

Notes On Vedas

Since July 2009 I had been forwarding short instalments on the contents of the vast Vedic literature to my numerous friends. A number of them wrote back appreciating their content. Hence I have now decided to put all of them together so that the reader can find them in a single file

Ashok Joshi, December 2009

Introduction to Vedic literature

Although I am a Hindu by birth, except for the names of the four Vedas and a few Upanishads I knew very little else. Hence when Dr N Gopalakrishnan, Director of Indian Institute of Scientific Heritage (IISH) started a weekly newsletter on Vedic literature and related subjects two years ago I began compiling together the relevant information in his newsletters. The series is still continuing but I shall not wait for its completion since he has so far covered the ground substantially

Frankly I was amazed with the vastness and depth of this literature which constitutes the core of our religion. Hence it is a great pity that almost all modern Hindus do not even have an inkling of its greatness and content. Even a list of this literature looks forbidding and very few will have the patience and time to study its contents further. So my idea is basically to list the contents of the Vedic literature with a brief note on what each work contains in a series of short newsletters. I have retained Dr Gopalakrishnan's text except for minor editing and a few explanatory sentences

I shall purposely keep each installment short so that a reader can quickly skim through it at leisure and get a broad idea of the subject. But please do remember that this is only, so to say, a primer on this subject with a limited goal of informing the reader and encouraging him to study the subject further. Your comments are most welcome. I shall be greatly obliged if you could forward these installments to *all* your Hindu friends so that they too become aware of our glorious heritage.

I have IISH's three DVDs which contain the chanting of all the Vedas. Unfortunately Dr Gopalakrishnan has not provided a suitable index for the MP3 files in them in spite of a few reminders. Hence one does not often know what one is listening to. If anyone is interested in having these DVDs please let me have your postal address so that I can send them

You will get more information on this and related subjects on the IISH website

www.iish.org

The newsletters can be accessed at:

http://www.iish.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&id=36&Itemid=55

1.. Direct Vedic Literature

Direct Vedic literature is the base for all Indian cultural books (*Vaideeka saahitya*). They are the Veda, Brahmana, Aaranyaka and Upanishad

***VEDAS:** There are four Vedas. Rig Veda, Yajurveda, Sama Veda and Atharva Veda. Rig Veda has 25 recensions (branches) Yajurveda has 108 recensions; Sama Veda has 1000 recensions and Atharva Veda has 50 recensions. The word 'recension', in Sanskrit is known as 'Saakhas'. (Yajurveda is further divided into two streams Sukla Yajurveda having only verses and no prose and Krishna Yajurveda having both prose and verses. Hence in our discussions, sometimes you will see the usage as four + one Vedas = Rig Veda + Sukla Yajurveda, + Krishna yajurveda + Sama Veda + Atharva Veda). A summary of the contents of each Veda will be given later

***BRAHMANAS** are the literature which discuss mainly the Yagas and Yajnaas. They also include a variety of historical facts and truths. They are classified under these four + one Vedas.

Rigvedeeya (means belonging to Rig Veda) brahmanaas are Aithareya brahmana, Sankhaayana brahmana and Kousheethakee brahmana

Sukla yajurveda has only one brahmana namely Satha patha brahmana available in two versions. One with 100 chapters belonging to vaajasaneyee maadhyndina yajurveda saakha and other having 104 chapters belonging to Kaanwa yajurveda saakha.

Krishna Yajurvedeeya brahmana are two Thaitheeya brahmana and Maithraayaneeya brahmana

Samavedeeya brahmanas are many. Few among them are Jaimineeya brahmana, thaandya brahmana, aarsheya brahmana, shadvimsa brahmana, chaandokhya brahmana, saamavidhaana brahmana, abhootha brahmana, vamsa brahmana and samhithopanishad brahmana.

Atharva Veda has only one brahmana namely Gopatha brahmana.

***AARANYAKAS** discuss about the philosophical aspects of life and the rituals to be performed during sanyasa and vanaprastha asrama.

Aaranyakaas are also classified under each Veda like brahmana literature: Rigvedeeya aranyakas are Aithareya aranyaka and kousheethakee aranyaka, Sukla yajurveda has no aranyaka, Krishna yajurveda has Maithraayaneeya aranyaka and thaitheeya aranyaka. Sama Veda and Atharva Veda do not have aranyaka, even though their brahmanas contain few aranyaka based subjects .

***UPANISHADS:** The fourth part of Vedic literature is the Upanishad. They are the essence of Vedas and Vedic messages and are most popular in the Vedic literature. Since they are coming as the end/ last part of Vedic literature, they are known as 'Vedaanthaas' (means which are coming in the end of Vedas. Veda antha = end of Vedic literature). There are

many Upanishads of which the most important are 108. These Upanishads are classified under four + one Vedas as follows.

Rigvedeeya Upanishads: Aaithareya Upanishad, kousheethakee Upanishad, naada bindu Upanishad, aathma bhodha Upanishad, nirvaana Upanishad, mulgala Upanishad, akshamaalika Upanishad, tripura Upanishad, soubhaagya lakshmi Upanishad, bahvrucha Upanishad. (total ten Upanishads)

Sukla yajurvedeeya Upanishads: Eesaavasya Upanishad, Bruhadaaranyaka Upanishad, Hamsa Upanishad, Parama Hamsa Upanishad, Subaala Upanishad, manthrika Upanishad, Thrisikhi Braahmana Upanishad, Niraalamba Upanishad, Mandala Braahmana Upanishad, Advaya Upanishad, Thaaraka Upanishad, Bhikshuka Upanishad, adhyaathma Upanishad, Muktika Upanishad, Thaarasaara Upanishad, Yajnavalkya Upanishad, s'aatyaayana Upanishad, thuriyaatheetha avadhootha upanishad (Total eighteen Upanishads)

Krishna Yajurvedeeya Upanishads: Katha Upanishad, thaithireeya Upanishad, brahma Upanishad, kaivalya Upanishad, swethaaswethara Upanishad, garbha Upanishad, mahanaaraayana Upanishad, amruthabindu Upanishad, amruthanaada Upanishad, kaalaagnirudra Upanishad, kshurika Upanishad, sarvasaara Upanishad, sukarahasya Upanishad, thejobindu Upanishad, dhyaana bindu Upanishad, brahmavidya Upanishad, yogathathwa Upanishad, dakshinaamoorthy Upanishad, skanda Upanishad, saareerika Upanishad, yogasikha Upanishad, ekaakshara Upanishad, akshi Upanishad, avadhootha Upanishad, katarudra Upanishad, rudrahridaya Upanishad, panchabrahma Upanishad, praanaagni hotra Upanishad, varaaha Upanishad, yogakundalini Upanishad, kalisantharana Upanishad, saraswathee rahasya Upanishad (Total thirty two Upanishads)

Saamavedeeya Upanishads: Kena Upanishad, chaandokhya Upanishad, aarunee Upanishad, maithraayane Upanishad, maithreyee Upanishad, vajrasoochika Upanishad, yogachoodaamony Upanishad, vasudeva Upanishad, mahopanishad , sanyaasa Upanishad, avyakta Upanishad, kundika Upanishad, saavitri Upanishad, jaabaala Upanishad, darsana Upanishad, rudraaksha jaabaala Upanishad (Sixteen Upanishads)

Atharvavedeeya Upanishads: Prasna Upanishad, Mundaka Upanishad, maandukya Upanishad, atharvas'ira Upanishad, atharvas'ikha Upanishad, bruhadjaabaala, Upanishad, seetha Upanishad, s'arabha Upanishad, mahaanarayana Upanishad, , raamarahasya Upanishad, ramathaapini Upanishad, s'aandilya Upanishad, paramahamsa Upanishad, annapoorna Upanishad, , soorya Upanishad, aathma Upanishad, paas'upatha Upanishad parabrahma Upanishad, thripurathaapini Upanishad, devi Upanishad, bhaavana Upanishad, bhasma Upanishad, ganapati Upanishad, mahaavakya Upanishad, gopalathaapini Upanishad, sreekrishna Upanishad, hayagreeva Upanishad, datthathreya Upanishad, garuda Upanishad, narasimhapoorva thaapini Upanishad, narasimha uttara thapini Upanishad, naarada parivraajaka Upanishad (Thirty two Upanishads)

2.. Other Vedic Literature

The Vedic seers did not restrict themselves only to rituals and philosophical discussions. Many branches of arts and science flowered simultaneously. These are listed below. Although their development and compilation commenced during the Vedic period, additions were made to many of these branches even after the format of the four Vedas was finalised by Maharshi Vyasa. They show how vast our ancient literature is and how many fields of arts and science were covered by the ancients

* Vedangas

There are six Vedangas. They are Siksha, Nirukta, Vyaakarana, Chandasastra, Kalpasastra, Jyothisha. A number of books are available on these six Vedangas. It is said that 18 books on each Vedanga are available. Even though they are not strictly classified under each Veda, it is known that specific books discuss on specific Vedas.

*Upavedas

Next comes the Upavedas which are the subsidiaries of Vedas. In fact they are *scientific* literature which are specified for each Veda. These Upavedas are Arthasastra, Dhanurveda, Gaandharva Veda and Ayurveda + Sthaapthya Veda. Artha saasthra is economics it is the upaveda of Rigveda. Dhanurveda is the upaveda of Yajurveda, Gaandharva veda is the upaveda of Saamaveda and Ayurveda + Sthaapthya veda (Vaastu) are the upavedas of Atharva Veda.. More details we will discuss later.

*Puranas

After the upavedas comes the Puraanas. There are eighteen puranaas and same number of upapuranaas. The 18 puranaas are Vishnu puraana, bhavishya puraana, garuda puraana, agni puraana, mahabagavatha puraana, sivapuraana puraana, markandeya puraana, linga puraana, brahmavaivartha puraana, mathsyas puraana, koorma puraana, varaaha puraana, vaamana puraana, skanda puraana, brahmaanda puraana, padma puraana, vaayu puraana, naaradeeya puraana.

There are less important puraanas which are known as upa puranas which are also 18 in number. They are Saamba puraana, devee bhagavatha puraana, kaalika puraana, laghu naaradeeya puraana, harivamsa puraana, vishnudharmoththara puraana, kalki puraana, mulgala puraana, aadi puraana, aathma puraana, brahma puraana, vishnudharmoththara puraana, narasimha puraana, kriyaayoga saara puraana, soorya puraana, bruhad naaradeeya puraana, purushoththama puraana, bruhad Vishnu puraana .

*Darsanas

Darsanaas are separate class of literature which are wrongly described as philosophical texts. They are not philosophy but visions of various acharyaas. Since they are the visions the words darsana (that which is seen) is used. Nyaaya darsana of Gouthama Maharshi, Vaiseshika darsana of Kanaada maharshi, Saankhya darsana of Maharshi Kapila, Yoga darsana of Maharshi Patanjali, poorva meemamsa darsana of Jaimini and Uttara meemaamsa of Maharshi Veda vyaasa. These six darsanaas are known as shaddarsana and one more darsana which is powerful and high standard atheism is by Maharshi Charvaaka known as charvaaka darsana.

*Epics

There are two more (epics) literature which you all know are the Epics. The Valmeeki Ramayana and the Vyasa Maha Bharatha.

*Smruthis

Smruthies are yet another section sometimes considered as the part of Kalpasastra, and are classified separately. They are considered separate branch of Indian dharma saastra literature. These smruthies are very important cultural part of the Indian literature connected with the day to day life of Indians. They are Usana smruthi, Yajnavalkhya smruthi, Vishnu smruthi, manusmruthi, aangeerasa smruthi, yama smruthi, athri smruthi, samvartha smruthi,

bruahath parasara smruthi, bruahath smruthi, daksha smruthi, saathaathapa smruthi, likhitha smruthi, vyaasa smruthi, paraasara smruthi, sankha smruthi, gouthama smruthi, vasishta smruthi. There may be many more smruthies but these are said to be less important.

It will be seen from the above that the Vedic literature which has come down to us is enormous even though numerous texts are not available to us at present. We shall now take a detailed look at the Vedas. But before doing that let us summarise the salient points

Points to note

- * Vedas are the base of all Indian knowledge.
- * None knows exactly when they were composed so they are known as anaadi.
- * None knows who composed them so it is apourusheya.
- * They were composed by hundreds Vedic Rishies who were known as manthra dhrushtaatra (those who could see and experience the manthras) .
- * Krishnadwaipayana Veda Vyasa compiled them into four Vedas.
- * The first Veda shows jnaana marga known as Rig veda.
- * second Veda shows karma marga known as Yajurveda.
- * the third Veda guides to the base of arts and music known as Sama Veda
- * the fourth one inform us about common (man's) subjects known as Atharva veda.
- * Brahamanas are the literature which discuss mainly the Yagas and Yajnaas .
- * They also include variety of historical facts and truths
- * All the four Vedas have brahmanas .
- * Satha patha brahmana, Prouda brahmana, Shadvimsath brahmana and Gopatha brahmana are a treasury of knowledge about ancient India.
- *In the Vedic literature, after the brahmanas come the Aranyakas which discuss about the philosophical aspects of life and the rituals to be performed during sanyasa and vanaprastha asrama.
- * We have to go through the commentaries for understanding the Vedas, Brahmanas and Aranyakas .
- * Every word, every line and every mantra has a variety of meaning and what we understand in the first step of reading may not be the real message.
- * Many non-Indians have written commentaries in recent times. They were primarily aiming at confusing Indian mind but several present day writings are good.
- * Try to understand the Vedic literature with the help of books and commentaries written by Indian scholars who do have the knowledge and spirit of the culture of this country.
- * Merely understanding the meaning of the Vedic literature using modern Sanskrit dictionary may not give us what is really needed/expected.
- * Upanishads are the essence of Vedas and Vedic messages.
- * They are vedanthas which comes as the fourth part in the Vedic literature.
- * Understanding them takes time and need patience.
- * Still it is good to understand and work using the message in our day to life to make the life worth living.
- * The Eesaavasya Upanishad is one of the great Upanishads among all the other Upanishads.

3a.. The Vedas (General)

What are Vedas? One should analyse the Vedas very carefully even from the meaning of the word. ' Veda' word was evolved from *vid* meaning knowledge. It is another form of vidya. Hence Veda means knowledge. Veda Grantha means the book containing knowledge. Vedas were composed by hundreds of Rishies. The authors of each Veda mantra are known as

Manthra drushtara i.e. those who have *seen* the manthra (not those who have *heard* manthra). Seeing a manthra means experiencing with inner eyes the realities of knowledge (from within). The Veda mantras were written many thousand years ago. Hence Vedas are known as anaadi (the days when it was written remain unknown). Vedas are not written by one or a few Rishies ! Various mantras were written by different Rishies and they were compiled by Rishies from Vyasa Kula particularly Veda Vyasa. Krishna Dwaipaayana (meaning the black coloured born in an island) is the famous among Vyasa Kula Rishies. These Rishies are known as Vyasas because they classified the total mantras into four divisions under Rig + Yajus + Sama + Atharva Veda ! (*vyasa* means classifying/separating). Vedas can never be compared with Bible and Quran because Vedas are Sookthas giving eternal truths without giving stories or explanations. The Vedas give only universal messages.....ultimate truths ! Hence Vedic messages are beyond caste, creed, religion, linguistic background, national boundaries. The Veda manthra may either be written in prose or as poems.

Types of Mantras

There are four types of mantras. They are Veda mantras (Mantras chanted with sruthies or tunes which are taken from Vedas), Purana mantras (these mantras do not have any sruthi and are taken from 18 puranas or 18 upapuranas), Itihasa mantras (mantras which are taken from either Mahabharata or Ramayana) and Karma mantras (which are literal explanation of what we are doing; it can also be a prayer).

Who should chant the Vedas?

There is a belief that Veda mantras should not be chanted by everyone. This belief sprouted only because, Veda mantra chanting has ten difficult sruthies (udaattha, anudaattha, swaritha, repha, hraswa, pracheya, anunaasika, kampa, deergha kampa and plutha). It takes years together for anyone to learn the Veda mantras with sruti. Learning should be started from very young age itself, like 5 / 6 year old. *Learning Veda with sruthi is not that easy and Veda mantra should be chanted only with sruthi, because the sruthi is as important as the message of the mantra.* Hence Vedas are also known as sruthies. If one is chanting without sruthi, it is not good. It may be compared like taking five Saridon tablets when we do not have a headache. It can cause more negative effect than giving positive effect. Hence it is instructed that everyone should not chant Veda mantra. Anyone whether Hindu, Christian, Muslim and ladies can chant Veda mantra provided, they can chant with sruthi. I am specifically explaining the above statement because Veda mantras were not exclusively composed by Brahmins. They were also written by Kashatriyas and other castes. Veda mantras were in fact classified by Vyasa whose mother was a fisherwoman. The Aacharas were not written by Brahmins but by Maheedasa Aitareya who hailed from a Chandaala (Dalit) family.

Many of our great rishies, both modern and ancient, were not Brahmins. This is true even in the case of Avataaras, Lord Krishna and Rama do not belong to Brahmin class. Thus one need not worry too much about the caste / religion /place of origin etc for learning the Vedas. They should only ascertain, whether they have the endurance power to sit and learn the Vedas for about five years, uninterrupted. Remember If the sruthi has gone wrong, even the meaning and the message changes and even becomes negative. Example: in Gayatri manthra ‘...dhiyo yo na: prachodayaath’. Here, the word /letter Na: if not properly chanted will give the meaning NO instead of US (i.e ‘Oh lord Sun do NOT enlighten with dharmic wisdom’ instead of ‘Oh Lord Sun enlighten US with dharmic wisdom’). I would like to inform you that every instruction given by our Rishies has a specific logic. Unfortunately due to our ignorance and biased approach we think they are all superstition.

Remember that no one is compelling us (including a Brahmin) to learn the Vedas. If we are learning then follow the instructions. This is what they said, but we misinterpret their instruction and say, it is *savarna aadhipatya* and superstition, etc.

3b.. The Vedas (General) (contd.)

Why is shruti important?

Detailed studies have been carried out by professors of music from Cleveland University on the Vedic sruthies. Even today lot of research work is going on in this subject. The sruti of all the four Vedas vary and that of Sama Veda is completely different. Veda thrayee means Vedas have been written partly as poems (padya style), prose (Gadya style) and Music (geetha/gaana). This is the actual meaning of Veda thrayee. Some people think that Veda thrayee means Rig veda, yajurveda and sama Veda. They wrongly say Atharva veda is not to be included. This is a superstition or mistake.

For chanting the Veda manthra, it is not compulsory to know the meaning. Chanting of Veda manthra has two merits: one its vibrations which create or the Neurolinguistic effect and the other the message for the mankind. The Neurolinguistic effect is obtained by anyone who listens or chants the manthra in the prescribed tone. This gives a music therapeutic effect by way of producing curative chemicals in the brain. It is well known that more than 20 curative hormones which are curative in nature are produced resulting in balanced brain waves and optimum heart functioning, blood pressure, level of cholesterol and also the level of adrenaline in blood. This effect is being positively utilized while undertaking stress-full work like driving a vehicle, performing mechanical and computer tasks, for reducing the pain of cancer patients, reducing tension and confusion, lowering the BP, calming the brain, reducing head ache, etc. This is particularly useful in the modern life especially for those who perform high tension mental or physical work. Hence using Veda manthra can be termed as manthra therapy. It is not a superstition, nor religion and science mixing, nor retrograding, nor converting a *durachara* into a *sadachara*. It is pure applied science. You can see manthra chanting cassettes/CDs/etc in many cancer hospitals, mental health centers, research laboratories, etc.

We repeat that while listening to Veda manthra one need not know the meaning of the manthra, the therapeutic effect can be derived directly from its sruthi/tone.

The Vedic Message

The second effect of the Vedas will be derived if and only if you know the meaning of the manthras. Most of India's message to the world/mankind is derived from Vedas prompting some to say that everything is in Veda. Literally this is not correct, but when we go deep into the significance of this statement, we see that almost all knowledge of Indian origin, is directly or indirectly linked with Vedas. It is for this reason that the scholars say that everything is in Vedas.

Vedas differ significantly from other scriptures like the Bible or Quran. They are entirely different in their contents or in the way of presentation. Different sookthas (having 3 to 20 lines with very specific number of letters in each line) known as riks were written by different Vedic sages (they are known as Manthra drushtaara) and the great Rishi(es) from Vyasa kula compiled them into the four Vedas. The vedic messages touch all aspect of human life.

There are three types of meanings for each mantra. Hence generally after chanting a Veda mantra, we also chant Om Santhi, Santhi Santhi. The three santhies are *adhyaathma* santhi, *aadhi bhouthika* santhi and *adhi devatha* santhi. Like this there are *adhyathma sandesha* – *aadhi bhouthika sandesha* and *adhi devatha sandesha* (meaning; message) for each of the Veda mantra. Understanding all these meaning may take a long long time for a student of Veda. Unfortunately without knowing any of these facts many of the so called progressives, atheists and politicians criticize our heritage.

Compiling and classifying the Four Vedas

Before coming to each of the Vedas, let us try to understand why there are four Vedas. The Veda mantras were composed by more than two hundred Rishies whom we generally call as *manthra drushtara*, which means those who could see the mantra. They compiled by their own method the mantras on different devathas (Vedic deities) having 24, 28, 32, 36, 40, 44, 48, 52 or 56 letters per line, known as *chandasa*. For example a mantra having 24 letters in one line is said to be composed in *Gayatri chanda*.

The mantras are also known as *sookthas* like *purusha sookthas*, *sree sookthas*, *bhagya sookthas*, and so on. Before chanting each *sooktha*, the name of the Rishi, the *chandasa* and the devatha of the mantra used to be chanted. So, knowing the Rishi, *chandasa*, and devatha of each *sooktha* is not at all difficult. There are thousands of *sookthas* composed during different periods, by different Rishies, in different *chandasa* for different devathas. These *sookthas* /mantras were compiled in Vedas. More than a thousand *sookthas* are compiled in *Rig Veda*, some other mantras and also some from *Rig Veda* are compiled in *Yajurveda*, few mantras from *Rig Veda* are chanted with excellent musical tone as songs (*Saama gaana*) which is known as *Sama Veda*. Some *Rig Veda* mantra + some *Yajurveda* and some other mantras are compiled to form *Atharvaveda*.

This compiling and classification were done by the Rishies of Veda *Vyasa Kula* particularly *Krishna Dwaipayana Veda Vyasa*. Thus we say *Veda Vyasa* classified the Veda mantras into four Vedas. The base of classification may be defined like this. The message with knowledge (*Jnaana kaanda*) are compiled in *Rigveda*. The message which convey *jnaana* and *karma* are compiled in *yajurveda* for performing *yagaas*, the musical way of chanting as entertainment for the divinity or gods and also for human beings form *Sama veda*. These *Sama* mantras are mainly from *Rig Veda* but are sung with an entirely different pattern to form *Sama Veda*. The common man's social, political, agricultural, day to day life aspects...etc are compiled as *sookthas*, exactly in the same pattern as *Rig Veda* which forms the *Atharva Veda*. There are many mantras which are present in all the four Vedas some are common for three Vedas, some for two Vedas. *Yajurveda* is further divided into two. First, *Krishna yajurveda samhitha* which has both poems/stanzas and prose. The second is *Vajasaneyee madhyandina sukla yajurveda samhitha* which has only poetical presentation.

We shall next make a broad survey of each Veda before citing examples of a few salient and inspiring verses as well as explaining the method of chanting them

4a- Rigveda

Rigveda is the oldest literature of human race. It has been composed by many Rishies and not by one Rishi. The *Rig Veda* is so known because it is composed of *Riks*. *Riks* means two lines of poems with very stringent *sruthies* / tones to chant. Each *suktha* may have two or more *Riks* in it. Those who compose the Veda mantras are known as *Manthra drushtara*:

means who could *see* the Veda manthra. Majority of the names of Vedic Rishies are not known to us. These mantras were composed over several centuries or even millennia and not at a particular period. The first part of the Rigveda appears to be old Vedic Sanskrit and the last part appears to be modern Sanskrit languages. In short there is an opinion that the first part and second part of Rig Veda manthra are composed in slightly different Sanskrit style. As mentioned earlier, Rishies from Veda Vyasa kula classified/ rearranged the manthras to the present form as seen now in Rigveda. Majority of the Veda hymns are composed by the Rishies of Viswamitra kula during different periods. All the hymns are adoring the Vedic devathas. Rigveda is composed almost fully in poetical style and no prose is seen.

Rig Veda has 25 recensions (sakhas). Only four are now available known as Saakala, Bhaashkala, Saankhyayana, Kousheethakee saakhas. The recensions have only minor variations. These sakhas are wrongly interpreted in English as branches. No! They are recensions. Out of the 25 sakhas only four are available now, the remaining are lost for ever. Each sakha is known in the name of respective Rishies. They are Saakala sakha, Bhaashkala sakha, Saankhyaayana sakha, and Kousheethakee sakha are most important and they are composed or organized in the present status by Saakala, Bhaashkala, Saankhyayana and Kousheethakee Maharushies.

Major difference among these Vedic recensions of Rigveda are in the arrangements of many mantras (Riks) and also in the organization of the Parisishta mantras (parisishta mantras are those mantras which are not strictly part of Vedas but they are chanted in between Veda mantras as a custom). In different sakhas in some places synonyms are also used like baahubhyam is changed to hasthaabhyam.

The Rigveda mantras are arranged in the Bhaskala sakha as mandala krama. All the mantras of the Rigveda has been included in ten mandala. In the Saakala sakha the arrangement is in ashtaka as the bunch of eight chapters. There are totally 64 chapters and they are arranged in 8 ashtakas.

Few mantras are also rearranged in different sookthas in bhashkala saakha. Very few mantras are missing too. It is interesting to note that a few sookthas, which most probably might have got added during a later period are known as parisishtas and chanted after certain vedic sookthas of a particular adhyaaya in an ashtaka. These parisishta mantras also vary to some extent in bhaskala saakha as compared to saakala saakha. One simple example is given here: In saakala saakha there are 11 sookthas known in the name vaalakhilya mantras, but in bhaashkala saakha only 7 sookthaas are included under this head. the remaining sookthaas are there in the same pattern in this veda but they are not known as vaalakhilya sookthas. Similarly Saankhyaana saakha and Kousheetaki saakha have also got similar type of minor variations.

The Saakala saakha of Rigveda has 193816 words which are composed by 397265 letters. There are 10552 Riks (stanzas) which are composed using 193816 words and they are organized in 2024 vargas. These many vargas are included in 64 chapters (adhyayaas) and eight each of this form ashtakas and hence Saakala sakha of Rigveda has 64 adhyayaas or 8 ashtakas.

All these mantras included in 64 chapters of Sakala Sakha are classified in a different method in the Bhaskala sakha of Rigveda (with minor variations) into ten mandalas. The first mandala has 191 sookthas, then in the order from 2nd to 10th mandalas, respectively 43, 62, 58, 87, 75, 104, 103, 114 and 191 sookthas are present. The number of Riks in each

suktha or each mandala also varies significantly. Say for example in the first mandala there are 2006 Riks included in 191 sookthas and in the last Mandala has 191 sookthas but consists of only 1754 Riks.

We might have heard the names of some of these Rishies who have composed our puranas, itihasas etc. But we might not have heard the names of majority of the Rishies who composed Veda mantra. However if a researcher would like to go deep into the subject of the 'names' of these Vedic Rishies, he will understand that these names have very special meaning or connotation. Given below are the names of Rishies who composed the Rig Veda. These names are presented here only just to give an awareness on the names of the Vedic Rishies :

Kanwa, Sunsepha, Aangeeras, Praskanwa, Savya Aangeeras, Nodha Gouthama, Gouthama rahoogana, Kuthsa angeeras, Kasyapa, Dhairghathamas, Romasa, Daivodaasi, Ouchadthya, Agasthya, Lopaamudra, Gurthsamada sounaka, Viswamitra gaadhina, Rushabha viswamitra, Utkeela kaathya, Katho viswamitra, Gaathee kousika, Bhartha, Prajapati viswamitra, Vamadevva gouthama, Thrasadsyu, Athreya, Kumara Athreya, Vrusojaana, Vasusrutha, Isha athreya, Gaya athreya, Suthambhara athreya, Dharuna angeeras, Pururathreya, Vaprirathreya, Prayaswantha athreya, Sasa athreya, Viswasaama athreya, Gopayana, Loupaayana, Vasooyava athreya, Bharatha Raja, Viswamithrarathreya, Babhrurathreya, Gaathurathreya, Prabhuvasurangeeras, Athri bhouma, Avathsaara kasyapa, Sadaavuruna athreya, Prathikshathra athreya, Achanaana athreya, Bharadhwaja, Bharhaspathya, Suhotra bharadwaja, Bharadhwaja, Samyu bruhaspati, Gargya bhradwaja, (Many Rishies of Bharadwaaja kula, Maitravaruna, Vasisthaputra, Viswamanu, Vaivaswatha manu, Medhathithi kanwa, Syaavascha athreya, Naabhakakanwa, Syaavascha athreya, Viroopa angeeras, Thrisoka kanwa, Vasosavya, Ghora karna, Bhaga praagatha, Pragaatha kanwa, Purhanma angeerasa, Haryatha praaagaatha, Gopavana athreya, Kurusutri kanwa, Kruthsa bhargava, Ekadhyunoundhas, Kuseedikanwa, Krishna aangeeras, Nrumedha angeeras, Thirascheera angeeras, Repha kasyapa, Nomobhargava, Jamadagnir bhargava, Sobhari kanwa, Medhathithi kanwa, Hiranyasthoopa angeeras, Darddyachyutha, Bindhuraangeeras, Nidhruvee kasyapa, Ambareesha, Yama, Yamee, Yamavaivaswatha, Yaamayatha, Vimada aindra, Vasuka, aindra, Kavasha ailoosha, Lusadhana, Abhithaapa sourya, Ghosha kaakshivati, Suhashtya ghousesya, Saptha guru angeeras, Agni souchika, Gayaplaatha, Vasu karna, Vasukra, Aayaasya angeerasa, Sumitra Vandhyaswa, Beruhaspati Lounkhya, Viswakarma bhouvana, Manyuthaapasa, Suryasaaavitri, Vrushtikaama, Vaikhanasa, Mulagala bharmaswa, durmitra, Vairoopa, Agniyutha, Bhiskshurangeerasa, Atharvana, Vasishta, Hiranyagarbha, Vagamdhruni, Kusika, Parameshti, Sakapootha, Pajavana, Aapsathya, Brahma, Nainruthi, Vairraaja, Vathayana, Aghamarshana, Samvanana, are the Vedic Rishies who composed Rigveda manthra.

I have tried to include almost all the names. Still there can be some omissions. Thus it will be seen that the Vedas are a compilation of insights and devotions of innumerable individuals and not a revelation or message of 'The Chosen One'.

4b- Rig Veda *(continued)*

When one reads or chants the Rigveda manthra, just before reading, he is expected to chant the name of the Rishi who composed the manthra, the chandas (chandas is based on the number of letters in each Rik/mantra in the suktha) and also the Vedic deity of adoration (the deity of the manthra). Before starting the chanting, it goes like this : Gaadhino

viswamitra Rishi, Anushtub chandas: mitro devata...then the Veda mantra is to be chanted. Here the author of the manthra is Gaadhina viswamitra, The chandas is anushtub and the Vedic Deity is mitra (Sun). Aapasthamba Rishi, Jagati chanda Agnirdevata... Here the name of the Rishi, the chandas and the devatha are given in the order. So it is easy to understand who has composed each manthra. There are many mantras composed by the same Rishi. There are also mantras composed by the family members of the same Rishi. In the Rigveda text, you can read the names of the composer of each manthra. More information will follow. Kindly again read the names given earlier to know the names of the composers of the greatest and the earliest literature in the world, Rig Veda.

The meanings of Vedic mantras

Every Veda manthra has three types of meaning. These meaning are known as aadhtyaatmika, aadhibhouthika and aadhidaivatha artha. This is the reason why after chanting every Veda manthra we chant three times Om Santhi Santhi Santhi for aadhyatmika saanthi, aadhi bhouthika saanthi and aadhi daivathaa saanthi. How can we understand what are these three meanings ?

Yaskacharya has interpreted three meaning in a different way. Yaajnikam, daivatham and aathmeeyam. When you take the meaning as yaajneekam, then we consider that all whatever is ours we submit them to the divine power. We sacrifice them and get detached from them. The second daaivatha meaning is that we are doing all these for making the god and divine power happy for their blessings as common man does. In the athmeeya meaning we consider the aathma paramaathma relation and look into the spiritual aspect of the manthra. In a nutshell, if a line of mantra on the animal sacrifice is chanted it can have these three meaning.

1. In this meaning the Jeevathma of the animal is getting dissolved in the paramaathma chaitanya which is symbolically explained as animal sacrifice. (aadhi daivatha artha)
2. The animal is the symbol of animal instinct like ego, anger, etc of the man and it is sacrificed or it is also the sacrifice of ignorance of human beings which is characteristics of the animals. (aadhyaatmika artha). There will not be any animal sacrifice according to this, it is only in explanation
3. Aadhi bhouthika artha in which the animal is sacrificed as offering to god / devatha for getting the benefits from the god. (In old testaments of Bible and also in Quran animal sacrifice is described in every place, including for Bakrid. It is known that in India also during the olden days animal sacrifice was common)

Veda mantras are chanted in all the Vedic rituals where the materials are offered to fire. All the Vedic rituals are known as offering through Agni using the word swaaha. These mantras play very important role in Somayaga, Aswamedha yaga, Putra kameshti yaga, Vajapeya yaga, and many other yaagas. They are also chanted in some special rituals with the thantra.

There are some mantras which are very commonly used, like Purusha sukta, bhagya sukta, Vishnu sukta, Sree Sukta, and so on. They are always chanted. Few mantras are chanted in every rituals. All these mantras are expected to be chanted with ten sruthies (tones) known as udaattha, anudhaatta, swaritha, repa, hraswa, pracheya, anunaasikaa, kampa, deergha kampa and plutha. Three among these are present in Gayatri manthra. In all the three Vedas Gayatri mantra written by Viswamitra is included.

There are many Vedic scholars in India who know the Rig Veda by heart. In fact a person is known as a 'Vedic scholar' provided he can chant a Veda mantra, when asked to chant a line

or a suktha from anywhere from the Vedic text, from any chapter at any part . Say for example: the 6th ashtaka, 3rd chapter, 9th sukta. If it is told to chant like this, the scholar is expected to recollect this mantra and chant. So learning Vedas is not done just like that.

Excellent examination procedure is also adopted for verifying the knowledge of the Vedas, by the examiners. The method of chanting the Veda mantra by Kerala Namboothiries is known as Sounaka siksha method. The method followed by Tamil/ Karnataka/Telugu Vedic scholars is known as Yajna valkhyia sikhsa and the scholars from North India and Maharastra chant Veda in Narayana Siksha. If a person having no background of Veda mantra listens to these three ways of chanting he can never know that all are chanting the same mantra in three different method without any change in even a line.

5a- Yajurveda

Now we shall go through the Yajurveda samhitha which is the second Veda in the series of the Vedic literature . As mentioned in our earlier messages, the Rig Veda gives the Jnaana kaanda, Yajurveda gives the karma kaanda, Saama Veda gives the arts and related subjects and the Atharva veda gives the social and related messages / concepts/ bases. In short all the Indian literature connected with jnaana kaanda have their base on Rig veda, and all the karma yoga based messages and literature can be seen directly linked with the Yajurveda. The sapatha swara. thaala, vaadya, mela, raga, keerthana, gaana, sruthi, laya and so on have their basic principles in the Saama veda chanting . All the social concepts, family bondages, nation, agriculture, diseases, medicines, satru naasana, success in the battles, etc are the subjects given as mantras in atharva veda.

Recensions

In yajurveda, it is said that there are more than 100 recensions. Each of the recensions has further branched into branchlets. Hence yajurveda is known as yajurveda vruksha (Yajurveda tree). Even though it is very difficult for a common man to understand, let us just glance through the names of the yajurveda texts recensions. Aalambi, kalinga, kamala, ruchaabha, aaruni, thandya, syaamaayana, kata, kaalaapi are the prime saakhas (recensions).

From among this, the kata saakha has been further expanded by various rishies into charaka kata, aahwaraka kata, bhrajishtala kata, kapishtala kata, chaaraayaneeya kata, praapya kata swetha kata, swethaswethara kata, oupamanyava kata, paathaandineya kata and maithraayaneeya kata, pinjula kata, oudala kala, sapicchala kata, mudgala kata, srungala kata, soubhara kata, mourasa kata chuchu kata, yoga kata, hapila kata, bhousala kata, ghosha kata, jrumbhakata kata etc

To illustrate the further branching of each saakha let us consider the kaalaapi saakha. It has been further expanded into haaradraveeya, cchagalina, thoumburuvina, oulupina saakha. Similarly the above mentioned maithrayaneeya saakha has further grown into maanava, vaaraaha, dundubha, aikeya, syaama, syaamaayaneeya, haaridraveeya. The latter haaridraveeya saakha has further grown into aasurina, gaargya, saarkaraakshya, maarga, vaasaveeya.

I know well that it is impossible for you to remember these names and how the classification and sub-classification of Yajurveda has been made. However what each of us should know is that the Yajurveda book (samhitha) is not a single book, but it is several books written by many many rishies over several thousand years. In the present day for the common man's

understanding we need only know that the yajurveda is classified into two saakhas as sukla yajurveda which has forty chapters and composed fully in the poetical style without and prose. Only two books are known in this saakha: Vaajasaneeyee madhyandina yajurveda samhita and Kaanwa samhitha. All other saakhas mentioned above come under Krishna yajurveda which are known to have both prose and poems.

The kaanwa samhitha and vaajasaneeyee samhitha of sukla yajurveda do not differ significantly whereas all the saakhas (recensions) of the Krishna yajurveda differ significantly in its composition. There are some manthras which are common in Rig Veda and yajurveda. The number of Rigveda manthras varies in different yajurveda saakha.

In prose and the hymns, the mantras are presented in such a way that they are to be used directly for performing yaagaas or sroutha karmas. In Rig veda the Vedic hymns were presented as compilation where the manthras can be used for different purposes depending upon the message of the manthra. In Yajurveda depending upon the message of the manthra they are used for a SPECIFIC PURPOSE that is for a specific karma. All these manthras do have a role in karma kaanda that is a ritual. Hence we say yajurveda is compiled for performing yagaas.

Sukla Yajurveda

There are two recensions for sukla yajurveda known as Vaajasaneeyee maadhyandina yajurveda samhitha and kaanwa samhitha which do not vary significantly. Almost 95 % of the hymns remain the same in these two recensions. The vaajasaneeyee maadhyandina saakha followers are known as vaajasaneeyins and those who follow kaanwa saakha are known as kaanwas in the Vedic scholars circle. Both the Vedic recensions have forty chapters in the book. In both the saakhas the last chapter is the well known Eesaavaasya Upanishad. Let us just glance through the arrangements of the hymns in vaajasaneeyee maadhyandina yajurveda samhitha: Do not worry even if you could not understand anything. This is just to inform you that we cannot understand anything unless we go deep into the Vedas. That is the reason why our ancestors have decided to inform us that everyone need not learn Vedas. It needs a thapascharya and a life long sacrifice of time, energy, money and brain.

In vaajasaneeyee samhitha the first two chapters are darsapoorna maasi yaaga, 3rd & 4th chapter chaathurmaasya customs, agnyaadhaanam and agniupasthaanam for the yaaga (making and consecrating the fire in yaaga saala). In the fifth chapter the preliminary steps of yaaga to extracting soma rasa are narrated as manthra part. From the reception of the guests and priests to consecrating the yoopta in yaaga saala are explained as hymns in 5th chapter then upto 9th chapter extracting soma juice, savannas for each day upto third day of yaaga, In the 9th to 14th chapters special rituals connected with vaajapeya yaaga, raajasoooya yaaga soutraamani yaaga ritual, etc are specially explained as manthras. After wards upto 22nd chapters are explained as mantras, the most important rituals of the yaagas. From 23rd to 25th chapters, aswamedha yaaga manthras are compiled. Upto 30th chapter the fifth day rituals and a special ritual known as soutramani are explained as manthras. Upto 39th chapter various manthras connected with rituals like gharma, pravargya, sambharana proshana, prayaschitha, puroshaada kriya, pithrumedha, etc of various types of yaagas (which is beyond the scope of this abstract presentation) are given. The 40th chapter is as explained earlier, the eesaavasya upaishad. More than 50% of the yajurveda manthra are directly or indirectly connected with rigveda

5b- Yajurveda (Continued)

Benefits of chanting mantras

Now the question is how we will know which, when, how, where, these mantras are to be chanted. In Yajurveda, when mantras are chanted in the yaaga / yajna, the message is made very clear directly or indirectly as in a prayer. Thus, if a systematic analysis of the yaaga customs and rituals is done in order to understand the meaning of that ritual, you will definitely get the message of the mantra which can then be recited in our day to day life.

What are the present day use of the mantra? These mantras are being learned and taught as the key words in conveying deep messages connected with management principles, health information, values in the family and society, scientific knowledge, psychological benefits, etc. Ancient Indian method of learning the mantra by heart had an advantage that, it can be quoted at any time at any place to anyone which convey excellent messages as subhashithams. So learning mantra has many advantage provided it is used rationally, logically and scientifically.

Many doctors in the West are advising the patients suffering from BP or psychosomatic problems, to listen to mantras while sleeping, working, driving etc. It is also common everywhere to chant/ listen specific mantra while doing pranayama, yoga, morning or evening walk and even while doing modern exercises. Your religion, caste, vision, language, political background etc will not have any bearing on your chanting or listening to a mantra. Even you need not have to have faith in mantras for listening to them.

But if you can spare few minutes, it is easy to understand which mantra is to be chanted at a particular time/occasion and also about its meaning. Remember mantras can be chanted by anyone. If possible it should be chanted with sruti or the Vedic tone for getting the excellent effect.. The best way is to listen instead of chanting with a wrong sruti. One should remember that learning to chant a mantra takes lot of your time, or even a part of life time. But listening is the best because you can do it from CDs and cassettes. Yajurveda is the source of many mantras which may be applied in our day today life, because they convey the message when and where each mantra is to be chanted.

Which mantras to chant?

Some of our readers have asked a few questions on the mantras. The answers are: those who want to chant mantras can chant Gayantri mantra, Mruthyunjaya mantra, the five saanthi mantras of Upanishads, purusha sookthas, Bhagya sookthas, Narayana sookthas, Rudra sookthas, Rudhra and chamaka, Upanishads, etc. Preferably listen to those mantras before learning them (if you are learning without the help of a teacher). Every one can chant/ learn the mantras preferably morning and evening, sitting in pooja room or a clean place. Make sure that the chanting is done with clear sound and slowly and steadily.

The Britishers who translated or interpreted the Yajurveda has given the name for sukla Yajurveda as white Yajurveda and Krishna Yajurveda as Black Yajurveda. Unfortunately many publishers follow the same method even today. Remember that there is neither black nor white in Yajurveda. This is a glaring example of misinterpretation of Sanskrit words into English and vice versa.

I have informed you that in Vajasaneyee maadhnadina samhitha of Sukla Yajurveda has 1975 mantras which are hymns and composed in poetical style. Sree Rudra and Chamaka for performing many Rudra yagas are the part of this book. There is another recension of sukla

Yajurveda known as Kaanwa samhitha in which major variations are not seen except in the number of a few mantras, the number of chapters and other contents remain the same without much variations.

Thaithireeya samhitha is the part of Krishna Yajurveda which has both prose and poems. But all are chanted with the Vedic sruthi. The thaithireeya samhitha is classified into kandas (parts) and each kaanda has further been classified into prapaatakaas. Each prapaataka describes each ritual in yaagas.

Yaagas

One should remember that there are two type of yaagas. The yaagas which are performed for prosperity and fulfilling all the wishes and needs of the life. Make the life happy with all the luxuries through the yaagas which are known as kaamyaa yaagas or Kamyeshaties (Ishti means yaagas). Some of the yaagas are performed purely for attaining moksha (in other words for attaining heavenly abode) which are known as moksheshhti . Moksheshaties are for relinquishing the earthly life and slowly preparing for giving up the earthly life.

Yajurveda elaborately describes all that are connected with the construction of the yaaga saala, each and every ritual connected with making of the fire, consecrating, the chanting of saama gaana, the role of yajamaana and his wife, the offering to fire, the mantras to be chanted etc. Cooperation and support of every section of the society right from the king to the pot maker, forest tribes, fishermen, soldier, trader, farm worker, hunter, and people from all walks of life is necessary. This benefits the individual, family, society and nation by strengthening the social bondage. It helps the economical, agricultural, industrial, scientific and technological aspects of a village or nation directly or indirectly.

Thus we can see that Yaagas are not meant merely for spirituality but for social relations and bondage too, in concurrence with high quality message for value based life. These messages are given either as prayers or advise to people or as part of explanations in Vedas. One should clearly remember that these Vedas and Vedic composition and Vedic messages are no way comparable with the Messages given in Bible, Koran or any other texts of any other religion qualitatively or quantitatively or structurally or composition wise.

5c- Yajurveda *(Continued)*

Maithrayaneeya samhitha is yet another important branch or sakha of Krishna Yajurveda. Four major parts are well demarked in the text of this Veda. Variety of yaagas and their manthrs are given here. An crucial difference what we can observe in this Veda is that the shodasa acharas like anna prasana, jaatha karma, naama karana, vivaha, etc are also described with manthras (i.e. family rituals like sacred thread ceremony, marriage, birthday celebrations, naming ceremony, etc). The shodasa acharas are the 16 sacraments to be performed for every Hindu, right from the garbhaadhaana till death (anthyeshhti). Generally this type of subjects are described in Gruhyasutra part of Kalpasutra (the fifth vedanga)

There are many manthras which are common in Thaithireeya samhitha and maitrayaneeya samhitha. Many manthras are from Rigveda and Atharva veda.

Now if you search the location of the vedic scholars, you will know that many of them are located in isolated places, as one or two families. However Yajurveda scholars and Rigveda scholars are seen in major part of India. But from among them, those who follow or those who know specific recension may be one or two or maximum half a dozen pandits. Those

Vedic scholars who follow Mathrayaneeya samhitha are now live mainly in Gujarat, and Andraparadesh, in the banks of Narmada and Godavari rivers. The Thaitheeya sakha vedic scholars live almost everywhere in India where as Kata sakha followers are again only in southern banks of the Godavari river. The Kaanwa sakha followers are scattered in their huts on the banks of the Krishna river. The Vajasaneeyee madhynadina sakha of yajurveda followers are settled in the river banks of Sarayu .

Yajurveda manthras has the sruti almost similar to Rigveda manthras. One should learn the Vedas from the guru otherwise the sruti may go wrong while chanting. When some of the manthras are repeated in different Vedas, minor changes are also seen either in letters, or in words or sometimes in lines.

The tone of chanting or the sruti of Yajurveda mantras is almost the same as the Rigveda mantras. The method of learning (paatas) also resemble very much with that of Rigveda. When Rigveda is considered as Jnaana kaanda, Yajurveda is focusing on karma kaanda. The 40th Chapter of Sukla Yajurveda is known as eesaavaasya upanishd. This is the only Upanishad out of 108 upanishad, which is the inseparable part of a Veda. The 18 lines of eesaavaasya upanishd give 18 greatest messages of Hindu dharma. It is to be chanted with sruti. There is a sakha of Yajurveda known as maitraayaneeya sakha. The maitraayaneeya Upanishad and maithreyee Upanishad are also considered as the part of the veda but considered as parisishtha (addentum). Anyone who would like to listen to all the four Vedas can down the mantras from

<http://www.nandanmenon.com>

Early Western Commentaries on Vedas

Many people have asked the question which are the best commentaries of Vedas. There are many Indian commentaries. Follow anyone of them. The western commentaries written in olden days did not have the real of aim of writing a commentary or translation . *The aim of translation and commentary of Prof. Max Muller, William Moneir, Boden, Wilson and many western scholars was mainly to misinterpret the Vedas and confuse the Indian mind.* This confusion will make the Indian mind to give up the Vedas and embrace Christianity. This they have clearly mentioned in their own books/ letters directly or indirectly. Thus learning the Vedic translation by the earlier western scholars will lead to confusion and wrong meaning. Similarly the dictionary of Monier is nothing but a nonsense which gives sexual and pornographic meaning for Sanskrit words given in Vedas. (their intentions are given in the website in their words www.heritageindianews.org

Remember good translations of Vedas are available from Indian authors, who are well versed in the English and Sanskrit languages/ regional languages. Also remember that the modern Sanskrit and Vedic Sanskrit do have differences and hence learning the messages of Vedas exclusively using a modern Sanskrit dictionary also may not be appropriate. As mentioned earlier, there are three types of meanings for Veda mantras. Aadhyaatmika- Aadhi bhoudhika and Adhi devata . (Perhaps for reminding us the three meanings/messages, after chanting every Veda mantra we chant om saanthi, saanthi saanthi -three times).

If you are purchasing a good Veda text from Motilal Banarsidas publishers or Chaukhambha publishers or from Ramakrishna mission and so on, you will see that there are special markings in each letter of the mantra. This marking denotes the udaata, anudaata, swarita, repha,hraswa, pracheya, anunaasika, kampa, deergha kampa and plutha sruthi (tone) of the mantra chanting.

@ What was the aim of Prof. Max Muller in studying and translating the Vedas.?

In Max Muller's own words through a letter written to Duke of Argyll, the then secretary to India "I shall finish the translating work of Vedas and I feel convinced, though I shall not live to see it, that this edition of mine and the translation of the Veda will hereafter tell to a great extent on the fate of India, and on the growth of millions of souls in that country (India)". He wrote to his wife "This translation of mine and the translation of the Vedas will hereafter tell to a great extent on the fate of India . . . It is the root of their religion and to show them what the root is, I feel sure, is the only way of uprooting all that has sprung from it in the last 3000 years (18-12-1868)

6. Saama Veda

The third Veda, Saama Veda, is said to be the most interesting Veda. In Bhagavath geethaa Lord Krishna has said, " Vedaanaam saamavedoasmi" (I am the Saama Veda among vedas). It is the base of all Indian music /songs /ragas/ and arts. Gaandharva veda (sangeetha veda) is the upaveda of Saama veda.

The saptha swara has its origin from saama veda. *Sa-ri-ga-ma-pa-da-ni are the first letters of seven saama veda mantras.* In Saama Veda the seven swaras are written as prathama, dwitheeya, thritheeya, chathurthi, panchami, shashti and saptami. The equivalent notation in Karanataka or Hindustani music are respectively madhyma (ma), gaandhaara (ga), rishabha (ri), shadja (sa), nishaada (ni), daivatha (dha) and panchama (pa).

All the Saama Vedic scholars when they chant Saama Veda, (saama veda gaana aalaapanam) touch the 14 joints /tips of their five right hand fingers in a particular order based on the sruthi. According to the sruthi /swara /tone the fingers move automatically for a Saama Veda pundit. The 14th swara, which is the poorna or complete swara, the index finger tip and the thumb tip come in contact which gives the chin mudra, which has the shape of zero (0). Thus evolved the zero in ancient India as the symbol/message of "complete" (poornam) poojyam means poojaneeyam = holy, adorable, complete, whole, full etc. It is true that there is no beginning and end for zero = 0 (it is pointless because it is a circle). Hence it is the poornam. As Brahmam, the cosmic divine power does not have beginning and end as said in the Geetha; it is poornam and poojyam (thus Indians discovered zero).

Saama veda mantras are compiled as a special and unique way of chanting the Rig veda and Yajurveda mantras with added tones /sruthies/words and letters. This makes the Saama (veda) gaana. The saama gaana - music- singing is the most important part of any yaagas. It is said that the yaaga devathas dance in the yaaga saala when they listen and enjoy this songs/ music and they bless everyone (this is only the literal meaning). Based on this saama gaana evolved the Karnatik and Hindustani music /keerthans /bhajans /poems/. It is the toughest among the four Vedas to learn or teach.

Saama Veda has 1000 saakhas (recensions) majority of which are lost for ever. It is said that now only thirteen recensions are now available. They are : ranaayaneeya sakha, saatya mugra saakha, vyaasa saakha, bhaguri saakha, oulundi saakha, goulgovi saakha, bhaanumaan saakha, oupamanyava saakha, kaaraati saakha, masaka saakha, gaargya saakha, kouthuma saakha, saalihotra saakha and jaimineeya saakha. It appears that now the vedic scholars who are alive can chant only the following three saakhas; Kouthuma saakha, Jaimineeya saakha and ranaayaneeya saakha. That means the other recensions are

disappearing from the land of bharatha varsha for ever. Even if the text of the respective recensions may become available in future in foreign libraries, the scholars who can chant/sing are not available. That means the sakha is dead. Have you ever heard the names of the above sama veda saakhas? 99.9% might not have heard these names. Many so called progressives/people/ intellectuals who make negative comments on Vedas have not even heard the names even once in their life, but they degrade, make fun off, belittle and denigrate these Vedas even without knowing even the first letter of veda. The Vedas and vedic messages are universal in nature and they never never teach or preach anything biased/ destructive. I felt happy to see that there are thousands of youngsters whom I met, learning the Vedas in foreign countries. Let us wish and hope that through them these Vedas may resurrect.

Sama Veda Mantras

Brief description of sama veda is given here. Total number of mantras in sama veda is 1549 (based on different sakhas there can be minor variations). Out of this 267 mantras should be repeated twice, whenever sama mantras are chanted. So these 267 mantras are known as punarukti (means repetition). Including these punarukti the total number of sama veda mantra may sometimes be said as $1549 + 267 = 1816$. Some sakha followers say kouthuma sakha has 1875 mantras and Jaimineeya sakha has only 1693 mantras. The sama vedic mantras except 105 mantras are from Saakala sakha of Rigveda. It is also said that out of these 105 mantras, 30 mantras are said to be present in Bhaashkala sakha of Rigveda. Thus the original mantras belonging to sama veda are only 75; all other mantras of sama veda are from Rigveda. In short the Rgi veda mantras are chanted as songs (sama gaana) in sama veda. In the kouthuma saakha of Sama veda, the total mantras are classified into poorvarchika, mahaanamnyarchika and uttararchika. In different sakhas the mantras are classified and also named differently.

The sama gaanas (the songs of sama veda) are four types. Graama geya gaanas which are sung in village atmosphere/environment, whenever the yaagas are performed in villages (gramas). The aaranya geya gaanas are sama songs sung when the yaagas are performed in the forest. The third category of sama ganas are those sama songs sung very confidentially /secretly without making much sound known and it is known as ooha gaanas. Those songs of sama veda which are sung only in the mind with full concentration are known as oohya gaanas.

There are 1232 grama geya gaanas, 291 aranya geya ganas, 802 ooha gaanas and 352 oohya gaanas in Jaimineeya sama veda sakha. One may remember that same mantra is sung in different gaanas in any one or more of the above method, hence the number shown above which when added together will go more than total number of sama veda mantras. The chanting method of Sama Veda is given in samhitanishad brahmana which is a small book explained later.

7. Atharva Veda

Atharva Veda mantras generally deal with material problems and prayers which are associated with sociology, agriculture, medicine, success and failures and so on in the life. It is also known as Bhrama Veda, Atharva Agneerasa Veda, Angeerasa Veda, Kshatra Veda etc. *It has been wrongly stated that the Atharva Veda is inferior (or forbidden) than the other three Vedas.* Some of the cinemas / movies / serials appearing strengthen this misunderstanding about Atharva Veda. This is wrong; the quality and all other parameters

of Atharva veda are similar to other Vedas. Veda thrayee only means three qualities of Vedas which are samhita, chandas and sruti. Atharva Veda has all these three, hence it is no way inferior to other Vedas.

It is said that Atharva Veda has 50 recensions/ sakhas. Only nine sakhas are known now. Their names are Pippalada sakha, thouda sakha, mouda sakha, sounakeeya sakha, jaajala sakha, jalada sakha, brahmavada sakha, devadarsa sakha, and charana vaidya sakha. Now only two sakhas are available in the complete form. They are sounaka sakha and pippalada sakha. Unfortunately due to the wrong understanding (misunderstanding / superstition) that Atharva Veda is inferior to other Vedas, there are only few students to learn and few teachers to teach this Veda. Thus Atharva Vedic scholars are very few in number. In Keralam there may be only two or three scholars who know the mantras with sruti. Even the original sruti of this Veda is also said to be almost lost.

Many people think that Atharva veda deals only with black magic. It is also misunderstood that, it is connected with mantra (practices) vaada type of magic or kshudra prayogas. This is absolutely wrong. There are of course a few mantras which fall under satru nasana, rashtra vijaya, roga nasana, raja vijaya, and so on. There are also many mantras which are chanted during ratha arohana, entering in palace, simhasana arohana, and for prosperity, health, long life, freedom from health problems, medicines for a variety of diseases etc. But these mantras are never used for black magic or kshudra prayogas. They are chanted exclusively for the benefit, by anyone, in his own way and not for destroying anyone else.

The Sounakeeya sakha of Atharva Veda has 750 sukthas compiled in 20 Kandas (parts) having 5987 mantras of which 1200 mantras are from Rigveda. There are many Yajurveda mantras too. Each suktha has a specific purpose in chanting, hence this arrangement of the suktha by mentioning the purpose is unique to Atharva Veda. It is said that the learning procedure of Atharva Veda was not as rigid as observed in other Vedas. Hence it is said that variations in chanting methodology, number of mantras etc are common. There can be variation when a student of Kerala and Kashmir sit for chanting the same Atharva Veda sakha. But this is not the case with the other Vedas; when the scholars of the same sakha of Rigveda chant, the mantras it will be the same, whether the vedic scholar is from MP, AP, Haryana, Kashmir or Kanyakumari

Each sukta is a prayer / explanation for fulfilling the expectations or wishes. These prayers are for different purposes which reflect in the name of the suktha. *Atharva vedic prayers focus on prosperity and peaceful life on earth for all spiritual and physical benefits.* They are classified under adhyatmikam, adhibhouthikam and adhidaivatham categories.

The adhyatmika subjects are included in adhyatmika prakaranam: aathma thathwam, brahmacharyam - gruhastha-vanaprastha-sanyasa dharmam, description on jeevathama, pramathma, health, pancha bhootha, pancha prana and so on. Prayers for good health, medicines, curative effect, long life, relief from diseases / health problems like leprosy / fever/ small pox/ infections, and so on are also included in adhyatmika prakaranam.

Adhibhoothika subjects are described in adhibhootha prakaranam: these include the prayers/mantras connected with the role of kings, ministers, victory in war, simhasana arohanam, rajya vijayam, satru nasanam, anna vardhanam, prosperity and so on. In the third part of Atharva Veda the Adhidaivatha prakaranam include the prayers towards vedic deities, yaga mantras, kaala sthuti, adoration of vaayu, agni, mitra, medicinal plants, indra, vaiswanara, mitra varuna and so on.

Name of some specific Atharva Veda mantras are: medha janana, roga s'amanam, paasa vimochanam, yakshma naasanam, kanyaa vivaranam, pushti karmam, alakshmi naasanam, raktha chamkramanam, hrudroga nasanam, jwara nasanam, swasthayayanam, rashtaabhi vrudhi, madhu vidya, agni prarthana, abhaya praapthi, bala praapthi, pas'u samvardhanam, krimi nasanam, sreya praapthi, rajaabhishekam, raja kruthyam, sala nirmanam, vanijyam, vanaspati vardhanam, ajaraksha, putra laabham, samaruddhi, athma raksha, pasuposhanam, brahma vidya, athmavidya, vajeekaranam, papa mochanam, mruthyusantharanam, vijaya prarthana, sarpavisha nasanam, garbhaadhaanam, kesavardhini oushadhi, swasti vachanam, abhaya yachana, jala chikitsa, sarparakshanam, patilaabham, anna labham, dampathi prarthana, unmathamochanam, pasamochanam, sukrutha lokam, bhumi suktam, and so on

8. Chanting the Veda Mantras

So far I have been restricting my instalments to about 1000 words for quick reading. This instalment, however, is a bit long but can be quickly skimmed through to understand how our ancients ensured that the mantras are not corrupted and interpolations/alterations are just not possible. We must be grateful to them for the foolproof steps they have taken to ensure everlasting purity of the scripture

Those vedic scholars who belong to a family who know all the four vedas were known in the earlier days as Chaturvedi. Those belonging to the family of the first three vedas were known as Thripaati/ Thrivedi. Families which had studied two vedas were called Dvivedies and if they had studied only one veda special titles were not given. However if anyone today bears the above name(s) it does not necessarily mean that he know them!

If any vedic scholar has studied the vedas in the Ghana paata he is known as Ghana paatee. This is a personal title . More information on the paata / method of learning vedas given below is just for your understanding that how complicated is the method of learning vedas. Many of those who know chanting Veda manthras may not necessarily be Vedic scholars. The real Vedic scholars have devoted their life for learning and teaching Vedas. They can quote the Vedas from any chapter, any suktha without looking into veda book. They can go beyond the chanting level also. They know the starting point of each Rik, suktha and in which chapter or from which mandala each line is present. They can chant them in the reverse order also.

Ashtau Vikruthaya

There are eight methods (known as paatas) for a thorough mastering of Vedas. These are further split into several sub branches. (Manthra or samhitha paata (paata means recitation) is the paata we hear when the Vedic scholars chant them). The following line of a mantra is taken here as an example to explain the different paatas:

oshadhya sam vadanthey somena saha raajnaa

Please note that in this mantra the word order is oshadhya -1, sam -2, vadanthey -3, somena -4, saha -5, raajnaa - 6)

1. **Samhitha Paatam** is the first paata in which the Veda mantra is just chanted without any sruthi. The words are just recited in the order 1-2-3-4-5-6

2. **Manthra Paatam:** the above line is chanted with sruthies. The Sruthies are ten in number:

Udaattha, anudaattha, swaritha, repha, hraswa, pracheya, anunaasika, kampa, deerga kampa and plutha are the ten sruthies in all the Vedas. The manthra paata will now have the manthra dhvani. The words are chanted in the same order as Samhita Patam

3. **Pada Paata:** word by word separated as pada (word). After each word there is a 'full stop'.

Oshadhaya. Sam. Vadanthey. Somena. Saha. Raajnaa.

Words are arranged as 1.2.3.4.5.6.

4. **Krama Paata:** in this paata the order is twisted and chanted with sruthi. And here the sruthi is not vedic sruthi. It is the paata sruthi. Each word when we chant forward and then backward as given below will have different sruthi, which should be studied under the guidance of a guru. (see the full stops given here)

oshadhaya: sam. sam vadanthey. vadanthey somena. somena saha. saha rajnaa. raajneti raajnaa.

1-2. 2-3. 3-4 . 4-5. 5-6 (and ending in) 6 iti 6 (raajneti raajnaa)

4a. **Pancha Sandhi Krama Paata:** from here onwards chanting the paata becomes difficult. Very clear *and* strict grammatical rules are to be followed when the words are chanted forward and backward. Please note that the essential sruthi of the paata is not included here. It is incorrect to chant this paata without sruthi.

oshadhaya: sam. sam sam. samoshadhaya: oshadhaya oshadhaya .
oshadhaya sam.

sam vadanthey. vadanthey vadanthey. vadanthey sam. sam sam. sam vadanthey.

vadanthey somena . somena somena. somena vadenathey. vadanthey
vadrnathey. vadanthey somena.

somena saha. saha saha. saha rajnaa. somena somena. somena saha.

saha raajnaa. raajnaa.raajnaa. raajnaa saha. saha saha . saha
raajnaa. raajneti raajnaa

(the above lesson can be arranged word wise as given below)

1-2, 2-2, 2-1, 1-1, 1-2

2-3, 3-3, 3-2. 2-2, 2-3

3-4, 4-4, 4-3, 3-3, 3-4

4-5 5-5 5-4 4-4 4-5

5-6 6-6 6-5 5-5 5-6 6 iti 6

you cannot learn the above paata merely with word arrangements, because sruthi is important which you can get only from the guru.

5. Jataapaata:

oshadhayas sam, samoshadhaya, oshadhayas sam.

sam vadanthey, vadanthey sam, sam vadanthey.

adanthey somena, somena vadanthey, vadanthey somena.

somena saha, saha somena, somena saha.

saha raajnaa, raajnaa, saha, saha raajnaa, raajneti raajnaa.

1 -2, 2-1, 1-2. 2-3, 3-2, 2-3.

3-4, 4-3, 3-4. 4-5, 5-4, 4-5

5-6 6-5 5-6 6iti 6

6. Maalaa Paata:

*oshadhaya sam. raajneti raajnaa. sam vadanthey. raajnaa saha.
vadanthey somena. saha somena*

*somena saha. somena vadanehty. saha raajnaa. vadanthey sam.
raajneti raajnaa . somoshadhaya:*

(remember the numbers are the Vedic words given in the order as 1,2,3,4,5,6) connecting from the first two words and the last words in the reverse order

1-2 6 iti 6. 2-3. 6-5. 3-4. 5 - 4

4-5. 4-3. 5-6. 3-2. 6-6. 2-1

6a. **Pushpa Maala Paata:** There are different methods for making a mala or garland. Similarly there are different types of maala paata. One type of maala paatam known as pushpa maala paatam is shown below

oshadhaya: sam samoshadhaya: oshadhaya: sam . - iti

sam vadanthey vadanthey sam sam vadanthey - iti

vadanthey somena somena vadanthey vadanthey somena- iti

somena saha saha somena somena saha - iti

saha raajnaa raajnaa saha raajnaa - iti

raajneti raajnaa

1-2 2-1 1-2 - iti

2-3 3-2 2-3 iti

3-4 4-3 3-4 iti

4-5 5-4 4-5 iti
5-6 6-5 5-6 iti
6 iti 6

7. Sikha Paata:

*Oshadhaya sam, samoshadhya:, oshadhaya sam, - vadanthey
sam vadanthey, vadanthey sam, sam vadnathey, - somena
vadanthey somena, somena vadanthey, vadanthey somena, - saha
somena saha, saha somena, somena saha, - raajnaa
saha rajnaa, rajnaa saha, saha rajnaa, - rajneti rajnaa*

1 –2 2- 1 1- 2 – 3
2-3 3-2 2-3 - 4
3-4 4-3 3-4 - 5
4-5, 5-4, 4-5, - 6
5-6, 6-5, 5-6 - 6iti 6

8. Rekha Paata:

Oshadhaya sam. samoshadhaya. oshadhaya sam.

samvadnathey somena somena vadanthey sam sam vadanthey .

vadanthey somena saha rajnaa rajnaa saha somena vadanthey. Vadanthey somena.

somena saha . saha rajnaa. rajneti rajnaa.

1-2, 2-1, 1-2
2-3-4, 4-3-2, 2-3
3-4-5-6, 6-5-4-3, 3-4
4-5-6 6-5-4, 4-5
5-6 6-6 5-6 6 iti 6

Here one can see that two words are composed together, then three words, then four words and so on. If five, six, seven, eight words are there in one line then it goes on continuously without interruption.

9. Dwaja Paata: in this method of chanting and learning, *all* the words of one Rik are taken into consideration. In the example taken above, the full Rik or shloka has 12 words. Thus, the arrangement of words with sruthi will be from word number 1 to word number 12. Interestingly it has been proved that those vedic scholars who have studied vedas like this do not get Alzheimer's disease, because of the excellent memory necessary for such chanting !

*Oshadhaya sam, paarayaamasi iti paarayaamasi
sam vadanthey raajan paarayaamasi
vadanthey somena, tham raajan
somena saha, braahmanastham
saha raajnaa, krunoti braahmana
rajneti raajnaa, yasmai krunoti
yasmai krunoti, rajneti raajnaa
krunoti braahmana, saha raajnaa
braahmanastham, somena saha
tham raajan, vadanthey somena
raajan paarayaamasi, sam vadanthey
paarayaamasi iti paarayaamasi, oshadhaya sam.*

1-2, 12iti-12
2-3, 11-12
3-4, 10-11
4-5, 9-10
5-6 8-9
6-7 7-8
7-8 6-7
8-9, 5-6
9-10, 4-5
10-11, 3-4
11-12, 2-3
12iti 12, 1-2

10. Danda Paata:

oshadhaya sam, samoshadhaya:
oshadhaya sam, sam vadanthey, vadanthey samoshadhaya:
oshadhaya sam, sam vadanthey. vadanthey somena. somena vadanthey samoshadhaya:
oshadhaya sam, sam vadanthey. vadanthey somena somena saha. saha somena vadanthey
samoshadhaya:
oshadhaya sam. sam vadanthey. vadanthey somena. somena saha. saha raajnaa. raajnaa saha
somena vadanthey samoshadhaya:
oshadhaya: sam. Sam vadanthey. vadanthey somena. Somena saha. Saha raajnaa. raajneti
raajnaa.

1-2, 2-1
1-2, 2-3, 3-2-1
1-2, 2-3, 3-4, 4-3-2-1
1-2, 2-3, 3-4, 4-5, 5-4-3-2-1.
1-2, 2-3, 3-4, 4-5, 5-6. 6-5-4-3-2-1.
1-2, 2-3, 3-4, 4-5, 5-6, 6 iti 6.

11. **Ratha Paata:** this is yet another very interesting paata. However it is impossible for me to write that in English nor give the order because it will be very complicated for a common reader. It can be given only in Sanskrit. There are different types of ratha paata, dwichakra ratha paata, thri chakra ratha paata, chathuschakra ratha paata and so on.

One of the most important and tough forms of paata is Ghana pata. We shall see how the Ghana paata is applied to a manthra. We shall take another mantra for demonstrating this paata in Ghana paata

"Gaayanthi thwaa gaayathrino archanthyarka markinaA:"

Gaayanthi thwaa, thwaa gaayanthi, gaayanthi thwaa, gaayathrino; gaayanthrinasthwaa gaayanthi.
Gaayanthi thwaa gaayathrina,;

thwaa gaayathrino, gaayahtrinsthwaa, thwaa gaayahtrino archanthya-archnthei gaayanthrinasthwaa .
thwaa gaayathrinorchanthi.

gaayathrino archanthya, archanthi gaayathrino, gaayanthrinoarchanthyarkama- arkamarchanthei
gaayathrino gaayathrino. archanthyarkam.

archanthyarkama - arkamarchanthy- archanthyarkama- arkina;

arkino arkamarchanthy -archanthyarkamarkina:

arkamarkino - arkinnoarkama-arkama-arkamarkina: . arkina ityarkina:

If you go deep into the method of chanting these words/ hymns systematically, you will appreciate the effort one has to take for studying the method of chanting it without losing the sruthi and also without referring to the book.

All the four Vedas have the above pattern of learning methods i.e. their own paataas. The rules do vary from Veda to Veda and the ten swaraas / sruthies vary. The sweetest of the Vedas is the Saama veda, which when chanted with the above mentioned paata bhedaas gives an unexplainable experience to the mind.

9a- Brahmanas

The next component of the Vedas is Brahmanas. Majority of them explain the yaaga / yajna rituals which is practically difficult for anyone to understand without their commentaries. They are basically meant for vedic scholars. Some of the brahmanas however may contain different subjects also. Most of the information given in Brahmanas are the authentic references for the history of ancient India. Even some of the UGC approved history texts are based on the descriptions given in the brahmanas (particularly satha patha brahmana and gopatha brahmana). Each veda has its own Brahmanas. The yaagas are performed by the vedic scholars of respective Veda sakha based on the explanations given in their respective brahmanas. To sum up important points

- these braahmanaas can be studied/understood only with the help of commentaries
- the language of the above brahminical literature is Vedic Sanskrit and hence need special knowledge to interpret the rituals
- in modern days their relevance is confined to the scholars who perform the yaagas
- for the common men, there is not much to understand except historical information
- simplified versions on the direction for performing yaagas are given in the fifth vedaangaa known as kalpa sutra

Research has to be done to understand what are the messages of braahmanaas beyond the description of performing the yaagas.

Rigveda

Aithareya brahmana, saankhyaayana brahmana and kousheetakee brahmana are the three brahmanas of Rigveda of which aithareya and saankhyayana brahmana are available in full whereas kousheetaki brahmana is almost extinct.

One of the most important and the oldest Brahmanas is the Aithareya Brahmana. This book explains various aspects of yaagas. It was written by Maheedaasa Aitareya, of Kuru panchaala desa. He was the son of a sudra woman namely Itara, belonging to the working class. He is the author of Aithareya Brahmana, aithareya aranyaka, aithareya upanishad and mahaitareya upanishad. As far as the subject matter in this brahmana is concerned, it is primarily on yaagas performed from one day (ekaaha yajna) to twelve days (dwaadasaaha yajna). This book is composed of 162 khandas in 40 chapters. Five chapters are put together known as panchikas. Thus Aithareya Brahmana has eight panchikas

They describe various aspects of the yaaga like the yaagasaala, its dimensions, fire altar, the cleaning and purification (suddhi karma) to be performed, reception to be given to the yaaga dravyas (materials for yaagas) and to the priests, the vedic names, quality, qualification and the role of the priests who are performing the yaagas, significance of the names of specific mantras, specific rituals to be performed each day, the materials to be used, receiving the soma latha for the soma rasa, praayaschitta to be performed for omissions and errors, the role of the king in yaagas, the coronation done after the yaagas, the simhasana arohanam performed, the crowning rituals done by the priests, qualification of the king described by narrating the examples of ideal kings like Bharatha and Janamejaya, the pledge / oath taken by the king, raja purohita and ministers, their qualities and qualifications and so on. Without a commentary (vyaakhyaana) understanding the contents of Aithareya Brahmana is not easy. However major part of this book is not relevant for the common man because it describes mainly yaagas. To some extent it may be of historical importance for the academicians and history students.

The second Brahmana book of Rigveda is known as Saankhyaayana Brahmana written many thousand years ago by Maharshi Saankhyaayana in 30 chapters. The yaagas performed by the Vedic scholars belonging to saankhyaayana Rigveda saakha are described in this book. Many descriptions of Aitareya brahmana are as such repeated in the Saankhyaayana Brahmana also. It is said that this book is also known as Kousheetakee Brahmana which has minor difference in presenting the yaaga descriptions. Kousheetakee brahmana might have been written with minor modification by Maharshi Kousheetakee.

Yajurveda

Most important among the brahmanas of vedic literature is sathapatha brahmana. It is so called because it has hundred chapters. The sathapatha brahmana has two versions / recensions. One having 100 chapters belonging to Sukla Yajurveda and another having 104 chapters, belonging to Krishna Yajurveda. When it is systematically analyzed, one can get extensive information on the ancient history of India. In fact many Indian history books quote a lot from this brahmana text.

The 14 kaandas or sections of sathapatha brahmana are known as haviryajnam, ekapaadika, advaram, grahanamam, savam, ushasambharanam, hasthighatam, chiti, samchiti, agnirahasyam, ashtaadhyaayee, madhyamam, asvamedham and bruhadaaranyakam.

All these 14 kaandas have been classified into 438 brahmanas which are further divided into 7624 khandikas. There are 24,000 slokas (stanzas) using 768000 letters. (on the other hand Rigveda has only 10552 Riks / stanzas written using 397265 letters). Thus Satha patha brahmana is almost double in size compared to Rigveda. It is said that this book might have been composed around 3000 BC or so by Yajnavalkya Maharshi. This book is unique among the vedic literature because it is systematically composed using refined Sanskrit with all perfection. There may not be more than a few hundred people in the world who would have gone through the text. It's English translation is also available, which is a treasury of knowledge on ancient India, for the common man. The book has another recension known as kaanwa Sathapatha brahmana, belonging to the Kanwa sakha of Yajurveda. Probably the scholars belonging to the Kanwa sakha of Yajurveda might have added some more information to the former and might have rewritten the Sathapatha brahmana in 104 chapters. In Kanwa Sathapatha brahmana has 17 kandas which are distributed in 104 chapters. These many chapters are subdivided into 435 brahmanas and again subdivided into 6808 khandikaas. The number of kandas, chapters and khandikas has variation from the other Sathapatha brahmana. It is also said that Kanwa Sathapatha brahmana has better

clarity in subject presentation.

Kanwa Sathapatha brahmana has detailed descriptions of regions like Kosala, Kurupanchala Desa, Videha, Ayodhya, Mithila, and so on. It includes the history of many kings and kingdoms. What we know about Buddhism and Buddha has come from Sathapatha brahmana. We can also get the historical perspectives of the scientific and technological knowledge that existed then. Many stories like those of Dushyantha, Bharatha, Purooravas, Urvasi and so on are part of this book.

Thaithireeya brahmana of the Thaithireeya sakha of the Krishna Yajurveda has 24 chapters subdivided into prapaatakas and further divided in anuvaakaas. At the end come Thaithireeya aaranyaka and then the three major Upanishads known as Thaithireeya, Mahanaaraayana and Yaajnikee which give the essence of the Indian philosophy.

Maithrayaneeya brahmana, belongs to the Maithrayaneeya sakha of Yajurveda and it is not now available as full text. Similarly at the end of Maithraayaneeya brahmana comes the Maithraayaneeya aaranyaka and as a continuation of this comes the Maithraayaneeya Upanishad.

9b- Brahmanas (*continued*)

Sama Veda

There are eleven brahmanas in the Sama Veda. They are Thaandya brahmana, Jaimineeya brahmana, Upanishad brahmana, Devathaadhyaaya brahmana, Jaimineeyopanishad brahmana, Samhithopanishad brahmana Vamsabrahmana Aarsheya brahmana, Shadvimsa brahmana, Saamavidhaana brahmana and Chandogya brahmana.

Thandya brahmana is also known as panchavimsath (means 25) brahmana because it has 25 chapters. It is connected with the Kouthuma sakha of the Sama Veda. Each chapter of this massive brahmana has again been subdivided into khandas. This brahmana has elaborate explanations on all the type of yaagas performed by the vedic scholars belonging to the samaveda saakha. Here, various musical aspects of the samaveda are also given. More importance is given for their chanting in yaaga saala, as it is presumed that Vedic deities enjoy it. That is known as saama gaana aalaapanam in yaga sala. The tones, ragas, and chanting methods are entirely different during the yaaga performance. It is something unimaginable for anyone who has not hitherto heard such chanting.

This brahmana gives in detail the saama gaana chanting methods by the udgaata priests in yaagas. Udgaata word means those who are singing in a glorious way in yaaga saala. The priests coming under udgata group are known, in yaaga saala as prasthotha, pratihantaa and subrahmanya. Those who are coming under the advaryu class of priests who perform major rituals of yaagas are advaryu, pratiprasthotha, neshtri and unneti priests. Those who are coming under the hotru class of priests who also perform yaaga rituals with advaryu group priests are known as hota, maithraavaruna, acchavaaka and graavastut. The priests coming under the brahma class of priests who guide the whole yaaga karma are brahmanaachaamsi, agneedran and potha. Their roles are very specifically given in the Thaandya brahmana.

The next brahmana of sama veda is Jaimineeya brahmana which has three kaandas and each kaanda has further been subdivided into khandas. In these three kaandas various yaagas are

explained.

Upanishad brahmana is the third brahmana of Saama Veda which is said to be the part of the Jaimeeneeya brahmana itself and hence sometimes it is called Jaimineeyopanishad brahmana also. Unlike other brahmana texts, this book deals with the philosophical aspects like mantras and Rishi parampara. The clan of two great Rishi families are given in this book and also the greatness of the gaayatri mantra. As a continuation of this brahmana comes the Kenopanishad one among the major ten upanishads

Devathaadyaaya brahmana is the 4th brahmana of Sama Veda which has four khandas. Major part of this brahmana explains the vedic deities and their adoration given as samaveda sthuthy. It also gives the prosody / chandas of the Veda mantras. The sama gaana connected with the vedic deities like agni, indra, parajaapati, soma, varuna, twashtaa, aangeeras, pooshan etc are known as saraswatha saamam, indraagnisaamam, vasu-rudra-aadityasaamam and so on. The mother and father of each saama gaana are also explained which in Sanskrit is known maathru sthaana and pithru sthaana. Similarly there are prajaapati sthaana and devathaa sthaana for each saama Veda gaana (songs)

Jaimineeyopanishad brahmana: it is said that this brahmana is not the same as the above mentioned Jaimineeyopanishad brahmana by some scholars. May be that there is yet another brahmana in this name which differs from the above brahmana mentioned in the earlier paragraph. This brahmana has three chapters which explain the upanishadic subjects only.

Samhitopaniashd brahmana belonging to Sama Veda explains mainly the samaveda manthra /samhitha (text). Nothing connected with the yaagas are explained in this brahmana, and hence it is unique in its contents. There are five khandas /parts in this brahmana each khanda gives deep information on the philosophical aspects of sabda, Veda, sruti, raaga, gaana, samhita, upaasana of sama Veda and so on. The second khanda gives the rules of chanting sama Veda where srutis like sthobham, anuloma-pratiloma swaras, repha sandhi, uddattha, anudaattha, roha, abhigeeta, visarga, upagrahaa, hraswa, deergha, prasthaava varnaas, vyanjanaas are explained. The next khanda explains the qualities and qualifications of the teacher and students and the method of learning sama Veda under a scholarly guru. Fourth khandas explain about the daana (offering) materials to others and the merits of giving materials to poor /needy / and so on.

Vamsa brahmana is the Sixth brahmana of samaveda which also does not give explanations about yaagas. But it explains in three small khandas the names of the Rishies as their parampara/ hierarchical order. One set of example is given here. The hierarchy in this case is

sivadatta-gaargya- draahyaayana- nigada -paanavalkya- girisarama- mitravarchas- supratheetha-bruhaspati- bhavatraatha- saakaraakshya- sravanadata- kouhala- susaarada- saalankaayana-oupamanya- bhaanumatha- aanandaja- saama-madakaara- susrava- vaarshaganya-keturvaabhya- sunnetha and so on in that order from one generation to next.

These types of vamsaa paramparas are given in this brahmana. In the next two chapters also similar explanations on the vamsa parampara are given specifically from generation to generation for about fifty generations or even more. If we assume the life of each generation to be thirty years then fifty generations should account for around one thousand five hundred years!

9c- Brahmanas (continued)

Sama Veda (contd)

Arsheya brahmana is associated with sama Veda and there are two Arsheya brahmanas one is associated with Kouthumeeya sama Veda saakha and the other connected with Jaimineeya sakha. Both have many lines and messages in common, still they are two books with same name. There are five chapters which are further divided into khandas in this book. All the chapters give the descriptions of sama ganas connected with various vedic deities like Agni, Indra, and so on. It gives the mantras to be chanted as ooha gaanas, oohya gaanas, gramageya gaanas and aranyageya gaanas.

The next brahmana is shadvimsa brahmana. The word shad vimsa means 26th . It shows that this brahmana may be a separate one but a continuation of the pancha vimsa brahmana. It may be the 26th part of the pancha vimsa brahmana. There are five chapters in the shad vimsa brahmana. Unusually interesting and important descriptions of the sama gaana mantras are described in this book, which are connected with various yaagas and yajnas. Some of the great and very interesting sama gaana mantras are known as thrivrushasthoma, panchadasasthoma, saphthadasastghoma and so on. There are also descriptions connected with the origin of various mantras and deities in the sama Veda.

Samavidhaana brahmana is also connected with sama Veda which is unique among all the vedic literature. *This is the only book describing the yaagas and rituals connected with the soul leaving the body after death.* In short this brahmana gives the rituals connected the bhootha pretha moksha.

The last and important brahmana of Saama Veda is chaandogya brahmana having ten prapaatakas. This is said to be the last part of thaandya maha brahmana. *The first two prapaatakas of this brahmana describe the rituals to be performed by the family members, known as the Gruhastha karmas /acharas.* All other braahmanaas described hitherto, generally give the description of yaagas and yajnaas, but this is the only brahmana which gives a different subject, in the first part. The remaining eight prapaatakas / parts are the famous Upanishad known as the Chaandogya Upanishad. In the first two parts known as gruhastha karma part the rituals connected with the spiritual and ritual aspects of the marriage are described. Then the shodsa karmas (samskaraas/sacraments) like garbhaadhaana, pumsavana, seemanthonnayana, jaatha karma of the newly born baby, choodaakarna, nishkramana, upanayana etc of the baby are described in detail. In the second part the yaagas / rituals connected with the prosperity of the family are described. The gruhastha karmas mentioned above in two parts are also described in detail in the 268 sutras (messages) of Gobila gruhya sootra and ghaadira gruhyasutra. Since this brahmana was written earlier to the other gruhya sutras, it may be more appropriate to say that these 268 mantras of the of chaandogya Upanishad are also reproduced in the two gruhyasutras.

The remaining eight parts of this brahmana are the Chaandogya Upanishad which we shall be describing in detail when we discuss the Upanishads. Here, the order of arrangement of the books is Veda, brahmana and Upanishad. Same is applicable for Atharva Veda also. However for Rig Veda and Yajurveda the order is Veda, Brahmana, Aaranyaka and Upanishad. The aaranyaka subjects are given in the braahmanaas book itself and hence no separate aaranyaka is available for them. It is interesting to note that all these books are written, classified, described and presented in a very systematic method. None will get any confusion provided he/she knows from where he starts the learning process.

Atharva Veda

Subject matter wise the Gopatha Brahmana) may not be useful or very relevant for the 21st century, but *its contents throw light on the great scientific, technological, spiritual, psychological, social, geographical, (and so on) aspects of ancient India.* No other ancient book can be cited which gives such authentic information and references on ancient India (of course satha patha brahmana does this to a great extent). *For those who are searching for information on ancient India, this book is a unique source and is often quoted in many texts.*

Gopatha Brahmana is the only brahmana connected with Atharva Veda. It is perfectly organized in content and literary beauty. Gopatha word is said to have the meaning guptha = deep / secret and it also is said to have another meaning following the footsteps of Veda (Go means Vedas and patha means footsteps/ pathways). So gopatha means the footsteps of Vedas. It is as big as Rigveda and almost similar in size with the sathapatha brahmana. It has been divided into two parts. In the first part there are five prapaatakas which are known as poorva brahmana and in the second part there are six prapatakaas which are known as utara brahmana.

In the first part the greatness of Atharva Veda and that of the Atharva vedic Rishies have been explained. The method of learning and teaching Atharva Veda and practicing the messages of this veda are also given in the first few prapaatakas of the poorva brahmana. These prapaatakas are further divided into kaandas. As mentioned in other brahmanas, the rituals and customs connected with the Yaagaas and yajnaas are also explained in detail. In the same way yaagas and yajnaas are explained in the second part also (utara brahmana). Every aspect connected with social, psychological, spiritual and anthropological ..of the yajnaa are included in the explanation in Gopatha brahmana. A variety of great yaagas performed in our itihisas are explained in this book like putra kameshti, vaajapeya, aswamedha, pasu bandha etc.

10. Aranyakas

In the Brahmanas the subject matter was kamyeshaties which are meant for prosperity, wealth, power, and so on. In short these yaagas and yajnaas are for making life happy and prosperous for the family members, kings, village heads and also for great or rich men. But the next branch of Indian knowledge in Vedas is known as Aaranyakaas which describe how a retired person should lead his life in order to attain moksha or liberation.

Aaranyaka means 'that which is connected with forest'. They cover rituals which are to be performed by those who are going to vaana prastha after giving up the family life and handing over the responsibility of the family to the grown up children. While living in forest, many rituals are to be performed with the available materials in the forest. These rituals are not for name, fame or prosperity. They are meant for leaving the life happily (moksha) without any bondage. Hence they are known as moksheshti, the yaagas which lead for moksha or detachment. Here comes a discussion of various topics like philosophy, bondage or attachment, jnaana, bhakti, karma, dharma, Vedas, Upanishads, psychology, divinity, ultimate and relative truths, sensory organs, functional organs etc., associated with our life. These subjects are the part and parcel of Indian philosophy and hence lead to upanishadic knowledge through aaranyaka texts.

There are Rigvedic and Yajurvedic Aranyakaas. No Aaranyakas exist for Sama Veda and

Atharva Veda. However the subject of aaranyaka is dealt in the last part of many of the brahmanas of samaveda and also in the Gopatha brahmana of atharvaveda.

Rigvedeeya aaranyakas are aithareya aaranyaka and kousheetakee aaranyaka, Yajurvedeeya aaranyakas are maithraayaneeya aaranyaka and Thaithireeya aaranyaka. For the modern man, the aranyakas do not have much relevance, in the day to day life as they are meant for vaanaprasthaasrami and almost all the subject matters deal with yaagas. Still we are presenting the abstract of the aaranyakas exclusively for getting an outline of such type of literature, existing as a part of Vedas.

In the first part of this aranyaka at the end of the Aithareya aranyaka comes the Aithareya Upanishad, mahaitareya Upanishad and Bahvrucha Upanishad. In the second part of the Aithareya aranyaka comes the samhitanishad. All the subject matters in this aranyaka, as mentioned earlier are connected with philosophy of life and moksha. Even few stories also appear here and there to inform the significance of the philosophical approach in our day to day life. In the Kousheetakee aranyaka too major part of the explanations are connected with the spirituality and philosophy. Out of the 15 chapters in this Upanishads, 3 to 6 chapters are known as kousheetakee Upanishad. Rest of the Upanishad discusses about the philosophy. Very specifically speaking one can see an unusual subject in the 13th to 15th chapter of this book. They discuss about rain, lightening, celestial bodies and their rising and setting, etc.

Next we enter into the yajurvedeeya aranyaka. There are no aranyakas for the Sukla yajurveda. Maithraayaneeya aranyaka and thaithireeya aranyaka are the two aranyakas for the Krishna yajurveda. In the former, the first part discusses about the significance of the spiritual and sanyasa life by narrating the story of King Bruhadratha, who gave up all his belonging and country and went for sanyasa and attained moksha. The discussion between King Bruhadratha and Suni Sakaayana given in this book will be interesting for philosophy students. In the end of this aranyaka comes the maithraayaneeya Upanishad and maithreyee Upanishad. Thaithireeya aranyaka has almost full description of havans and sacrificial rituals to be performed by a vaanaprastee. Thaithireeya upanishad is the part of the thaithireeya aranyaka.

11. Upanishads

Now we are entering into the subject of Upanishads. Like several Geetas there are many Upanishads. It is said that now there are more than 600 Upanishads. Some of them are very recent like Ramakrishnupanishad, Sai Upanishad, Kraistavopanishad, Alla Upanishad and so on! But the classical Upanishads are 108 as recorded in other literature like Mukthiko Upanishad itself and here we are concerned only with them

Upanishad means accompanying nearer: *upa* means nearer and *nishad* leading or accompanying. Nearer means closer to the ultimate truth and reality. Since this branch of Vedic literature comes at the end of Vedic literature, we say Upanishads are Vedantas which means the *antham* of Vedas (end of Vedas). There are 10 Upanishads for Rig Veda, 19 for Sukla Yajurveda, 32 for Krishna Yajurveda, 16 for Sama veda and 31 for Atharva Veda.

The 108 Vedic Upanishads

We reproduce here the list of 108 classical Upanishads. The dashopanishads in this list are highlighted

Rigvedeeya: **Aaitareya**, Kousheethakee, Naada Bindu, Aathma Bhodha, Nirvaana, Mulgala, Akshamaalika, Tripura, Soubhaagya Lakshmi, Bahvrucha. (Total Ten)

Sukla Yajurvedeeya: **Eesaavasya**, **Bruhadaaranyaka**, Hamsa, Parama Hamsa, Subaala, Manthrika, Thrisikhi Braahmana, Niraalamba, Mandala Braahmana, Advaya, Thaaraka, Bhikshuka, Adhyaathma, Muktika, Thaarasaara, Yajnavalkya, S'aatyaaayana, Thuriyaatheetha Avadhootha (Total Eighteen)

Krishna Yajurvedeeya: **Katha**, **Thaithireeya**, Brahma, Kaivalya, Swethaaswethara, Garbha, Mahanaaraayana, Amruthabindu, Amruthanaada, Kaalaagnirudra, Kshurika, Sarvasaara, Sukarahasya, Thejobindu, Dhyaana Bindu, Brahavidya, Yogathathwa, Dakshinaamoorthy, Skanda, Saareerika, Yogasikha, Ekaakshara, Akshi, Avadhootha, Katarudra, Rudrahrudaya, Panchabrahma, Praanaagni Hotra, Varaaha, Yogakundalini, Kalisantharana, Saraswathee Rahasya (Total Thirty Two)

Saamavedeeya: **Kena**, **Chaandokhya**, Aarunee, Maithraayanee, Maithreyee, Vajrasoochika, Yogachoodaamony, Vasudeva, Mahopanishad, Sanyaasa, Avyakta, Kundika, Saavitri, Jaabaala, Darsana, Rudraaksha Jaabaala (Sixteen)

Atharvavedeeya: **Prasna**, **Mundaka**, **Maandukya**, Atharvas'ira, Atharvas'ikha, Bruhadjaabaala,, Seetha, S'arabha, Mahaanarayana, Raamarahasya, Ramathaapini, S'aandilya, Paramahamsa, Annapoorna, Soorya, Aathma, Paas'upatha, Parabrahma, Thripurathaapini, Devi, Bhaavana, Bhasma, Ganapati, Mahaavakya, Gopalathaapini, Sreekrishna, Hayagreeva, Datthathreya, Garuda, Narasimhapoorva Thaapini, Narasimha Uttara Thapini, Naarada Parivraajaka (Thirty Two)

Dashopanishads

Out of 108 Upanishads the most important are 10 Upanishads which are known as Dashopanishads. These Upanishads became the most important ones, as these were the ten Upanishads for which Adi Shankara wrote commentaries. Generally if one reads these, the Vedantic concepts of Atman and Brahman, Jagat and Viswam, and their inter-relationships become clear

- a. Aitareya Upanishad of Rigveda.
- b. Ishavasya Upanishad of Yajurveda.
- c. Kathopanishad of Yajurveda.
- d. Taittiriya Upanishad of Yajurveda.
- e. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad of Yajurveda.
- f. Kenopanishad of Samaveda.
- g. Chhandogya Upanishad of Samaveda.
- h. Prashnopanishad of Atharvaveda.
- i. Mundakopanishad of Atharvaveda.

j. Mandukya Upanishad of Atharvaveda.

Each class of Upanishad has a separate saanthi mantra which is chanted in the beginning of the Upanishad. Thus

- Rig Vedic Upanishads start with om vaang me manasi prathishtithaa...,
- Sukla Yajurveda Upanishads start with the saanthi mantra om poorna matha poorna midam, poornath..
- Krishna Yajurveda Upanishads start with om saha naa vavathu saha now bhunaakthu...
- Saama Veda Upanishads start with om apyaayanthu mamaangaani vaak prana schakshu..
- Atharva Veda Upanishads start with bhadram karnebhi srunyaama devaa.

From the saanthi mantra itself one can understand, to which Veda that particular Upanishad belongs to.

Upanishad are the essence of Hindu dharma. They do not have any religion, and are based purely on perceptions of ultimate truths. Their contents are beyond, caste, religion, linguistic, regional, national, demarcations or separations. They never advocate us to do anything by compulsion, they only give the message. These messages integrate the philosophy, science, sociology, anthropology and many types of knowledge including the latest subject of awareness and consciousness which are being studied today in physics as well as medicine. They also focus on the mind, jnaanendriyas, karmendriyas, and their functioning in experiencing various aspects of life.

The subjects dealt with by Upanishads are vast and hence it will not be possible to describe each Upanishad separately. Excellent commentaries are available on the Dashopanishads. If there is sufficient interest I shall write a short commentary on the other Upanishads after Dr Gopalakrishnan completes this series. Meanwhile I shall put all the instalments in a single file so that readers can save it and use it as a reference when required.