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THOUGHT AND USE OF VEDIC SYMBOLS IN NEW ERA

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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Abstract

Introduction: India is a land of many religions and people. Traditional Hinduism in India is surrounded by many scriptures. Among those scriptures, Vedas are the oldest scriptures. This study points out that in the ancient Vedic period religious ceremonies used various symbols in along with the observance of mantras- hymn, meditation, spiritual knowledge, philosophy, religious rites-activities-religious Yajna - symbolic Yajna. The concept and thought of these symbols according to the Vedic religion is very widespread even in the present day. Ancient Vedic symbols carry many meanings whose elapsed function has influenced the modern age as well.
Objectives: The purposes of this study are to 1.gain a deeper understanding of the concept and significance of Vedic symbols.2.explore the practical applications of Vedic symbols in modern daily life.3.examine the potential benefits and limitations of using Vedic symbols in modern daily life.
Methods: A qualitative research method was used in this study, which included a comprehensive review of various books on the Vedas, various websites, Wikipedia and scholarly articles.
Conclusion: At the end of this study, it was found that the symbols used in the Vedas were used many ages ago. There was dogma in thinking and concepts related to symbols. But nowadays its prevalence has increased and orthodoxy in the use of symbols has also decreased due to the enlightenment of education.

Keywords: *Vedas, Vedic knowledge, Vedic symbols*

Introduction

Vedas are eternal. Shankaracharya defined the Vedas as – "পরমাত্মানং লভন্তে ইতি"। According to Shankaracharya that which attains the supreme soul (attainment of moksha) is called the Vedas (Samarpanananda, 2017). Many controversies have been observed in the analysis of the data regarding the period of composition of the Vedas. However, based on linguistic, historical, and archaeological evidence, scholars estimate the following approximate dates for the composition of the Vedas: - *Rigveda:* 1500 BCE - 1200 BCE, *Yajurveda:* 1200 BCE - 900 BCE, *Samaveda:* 1000 BCE - 800 BCE, *Atharvaveda:* 900 BCE-600 BCE. These dates indicate that the Vedas were composed during the Vedic period, which spanned from approximately 1500 BCE to 500 BCE. This period is divided into two sub-periods: *Early Vedic period* (1500 BCE - 1000 BCE): Rigveda and Yajurveda were composed during this period. *Late Vedic period* (1000 BCE - 500 BCE): Samaveda, Atharvaveda, and the Brahmanas (commentaries on the Vedas) were composed during this period (Mrunalini, 2012).

The influence of Vedas is also significant in Indian philosophy because all branches of Indian philosophy that accept the authenticity of Vedas belong to the theistic category. Vedas are not only contained in mantras and hymns, the various symbols mentioned in the Vedas provide lessons in the practical aspects of our current day-to-day life. It is difficult to trace the origin and invention of these Vedic symbols to ancient Indian history. Although symbols are used in many cases, its importance, its meaning, its function remains unknown. It is necessary to explore the concepts and practical aspects of symbols included in the significant Smriti literature of Traditional Hinduism. The origin and discovery of Vedic symbols are deeply rooted in ancient Indian history and are difficult to pinpoint exactly. However, here are some approximate timelines associated with the emergence of these symbols: *Indus Valley Civilization (3300-1300 BCE):* Early forms of Vedic symbols, such as the Swastika and Kundalini, appear in the seals and artifacts of this civilization. *Vedic Period (1500-500 BCE):* The Vedas, ancient Indian

scriptures, mention various symbols like Om, Sri Yantra, and Shatkona, which were used in rituals and spiritual practices. *Upanishadic Period (800-400 BCE):* The use of symbols like the Lotus, Third Eye, and Mandala became more prevalent in spiritual and philosophical texts. *Epic Period (400 BCE-500 CE):* Symbols like the Trishul and Kundalini gained prominence in Hindu mythology and scriptures like the Mahabharata and Ramayana. *Tantric Period (500-1500 CE):* The use of Vedic symbols like Sri Yantra, Shatkona, and Kundalini became more widespread in Tantric practices and scriptures.

Literature review

Ugale (2024), in this paper the researcher has tried to cover most of the parts of Veda-yoga-philosophy. The purpose of this paper is to initially develop the standard taxonomy based on IKS and then demonstrate its use with a few examples. Researcher suggests that IKS can help maintain purity and accuracy. He said more research could be done to standardize this taxonomic protocol. Kumari (2017), in this study the researcher has given a beautiful and clear idea about Vedas and Vedic educational system. Vedic education system, curriculum, teaching medium and student-teacher relationship are discussed in detail in this study. Licyamma (2016), in this research paper the researcher has highlighted the beauty of life and highly respected principles and values and reality of the epic characters of the present generation. Pandya and Shambhudass (2005), in this book on Vedic symbols, researchers have discussed in detail about the symbols used in our Hindu religious ceremonies. Kanagasuntheram (2003), in this study, the researcher presents information on the theory of logos, iconic symbols used in Hinduism and their spiritual forms and representations of these symbols in various forms in other fields.

Objectives of the study:
(1) To gain a deeper understanding of the thought of Vedic symbols.
(2) To explore the practical applications of Vedic symbols in modern daily life.
(3) To examine the potential benefits and drawbacks of using Vedic symbols in modern daily life.

Research questions:
(1) What is the historical and philosophical thought of Vedic Symbols?
(2) How can Vedic symbols be applied in modern daily life to promote personal growth, spiritual evolution and holistic well-being?
(3) What are the potential benefits and drawbacks of using Vedic symbols in modern daily life?

Significance of the study: The significance of the study is as follows:

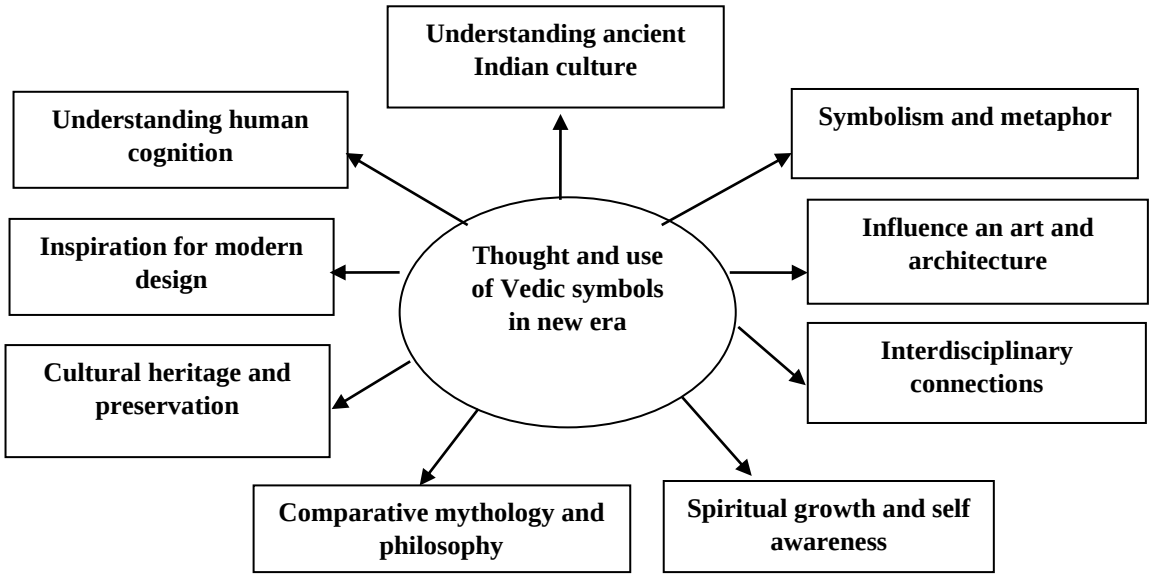

Figure 1: Thought and use of Vedic symbols in new era

Methodology: The research adopts a qualitative approach, utilizing historical analysis of ancient texts, scholarly articles, reviews of various books of the Vedas, various websites, Wikipedia.

Discussions:

a) Historical and Philosophical thought of Vedic Symbols:

Historical Thought: Vedic Texts and Rituals: Vedic symbols are integral to the rituals and texts of the Vedic period (circa 1500-500 BCE). They were used in ceremonies, including fire sacrifices (yajnas) and rites of passage, to invoke divine forces and maintain cosmic order. For example, symbols like the Swastika and Om were employed to ensure the efficacy of rituals and to represent divine auspiciousness.

Art and Architecture: Vedic symbols have been depicted in ancient Indian art and architecture. Temples, sculptures, and manuscripts often feature these symbols, reflecting their sacred nature and their role in religious and cultural practices. Over time, these symbols became central to various schools of Indian philosophy and religious practices.

Cultural Transmission: As Vedic traditions evolved, symbols were incorporated into later religious and philosophical systems, including Hinduism, Jainism, and Buddhism. They continued to represent fundamental truths and values across different cultural and historical contexts.

Philosophical Thought

Indus Valley Civilization (3300-1300 BCE):

Swastika: The word swastika is derived from the Sanskrit word svasti = Su (good) + Asti (being). As a symbol, the swastika is a line-pattern invented by the Vedic. According to the sages, certain geometries have certain relationships with specific natural energy fields. The swastika symbol is a clockwise direction, as we see it on Earth, with the sun rising in the east and setting in the west. Thus the four arms of the swastika represent four main directions (Pandya & Shambhudass, 2005). The swastika, often associated with auspiciousness and good fortune, is a symbol used in various Indian religions, including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. Its meaning varies slightly across traditions but generally represents prosperity, good luck, and the cyclical nature of existence. The swastika is seen as a symbol of the eternal cycle of creation, preservation, and destruction.

Kundalini: Kundalini is a concept in Hindu and yogic traditions referring to a latent spiritual energy believed to reside at the base of the spine. The awakening of this energy is thought to lead to spiritual enlightenment and self-realization. The process involves a series of spiritual practices aimed at rising this energy through the chakras to achieve higher consciousness.

Vedic Period (1500-500 BCE):

Om (Aum): Om is the most profound Vedic symbol, representing the sound and vibration of the universe. Om is considered the primordial sound of the universe, symbolizing the essence of ultimate reality and consciousness. In Vedic philosophy, Om embodies Brahman (the ultimate reality) and signifies the interconnectedness of all existence. It symbolizes the three aspects of divinity—creation (Brahma), preservation (Vishnu), and destruction (Shiva)—and serves as a meditative focus for realizing spiritual truths. Om (or Aum) is a sacred syllable and a fundamental sound in Hinduism and other Indian religions. It is considered the primordial sound from which the universe originated. Philosophically, Om represents the essence of the ultimate reality or consciousness (Brahman) and encompasses all of existence.

Sri Yantra (Sri Chakra): Vastu Shastra - Vedic archaeology, use of "Yantra", Especially Shri Yantra, Ganesha Instruments etc. have become quite popular in present era. The Sri Yantra, a complex geometric pattern, is used in meditation and worship to represent the cosmic and divine structure. Philosophically, it embodies the union of the masculine (Shiva) and feminine (Shakti) principles, illustrating the interplay of energy and consciousness in the universe. It symbolizes the divine essence from which all creation emerges.

Sadhana: Devoted efforts at self-transformation and Spiritual elevation through self-discipline (Pandya & Shambhudass, 2005).

Panchatattva: The gross five basic elements Manifestation of nature, namely, Prithvi (all solid matter on or within the earth), Jal (water, liquid and liquid), Vayu (air, gaseous state), Agni (source of fire and energy) and Akasa (subliminal etheric extension and domain of existence and Expression of mental and emotional faculties (Pandya & Shambhudass, 2005).

Shatkona (Hexagram): The Shatkona, or six-pointed star, is a symbol found in both Hindu and Buddhist traditions. It represents the union of the divine masculine (Shiva) and feminine (Shakti) energies. The upward and downward triangles intersect to form the star, symbolizing the balance and integration of opposites, such as spirit and matter.

Upanishadic Period (800-400 BCE):

Lotus (Padma/Water Lily): The Lotus flower symbolizes purity, enlightenment, and the unfolding of spiritual realization. In Vedic philosophy, it represents the soul's journey from the muddy waters of material existence to the blossoming of spiritual awakening. The Lotus also signifies detachment and rising above worldly concerns to achieve spiritual growth. The lotus symbol mentioned in Hinduism is also a common symbol in Buddhism.

Third Eye (Ajna Chakra): Associated with intuition and higher perception, the third eye (Ajna chakra) is located between the eyebrows. It's a symbol of inner vision, spiritual insight, and awakening.

Mandala: Mandalas are intricate circular designs used for meditation and spiritual focus. They represent the universe, wholeness, and the journey toward self-realization.

Epic Period (400 BCE -500 CE):

Trishul (Trident): The Trishul symbolizes Lord Shiva and represents the three aspects of existence: creation, preservation, and destruction. It also signifies overcoming ignorance and achieving enlightenment. The trident also represents the control of the three gunas of nature (sattva, raja, tama guna) and the ability to overcome ignorance and delusion.

Other ritual symbols:

Deepak (Divine Light): Deepak symbolizes wisdom, enlightenment, and dispelling darkness. Lighting a Deepak during rituals signifies seeking truth and inner illumination.

Kalash (Sacred Pot): The Kalash is a prominent Vedic symbol that represents the manifestation of **Gayatri** and **Yagya**. Gayatri symbolizes the divine knowledge, while Yagya represents selfless service and sacrifice.
Physically, the Kalash is a metal or earthen pitcher filled with water (preferably from a sacred river like the Ganga). It is adorned with betel or mango leaves and a sanctified thread tied around its neck. Placed on the worship dais, it signifies balance and success in all aspects of life.

Shankha (Conch Shell): The Shankha holds spiritual significance in Hinduism and Buddhism. It symbolizes purity, auspiciousness, and the primordial sound (Om). When blown, the conch produces a resonant sound, representing the cosmic vibration. In Hindu rituals, it is used during worship, invoking positive energies. Lord Vishnu's conch, known as Panchajanya, is a powerful symbol in Hindu mythology.

b) **The practical applications of Vedic symbols in modern daily life:** Vedic symbols can enhance well-being and spiritual growth in modern day-to-day life. There are practical ways to apply these symbols, this are:

1. **Mindful Awareness**:

Om (Aum): It is absolutely necessary for everyone to start the day with Om chanting. It calms the mind, focuses your energy and connects you to the Universal Consciousness.

Third Eye (Ajna Chakra): Practicing mindfulness focusing on the space between your eyebrows is especially important as it cultivates insight and self-awareness.

Use: *Meditation and Yoga:* Incorporate Vedic symbols, such as the Om or Sri Yantra, into meditation and yoga practices to focus the mind and connect with inner self.

2. Balance and Harmony:

Swastika: The swastika needs to be used as a reminder of balance. Reflect on the cycle of life - ups and downs - and balance.

Shatkona (Hexagram): Embrace both the masculine and feminine energies within you. It is possible to balance work and rest, logic and intuition.

Use: *Visualization and Affirmations:* Visualize Vedic symbols and repeat associated affirmations to reprogram the mind and manifest positive change.

3. Sacred Spaces:

Mandala: Creating Mandalas or using Mandala art in your living spaces promotes harmony, meditation and positive energy flow.

Sri Yantra: It is possible to visualize Sri Yantra as a cosmic map. Meditating on its layers is great for aligning your inner self with the universe.

Use: *Sacred Geometry:* Use Vedic symbols in sacred geometry practices, like drawing or tracing symbols, to balance energy and harmonize surroundings.

4. Self-Care Rituals:

Deepak (Divine Light): It is possible to set intentions for clarity, wisdom and inner light by lighting a candle or oil lamp each day as you do.

Kalash (Sacred Pot): Place a small urn with water on your altar to symbolize abundance and spiritual energy.
Use: *Rituals and Ceremonies:* Incorporate Vedic symbols into rituals and ceremonies to mark important life events, seek guidance, or honor cycles of nature.

5. Symbolic Jewelry and Clothing: Wear jewelry or clothing adorned with Vedic symbols. They serve as reminders throughout the day. For example, a pendant with the Om symbol or a lotus design can carry positive vibrations.

Use: *Journaling and Reflection:* Use Vedic symbols as prompts for journaling and reflection, exploring their meaning and significance in your life.

6. Yoga and Breath work:

Kundalini: Practicing Kundalini Yoga is essential to awakening your inner energy. Focusing on spinal alignment and breathing is also necessary.

Use: *Personal Growth and Transformation:* Use symbols like Kundalini or Sri Yantra in yoga and meditation practices to facilitate personal growth and transformation.

Trishul (Trident): Imagine the Trishul at your spine—representing balance, transformation, and awakening.

Use: *Energy Healing:* Apply Vedic symbols in energy healing practices, like Reiki or acupuncture, to balance and align energy.

7. Nature Connection:

Lotus (Water Lily): Spend time near water or keep a water lily plant. It symbolizes purity and growth.

Shankha (Conch Shell): Listening to conch shells or going to the beach helps connect with primal vibrations.

8. Creative Expression: Express Vedic symbols through art, music, or writing to tap into their creative potential.

9. Personal Mantras*:* Choose a Vedic symbol as a personal mantra, repeating it to focus intentions and cultivate inner peace.

10. Daily Reminders*:* Display Vedic symbols in daily life, like on a phone lock screen or fridge, to serve as reminders for spiritual growth and self-awareness.

c) The potential benefits and drawbacks of using Vedic symbols in modern daily life:

Benefits:

1. Spiritual Connection: Vedic symbols serve as bridges between the material and spiritual realms. They remind us of our deeper purpose, connecting us to ancient wisdom and cosmic energies.

2. Mindfulness and Focus: Using symbols like the **Om** or **Third Eye** encourages mindfulness. They anchor our attention, promoting clarity and inner awareness.

3. Positive Energy: Symbols carry inherent positive vibrations. Placing them in our surroundings uplifts the energy and creates a harmonious atmosphere.

4. Visual Reminders: Vedic symbols act as visual cues. When we see them, we remember our intentions—whether it's balance, growth, or self-improvement.

5. Cultural Heritage: Embracing these symbols honors our cultural heritage. It connects us to ancient traditions and fosters a sense of continuity.

6. Aesthetic and Symbolic Value: Vedic symbols often have intricate designs and aesthetics that can enrich personal spaces, such as home decor. Their presence can provide a sense of peace, harmony, and beauty, contributing to a positive environment.

Drawbacks:

1. Misinterpretation: Symbols might be used in ways that distort their original intent, leading to confusion or misunderstanding. Some symbols, like the **Swastika**, have been misappropriated. People may misinterpret their meaning due to historical events. The irreverent use of symbols holds deep significance to those who belong to that culture.

2. Superficial Use: Using symbols without understanding their depth can be superficial. True benefit comes from genuine intention and knowledge. True spiritual growth requires more than an emphasis on symbolic representation; Spirituality certainly requires deep practice and personal transformation.

3. Personal Relevance: Not all symbols resonate with everyone. Choose symbols that align with your beliefs and experiences.

4. Overreliance: Relying solely on symbols may distract from inner work. Balance external practices with self-reflection.

5. Commercialization: If these symbols are used primarily for aesthetic or commercial purposes, this may undermine their sacredness and intended use in spiritual practice.

Conclusions

A new era has dawned, and the thought and use of Vedic symbols have evolved to accommodate modern perspectives while retaining their ancient wisdom. Vedic symbols, once reserved for spiritual and philosophical discourse, have transcended their traditional boundaries to become an integral part of modern daily life. Their significance extends beyond cultural and religious contexts, offering universal principles and themes that resonate with contemporary society. As we embrace the thought and use of Vedic symbols in this new era, we must remember to approach them with respect, authenticity, and awareness of their

origins and significance. By doing so, we can harness their power to elevate our lives, communities, and world. The symbolism of the Vedas is a deep reservoir of wisdom that can be creatively interpreted and applied in the new era to address spiritual, environmental, ethical, personal, and aesthetic dimensions of human life and society. Integrating these symbols into modern discourse and practices can foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of our shared heritage while addressing contemporary challenges. These symbols from the Vedic tradition are integral to the spiritual and cultural landscape of the Indian subcontinent, representing various aspects of life, cosmic principles, and divine energies. They continue to influence rituals, art, and daily practices, reflecting the deep spiritual heritage of the region. Vedic symbols have found new applications in the contemporary world, integrating with modern practices and technologies while preserving their traditional meanings. They continue to offer insights, inspiration, and guidance in various aspects of life, reflecting the enduring relevance of Vedic wisdom in the new era.

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