical substance. It is the substratum of the quality of sound. The quality of sound relates to the sound or noise pollution, as discussed by the modern environmentalists. There is a relation between ether and sound. The Sun shines in *Dyuloka* and we get light from sky, the sunrays strengthen our inner power and are essential for our life. Therefore, *Ākāśa* is important for us. Thus *Vedic* verses openly mentions about the importance and care for the ether.

*Mind***:** Mind has been defined as an internal sense-organ. It is most powerful and unsteady. It is the only factor which distinguishes one *Jīva* from another. No scientist has accepted mind or intellect as component of environment except the exponents of *Sanskrit* literature. The personality of the modern man is engulfed in stress. The lust and greed in the mind of the modern man has affected the society and polluted the environment. The modern mind is alienated from the society and he is in quest of peace. Therefore, it is necessary to train the mind to avoid greediness and to maintain proper balance in environment. This is possible by training the mind to follow ethical values enshrined in the *Sanskrit* literature.

*Plants***:** The knowledge about the origin and significance of plants can be traced out from *Vedic* literature. Plants are considered as the saviors of humanity in the *Vedic* literature. They possess qualities of all deities and have the power destroy poisonous effect of the atmosphere.

The *AV* talks about the relation of plants with earth, 'The earth is keeper of creation, container of forests, trees and herbs'.[100] Plants are considered as living being.[101] The *AV* prays for continuous growth of herbs.[102] The *AV* regards that the greenness of

[100] मन्द्राग्रेत्वरी भुवनस्य गोपा वनस्पतीनां गृभिरोषधीनाम्॥ AV.xii.1.57

[101] ….येन प्राणन्ति वीरुधः ॥ Ibid.i.32.1

[102] यत् ते भूमे विखनामि क्षिप्रं तदपि रोहतु।
मा ते मर्म विभृग्वरि मा ते हृदयमर्पिपम्॥ Ibid.xii.1.35

trees is due to the *Avi* element[103] that is, the 'Chlorophyll'. The term *Avi* is derived from the root *Av* and thus gives the direct meaning of 'protector'. Hence, plants were studied as a part of environment and their protection.

*Yajña***:** The sacrifice or the *Yajña* is considered as an important concept of *Vedic* philosophy. The *Vedic Ṛṣis* had mentioned the need of performing daily *Yajñas* for protecting the ecology. *Yajña* is regarded as a source of nourishment. The *Vedic Mantras* are capable of producing changes in the environment. *Yajña* helps in minimizing air pollution, in increasing crop yield, in protecting plants from diseases, as well as in providing a disease free, pure and energized environment for all.

From these verses, the knowledge of *Vedic* seers about various aspects of environment, about cosmic order, and also about the importance of co-ordination between all natural powers for universal peace and harmony can be guessed. It implies that our ancient texts are much more relevant today because science alone cannot be successful to save human beings from the horrible impact of environmental pollution. Thus, the welfare element is very much clearly evident in the *Vedic* literature in general and particularly in the *AV.*

Political Welfare:

In the *AV,* two socio-political institutions related to governance and kingship namely *Sabhā* and *Samiti* are found throughout its text. These two institutions are established by the king for the welfare of the public. The institutions of *Sabhā* and *Samiti* appear to have played vital roles in the proper running of a country. References to the *Sabhā* and *Samiti* are also found here and there in the *ṚV*. The former was a gambling place

[103] आविर्वै नाम देवतर्तेनास्ते..।
तस्या रूपेणेमे वृक्षा हरिता हरितस्रजः ॥ AV.x.8.31

and also a place for discussing topics relevant to the society.[104] It was a powerful institution next to committee. The *AV* considers *Sabhā* as a wider power and not as a local institution.[105] It was organized even in the smallest villages as well as in the centre. In the smaller villages, it was in the form of Village *Sabhā (Pañcāyat*). In bigger cities and in the centres, it was known as *Janasabhā* or *Lok Sabhā*. Hence those who followed this system were described as *Janarāja* (democratic kings) in the *AV*. Members of the assembly have been described in the *AV* as '*Pitarah*'[106] This suggests that the members were respected and revered by the king like father. As the assembly (*Sabhā*) was the house of people's representatives, it may also be called the House of Representatives (*Lok Sabhā*). It has described *Sabhā* and *Samiti* as the two daughters of the king.[107]

According to *Sāyaṇa*, decisions are taken in a *Sabhā* on the basis of majority which cannot be denied. It is easier to avoid what a single individual says but a majority opinion cannot be ignored. This *Mantra* also makes it clear that the decision of the assembly is binding on everyone. Showing the importance of *Sabhā* and *Samiti*, the *AV* describes the *Sabhā* as *Nariṣṭā*.[108] *Nariṣṭā* may mean something conducting to public good. It means 'we know you o *Sabhā* alias *Nariṣṭā*'. *Sāyaṇa* interpreted the term *Nariṣṭā* as inviolable[109] and the term *Sabhā* as the council of scholars.[110] The *AV* uses the word '*Sabhāsu*' to suggest numerousness and pervasiveness of the

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[104] ṚV.vi.28.6; x.34.6
[105] AV.vii.12.1-4
[106] सभा च मा समितिश्चावतां प्रजापतेर्दुहितरौ संविदाने
येना संगच्छा उप मा स शिक्षाच्चारु वदानि पितरः संगतेषु ॥ Ibid.vii.12.1
[107] सभा च मा समितिश्चावतां प्रजापतेर्दुहितरौ संविदाने ।
येना संगच्छा उप मा स शिक्षाच्चारु वदानि पितरः संगतेषु ॥ Ibid.vii.12.1
[108] विद्म ते सभे नाम नरिष्टा नाम वा असि ।
ये ते के च सभासदस्ते मे सन्तु सवाचसः ॥ Ibid.7.12.2
[109] अहिंसिता पैरेरनभिभाव्या
[110] विदुषां समाजः Sāyaṇa on AV.vii.12.2 and vii.12.1

assemblies.[111] *Sabhāsu* also suggests that there was not only the central assembly but the cities too had their own assemblies. The *AV* refers to *Sabhā* as a place of mirth and debate.[112] In this context, it is to be noted that it has been implied in the *AV* [113] that *Sabhā* was associated with king and thus was more a political rather than a social institution. In this passage it has been stated that the member of the *Sabhā (Sabhāsadaḥ*) of *Yama* were *Rājānaḥ* and who shared the sixteenth part of the merit accumulate from the good deeds of the people.[114] Altekar, while referring to this *Atharvavedic* passage has observed that 'It is possible to argue that the status of the members of the terrestrial *Sabhā* like that of the celestial one was also almost the high as that of the king and that they too were entitled to receive a small share of the tithes and tributes that were paid to the ruler'.[115] Altekar also observed that the meaning of the *Sabhā* and *Samiti* differed from age to age and locality to locality.[116] As pointed out by *Chakraborti*, the term *Sabhā* is derived from Indo-European s(u)e-bho and is closely associated with Old-European sib, German sippe, Old High German sip(e)a and Gothic sibja—all meaning an association of kin (of tribe, family or clan).[117] Scholars like Hillebrandt, Zimmer, Renou, Altekar, Ludwig, Majumdar, Jaiswal and Apte have defined the word *Sabhā* differently. Hillebrandt has even considered that the *Sabhā* and *Samiti* were one and same.[118] But there is an *Atharvavedic* passage which clearly mentions that the *Sabhā* and *Samiti* were two

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[111] ...भद्रं गृहं कृणुथ् भद्रवाचो बृहद् वो वय उच्यते सभासु ॥ AV.iv.21.6

[112] AV.vii.12.2; x.8.24; xii.3.46

[113] संशितं म इदं ब्रह्म संशितं वीर्यं बलम् ।
संशितं क्षत्रमजरमस्तु जिष्णुर्येषामस्मि पुरोहितः ॥ Ibid.iii.19.1

[114] यद्राजानो विभजन्त इष्टापूर्तस्य षोडसम् यमस्यामिसभासदः

[115] Altekar, AS. State and Government In Ancient India, Delhi, 2005, p.142

[116] Ibid., p.140

[117] Chakrabarti, HP. Vedic India, Political and Legal Institution In Vedic Literature, Calcutta, 1981, p.135.

[118] Ibid., pp.130-145

different bodies.[119] William says that the word *Sabhā* is of unknown derivation. Nevertheless he refers that *Sabhā* stands for 'an assembly, congregation, meeting, council, public audience'.

According to *Sāyaṇa*, the word *Samiti* in the *ṚV* simply means *Saṁhati* that is a group and *Saṁgrāmaḥ*[120] warfare. However, in the *ṚV*,[121] the word *Samiti* appears to stand for an assembly which was regularly attended by the kings. The *ṚV*[122] uses the word in all probability to mean a social gathering. Williams states that the term *Samiti* stands for 'coming together, meeting, assembly, council…encounter, hostile meeting, war, battle'. *Sāyaṇa*, in his commentary on *AV*,[123] has explained the meaning of the word *Samiti* as *Saṁgrāmīṇajanasabhā* suggesting that *Samiti* was an assembly of the people which was called in times of the war. The *Atharvavedic* passages seem to confirm that *Samiti* was a political institute.[124] The regal power of a king depended upon his acceptability by the *Samiti*. It has been stated that.[125] Thus, the *Samiti* appears to have enjoyed the power to dethrone to reinstate and also to restrain the king. It has been stated that the *Samiti* does not support a king who transgresses the rights and privileges of a *Brahmin*.[126] [*Samiti* does not think for this (king), friends (also) do not show respect to him]

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[119] सभा च मा समितिश्चावतां प्रजापतेर्दुहितरौ संविदाने।
येना संगच्छा उप मा स शिक्षाच्चारु वदानि पितरः संगतेषु॥ AV.vii.12.1

[120] Sāyaṇa on ṚV, i.95.8; ix.92.6; x.11.8, 97.6, 166.6 etc. on i.95.8 Sāyaṇa explains the word as tejasāṁ saṁhati and on x.11.8 as stutisaṁhati

[121] परिसद्मेवपशुमान्तिहोताराजानसत्यः समितीरियानः
सोमः पुनानः कलशाँअयासीत्सीदन्मृगोनमहिषोवनेषु॥ ṚV. ix.92.6; x.97.6

[122] समानोमन्त्रः समितिः समानीसमानंमनः सहचित्तमेषाम्।
समानं मन्त्रमभिमन्त्रयेवः समानेनवोहविषाजुहोमि॥ x.191.3

[123] AV.vii.12.1

[124] Ibid., vi.88.3; 89.6

[125] ध्रुवा द्यौर्ध्रुवा पृथिवी ध्रुवं विश्वमदं जगत्।
ध्रुवासः पर्वता इमे ध्रुवो राजां विशामयम्॥ Ibid., vi.88.3

[126] नास्मै समितिः कल्पते न मित्रं नयते वशम् Ibid., v.19.15

The *Atharvavedic* society was ruled by a systematic government. The king is regarded as the originator or supreme head of these institutions. He was selected by the king makers known as *Rājakṛtaḥ*.[127] The group of the kingmakers consisted of the following persons:

i. *Dhīvānaḥ* the fisherman.

ii. *Rathakārāḥ* the chariot-makers.

iii. *Karmārāḥ* the black-smiths.

iv. *Manīṣiṇaḥ* the intelligentsia.

v. *Rājānaḥ* the king of other states or the people of royal families or the royal people.

vi. *Sūtāḥ* that is those who lives as charioteers.

vii. *Grāmaṇyaḥ* the village headmen.[128]

Thus it appears that these kingmakers were the representatives of the common people. These representatives were probably selected as the members of the *Samiti* by the common people. Kingship in *Vedic* times depended upon the acceptability of the king by the *Viśaḥ* that is the subject. An *Atharvavedic* passage which is also found in the *ṚV* runs as follows—(O king), may all the people wish to have you (as a ruler). May the kingdom be not lost to you.[129]

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[127] Sāyaṇa, the commentator of the Aitareyabrāhmaṇa, 8.4.3 states that the rājakṛtaḥ means the relatives of the king. However, the fact that the king was selected by the people has been alluded to ṚV, x.173

[128] ये धीवानो रथकाराः कर्मारा ये मनीषिणः ।
उपस्तीन् पर्ण मह्यं त्वं सर्वान् कृण्वभितो जनान् ॥
ये राजानो राजकृतः सूता ग्रामण्यश्च ये ।
उपस्तीन् पर्ण मह्यं त्वं सर्वान् कृण्वभितो जनान् ॥ AV.iii.5.6-7

[129] विशस्त्वा सर्वा वाञ्छन्तु मा त्वद्राष्ट्रमधि भ्रशत् । Ibid.vi.87.1

The members of the *Sabhā* and *Samiti* were required to be men of knowledge, wisdom and good personality.[130] They compulsorily required being eloquent. The *AV*[131] states that every man may respect and support the king at the meeting: May every man I meet respect and aid me, Fair be my words, O Fathers, at the meetings.[132] The members of the *Sabhā* and *Samiti* required harmony and peace among themselves. Passages from the *AV* and the *ṚV* confirm this fact.

It is evident that the *Atharvan* polity was somewhat federal where the king was the head of the state and the actual power was vested to the *Samiti*. However, there is no clear reference to the procedure of selection and the role of common people in selecting the members of *Samiti*. Nevertheless the reference of common people in the same group of king intelligentsia leads to the fact that in that period common people got equal place in politics.

The king is the maintainer and protector of his subjects. He adopts measures in order to ensure safety and prosperity of the people. He creates the assembly. He would care for the assembly like daughter and the assembly would likewise reciprocate, so that both the king and the assembly would cherish for the well-being of each other. The public or the people are the husband of the assembly whose property she is.

The *Sabhā*-members were known by several names such as *Sabhāsad,*[133] *Sabhya,*[134] *Sabheya*.[135] It was the duty of the members to observe the rules of the assembly and

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[130] एषामहं समासीनानां वर्चो विज्ञानमा ददे।
अस्याः सर्वस्याः संसदो मामिन्द्र भगिनं कृणु॥ AV.vii.12.3

[131] येना संगच्छा उप मा स शिक्षाच्चारु वदानि पितरः संगतेषु॥ Ibid.vii.12.1

[132] Griffith, RTH. The Hymns of the Atharvaveda, vol.i, 1968, p.333

[133] यद् राजानो विभजन्त इष्टापूर्तस्य षोडशं यमस्यामी सभासदः। AV.iii.29.1
ये ते के च सभासदस्ते मे सन्तु सवाचसः॥ vii.12.2
सभ्यः सभां मे पाहि ये च सभ्याः सभासदः॥ xix.55.5

[134] Ibid.viii.10.1-9; xix.55.5

protect its dignity.[136] It was also their duty to speak truth only, to speak exactly what they witnessed or heard. Their consensus of opinion was equally necessary.[137]

The *Sabhā* was smaller than the *Samiti* (the sovereign Assembly) and worked under the *Samiti*. Discussion and debates were held on various public issues for public welfare.

The main function of the *Sabhā* was to ensure justice. The chairman of the national assembly had the power to pass his final verdict on all judicial matters. At places he has been designated as *Sabhāsad* only.[138]

The *Samiti* was a general national assembly. It was called *Samiti* because people from all the classes of the society participated in it. It was the highest national body. The most important function of the *Samiti* was the election of the king.[139] It was represented by all the sections of the society. It undertook for discussion all matters pertaining to state administration. Prayers have been said in the *ṚV* for unity and unanimity in the *Samiti*.[140] The *Samiti* seeked consensus of thought and opinion of a

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[135] AV.xx.128.1; ṚV.i.91.20

[136] AV.xix.55.5

[137] विद्म ते सभे नाम नरिष्टा नाम वा असि।
य ते के च सभासदस्ते मे सन्तु सवाचसः ॥ Ibid.vii.12.2

[138] यद् राजानो विभजन्त इष्टापूर्तस्य षोडशं यमस्यामी सभासदः।
अविस्तस्मात् प्र मुञ्चति दत्तः शितिपात् स्वधा ॥ Ibid.iii.29.1
अपश्चा दग्धान्नस्य भूयासम्।
अन्नादायान्नपतये रुद्राय नमो अग्नये।
सभ्यः सभां मे पाहि ये च सभ्याः सभासदः Ibid.xix.55.5

[139] त्वां विशो वृणतां राज्याय त्वामिमाः प्रदिशः पञ्चदेवीः
वर्ष्मन् राष्ट्रस्य ककुदि श्रयस्व ततो न उग्रो वि भजा वसूनि ॥ Ibid.iii.4.2; vi.87.1; vi.88.3

[140] संगच्छध्वं संवदध्वं संवोमनांसिजानताम्।
देवाभागं यथापूर्वे संजानानाउपसते ॥
समानोमन्त्रः समितिः समानीसमानंमनः सहचित्तमेषाम्।
समानंमन्त्रमभिमन्त्रयेवः समनेनवोहविषाजुहोमि ॥
समानीवआकूतिः समानाहृदयानिवः।
समानमस्तुवोमनोयथावः सुसहासति ॥ ṚV.x.191.2-4

goal. This suggests that safety and prosperity of the nation and its people must be everybody's goal. The *Samiti* had the power to appoint the king permanently.[141] It also dealt with income-expenditure and financial disbursement.[142] It has been mentioned that the *Samiti* cannot function smoothly and progress well in a nation where *Brahmaṇas* are oppressed by the king.

Besides *Sabhā* and *Samiti*, the *AV* mentions another institution named as *Āmantraṇa*.[143] *Āmantraṇa* has been regarded as a higher institution than both *Sabhā* and *Samiti*. As its name implies, it took up counseling at higher level. This shows that only ministers used to be its members and general discussions were held in the *Samiti*. *Āmantraṇa*, therefore may be equivalent to the council of ministers.

Thus there were three forms of national organization that is *Sabhā*, its member was called *Sabhya*; *Samiti*, its member was called *Samitya* and *Āmantraṇa*, its member was called *Āmantraṇīya*. In the *AV* the word *Saṁsad* has been used for both *Sabhā* and *Samiti*. This perhaps signifies that *Saṁsad* was used to show the central character of *Sabhā* and *Samiti*. One of the *Mantras* also suggests that *Saṁsad*, a joint session of the *Sabhā* and the *Samiti* was also sometimes held.

Very important and serious subjects were taken up for discussion in the *Saṁsad* or parliament. The *AV* mentioned the seven *Saṁsad*.[144] This shows that the central government was divided into seven departments, each having one separate minister. But the names of the departments were not mentioned in the *AV*. Thus it can be seen

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[141] ध्रुवा द्यौर्ध्रुवा पृथिवी ध्रुवं विश्वमदं जगत्।
ध्रुवासः पर्वता इमे ध्रुवो राजां विशामयम्॥ AV.vi.88.3

[142] यदग्न एषा समितिर्भवाति देवी देवेषु यजता यजत्र।
रत्ना च यद् विभजासि स्वधावो भागं नो अत्र वसुप्रन्तं वीतात्॥ Ibid.xviii.1.26

[143] Ibid.viii.10.1, 8-13

[144] यस्मिन् विश्वा अधि श्रियो रणन्ति सप्त संसदः Ibid.xx.110.2

that the ancient political system had a welfare system for the common people. Their problems were taken note of seriously and were taken care of through the institutions like *Sabhā, Samiti, Āmantraṇa* and *Saṁsad*.

*Women welfare***:**

Women are accorded the great respect in *Vedas*. But some ignorant semi literate people propagate the false propaganda that *Vedas* demean women. In the *Vedic* times, the custom of the bride purchase was prevalent, but not held in esteem. Those sons-in-law who practiced it were said to be *Vijāmātā* or disreputable sons-in-law.[145] The custom of *Svayamvara,* prevalent at that time implies that the grown up brides had the exclusive right of selecting their groom or husband, particularly among the *Kṣatriya* circles in society. There is reference in the *AV* of royal brides bringing with them the dowry of a hundred cows.[146] The rich and royal families used to give some gifts to sons-in-law at the time of marriage. Some instances are *Draupadī*, *Subhadrā* and *Uttarā* who brought gifts of horses, elephants and jewels with them from the parents' homes after their marriages. Thus it is seen that brides can select their own husband.[147] The *AV* also refers to second marriage for women. It lays down a ritual to secure the union of the new couple in heaven.[148] So, it implies that the author of this hymn did not regard remarriage of widows as disrespectful. If this would have been regarded as prohibited or objected, there would not have been any hymn for the union of the widow with the second husband in heaven. Moreover, it has to be noted that the

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[145] अश्रवं हि भूरिदावत्तरा वां विजामातुरुत वा वा स्यालात्। ṚV.i.109.2

[146] नास्य जाया शतवाही कल्याणी तल्पमा शये। AV.v.17.12
अश्रवं हि भूरिदावत्तरावांविजामातुरुतवाघास्यालात्। ṚV.i.109.2

[147] भद्रा वधूर्भवति यत्सुपेशाः स्वयं सा मित्रं कृणुते जने इत्। ṚV.x.27.1

[148] या पूर्वं पतिं वित्त्वाथान्यं विन्दतेपरम्।
पञ्चौदनं च तावजं ददातो न वि योषितः॥
समानलोको भवति पुनर्भुवापरः पतिः। AV.ix.5.27

AV does not provide any suggestion that the second marriage of the widow has to done with her brother-in-law. However, usually the widow seems to marry a young brother-in law, who was very often unmarried at the time. But there was no compulsion. Some widows used to marry outside the circle of their late husband's families. Here, it is interesting to mention that even *Manu* himself suggests in his book that a wife is not to blame if she abandons a husband, who is impotent, insane, or suffering from an incurable or contagious disease.[149] The *ṚV* regards the wife as a haven of rest.[150] The *Vedic* marriage hymn says that the bride should immediately take the reins of the household from her elderly relations.[151] Usually, her views were considered very important for household management.[152] In the *Vedic* and epic society the wife was treated with utmost courtesy and regard. The wife was well recognized as the ornament of the house.[153] Rather, the wife herself was the home.[154] She arranges for the smooth and normal running of the household by assigning right duty to the right person or servant.[155] Thus it can be said that her decisions were held high, particularly in the matters of household management. The *AV*[156] held the education of girls important by saying that girls too should train themselves as students and only then enters into married life. The *Brahmacārya Sūkta* specifically

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[149] उन्मत्तं पतितं क्लीवमवीजं पापरोगिणम् ।
न त्यागोऽस्ति द्विषन्त्याश्च न च दाया पर्ततनम् ॥ Manu, ix.79

[150] जायेदस्तं मघवन्त्सेदुयोनिस्तदित्त्वायुक्ताहरयोवहन्तु । ṚV.iii.53.4

[151] सम्राज्ञीश्वशुरेभवसम्राज्ञीश्वश्वाभव ।
ननान्दरिसम्राज्ञीभवसम्राज्ञी अधिदेवृषु ॥ Ibid.x.85.46

[152] यथा सिन्धुर्नदीनां सामाज्यं सुषुवे वृषा ।
एवा त्वं सम्राज्ञ्येधि पत्युरस्तं परेत्य ॥ AV.xiv.1.43

[153] दुरोकशोचिः क्रतुर्ननित्योजायेवयोनावरंविश्वस्मै । ṚV.i.66.3

[154] जायेदस्तं मघवन्त्सेदु योनिः । Ibid.iii.53.4

[155] उपोअदर्शिशुन्ध्युवोनवक्षोनोधाइवाविरकृतप्रियाणि ।
अद्यसन्नससतोबोधयन्तीशश्वत्तमागात्पुनरेयुषीणाम् ॥ Ibid.i.124.4

[156] ब्रह्मचर्येन कन्या युवान विन्दते पतिम् ।
अनड्वान् ब्रह्मचर्येणाश्वो घासं जिगीर्षति ॥AVxi.5.18

emphasizes that girls should receive the same level of training as boys. Parents should gift their daughter a dowry of intellectuality and power of knowledge when she leaves for husband's home.[157] When girls ignore external objects and develops foresight and vibrant attitude through power of knowledge, she becomes provider of wealth of skies and earth. The *AV* emphasizes that the knowledge and noble qualities of the bride may please everyone at her husband's home.[158] It also regards women to be the protector of children, having definite knowledge, worth thousands of prayers and impressing all directions.[159] The wife was the mistress of the household. She has the responsibility as well as power to control the entire establishment—servants, unmarried brothers and sisters of the husband. The *Soma*-sacrifice is practiced by the husband along with the wife. There are also references which state that women attended public feasts, dances, and festive gatherings. They are the leaders of prosperity and wealth. Scholarly, respectful, thoughtful, happy wife protects and enhances wealth and bring happiness in home.[160] The bride is considered as the protector of husband's entire family and she enlightens all.[161] The women are pure, sacred and *Yajñīya* (as respected as *Yajña*); worth being worship, worth being served, of great character and scholarly.[162] They

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[157] चित्तिरा उपबर्हणं चक्षुरा अभ्यञ्जनम् ।
द्यौर्भूमिः कोश आसीद् यदयात् सूर्या पतिम् ॥ AV.xiv.1.6

[158] भगस्त्वेतो नयतु हस्तगृह्याश्विना त्वा प्र वहतां रथेन ।
गृहान् गच्छ गृहपत्नी यथासो वशिनी त्वं विदथमा वदासि ॥ Ibid.xiv.1.20

[159] या विश्पत्नीन्द्रमसि प्रतीची सहस्रस्तुकाभियन्ती देवी
विष्णोः पत्नि तुभ्यं राता हवींषि पति देवि राधसे चोदयस्व ॥ Ibid.vii.46.3

[160] एषा ते कुलपा राजन् तामु ते परि दद्मसि ।
ज्योक् पितृष्वासाता आ शीर्ष्णः समोप्यात् ॥ Ibid.i.14.3
यास्ते राके सुमतयः सुपेशसो याभिर्ददासि दाशुषे वसूनि ।
ताभिर्नो अद्य सुमना उपागहि सहस्रापोषं सुभगे रराणा ॥ Ibidvii.48.2

[161] इयमग्ने नारी पतिं विदेष्ट सोमो हि राजा सुभगां कृणोति।
सुवाना पुत्रान् महिषी भवति गत्वा पतिं सुभगा वि राजतु ॥ Ibid.ii.36.3

[162] शुद्धाः पूता योषितो यज्ञिया इमा आपश्चरुमव सर्पन्तु शुभ्राः ।
अदुः प्रजां बहुलान् पशून् नः पक्तौदनस्य सुकृतामेतु लोकम् ॥ Ibid.xi.1.17

provide us with subjects, animals and food. The *AV*[163] ensures that these women never weep out of sorrow. Keep them free from all diseases and give them ornaments and jewels to wear. The wife becomes the queen and manager of everyone in the family of her husband.[164] The husband holds wife's hand for prosperity.[165] Hey bride! You shall bring bliss to all and direct our homes towards our purpose of living.[166] In the *AV* equalizes man with woman in regard to knowledge.[167] If the husband is the *SV* then wife is the *ṚV*. The bride is illuminating.[168]

The *AV* comprises a good number of charms pertaining to the women. The majority of such hymns invoke both the sexes that means male and female. There is love charms aimed at men exercised on behalf women and also there are charms through which men tries to get response on his counterpart. There are hymns which belong to the peaceful sphere of conjugal life as well. Besides this, there are charms to secure birth of a child and charms to protect the embryo of the womb. The *AV* contains charms and rituals to ensure the birth of a son in presence of a daughter.[169] But the birth of a daughter was not a source of worry or problem to the family in the *Vedic* and *Upaniṣadic* ages.

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[163] इमा नारीर्विधवाः सुपत्नीराञ्जनेन सर्पिषा सं स्पृशन्ताम् ।
अनश्रवो अनमीवाः सुरत्ना आ रोहन्तु जनयो योनिमग्रे ॥ AV.xii.2.31

[164] Ibid.xiv.1.20

[165] गृह्णामि ते सौभगत्वाय हस्तं मया पत्या जरदष्टिर्यथासः ।
भगो अर्यमा सविता पुरंधिर्मह्यं त्वादुर्गार्हपत्याय देवाः ॥ Ibid.xiv.1.50

[166] सुकिंशुकं वहतुं विश्वरूपं हिरण्यवर्णं सुवृतं सुचकम् ।
आ रोह सूर्ये अमृतस्य लोकं स्योनं पतिभ्यो वहतुं कृणु त्वम् ॥ Ibid.xiv.1.61

[167] अमोहमस्मि सा त्वं सामाहमस्म्यृक्त्वं द्यौरहं पृथिवी त्वम् ।
ताविह सं भवाव प्रजामा जनयावहै ॥ Ibid.xiv.2.71

[168] येदं पूर्वागन् रशनायमाना प्रजामस्यै द्रविणं चेह दत्वा ।
तां वहन्त्वगतस्यानु पन्थां विराडियं सुप्रजा अत्यजैषीत् ॥ Ibid.xiv.2.74

[169] Ibid.iii.23; vi.11

It was in the later age that the women were equated with *Śūdras* and were said to be ineligible for *Vedic* studies. In prehistoric times, lady poets themselves composed hymns. Some of these were destined to be included even in the *Vedic Saṁhitās*. As recorded in the *Sarvānukramaṇikā*, there are as many as twenty women among the 'seers' or authors of the *ṚV*. Though some of them are doubted to be mythical personages, but internal evidence shows that *Lopāmudrā*, *Viśvavārā*, *Sikatā Nivāvari* and *Ghoshā*, the author of the *ṚV*.i.179, v.28, viii.91, ix.81.11-20 and x.39 and 40 respectively, were women in flesh and blood. They actually once lived in Hindu society. There are some doubts about the real names authors of x.145 and 159, whether they were *Indrāṇī* and *Śacī* or not. But it is confirmed that the authors were ladies. Showing the importance of women education, the *AV* observes that a maiden can succeed in her marriage only if she has been properly trained during the period of studentship (*Brahmacārya*).[170] During that period, cultivation of fine arts like music, dancing and painting was encouraged for girls. Some hymns were particularly recited by women. For instance, musical recitation of the *Sāma* hymns was originally the special function of ladies.[171] It shows that the women must be specialising in music in the early *Vedic* period. Therefore, this important duty was assigned to them. Some legends in the *Vedic* literature even make sarcastic references to women's partiality to music.

In the *Vedic* age women could move quite freely in society. They could even manage the family farms, if necessary. The *Vedic* marriage hymn says that the bride should be shown to all assembled guests at the end of the marriage ritual.[172] Moreover, she was

[170] ब्रह्मचर्येण कन्या युवानं विन्दते पतिम्। AV.xi.5.18

[171] पत्नीकर्मेव वै तेऽत्र कुर्वन्ति यदुद्गातारः। Śa Br.xiv.3.1.35

[172] सुमङ्गलीरियंवधूरिमांसमेतपश्यत।
सौभाग्यमस्यैदत्वायाथास्तंविपरेतन॥ ṚV.x.85.33

hoped to be able to speak with composure in public assemblies down to her old age.[173] The presence of ladies in social and public gatherings was a normal feature in the *Vedic* times. There were no prohibitions in the society as such. Rather it was quite welcome to society.[174] The *Vedic* poets compared the description of anything charming or graceful with the gaily attired lady, going out for a function.[175] From the *Nirukta,* it is evident that ladies used to go out to courts of law to establish their claims of inheritance.[176] This shows that they also enjoyed the rights of hereditary wealth.

*Health and Welfare in AV***:**

The *AV* is such a text which may be considered to be dedicated to the welfare of the people. It discusses various problems related to the health, their remedies, long life. In the *AV,* a large number of charms are directed towards expelling demonic beings. The *AV* appeals to the plant *Ajaśṛṅgi* to drive *Rākṣasas*, *Apsaras* and *Gandharvas*.[177] The *Rakṣas* and fits are driven out of a possessed person with an amulet made from ten different kinds of holy wood.[178]

Āyuṣyāni hymns of the *AV* are supposed to be capable of bestowing long life and good health. These hymns are similar to the medicinal hymns of the *AV*. It mentions about various diseases.[179] Along with the prayer for the cure of diseases and exemption from death, these hymns are mainly intended to secure life unto the ideal old age with good health. There are prayers asking for life (*Āyus, Jīvana, Prāṇāpānau*) which shall last a

[173] अथ जिर्विर्विदथमा वदासि। AV.xiv.1.21
[174] जुष्टा वरेषु समनेषु वल्गुरोषं...। Ibid.ii.36.1
[175] ṚV.iv.58.7; x.168.2
[176] Ni.iii.5
[177] AV.iv.37
[178] Ibid. ii.9
[179] Ibid.iii.11, xix.44

hundred autumns, a hundred winters and a hundred springs (that is hundred years). Prayers for liberation from 100 or 101 kinds of death and for protection from all sorts of diseases are also found.[180] The *Āyuṣya* hymns gives special prominence to *Agni* including other divinities. Likewise, some other stanzas scattered here and there are of like nature.[181]

The *AV* also referred to the use of some amulets which are considered as life-bestowing and life protecting. It is recommended that an amulet of pearls and gold secures and lengthens one's life without any disease.[182] The sacred girdle (*Mekhalā*) is also considered as an *Āyuṣyam*. *Agni* is adored for salve (*Āñjana*), which has the power of protecting life and limbs, destroying various diseases.[183] It is said that one who bears *Āñjana* is protected from curse, sorcery, burning pain and *Viṣkandha*. Likewise, the *AV* also refers to *Āñjanamaṇi*,[184] *Śaṅkhamaṇi*,[185] *Paraṇamaṇi*[186] in order to ensure prosperity, long life, virility. Moreover, to make their life lengthened the *Vedic Āryans* used '*Rakṣāsūtra*' in the right hand. For the same purpose, an amulet of *Jaṅgiḍa* is also used.

The *AV* also contains a number of spells for the restoration of harmony. These stand mid way between the expiatory formulas and benedictions and are known as the *Sāṁmanasyāni Sūktani*. These hymns are used to achieve peace and harmony in the family affected by discord as well as in preserving harmony in an assembly.

There are also hymns in the *AV* called *Pauṣṭikāni*. These include prayers and rites about house, home, field, grain, river, rain, cattle, horses, trading, gambling, journey,

[180] AV.ii.28.1, iii.11.7, viii.2.27
[181] Ibid. ii.13, 28, 29; vii.32
[182] Ibid.xix.26, iv.10, xix.46
[183] Ibid. iv.9; xix.44, 45
[184] Ibid.iv.9
[185] Ibid.iv.10
[186] Ibid.iii.5

returning, serpents, vermin, wealth, progeny, and exemption and protection from calamity and danger. In this class, benedictory stanzas are found for the uplifment of the farmer, the shepherd, the merchant, the gambler. It consist more than one fifth of the whole *Sūktas* of the *AV* excluding the *Sūktas* of the 20th book.

The *AV* also contains prayer for building a new house.[187] A certain accessory ceremony *Śyenayāga* on *Śyenejyā* is performed on the ground under the new house or on that place where a new house will be built.[188] It protects the house from lightning and fire.[189]

There are some exorcisms against serpents in the *AV*. The hymn vi.56 deals with exorcisms of serpents from the premises. In a noteworthy charm against snake in the *AV*,[190] the horse, '*Pedu*' (probably the horse of the sun) is invoked for this purpose.

The rest of the hymns of this class can be divided into two classes, one class of which is to procure health, wealth and prosperity[191] and other is to ward off danger and calamity. An amulet of *Udumbara* tree is seen used to secure prosperity (xix.31). *Anumati* (vii.20), *Sinīvātī* (vii.46), *Kuhū* (vii.47), *Rākā* (vii.48) are prayed for wealth and offspring.

[187] AV.iii.12
[188] Ibid.vii.41
[189] Ibid.vi.106
[190] Ibid. x.4
[191] Ibid i.31 i.15; ii.26; iv.13; vii.24, 69; xix.1, 9, 10, 11