

A Critical Study of the Peace in the Vedas

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Abstract: The Vedas, the most ancient scriptures of humanity, present a comprehensive vision of peace (*sānti*), not merely as the absence of conflict but as a positive and holistic state of harmony. This paper critically studies the principles of peace as reflected in the R̄gveda, Yajurveda, Sāmaveda, and Atharvaveda, exploring their philosophical, spiritual, and socio-ethical dimensions.

Keywords: Peace, Veda, Upaniṣads, Social life, Morality

Introduction

In the Vedas, not only are the sacrificial rituals and Vedic ceremonies described, but also there are profound foundations for the social, economic, religious, and ethical life of ancient India. This knowledge is meant to guide all human beings in their worldly existence. Just as the fourfold policy of *sāma* (conciliation), *dāna* (gift/charity), *bheda* (division), and *dānda* (punishment) are acknowledged as means of governance, even so in our personal lives, the four stages of life (*catur-āśrama*) yield fruit in harmony with the Vedic wisdom.

Discussion

The concept of peace in the R̄gveda

The concept of peace in the R̄gveda is not articulated in the later technical sense of the word *sānti* as found in the Atharvaveda and the Upaniṣads, but it is present in a more primordial and holistic way. Peace in the R̄gveda is essentially rooted in the idea of *rta*, the universal order, which is upheld by the gods and sustains harmony in nature, society, and the inner life of human beings. Whenever *rta* is disturbed, there is conflict, suffering, and disorder; whenever it is maintained, there is prosperity, unity, and tranquility. Thus, the Vedic seers conceive peace as the outcome of cosmic balance and moral order.

One of the best-known hymns that speaks directly to this vision of harmony is R̄gveda 10.191, where the seer prays:

“Samānī va ākūtiḥ samānā hr̄dayāni vah ।
samānamastu vo mano yathā vah susahāsati ॥”¹

—“Let your intentions be common, let your hearts be one, let your minds be in harmony, so that you may live together in unity.”

This verse makes it clear that peace in society is not merely the absence of hostility but a positive condition of shared thought, mutual cooperation, and collective will. The emphasis here is on social concord—a unified community where minds and hearts are aligned in friendship.

Peace also has an inward dimension in the Rgveda. Several hymns pray for a mind free from fear, sin, and restlessness. For example, in Rgveda 1.89.1–10, the seer invokes peace and well-being through the favor of the gods:

“svasti na indro vrddhaśravāḥ svasti naḥ pūṣā viśvavedāḥ |
svasti naḥ tārśryo arīṣṭanemih svasti no br̥haspatih dadhātu ||”²

At its highest level, the Rgveda conceives peace as a spiritual reality—a state of immortality and union with the divine. The seers often long for liberation from mortality and entry into the world of the gods (Rgveda 1.154, 9.113). This transcendental peace is not merely social or ecological but an eternal calm beyond the disturbances of worldly existence.

In the present time, the main cause of unrest is the violation of rules and regulations. When mutual distrust and conflicts arise, an atmosphere of disorder and peace lessens inevitably develops. If the whole world is regarded as one vast family, then all people must strive to lead a life filled with peace through spiritual effort. By adopting the principle of brotherhood, humanity can be guided towards unity. Therefore, the seers have declared:

“Samāno mantrah samitih samānī samānam manah saha cittameśām!
Samānam mantram abhi mantraye vah samānena vo haviṣā juhomi ||”³

In society, unity is seen among groups of people. However, some individuals, being selfish, do not understand the value of unity. Some people are depressed, while others, driven by necessity, search for peace, yet they fail to understand one another. For the establishment of awareness in society, our Vedas are essential, because within them lies the root of peace. For the foundation of peace and prosperity in society, the feeling of mutual goodwill becomes especially important. Therefore, it is said—

“saṃgacchadhvam̄ saṃvadadhvam̄ sam̄ vo manāmsi jānatām̄ |
devā bhāgām̄ yathā pūrve saṃjānānā upāsate ||”⁴

Translation: "Move together, speak together, let your minds be in harmony. As the gods of old, being united, accepted their share of sacrifice, so should you all be of one accord."

The concept of peace in the Sāmaveda

The Sāmaveda does not discuss peace (*śānti*) in a direct philosophical sense the way the later Upaniṣads or dharma texts do. Its primary character is musical and liturgical: it is meant for chanting in yajñas, transforming Rgvedic verses into *sāman* melodies. Yet, through this very transformation, the Sāmaveda conveys a profound vision of peace as harmony on multiple planes of existence—cosmic, social, and inner.

In the Sāmaveda, peace is first understood as cosmic order (*rta*). The hymns praise Agni, Indra, Soma, and other deities as guardians of the universal rhythm. Agni, for example, is invoked in *Sāmaveda I.1* (taken from Rgveda 1.1.1) as the divine priest who mediates between gods and men, ensuring balance and concord.

The concept of peace Yajurveda

In the Yajurveda, the concept of peace (*sānti*) is presented not merely as the absence of conflict but as a condition of cosmic, social, and personal harmony. The Yajurveda, being primarily a ritual and sacrificial text, links peace with the right performance of *yajña* (sacrifice), dharma, and the alignment of human life with *rta* (cosmic order). Peace is seen as the outcome of harmony between the natural forces, the gods, and human society.

The seer invokes peace and well-being through the favor of the gods:

“*Mitrasya mā caksuṣā sarvāṇi bhūtāni samīkṣantām* /
mitrasya caksuṣā samīkṣāmahe”⁵

—“May all beings regard me with the friendly eye of Mitra, may we look upon one another with the eye of a friend.”

This prayer shows how inner calm, freedom from hostility, and mutual goodwill are regarded as integral to a peaceful life

One of the most striking aspects of peace in the Yajurveda is its universal inclusivity—it prays for peace in the external environment, in the community, and within the individual mind. This vision of *sānti* is holistic, encompassing every sphere of existence.

For instance, the famous *Sānti* mantras of the Yajurveda declare:

“śam no mitrah śam varuṇah śam no bhavatvaryamā
śam na indro bṛhaspatih śam no viṣṇururukramah
namo brahmaṇe namaste vāyo tvameva pratyakṣam brahmāsi...”⁶

Discussion on the concept of peace in the Atharvaveda

When we follow the rules and regulations, and conduct ourselves with goodwill and mutual understanding, then in our life no mental, intellectual, or social problems arise. Always, with all beings, one lives in peace and prosperity.

The Vedic seers understood that the creation of the universe and the various cosmic phenomena were meant to be preserved and served through humanity. They also realized that in the world, among different religions and castes, conflicts are seen. The Vedas too speak about such worldly and supra-worldly matters.

Human beings, in the course of small or rapid events of time, often become anxious and confined. With the constant pressure of responsibilities, mental stress arises in human life. The modern lifestyle, being full of irregularities and disorder, has created such a situation that people, leaving aside mutual understanding, are moving towards sorrow and depression.

They are always running after worldly pleasures, yet fail to find the proper path to peace. Because of such failures, people fall into suffering; due to dissatisfaction, they sometimes even commit suicide. In the present society, this problem has become evident.

In human life, worldly sorrows and physical pains cannot be entirely avoided, yet they can be overcome through peace, health, happiness, contentment, and joy. Therefore, if we desire to remove all forms of sorrow in a universal way, we must turn to the wisdom of the Vedas.

We hear repeatedly that the supreme ideal for mankind is universal unity and harmony. The Vedas provide such inspiring examples of spiritual integration. “*Vasudhaiva Kuṭumbakam*” (the whole world is one family) or “*Sarve bhavantu sukhinah*” (may all beings be happy) becomes the very foundation of peace and universal brotherhood.

The Vedic seers have spoken of peace as one of the most important needs of human life. Peace helps to bring about the fruits of human aspirations, and hence its necessity is even greater. By peace the mind, the body, and the soul of human beings shine in completeness. Without peace, life cannot appear truly beautiful or blissful. In this matter, the Atharvaveda points out one essential path

“imāni yāni pāpeṣu pravṛttyāni manah-ṣaṣṭhāni indriyāni samśritāni|
yaireva sasrje ghorām taireva śāntim karotu nah”||⁷

From the standpoint of psychology, the root causes of restlessness and the absence of peace in our life can be traced mainly to the mind. By the proper regulation of the mind and also purification can be accomplished. Thus, by way of example, six principles may be identified that generate peace; without these principles, true peace can never arise.

Conclusion

The Vedas, the most ancient stratum of Indian wisdom, present peace (*śānti*) not merely as the absence of conflict but as a universal, cosmic, and spiritual principle. From the R̄gvedic hymns that pray for harmony between gods, men, and nature, to the Yajurvedic *Śānti Mantras* that envision peace pervading the heavens, the earth, the waters, the plants, and the human mind, peace is conceived as the ultimate condition of balance and fulfillment. The Atharvaveda extends this vision into social and medical dimensions, stressing concord, health, and communal welfare.

At the heart of the Vedic worldview lies the doctrine of *rta*, the cosmic order. Peace is the fruit of living in alignment with *rta*—through righteous conduct, disciplined mind, respectful coexistence with nature, and reverence toward the divine. Unlike modern notions of peace restricted to socio-political or psychological realms, the Vedic ideal integrates cosmic, ecological, ethical, and spiritual harmony. In conclusion, as we stand on this day, we must inevitably recall the *śānti*-mantra

“dvoḥ śāntirantarikṣam śāntih pr̄thivī śāntih āpaḥ śāntiroṣadhayah śāntih
vanaspatayah śāntih viśvedevah śāntih | śāntih śāntih śāntih” ||⁸

Endnotes

1. Ṛgveda 10.191.4
2. Ṛgveda 1.89.8
3. Ṛgveda 10.191.3
4. Ṛgveda 10.191.2.
5. Vājasaneyī Samhitā 36/18
6. Taittirīya Upaniṣad 1/1
7. Atharvaveda 19.9.5
8. Yajurveda & Atharvaveda 19.9.14

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