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# **THE HOLISTIC APPROACH IN THE TREASURE OF INDIAN WISDOM**

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## Abstract:

India has inherited a great treasure of wisdom in the form of Vedas, Puranas, Upanishadas, Smritis and Shastras. Indian wisdom, as articulated in these ancient texts, offers a comprehensive worldview that integrates spiritual insight, ethical conduct, social responsibility, and ecological awareness. It encourages a balanced and holistic way of life, where every aspect of existence is seen as interconnected and essential to the overall harmony of the universe. The Vedas and Puranas often depict nature as sacred, with gods and goddesses representing natural forces. The concept of living in harmony with nature is deeply embedded in these texts. This reverence for nature fosters an ecological consciousness, advocating for a lifestyle that respects and protects the environment as part of a holistic life. However, the current generation is concerned about holistic development of human beings, yet few are aware about the age long traditions and knowledge system that the Indian ancient texts possess. This paper makes an attempt to introduce some of these texts like Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, Purushsukta, Ishavasya Upanishad, Manusmriti and some well-known Vedic mantras and provide glimpses of the holistic thinking that the Indian texts have been preaching.

## Introduction:

It is observed that though the horizons of knowledge have been expanded in the field of Science and Technology; the inner boundaries of human ability and existence are being narrowed simultaneously. Western influence and modern lifestyle have led us to more and more self-centered ways of life and our vision is gradually losing holistic thinking even in the age of globalization. It is a great paradox that when we did not have any scientific gadgets to obtain comforts, we were having peace of mind and inner comforts. Now, when we have abundant gadgets for any comfort we may ask for, we are far from all comforts and peace of mind. Our progress is in fact regress in disguise! Our learning is unlearning instead! Our ability to invent, produce and use gadgets is becoming our inability to do anything ourselves. We are losing our general abilities to gain specific abilities. We are moving from whole to parts. This is how we are getting rid of holistic way of thinking which seems to be resulted in disabilities, anxiety and isolation. This problem is related to Psychology which has its roots in Philosophy. Interestingly enough, this path to isolation is not shown by Philosophy in general and Indian Philosophy in particular. The treasure of Indian Wisdom, that is renowned for the utterances like “वसुधैव कुटुम्बकम्” and “आनो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः” leads to the holistic way of life. Some of the glimpses are discussed hereafter.



## 1. Holistic Discourse in Shreemad Bhagavat Geeta: Sermon

It is said about Geeta that once Geeta is understood, there is no need of learning any other shastra. There are so many discourses in Geeta that evidently preach the holistic way of life. Shri Krishna says Arjuna, in chapter three, that until we sacrifice or offer anything to Devas, we are not worthy to have it. They are thieves who enjoy without offering. Moreover, it is sin to cook only for our one's own sake. The virtuous, who partake of what left out after sacrifice, are absolved of all sins.

इष्टान्भोगान्हि वो देवा दास्यन्ते यज्ञभाविताः ।

तैर्दत्तानप्रदायैभ्यो यो भुङ्क्ते स्तेन एव सः ॥ 3.12॥

यज्ञशिष्टाशिनः सन्तो मुच्यन्ते सर्वकिल्बिषैः ।

भुञ्जते ते त्वघं पापा ये पचन्त्यात्मकारणात् ॥ 3.13॥

Think of others first is a kind of message we can derive from the above verses, as in India, even the guests are considered to be deities whom lord Krishna advises to foster first. This is how, it is preached not to be self-centered and it is the fundamental norm of being holistic.

Furthermore, it is also guided that the very existence is a part of whole. Everything is interconnected and we are just one link in it.

अन्नाद्भवन्ति भूतानि पर्जन्यादन्नसम्भवः ।

यज्ञाद्भवति पर्जन्यो यज्ञः कर्मसमुद्भवः ॥ 3.14 ॥

कर्म ब्रह्मोद्भवं विद्धि ब्रह्माक्षरसमुद्भवम् ।

तस्मात्सर्वगतं ब्रह्म नित्यं यज्ञे प्रतिष्ठितम् ॥ 3.15 ॥

एवं प्रवर्तितं चक्रं नानुवर्तयतीह यः ।

अघायुरिन्द्रियारामो मोघं पार्थ स जीवति ॥ 3.16॥



All beings are evolved out of food, and food is produced from rain; from sacrifice arises rain, and sacrifice is born of action. Action comes from Brahma, and Brahma proceeds from the Imperishable. Therefore, the all-pervading (Brahma) ever rests in sacrifice. He, who does not follow the wheel of creation, thus set revolving, who is of sinful life, rejoicing in the senses and he lives in vain.

Thus, Geeta very clearly says that one, being just a part of the whole, has to follow his duties and think of all others. It is said that one who becomes self-centered, gets deprived of all joys of life. The Vishwarupa Darshana in chapter 11 also expresses the holistic nature of the world and spirit

## 2. Holistic Discourse in Purushasukta:

It is said allegorically in the very beginning of Purushasukta that all living beings, nature and universe are part of one Purusha. First, twelve to fourteen verses are quoted below which significantly express this view.

The Purusha, i.e. the universal being has thousand heads, thousand eyes, and thousand feet. He pervades each part of the Creation and extends beyond in the Ten Directions represented by ten fingers. All classes of society, viz. the Brahmanas, the Kshatriyas the Vaishyas and the Shudras were His Mouth, His Arms, His Thighs, and His pair of Feet respectively.

The Moon was born from His Mind and the Sun was born from His Eyes, Indra and Agni (Fire) were born from His Mouth, and Vayu (Wind) was born from His Breath. His Navel became the intermediate Space between Heaven and Earth, His Head sustained the Heaven. The Earth was sustained by His Feet, and from His Ears the Directions were sustained; in this manner all the Worlds were regulated by Him.

सहस्रशीर्षा पुरुषः सहस्राक्षः सहस्रपात् । स भूमिं विश्वतो वृत्वात्यतिष्ठदशाङ्गुलम् ॥१॥

ब्राह्मणोऽस्य मुखमासीद् बाहू राजन्यः कृतः । ऊरू तदस्य यद्वैश्यः पद्भ्यां शूद्रो अजायत ॥२॥

चन्द्रमा मनसो जातश्चक्षुः सूर्यो अजायत । मुखादिन्द्रश्चाग्निश्च प्राणाद्वायुरजायत ॥३॥

नाभ्या आसीदन्तरिक्षं शीर्ष्णो द्यौः समवर्तत । पद्भ्यां भूमिर्दिशः श्रोत्रात्तथा लोकाँ अकल्पयन् ॥४॥

Thus, the omnipresence of the universal man, oneness of all the classes, creeds and nature makes us realize the holistic nature of the world.



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### 3. Holistic Discourse in Manusriti:

All the Smritis are the part of Dharama Shastra. Dharma does not mean religion here. Dharama means duties to be followed for the wellbeing of society. धरणात् धर्मः i.e. One that bounds together and united is dharma and धर्मो धारयति प्रजा: i.e. dharma keeps the people united. So, one should not consider himself to be a separate entity but must be a part of the whole.

It is nicely said that the man unknowingly commits five types of violence every day, for which, being a part of the whole, he must perform five -Maha Yagnas. These five slaughters are hearth, the grinding stone, the broom, the pestle and the mortar and the water-vessel. The great sages have prescribed five Maha Yagnas. They are teaching and studying offered to the Brahman, Tarpan offered to Pitrus, The Homa offered to gods or deities, the Bali offered to the Bhutas hospitable reception of guests offered to all beings.

पञ्च सूना गृहस्थस्य चुल्ली पेषण्युपस्करः ।

कण्डनी चौदकुम्भश्च बध्यते यास्तु वाहयन् ॥ ३.६८ ॥

तासां क्रमेण सर्वासां निष्कृत्यर्थं महर्षिभिः ।

पञ्च क्लृप्ता महायज्ञाः प्रत्यहं गृहमेधिनाम् ॥ ३.६९ ॥

अध्यापनं ब्रह्मयज्ञः पितृयज्ञस्तु तर्पणम् ।

होमो दैवो बलिर्भौतो नृत्यज्ञोऽतिथिपूजनम् ॥ ३.७० ॥

- Manusriti- Chapter -3

This is how; the householder is advised to perform his duties. These duties are the kind of tasks that makes men sensitive to the society and a responsible citizen. Thinking for other and not merely for yourself is the precious message conveyed in Manusmriti. The Holistic view is evident here.



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## 4. Holistic Discourse in Ishavasya Upanishada:

Ishavasya Upanishad begins with a very significant mantra which gives a great message of the joy of sacrifice as everything belongs to the God and what remains at the end is the lord only.

ईशा वास्यमिदं सर्वं यत्किञ्च जगत्यां जगत्।  
तेन त्यक्तेन भुञ्जीथा मा गृधः कस्यस्विद्धनम् ॥

Whatever is there in this world is covered by the Lord. So, enjoy it by sacrifice and do not be envious to or run after the wealth belonging to others.

This verse expresses the idea that the divine essence pervades all of creation, emphasizing the unity of all existence. This perspective fosters a holistic view of the world, where every being and object is interconnected through a shared divine presence. Recognizing this unity encourages a life of respect and reverence for all living and non-living things.

## 5. Vedic Mantras:

Many other references can be cited that express holistic view of Indian Philosophy. Many Upanishadas begin with the following mantra.

ॐ पूर्णमदः पूर्णमिदं पूर्णात्पूर्णमुदच्यते।  
पूर्णस्य पूर्णमादाय पूर्णमेवावशिष्यते ॥  
ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

The mantra can be interpreted like this: “Brahman is purna, i.e. infinite. This phenomenal world is also infinite. But 'this' is only a projection of 'that'. If 'this' is taken away, 'that' remains infinite as before.” The implication of this mantra can be even deeper, but the evident holistic view in it preached the infinity and wholeness.

Even the mantra that found at the end of Upanishadas repeat the holistic view.



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ॐ सह नावतु । सह नौ भुनक्तु । सह वीर्यं करवावहे ।

तेजस्वि नावधीतमस्तु मा विद्विषावहे ।

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

The interpretation is: “May God protect us both. (the Teacher and the Student) May God nourish us both. May we work together with energy and vigor, may our study be enlightening and not give rise to hostility.”

We can see that every prayer in India say not about me but us. It prays for all to be happy and without any pain!

सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः ।

सर्वे भद्राणि पश्यन्तु मा कश्चित् दुःख भाग्भवेत् ॥

ॐ शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः ॥

## Conclusion:

These are some of the examples cited from the treasure of Indian wisdom. However, there is enormous source in Indian philosophy that can show us the Holistic approach prevailing in it. The holistic guidance of these precious preaching shows us the way to peaceful and happy life not only for us but for all. Understanding these ancient principles can deepen our commitment to environmental stewardship. It connects modern eco-friendly practices with a rich philosophical tradition, making sustainability not just a practical necessity but also a moral and spiritual imperative. Knowledge of these teachings can guide both personal lifestyle choices and collective environmental policies. By embedding eco-consciousness in cultural and spiritual values, it can inspire more widespread and enduring environmental practices.



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