



An Analysis Of The Concept Of Justice In The Vedic Period

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Abstract

This comprehensive study undertakes a detailed analysis of the concept of justice during the Vedic Period (1500–500 BCE), the foundational epoch of Indian jurisprudence and philosophical thought. Moving beyond modern positivist notions of law, this article argues that Vedic justice was conceived as a cosmic imperative rooted in the principle of *Rta* (ऋत), the universal order governing both nature and morality. Through an extensive examination of original Sanskrit hymns from the Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Atharva Veda, and the Brahmana texts, this research explores the metaphysical foundations of justice, the sources of legal authority, and the institutional mechanisms for adjudication. The study examines the role of the king (rajan) as the earthly guardian of divine law, the significance of popular assemblies (sabha and samiti), and the procedural reliance on witnesses (sakshi), oaths (sapatha), and ordeals (divya). Furthermore, it analyzes how the concepts of rina (debt) and dharma (duty) extended legal obligation beyond the human realm into cosmic and ancestral dimensions. The article also critically examines the emergence of the varṇa system and its implications for the differential application of justice. The analysis reveals that the Vedic understanding of justice established an enduring paradigm wherein law, religion, ritual, and cosmic harmony were inseparably united, bequeathing a rich legacy to subsequent Indian legal traditions.

Keywords : Vedic Period, Justice, *Rta*, Dharma, Sanskrit, Ancient Indian Jurisprudence, Rig Veda.

1. Introduction

The Vedic Period, spanning approximately from 1500 BCE to 500 BCE, represents the intellectual and spiritual dawn of Indian civilization. Named after the Vedas (वेद), the sacred compilations of hymns, rituals, and philosophical speculations revealed to the ancient seers (rishis), this era witnessed the germination of ideas that would shape the subcontinent's cultural, social, and juridical landscape for millennia.²

To analyze the concept of justice during this formative period is to undertake an exploration of a worldview fundamentally different from modern secular jurisprudence. "In the Vedic cosmos, law was

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² "Vedic Period or Vedic Age" Maharshi Panini Sanskrit Evam Vedic Vishwavidyalaya Ujjain available at https://www.mpsvv.ac.in/files/veda_e-content

not merely a human construct designed to regulate social interactions and resolve disputes. Rather, it was a reflection and enforcement of a universal, eternal, and inviolable principle known as Ṛta (ऋत)."³

“The Vedas, considered Śruti (श्रुति)—“that which is heard” or directly revealed—constitute the primary source material for understanding this ancient conception of justice. These texts are not legal codes in the modern sense, like the Code of Hammurabi or the Twelve Tables of Rome. They are primarily liturgical and hymnic compositions. However, embedded within their verses are the foundational principles, the philosophical underpinnings, and the procedural glimpses that allow us to reconstruct the Vedic idea of a just order.”⁴

This study will analyze these sources, presenting original Sanskrit ślokas with transliteration and translation, to illuminate how the ancient Aryans understood truth, duty, punishment, and the harmonious functioning of society as a microcosmic participation in a divine macrocosm.

The analysis will proceed by first examining the cosmic foundation of Ṛta, then exploring the human institutions—the king, the assemblies, and the procedures—that were charged with its earthly manifestation. It will also critically engage with the social context, particularly the emerging varṇa system, to understand how the universal ideal of justice was mediated through a hierarchical social lens. Ultimately, this study aims to demonstrate that Vedic justice was a holistic concept, integrating the metaphysical, the ethical, the ritualistic, and the social into a seamless whole.

2. The Metaphysical Foundation: Ṛta (ऋत) as Cosmic and Moral Order

At the apex of the Vedic conceptual universe stands Ṛta. Derived from the Sanskrit root ṛ (ऋ), meaning “to go,” “to move,” or “to rise,” Ṛta signifies the fixed, regular, and inherent order that governs the cosmos.⁵ It is the principle that ensures the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, that the seasons follow one another in unbroken succession, that rivers flow towards the ocean, and that day follows night. This is not a law imposed by a creator god from outside; it is the intrinsic, dynamic rhythm of the universe itself.

The gods, in the Vedic conception, are not the creators of Ṛta but rather its foremost guardians, upholders, and exemplars. They are ṛtavan (ऋतावन)—“possessors of Ṛta.” Their power and divinity are contingent upon their adherence to this cosmic order. Among the pantheon, the gods Mitra (मित्र) and Varuṇa (वरुण) are most intimately associated with Ṛta.⁶ Varuṇa, in particular, is the cosmic sovereign who oversees the moral and physical order, punishing those who transgress (anṛta).

A hymn from the Rig Veda beautifully expresses this relationship:

ऋतस्य हि वर्तनयः प्र यातवे भवन्ति मह्या अधि निष्कृतौ | याभिर्विश्वस्य जगतः सम्राज्यं गमेथाम् ।

(For the paths of Ṛta are to be travelled, they exist for the great attainment. By which paths you two (Mitra and Varuṇa) attain universal sovereignty over the whole world.)

This verse reveals that even the sovereign gods Mitra and Varuṇa must traverse and adhere to the paths of Ṛta to maintain their dominion. Ṛta, therefore, is a meta-divine principle.

Crucially, Ṛta is not merely physical law; it is simultaneously moral and ethical law. It is the standard of truth and righteousness. The Vedic seers made an explicit connection between Ṛta and Satya (सत्य), or truth. Satya is the verbal and human expression of Ṛta; it is reality as it is, spoken and acted upon. The Nāsadiya Sūkta (Hymn of Creation), one of the most profound philosophical hymns of the Rig Veda, traces the origin of existence itself to the interplay of Ṛta and Satya:

³ Ibid

⁴ Ancient Indian Political Thought” Tripura University Available at <https://tripurauniv.ac.in/StudyMaterialsDetail>

⁵ Rig Veda: Doniger, Wendy, trans. The Rig Veda: An Anthology. London: Penguin Books, 1981.

⁶ “Vedic Mythological Tracts” Ramchandra Narayan Dandekar

Ajanta publications delhi, 1979, 383 pages Available at <https://cse.iitk.ac.in/users/amit/books/dandekar-1979-vedic>

ऋतं च सत्यं चाभीद्धात्तपसोऽध्यजायत ।⁷

Here, Ṛta and Satya are born together from the primordial creative energy (tapas). They are twin aspects of the same fundamental reality. To speak truth (satya-vacana) is to align one's speech with Ṛta. To act justly is to align one's actions with the cosmic current. Conversely, to lie or act unjustly is to commit anṛta (अनृत), a violation that creates a ripple of disorder, a cosmic pollution that must be atoned for or punished.

This metaphysical framework has profound implications for justice. A crime is not merely an offense against an individual or the state; it is a transgression against the cosmic order. The function of human justice, therefore, is to restore the balance of Ṛta that has been disturbed by the wrongful act. The king or the adjudicator is not simply applying a human law but is acting as an agent of cosmic restoration. The Satapatha Brahmana reinforces this connection between the divine and the just, stating that the gods themselves are established in Ṛta:

ऋते देवाः ऋतधामानः ।

(The gods are established in Ṛta; they have their abode in Ṛta.)⁸

If the gods dwell in Ṛta, then for humans to be righteous and to receive divine favor, they too must align their lives with this order. Justice, in essence, is the path of alignment with the divine.

3. The Sources of Justice in the Vedic Worldview

How did one know what was just in the Vedic period? With no codified legal texts in the modern sense, authority derived from a hierarchy of sources, with Ṛta at the apex, manifesting through several channels.

- The Vedas (Sruti - श्रुति):

As the primary revelation, the Vedas were the ultimate source of authority. They prescribed the rituals (yajnas), the hymns, and the chants that maintained the cosmic and social order. Proper performance of these duties was the most fundamental aspect of justice. A person who neglected their ritual obligations was failing in their duty to the gods (deva-ṛṇa) and thereby disturbing Ṛta. The Mimamsa school of philosophy, which later systematized Vedic interpretation, held that the Vedas were apauruṣeya (अपौरुषेय)—not of human origin—and therefore infallible. While this school post-dates the Vedic period, its roots lie in the reverence for the Vedic word as the ultimate source of dharma.⁹

- Smṛti (स्मृति) and Custom (Sadachara - सदाचार):

While the formal Smṛti texts (like the Dharmasūtras and Dharmashastras) were composed in the post-Vedic period, the authority of tradition and custom was already recognized. The conduct of those who were learned in the Vedas and who lived virtuously—sadachara—served as a model for just behavior. Customary norms of the community (grama-dharma) or family (kula-dharma) held significant sway in local disputes, provided they did not contradict the broader principles of Vedic order. This reliance on custom indicates a flexible, organic system of justice rooted in lived tradition.¹⁰

- Royal Decrees (Rajana - राजाज्ञा):

⁷ Atharva Veda: Bloomfield, Maurice, trans. Hymns of the Atharva-Veda. Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XLII. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1897.

⁸ Brahmanas: Eggeling, Julius, trans. The Satapatha Brahmana. 5 vols. Sacred Books of the East, Vols. XII, XXVI, XLI, XLIII, XLIV. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1882-1900.

⁹ Sources Of Law In The Ancient Vedic Period : Indian Journal of Law and Legal Research – IJLLR Available at <https://www.ijllr.com>

¹⁰ Ibid

The king, as the protector of his realm, had the authority to issue decrees. However, his power was not absolute. A royal decree was considered legitimate and just only insofar as it was in alignment with the higher law of Rta and the principles of the Vedas. The king was expected to be guided by his purohita (पुरोहित—royal priest) and his council of ministers and elders, ensuring that his commands were not arbitrary but were an extension of the divine order into specific administrative contexts. The Aitareya Brahmana emphasizes that the king is the protector of dharma, not its creator.¹¹

- Conscience (Atmatusti- आत्मतुष्टि):

In the absence of clear guidance from revelation, custom, or royal decree, the satisfaction of one's own conscience—the inner voice of a person purified by Vedic study and righteous living—was considered a valid source of knowing what is just. This internalization of Rta represents the highest stage of ethical development, where the cosmic order becomes an intrinsic guide for personal conduct.

These multiple sources created a layered legal epistemology, where the universal principle of Rta was refracted through revelation, tradition, royal authority, and individual conscience.¹²

4. The King (राजन्): The Earthly Guardian of Divine Justice

The institution of kingship (rajya) evolved considerably during the Vedic period. In the early Rig Vedic era, tribal chieftains (rājan) were often war-leaders, their authority dependent on their prowess and the consent of the tribal assemblies. By the later Vedic period (the age of the Brahmanas), kingship became more established, sacralized, and central to the maintenance of justice.

The king's primary duty, reiterated across Vedic texts, is prajānam rakṣaṇam (प्रजानां रक्षणम्)—the protection of his subjects. This protection was not merely military defense but encompassed the maintenance of internal order and the administration of justice. The king was often referred to as dharmapatni (धर्मपत्नी), the lord of dharma, or dharmagoptā (धर्मगोप्ता), the protector of dharma.¹³ The Aitareya Brahmana, in a passage describing the royal consecration (rajasuya), contains a remarkable verse that encapsulates the reciprocal relationship between the king and his people, a foundational concept for just governance:

अहं प्रजानां राजास्मि प्रजा मह्यं राजास्मीति । एतद्वै राज्ञो राजसूयस्य रूपम् ।

(I am the king of the people; the people are king over me. This, indeed, is the nature of the royal consecration.)

This verse articulates a form of social contract. While the king holds sovereignty over the people, his authority is contingent upon his service to them. The people, in a sense, are his sovereign masters, and his kingship is valid only insofar as he fulfills his duty to them. This idea places a profound ethical obligation upon the ruler.

Furthermore, the king was seen as the earthly counterpart to the god Varuṇa. Just as Varuṇa uses his divine power to bind transgressors with his fetters (pāśa), the king uses his temporal power to bind and punish wrongdoers.

The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa explicitly draws this parallel, stating that the king, upon consecration, becomes the human Varuṇa:

वैश्वदेवीं वा एष तद्वाचं वदति यदेनं राजानं वरुणं कुर्वन्ति ।

(He speaks, indeed, a speech relating to all the gods when they make him, the king, a Varuṇa.)⁷

¹¹ Ibid

¹² Ibid

¹³ Kingship-And-Community-In-Early India, Available at

http://ia801405.us.archive.org/8/items/in.ernet.dli.2015.136133/2015.136133.Kingship-And-Community-In-Early-India_text.pdf

The Sabhā was a more select body, perhaps a council of elders or nobles. It functioned as a court of justice and an administrative council.

The Atharva Veda contains a hymn that praises the Sabhā and prays for understanding within it:

यथा नः सभासु सख्यानि जानत ।

(So that they may know our friendships in the assemblies.)

The Sabhā was where disputes were likely adjudicated. It was a place for deliberation, for hearing evidence, and for arriving at a just decision. The presence of these assemblies indicates that Vedic justice was not a purely autocratic process. The king, even if he presided, was expected to consult with and be guided by the wisdom of the sabhāsad (members of the assembly). This provided a check on royal power and incorporated community wisdom into the judicial process.¹⁹

Over time, as kingship became more powerful in the later Vedic period, the influence of these assemblies may have waned, but their early prominence establishes that the pursuit of justice was a shared responsibility between the ruler and the ruled.

7. Adjudication and Evidence: The Quest for Satya (सत्य)

Vedic legal procedure was a sacred quest to ascertain Satya (truth). The mechanisms employed reflect a deep reliance on divine witness and the moral integrity of the participants.²⁰

● 7.1. Witnesses (साक्षिन) :

The testimony of witnesses (sākṣin) was a primary means of establishing facts. The word sākṣin literally means "one who sees," indicating that the witness was an eyewitness to the event in question. The credibility of a witness was paramount. Only individuals of high moral character, who were trusted by the community, were considered valid witnesses. Giving false witness was considered a heinous sin, a direct violation of Satya and Ṛta.

● 7.2. Oaths (शपथ) :

In the absence of clear evidence or credible witnesses, or to bolster testimony, oaths (śapatha) were administered. An oath involved invoking a deity or a sacred object and calling down a curse upon oneself if one spoke falsely. The underlying belief was that the divine power invoked would punish the perjurer.

The Taittirīya Saṃhitā emphasizes the inviolability of truth, linking it to the stability of the world itself:

सत्येनोत्तब्धा ध्रुवा धरा ।

(The earth is upheld and fixed by Truth.)

To swear a false oath, therefore, was to go against the very foundation of the earth. The psychological and religious weight of such an act was immense, making it a powerful tool for eliciting truth. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa describes the procedure for administering an oath, often involving touching water or fire, elements considered pure and capable of revealing or punishing falsehood.

● 7.3. Ordeals (दिव्य) :

In cases where human testimony was insufficient or contradictory, the judgment was left to the gods through ordeals (divya). The word divya means "divine" or "heavenly." The principle was that the divine powers, as guardians of Ṛta, would protect the innocent and expose the guilty through the operation of the natural elements. Common ordeals included:

● Fire Ordeal:

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Sunil Sondhi. DANDANITI IN THE INDIAN TRADITION. Indira Gandhi National Center for the Arts; IGNC A Janpath New Delhi-110001 India <https://ignca.gov.in/>. 2025, pp.101. fahal-05320608v2ff

The accused would have to walk through fire or hold a red-hot iron. If they emerged unscathed, they were deemed innocent.

- Water Ordeal:

The accused would be submerged in water for a period. If they were protected from drowning, or if they floated (depending on the specific tradition), it was a sign of innocence.

- Balance Ordeal: The accused would be weighed on a scale. If they were found lighter than their normal weight, it was considered a sign of truthfulness.

The Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā of the Śukla Yajur Veda contains allusions to such tests, invoking Agni (fire) and Āpas (waters) as purifiers and revealers of truth. While the detailed systematization of ordeals came later in the Dharmasūtras (e.g., in the texts of Baudhāyana and Gautama), their conceptual roots lie firmly in the Vedic belief that the cosmos, governed by Rta, will actively uphold justice when appealed to Conscience.²¹

8. Justice and Cosmic Obligation: The Theory of Ṛṇa (ऋण)

The Vedic concept of justice extended far beyond the resolution of human disputes. It encompassed a web of obligations that every individual owed to the cosmos and society. This is encapsulated in the theory of Ṛṇa (ऋण), or "debt." According to this worldview, a person is born with inherent debts that must be repaid throughout their life to live a just and complete existence.²²

The Taittirīya Saṃhitā provides one of the clearest articulations of these debts, listing three primary obligations:

जायमानो वै ब्राह्मणस्त्रिभिरृणवाञ्जायते । यज्ञेन देवेभ्यः प्रजया पितृभ्यः ।

(A Brāhmaṇa, indeed, is born with three debts: with debt to the gods through sacrifice, with debt to the ancestors through progeny.)

While this verse specifically mentions three debts for a Brāhmaṇa, other texts elaborate on a fourth, creating a comprehensive framework of four debts (catvāri ṛṇāni):

- Deva Ṛṇa (देव ऋण): Debt to the gods, to be repaid through the performance of sacrifices (yajña) and the chanting of hymns.
- Rishi Ṛṇa (ऋषि ऋण): Debt to the ancient seers (rishis), to be repaid through the study and teaching of the Vedas (svādhyāya and pravacana).
- Pitṛ Ṛṇa (पितृ ऋण): Debt to one's ancestors, to be repaid by producing offspring (prajā) and performing the śrāddha ceremonies to ensure their continued well-being in the ancestral realm.
- Manuṣya Ṛṇa (मनुष्य ऋण): Debt to fellow human beings, to be repaid through the practice of hospitality (atithi-sevā), compassion, and charity (dāna).

Failure to repay any of these debts was a form of injustice. A person who did not perform sacrifices was unjust to the gods; one who did not study was unjust to the sages; one who did not have children was unjust to the ancestors; and one who was inhospitable was unjust to humanity. This framework integrated justice into the aims of human life, making it a continued process of fulfill the obligations. The concept of debt also applied to financial obligations. Failure to repay a loan was a serious issue. The creditor had a claim, and society recognized the obligation of debtor.

The Atharva Vedas contains prayers regarding this -

ऋणानि विश्वा मुञ्चतु ।

This intertwining of cosmic and financial debt demonstrates the holistic nature of Vedic justice, where every aspect of life was imbued with a sense of righteous obligation.²³

²¹ Ibid

²² <https://www.prekshaa.in/foundations-sanatana-dharma-rta-rna-dharma>

²³ Ibid

9. Civil and Criminal Adjudication in Vedic Society

While a detailed legal code is absent, Vedic texts provide glimpses into the types of disputes that required adjudication and the nature of punishments imposed.

Civil Matters:

- **Property Disputes:** Conflicts over land (kṣetra), cattle (paśu), and other forms of wealth (dravya) were common. The king's role was to adjudicate based on customary norms of possession, inheritance, and usage. The concept of adverse possession may have been recognized in some form.
- **Debt:** As discussed, disputes over loans and their repayment were frequent. Interest (vṛddhi) was known, though its rates and legality likely varied.
- **Boundary Disputes:** Disagreements between neighboring villages or individuals over land boundaries would have required royal or local intervention.

Criminal Matters:

- **Theft (steaya - स्तेय):** Theft was a serious crime. Punishments could include fines, restitution, corporal punishment, or even execution in severe cases.
- **Adultery:** This was considered a grave offense against the family order and a violation of a husband's rights. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa mentions severe punishments for adulterers.
- **Violence (himsā - हिंसा):** Assault and murder were the most serious crimes. The principle of retribution (daṇḍa) was applied, but with an emerging sense of proportionality.

The Vājasaneyi Saṃhitā contains a prayer for protection from violent men, indicating the societal concern with such crimes:

अघायवे द्विषते हन्तु वज्रं ।

(May he hurl his thunderbolt at the wicked enemy.)

The Atharva Veda also contains hymns aimed at neutralizing robbers and enemies, reflecting a concern for public safety and order.

Punishments varied. Fines, often paid in cattle (gau), were common. Imprisonment was less common as a primary punishment but was used for detaining accused persons or debtors. Corporal punishment, including whipping and mutilation, was prescribed for certain crimes. Banishment from the kingdom was a severe punishment, effectively cutting the offender off from their social and ritual identity. The overarching principle was that the punishment should fit the crime and serve to restore the disturbed social and cosmic order.²⁴

10. Justice and Social Stratification: The Varṇa (वर्ण) System

Any analysis of Vedic justice must confront the reality of social hierarchy. The later Vedic period witnessed the formalization of the varṇa system, a four-fold social classification that profoundly influenced the conception and application of justice.

The Puruṣa Sūkta of the Rīg Veda provides the theological charter for this system:

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

(The Brāhmaṇa was his mouth; the Rājanya (Kshatriya) was made his arms; that which is the Vaiśya was his thighs; the Śūdra was born from his feet.)²⁵

This hymn presents the four varṇas as emanating from different parts of the primordial cosmic being (Puruṣa), suggesting an organic, hierarchical, and divinely ordained social order. The mouth (source of speech and knowledge) is the Brāhmaṇa; the arms (source of strength and protection) are the Kshatriya;

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Oldenberg, Hermann. The Religion of the Veda. Translated by Shridhar B. Shrotri. Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1988.

the thighs (source of sustenance and activity) are the Vaiśya; and the feet (source of service and foundation) are the Śūdra.

This hierarchy had direct implications for justice. The concept of dharma itself became variegated. Each varṇa had its own sva-dharma (स्वधर्म)—its own specific duties and codes of conduct. The dharma of a Brāhmaṇa (study, teaching, performing sacrifices) was different from that of a Kshatriya (governing, fighting, protecting), which was different from that of a Vaiśya (agriculture, trade, cattle-rearing), and that of a Śūdra (service to the higher varṇas)²⁶

Consequently, justice meant upholding one's sva-dharma. A Kshatriya who engaged in trade was, in a sense, acting unjustly by abandoning his prescribed role. More significantly, punishments for crimes were often graded according to the varṇa of the offender and the victim. An offense against a Brāhmaṇa was considered far more heinous than the same offense against a Śūdra, and would invite a correspondingly severe punishment. Similarly, the punishment for a Śūdra who offended a Brāhmaṇa would be greater than for a Brāhmaṇa who committed a similar offense.²⁷

While the detailed legal codes of the Dharmashastras (like Manu's) systematized these graded punishments centuries later, the principle was nascent in the Vedic period. The universal ideal of Ṛta was thus mediated through a social lens that was anything but egalitarian. Justice was not equal for all; it was appropriate to one's station in the cosmic-social hierarchy. This remains one of the most complex and debated aspects of the Vedic juridical legacy.

11. The Legacy Of Vedic Justice

The conceptual framework of justice established in the Vedic period did not disappear. It formed the bedrock upon which the entire subsequent tradition of Indian jurisprudence was built.²⁸

The Dharmasūtras and Dharmashastras: Texts like the Dharmasūtras of Gautama, Baudhāyana, and Āpastamba (c. 600–200 BCE) and the later metrical Dharmashastras, most famously the Manusmṛti (c. 2nd century BCE – 3rd century CE), are essentially systematic elaborations of the principles first enunciated in the Vedic worldview. The concepts of Ṛta and Satya developed as a comprehensive concept of Dharm as principle of law, duty, and righteousness. The king's role the protector of dharma, the daṇḍa, the varṇa system, and the founding sources like Śruti and Smṛti having roots in the Vedic period.²⁹

- The Mimamsa School:

This school of Vedic philosophy developed rules for the interpretation Vedic texts to derive legal principles of dharma. The Mimamsa Sutra of Jaimini, is a direct source of the need to systematize the Judicial and ritual concepts of the Vedas.

- The Arthashastra :

Kautilya's most important treaty on stateship in the mean time maintaining the pragmatic and secular in many aspects, still operating within the broader Vedic framework. The duty of the king to maintain law and order through daṇḍa and vidhan and to protect its people is a continuation of the Vedic concept of the king as the guardian of dharma.

- The Nibandha :

The tremendous digests and literatures that compiled and edited diverse dharmashastra texts continued to recall Vedic authority as ultimate source of all legal principles.

Thus, the Vedic period provided the philosophical reasons, the concepts, and the founding principles that enriche Indian jurisprudential thought for over two millennium years.

²⁶ Ibid

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ . Saletore, B.A. Ancient Indian Political Thought and Institutions. New York: Asia Publishing House, 1963.

²⁹ Ibid

12. Conclusions

The concept of justice in the Vedic period was a magnificent and complex synthesis of the cosmic, the religious, the social, and the ethical. It was fundamentally established in the belief of Rta, the cosmic order that ruled everything from the movement of sky stars to truthness of human speech. Justice was not an autonomous creation but this was a sacred duty to fit the society with this divine rule.

Administration by the king who was posed as the earthly counterpart to Varuṇa and who Held the Rod of Daṇḍa, and justice was achieved by procedures i.e. witnesses, oaths and ordeals that implicitly or explicitly invoked the divine as the sole Guardian of truth. The theory of Rṇa extended the sphere of justice beyond human interaction ,making the life itself in various obligations such as towards gods, sages, ancestors, and fellow beings. The existence of famous assemblies the Sabhā and the Samitis as a participate justice by balancing royal authority with community wisdom.

However This Structure was embedded within a society that was becoming hierarchical gradually. The existing varṇa system meant that the principle of Rta was applied through a prism of social status which in turn provided differential duties and punishments.

This dual structure i.e. universal divine order coexisting with specific social order is the defining characteristic of Vedic period justice.

Conclusively, the Vedic justice system established a long lasting paradigm for Indian-civilization. It given a principle where law was not separable from morality and where the king was bound by divine and customary laws and where the pursuit of justice was synonymous with the pursuit of harmony with the ultimate reality. The concept made in this ancient period would continue to evolve and be systematized, but their essence remained same which shaped the judicial and ethical consciousness of India for centuries to come.

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