

Roots

Written by
Kadambi Srinivasan



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ROOTS

By

Kadambi Srinivasan

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Foreword

A book takes good structure when the author puts his ideas in a proper, sequential and standard way. Here is a book for readers of all ages which enhances the thirst to know about the Indian's Ancient living and their contributions to the fields of Philosophy, Mathematics, Astronomy, Medicine, Surgery, Plastic surgery, Veterinary science, Economics, Political science, Education, Literature, Poetry, Drama, so on and so forth. Our ancestors had a unique and distinct identity in the fields of Medicine, Mathematics, Geometry, Astronomy and Logic. The entire world has accepted that the Indian civilization and its literature dates back to the earliest period of History. In spite of this, Indians are ignoring the original quality and quantity of the 'Medha' or 'Intellect' of their ancestors. A friend shot a question to the author about "What have the Indians been doing?" To counteract the oral question the author has answered in a factual written form- "I chose to unfold the various facets of Vedic culture including their literature, their philosophy, their learning etc. The entire book has been written with that question in focus".

The author has compiled the information collected from different sources from the time of Vedas to 15th Century A.D. In spite of such an industrious study, the author humbly says that this book represents just the tip of an iceberg. He also states that there is a large scope for an extensive in-depth research in this context. He submissively opines that- 'A pride should be apparent on every Indian's face befitting our cultural background'. The Author's statement influences my senses to think over it. His valuable ideas are appreciable. I am immensely happy to bring this book to the vision of the public. I also urge the readers to think widely to implement certain ideas as a supplement to their life style, because India's glory has attracted the entire world and it is on its journey even today.

The author, belonging to the field of Physics and Instrumentation has put forth his best knowledge related to Philosophy and Theism. I wish him all the best and also hope that his dreams come true.

In the service of lord venkateswara

Executive Officer,
Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams,
Tirupati.

About the book

Work on this book started almost eight years back during the winter of 2006. I was having tea with a group of my friends at Chennai. The conversations slowly turned towards ancient civilizations. A friend of mine had just returned after a holiday in Egypt. He was very impressed with what he saw and what he heard. He told us about the Pharaonic antiquities and the treasures of King Tutankhamen. Suddenly he turned to all of us listening to him and shot a question – in contrast what have the Indians been doing?

I felt as if he has slapped us. What have the Indians done? Sitting on their hands?

Where shall I begin? Their contributions in Philosophy, literature, poetry, drama, education, Mathematics, Astronomy, Medicine, Surgery, Plastic surgery, Veterinary science, Economics, Political science – the list just goes on.

Gone is the old idea of an Aryan invasion. In its place, the world is accepting a continuity of Indian civilization and its literature dating back to the earliest period of history. The work done by the ancient Indian scholars in the fields of Medicine, mathematics, geometry, Astronomy and logic are being recognized to be among the earliest the world has seen. While trying to answer the question of “what have the Indians been doing?” I decided not to go by a statistical route. Plenty of information to engage in a lively argument is already available. I believe, that the way in which we visualize any particular thing is based on the outlook we entertain in respect of that thing. Usually we do not have a comprehensive idea of most of the things in this world. When we think about a subject we regard it with some blinkers limiting our vision of that subject, whereby we tend to ignore other aspects which also go to have a strong bearing on the subject. While trying to answer the question “what have the Indians been doing”, to get a more comprehensive idea, I chose to unfold the various facets of Vedic culture including their literature, their philosophy, their learning etc. The entire book has been written with that question in focus.

Slowly, the world has started accepting the Indian civilization to be the earliest leading the rest of the world in spiritual, material and scientific progress.

“India was the motherland of our race, and Sanskrit the mother of Europe’s languages; she was the mother of our philosophy; mother through Arabs of much of our mathematics; mother through Buddha of ideals embodied in Christianity; mother through village community, of self-government and democracy; mother India is in many ways is the mother of us all.” - Will Durant; American Historian (1885-1981)

What I could present in this book represents just the tip of an iceberg. Will Durant was correct in stating that India was the mother, not just of philosophy, but a majority of other subjects as well. India's glory was not like a wick that shone for brief period and then got extinguished. It shone for thousands of years shedding light on a number of subjects. In fact, the knowledge it spread, in many instances, was not limited to people within the boundary of Bharat Varsha, but to the entire world. Bhagavad Gita is a typical example. The concept of zero in the counting of numbers is another. And there are many others as well.

In this book I tried to present available information from different sources. The period covered included from the time of the Vedas up to the 15th century AD. Greatest challenge faced was in fixing the dates. More work needs to be done by our scholars in this context.

During ancient times the teaching was done at the Ashrams of the sage. These Ashrams were located far away from the cities. Students, all Brahmacharins, lived at the Ashrams. Subjects were not taught in modules or by a semester system. Typically, the students were taught eighteen Vidyas –Four Vedas, six Vedangas, two Mimamsas, one Nyaya and one Puranas / other scriptures; Along with this, four other vidyas are also taught. Ayurveda (1); Dhanurveda (1); Gandharva Veda (1); Artha Shastra (1). This brings the total of vidyas taught equal to 18. It is my wish to bring about in this book, if not entirely (some of the vidyas were not touched upon, to keep the book within reasonable size), an atmosphere of comprehensive learning available at the Guru Kulas in ancient India.

I don't believe the aberration that my friend suffered was an isolated case. It has to be accepted that the knowledge of general public regarding our literature, our contributions has thinned out. I am not for a moment suggesting that the current education / knowledge should be replaced by ancient learning. On the contrary, the current learning should supplement what we have achieved over the many years. A pride should be apparent on every Indian's face befitting our cultural background.

I hope this book serves to remind the readers of our contributions in different fields

Kadambi Srinivasan
June 2014.
Sydney

Acknowledgements

Projects of any type are seldom solo efforts. Writing a book has entered into this category. Behind the name of the author stand a team of individuals, some of them technical experts, trying to make the book an acceptable product. In this case it is no different.

My immediate advisors are from my own family – my wife Vedavalli, son Ashwin and daughter Anusha. In addition my advisory group included my sister Ms Jayalakshmi Chary, Sujatha, her husband Gopal, Dr. Saroja Srinivasan, my brother Lakshmi Narasimha and his wife Vijaya. Observations, comments and advice from time to time were utilised for course corrections and presentation changes. Their contributions have been invaluable and gratefully accepted.

My friend Ranganathan Narayan read almost all the manuscripts. His comments and encouragement are being gratefully accepted. Ms Nikita Sharma did enormous work in getting the documentation in order. Without her help I could not have completed this work. I am grateful for her help.

I now come to a couple who made it all possible -my brother, Lakshmi Narasimha and his wife Vijaya. Right from the moment they had a look at the book they were convinced that it deserved publication. From that time onwards, the management of the project was entirely in their hands. It is rarely that one witnesses such a dedication and intensity of effort. Without their help, it is doubtful whether I could have got the book published.

Mr V.K. Agrawal, IAS read the manuscript and gave some valuable advice. I remain grateful for the encouragement he gave in getting this book published.

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Chapter – I Hindu Scriptures & Sanskrit Literature

Introduction

Three religions are regarded as the oldest having come down to us from pre-historic times. They are Hinduism, Zoroastrianism and Judaism. Sanskrit, as defined by Panini, is the classical Sanskrit which evolved from the earlier Vedic Sanskrit. Vedic Sanskrit is the language of the Vedas consisting of Samhitas, Brahmanas and Upanishads. The metrical hymns of the Rig Veda Samhita are regarded as the earliest composed by man.

Prof. Max Muller while recording the first voice on a Gramophone chose the first Shloka of Rig Veda "Agni Meele Purohitam". He proceeded to explain the reason for his choice - "Vedas are the oldest text of the human race. And Agni Meele Purohitam is the first verse of Rig Veda. In the most primordial time, when the people did not know how even to cover their bodies and lived by hunting and housed in caves, Indians had attained high civilization and they gave the world universal philosophies in the form of the Vedas."

There are two important aspects about the Vedas - (a) Hindus regard that the Vedas have been received through revelation. It was not written by any man (Apaurusheya); and (b) The Vedas are without a beginning and end.

How is it possible? Swami Vivekananda explains. "By the Vedas no books are meant. They mean the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws discovered by different persons at different times. Just as the law of gravitation existed before its discovery, and would exist if all humanity forgot it, so is it with the laws that govern the spiritual world. The moral, ethical, and spiritual relations between soul and soul and between individual spirits and the Father of all spirits, were there before their discovery, and would remain even if we forgot them". The name given to the discoverers of these laws was "Kavi". The Vedas described them as *kavayah satyasrutah* meaning seers who were the hearers of the truth. The Veda itself was called Shruti meaning revealed scripture. The sage who had a direct intuitional perception is called *Sakshath Krutha Rishi*. The sage who heard it from his Guru and remembered it is called *Shrutha Rishi*.

Veda have been divided into *Karma Kanda* (section of works and rituals) and *Jnana Kanda* (section of knowledge) the former associated with the hymns and the later with the *Upanishads*. European scholars took up the ritualistic tradition and went on to make their own etymological explanation of the words resulting in arbitrary meaning for Vedic verses. In fact, what they were looking for in *Veda* was the early history of India, its society, institutions – in short a picture of the times. They then invented the theory (based on the difference of languages) of an Aryan invasion from the north, and an invasion of the *Dravidian* India. The Indians themselves had no memory of such invasions and there were no records of such events in their classical

literature. Yet, this appears to have persuaded the minds of some Indians in favour of this view. All this resulted in a chaos and a mutilation of dates of historical events. As Aurobindo puts it “the Vedic religion was on this account only a worship of Nature-Gods full of solar myths and consecrated sacrifices and a sacrificial liturgy primitive enough in its ideas and contents, and it is barbaric prayers that are the much vaunted, haloed and apotheosized Veda”. And we were left to trace our civilization and ancestors from among the ruins at Mohenjo Daro and Harappa. In recent years, Indian scholars have started work on the scientific dating of various events described in our Puranas. The Rishis, the poet seers of Veda, were men with a great spiritual and occult knowledge not shared by ordinary men. Among this enlightened group, there are a number of Rishikas (female Rishis) as well. Still the task is unfinished. To be revealed is one thing, to preserve it and pass it on is quite another thing. The mantras acquire their powers by virtue of their acoustic energy of the syllables (*Shabda*). In addition, correct sequence of words, purity of the language, exact pronunciation of the words, precise stress on syllables, measured pause between syllables, appropriate tone, accent, modulation and pitch of recitation, proper breath control etc are very critical. In the case of written texts comparisons may be carried out much more easily. How can you devise a system to control the requirements of Vedic texts? In addition the requirement for memorising the entire Vedic texts existed. The Ashrams of the Rishis served as the learning centres and they were located in forests. And maintaining large libraries was impracticable.

Oral Tradition

Systems have been devised to meet this challenge. It is astounding that large volumes of *Vedic texts were preserved* by oral tradition for over thousands of years, safeguarding their purity and entirety. *Svaadhyaya*, the oral tradition, by which Vedas have been preserved, emphasizes the preservation of actual sound of the Vedas over their meaning and interpretation! Careful thought and planning have gone into devising methods to achieve the desired results. Oral methods have been around in other parts of the world as well but rarely has any other oral tradition been so venerated and so well preserved as the Vedic tradition.

Rishi Veda Vyasa categorised and compiled four Vedas so that they are more amenable to study and memorise. The task of preserving and perpetuating each branch of Veda in its entirety and purity was assigned to a specified Shakha (branch). The followers of each Shakha, identified as *Shakhins* of that particular Vedic school, were responsible for preserving their assigned part of Veda. Followers of each Shakha would learn and preserve one of the four Samhitas along with their associated Brahmana, Aranyaka, Upanishads and the Sutras such as *Grhyasutra* and *Shrautasutra*. Today only a small number of *Shakhas* have survived- among them are *Sakala* and *Bhaskala*. *Siksha*, one of the six Vedangas that dealt with phonetics and phonology of Sanskrit laid down the rules for correct pronunciation of

Vedic Hymns and *Mantras*. Along with this, several patterns of Vedic chants were devised to ensure complete and perfect memorization of the text and its pronunciation including the Vedic pitch, accent. These patterns called *Pathaas* ensured correct recital of the Veda mantra by weaving the mantras into various patterns and complex combinations of patterns. There are eleven acknowledged patterns or *Pathaas* Viz. *Samhita* or *vakhyaa*, *padaa*, *krama*, *jataa*, *maala*, *Sikhaa*, *rekhaa*, *dhvajaa*, *dandaa*, *rathaa* and *Ghana*. For illustration, salient features of a few *Pathaas* are given below

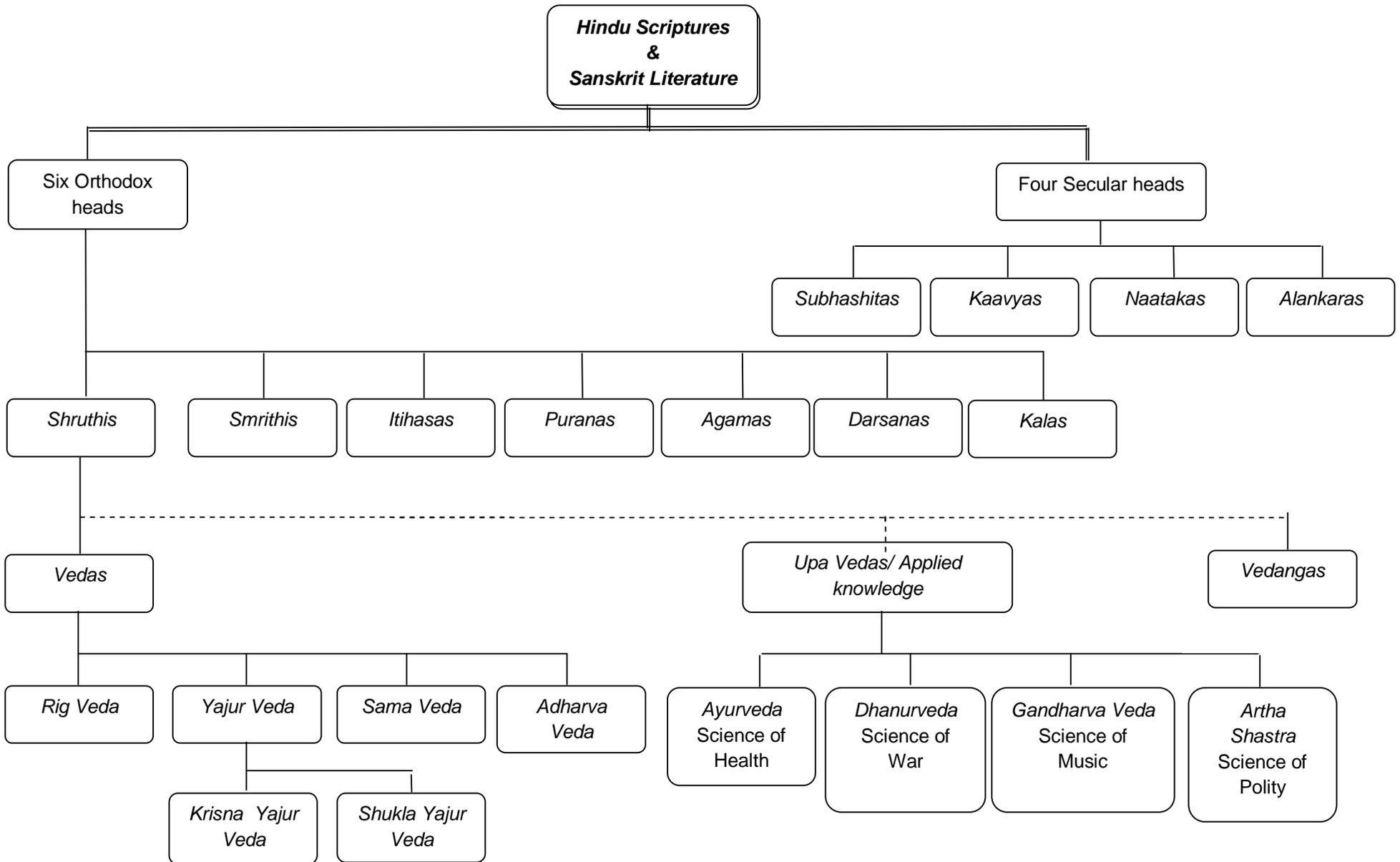
(a) *Krama Paathaa*: The first word of the mantra is added to the second, the second to the third, the third to the fourth and so on, until the whole sentence of the mantras is completed. The order of words will be 1-2; 2-3; 3-4; 4-5 and so on.

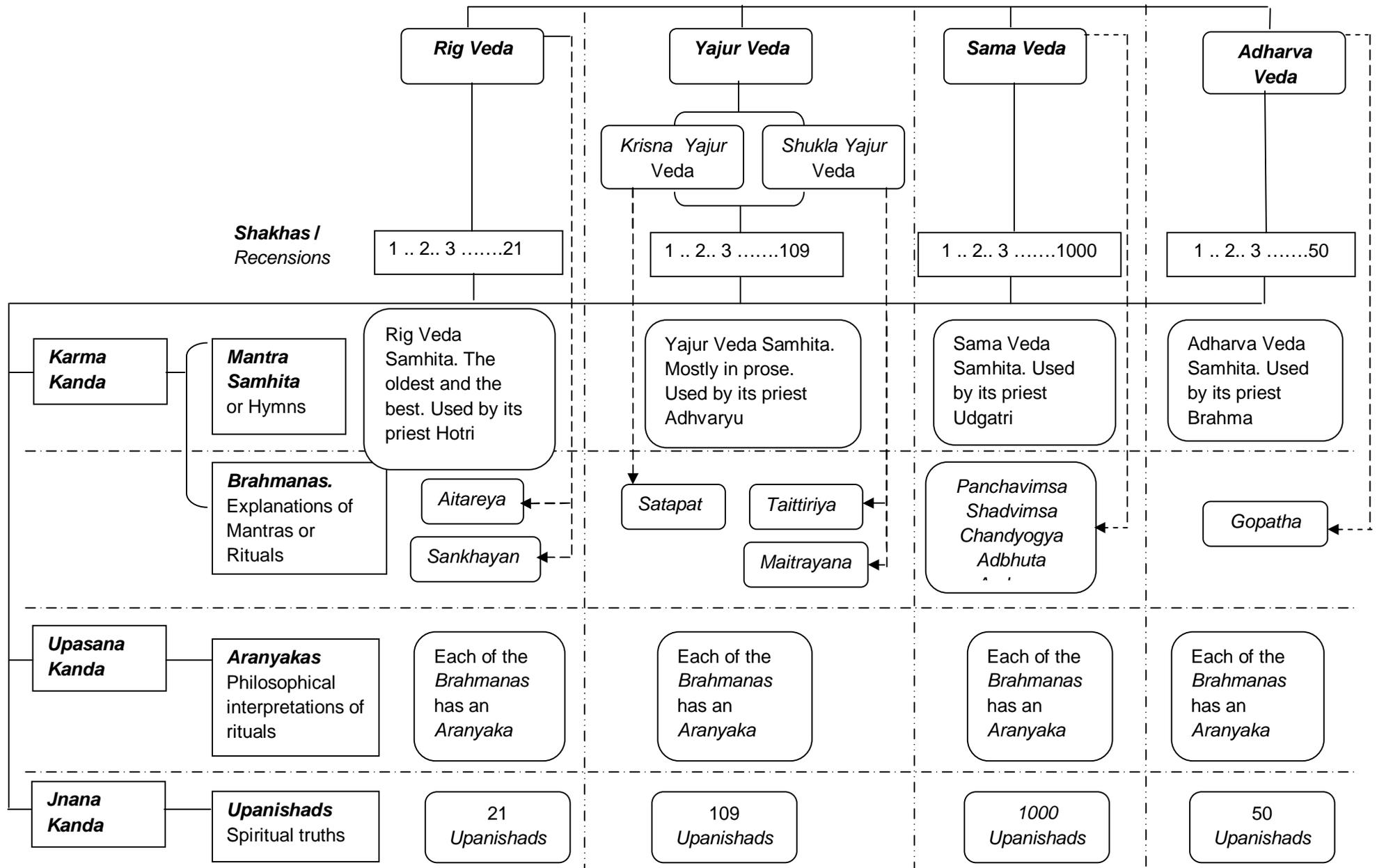
(b) *Jata Paathaa*: the first two words are recited together and then the words are recited in a reverse order and then again in the original order. *Jata Paathaa* is a play by twisting the *Krama Paatha*: The order will be 1-2-2-1-1-2; 2-3-3-2-2-3; 3-4-4-3-3-4; 4-5-5-4-4-5 and so on

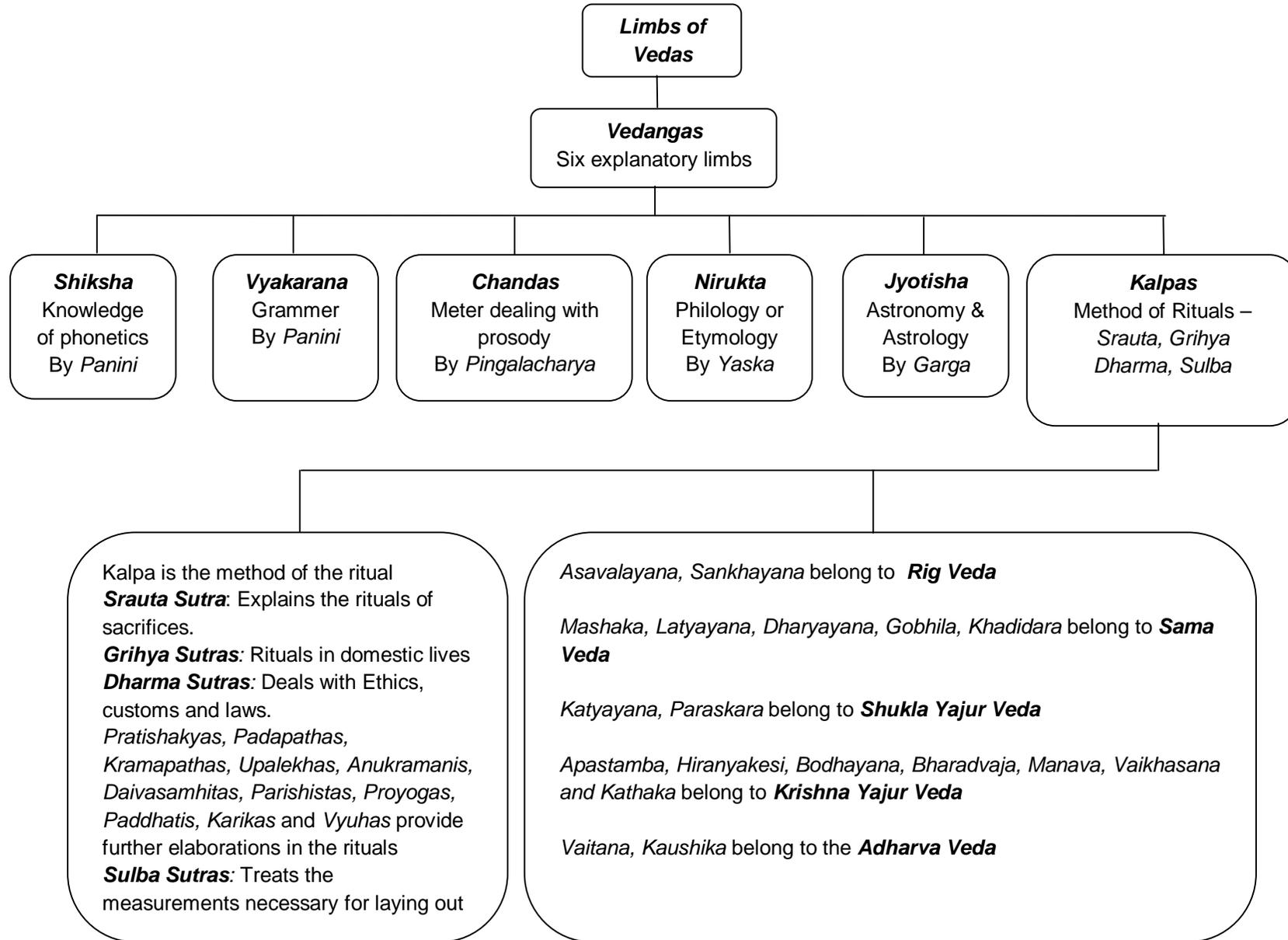
(c) *Ghana Paathaa*: This is one of the most popular form of recitations and requires years of learning and practice. A scholar proficient in recitation in this format is honoured as *Ghana_ paathi*. In *Ghana Paathaa* the combination will be: 1-2-2-1-1-2-3-3-2-1-1-2-3; 2-3-3-2-2-3-4-4-3-2-2-3-4; 3-4-4-3-3-4-5-5-4-3-3-4-5 and so on

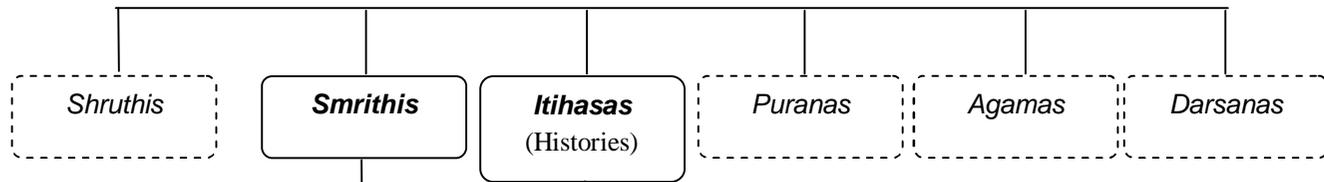
By applying these stringent methods of learning and complicated patterns of recital, each generation committed to memory long passages of its assigned texts through incessant practice. This oral heritage spread over a number of years, ensured that the form and content of the texts were retained in their pristine condition. It was transmitted, orally, to the next generation. This was how the Vedic texts were retained in oral form, uncorrupted, over the centuries.

Apart from the Vedas, ancient Sanskrit literature had a number of other manuals dealing with a variety of topics guiding individuals and societies to lead healthy and meaningful lives. The chart given below gives a brief summary of what was available. Foreign invasions and changing times have taken a heavy toll. Sanatana Dharma has been there for 1000s of years. During these years it has faced many challenges and yet it is still there. It is still relevant. I am confident that it will survive the current crisis and continue to offer guidance to its followers.





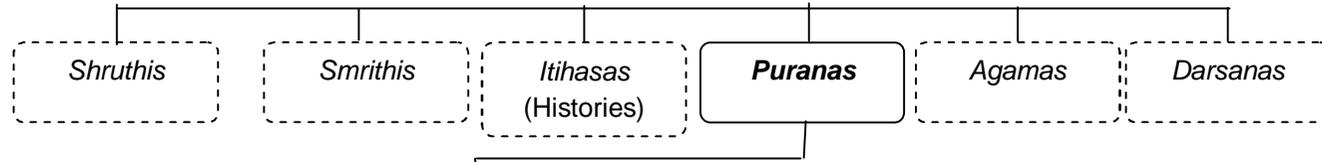




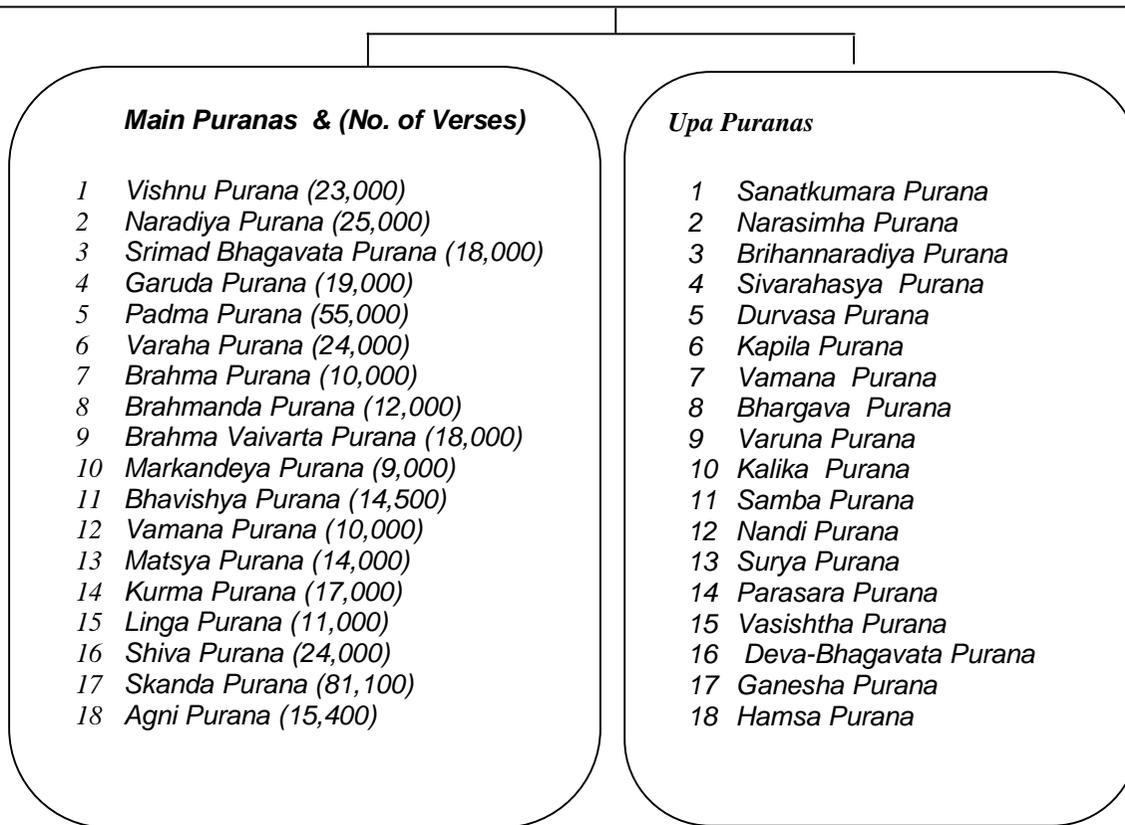
There are 18 main *Smrithis* or *Dharma Shastras*.
 The most important are of *Manu, Yajnavalkya and Parashara*.
 The other 15 are – *Vishnu, Daksha, Samvarta, Vyasa, Harita, Satatapa, Vasishtha, Yama, Apastamba, Gautama, Devala, Sankha-Likhita, Usana, Atri and Saunaka*

1. *Smrithis* are secondary scriptures – next in importance to the *Shruthis*
2. *Shruthi* means what is heard. *Smrithi* means what is remembered. The former is a revelation and the later a tradition. The former is a direct experience by the great *Rishis*. The later a recollection of that experience.
3. *Upanishad* is *Shruti*. *Bhagavad –Gita* is a *Smrithi*
4. *Smrithis or Dharma Shastras* are written by sages.
5. *Shruthi* is considered as the final authority. If there is anything in the *Smrithi* that contradicts the *Shruthi*, then the *Smrithi* is rejected
6. *Smrithis* are the ancient sacred law codes of the Hindus. They supplement and explain the ritualistic injunctions called *Vidhis* in the *Vedas*. *Smrithis* are based on the teachings of the *Vedas*.
7. *Smrithis* have laid down definite rules and laws to guide individuals and communities in their daily conduct and regulate their manners and customs. The *Smrithis* have given detailed instructions, according to the conditions of the time, to all classes of men regarding their duties in life. The duties of *Varnashrama* and all ceremonies are clearly given in these books. The object of the *Smrithis* is to purify the heart of the man and lead him gradually to the supreme abode of immortality.
8. From time to time, a great law-giver would take his birth. He would codify the existing laws and remove those that have become obsolete. He would make alterations, adaptations, readjustments, additions to suit the needs of the time and ensure the way of living of the people would be in accordance with the teachings of the *Vedas*. Of such law givers, *Manu, Yajnavalkya and Parashara* are the most celebrated. We thus have *Manu Smrithi, Yajnavalkya Smrithi, and Parashara Smrithi*
9. The laws of *Manu* are intended for the *Satya Yuuga*. Those of the *Yajnavalkya* are for the *Treta Yuuga*. Those by *Sankha and Likhita* are for the *Dwapara Yuuga*. Those of *Parashara* are meant for the *Kali Yuuga*.

- Ramayana
- Mahabharata
- Hari Vamsa
- Yoga Vasishtha

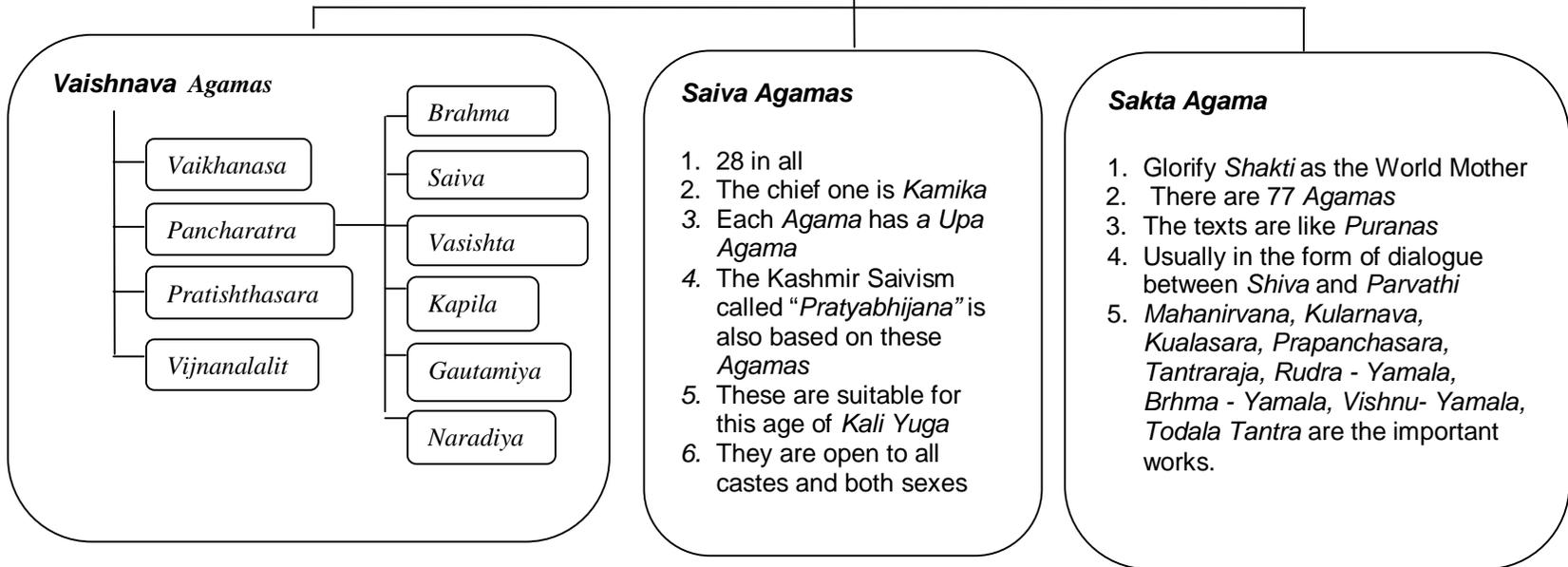


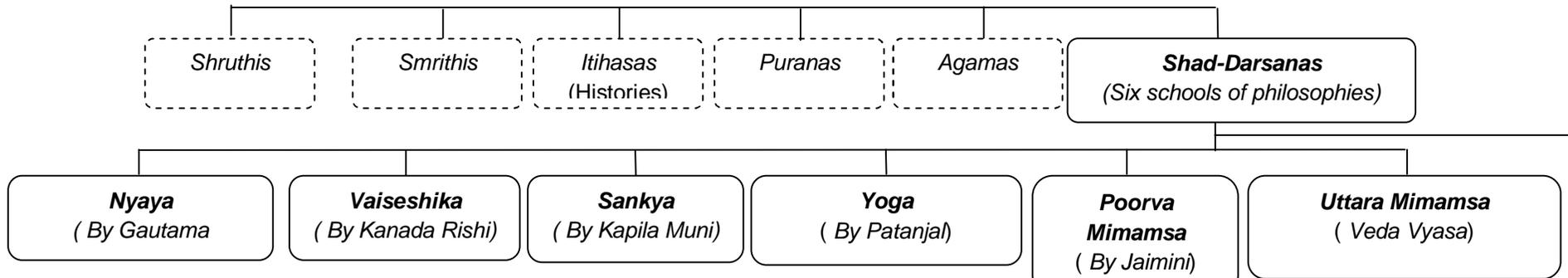
Same class as *Itihasas*. There are 18 Main *Puranas* – all written by *Veda Vyasa*. There are an equal number of *Upa Puranas* (*Sub- Puranas*). *Srimad Bhagavata Purana* and the *Vishnu Purana* are well known. A portion of the *Markandeya Purana* is well known as *Devi Mahatmtya*. The divine *Lilas* of Lord *Shiva* are recorded in Tamil *Puranas* like *Shiva Purana*, *Periya Purana*, *Shiva Parakramam* and *Tiruvilayadal Purana*. The language of the *Vedas* is difficult to grasp and assimilate. *Puranas* present philosophical truths and precious teachings in an easier manner for common people



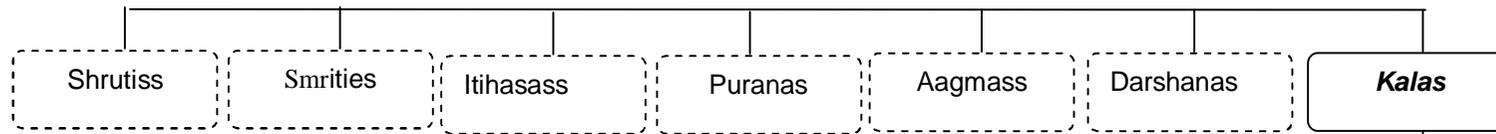


The Agamas are theological treatises and practical manuals of Divine worship. They include Tantras, Mantras and Yantras. They explain external worship of God in Idols, temples etc. All the Agamas treat of (1) Jnana or knowledge (2) Yoga or concentration (3) Kriya or esoteric ritual (4) Charya or worship. They also give details on temple building, image making etc. The Agamas are divided into 3 sections – (a) Vaishnava (b) Shaiva (c) Shakta. The Vaishnava or Pancharatra Agamas glorify God as Maha Vishnu. The Shaiva Agamas glorify God as Maha Shiva. The Shakta Agamas or Tantras glorify the God as the Mother of the Universe _ Devi .The Agamas do not derive their authority from the Vedas but are not antagonistic to them. They are all Vedic in Spirit and Character. For this reason they are considered authoritative





1. *Itihasas*, *Puranas* and *Agamas* are meant for the masses. *Darsanas* form the intellectual section of the *Hindu* writing. *Darsanas* are schools of philosophy based on the *Vedas*. They are meant for scholars having excellent powers of understanding, acute acumen, power of reasoning, subtle intellect and a very good understanding of the *Vedas*.
2. The philosophy has six divisions. Hence, it is called *Shad Darsana* – six different schools of thought. Each school has developed and systematized various parts of *Vedas* its own way. Each system has its own *Sutrakara* – a great *Rishi* who has systematized the doctrines of the school and put them in short aphorisms or *Sutras*.
3. The *Sutras* are short and terse. The *Sutras*, themselves, are very difficult to understand without the help from great teachers and *Rishis*. Thus, there arose a number of eminent commentators are *Bhashyakaras*, who in turn produced commentaries on the original commentaries.
A *Sutra* or an aphorism refers to a very short and terse statement (without any ambiguity at all) embracing all the meanings and containing the complete essence of a large volume of knowledge. They are to be kept in memory at all times.
4. The six *Darsanas* are divided into 3 pairs – to help explain the philosophy of the *Vedas* in a rationalistic manner. *Nyaya* and *Vaiseshika* form the first pair, *Sankhya* and *Yoga* the second pair, *Mimamsa* and *Vedanta* the third pair.
5. *Panini* composed *Ashtadhyayi*, the greatest and perfect of all *Sutra* literature. *Panini* is regarded as the father of all *Sutrakaras*.
6. The six *Vedangas* along with *Shad Darsanas* constitute the 12 sets of core *Sutra* literature. The others are, later compositions like *Narada Bhakti Sutras*, *Shandilya Bhakti Sutras* etc
7. Each of the *Sutras*, are supported by – a) *Bhashya* (b) *Vritti* (c) *Varttika* (d) *Vyakhyana* (or *Tikka*) (e) *Tippani*
 - (a) *Bhashya* is an elaborate exposition or commentary with word by word meaning of the aphoristic precepts together with the individual views of the commentator or *Bhashyakara*. The best and exemplary *Bhashya* in *Sanskrit* literature is the one by *Patanjali* on the *Vyakarana Sutras* of *Panini*. *Patanjali* is regarded as the father of *Bhashyakaras*. Other highly regarded ones are – *Bhashya* on *Mimamsa Sutra* by *Sabara-Swamin*, *Bhashyas* on *Brahma Sutra* by *Jagadguru Shankaracharya* and that by *Sri Ramanujacharya*.
 - (b) *Vritti* is a short gloss explaining the aphorisms in a more elaborate way, but not as elaborately as the *Bhashya*. *Bodhayana's Vritti* on *Brahma Sutra* is an example.
 - (c) *Varttika* is a critical study on the *Bhashya* highlighting the imperfections and ways of making it better. Notable *Varttikas* are - *Katyayana's* on *Panini Sutras*, *Sureshwara's* on *Shankara's Upanishad Bhashya* and *Kumarila Bhatta's* on *Sabara Bhashya*.
 - (d) *Vyakhyana* or *Tikka* is a running explanation in an easier language of what has been said in the original *Darsana* or *Bhashya*. *Vachaspati Mishra's* work on *Darsanas* and *Shankara's Brahma Sutra Bhashya* is an example.
 - (e) *Tppani* is very similar to *Vritti* but less orthodox. It gives explanations of difficult words or phrases in the original. *Kaiyata's*



A brief overview of some of the Sciences that existed and covered by Vedas is given below –

1. *Akshara Laksha*: By Sage *Valmiki*. Subjects such as mathematics, geometry, algebra, trigonometry, mineralogy, hydels are said to have been treated. . This work comprehends earlier discoveries by Sage Kashyapa, Ganapati, Soorya, Brihaspati, Jaimini, Hanuman and others
2. *Shabda Shastra*: By *Kandika Rishi*. Deals with sound, its measurement, and methods of mechanically rereproducing them.
3. *Lakshana Shastra*: By Shaktayana. Science of determining sex
4. *Shakuna Shastra*: By Sage *Garga*. Deals with omens – good and bad effects from sounds of birds, words of human beings
5. *Shilpa Shastra*: By sage Kashyapa. Handles the constructions of temples, palaces, halls etc. Earlier writers on the subject were – *Vishwakarma, Maya, Maruti*.
6. *Malinee Shastra*: By sage *Rishyashringa*. Deals with flower arrangements garlands, bouquets, hair-do's in various styles for women, writing love messages on flower petals etc are said to have been included
7. *Supa shastra*: By *Sukesa*. Deals with the science of cooking. It is said, more than 3000 dishes for people living in different parts of the world have been described.
8. *Science of Kala or Time*: By *Lord Kartikeya*. Division of time into definite periods, auspicious and in-auspicious moments etc are said to have been handled.
9. *Samudrika Lakshana*: By *Samudra Raja*. Topics handled are –Oceanography, living under and above sea
10. *Dhatuvada*: By *Ashwini Kumaras*. The subject of metallurgy.
11. *Visha Shastra*: By *Ashwini Kumaras*. The subject of 32 kinds of poisons, their properties, preparation, effects and antidotes are handled.
12. *Chitrakarma shastra* : By *Bhima*. Deals with the science of drawings.
13. *Malla Shastra*: Deals with gymnastics and Sports
14. *Ratna Pariksha*: By sage *Vatsyayana*. Handles the subject of testing gems
15. *Artha Shastra*: By sage *Vyasa*. Handles wealth creation and accumulation
16. *Yantras*: By sage *Bharadwaja*. Deals vehicles for transportation – by lands, boats and ships
17. *Mahendrajala*: By *Veerabahu* (serves Lord *Kartikeya*). The science of Magic

4 Secular heads

Subhashitas

Kaavyas

Naatakas

Alankaras

1. *Subhashitas* refer to wise sayings, instructions or stories in prose or poetry.
2. Notable ones are –
- *Bhartrihari's Subhashitas*
 - *Somadeva Bhatta's Katha Sarit Sagara*
 - *Kshemendra's Brihat-Katha-Manjari*
 - *Panchatantra*
 - *Hitopadesa*

1. *Kaavyas* refer to highly scholarly compositions in poetry, prose or both
2. Notable among the Poetical *Kaavyas* are -
 - *Kalidasa's Raghuvamsa and Kumara Sambhava*
 - *Bharavi's Kiratarjuniya*
 - *Magha's Sisupala Vadha*
 - *Sri Harsh's Naishada*
3. Notable among the Prose *Kaavyas* are -
 - *Bhattabana's Kadambari and Harshacharita*
4. Notable among those containing both Poetry and Prose are –
- *Champu Ramayana*

1. *Naatakas* refer to scholastic dramas in Sanskrit. Characters in these dramas portray a number of moods (*Rasas*).
2. There are 9 different *Rasas*. They are – *Sringara, Veera, Karuna, Adbhuta, Haasya, Bhayaanaka, Bheebhatsa, Raudra and Santi*. The *Rasa Santi* is not portrayed in *Natakas*.
3. Well known *Naatakas* are –
 - *Kalidasa's Shakuntala*
 - *Bhavabhooti's Uttara Rama Charita*
 - *Vishaka Datta's Mudrarakshasa*

1. *Alankaras* refer to texts dealing with effective compositions in ornamental language – both in poetry and prose.
2. They are even superior to the *Kavyas* and *Natakas*
3. The best among the *Alankara Granthas* are –
 - *Mammata's Kavyaprakasha*
 - *Jagannatha's Rasangadhara*

Chapter II - Creation

Basis

Puranas contain history of remote times. They are meant for common people and describe the times, troubles and triumphs of their heroes. A *Purana* usually gives prominence to a certain deity (*Shiva, Vishnu, Krishna*). Most use an abundance of religious and philosophical concepts in their narration from Bhakti to Sankya.

According to *Matsya Purana*, they deal systematically with five subjects called *Pancha Lakshana*. They are –

- (1) *Sarga* - The creation of the Universe
- (2) *Pratisarga* – Secondary creations after dissolution
- (3) *Vamsa* – Genealogy of Gods and sages
- (4) *Manvantara* – Creation of the human race and the first human beings
- (5) *Vamsaanucharitam* – Dynastic histories.

A *Purana*, generally, gives importance to a particular deity and treats other deities to secondary roles. This is to increase the faith in their particular *Ishta-Devata*.

The following section is based on *Srimad Bhagavatam*. At same time, it is not intended to give complete details of the entire *Bhagavatam*. The aim is to give a broad picture on the genealogy of prominent men and women of their times.

Beginning

There was a great deluge. The entire Earth was submerged in water. Lord *Narayana* was absorbed in *Yoga nidra* after the *Maha pralaya*. He was reclining on the great serpent *Adisesha*. The entire Universe had been withdrawn into Him and lay dormant in Him.

The three *Gunas Sattva, Rajas* and *Tamas* were in equilibrium. So it was a long time. Then TIME caused a disturbance in the three *Gunas* and the equilibrium was upset. Out of the navel of the Lord *Narayana* emerged a thin stalk. This grew into an immense lotus. Into that lotus entered the Lord in another form which was *Brahma*. *Brahma* found that he had four heads. He then looked around and saw large expanse of water and nothing else. It seemed to him that the waves around appeared to be telling him to perform *Tapas*. He then did the *Tapas* for hundred years. All of a sudden, he saw the form of Lord *Narayana* in his mind. *Brahma* realized He was the *Purusha*. Lord *Narayana* told him “I have set you the task of creating the world and the beings on it.

Out of the mind of Lord *Brahma* were born the four *Rishis Sanaka, Sananda, Sanatana* and *Sanatkumara*. *Brahma* asked them to take up the task of creation and multiply. However, the minds of the *Rishis* were made up of attaining salvation. They refused to undertake the task of creation. *Brahma* was angry with them but he controlled it. However, his anger took up a form and emerged out of his forehead. The child began to cry as soon as he was born. The child asked for a name and a place to stay. *Brahma* told the child "Do not cry. Since you cried the moment you are born, you will be called *Rudra*. The heart, the senses, life, the sky, air, fire, water, earth, the sun, the moon and tapas are the places assigned to you. You can go now and produce many in your image".

Brahma then created ten sons out of his body. These were – *Atri, Angiras, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Bhrigu, Daksha, Marichi, Vasishtha* and *Narada*. *Dharma* and *Adharma* were also born out of *Brahma*. Out of his heart was born desire and out of his brows anger. His shadow took a form and this son was named *Kardama*. From his mind and body was created this entire world. The four *Vedas* were born out of his four faces.

Brahma then divided his body into two; one was male and the other female. They were called *Svayambhu Manu* and *Shatarupa*. As soon as he was born *Svayambhu Manu* asked his father what he wanted him to do. Lord *Brahma* commanded that the work of creation should be continued. At that time the Earth was submerged in water and the *Manu* did not have a place to start. *Brahma* then sought the help of Lord *Narayana* who assumed the form of a boar in order to raise the Earth from below the water. He plunged into the ocean, located the earth, raised it on his tusks and began to climb. An *Asura* named *Hiranyaksha* tried to stop His progress but he was killed.

Svayambhu Manu and *Shatarupa* produced five children; three were daughters- *Akuti, Prasuti* and *Devahuti*. The sons were *Priyavrata* and *Uttanapada*.

Akuti was married to a *rishi* by the name *Ruchi*, *Devahuti* to *Kardama* and *Prasuti* to *Daksha*. The children of these and their descendants have populated the world. *Daksha* had thirteen daughters. He gave them in marriage to *Kashyapa*, son of *Marichi*. *Diti* was one of them.

Diti's sin

One evening just after *Kashyapa* finished his evening worship, *Diti* came to him and wanted him to make love to her. *Kashyapa* refused pointing out that evenings are sacred for the worship of *Mahadeva*. However, *Diti* was determined to have her way. As a result of her sin, *Diti* gave birth to two sons and both of them were wicked. They were known by the names *Hiranyaksha* and *Hiranyakashipu*. It was this *Hiranyaksha* who was killed by Lord

Narayana in the form of *Varahamoorthy*. *Hiranyakashipu* also hated Lord *Narayana* intensely. However, his son *Prahlada* was a great devotee of the Lord. *Hiranyakashipu* persecuted everyone including the *Devas*. However, when he started punishing his son he crossed the limit. Lord *Narayana* killed him manifesting in the form of *Narasimha*.

Devahuti served her husband *Kardama* with great devotion. They had nine daughters. Sage *Kardama* married his daughters to *Rishis*. *Kala* was given to *Marichi*; *Anasuya* to *Atri*; *Shraddha* to *Angiras*; *Havirbhu* to *Pulastya*; *Gati* to *Pulaha*; *Kriya* to *Kratu*; *Khyati* to *Bhrigu*; *Arundhati* to *Vasishta* and *Shanti* to *Atharva*.

Kapila Vasudeva

Finally, Lord *Narayana* was born *Devahuti*'s son. He was named *Kapila*. It was this *Kapila* who established the well known *Sankhya Yoga*. *Kapila Vasudeva* was born to reveal *Brahma Vidya* to human beings. *Kapila* teaches *Atma Vidya* to his mother to help her realize the Lord. After the birth of *Kapila*, *Kardama* retired to a forest and spent his days in *Tapas*. After teaching his mother *Brahma Vidya*, *Kapila* leaves home. *Devahuti* spent the rest of her life on the lines taught by her son and attained liberation. The spot where she attained *Brahman* became a holy spot. It is called *Siddhapada*. Even gods visit this place. Sage *Kardama*'s next daughter, *Shraddha*, was married to Sage *Angiras*. They had a son and he was *Brihaspati*. *Havirbhu* married Sage *Pulastya* and they had two sons; one was Sage *Agastya* and the other was *Vishravas*. The son of *Vishravas* was *Kubera*. *Vishravas* had another wife named *Kaikasi*. She was the mother of the famed *Ravana*, *Kumbhakarna* and *Vibhishana*. *Kratu*'s wife *Kriya* was the mother of *Rishis* named by "Valakhilyas". *Kyati*, wife of *Bhrigu* had two sons. One of them was the father of *Mrikandu*. The other son was Sage *Shukracharya*, the *Acharya* of *Asuras*.

Atri's Tapas

Daksha Prajapati married *Prasuti*, the second daughter of *Manu*. They had sixteen daughters. Thirteen of the daughters were married to *Dharma*. One daughter was given to *Agni*; one to the *Pitris* and one was given to Lord *Mahadeva*.

Anasuya, daughter of *Manu* was married to Sage *Atri*. Sage *Atri* performed a great penance on the mountain of *Ruksha*. He wanted a son from the Lord of the Lords who will be like Him. Pleased with his *Tapas* all the three murthis- *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Mahadeva* appeared before him. Overwhelmed by the simultaneous presence of the tri-murthis Sage *Atri* worshipped them appropriately. In response to the query from the three murthis, the sage replied "I prayed for the best among you to grant me a son in His image. It is up to you to tell me who is the best from among you". *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Mahadeva* were amused by his words. "We are all aspects of the *Brahman*. It

is the same *Brahman* who creates, preserves and destroys. We wanted you to realize the truth and that is why all three of us have come. You will be father of three sons, each one an *amsha* of each of us. They will become very famous and bring you a great name". The son born to *Atri* with the *amsha* of *Brahma* was the *Moon*; *Datta* was the son with the *amsha* of *Vishnu* and the son with the image of *Mahadeva* was *Durvasa*.

Arrogant King

Daksha Prajapati's daughter, *Sati*, married Lord *Mahadeva*. *Daksha* once performed a great *Yagna* by the name *Brahma Satra*. As the *Yagna* was about to commence, *Daksha* felt that *Mahadeva* insulted him. In an uncontrollable anger he abused and cursed the Lord. In an atmosphere charged with anger and emotion the followers of *Daksha* and Lord *Mahadeva* exchanged curses. As a follow-up on this *Yagna*, *Daksha* performed another where he pointedly did not invite *Mahadeva*. The Lord did not attend the *Yagna* but allowed His wife to attend, since she was very keen. However, on arrival at the *yagnashala*, she discovered that her father, *Daksha*, ignored her. Others at the scene did not dare to defy *Daksha*. *Sati* was furious at the insult targeted towards her husband. She spoke harshly to her father. Then by yogic power she burnt her body and was reduced to ashes.

On hearing about the tragedy at the *yagnashala*, Lord *Mahadeva* was not at all surprised but was very furious. He pulled a strand from his matted locks and threw it on the ground. Out of it was born *Virabhadra* glowing like fire. *Mahadeva* ordered that the proud *Daksha* along with the *yagnashala* to be destroyed. *Virabhadra* along with *Pramathaganas* rushed to the *yagnashala*. Within a short time the place was destroyed and *Daksha* was killed. All the *Devatas* accompanied with Lord *Vishnu* and *Brahma* went to *Kailasa* to meet *Mahadeva* and pacify Him. He forgave *Daksha* and who came back to life with the head of a goat. The *Yagna* was completed.

Dhruva's Tapas

Uttanapada, the son of *Manu*, had two wives; *Suniti* and *Suruchi*. *Suniti's* son was *Dhruva* and *Suruchi's* son was *Uttama*. *Suruchi* was the favourite wife of *Uttanapada*. Under the influence of *Suruchi* the king treated *Uttama* with great affection and openly neglected *Dhruva*. The child ran to his mother and complained. *Suniti* advised the child to take refuge in Lord *Narayana*. He went away to a forest not knowing how to gain the grace of the Lord. Sage *Narada* decided to help the child. He initiated the *Maha mantra* "Aum Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya" and told him to repeat it with his mind firmly concentrated on the Lord. *Dhruva* performed intense *Tapas* repeating the *mantra*. Lord *Narayana* was very pleased with the young devotee. He blessed the child that his wish to become the favourite of his father will come true and his father will crown him as a King In addition the Lord told the boy that He is

assigning a place for him which will be eternal. The Sun and Moon will revolve round it. At the end of his life *Dhruva* reached Lord *Narayana*.

King Prithu

One of the descendants of *Dhruva* was a tyrant named *Vena*. He would not listen to advice from his ministers and continued with his reign of terror. The *Rishis* then invoked the God of death and *Vena* died. After the death of *Vena*, the land had no king to rule. Eventually with the help of penance of the *Rishis* a boy and a girl was born. They named the boy as *Prithu*. The girl was named *Archis*. From the *lakshanas*, the *Rishis* knew that he was born from an *amsha* of Lord *Narayana*. *Archis* was Sri *Maha Lakshmi*.

When he was old enough, the boy was crowned as king. After he was crowned as king, the *Rishis* called him *Prithu*, the great protector of the world.

Prithu noticed that his subjects were thin and emaciated. He concluded that Earth was not yielding enough. So he confronted Mother Earth and decided to punish her. Mother earth got frightened and explained that as time passed sinful acts were being committed everywhere. In a fit of anger she decided that the people were not fit enough to enjoy the wealth provided to them. However, she promised that she will now agree to yield enough food for all people. Everyone then got what he wanted. King *Prithu* was very pleased with the earth and her bounty, that he made her his beloved daughter. Since then mother Earth came to be called as *Prithvi*. He was the first king that ever won the hearts of the people. From his time kings have been called "*Rajas*". "*Ranj*" means charm, "*Ranjayati iti Raja*". *Prithu* was the first *Raja* – "*Adiraja*". King *Prithu* performed one hundred *Ashvamedhas*.

King *Prithu*'s grandson was *Havirdhana* who married *Havirdhani*. They had six children and the eldest was *Barhishat*. He married *Shatadruti*, daughter of the lord of the seas. Ten sons were born to this couple and they were famed as *Prachetas*. King *Barhishat* believed in the performance of *yagnays* and he performed many. Sage *Narada* took interest in him and initiated the *Brahma Vidya* advising him that it was the way for salvation. King *Barhishat* followed his advice.

Prachetas, the ten sons of King *Barhishat*, were great devotees of Lord *Narayana*. Lord *Mahadeva* was pleased with them and decided to help them. He taught them *Rudra Gita* and asked them to repeat it with a steady mind in order to gain the favour of Lord *Narayana*. They did that. The Lord *Narayana* was pleased with their devotion and asked them to marry *Marisha*, daughter of an *Apsara*. He also told the brothers that she will bear them a son whose fame will spread all over the world. All ten of them married *Marisha*. A son was born to them and he was *Daksha*. It was the same *Daksha Prajapati* who insulted Lord *Mahadeva*. He was born as a human being for the sin he

committed. Prachetas crowned Daksha as the king and left for the forest. However, he too left for the forest to perform Tapas.

We mentioned earlier that *Svayambhu Manu* had two sons – *Priyavrata* and *Uttanapada*. We learnt earlier that *Uttanapada*'s son was the famed *Dhruva*. *Priyavrata* was the eldest son of the *Manu*. However, he had no desire to rule the kingdom and left for the forest to perform Tapas. *Uttanapada* and later *Dhruva* ruled the land. However, when *Daksha*, their descendant, left for the forest, the land was without a ruler. Lord *Brahma* went to *Priyavrata* and persuaded him to take up the reins of ruling the kingdom. *Priyavrata* married *Barhishmati*, daughter of *Vishvakarma*. Ten sons and a daughter were born to them. *Agnitra* was the eldest son. Three of his brothers left to the forest to perform Tapas. *Agnitra* and his six other brothers ruled the seven islands. The daughter *Ojasvati* was married to *Shukra* and their daughter was *Devayani*. People were happy during his rule. *Priyavrata* was interested in tracing the path of the Sun. He equipped himself with a chariot fast enough to travel with the Sun. He travelled with the Sun around the Earth seven times. The moats formed by the quick progress of his chariot became the seven great seas. They were named – *Lavana, Ikshu, Sura, Sarpi, Dadhi, Kshira and Madhu*. The earth divided into seven islands. They were named – *Jambu, Plaksha, Shalmali, Kusha, Krauncha, Shaka and Pushkara*.

King Bharata

Agnitra's son was *Nabhi* and he had no children. He performed a great sacrifice where he worshipped Lord *Narayana*. The Lord was pleased with *Nabhi* and promised that he will be born as a son to *Nabhi*. The child was named *Rishabha*. *Rishabha* was crowned as the king after *Nabhi*. *Rishabha* married *Jayanti* the daughter of *Indra*. They had hundred sons; the eldest of them was *Bharata*. *Bharata* was a great king and the land was called *Bharatavarsha* after him. After a long number of years, *Bharata* decided to retire to the forest. He distributed his kingdom among his sons he went away to the *ashrama* of sage *Pulaha* near *Haridwar*. He worshipped Lord *Narayana* with great devotion. His heart was filled with peace born out of renunciation and detachment. One day he rescued a new-born deer when her mother died. He brought up the deer with great care and was greatly attached to it. His meditation and prayers were all things of the past. And when he died *Bharata*'s mind was on the deer. Since his thoughts were on the deer, *Bharata* was born as a deer. However, he had the privilege of remembering his previous birth. As a deer he travelled to holy places and finally died. And that was not the end of it all. *Bharata* was born again as a son of a Brahmin in the *Angirasa* clan. He was disgusted and did not want any attachment with anyone. His thoughts were continuously on Lord *Narayana* and it did not bother him to do menial jobs. He was *Jada Bharata*. He wandered over earth till he obtained salvation.

Daksha's descendants

Daksha, son of *Prachetasa* brothers married *Asikni* and had sixty daughters. Of the ten were married to *Dharma*, seventeen to *Kashyapa*, twenty-seven to *Chandra* and *Bhuta*, *Angiras* and *Krishashva* married two each. *Vishvadevas* were sons of one of the daughters. *Marutvati* was the mother of *Marutvan* and *Jayanta*. *Jayanta* was also called *Upendra*. *Sankalpa* was one of the daughters. Her son was also named *Sankalpa* and he was the father of *Kama*.

The daughter *Vasu* was the mother of the eight *Vasus Sarupa*, wife of *Bhuta* became the mother of thousands of *Rudras*, eleven of whom were famous: *Raivata*, *Aja*, *Bhava*, *Bhima*, *Vama*, *Ugra*, *Vrishakapi*, *Ajaikapat*, *Ahribudhnya*, *Bahurupa* and *Maha.Kashyapa* wives were *Aditi*, *Diti*, *Dhanu*, *Kashtha*, *Arishta*, *Surasa*, *Ila*, *Muni*, *Krodhavasha*, *Tamra*, *Surabhi*, *Saram*, *Timi*, *Vinata*, *Kadru*, *Patangi* and *Yamini*. *Aditi* 's son was *Vamana* – one of the incarnations of Lord *Narayana*. *Vamana* was born in the month of *Bhadrapada: Shukla Paksha: Dvadashi* and *Abhijit* was the star under which the child was born. In later years this *dvadashi* will be known as *Vijaya Dvadashi*.

The sons of *Aditi* were *Vivasvan*, *Aryama*, *Pusha*, *Twashta*, *Savita*, *Bhaga*, *Dhata*, *Vidhata*, *Varuna*, *Mitra*, *Sakra* and *Urukrama*. *Dhanu* had sixty one children. One of them was *Vrishaparva*. His daughter *Sharmishta* marries King *Yayati*, son of King *Nahusha*. *Surabhi* produced cows and buffaloes. *Tamra* gave birth to hawks, falcons and eagles. *Krodhavasha* was the mother of serpents with fangs. *Ila* produced trees. *Arishta* was the mother of *Gandharvas*. *Kashta* produced animals without split hooves. *Viprasiddhi*, son of *Dhanu* married *Simhika*, daughter of *Hiranyakashipu*. They had hundred children which included *Rahu* and *Ketu*. *Muni* gave birth to *Apsaras Patangi* produced birds and *Yamini* gave birth to moths and similar short-lived insects *Vinata* was the mother of *Aruna* (charioteer of Sun) and *Garuda* who carried Lord *Narayana* *Kadru* was the mother serpents. Famous among the sons were – *Sesha*, *Vasuki*, *Takshaka* and *Karkotaka*

Daityas and Maruts

Hiranyaksha and *Hiranyakashipu* were the sons of *Diti*. She also gave birth to Maruts. *Hiranyaksha* was killed by Lord *Narayana* in the form of *Varaha*. *Hiranyakashipu* hated Lord *Narayana* for this. He persecuted all devotees of *Narayana*.

Hiranyakashipu's son was *Prahlada* who turned out to be the greatest devotee of the Lord. When *Hiranyakashipu* started persecuting *Prahlada*, then the Lord killed him in the form of *Narasimha*. *Prahlada*'s son was *Virochana*. And his son was the great asura king *Bali*. He defeats God *Indra* and

becomes the Lord of the world. It was to subdue King *Bali* that Lord *Narayana* was born as *Vamana*. *Bali* was involved in conducting a great *Yaga*. *Vamana* approaches *Bali* and asks for a boon. The boon the child was asking was for three paces of ground as measured by the child. *Shukracharya*, the preceptor of the King reveals to the King that the child is in fact Lord *Narayana* himself and the boon should be refused. However, the king was excited to be in a position to grant a boon to the Lord of lords. He gives it. *Vamana* measures the earth and heaven with two paces and asks *Bali* a place for the third pace. *Bali* offers his head. Lord *Narayana* was very pleased with *Bali* and blessed him.

Solar dynasty

Aditi, wife of sage *Kashyapa*, gave birth to twelve *Adityas*. One of them was *Vivasvan*, the Sun god- *Surya*. *Surya*'s son was *Vivasvatha Manu*. *Manu* had many sons and one of them was *Ikshvaku*. He was the founder of *Ikshvaku* dynasty; sometimes referred to as *Surya Vamsha*. In the line of *Ikshvaku* was born *Naabhaka*. He became one of the greatest seers of his time. *Naabhaka*'s son was *Ambarisha* and he possessed immense wealth. Yet he was aware that all the things of this world like riches are transient. He lived in this world of men without any bondage. He was a great devotee of Lord *Narayana*. His encounter with the sage *Durvasa* while practicing *Dvadashi Vrata* is well known.

King *Puranjaya* was one of the descendants of *Ikshvaku*. He was a great warrior and was called by another name *Kakutstha*. King *Mandhatri* was one of the descendants of this lineage and was regarded as a great monarch.

Trishanku

Satyavrata was a later king in the Solar dynasty. His son was *Trishanku*. *Trishanku* wanted to reach heavens with a human body. He approached his *Guru Vashishta* and resented his strange wish and cursed him to become a *Chandala*. *Vishvmitra*, the generous hearted agreed to perform a *Yagna* to send him to heaven. And he did perform the *Yagna* and the king was raised to the heavens. The *devatas* led by their king *Indra* resented it and threw him down. *Vishvmitra* got furious with the *devatas* and stopped *Trishanku* in mid air. Further he went on create a new heaven solely for the purpose of *Trishanku*. As he was about to create a new *Brahma*, the *devatas* pacified him. *Trishanku* lived in the special heaven.

King Bhagiratha

Trishanku's son was *Harischandra*. Another great king born in the Solar dynasty was *King Sagara*. He had two wives; *Sumati* and *Kesini*. *Sumati* had sixty thousand sons and *Kesini* had one son named *Asamanja*. *Asamanja* son was *Amshuman* and he was greatly devoted to his grandfather. Emperor *Sagara* wanted to perform *Ashvamedha Yaga*. Lord *Indra* stole the horse and

left it in a cave where Sage *Kapila* was in *Samadhi*. Sixty thousand sons of the emperor went in search of the horse. When they found the horse in front of the sage, they mistook him to be the thief. Hearing the noise the sage opened his eyes and the sixty thousand princes were reduced to a heap of ash. *Amshuman* went in search of the sixty thousand princes and the missing horse. He finally reached *Maharshi Kapila* and fell at his feet. The sage told him to take the horse back to the emperor *Sagara*. He also told *Amshuman* that if water from *Ganga* could be used to wash the ashes of the princes, then they could ascend to the *Pritiloka*. The only problem was *Ganga* at that time was in the heavens. How do you bring it to the earth? Both *Amshuman* and his son *Dilipa* performed *Tapas*. Both of them died before achieving any success. *Bhagiratha*, son of *Dilipa*, was determined to bring *Ganga* to the Earth. He performed tapas for a long time and Goddess *Ganga* was pleased with him. However, she asked that when she comes down from the heaven to the earth what will be there to take up the force of her fall. *Bhagiratha* began to perform tapas once again to please *Lord Mahadeva*. At last he got the Lord to agree to receive *Ganga* on His matted locks. The rest is history. The sixty thousand valiant sons of *Sagara* reached the *loka* meant for the *Pitris*.

Raghu was a king from the Solar lineage. His son was *Aja*. And *Aja*'s son was King *Dasharatha*. *Rama*, *Lakshmana*, *Bharata* and *Shatrughna* were the four sons of King *Dasharatha*. The famous *Purana Ramayana* written by Sage *Valmiki* tells deeds performed by the four brothers.

Lunar Dynasty

We have seen that *Chandra* (also called as *Soma*) was one of the sons of Sage *Atri*. Lord *Brahma* made him the lord of the *Oshadhis* (medicinal herbs) and of stars. *Soma* conquered the three worlds and performed the *Rajasuya*. He was very handsome. In course of time he became proud and arrogant. *Soma* stole *Tara*, the wife of *Brihaspati* and refused to give her back. In the end Lord *Brahma* intervened and restored *Tara* back to *Brihaspati*. *Tara* had a son through *Chandra*. He was named as *Budha*. *Budha* married *Ila* and they had a son named *Pururavas* and he becomes the first king in the Lunar dynasty – *Chandravamsha*.

In the line of *Pururavas* was born a king named *Gadhi*. His daughter named *Satyavati* married *Ruchika*, a Brahmin. *Gadhi* had a son by the name of *Kaushika*. In later years *Kaushika*, after performing great *tapas*, came to be known as *Vishvamitra*.

In course of time *Satyavati* had a son and he was named *Jamadagni*. He married *Renuka* and five sons were born to them: *Vasuman*, *Vasu*, *Vasushena*, *Rumanvan* and *Rama*. *Rama* was *Kshatriya* by nature. He came

to be known as *Parashurama*. It was he who nearly exterminated the entire *Kshatriya* clan.

Nahusha and his personal heaven

Pururavas had six sons, the eldest of whom was *Ayu*. His descendants were *Nahusha*, *Yayati* and *Puru*. *Nahusha* was a very good king, performed many *yajnas* and was fit enough to be *Indra*. As it happened, the *Devas* came to *Nahusha* with a request to officiate as *Indra* during a period when *Indra* was in hiding. *Nahusha* did that for a while and started becoming arrogant with the power and wealth at his disposal. He misbehaved with the *Rishis* and was cursed to spend his time as a python. He begs forgiveness and was told that he will be released from the curse by the *Pandavas* in *Dvapara Yuga*.

Nahusha's son was *Yayati*. *Yayati* had two wives: *Devayani*, daughter of *Shukracharya* and *Sharmishta*. King *Yayati* had five sons – two from *Devayani* and three from *Sharmishta*. The sons of *Devayani* were *Yadu* and *Turvasu*. Sons of *Sharmishata* were *Druhyu*, *Anu* and *Puru*.

Kuru Vamsha and Kurukshetra

Puru was considered as one of the foremost kings of the Lunar dynasty. *Kuru* was another. So the *vamsha* was called *Paurava vamsha* or *Kuru vamsha*. In this *vamsha* was born King *Dushyanta*. *Dushyanta* married *Shakuntala*. *Shakunta* was born to the *apsara Menaka* when she lived with Sage *Vishvamitra*. The son of *Shakuntala* was *Bharata*. One of the descendants of *Bharata* was *Kuru*. *Kuru* performed *tapas* in a spot named *Kurujangala*. This spot came to be named as *Kurukshetra*. The descendant in this line was king *Shantanu* who was the grandfather of *kauravas* and *Pandavas*.

Yayati's son *Yadu* was not interested in ruling a kingdom and he was made to rule one of the smaller kingdoms. He had three other sons- *Kroshtu*, *Nala* and *Ripu*.

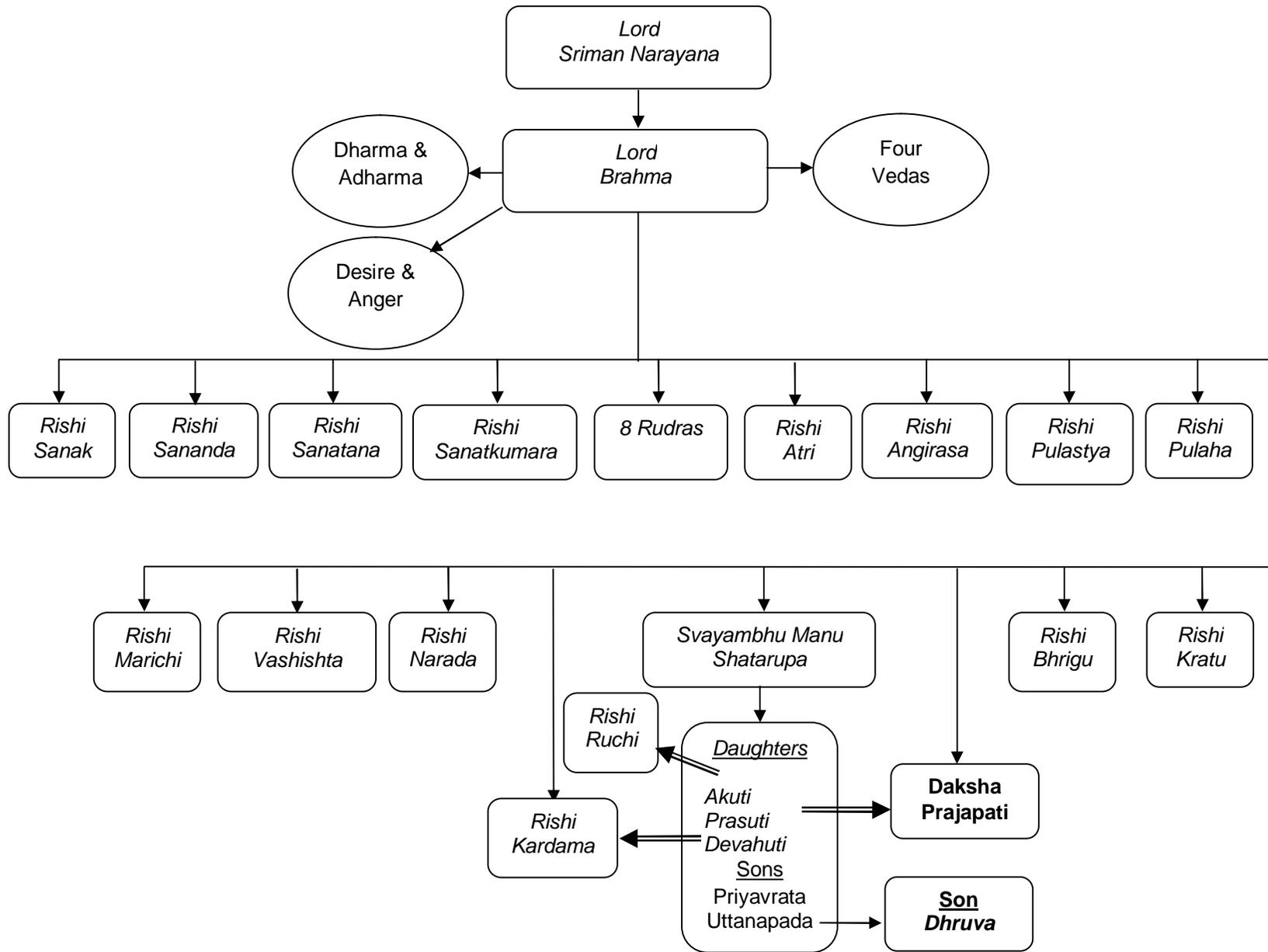
Sri Krishna and Balarama

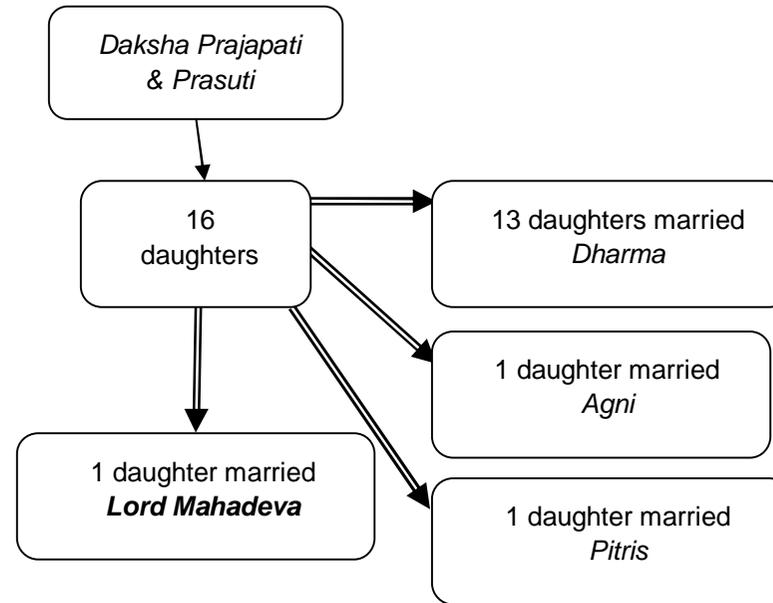
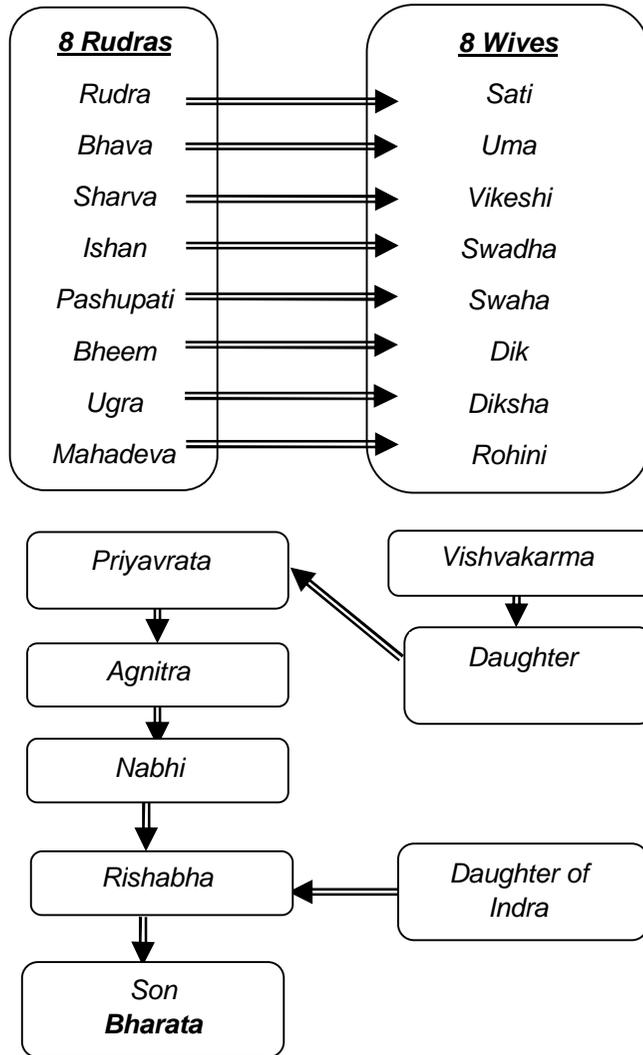
In the line of *Kroshtu* was born *Andhaka* and *Vrishni*. A descendant of *Andhaka* was *Aahuka* whose sons were *Devaka* and *Ugrasena*. *Devaka* had a daughter by the name of *Devaki*. She was given in marriage to *Vasudeva*, son of *Shura*. The son of *Devaki* and *Vasudeva* was Lord *Krishna*.

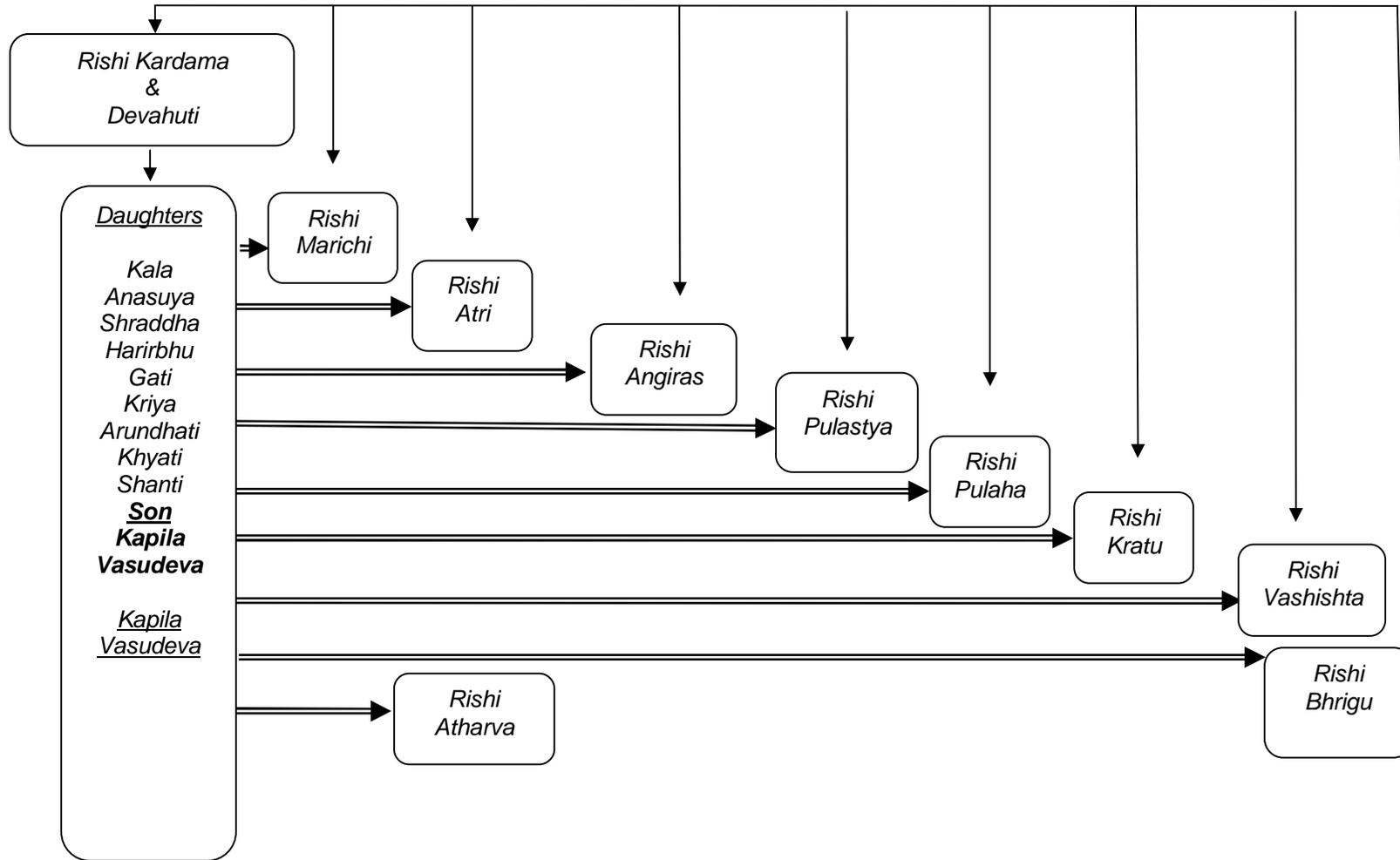
Vasudeva had seven wives – *Pauravi*, *Rohini*, *Bhadra*, *Madira*, *Rochana*, *Ila* and *Devaki*. Through *Rohini*, *Vasudeva* had *Balarama* as his son.

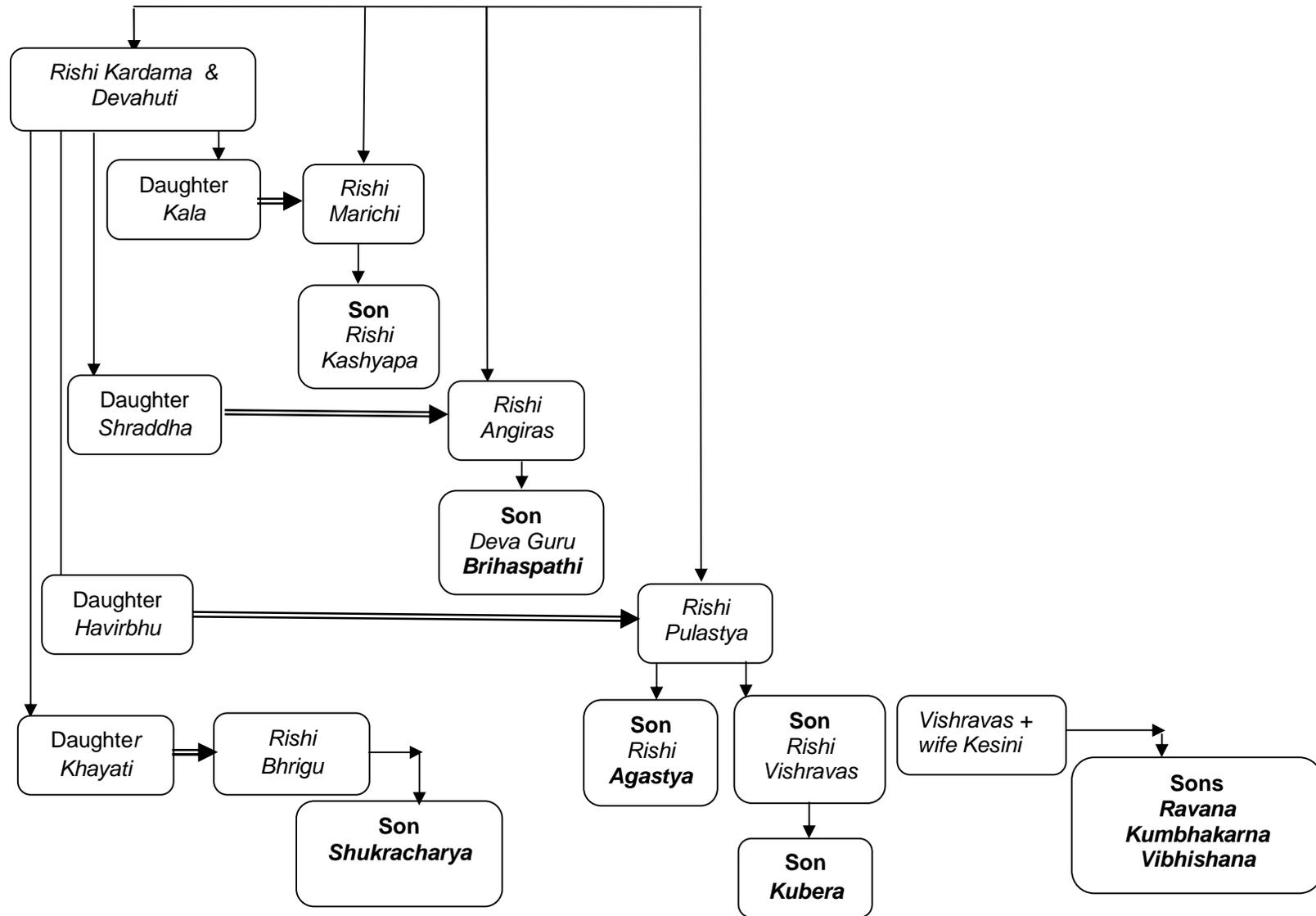
Vasudeva had five sisters – *Pritha*, *Shrutadevi*, *Shrutakirti*, *Shrutashravas* and *Rajadhidevi*. *Kunti Bhoja* was a friend of *Shura* and did not have any children. King *Shura* gave his daughter *Pritha* to his friend. *Pritha*, from then on, was better known as *Kunti*. She was the mother of three of the *Pandavas*- *Dharmaraja*, *Bhima* and *Arjuna*.

Given below is a chart in brief that gives the names of some of the familiar personages we come across in *Puranas*. The *Puranas* contain a detailed *Vamsha Vriksha*.

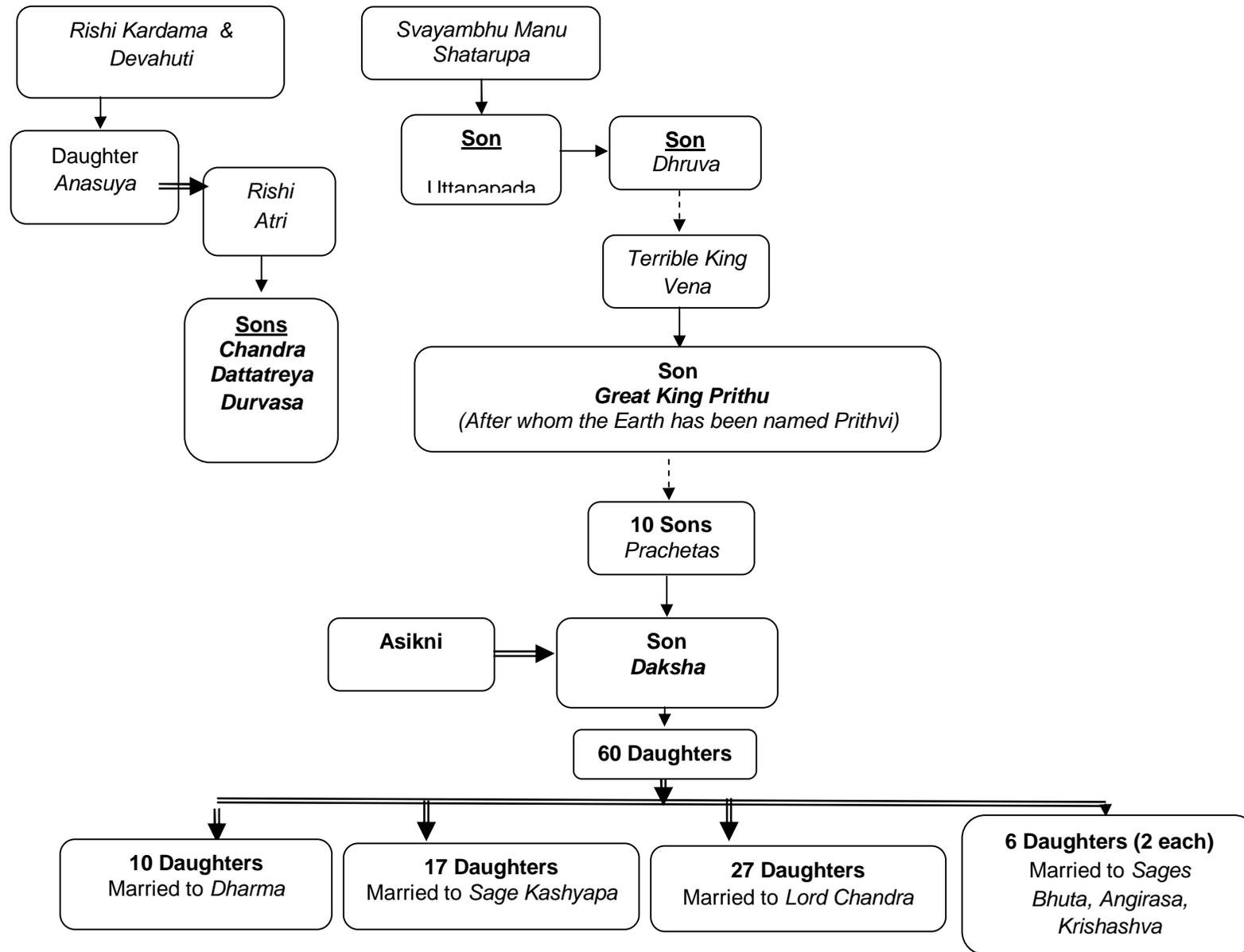


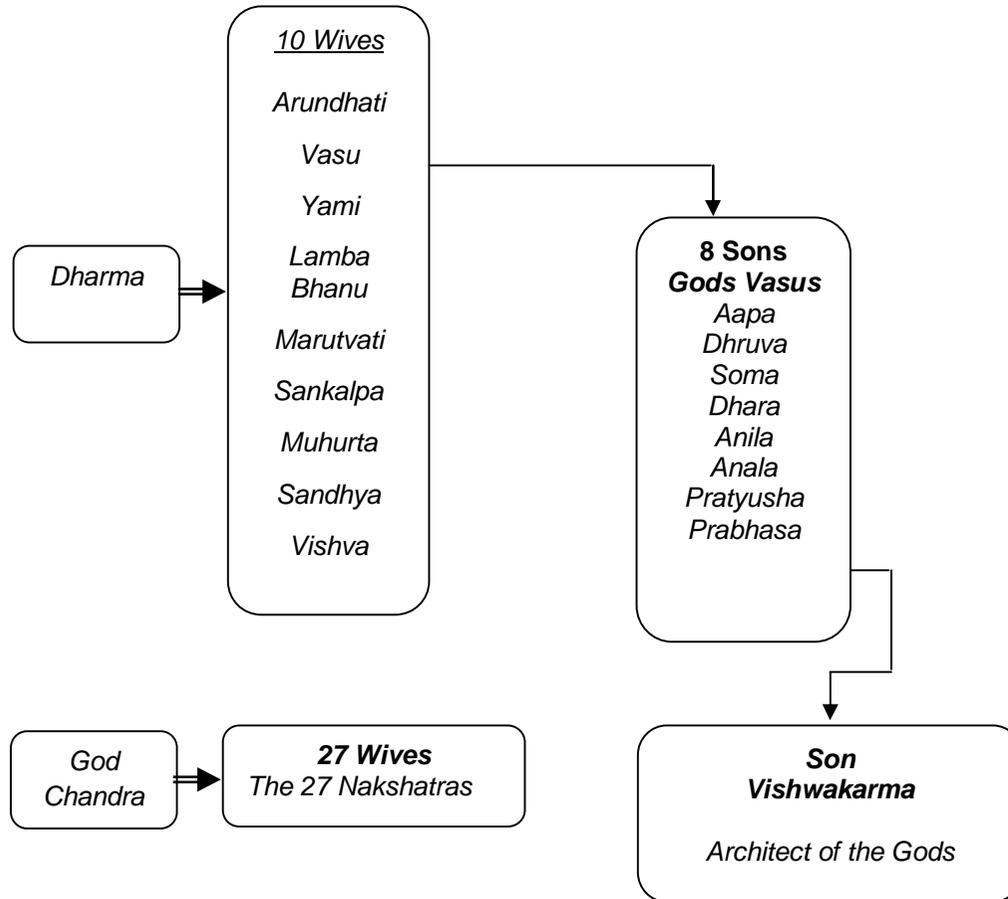


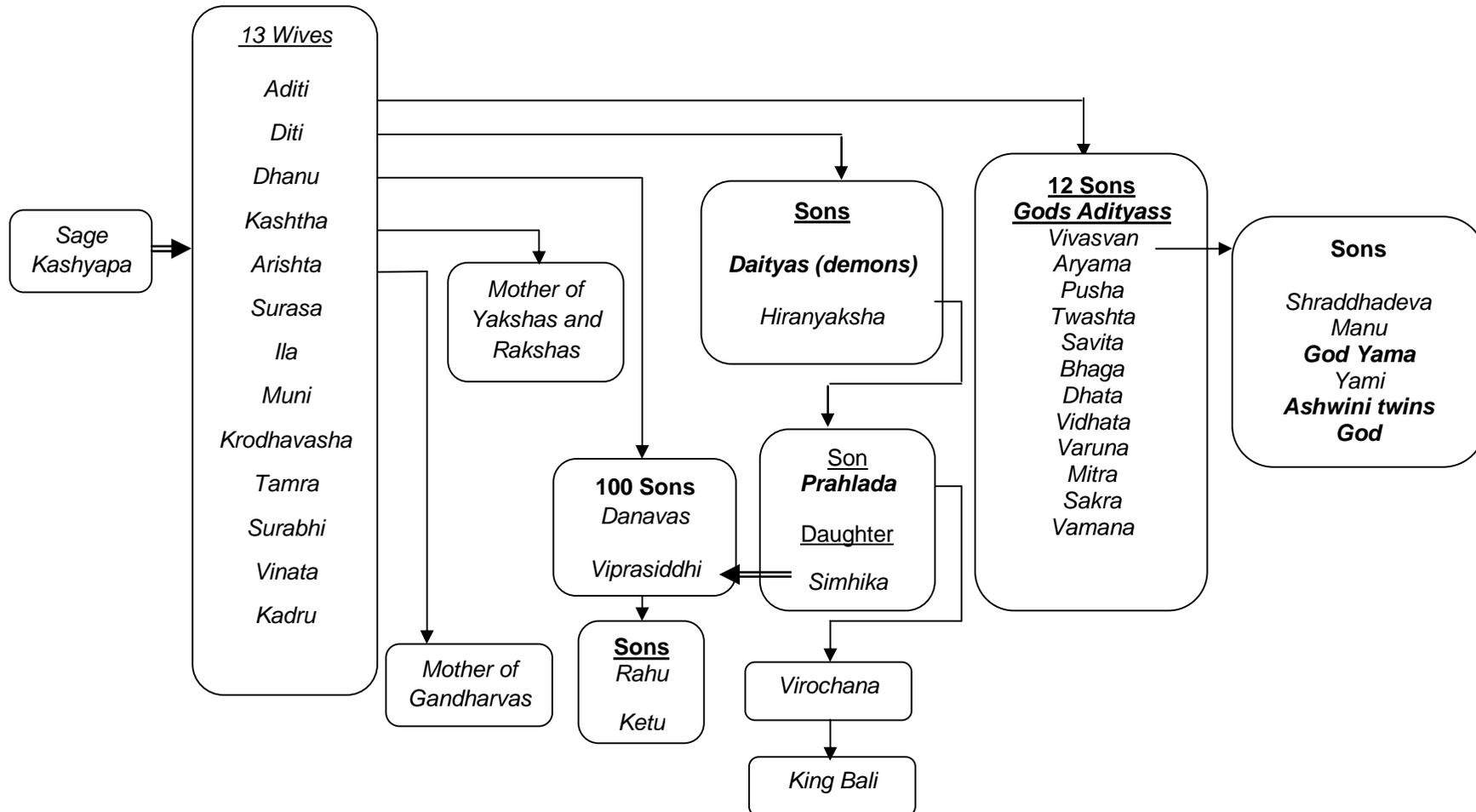


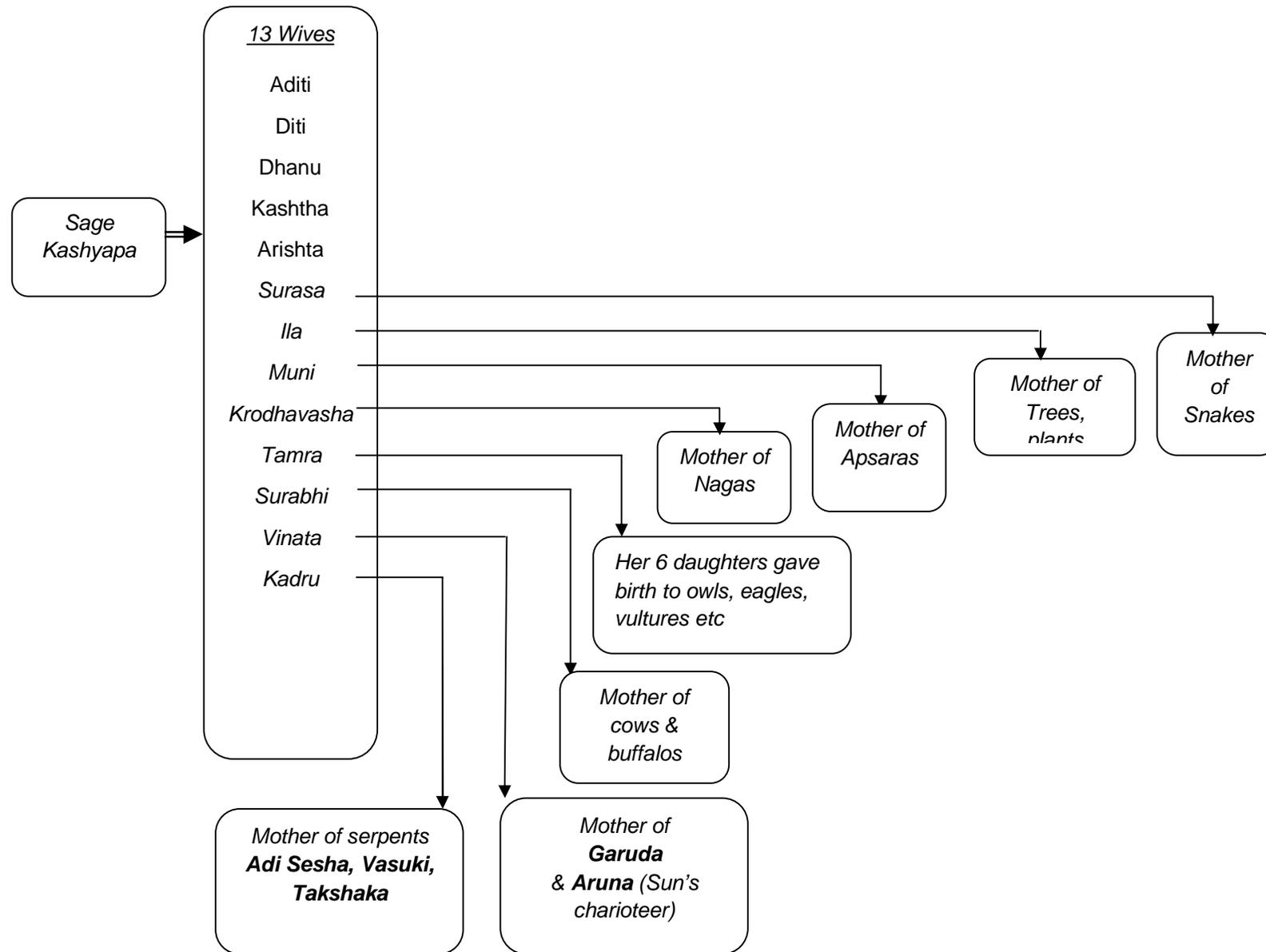


Roots - Creation

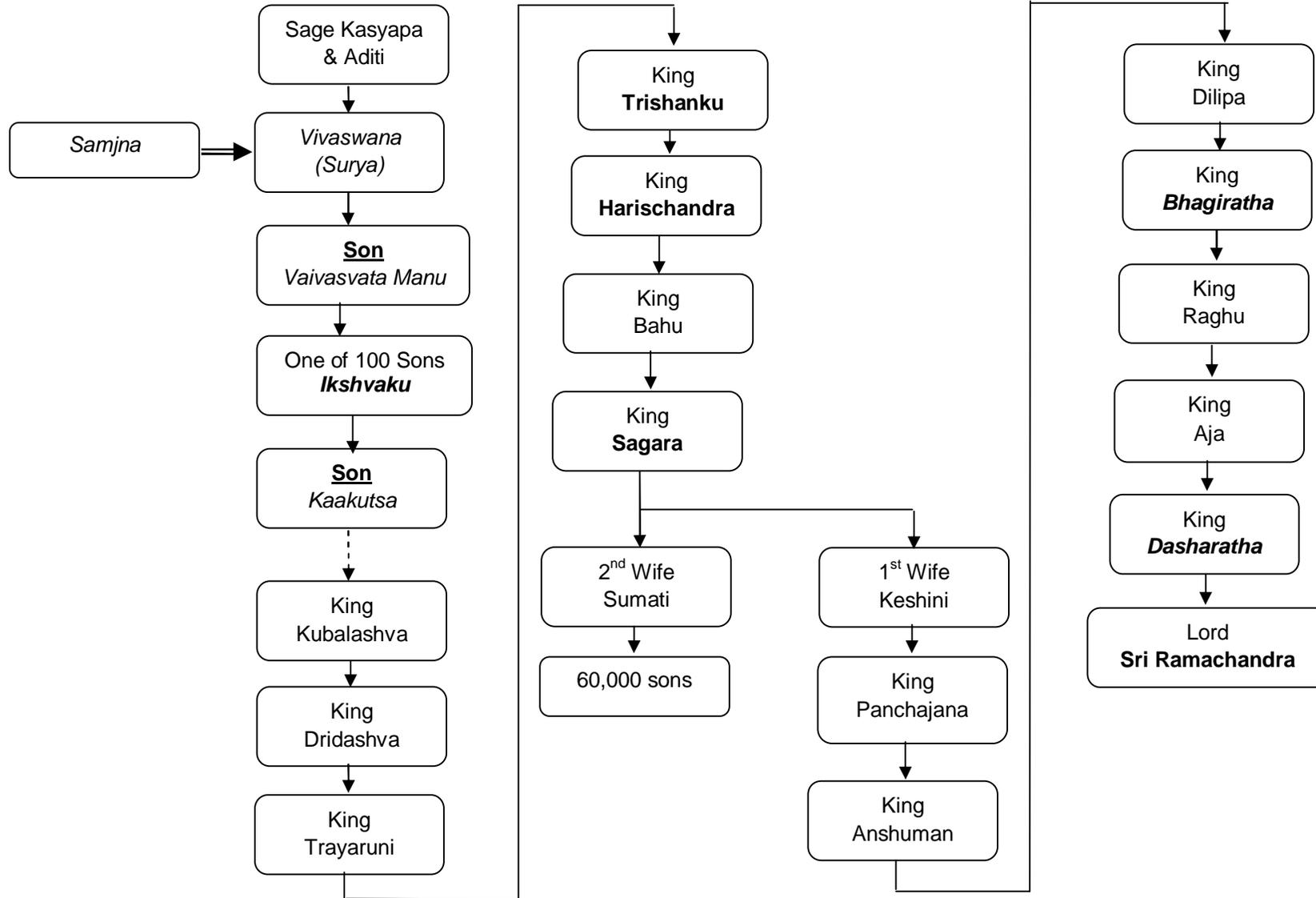


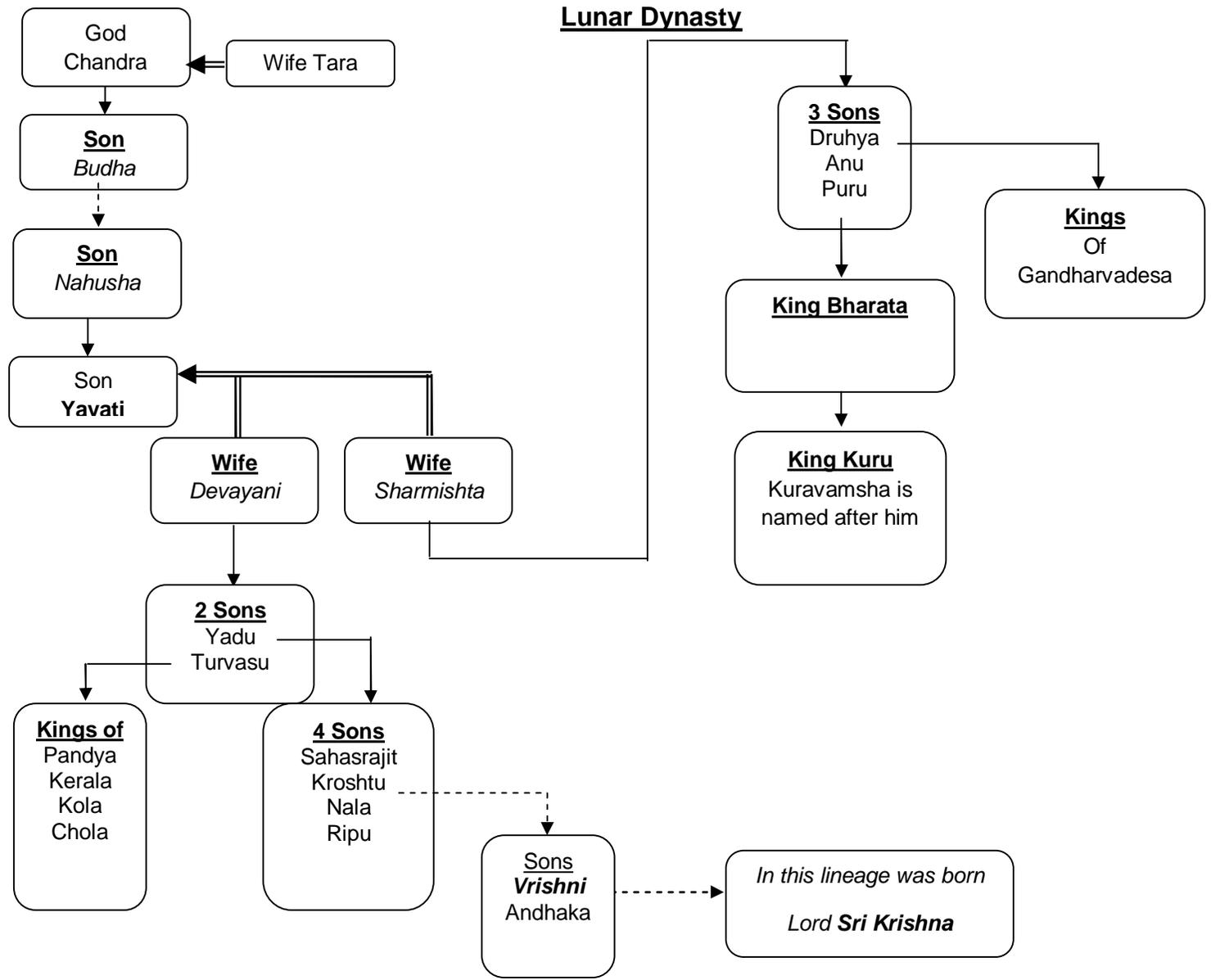






Solar Dynasty





Chapter III - Vedas and Upanishads

Vedas

Introduction

The word “*Veda*” has been interpreted in a number of ways by scholars. (a)The word *Veda* originates from the *Sanskrit* root *Vid*. “*Vid*” means to know. The word “*Veda*” then literally means knowledge. (b)The word *Veda* also means “to be”. It is concerned with “*astiva*” – existence. That which creates awareness in a man about his own existence is called *Veda*. (c)*Veda* could also be interpreted to mean “to think”. The process of thinking awakens discretion in a man leading him to be wise and judicious. Thus the knowledge which helps him to distinguish between *Sat* and *Asat* is *Veda*. (d)*Veda* could be interpreted to mean accomplishment. Thus the knowledge which helps a man realize his supreme goal is *Veda*.

Veda has also been interpreted as ‘the means by which, or in which all persons know, acquire mastery in, deliberate over the various lores or live or subsist upon them.’

Yet, the Vedas are not documents of yester years. The *Vedas* have been accepted, without any dispute, as the most ancient book in the in the *Sanskrit* world. They have been there for thousands of years. Many argue that *Veda* is oldest book, not just in the *Sanskrit* world, but anywhere in the world. We will come to this argument a little later in this section.

The *Vedic* literature is composed of many books. The oldest texts are the four *Vedas* – *Rig-Veda*, *Yajur-Veda*, *Sama-Veda* and the *Atharva-Veda*. It is said that the *Vedas* had 21, 109, 1000 and 50 branches respectively with over 100,000 verses. Today we may find only around 20,379 verses in total from these four *Vedas*.

And interestingly, they are not considered to have been authored by some poets or authors. They are regarded as divine in origin and referred to as “*apaurusheya*”. *Veda* is not an acquired knowledge. They are not products of reasoning or intellect. They have been accorded the position of revealed scriptures and are revered in Hindu religious tradition. It is the sublime knowledge revealed by the Supreme Divinity to great *Rishis* or *Seers* (*Drashtas*) during their meditation. These *Rishis* were merely instruments of God to spread His word. The *Vedas* are the God’s gift to the man. *Shri Aurobindo* says they contain the ‘divine knowledge’ revealed to the great *Rishis* in their “Supra-normal Consciousness”. Whatever was ‘heard’ or ‘revealed’ to the great *Rishis* was presented in the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*. From thereon, over the Millennia the *Vedas* have been handed over from generation to generation by oral tradition and hence the name “*Shruti*” or “that which is heard”. For this reason, *the Vedas* are known as *Shruti* literature.

A number of people think that the Vedas are solely meant for spiritual contemplation. This is not correct. Discussions regarding the relationship between *Jiva* and *Paramatma* appear in the concluding sections of the *Vedas* – the *Vedanta* or *Upanishads*. Vedas also contain worldly and divine concepts. The Vedas were created for the welfare of the mankind. The motive of the Vedas is to help man to remain happy in the materialistic world – even though he might have failed to understand the main purpose of life in this world.

Creation by the Lord is seen as a more meticulously planned effort than is commonly understood. Before the creation of living beings (both *Chetana* and *Achetana*) questions such as – what will they breathe, what will they eat, how should they conduct themselves, how will they survive, how will they populate etc have all been addressed. The stage was set before the arrival of living beings. Further, man needed guidance on personal conduct and actions (what is a good conduct and what is not), interactions and his responsibilities (to the society, family, ancestors).

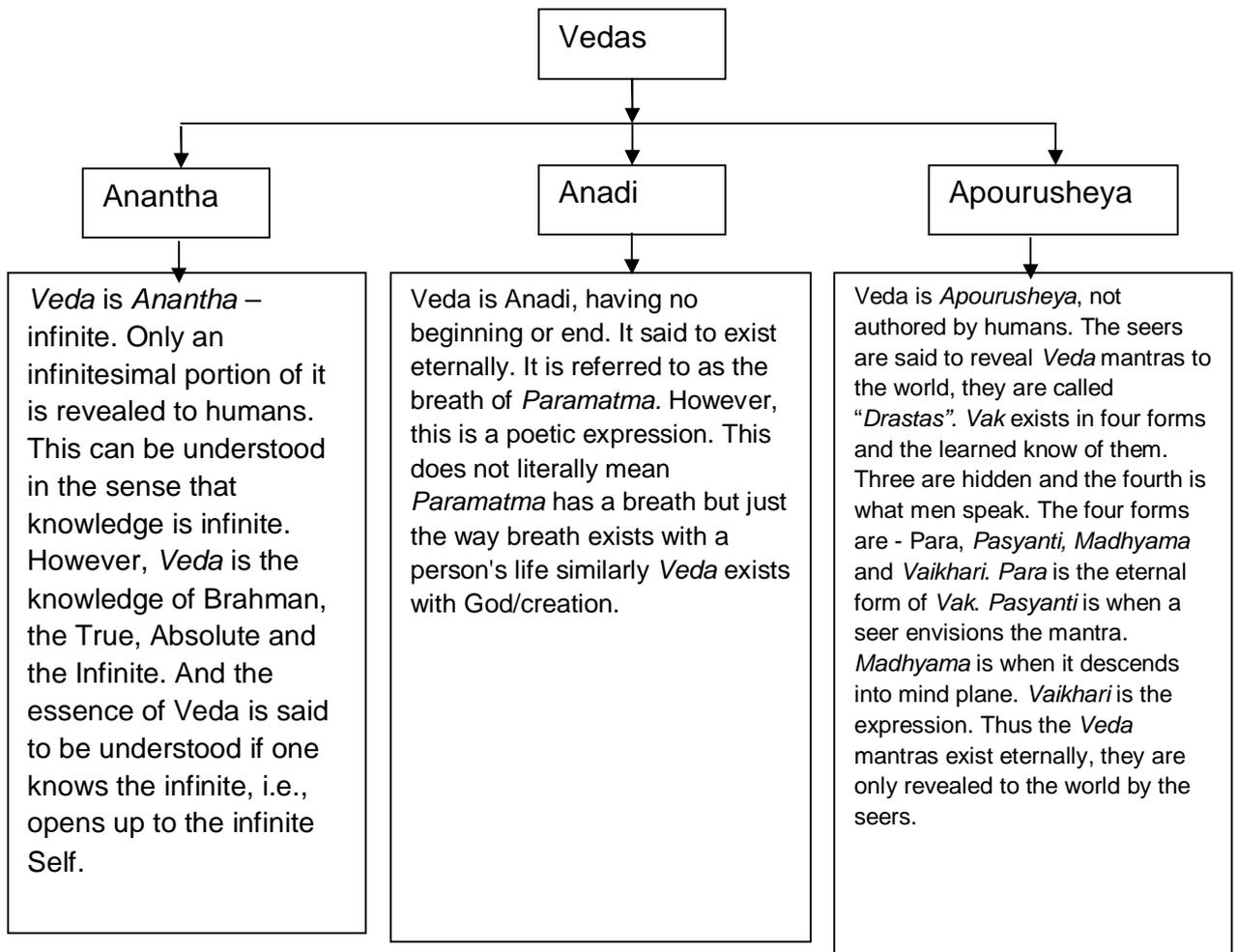
Before the creation of man, the Lord created *Pancha Maha Bhutas* to fulfil the requirements of the physical body. Similarly, He presented the *Vedas* for the sake of the embodied soul as a guide on other matters. The Rig Veda is a storehouse of information on the lifestyle, religious, social and cultural practices of the people of the *Vedic* age. The suitable aspects of living a happy and healthy life by practicing meditation and Yoga, etc. are mentioned in a detailed manner in the *Rig Veda*. Today, this text is revered by Hindus around the world, primarily in India and Nepal. Its verses are recited at prayers, religious functions and other auspicious occasions. The *Vedas* are considered to be full of all kinds of knowledge, and an infallible guide for a man in his quest for the four goals – *Dharma*, *Artha*, *Kama* and *Moksha*. As such, the knowledge revealed to the ancient sages bears the hallmark of a Divine source.

Traditionally, the following features are attributed to the *Vedas*.

Ananta - *Veda* is *Anantha* – infinite. Only an infinitesimal portion of it is revealed to humans. This can be understood in the sense that knowledge is infinite. However, *Veda* is the knowledge of Brahman, the True, Absolute and the Infinite. And the essence of *Veda* is said to be understood if one knows the infinite, i.e., opens up to the infinite Self.

Anadi - *Veda* is Anadi, having no beginning or end. It said to exist eternally. It is referred to as the breath of *Paramatma*. However, this is a poetic expression. This does not literally mean *Paramatma* has a breath but just the way breath exists with a person's life similarly *Veda* exists with God/creation.

Apourusheya - *Veda* is *Apourusheya*, not authored by humans. The seers are said to reveal *Veda* mantras to the world, they are called “*Drastas*”. *Vak* exists in four forms and the learned know of them. Three are hidden and the fourth is what men speak. The four forms are - *Para*, *Pasyanti*, *Madhyama* and *Vaikhari*. *Para* is the eternal form of *Vak*. *Pasyanti* is when a seer envisions the mantra. *Madhyama* is when it descends into mind plane. *Vaikhari* is the expression. Thus the *Veda* mantras exist eternally, they are only revealed to the world by the seers.



The Vedic literature is also known by other names such as –

Nigama: Traditional wisdom transmitted from generation to generation

Amnaaya: The root texts of Hindu tradition

Trayi: Vedic texts comprising of versified mantras, prose mantras and melodies

True, the sages might have acquired the verbal form during certain period in history. Indian scholars have dated even this verbal form to be anywhere between 6000 to 24,000 years B.C. The truths revealed by the *Vedas* are beyond the influence of time. Time or place can not affect the significance of the knowledge 'contained' in the *Vedas*. For that reason, the *Vedas* are adjudged the *Swatah Pramana* or self-evident. That means their truths do not need any proof, support or elaboration. Their validity is built-in. They constitute the first significant utterances on the lips of the man.

Shruti, the revealed knowledge, is accepted as a means of gaining valid knowledge about the Reality. It is the *Shabda Pramana*. Discussions on this are presented in another section of this book. *Vedas* formed the basis of religion and philosophy and even today they are authoritative in those fields for *Hinduism*. For this reason any other Hindu scripture must agree with the *Vedas* in order to be considered an authority. Schools of philosophy which reject the authority of the *Vedas* are considered "*Naastika*", while schools which accept Vedic authority, are considered "*Astika*".

"The message that the *Vedas* convey unites all worshippers as surely as the dogmas of the ignorant divide. Against such a background, *Hinduism* developed an attitude of comprehensive charity instead of fanatic faith. It is completely free from the attitude that a certain religious metaphysics is essential for salvation, and non-acceptance thereof is a heinous sin. In other words, it did not regard that its mission is to convert humanity to any one opinion. *Hinduism* does not believe in bringing about a mechanical uniformity of belief or worship by forcibly eliminating all that it is not in agreement with. It does not say that *Moksha* is limited to only those who hold a specific view of God's nature and worship. Such exclusive view is in-consistent with an all loving universal God".

Worshippers of different Gods and followers of different faiths were taken into *Hindu* fold. The addition of new gods to the *Hindu* pantheon does not endanger it. The main note of *Hinduism* is one of respect and goodwill for other creeds. What counts is conduct and not belief. It accepts and allows each group to arrive at the truth by its own traditions and by means of

discipline of mind and morals. Error in individuals is a sign of immaturity and not a grievous sin.

Vedas as the source of development “*Ekam sat vipraha bahuda vadanti*”

- meaning The Real is essentially One only, though the sages speak about it variously owing to the planes in which One is seen. Inadequate understanding by some western thinkers led to Hinduism being labelled as “henotheism” – essentially suggesting opportunistic monotheism. This flies against the Upanishadic explanation that all things and beings are God – because they form the body and function of the Brahman- “*Sarvam Kalvidam Brahma*”. The view presented by the Upanishads is that every prayer addressed to any of the gods and goddesses ultimately get directly referred to One Supreme Being. So common sense polytheism inherent in hierarchy is not in every sense contradictory to monotheism. While on this topic, one is reminded of two magnificent *Sooktas* – The *Purusha Sookta* and the *Nasadiya Sookta*.

Purusha Sookta

It is the hymn of the cosmic person. It gives a magnificent description of the spiritual unity of the cosmos. It occurs in all Vedas with slight variations of the order of the mantras. This famous hymn acts as a synthesis of several Vedic concepts. The *Sookta* presents the Reality as both immanent and transcendent. The all encompassing *Purusha*, who is all heads, all eyes and all limbs, envelops and permeates creation from all sides and clearly stands above it as the glorious immortal (*Sahasra sirsa Purusha, Sahasraksa Sahasrapad, Sabhumim visvato vrttva atyatista dasangulam, purusa evedam sarvam*). The whole Universe is a small fraction of Him, as it were, for He ranges above it in His infinite glory. The divine personalities have merged in the One Supreme *Purusha*. The monism of metaphysics finds its transformation as the supreme personality of God of religion. The *Purusha* is all that was, is and shall be. From Him proceeds the original creative will (later identified with *Brahma*) by which this vast Universe is projected in space and time.

Nasadiya Sookta

This is the 129th hymn of the 10th *Mandala* of the *Rig Veda*. The *Sookta* presents the scene that existed prior to the creation. The Supreme Being is above all beings, and its existence is beyond all possible concepts about it. “In the beginning there was neither existence nor non-existence, no realm, no sky, no air, no earth. There was neither mortality nor immortality. There was neither any form nor name. There was neither day nor night. Darkness concealed darkness. There was, however, just one thing- which breathed breathlessly by its own impulse. Other than that there was nothing. Who can tell whence it was born or was it born at all? From It the creation arose.

However, no one can give an account as to what happened and how it happened, for creation has not started by then. Everyone, including the *Devas*, came much later as a result of the creation. This is the central point of the *Nasadiya Sookta*. This in turn led to the various ramifications of philosophic and religious thought in the *Upanishads*.

Vedas as the source of development

The *Vedas* formed the basis for the later development of thought. The philosophic flights made by the *Vedas* climaxed in the *Upanishads*. *Vedas* inspired in the formulation of the school of *Yoga* which was codified in aphorisms by *Patanjali*. The visions of creation of the Universe expressed in the *Vedas* helped in the rise of the *Sankya* doctrine which regularised prevalent notions on cosmology and psychology. The logical trend found in the *Vedas* stimulated the development of *anvikshiki* (application of reason) and the rationalistic bias of certain systems among the *Darsanas*. The accounts of sages and kings which the *Vedas* bring out formed the basis for Epics and *Puranas*. The social rules and customs of the time formed the cornerstones in the systematization of conduct and law in the *Dharma Shastras*.

Vedas over the years

Veda, which is a *Shruti* literature, is treated as a supreme and an ultimate authority. The authentic *Smriti* literature (which we will study a little later) has its basis in the *Shruti*. Whenever, a difference arises between *Shruti* and the *Smriti*, the statement of *Shruti* is accepted as the final word. From time to time *Smriti* might undergo modifications, but the *Shruti* cannot be altered at all.

Rig Veda is built around a science of sound, which comprehends the meaning and power of each letter. All the other *Vedas* are based upon it and consist to a large degree of various hymns from it. Each and every letter in the hymns of the *Rig Veda* is pronounced in such a way that the exact meaning and power of the letter in it is clear and distinct from others. In *Rig Veda* the hymns are penned basing on the science of sound in order to make the pronunciation of each letter sound more powerful.

For several centuries, *Vedas* had to be committed to memory and were passed on orally from generation to generation. Manuscripts were sparingly used as memory aids. In this process, care has to be exercised to prevent errors from creeping in. A fool-proof method was devised.

Texts were used for aiding memorization and recitation of *Vedas* with utmost fidelity. They were called "*Lakshana Granthas*". These texts include *Padapathas*, *Ghanapathas*, *Kramapathas* and other *Vikrits* or modification of the root text, phonetic treatises like *Sikshas* and *Pratisakyas*. The modes of chanting prescribe the basics like how much time one has to take for reciting

a word, how to regulate breathing while reciting so that required vibrations are produced in the specific parts of the body which will yield pure word-sound. As a result, several *Vedic* texts were transmitted over several millennia with utmost fidelity, together with accent.

There is another reason for the great care the Rishis have taken for ensuring that the mantras are uttered exactly as they were intended to be. The power of the mantra lies in the manner it is uttered – on the sound and the vibrations it generates. The script cannot convey this. It has to be demonstrated and taught by the teacher to the pupil. *Shruti* is composed in *Vedic Sanskrit* and *Smritis* in *laukika Sanskrit*. There are some basic differences between these two types of *Sanskrit*. In *Vedic Sanskrit* the words have accent, akin to notes in music, and a word's meaning can change drastically simply by changing the accent of its letters. Therefore these words have to be heard properly from the guru.

The revelation

As we said, earlier, Vedas represent sublime knowledge revealed by the Supreme Divinity to great *Rishis* or *Seers* (*Drashtas*) during their meditation. However, it is not as if that all of it was revealed to one great *Rishi*. It is said that they have been revealed to a number of Rishis over a period of time. In the case of Rig Veda, it is believed, that around 400 sages were involved. Importantly, some of them were women sages. The Rig Veda is the only scripture in which the Divine Truths are revealed to women sages and in which hymns describing these revelations, find a prominent place in the *Rig Veda Samhita*. There are more than 30 women sages in Rig Veda with specific hymns associated with them..

Generally, around ten families have been identified as the original composers. They were – *Kanvas*, *Angirasas*, *Agastyas*, *Grtsamadas*, *Vishvamitras*, *Atris*, *Vashishtas*, *Kashyapas*, *Bharatas* and the *Bhrgus*. All their work was in one stream and contained 1180 *Shakhas* (recessions). These sages were men of great intellect and they memorized the entire Vedas before communicating the knowledge orally to their disciples.

During *Maharishi Vyasa's* time there were at least 1180 such *Shakhas*. Each *Shakha* was maintained and passed on by the Guru to the disciples.

The practice of oral communication and the teaching of Vedas continued for many centuries. Towards the end of *Dwapara Yuga*, it appeared as if the Vedas may even have to face extinction! It was at this point in time that *Maharishi Veda Vyasa* appeared on the scene. His contribution in the compilation of Vedas is an example of unparalleled erudition. With great perseverance he searched and collected the works of all *Rishis* on Vedas up to that point in time and categorized all of them. He compiled them into four

parts and they, in turn, came to be known as Vedas. The four Vedas are – *Rig Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, *Sama Veda* and *Atharva Veda*. His contribution did not stop with the codification of the Vedas. He further authored 18 *Puranas*, 18 *Upa Puranas*, *Brahma sutras* and the *Maha Bharata*. He still had time to teach the Vedas, thus divided, to his chief disciples.

No	Veda	Name of the disciple
1	<i>Rigveda</i>	<i>Paila</i>
2	<i>Yajurveda</i>	<i>Vaishampayana</i>
3	<i>Sama</i>	<i>Jaimini</i>
4	<i>Atharvan</i>	<i>Sumantu</i>

It is said that during every *Dwaparyug* of the present *Vaivasvat Manvantara*, different *Vyasa*s have divided the Vedas twenty-eight times.

Their names are given below –

<i>Dwaparyug</i>	<i>Veda Vyasa</i>	<i>Dwaparyug</i>	<i>Veda Vyasa</i>
1	Lord Brahma	15	<i>Trayyarun</i>
2	<i>Prajapati</i>	16	<i>Dhananjay</i>
3	<i>Shukracharya</i>	17	<i>Krutunjay</i>
4	<i>Brhaspati</i>	18	<i>Jay</i>
5	<i>Surya</i>	19	<i>Bharadwaj</i>
6	<i>Mrtyu</i>	20	<i>Gautam</i>
7	<i>Indra</i>	21	<i>Haryatma</i>
8	<i>Vashishta</i>	22	<i>Vajshrava</i>
9	<i>Sraswat</i>	23	<i>Trinbindhu</i>
10	<i>Tridhama</i>	24	<i>Riksh (Valmiki)</i>
11	<i>Trishikh</i>	25	<i>Shakti</i>
12	<i>Bharadwaj</i>	26	<i>Parashar</i>
13	<i>Antariksh</i>	27	<i>Jatukarn</i>
14	<i>Varani</i>	28	<i>Krishnadwaipayana</i>

An Overview

In the Hindu tradition, Veda is a single collection of all mantras. Every *mantra* (verse) is one of the 3 types. (a) *Rik* – *Mantra* of illumination in one of the several metres (b) *Saman* – *Mantra* with a *meter* which has to be sung according to the symbols indicated in the mantra. (c) *Yajus* – mantra in rhythmic prose. When Veda is referred to as threefold (*Trayi*) the reference is to these three types. *Rig Veda Samhita* and *Atharva Veda Samhita* have only *Rik Mantras*. The *Sama Veda Samhita* has only *Sama mantras*. But the *Yajur Veda Mantra Samhita* has both *Rik* and *Yajur mantras*. Many of the *Yajur Veda mantras* are found in the *Rig Veda Samhita* also.

Yajur Veda Samhita has two types of recessions (a) *Krishna* (mixed) *Yajur Veda Samhita* (b) *Shukla* (pure) *Yajur Veda Samhita*. One of the peculiarities of *Krishna Yajur Veda Mantra Samhita* is – some of its *anuvakas* contain *Brahmana* passages in plain prose. It is one of the reasons for this *Veda Samhita* being referred to as *Krishna* or mixed (i.e. mixed with *Brahmanas*). The *Shukla Yajur Veda* does not contain any *Brahmana* passages. The mantras in the *Yajur Veda Samhita* give only the mantras to be chanted on various occasions. It does not give details of the rites to be performed alongside with it. These details are given in books called *Brahmana*, and *Sutra* books like *Apasthamba*. Each *Veda Samhita* has one or more *Brahmana* books associated with it. *Aitareya Brahmana* is associated with the *Rig Veda*. *Taittiriya Brahmana* is associated with *Krishna Yajur Veda*. *Shatapatha Brahmana* is associated with *Shukla Yajur Veda*. The *Brahmana* books are called *Brahmana* passages. They are in the form of long prose sentences. Typically each passage will explain (a) Explanation of the particular mantra in the *Samhita* book. – from a ritualistic point of view (b) legends about the Gods (c) details of the rites, and of oblations to the Gods (d) details of *dakshina* to the priest (e) material benefits that you may expect by the performance of the rites.

It is important to understand the meaning of mantras in the context of *Vedas*. By mantra we mean either (a) *Rik mantra* adhering to a specific metre (b) *Yajus mantra* being a short rhythmic phrase. Mantra rises from the innermost depths of the *Rishi* and is revealed to him. The mantra embodies a deep chunk of knowledge or wisdom. The *Brahmana* passage, on the other hand, is a lengthy prose passage of 50 to 100 lines with the purpose of giving details on ritualistic explanations. The seers of mantras are *Rishis*. However, the seers of *Brahmanas* are only *acharyas*. This means the *Brahmanas* may not have been composed by *Rishis*. For this reason the *Brahmana* passages have much less authority than the *mantras*.

Animal Sacrifice

The key concept of Veda is *Yajna*. *Yajna* is not a mere ritual. It is a symbol of intense spiritual practice, both at the individual level and also at the collective level.

The question then arises as to whether “*Mantras of Veda Samhitas* support the killing of animals as part of the *Yajna* rites?”. Writings from authorities like *Sayana* appear to say “yes”. However, more modern intellectuals, like *Sir Aurobindo* argue on the concept of “*Inner Yajna*” and sacrifices are more symbolic in nature.

In the Hindu tradition *Vedas* are regarded as the source of all wisdom. These books contain the seed of the doctrine or the philosophical thought which then blossomed into the teachings of the *Upanishads*.

Divisions within Each Veda

Each Veda was further divided into four parts. This was done to suit the four stages in a man’s life.

Samhitas

The mantra portion of the Vedas is useful for Brahmacharins.

Rig Veda -Samhita

They are hymns in praise of the *Vedic* Gods for attaining material prosperity here and happiness hereafter. They are metrical poems addressed to various deities. They are called “*RiK*”. The priest for the *Rig Veda Mantra Samhita* is called *Hotri*. His function is to invoke deities to the sacrifice.

Yajur Veda Samhita

There are two *Yajur Vedas*. They are (a) *Shukla Yajur Veda* (b) *Krishna Yajur Veda*. The *Samhitas* here are in prose form. They are called “*Yajus*”. The priest, *Adhvaryu*, makes use of this. He performs the sacrifice according to strict ritualistic codes and makes offerings to the God.

Sama Veda Samhita

This is mostly borrowed from the *Rig Veda Samhita*. *Sama Veda* mantras are called “*Saman*”. A *Sama Vedic* priest *Udgatri* sings it.

Atharva Veda Samhita

Priest titled *Brahma* uses this. Being well versed in all the Vedas, he supervises and guides the sacrificial rites. The *Atharva Veda* is comprised of both *Riks* as well as *Yajus*.

Brahmanas

Basically they provide a guide to people performing sacrifices. They are prose explanations of the method of using the mantras in a *Yagna* or sacrifice. The Brahmanas are suitable for householders

- There are two Brahmanas for the Rig-Veda. They are Aitareya and Sankhayana.
- The Shukla Yajur Veda has Satapatha Brahmana. The Krishna Yajur Veda has two Brahmanas – Taittiriya Brahmana and Maitrayana Brahmana
- Sama Veda has Tandya or Panchavimsa, the Shadvimsa, the Chandogya, Adbhuta, Arsheya and Upanishad Brahmanas
- The Atharva Veda has Gopatha Brahmana

Aranyakas

They are intended for *Vanaprasthas* – people preparing themselves for the last stage of life have retired to the solitude of the forests. For them the physical performance of *Yajnas* may not be easy. The *Aranyaka* portion teaches methods based on the philosophical interpretations of the rituals.

Upanishads

They appear at the concluding portions of the Vedas and contain the knowledge portion of the Vedas. The philosophy of the Upanishads is sublime, profound and soul stirring. They deal with the subject of *Jagat*, *Jiva* and *Jagadishwara* and their relationship. In the Vedas, we notice, (a) portions dealing with action or performance of rituals (referred to as *Karma Kanda*); (b) portions dealing with method of worship and meditation (referred to as *Upasana Kanda*) and finally portions dealing *with* the highest knowledge or the knowledge of *Brahman* (*Jnana Kanda*). Basically, *Samhitas* and *Brahmanas* constitute the *karma kanda*, the *Aranyakas* constitute the *Upasana Kanda* and *Upanishads* constitute the *Jnana Kanda*.

Summarizing, the scheme of *Vedic* learning is first studying and recitation of the hymns (*Samhita*) followed by performance of *Yajnas* (*Brahmana*), then an enquiry into the rationale behind the performance of these *Yajnas* (*Aranyaka*) and lastly, an enquiry into '*Paramatma Tattwa*' and attaining its actual experience (*Upanishad*).

In many ways, the *Rig Veda Samhita* though the oldest, constitutes the basis for the other *Samhitas*. As an example, consider the *Samhitas* of *Rig Veda* (*Sakala*), *Yajur Veda* (*Madhyandina*), *Sama Veda* (*Kauthuma*) and *Atharva Veda* (*Saunaka*), we find a number of mantras are repeated. *Rig Veda*

mantras repeated in Sama Veda = 1800 Rig Veda mantras repeated in Yajur Veda = 581 : Rig Veda mantras repeated in Atharva Veda = 1260

In the case of the *Rig Veda*, *Sama Veda* and the *Atharva Veda*, there is a clear-cut separation of the Mantra collection from the *Brahmana* portions. In contrast, the *Yajur Veda* is of two types: *Shukla* (or white) *Yajur Veda* and *Krishna* (or black) *Yajur Veda*. In the former, the *Mantra* and *Brahmana* collections occur separate from each other. In the latter, the *Mantra* and the *Brahmana* portions are intermixed. Thus, the *Taittiriya 'Samhita'* belonging to the *Krishna Yajur Veda* has *Mantras* interspersed with *Brahmana* portions. Even the *Taittiriya 'Brahmana'* has both *Mantras* and *Brahmana* passages mixed with each other.

Coming to the *Brahmana* texts, there is often no clear-cut distinction between the *Brahmanas* proper and the *Aranyakas*, or between the *Aranyakas* and the *Upanishads*. The *Brahmana* text proper often merges into the *Aranyakas* and many old *Upanishads* are actually embedded in the *Aranyakas*.

At this stage, it may be appropriate to understand some of the terms we come across frequently in Vedic literature.

- a) Mantras: They are hymns sung in praise of Gods. In the *Rig Veda* each *Rik* is a mantra.
- b) Sookta: The *Rig Veda Samhita* is in the form of verses called *Riks*. In later years *Riks* came to be known as *Slokas*. A number of *Riks* or *mantras* constitute a *Sookta*. Examples are *Purusha Sookta*, *Narayana Sookta*, and *Sri Sookta* etc.
- c) Sootra: They are aphorisms or declarations using minimum number of words. It contains the essence of the thought without any ambiguity. Examples are _ *Brahma Sootra*, *Narada Bhakti Sootra*, *Patanjali Yoga Sootra* etc.
- d) Shakhas: The traditional source of information on the *Shakhas* of each *Veda* is *Carana- Vyuha*.

The *Vedic* literature that has come down to our times is attached to various traditional schools of recitation and ritual called "*Shakhas*". The *Rig Veda* was then divided into 21 sections, the *Yajur Veda* into 109 sections (recessions), *Sama Veda* into 1000 sections and *Atharva Veda* into 50 sections. . Thus the whole *Veda* was divided into 1180 recessions.

The tradition of recitation of Vedic texts originated in the north of India. Communities of Brahmins, over a period of time, migrated from one part of India to another. Thus the various *Shakhas* of *Vedas* were spread throughout

India. Today, we now have only two *Shakas* of the *Rig Veda*, *Shakala Shakha* and *Baskala Shaka*, remain alive out of the 21 that existed at one time.

Vedas - Sub Divisions

Rig Veda Mantra Samhita

The *Rig Veda Samhita* is, generally, classified in two different schemes.

Mandala, Anuvaka and Sookta (known as *Mandala- Sookta* scheme)

Ashtak, Adhyaya and Sookta (known as *Ashtak- Adhyaya* scheme).

Of these two schemes, the *Mandala- Sookta* scheme is the most popular

The Rig Veda Samhita has been divided into 10 *Mandalas* (books). The *Mandalas* were sub-divided into *Anuvakas* (sections); the *Anuvakas* were sub-divided into *Sooktas* (hymns) and the *Sooktas* into *mantras*.

Rig Veda Samhita						
Mandala	Anuvaka	Sookta	Mantra	Deities addressed	Composer family	Comments
M1	24	191	2006	Agni, Indra, Varuna, Maruts, Rudra, Mitra etc	Kanvas, Angirasa, Agastya, Vishvamitra, Vashishta, Kasyapa, Bharata	
M2	4	43	429	Indra, Agni	Grtsamadas, Bhrgus	
M3	5	62	617	Agni, Indra, Vishvadevas	Vishvamitras, Angirasa, Bhrgu	3.62.10 is Gayatri mantra
M4	5	58	589	Indra, Agni, Usas, Brihaspati, Ashwins	Angirasa	
M5	6	87	727	Indra, Agni, Vishvadevas, Maruts	Atri, Angirasa, Agastya, Vishvamitra, Vashishta	
M6	6	75	765	Indra, Agni, Ashwin, Pusan, Usasa	Angirasa	
M7	6	104	841	<i>Indra, Agni, Vishvadevas, Maruts</i>	<i>Vashishta</i>	
M8	10	103	1716	<i>Different Gods</i>	<i>Kanva, Angirasa, Agastya, Atri, Kasyapa, Bhrgu</i>	
M9	7	114	1108	<i>Soma Pavamana</i>	<i>Kanva, Angirasa, Agastya, Vishvamitra, Atri, Vashishta, Kashyapa, Bharata, Bhrgu</i>	
M10	12	191	1754	<i>Agni, other Gods</i>	<i>Kanva, Angirasa, Agastya, Vishvamitra, Atri, Vashishta, Kashyapa, Bharata, Bhrgu</i>	<i>Purusha Sookta & Nasadiya Sookta are found in this Mandala</i>
Total	85	1028	10,552			

There were a few outstanding female Vedic writers who have composed the Hymns. A brief list is given below.

Names of Rishikas	Veda reference (Mandala/Sookta)	No. Of Riks	About the writer	Comments
<i>Vak Devi</i>	10 / 125	8	Daughter of Rmbhirana	Known as Devi-Sookta
<i>Visvavara</i>		6	Atri clan	
<i>Aditi</i>	10 / 153 4 / 18	5 plus 5th, 6th, 7th	Wife of sage Kasyapa. Daughter of Daksha Prajapati. Mother of Adityas & Devas	
<i>Apala</i>	8 / 91	8	Atri clan	
<i>Yami</i>	10 / 154	10		
<i>Urvashi</i>	10 / 95	7		
<i>Lopamudra</i>	1 / 179	2	Princess of Vidarbha. Wife of great Sage Agastya	
<i>Romasha</i>	1 / 126	1	Queen of Bhava Yavya. Mother of King Svanaya	
<i>Kadru, Ghosha, Juhu, Vagambrini, Paulomi, Indrani, Savitri and some others</i>				

The topics dealt with in the Rig Veda Samhita may be classified into 3 groups.

1. The first group is in praise of the deities like Agni, Indra, Varuna, Mitra and others. Although these deities appear as controlling forces of nature, they are, in fact, manifestations of One Supreme Reality. The famous mantra on this point '*ekam sat viprah bahudha vadanti*' meaning 'Truth is one, sage's call it by various names' occurs in this Samhita.
2. The second group is concerned with philosophical speculations like the origin of the Universe and the real nature of human beings. Although the Samhita is a book of laudatory hymns all the later ideas of Vedanta including Jnana and Bhakti are found there in a basic form. The worship of God with form and qualities - *Sagunoposona* - is predominant. The proclamation contained in various mantras show that it teaches eka-devata-vada or monotheism and not polytheism. For example, the *Samhita* states that God creates the world out of Himself and rules over it; He is omnipresent (present everywhere), omnipotent (all powerful) and omniscient (all knowing), He is ever perfect, infinitely compassionate, easily approachable by the devotees (*Kalyana gunas*). He alone grants us *Moksha*. However, the idea about actual process of creation of the universe finds a place only in the later Vedantic literature i.e. the *Upanishads*.
3. The third group deals with several secular subjects like marriage, war etc., which show the nature of society of those times. A just and equitable social order existed. However, social life was conditioned by spiritual consciousness. There was *Samanvaya* or harmony of life here and hereafter. *Satya* (truth) and *Dharma* (righteousness) are glorified and *Amritatva* (immortality) as the goal of life was accepted.

The school of philosophical thought known as the *Vedanta (Upanishads)* is also called *Uttara-mimamsa*. The founder of the *Vedanta* system of philosophy was *Maharshi Veda Vyasa* (also referred to as *Badarayana Vyasa*). The founder of *Purva-mimamsa* school was *Sri Jaimini*, the disciple of *Sri Veda Vyasa*. Of these two the *Purva-mimamsa* is generally understood to imply inquiry into the *Mantra* portion of the *Vedas*. The *Uttara-mimamsa* is understood to mean an inquiry into the *Upanishad* portion of the *Vedas*. In other words *Purva-mimamsa* treats *Karma kanda*; *Uttara-mimamsa* deals with *Jnana kanda*. *Brahma Sutras* of *Sri Veda Vyasa* are termed as *Vedanta Darsanas*. The *Brahma Sutras* are the outcome of harmonizing of the apparently conflicting *Upanishadic* texts.

The *Vedas*, each of which has *Samhita*, *Brahmana*, *Aranyaka* and *Upanishad* were again sub-divided into two parts viz. the *Karma kanda* (work portion) and

Jnana kanda (knowledge portion). The former (*Karma kanda*) leads man to the world of happiness and enjoyment in *Svarga* or heaven. The *Jnana kanda* leads man to liberation or *Moksha*. The *Samhita* and *Brahmana* sections make up the *Karma kanda*. *Aranyaka* and *Upanishad* sections form *Jnana kanda*. *Brahma Vidya* refers to that knowledge by which *Brahman* is attained and it is dealt with in the *Upanishads*.

The *Vedas* have been divided into four parts (*Rig Veda* and others). Yet each of them has many branches. So also the *Upanishads*. In the *Rig Veda* there are 21 branches. There are 109 branches in the *Yajur Veda* and 1000 branches in the *Sama Veda*. *Adharvana Veda* has 50 branches. In each branch there is one *Upanishad*.

Rig Veda Brahmanas

The *Brahmana* of the *Rig Veda* presents the procedure for *Yagna* and tells how to use the *Riks* for *yagnas*. There are two *Brahmana* texts namely *Aitareya* and *Kausitaki*. The primary topics of discussion are the *Soma* and the *Rajasuya Yagna*.

Aitareya Brahmana

It is also known as *Ashvalayana Brahmana*. It consists of 40 *Adhyayas* (chapters) , which are further divided into eight *Panchakas* or fifths. Tradition names *Mahida Aitareya* as the author of the work. This *Brahmana* deals chiefly with the *Soma*-sacrifice, besides the fire-sacrifice and the feast of the consecration for kings (*Rajasuya*).

Kaushitaki Brahmana

It is also known as *Sankhayana Brahmana*. This also belongs to the *Rig Veda*, and consists of thirty *Adhyayas*. The first six *Adhyayas* deal with the food-sacrifice (fire-laying, fire-sacrifice, new and full moon sacrifices and the sacrifices of the seasons), while *Adhyayas* 7 to 10 deal with the *Soma*-sacrifice agreeing with the *Aitareya Brahmana*. The *Kausitaki Brahmana* is later than the *Aitareya Brahmana*.

Rig Veda Aranyakas

These texts do not deal with the details regarding the actual performance of various sacrificial ceremonies but essentially devote themselves to the exposition of the philosophy behind the ritual.

Each of the *Rig Veda Brahmana* is supplemented by an *Aranyaka*. They are (a) *Aitareya Aranyaka* (b) *Kaushitaki Aranyaka*.

Aitareya Aranyaka

It consists of 5 books with each one of them being called *Aranyaka*. Each of the *Aranyaka* has been sub-divided into *Adhyayas* or chapters. Each *Adhyaya*

has been sub-divided into *khandas* or chapters. The first book gives an explanation of the *Mahavrata* from a ritualistic point of view.. The second book consists of two distinct parts. The first part deals with the importance of speech in human life, creative powers of *Purusha* (Supreme Being) as material and efficient cause of creation, importance of *Prana* in life, creative powers of God etc. The second book consisting chapters 4 to 6 and is the Upanishad par excellence. The third book contains the mystic meaning of various forms of the text of the *Samhita*. The fourth book deals solely with the *Mahanaamni* verses. The fifth book consists of a description in *Sutra* style of the *Mahavrata* ceremony.

Kaushitaki-Aranyaka

It is also called by the name *Shankhayana Aranyaka*. This consists of 15 *Adhyayas*. The first two treat the *Mahavrata* ceremony. The 7th and 8th *Adhyayas* correspond to the 1st, 5th and the 3rd books of the *Aitareya Aranyaka*. The four *Adhyayas* usually inserted between them constitute the highly interesting *Kaushitaki (Brahmana-) Upanishad*.

Rig Veda Upanishads

Etymologically the word '*Upanishad*' means that which is taught to the pupils sitting at the feet of their teachers. Thus the Upanishads are books of wisdom taught by the accomplished teachers to the deserving students. If there is any scripture in the world that has sustained the spiritual thinking over the millennia, it is the *Upanishads*. All the schools of thought, religious movements that flourished in the later periods in Indian history have been by-products of the *Upanishadic* thinking. The knowledge given in the Upanishads destroys ignorance of man and leads him to Brahman. The number of works that go by the name *Upanishad* and available today exceeds 200. The *Muktikopanishad* gives a list of 108 *Upanishads*. *Sri Adi Shankaracharya* selected 10 as the principal *Upanishads*. *Sri Shankaracharya* was the earliest and the first to comment upon the *Upanishads*. It goes to the credit of *Sri Shankara* that through his masterly commentaries he brought out the Upanishads from obscurity and made them accessible and intelligible to a wider audience.

Sri Ramanujacharya, who lived between 1017 and 1137 AD, did not comment on any of the *Upanishads* but had enriched some of their concepts in his *Vedantasangraha*. His follower *Sri Rangaramanuja* completed the task by commenting on all the major *Upanishads*.

Sri Madhvacharyacharya who lived between 1197 and 1276 AD wrote brief commentaries on all the ten ancient Upanishads upon which his followers had also written explanatory studies.

Among the *Upanishads*, *Isavasyopanishad* attracted the attention of the maximum number of scholars and sages who had commented upon it over the centuries.

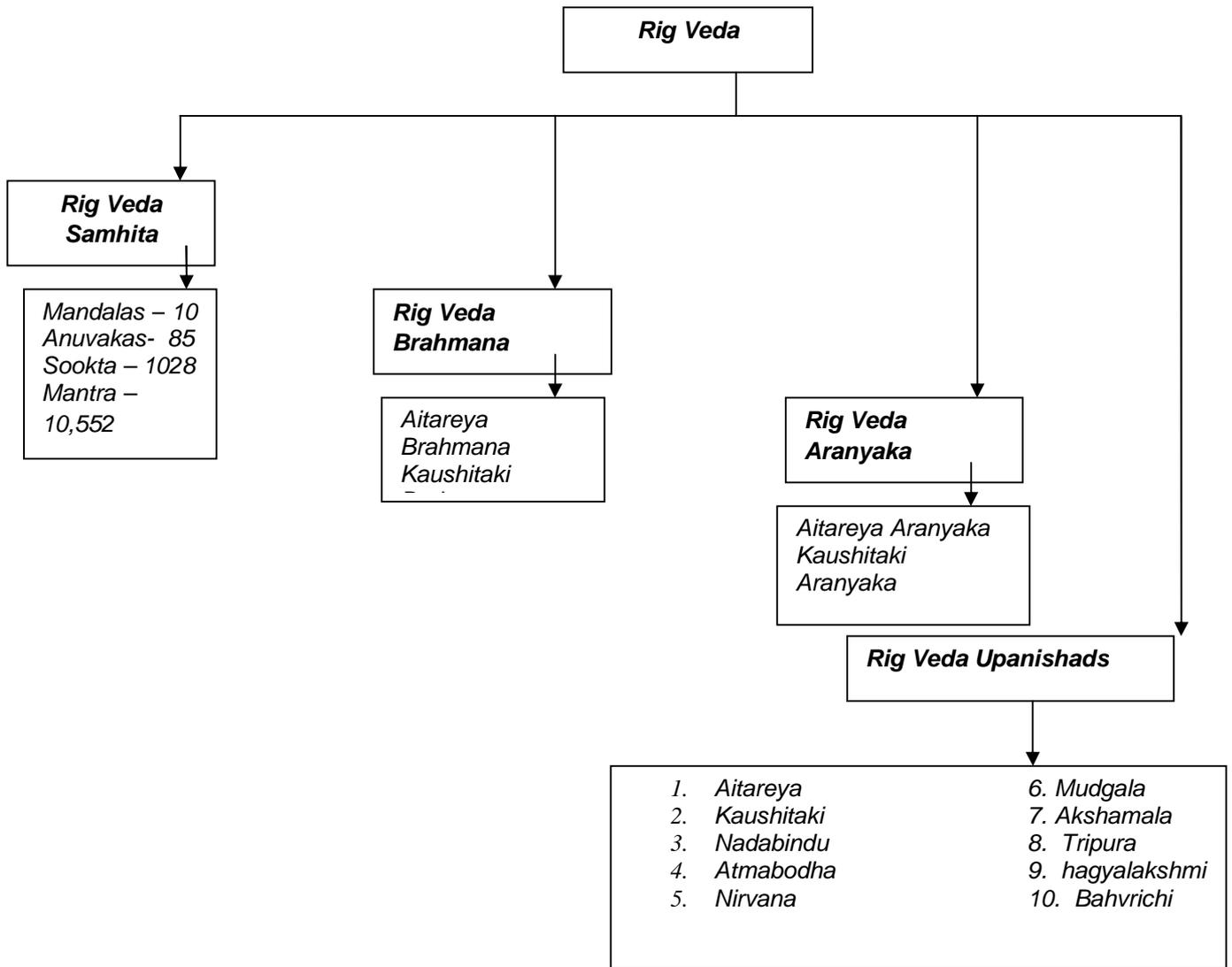
The list of the major 15 *Upanishads* and the *Vedas* they are associated with are given below-

S.No	Upanishad	Associated Veda
1	Isavasya Upanishad	Shukla Yajur Veda
2	Kena Upanishad	Sama Veda
3	Kathopanishad	Krishna Yajur Veda
4	Aitareya Upanishad	Rig Veda
5	<i>Brihadaranyaka Upanishad</i>	<i>Sama Veda</i>
6	<i>Prashna Upanishad</i>	<i>Atharva Veda</i>
7	<i>Mandukya Upanishad</i>	<i>Atharva Veda</i>
8	<i>Taittiriya Upanishad</i>	<i>Krishna Yajur Veda</i>
9	<i>Chandogya Upanishad</i>	<i>Sama Veda</i>
10	<i>Mundaka Upanishad</i>	<i>Atharva Veda</i>
11	<i>Jaabala Upanishad</i>	<i>Shukla Yajur Veda</i>
12	<i>Svetasvatara Upanishad</i>	<i>Krishna Yajur Veda</i>
13	<i>Kausitaki Upanishad</i>	<i>Rig Veda</i>
14	<i>Pingala</i>	<i>Shukla Yajur Veda</i>
15	<i>Maharanayana Upanishad</i>	<i>Krishna Yajur Veda</i>

The breakdown among the 108 *Upanishads* is given below

Veda	Number of Upanishads
Rig Veda	10
Sama Veda	16
Atharva Veda	31
Krishna Yajur Veda	32
Shukla Yajur Veda	19

A brief description of the individual *Upanishads* will be given at a later section. The following chart presents a summary on the divisions of *Rig Veda*



Yajur Veda Samhita

Yajur Veda Samhita is a collection *Yajus* or the *Mantras* in prose which gives procedural details to the *Advaryu* priest for performing *Yagnas*. While both contain verses for rituals, *Krishna Yajur Veda* includes the *Brahmana* prose discussions mixed with the *Samhita*. In the case of *Shukla Yajur Veda* it has a separate *Brahmana* sect, the *Shatapatha Brahmana*.

There are two major *Shakhas* in the *Yajur Veda* - They are:

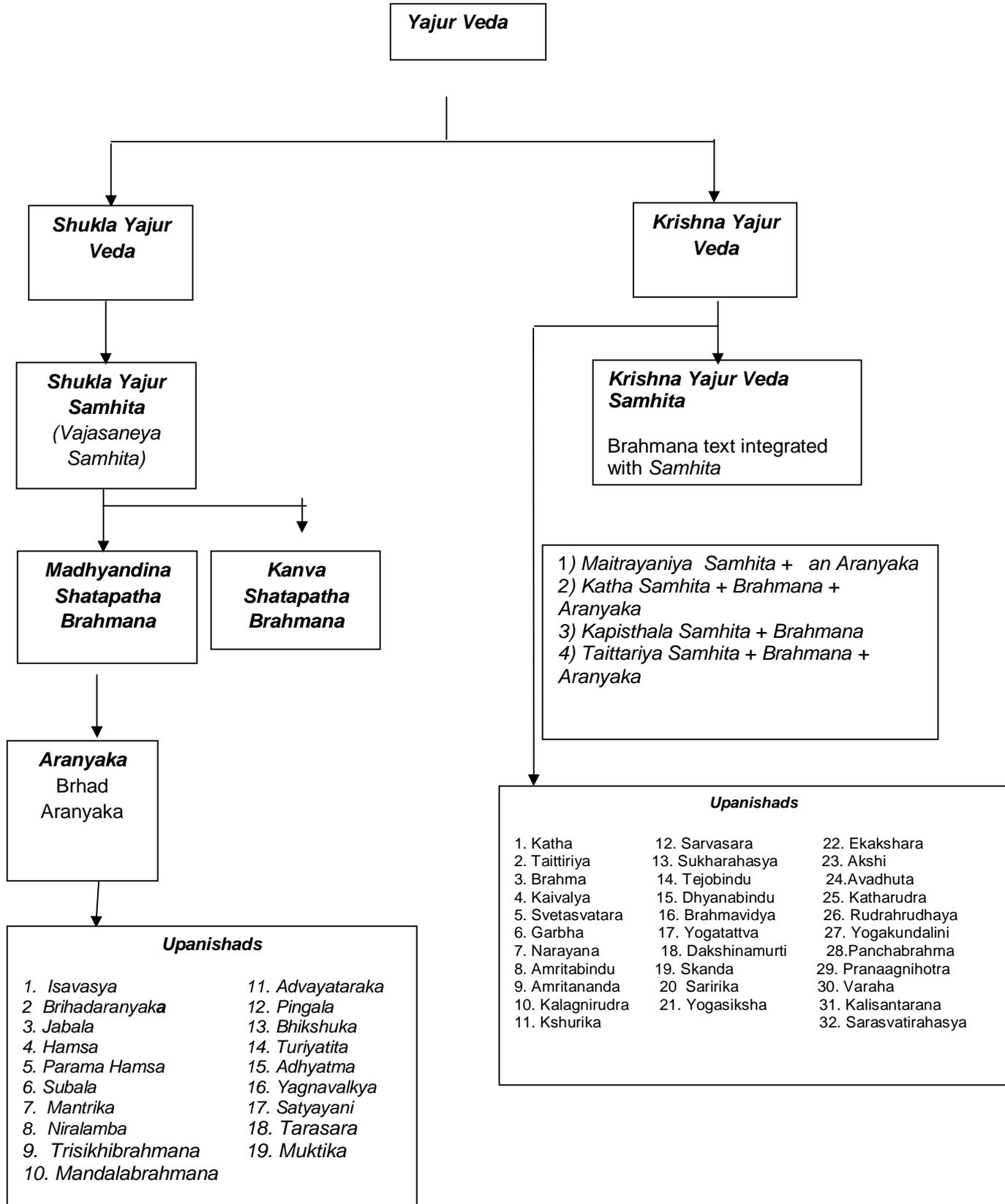
Shukla Yajur Veda

The *Shukla Yajur Veda* is also referred to as “*Vajasaneya Samhita*” Though it originally had 15 recessions, it now survives in two recessions – *Madhyandina Shatapatha Brahmana* and *Kanva Shatapatha Brahmana*. The *Madhyandina* was divided into 14 *Kandas* containing 100 *Adhyayas*, 68 *Prapathakas*, 436 *Brahmanas* and 7179 *Kandikas*. The *Kanva* was divided into 17 *Kandas* containing 104 *Adhyayas*, 435 *Brahmanas* and 6806 *Kandikas*. Note it has no *Prapathakas*.

Krishna Yajur Veda

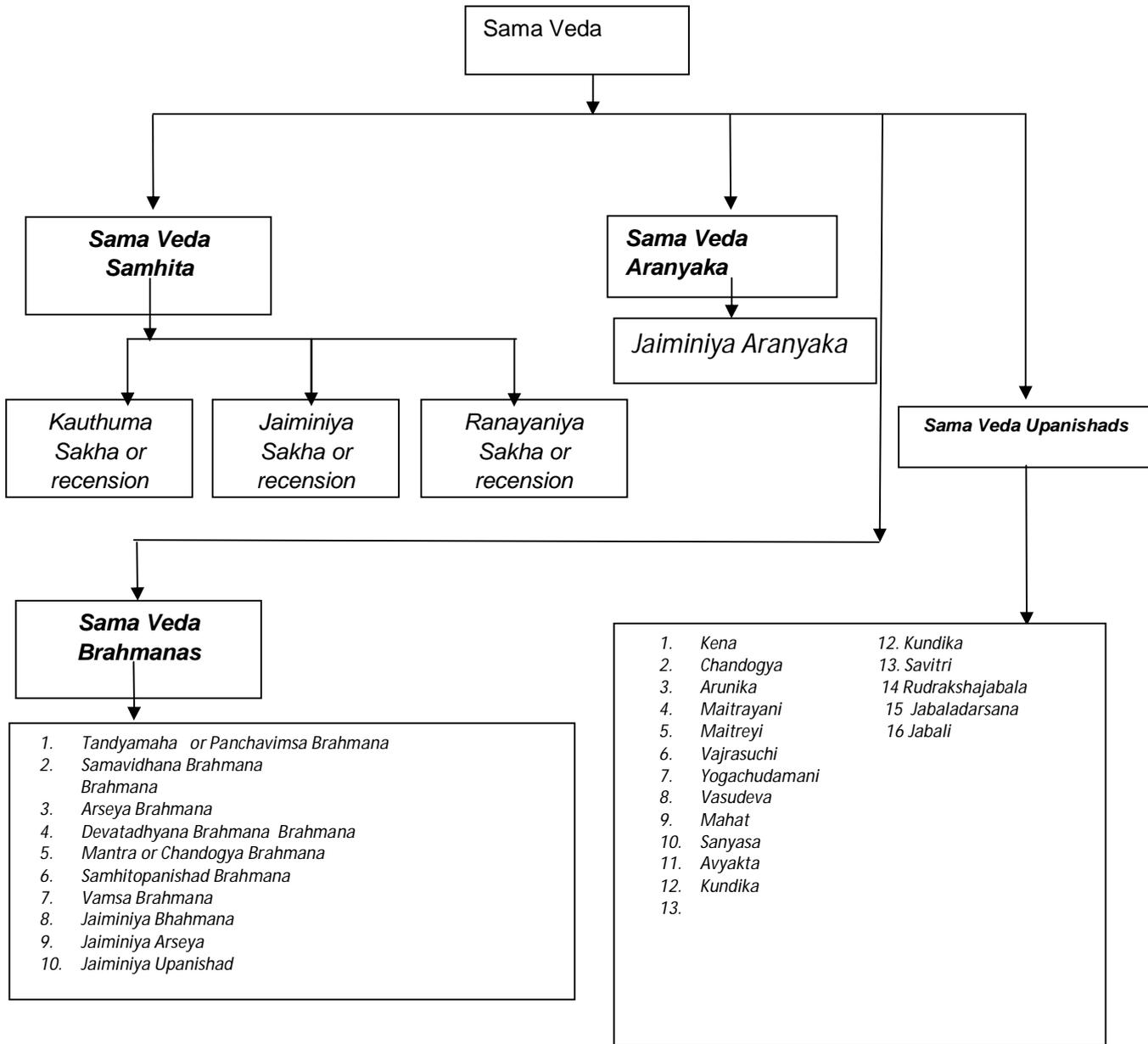
The *Taittiriya Brahmana* in the *Krishna Yajur Veda* has – 3 *Kandas* divided into 8,8 and 12 *Adhyayas* and a total of 17,480 sentences. Apart from this, the *Krishna Yajur Veda Brahmana* has *Maitrayani Samhita* and an *Aranyaka*; *Katha Samhita* with an additional *Brahmana* and *Aranyaka* and *Kapisthala Samhita* and a few fragments of its *Brahmana*.

The following table summarizes the divisions within the *Yajur Veda*.



Sama Veda Samhita

In its importance in *Yagas* and sacredness, *Sama Veda Samhita* rank next to *Rig Veda*. However, Lord *Krishna* has put the *Sama Samhita* on top of all the four *Samhitas*. *Sama Samhita* consists of hymns chanted by *Udhgatir* priests at *Sama Yagas*. Yet, it is not considered as an independent work. All the *mantras* of the *Rig Veda* which are useful for the *Udhgatir* priest for chanting in the *Yajnas* to ensure the grace of Gods have been brought together in this *Veda*. The *Sama Veda Samhita* comprises of 1875 verses (*Riks*) out of which all but 75 are traceable to *Shakalya Samhita* of the *Rig Veda*. *Saman* is a *mantra* of the *Rig Veda* set to music. Unlike the *mantras* of the other three *Vedas*, the *mantras* of the *Sama Veda* are simply known as *Samans* having seven *svaras*. It is said to form the basis for the Indian music system. Of the many *Samhitas* of the *Sama Veda* (the *Puranas* speak of 1000 *Samhitas*), which were said to have existed once, we now have only three available to us today. Some people divide *Samhita* into 2 broad divisions – *Purvarchika* and *Uttararchika*. The marked difference between the melodies of *Purvarchika* and *Uttararchika* is that the former is constituted on a single verse basis while the later is based on three verses. As indicated earlier, *Lakshana Granthas*, are available for aiding memorization and recitation of *Vedas*. However, in some cases, the accents are lost with time and the texts had to be recited without Vedic accents. For instance the *Brahmanas* of the *Sama Veda* lost their accents as early as 7th century C.E. Similarly, the *Paippalada Samhita* is recited by its followers today without the Vedic accents (i.e., in *eka-shruti*). In the case of the *Madhyandina Samhita*, the oral intonations are not related to the accent of the written text.



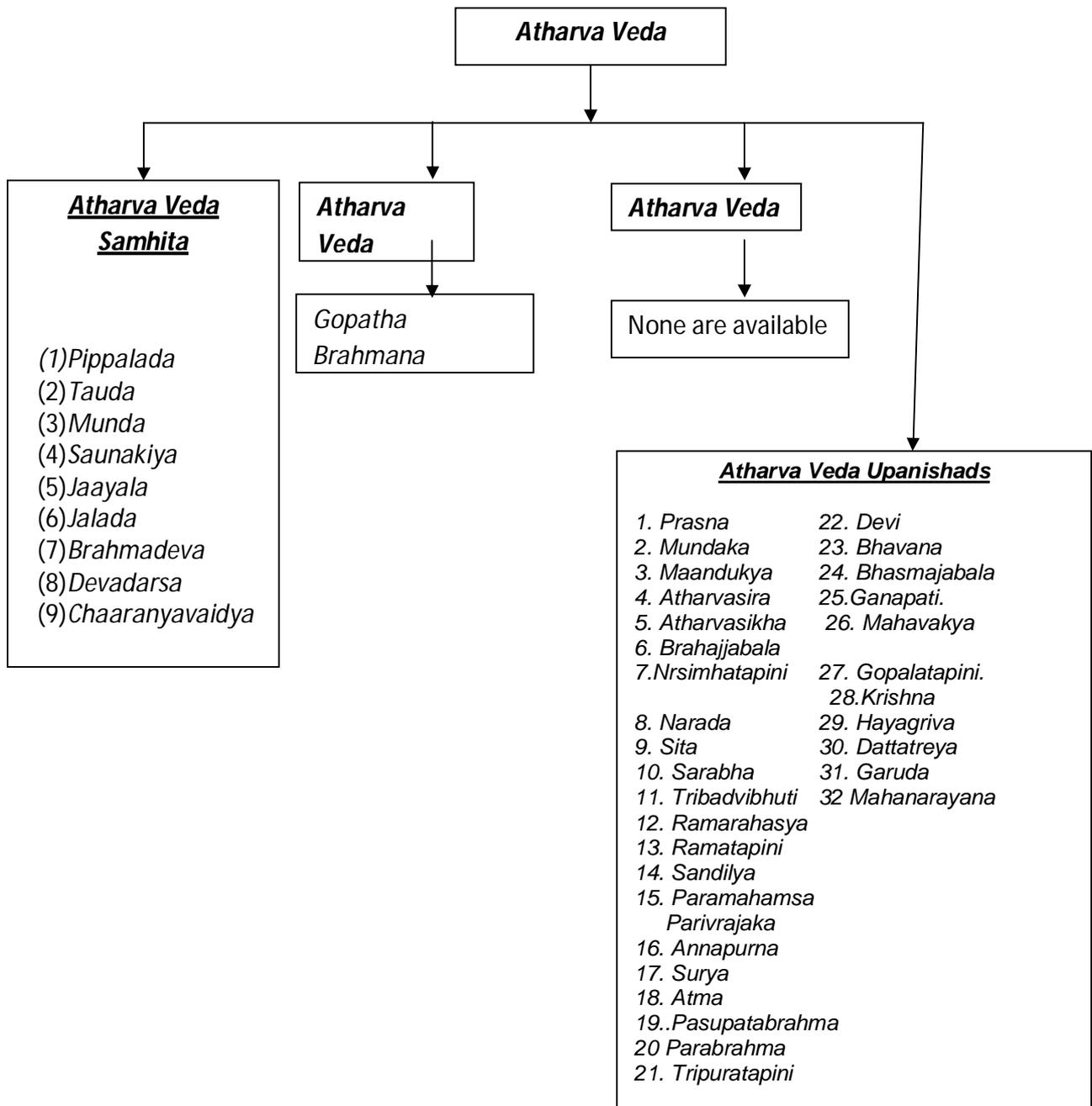
Atharva Veda Samhita

Atharva refers to a *Purohit* or *pundit*. This Veda is said to have been brought to light by a sage named *Atharvan*. Hence the Veda is called *Atharva Veda*. This is also called *Brahma Veda* because it is assigned to the *Brahma* priest who supervises the conduct of the *Yajna*. The mantras in this *Veda* appear both in prose and Verse form. It is often said that this was not given the status of a Veda and was elevated to this position later. This Veda has some special features and for that reason stands apart from the others. It deals more with things here and now than the hereafter and the sacrifices therein are used to achieve these results. The main theme of the *Atharva Veda* is cure for diseases, rites for prolonging life, fulfilment of one's desires, statecraft, penances, magic, charms, spells and sorcery. While the Gods of *Rig Veda* are approached with love, the *Gods of Atharva Veda* are approached with fear and favours are sought to ward off their wrath. Homage is paid to them to abstain from doing harm. Sophisticated literary style and high metaphysical ideas mark this *Veda*. Of the many original *Samhitas*, only two are available today – (a) *Shaunakiya* (b) *Pippalada*. The *Shaunakiya Samhita* has 5977 *mantras* arranged in 20 books, called “*kandas*”. The *Pippalada Samhita* has about 7950 *mantras* arranged in as many *kandas*. This *Veda* offers a better insight into the culture and life of the *Vedic* society. The reason is – it has hymns connected with wedding, agriculture, battle, medicine, domestic ceremonies etc. Significantly, dozens of hymns are devoted to Hindu spirituality and are, often, at par with the *Upanishads*. The following chart shows the spread of literature coming under the *Atharva Veda*. This *Veda* had nine branches or rescensions. Out of the nine, only two branches are available today – *Saunakha* and *Pippalada*.

The *Atharva Veda Samhita* has 5977 verses spread over 20 *Khandams* (books or chapters). The *Khandams* are further divided into hymns and they in turn house a group of mantras.

There is only one *Brahmana* of the *Atharva Veda* that is existing today – *Gopatha Brahmana*. It has been divided into two major parts – *Purva Bhaaga* and the *Uttara Bhaaga*. These, in turn, are divided into eleven sections called “*Prapathakas*”. The *Purva Bhaaga* exhibits more originality of content and glorifies the *Atharvan* and its priests. The *Uttara Bhaaga* follows other *Brahmanas* in its content. It introduces legends related to *Atharvan* teachers.

The *Atharva Veda* has no surviving *Aranyaka*. One may regard the *Gopatha Brahmana* as its *Aranyaka*.



Interpreting Vedic Texts

A number of methods have been used in ancient and modern times to interpret Vedic texts. Since the Vedic texts themselves were heterogeneous, no single method is best suited to interpreting the entire Vedic literature. A few examples are given below.

S.No	School of interpretation	Comments
1	Yajnika School	This is a ritualistic interpretation of the Vedas. <i>Samhitas, Brahmanas and Kalpasutras provide the needed support</i>
2	Nirukta School	This is the etymological method of interpretation of words and phrases occurring in the Vedas. The well known text explaining this mode of interpretation is <i>Nirukta of Yaksha</i> .
3	Dharmashastric School	This provides legal instructions from certain verses of the <i>Veda</i> .
4	Mimamsa school	Followers of this school believe that all the Veda texts should be treated as a harmonious whole. The correct meaning of the hymns can be understood if we consider the context, the relationship of various sentences and of words in those sentences. However, the method is mostly restricted to the interpretation of Brahmanas, Aranyakas and the Upanishads.
5	Aitihāsika School	The followers argue, that each mantra is related to an <i>Itihāsa</i> . So they interpret the concerned hymn or verses in conjunction with that <i>Itihāsa</i>
6	Parivrajaka School:	Since Vedic Samhitas convey spiritual ideas, hymns can be explained in a spiritualistic way.
7	Vaiyākaraṇa School	Interpretation by application of rules of grammar.

Kinds of Knowledge

In *Manduka Upanishad*, a conversation between a disciple *Shaunaka* and his teacher *Angirasa* is described. *Shaunaka* asks a very profound question

“O glorious one! Please tell me as to knowing what we shall come to know everything.” It is essentially a wish for omniscience. In life a number of people invest a large part of their entire life, money and energy in pursuit of knowledge. At the end they become humble and start feeling that they have after all learnt very little and there is a lot more to learn. Every such person shall have a profound respect to *Shaunaka’s* question.

Angirasa, the teacher was very pleased with the question. He begins his answer by classifying knowledge into two categories. They are (a) *Apara Vidya* (b) *Para Vidya*.

Apara Vidya

Apara Vidya refers to all knowledge that we refer to as “worldly knowledge”. *Apara Vidya* is categorized as a lower kind of knowledge. Under this category comes all the modern day subjects like – Science, arts, commerce, management, technology, engineering etc. In ancient days they studied what are called “*Vidyas*”. *Vidyas* include – Four *Vedas*, six *Vedangas*, *Meemamsa*, *Nyaya*, *Puranas* and other religious scriptures. These fourteen *vidyas* together with *Ayurveda*, *Dhanurveda*, *Gandharva Veda* and *Artha Shastra* becomes eighteen. Even these eighteen *Vidyas* also come under the category of lower kind of knowledge – *Apara Vidya*”!

Apara Vidya shall help us to make a living, have a dignified & respectable life, have a thoughtful intelligent mind, but never ever hope that you shall move towards omniscience. This is not the way for the fulfilment of such an aspiration.

Para Vidya

The second category of knowledge is referred to as *Para Vidya*. It is a higher category of knowledge. The teacher says *Para Vidya* refers to that kind of knowledge by which the imperishable (*Akshara Brahman*) is known. This statement implies that there does exist a method and a tradition by which we can realize that which is “permanent and imperishable”. Both the object of knowledge and methods to be pursued to realize the goal are entirely different.

Though various words are used to define the *Akshara Brahman*, none of the words can clearly define the imperishable. Because use of a word limits the object and the *Parabrahman* is limitless. In fact, the imperishable is not the object of our knowledge. He is the subject. However, there is a very clear & definite way of knowing this subjective essence. The teacher uses various pointers, like *Adrekshyam* (not-seen), etc.

The pursuit of *Apara Vidya* which includes deep study of *Vedas*, *Vedangas* and other *Vidyas* will not lead us to realize the *Akshara Brahman*. Under the

careful guidance of a Guru, *Para Vidya* can help us achieve this objective. Even though the meaning of *Para* and *Apara* are higher and lower knowledge the Upanishad says that both of them are required. *Apara Vidya* instructs one on the disciplines for gaining the necessary qualification to be able to understand and assimilate the *Para Vidya*. Without *Apara Vidya*, *Para Vidya* is impossible and without *Para Vidya*, *Apara Vidya* is incomplete.

Interpretation by Western philosophers

Polytheism, monotheism, monism have all been read into the Vedic hymns. Max Muller even coined the term “henotheism”, as the transitional stage between polytheism and monotheism in the hymns. In the opinion of some modern scholars the Vedic hymns reveal a gradual progress of philosophical thought i.e., from polytheism to monotheism to monism!

This major flaw in interpretation is not surprising when it is understood that such an opinion springs from viewing Indian philosophy through a Western philosophical looking glass.

The fundamental difference between Western philosophy and Indian philosophy, especially the scriptures, is that while Western philosophy tries to uncover the real with the use of the intellect, Indian philosophy is basically an attempt to logically reconcile the world of experience with the spiritual experience of the sages. The sages, such as *Yajnavalkya*— had in fact experienced reality. Unlike Western philosophers they're not speculating, analysing with the help of reason what reality might be. They know what it is because they have experienced it . By using analogies they are trying to describe it. Indian scholarship is more interested in seeking the 'fruit' of Vedic studies, whereas the Western scholarship concerned primarily with the 'roots' of the Vedic texts and words.

The chart presented earlier summarises the structure of the Sanskrit literature.

Chapter IV – Darsanas

Darsanas are schools of philosophy mostly based on the Vedas. Darsanas appeal to the intellect, while Itihasas and Puranas appeal to the heart. Philosophy, like most other systems of thought in India, is based on religious experience, metaphysics and ethics, rather than on epistemology. That logic should legislate for our experience is an important thing and cannot be denied. However, it is equally important to see that logic should find its feet on the ground and not allowed to soar in the sky without any let or control of facts. At the end of the day Yadaartha Jnaana is the main aim of all philosophizing. Experience is manifold, and the truth about experience must embrace all facts falling within that experience. If segments of experience alone are accepted, denying the rest it will only result in a logical collapse. Talking about logic, the Indian school of logic is not a recent arrival on the Indian scene. Gautama (6th Century BCE or earlier) founded the Anviksiki School of logic. The Indian logic is the oldest and it was followed much later by the Greek and Chinese traditions.

All metaphysical searches are after the Supreme Reality. Knowledge of the Real is possible. The question for us is – how do you apprehend the Supreme Reality. There are several theories of knowledge. Science takes its start from perceptual experience - undoubtedly the only type of experience of Reality. Yet, the existence of God transcends the conditions of space and time. (desa – Kaala). He cannot be known through ordinary perception or inference. The Supreme Being is beyond the pale of Pramaanaas of perception and anumaana. It is only by the grace of Divine can the Highest be known, understood and entered. Only then will that Perfect Being become a real being for the individual. That there is a higher demand on us, the parama-purushaartha (which means the demand to conceive, perceive and even experience the actual existence of the Supreme Reality), has been well documented. We shall start the study of the different philosophical systems by understanding the terms that will be used.

	Means of Right Knowledge	Comments
1	<i>Pratyaksham</i>	<i>That which is obtained by sense contact. Direct seeing is an example</i>
2	<i>Anumana</i>	<i>Inferential knowledge. Seeing the smoke we infer there is fire</i>
3	<i>Upamana</i>	<i>Argument based on similarity. Seeing an animal in the forest, the villager says it looked like a cow</i>
4	<i>Shabda</i>	<i>Hearsay</i>

we shall now consider the different thoughts based on (a) tattva or object of knowledge (Prameya) (b) source of right knowledge (Pramana) (c) Goal of life

(Purushartha). Indian thinkers did not divorce the goal of life (Purushartha) from their view of life (tattvajnana). It is not being pursued as – knowledge for knowledge sake.

In India, there are basically 9 classifications of philosophies. However, some later scholars included Advaita, Vishishtadvaita and Dvaita into the list of Astika philosophies. In this article we will discuss Charvaka Darshana from the Nastika system and the classical Shad-Darsanas (six philosophies) given below.

1. Nastika (a) Charvaka (b) Jaina (c) Buddha
2. Astika a) Sankya (b) Yoga (c) Nyaya (d) Vaiseshika
(e) Purva Mimamsa (f) Vedanta (Uttara Mimamsa)

The Nastika systems are those that deny the authoritativeness of Veda Pramana. They may accept any other human authorities. The Astika systems accept the authority of Veda as a conclusive Pramana. That is the basic difference.

Nastika system: Charvaka Darsana

It is said to have been taught by Charvaka, a pupil of Brhaspati. It accepts Pratyaksha as the only means of right knowledge (Pramana). This doctrine is a kind of sensory materialism. The life goal (Purushartha) is pleasure. Even temporary pleasure is worth seeking. The means to get pleasure should not be unpleasant. Since God is not an object of perception, God does not exist. The world of nature works mechanically.

Astika systems

Six schools of philosophies have been mentioned above. They are divided into three groups (1) Nyaya and Vaiseshika (2) Sankya and Yoga (3) Purva Mimamsa and Vedanta. Nyaya is considered as a pre-requisite for all philosophical enquiries. Vaiseshika is not very much in honour now. The Sankya is not a living faith. Yoga is practiced in practical form. Vedanta is the most popular of all schools today. Purva and Uttara Mimamsa discuss philosophy of Veda. Purva Mimamsa discusses the philosophy of karma kanda and Uttara Mimamsa discusses the spiritual philosophy (esp. Upanishads). Nyaya, Yoga and Uttara Mimamsa say that there is an Ishvara the Lord of All souls. The other three are *Nireeswara vaadas*. They talk of Atman, but not of Paramatman. Nireeswara vaada is not necessarily Naastika vaada and these Darsanas do lay an equal amount of stress on Dharma and that is the reason they are called Astika Darsanas and not because they accept a Parabrahman different from individual atman. They

differ in their basic tenets like Ishvara. All these Darsanas hold that atman is distinct from Manas (mind), Buddhi (intellect) and Prakruti (nature). They discuss the cause binding, what causes creation and whether creation is an appearance or true in a given state. They also differ in whether atman is identical with Brahman or not. Differentiating these and understanding the uniformity of these is very important both in understanding Hinduism as well as differentiating Hindu from non-Hindu ideology.

Nyaya system:

Sage Gautama was the author of Nyaya Sutras. This Darsana accepts four Pramanas – (a) Pratyaksha (b) Anumana (c) Upamana (d) Shabda. The goal of life is Nisreyasa (freedom from consciousness of matter). This school is known for its system of logic. Some scholars argue that the Greek philosopher Aristotle was influenced by the Nyaya philosophy.

Nyaya system assists all other Darsanas. It is also known as tarka- a method of inference by which the opposite positions are shown to be untenable because they are absurd. It is greatly used in debate. They arrange all things of the world into certain kinds (Padarthas).

The only means to arrive at “Nisreyasa” is through perfect knowledge. The soul’s connection with matter is the cause of its misery. It produces rebirths through activity in connection with matter which leads to desire. Perfect knowledge liberates the soul from its contact with matter. This removes all pain or dukha. In the Nyaya Sutras Gautama clearly analyses the nature of Prakruti, of the soul and the Pramanas. Later Naiyayikas like Udayana explained the problems of Ishvara as the creator of the world and as the first expounder and maker of the Vedas. The world is created by God out of the materials in the form of atoms and the souls. This view suggests that the effect was not previously present in any form in the cause but was brought into being by God. This view is called Asat-karya- vada or Arambhavada.

Vaiseshika system:

This system is considered to be the first philosophy of Nature (Prakruti). Sage Kanada formed the basis for this system. This system accepts three Pramanas- Pratyaksha, Anumana and Shabda. Its goal in life is deliverance. This Darsanas is considered to be the first philosophy of Nature (Prakruti). With help of the Pramanas stated above it arrives at the knowledge of Six Padarthas. The six Padarthas are – (1) Dravya (substance) (2) Guna (quality) (3) Karma (activity) (4) Samanya (generalities) (5) Vishesa (particularity) (6) Samavaya (inherent relations). Some include a seventh Padartha, namely Abhava (non-existence).

Nine kinds of substances form the Dravya- the Five elements in the form of atoms or minute particles – Prithvi, Apas, Tejas, Vayu, Akasa, Manas, Soul, Time and Space form nine kinds of substances. Atoms can exist alone or in aggregate number. Time and space are divisible. Souls are infinite in number. All knowledge of objects is with the instrument of mind. Finite knowledge is with the help of Manas. It operates through the sense organs.

The creation of the world is due to the principle of unforeseen force (Adrista) not God. Nature thus aggregates and disintegrates. The material cause of the world is atoms (or other Dravyas). The efficient cause of the world is Adrista which brings about the activities or Karma into play. The souls are not products of union of the material atoms but self-conscious. Before their union with matter the souls are in a state of self which resembles unconsciousness-“pasanavat”. It is held that their return to that state of bare selfness is Moksha (Nisreyas without consciousness of objects)

Sankya system

Sankya system was founded by Sage Kapila. It is said to be one of the oldest metaphysical worldviews. The word Sankya means count and this system is called so because it describes the world in an enumerative way. The Darsana seeks to understand the Nature (Prakruti) from the point of view of individual psychological consciousness. Kapila Muni is regarded as the father of psychology. The system accepts three Pramanas- Pratyaksha, Anumana and Shabda. It is an Astika Darsana, as it accepts Shabda Pramana. Its goal of life is liberation. Tattva-saakshatkara or True knowledge of the world is the source for liberation. This can be gained through Tattva- abhyasa or learning and meditation. Sankya does not emphasize on the exact method since it is by nature a philosophy. Contemplative state with the intent to know the Tattva is the source of knowledge. This is possible in Yoga through meditation and in the Jnana Marga through Sravana- Manana and Nidhidhyasana.

The cosmic principles of Sankya are of three kinds. (1) Avyakta (Un-manifest Primal nature. It is also called Pradhana, Maya, Mula-Prkruti). (2) Purusha (Absolute consciousness principle which is neither manifest nor un-manifest. This is the Self). (3) Vyakta (the manifest. This emanates because of the association of Purusha and Avyakta). The Sankya explains that Mula-Prkruti is the material cause out of which all elements of the outer world as well as the psychic organs or apparatus of the individuals arise by a process of evolution or manifestation. All these were in a subtle condition in the original state. The original matter is called Pradhana Avyakta because it is undistinguished, it has constant change as its nature or it is active; it comprises of three constituent Gunas; namely Sattva, Rajas and Tamas in a state of equilibrium. It is set into in-equilibrium by the nearness of the soul or Purushas. The intellect is the first evolute of Prakruti and is called Mahat or

the great one. It causes the evolution of ego-sense or self-consciousness. Evolution from self-consciousness is affected by the dominance of Gunas. So the dominance of Sattva causes the evolution of the five organs of perception, five organs of action and the mind. Dominance of Tamas triggers the evolution of five subtle elements– sound, touch, sight, taste, and smell from self-consciousness. These five subtle elements cause the creation of the five gross elements space, air, fire, water and earth. Rajas is cause of action in the evolutes. Since the Sankya system explains the world as transformational manifestation of Prakruti, it is said to uphold Parinama Vada. Prakruti is the creator of the phenomenal world. The beings are veiled from the sentient and eternal consciousness principle Purusha and they realise Purusha as they go through various phases of evolution. The ignorance of the beings and their experiences of the phenomenal world are all creations of Prakruti. She is thus the veil of ignorance Herself and is therefore called Maya. Sankya says, in the manifest world there are 25 principles in all. They are explained in 4 groups as follows-

Group-1: Mula Prakruti: She has no source. She is the source for the world.

Group-2: Saptaka: Mahat (intelligence principle. Born from Prakruti) + Ahamkara (Emanates from Mahat) + 5 Tanmatras (Subtle elements. They have source in Primal nature. They are the source for Primal elements). 7 in all.

Group-3: Sodasaka: (Sixteen Principles). 5 Primal elements of nature (earth, water, fire, air and sky) + 6 Jnanendriyas (including mind) + 5 Karmedriyas. 16 in all

Group-4: Purusha: Chetana

The 24 principles up to group 3 are all Achetanas (not externally conscious). The eternal conscious principle is the 25th- Purusha or the Self. The 24 principles of the Universe cause 3 kinds of experiences – Sukha (happiness), Dukha (grief) and Moha (attachment and illusion). Beings are diverse, in their capabilities, in their Upadhis (faculties of experience). This indeed is the diversity of the Purushas. Purushas are multiple. Each Purusha goes through experiences and takes birth repeatedly until Kaivalya. Prakruti manifests and transforms. But She is insentient. Purusha is sentient but does not act. So, how can they experience. It is possible and can be explained through the analogy of blind and limping man (Pangvaandha Nyaya). If the blind man carries the limping man they can reach their destination. Many principles proposed in the Sankya philosophy are accepted by the later systems like Vedanta. However, existence of Ishvara and the multiplicity of Purusha are not accepted.

Yoga system

Yoga Shastra is one of the oldest systems. The author of Yoga Shastra is Patanjali. The system accepts three Pramanas- Pratyaksha, Anumana and Shabda. According to this system, liberation is the goal of life (Purushartha). It is concerned with the activities of the Chitta, which is said to be the cause of misery. Putting an end to the movements of Chitta is Yoga. It shows that the attainment of the ultimate state is the state of Samadhi, which is changeless, motionless, thoughtless state of consciousness. This is the state of the soul in its perfect nature. Thus the nature of the soul in Yoga Darsana is identical with the state of the soul taught in the Sankya, as consciousness, changeless and activity-less. The control of mental modifications may have to be preceded by the control of the motor organs and sensory organs from running after objects which grant them their satisfaction and stimulation. Withdrawal from the objects of the senses is called Yama and Niyama. The principle of substitution of right kinds of thoughts in place of wrong ones helps in the final suppression of mental activities. Thus Ishvara-dhyana or surrender to God becomes very necessary as Niyama. Asana or control of physical postures also is insisted upon. Pranayama is a means to control the mind. These are all physical purifications leading to the control of Chitta. Pratyahara, dharana and dhyana are the further stages when the mind having been detached from the sensory and motor activities retraces to the control of the Ahamkara and Buddhi, which is achieved by a gradual concentration on one single object and finally on object at all. Ishvara is accepted as the Guru of this path. Unlike the case in Sankya system, wherein Nature brings about involution, in this system Ishvara brings about liberation of individual souls. Ishvara is not considered as the creator but as an exceptional spirit always the master of Prakriti and knower of it, on whom nature can hardly have any effect or influence. Knowledge of Prakriti is said to lead to liberation, but this requires the aid of the ever-liberated Ideal Purusha.

Purva Mimamsa:

Sage Jaimini is the author of this system. The system accepts 6 Pramanas – Pratyaksha, Anumana, Shabda, Upamana (comparison), Arthapatti (implication) and Anupalabdi (non-apprehension). The goal of life is the attainment of heaven. The Mimamsa system is a system of interpretation of Vedic texts. The philosophical view of the Purva Mimamsa system is the same as the Vedic literature. Its concern is with the fundamental faith in the sacrificial performances ordained in the Vedic scriptures which is said to be Dharma. These sacrifices are said to produce results such as attainment of riches, happiness in this world and happiness even after death. Thus causal theory of the effect coming into being after the cause ceased to exist is an important innovation. The sacrifices when performed to the strict vidhis have

the power to bring about the desired results. Even the Gods addressed during the sacrifices have no power in denying the results! Vedic injunctions are regarded as self-evident and absolutely authoritative. Purva- mimamsa having ignored the Gods or subordinated them to causality, also dispensed with the God as an unimportant entity in his search for dharma or sacrificial performances according to the Veda. Vedas are considered as Apaurusheya. And Purva mimamsakas went one step further – they believed granting authorship of Vedas is to commit it to mistakes. Then there were two schools of mimamsakas – (1) Kumarila Bhatta (2) Prabhakara. The first one tried to establish the self-evident authority of Vedas without postulating God or admitting his authorship of the Vedas. The latter asserted God and His authorship of the Vedas. Thus the Purva mimamsakas accepted the complete validity of the Veda, the eternity and reality of the souls and universe. They accepted the existence of God also, though not as the author of the Veda, but as its Teacher.

Uttara Mimamsa or Vedanta

Sage Veda Vyasa is regarded as the author of this system. He wrote an authoritative text called Brahma sutras. It accepts 6 Pramanas – Pratyaksha, Anumana, Upamana, Agama, Ardhapatti and Anupalabdi. The ultimate goal of life is Moksha – the fourth Purushartha. Vedanta is the philosophy of Upanishads. Rishis were leading the disciple to the final experiences of the Ultimate Reality, which they called as Brahman. For the person who knows or attains Brahman it is a release from the bondage of Samsara. Badarayana or Veda Vyasa tried to bring about a synthesis or Samanvaya of Upanishads. Yet there have arisen apparently divergent views such as Sri Shankara's Advaita, Sri Ramanuja's Vishishtadvaita and Sri Madhava's Dvaita. In spite of their differences there were acceptances on many points. Brahman is one Reality and He is pure and the ultimate Self – Sat Cit Ananda. He is beyond all description and determinations but He is indeed verily the power and reality that makes everything possible. Thus he is Nirguna, beyond all qualities and yet He is omnipervasive, omnipotent, omnibeneficent and Ishvara and so on. He is subtler than the subtle and greater than the great. He is this immanent in all and transcendent to all. In other words He is both the material and efficient cause of the Universe. Brahman is everything – Sarvam Kalvidam Brahman. He is without a second – Ekam eva advitiam. These passages from Upanishads show the ultimate monism of Brahman. It is clear that Vedanta leaves much room for different levels of experience. The several Upasanas or methods of meditation on Brahman are, in fact, are at once knowledge and meditation for the attainment of Divyanubhava. Both Sri Ramanuja and Sri Madhava consider that the highest joy comes from devotion and service to God.

Maharshi Veda Vyasa

A special mention about Maharshi Veda Vyasa and his contribution to Vedic literature has to be understood by every Indian

Maharshi VedaVyasa wrote all the 18 Puranas and the 18 Upa-Puranas as well. In addition he has written the massive Itihasa – the Mahabharata. He also wrote the Brahma Sutras. He has organized and arranged the Vedas into four Vedas that we see today – Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva Veda.

Every scripture in Hinduism begins with salutations to Bhagavan Sri Veda Vyasa. No name in Indian history invokes such reverential sentiment and stirs such widespread awe as that of this Rishi. He is the greatest seer, Guru, author, poet and philosopher the world has ever seen. He is regarded as an incarnation of Lord Maha Vishnu Himself. In India we celebrate Vyasa Poornima in his honour.

Chapter V - Principal Upanishads

Introduction

The *Upanishads* are part of a very long tradition of knowledge, which has been developing over many thousands of years. This tradition is not just a dead relic from the past. It is very much alive today. It is a living tradition that has been passed down in an unbroken line from teacher to disciple, through all the social, cultural, scientific and technological upheavals that have taken place.

Our problem is whether this traditional knowledge is helpful to us at present. Our exclusive devotion to technical and economic interests in the contemporary age has obscured the concept of reality and value. It is true that human nature is not altogether unchanging. It does change. However, it is also true that it does remain sufficiently constant to justify the study of ancient classics. The problems of human life and destiny have not been superseded by the stunning achievements of science, technology or commerce. The solutions offered by the ancient classics, though conditioned in their modes of expression by their time, have not been seriously affected by the march of modern achievements. The *Upanishads*, though remote in time from us, are not remote in thought. Disclosing the working of the primal impulses of human soul these classics rise above the differences of race and geographical location.

There is a view that Indian philosophy started with *Upanishads* otherwise known as *Vedanta* (end of the *Veda* or the concluding portion). Yet, there is a distinct difference between what is on offer between the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*. *Vedas* deal with the three *Gunas* – *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. They have the three *Gunas* as the motives to attain power, pleasure and heavenly residence. *Vedas* tell stories about various Gods; they prescribe rituals for making use of the Gods' divine powers to attain prosperity and other objectives. In other words *Vedas* taught the attainment of inferior ends (*Purusharthas*) which are known to be closely connected with the three *Gunas*, rather than *Moksha* which it was the function of *Upanishads* to teach. Though they both are from one single *Shastra*, *Vedas* offer the means to attain transient good while the *Upanishads* teach means to attain the eternal good. It is in this sense, perhaps, some scholars saw in the *Upanishads* germs of the pessimistic view since they discard the pursuit of social efficiency for the attainment of liberation from *Avidya* (which comprises of all technical knowledge and hedonistic pleasure ends) and *Samsara* for the transcendent condition of immortality which can only be won by *Vidya*.

Yet *Upanishads* have not discarded the earlier portions of the *Veda* or the gods praised therein. Indeed they have on the other hand, tended to make clear the implications of the *Veda* in such a way as to help the understanding of the enquiring mind.

Having studied the about *Vedas*, the *mantras* and the rituals contained therein, we arrive at the concluding sections- the *Upanishads*. And the *Upanishads* leave all the cosmology and applied knowledge behind. It is not the basic concern of the *Upanishads* to describe world, or to achieve the various objects that people desire. Their basic objective is philosophy. In a brief and uncompromising way, they ask questions about knowledge itself. They are not interested with all the descriptions and the pictures that have been built on top of our knowledge. Beneath the pictures and descriptions, they want to find out just what we really know. They repeatedly question about what happiness really is. The question is blunt - Is it permanently available once the objects that we pursue have been achieved?

The *Upanishads* are rather plain and straightforward. They do not construct any complex system of ideas and beliefs. Questioning such as this is not very common. For a resisting and a closed mind it appeared as a very complicated process not meant for an ordinary man. In fact, it progresses by asking questions – simple and straight forward. The search is for plain truth. Studying books such as *Upanishads* was not very common as they were reputed to be difficult to understand.

Upanishads are concerned with that knowledge which is common to all experience, anywhere. As they point out, this knowledge cannot be restricted to any names or forms or qualities. They can-not be bounded to any books or words- certainly not to any social classes or cultural systems or to any geographical locations. In the end it can only be taught and learned in one place – in each individual's direct experience. It is for this reason a lot of emphasis is laid on direct learning from a teacher. Therein lays the universality of approach.

Times have changed. There is no longer any need to hide philosophical enquiry, from ordinary life and education. In recent times, *Upanishads* have begun to be translated and interpreted for ordinary people. A number of commentaries are now available for a common man. In the works of classical commentators, we find the great oral traditions of interpretation which have been current in their time. Centuries of careful thought lie behind these traditions as they finally took shape. It would be a great mistake to neglect the work of the commentators. Chiefly due to the fact that there are words and passages in the *Upanishads* of which we could make little sense without the help of the commentators.

The Upanishads are most important and are equally difficult to understand. The difficulty arises because of the subjects they treat. They are not telling us a story like what the Epics and the Puranas do. Also, the Upanishads are not prayers offered to some god which we can just chant every day as a routine of practice. They do not tell us how to perform rituals or gestures of worship as we do in temples or altars of adoration. They tell us something quite different from all these things. What is this difference which marks the Upanishads? They deal with our Self.

The *Upanishads* are not telling us about any god. Then, what is it that the *Upanishads* talk about? It is speaking about God, but not about the God that we usually think of in our mind according to our upbringing, culture, language or tradition. It refers to God and it refers to nothing else. The 'do's' and 'don'ts' that fill the texture of every religion in the world do not appear in the Upanishads. References on something that has to be done and something that should not be done will not be found in the Upanishads. The question of this dichotomy does not arise in the Upanishads.

Number of Upanishads

There are 108 traditional Upanishads. Of these 10 are regarded as principal Upanishads. (1) Isavasya (2) Kena (3) Katha (4) Prashana (5) Mundaka (6) Mandukya (7) Taittiriya (8) Aitereya (9) Chandogya (10) Brhadaranyaka. Sri Shankara bhagavatpada wrote commentaries on all these Upanishads as well as on Shvetashvatara, Kausitaki and Mahanarayana. These together with Maitri, constitute 14 Upanishads. Some scholars regard 10 as the principal Upanishads and some others regard these 14 as the principal ones. All these belong to the Shruti literature.

Some of the *Upanishads* are associated with renowned sages such as *Aruni*, *Yajnavalkya*, *Balaki*, *Shvetaketu* and *Shandilya*. They are thought to be exponents of the doctrines attributed to them.

The mode of transmittal of knowledge in Upanishads basically consists of a teacher and a taught because no Upanishadic study is complete without the presence of a Guru. As a result, in the Upanishads the contents are explained through the words of the Guru.

In the Upanishads we come across "Vidyas". Essentially, the Vidyas lead one from the unreal to the Real, from mortality to Immortality. They lead the soul from the *Moola-Ajnana* to the highest Brahman. Sri Shankaracharya says in his Brahma-Sutra-Bhashya that even those who go to Saguna-Brahman (through

Vidya-Upasanas) will ultimately go to Nirguna-Brahman. We come across about 28 Vidyas in the Upanishads

A summary of the principal *Upanishads* is discussed below –

Isavasya Upanishad

The *Isavasya Upanishad* is the only one which occurs in the *Samhita* portion of the Veda. All the others come as appendices or follow-ups of the *Brahmanas* or the *Aranyakas*. Therefore, there is a special intonation required in the recitation of the *Isavasya Upanishad*, as is the case with the *Samhitas* of the *Vedas*. We cannot read the verses casually, just like reading a book. There is a special modulation and intonation of voice – *swara*, as it is called. This *swara* aspect of recitation is not emphasized as much in the other *Upanishads* as is the case with the *Isavasya Upanishad*. It derives its name from *Isavasya*. It is one of the shortest *Upanishads* and belongs to the *Yajur Veda*.

Four types of knowledge are imparted to us by this *Upanishad*.

- (a) The Creator pervades the whole of creation.
- (b) Everyone is to do one's duty.
- (c) Knowledge and action have to be combined and not be considered as opposites.
- (d) We should view God and the world as being in a state of harmony, not as opposed to each other. (There is no difference between creation and God.)

(a) The first mantra of the *Isavasya Upanishad* says :

Isavasyam idam sarvam yat kim ca jagatyam jagat, tena tyaktena bhunjitha, ma gridhah kasyasvid dhanam

This mantra says: "All this is enveloped by the Supreme Being." The creator whom we call God, manifests the universe, creates this universe. In what manner does He create the universe? It is a very big question and a complex one too. We shall not go into that now.

Some conclusions that come out of this are – there is something that cannot be divided into parts, which is infinite in nature, which is existing everywhere to such an extent that it may appear that is the

only thing existing. That only-existing thing is *Ishvara* about which *Isavasya* speaks about.

The great sage of the *Upanishad* tells us "*yat kim ca jagatyam jagat tat sarvam* – whatever is apparently moving or not moving – all that is *Ishvara*." The Supreme Being is not merely everywhere – He is also everything.

Knowing this, we pass on to the second part of this *Mantra*-

"tena tyaktena bhunjitha, ma gridhah kasyasvid dhanam"

This says be happy without the sense of possessiveness in regard to any object. It is commonly believed that possession and acquisition lead to happiness. But the *Upanishad* says that possession is not the way for being happy. In fact, there is no such thing as procession. For obvious reasons, a thing outside totally cannot become yours. That which is capable of leaving you, for any reason whatsoever, cannot belong to you. A thing that is yours cannot leave you. Anything which can leave you one day or the other is not yours, and there is nothing in this world which will not leave you one day or the other. Therefore, it cannot be considered as yours. Therefore, renounce attachment. It is another way of saying renounce the sense of possession.

Happiness is a state of being and not a consequence of possessing. Therefore, enjoy and be happy.

Summarizing- All this that you perceive, see, or contact through the sense organs is enveloped by God."

One great thinker said that if all the scriptures in the world were destroyed and if only this mantra is available to us, we need not learn anything else afterwards. Let this one mantra remain and all the scriptures be destroyed. This one verse is sufficient to save us:

"Isavasyam idam sarvam yat kim ca jagatyam jagat, tena tyaktena bhunjitha, ma gridhah kasyasvid dhanam"

- (b)** The second mantra says: "Everyone has to do something."

While the concept of Absolute is the subject of the first mantra the concept of individuality is the subject of the second mantra.

Very often a man may be tempted to think "I shall keep quiet because God does all things and He is all things"? This is an erroneous notion about yourself. A wrong concept about your individuality has crept in. The *Upanishad* says "Do not be in a hurry. Go slowly. Do such things that will gradually widen the concept of your personality, or individuality. Act in a way commensurate with the supreme universal personality of God Himself. This is done by the duty which is to be performed."

That brings us to the question of "what is duty"? You may do some work by way of participation towards the welfare of a larger whole. If you have done this considering it as your duty even while it involves personal sacrifice then that work has some value in it. It can be called duty.

A person who has not understood the meaning of the first mantra will not understand the meaning of the second mantra either. You will not be able to understand what duty is, in the sense of this self-sacrifice for the welfare of the whole, unless you know what the whole is. The ultimate whole is the Absolute being. Perform your duty as a participation in the work of this evolutionary process of creation and not as an individual initiative on your part. In duty, you cooperate with the existent order of things. You do not start independent initiatives which will not be regarded as commensurate with the requirements of the organization of the universe.

- (c)** The third point that is driven into our minds by the *Isavasya Upanishad* is – Knowledge and action have to be combined and not be considered as opposites. In other words - that there is no conflict between meditation and action, or knowledge and work.

Many of us think that knowledge means knowing something – reading books, accumulating information, having a degree, and acquaintance with the sciences and the arts of the world. But, knowledge is not necessarily this. The inner essence is not gained by ordinary academic reading. True knowledge is the insight into the being of things, the Self of all things. A feeling of conflict between knowledge and action appear to arise because

of the feeling that the aim of knowledge is not in harmony with the aim of work. In actual fact, knowledge and action go together. Understanding must precede action, and action without understanding is a mechanical routine.

One important point that we must remember is – all actions are not liberating. Only those actions that are performed without expecting any benefits for doing them, count for liberation. Both the means and the ends have some connection. You cannot adopt one kind of means and expect another kind of end. Knowledge and action go together because action is nothing but the movement of knowledge itself. Everything that you do from the point of view of this knowledge of the Upanishad is God Himself working through you.

- (d) The fourth instruction is - There is no difference between creation and God. God is not outside the world, and the world is not outside God. God is not extra-cosmic, as some thinkers may tell us. The pervasion of God in all creation rules out any kind of extra-cosmic existence of God.

Let us take the case of a potter making a pot. The potter is only an efficient cause; he is not the material cause. That is, he himself does not become the pot; he has an external material like clay. However, in the case of God – there is nothing like an external material. He is infinite and He is everything. The cosmos is His revelation. He is as He was – in the past and in the present and He will be in the same condition in future as well.

The Divine who is the Nourisher and Ruler, Seer, Death and In-dwelling self, and our father and Supreme Light is the Foremost Fire or Will within us. He is undiminished in every one of his descents and is ever full:

***Purnamadah purnamidam purnatpurnamudacyate!
Purnasya purnahtadaya purnam eva avasisyate !!***

Kena Upanishad

Like the *Isavasya*, this *Upanishad* derives its name from the opening word of the text, *Kena-ishitam*, “by whom directed.” It is also known as the *Talavakara Upanishad* because of its place as a chapter in the *Talavakara-Brahmana* of the *Sama-Veda*.

Among the *Upanishads* it is one of the most analytical and metaphysical; Its purpose being to lead the mind from the gross to the subtle, from the effect to the cause. By a series of profound questions and answers, it seeks to locate the

source of man's being; and to expand his self-consciousness until it has become identical with God-Consciousness.

It is in this Upanishad that we find the famous words

***“He who thinks he does not know It - knows It.
He who thinks he knows It - does not know It.”***

The true knowers think they can never know it (because of It is infinitude), while the ignorant think they know It.”

“Those who know do not speak; those who speak do not know.”

It has four sections, the first two in verse form and the other two in prose. The verse form deals with the Supreme Unqualified *Brahman*, the absolute principle underlying the phenomenal world and the prose form deals with the Supreme as God, *Ishvara*. The knowledge of the Absolute is possible only for those who are able to withdraw their thoughts from the worldly objects and concentrate on the ultimate fact of the universe. The knowledge of *Ishvara* puts him on the path way to deliverance in course of time. Such a worshipping soul gradually acquires the higher wisdom which results in the consciousness of identity with the Supreme.

The Upanishad opens with a few basic questions put by a sincere and inquisitive student of *Brahma Vidya* to his *Guru*. He asks his teacher:

1. Who commands and directs the mind to illumine its objects?
2. At whose command does the life-force (prana) function?
3. At whose will do men utter speech?
4. What power directs the eyes and the ears (and other sense organs) towards their respective objects?

An ordinary man hears, sees, thinks, and he is happy that he can do all this. He is not keen to find out what stands behind the ear or eye or mind. His conception does not go beyond the little circle of his bodily life. In fact, he has no interest to find out what really enables his senses and organs to perform their tasks. The sense organs like mind, eyes, ear, etc, are powerless by themselves. They require some power to make them function. What is that power? It is the source of all power which is described as Brahman or the Self. Brahman is the Supreme Reality on which everything rests. The layers of transmission of energy from the Cosmic Soul to the individual soul, from the individual soul to the intellect, from the intellect to the mind, from the mind to the Prana, from the Prana to the body

and from there to the sense organs are not well known. Neither is the body really alive and active, nor are the sense organs capable of perceiving things as you imagine. Neither is it true that the Prana is working of its own accord, nor can you think through the mind independently; nor is it true that you understand through your intellect; nor is it true that you are existing even as an individual isolated being, but for the fact of the power of the Universal Self.

These physical eyes are unable to perceive that subtle essence which is called the Brahman. Nor can it be expressed by finite language or known by finite intelligence, because it is infinite. Our conception of knowing finite things is to know their name and form; but knowledge of Brahman is distinct from such knowledge. These physical eyes are unable to perceive that subtle essence which is called the Brahman. Nor can it be expressed by finite language or known by finite intelligence, because it is infinite. Our conception of knowing finite things is to know their name and form (e.g. an elephant); but knowledge of Brahman is distinct from such knowledge. Whenever we perceive an object through our senses (direct perception, touch, smell etc) we try to recognize it by its species, quality, function or relationship (*jaati, guna, kriya, visheshana*). However, the does not possess any of these differentiating characters (like *Jaati, guna* etc). Hence it is difficult to clearly describe the nature *Brahman* to others. The *Upanishad* narrates a story to illustrate the point. Briefly it is given here-

The *Devas* won an important victory over the *Asuras*. The *Devas* were elated and started celebrating the victory and were shouting “ this victory is ours and the glory is ours only”. The Great Being, God Almighty, thought, “These Gods, are thinking that they have won the victory and all the strength comes from them. Let me teach them a lesson.” This Great Being appeared as some frightening spectre and sat on the top of a tree, near the abode of the gods. The gods just beheld it. “What is this peculiarly structured spectre?” they wondered. All the gods went to Indra and said, “Sir, something frightening is sitting on the top of a tree.” Indra called one of his emissaries, the God Agni, and said, “Go and find out what it is. Agni went and looked at this spectre, and It asked, “Who are you? “I am Agni, the God of fire. “Oh, I see. What can you do?. I can burn anything to ashes. The whole earth I can reduce to ashes,” replied Agni. “I see,” said the spectre. It placed a little piece of grass in front of Agni and asked him to burn it. It was an insult to Agni. “You are asking me to burn a piece of grass”. Agni ran with great speed to burn it to ashes, but he could not even move it, let alone burn it. He tried again and again, and he failed in the attempt to burn the blade of grass though he had the strength to burn the whole earth. He could not understand what had happened. He went back and told Indra, “I cannot understand who the creature is. “Send another person.

Next Indra sent *Vayu*. He too came back deflated and completely baffled. Then Indra went personally to investigate. The spectre had vanished. He met with *Shakti* of the Universe. She told "What you saw was the Supreme Creator Himself. You were under the impression that you won victory over the demons. How wrong can you be?."

What strength do you have? You cannot lift even a blade of grass. All the strength came from that Supreme Being. He was operating through you, and you felt that you did the work. In order to subdue your ego, the Creator came in this form and taught you a lesson." Having said this, the Goddess vanished from that place.

Katha Upanishad

The Katha Upanishad is probably the most widely known of all the Upanishads. It has been translated into many languages. English, German, French and other writers have all agreed in pronouncing it as one of the most perfect expressions of the religion and philosophy of the Vedas.

There is no consensus of opinion regarding the place of this *Upanishad* in Vedic literature. Some authorities declare it to belong to the Yajur–Veda, others to the Sama–Veda, while a large number put it down as a part of the *Atharva–Veda*. The story is first suggested in the *Rig–Veda*; it is told more definitely in the *Yajur–Veda*. In the *Katha Upanishad* it appears fully elaborated and interwoven with the loftiest Vedic teaching.

It contains the famous dialogue between *Nachiketa* and *Yama*, the lord of departed spirits. *Nachiketa's* father, in a rage, inadvertently promises his son to *Yama* as a sacrifice, and to keep his promise, promptly sends him to the doors of *Yama's* abode. Finding *Yama* absent, *Nachiketa* was kept waiting for three days at the doors, without food or water. *Yama*, on his return, apologizes to *Nachiketa* as no guest is to be treated in such a manner in his household. He offers three boons to *Nachiketa*. Return to his father in earth and the meaning of the sacrificial fire were the first two boons granted without hesitation.

Now for the third one, *Nachiketa* asked, "What happens to the soul after death? After the death of this body or it may be after the death of the individuality itself – in either case, what happens to the soul?"

The third boon was to explain the meaning of death, which even *Yama*, the Lord of Death finds it difficult to explain. Refusing to take alternative offers of worldly blessings, *Nachiketa's* persistently questions about death and immortality. This forms the philosophical discourse in *Katha Upanishad*.

The Lord of Death, *Yama*, starts his reply by these words - "There are two paths available for every person in this world: the way of the good and the way of the pleasant. The choice is up-to the individual to choose.

The good is called "*sreyas*" and the pleasant is called "*preyas*". These are the two roads you can tread; you can either choose what is good or you can choose that what is pleasant for you.

Lord *Yama* advises that the correct choice for a person to take is the first alternative. It is improper for any person to choose the pleasant path, because the good does not always look pleasant and the pleasant is certainly not always good. That which appears as the pleasant is nothing but the reaction of the sense organs in respect of objects outside. The pleasantness is not something existing in the object outside. The pleasantness is only in the sensations – a reaction of the sense organs.

Choosing the good is the correct path. But then what is good? It must always be good for you. It should not be a time variant. Good for some time and not so good at other times.

Is there such a thing?

That which is commensurate with the needs of the soul may be regarded as good. Why? The body and parts of the body are impermanent. The soul is permanent. The impermanent cannot satisfy the permanent. When we talk about "good for the soul" we are not referring social goodness or conduct goodness. We refer to the spiritual goodness. It is not a goodness that lasts for some time only, or will apply to some people only, or suitable for certain conditions only. It is good for all conditions, for all times and for all individuals.

Yet *Nachiketa's* question was – what happens to the soul? We get a vague answer from the *Katha Upanishad*. A more robust and satisfying answer is found in the *Chandogya Upanishad* and the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. Tentatively Lord *Yama* answers that when the body is shed, one takes a re-birth. One can be re-born as anything, according to the thoughts and the feelings entertained by the person during the tenure of the person. Thoughts that enter your mind at the moment of your death are very deciding. If you think you can cheat the system by enjoying a life with a gay abandon and yet come up with some appropriate thoughts at the last hour – you are mistaken. You never know when and how your last hour will come up. And the last thoughts are but an essence of all thoughts entertained in your life.

Why do you have to have re- birth? It is necessary to fulfil the desires that you could not fulfil till date. But in the realization of the Self, which is universal in its nature, desires get extinguished. All your desires melt in the light of the Self. This is Nirvana.

What happens to the soul after death?” is the question raised by Nachiketa. “Ordinarily, rebirth takes place,” is the answer. And most people in the world are ordinary people, because everyone has a desire of some kind or the other. Everyone is filled with egoism, a self-assertive nature; therefore, everyone will be reborn. If you have to be reborn, it is good to be born in more advanced circumstances. If you live like a tree, you may become a tree. if you live like an animal, you may become an animal. If you conduct yourself in a humanitarian way, you will be reborn as a very good human being. We said you will be re-born till all your desires are exhausted. What happens to the person who has no desires? Yama says, I shall tell you about the man, the person who has no desires.

He who has no desires of any kind is called-“*Nishkama*”.

Apta-kama is one who has fulfilled all desires. *Atma-kama* refers to one who loves only the Self.

Only he who has love for the Universal Self can be said to have fulfilled all desires; every other person has some extraneous desire.

What happens to such a person when he departs from the body?

He will not depart. We generally say the soul departs. In the case of a Self-realized soul, no departure takes place. It sinks then and there into the Absolute, like a bubble in the ocean. When the bubble in the ocean bursts, it does not travel some distance; it dissolves itself into the bosom of the sea.

They become one with the very Existence, then and there, here and now. They neither have to go to heaven, nor to *Brahma-loka*

The question of going arises only because of the concept of space and time. A timeless Eternity, which is the true essence of the soul of a person, does not travel to any place. It melts instantly into Pure Existence.

The Soul is Absolute and, hence, it enters the Absolute. This is what we gather from the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. So much detail is not found in the *Katha Upanishad* .Many other things are casually mentioned by way of a tentative elucidation of the answer expected by *Nachiketa*.

Prashna Upanishad

Prashna Upanishad comes from the *Brahmana* portion of the *Atharva Veda* belonging to the *Pippaladasakha*. It has 67 mantras spread over 6 chapters. The word “*Prashna*” means question. This *Upanishad*, like a number of other *Upanishads*, relies on the technique of questions and answers to explain a number of serious issues. It discusses more elaborately some topics dealt with briefly in the *Mundakopanishad* and for that reason it is considered as a commentary on that *Upanishad*. Much of the *Mundakopanishad* is in the form of verses with only a few passages being in the prose form. The *Prashna Upanishad* is just the opposite.

Six students, interested in knowing Brahman, come to *Sage Pippalada* requesting him to clarify their doubts. The sage asks them to take up penance for one year at his place and at the end of that period he will be willing to clarify all their doubts. The six students were (a) *Sukesha*, son of *Bharadwaja* (b) *Satyakama*, son of *Sibi* (c) *Sauryanee*, born in the family of *Garga* (d) *Kausalya*, son of *Ashwala* (e) *Bhargava* belonging to *Bhrigu* gotra (f) *Kabandhi* the son of *Katya*.

The text consists of basically six questions asked of sage *Pippalada*. His answers form a dissertation on the question of creation, human personality and metaphysical principle in man.

These students already knew about *Saguna Brahman* or *Brahman* with qualities (*Apara Brahman*). Now they want to know about *Supreme Brahman - Brahman* without qualities (*Para Brahman*). According to then existing tradition they carried firewood in their hands to meet the teacher *Pippalada* who is described as *Bhagavan* because of his great qualities. An offering of firewood to a teacher is a symbol of respect, humility and keenness to learn on the part of a student.

The six questions are given below-

1. What is the origin of all created beings?
2. Who protects and guards created beings and who among them is supreme? This relates to the constituents of human personality
3. How does the *Chaitanya (Prana)* enter the body and get diverted into five channels? How does it leave the body? How does it sustain the universe without and within? This refers to the nature and origin of *Prana*.

- 4.. Which are the senses that operate in the three stages - the waking, dreaming and sleeping? Who is that in whom all these are established? This is about the psychological aspect of the human personality.
5. What is the result of worshipping *Omkara* throughout one's life? This is about *Pranava Upasana*.
- 6.. Where is that Supreme Being, the Person of sixteen forms? This relates to the metaphysical principle in man.

1st Question - From where have all these creatures come?

The first question was raised by *Kabandi*. And the question was – from where have all these creatures come? The sage replied that *Prajapati*, the creator, was desirous of a progeny. He performed austerities and then created the pair – Moon the matter (*rayi*- food) and the Sun, the energy (*Prana*-). He thought the pair would produce manifold beings for him. Wherever there is manifestation of life and energy, it is due to the influence of the Sun. The Sun is being glorified as the nourisher of all life, the illuminator of all forms of matter and the provider of energy for sustenance of life as well as matter. In addition, the *Shruti* says, our life, both within and without, is nothing but a play of the Sun and the Moon.

Time, represented by the Year, is indeed the Lord of Creation- *Prajapati* . He has two paths - the Southern and the Northern. Those who perform *Ishtapoorta* (sacrifices and charitable works) the World of the Moon and after a while they return. Hence, those attached to the material life go to the *Chandraloka*. They will return to this world again and again.

In contrast, those who sought the *Atman* by austerity, abstinence, faith and knowledge attain the *Aditya* by the North pole. They do not return. The soul goes through the *Devayana* (path of Gods) to the world of *Aditya* and from there to *Brahmaloka*. Eventually he merges with the *Brahman*. This is known as *Krama mukti* (gradual liberation)

So far we have seen the glorification of Sun. Now the *Upanishad* talks about *Prajapati* – the Lord of creation. Time which is measured with reference to Sun is emphasized by calling it *Prajapati*. Time is the field in which creation operates. *Prajapati*, indeed, is the time or the year / season/ month/ day/ night.

2nd Question - Who protects and guards the created beings and who among them is supreme?

The second question was raised by *Bhargava* of *Vidarbha*.

The question was - Who protects and guards the created beings and who among them is supreme?

The sage replies that the supporting is done by the *Prana*, the vital energy. However, the scriptures refer to Five *Pranas*. Though there is only one *Prana*, It is an allegoric representation in order to make the functionality clearer. The Five *Pranas*, (*Pancha Pranas*) are – (a) *Prana* (b) *Apana* (c) *Samana* (d) *Udana* (e) *Vyana*. They function in maintaining the body. Even the mind is dependent on the *Prana*. The mental activities are but the expressions of the same energy that function through the body and senses. The *Upanishad* mentions that even the *Vedas* are also fixed in *Prana* (may be due to their recitation depends on the *Prana* or they have their original manifestation in *Hiranyagarbha*, the Universal mind or *Prana*).

Our bodies have five sense organs (*Jnana Indriyas*) and five organs of action (*karma Indriyas*). The body cannot function without these *Indriyas*. However, these *Indriyas* are made of matter and hence they are inert. By themselves they cannot function. It is the *Prana* that keeps the body functionality going. Refer to the following table.

No	Name	Functions	Location
1	<i>Prana</i>	Respiration- Inhaling and exhaling	Nose
2	<i>Apana</i>	Evacuation or excretion of waste	Anus & Genitals
3	<i>Vyana</i>	Circulation – Pervades the nerves of the body	Entire body
4	<i>Udana</i>	Reaction or pushing upwards. Maintains the heat in the body	Throat
5	<i>Samana</i>	Assimilation or digestion of food	Central region of the body

Prana is conceived as the nucleus of all energy both within the body and without in the larger universe. It is the power that vitalizes the matter in life. It is not just the air we breathe in and breathe out. According to some commentators, of the different forms of *Prana*, it is *Apana* that controls the organ of speech; *Vyana* of hearing; *Prana* (breath) of seeing; and *Samana*, of thinking. If *Prana* leaves the body none of those forms can function and the organs will become inactive.

The *Prana* is invisible. The eye cannot see it. Yet, the eye cannot function without it. The ear cannot hear it. Yet, the ear cannot function without it. In the same way, other *Indriyas* cannot function without the *Prana*.

3rd Question – What is meant by Prana and what is its Origin?

The first question dealt with the creation of the gross physical body. The second was concerned with the Prana which vitalizes the body and without which the body would disintegrate.

By now the students are very curious to know more about the *Prana*. The student *Aswalayana Kausalya* raises a third question seeking further clarification on *Prana* – Its origin, entrance into the body, its functioning and departure from the body.

The sage replies as follows –

The *Prana* comes from the Self or Atman. An example of the relationship between a body and the shadow cast by it is given here. The shadow does not have an existence independent of the body. You can neither catch it nor separate it from the body. It is merely a projection of the substance. Similarly, *Prana* is a projection of the Self - Atman

How does *Prana* enter the body? A man's present life is a result of his thoughts in his previous existence. And this body is a result of our desires, our decisions, resolutions and actions of our previous life. So the *Upanishad* points out that the mind creates the body. As you think so you become. So this text makes a reference to the doctrine of rebirth – an important concept in Vedanta.

The nucleus of all activities of the body is the *Prana*. It gets its work done through *Upa-Pranas* or secondary *Pranas* just as a king gets his work done by his subordinates. Each of these *Upa-Pranas* have their own work areas and they operate from specified action centres so to say. However, it must be noted that there is only one vital-breath or Prana. Different names are given to it on account of the different duties it performs in the body. The fivefold nature is a functional division. The following table indicates the locations at the physical level and the functions of the *Pancha Pranas* (five vital airs)

The *Prana* dwells in the eye, the ears, nose and mouth enabling them to see, to hear, inhale and exhale and speak. *The Apana* is in the organs of excretion and procreation and initiates the process of discharge of the wastes and procreation. Between the *Prana* and *Apana*, in the region of the navel is located *Samana*. The body energy and vitality produced by digestion is equally distributed by its function. The lotus like heart is the seat the subtle Atman known as *Lingatma*. From within the space of the heart seventy thousand energy channels branch

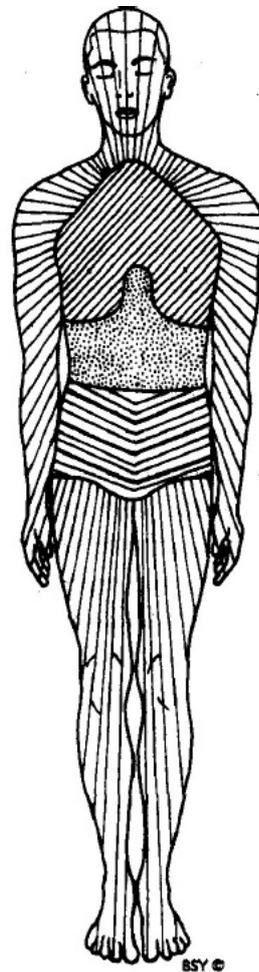
out. *Prana* moves *through* all these channels giving energy to all the limbs and senses. For this reason, it is also referred to as *Vyana*.

As for the *Udana*, it raises *by* the *Susumna-nadi* (One of the energy channels) which goes up to the top of the head taking the soul after it and departs the body. It reaches regions of the blessed or that of the condemned depending upon the good or bad actions performed. Evidently, *Udana* is the subtle aspect of the *Prana* which not only pervades the whole system, but also controls the *Linga sharira* (subtle body) in which the soul resides.

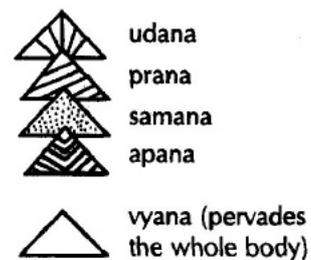
No	Name	Function	Location	Parallel at cosmic level
1	<i>Prana</i>	Respiration- inhaling and exhaling	Moves in mouth & nose and dwells in ear and eye (seven openings)	Sun
2	<i>Apana</i>	Evacuation of wastes and procreation	Anus and genitals	Earth
3	<i>Vyana</i>	Circulation – pervades the nerves of the body	Entire body	Air
4	<i>Udana</i>	Pushing upwards- maintains heat in the body – leads the soul at death	Throat	Fire
5	<i>Samana</i>	Assimilation & distribution of food	Central region of the body	Space

The *Upanishad* then goes on to state that the five forms of life-breath in the human body (microcosm or *Vyashti*) has an equivalent macrosystem (*Samashti*) in the cosmic counterpart. The table gives the details.

The following is a pictorial representation



The Pranic Body



Vedanta Categorizes all human wants into three categories - (a) desire for progeny (b) desire for name and fame (c) desire for wealth. Desire for progeny points to relationship with others in the society. *Pippalada* suggests that he who meditates on the truth that one's own microcosmic form with its activity centres is in a nutshell a miniature universe will find his relationship with others congenial. He attains the immortal nature of *Prana*.

4th Question - What are they that sleep in Man ? What are they that remain awake in Him? Which deity is it that seeks dreams ? whose is the happiness ? In whom, again are all these gathered together ?

The fourth question is raised by *Sauryayanin*, belonging to the family of *Garga*. He asked – “Sir, what are they that sleep in man? What are they that remain awake in him? Which deity is

it that sees dreams? Whose is the happiness? In whom, again, are all these gathered together?"

Cessation of physical activities distinguishes sleep from waking state. The waking stage is the period of our experience. Sense organs are active in this state. Sleep is not like waking state. Hence during the sleeping state all *Indriyas* (both Jnana Indriyas (5 in number-ear, skin, eyes, tongue and nose) and Karma Indriyas (5 in number- speech, hands, legs, anus, genitals) - retire into their very source, the mind. Apart from the organs of knowledge and action even the instruments of perception, feeling and comprehension also retire in sleep. The following table gives some details.

No	Name of organ	Function	Nature	Presiding deity
1	<i>Manas</i>	Receives stimuli from the organs of perception from external sources	Indecision or doubt	Moon
2	<i>Buddhi</i>	Analyses situations or stimuli received & determines cognition faculty	Decision making	Brahma
3	<i>Ahamkara</i>	Sense of doer-ship & enjoyership	Ego	Rudra
4	<i>Chitta</i>	Recollection of past experiences or events	Storehouse or memory	Vasudeva

The teacher explains this by giving an example of the Sun.

The rays of the Sun appear as if they are withdrawn temporarily and deposited in the Sun's orb for the night. At dawn the rays spring back.

The flames of *Prana* alone remain awake at the time of sleep. Even while the senses remain inactive, the different *Pranas* keep watch over the body. *Pippalada* compares the activities of the *Pranas* to that during the performance of *Yajna*. The mind as an important organ in this virtual *Yajna*, for it offers the senses and objects as oblations to the ever wakeful fire of *Prana* and yearns for experiencing the bliss of *Brahman* in a dreamless sleep.

The question of 'which deity is that which witnesses the dreams' is also answered. The answer is the mind with the senses gathered into it that experiences the dreams. Dreaming is the feature of the mind and not that of the Self. When the senses lie dormant in sleep, the mind builds up in a dream a world of its own out of impressions gathered during the awakened state. All the different parts of the dream are impressions of actual experiences – may have been gathered at different times or different places. They are all curiously and fantastically linked together by the mind in sleep. In this state the controlling power of both reason and will is absent. So, in a dream, you end up experiencing things or circumstances you have never before seen or experienced. In the *Vedanta* three states of consciousness are described.

- (a). Waking state: A person is conscious of the physical world outside
- (b) Dream state: A person is conscious of the inner world and objects created from impressions gathered during the waking state
- (c) Dreamless sleep: Consciousness is free from duality of subject and object and one experiences the feeling of undifferentiated awareness.

These three states are common to all – for both ignorant as well as enlightened. The sense organs do not function, the mind is inactive and the *Prana* keeps a watch over the body.

There is a fourth state called *Turiya*, or pure consciousness or immortal. There are some basic differences between these two states of dreamless sleep and *Turiya*. The following table highlights some of the differences.

No	Bliss during dreamless sleep	Bliss during <i>Turiya</i>
1	The state is attained by chance	State attained after meditation
2	Bliss is not permanent	Bliss is permanent and everlasting
3	Consciousness experienced is covered by layers of ignorance	Consciousness is covered by the knowledge of <i>Brahman</i>
4	The ignorant ones attain no fruits	The enlightened ones experience the knowledge of the <i>Brahman</i>
5	A normal person after waking up from deep sleep continues to lead his normal life of ignorance	The knower of <i>Brahman</i> never forgets his real nature and knows it as the bliss of the <i>Brahman</i> .

Explaining *Sushupti*, the state of deep sleep the teacher gives an example. Just like a bird after a daylong of flying goes to its nest, takes rest and returns fully refreshed we too go back to our resting place and come back refreshed.

Jagadguru Adi Shankara explains that during the waking state we are by our ignorance, desires and actions (*avidya, kama* and *karma*). Our ignorance leads to desires which in turn end up in our actions – some good and some bad. We get trapped in a cycle of *Karya* and *karana*. During deep sleep we are free from these.

Our condition then is *advayam, ekam, sivam and shantam* – there is no duality (*advayam*); there is only one – consciousness (*ekam*); there is then peace (*shantam*) and auspiciousness (*sivam*). All *Indriyas* (all 5 organs of knowledge – Ear, Skin, eyes, tongue and nose completely retire in sleep; also the 5 organs of action – *Speech (Vaak), Hands, Legs, Anus and Genitals* and inner instruments of perception 4 in number- *Mans, Buddhi, Antahkarana and Chitta*) retire in sleep. During deep sleep the apparent false knowledge of the external world disappears but not the real nature of the *Jivatman*. The *Jivatman* realizes oneness with the Supreme *Atman*. We then become *Sarvam*. The answer to the question – who is free from the three states, is the imperishable *Atman*.

5th Question = to which world is attained by a person who meditates throughout his life, with a single minded devotion, on AUM

Satyakama, son of *Sibi* raises the 5th question. He asks, as to which world is attained by a person who meditates throughout his life, with a single minded devotion, on *AUM* (sometimes spelled as *OM*).

Some explanation on *AUM* and meditation would be in order at this stage.

AUM

This single syllable incantation is regarded is the most powerful and significant of all mantras. It is accepted both as one with *Brahman* and as the medium connecting man and the Supreme. The sound of '*AUM*' is also called the '*Pranava*', meaning that it is something that pervades life. The very central theme of *Mandukya Upanishad* is the syllable '*AUM*', through which the mystery of *Brahman* is gathered.

Repetition of "*Om*kara" is done on different occasions. We find this in the repetitions of simple mantras like "*Om namo Narayanaya*" or "*Om Namashivaya*". And Vedic mantras as well as hymns begin with "*OM*". During sacrifices and acts of penance we notice that "*OM*" is repeated.

Sometimes “OM” is uttered and repeated independently – mostly by *sanyasins* and advanced *sadhaks*. This is called “*Pranavopasana*”.

Meditation

Meditation here refers to a continuous flow of mind towards *Atman* excluding everything else. The principal disciplines for meditation as laid down in *Patanjali Yoga Sutra* are *Yama and Niyama*. They refer to methods of self control at physical and mental levels. *Yama* includes non-violence, truthfulness. Non-stealing, chastity of body and mind and non-receiving of gifts. *Niyama* includes outer and inner purity, contentment, austerity, study of scriptures and devotion to God.

Indian thinkers have referred to the Supreme Being in two different ways – *Nirguna Brahman* and *Saguna Brahman*. In the *Nirguna* version the Supreme Being is attribute-less (has no form, smell etc) – He cannot be apprehended by our sense organs. In the *Saguna* version, the Supreme Being has a form and can be apprehended by our sense organs.

Though *AUM* is only one syllable which is to be meditated upon by uttering it as one unit, it can be uttered and meditated upon by using the sounds produced in three different parts (*matras*) viz. A, U, M. While meditating the syllable as a whole leads to the *Nirguna Brahman*, meditating on its different *matras* leads one to the *Saguna Brahman*.

The person who meditates on the first *matra* “A” (sound produced by pronouncing the first letter) is born again in the mortal world endowed with austerity, chastity and faith. He will enjoy the glory and power of spiritual life.

This is possible because the *matra A* in *AUM* constitutes the essence of the hymns of *Rig Veda*.

One who meditates on the second *matra* (sound produced by pronouncing letter *U*) is carried after death by the hymns of *Yajur Veda* to the world of Moon or mind. After enjoying the pleasures of that world he returns to the mortal world once again.

One who meditates on the *Supreme Purusha* as constituted by the three syllables becomes united with the Sun. Eventually he is taken to the *Brahmaloka* by the *Sama* hymns.

Essentially, the Upanishad indicates, when the letters (A, U, M) are employed separately the *Sadhak* will be going through the cycle of rebirth. However, when

the three *matras* are blended together and meditated upon the *Sadhak* will reap the benefits as described above.

6th Question - Whether there exists a person with sixteen parts ?

Sukesa, son of *Bharadvaja*, told the *Guru* that he was once asked by the Prince of *Kosala* whether he knows of a person with sixteen parts. He could not answer the question. *Sukesa* wanted to know where such a *Purusha* lives.

Guru Pippalada answers that the *Purusha* with sixteen parts exists within our body and is our inner Self. The sixteen parts of the manifestation of the Self are as follows. (1) *Prana*, the life principle (2) *Shraddha* (3) Space (4) Air (5) Fire (6) Water (7) Earth (8) *The Indriyas* - 5 *Jnana Indriyas* and 5 *Karma Indriyas* together are considered as one (9) *Manas*, the mind (10) Food (11) Vigor (12) *Tapas*, self discipline (13) Vedic Hymns – *mantras* (14) *Karma*, Sacrifice (15) Wisdom – meaning spiritual worlds representing different states of consciousness (16) Name or distinct identity.

The world of names and forms are all manifestations of the *Purusha*. As the flowing rivers, bound for the ocean disappear into it on reaching it, are referred to simply as ocean so too these sixteen parts disappear into the *Purusha*.

Sage *Pippalada* concludes his instructions with this. The students worship him as they would their father.

Mundaka Upanishad

Mundaka Upanishad belongs to the *Atharva Veda* and has 64 verses (*mantras*) spread over three Chapters (*mundakas*), each of which having two sections (*khandas*). It is regarded as a one of the *Mukhya Upanishads* and volumes of commentaries have been written on it.

Lord *Brahma* was one of the first Divine beings. He imparted this *Brahma Vidya* to His eldest son *Atharva*. *Brahma Vidya* is the fundamental science because it is the very substance of all knowledge, the different branches of which are all the lower forms of knowledge. Sage *Atharva* passed on the *Vidya* to Sage *Angi*. *Angi* then transmitted it to *Satyavaha*, the son of *Bharadvaja* who, in turn, gave this great science to Sage *Angiras*. *Mundaka* refers to a person with a shaven head – a *Sanyasin*. It is meant for a person who has renounced everything. Absolute knowledge cannot be co-existent with worldly activity. The truth that this *Upanishad* imparts is to be had through the inspirational initiation direct from a

Guru who is well versed in the *Brahma Vidya* and who has at the same time had the *Brahma Anubhava*, is brought out very clearly in this *Upanishad*. Sage *Saunaka* approached *Angiras* with due respect and asked “O *Bhagavan*, what is that through the knowledge of which everything becomes known?”

Ordinarily, knowledge of one thing does not imply knowledge of another thing. But then *Brahma Vidya* is not a knowledge which excludes other kind of knowledge. It is the Knowledge of the highest cause, the knowledge of which means the knowledge of all its effects also.

Sage Angiras starts his reply by telling that two kinds of knowledge have to be acquired. These are (a) the lower (*Apara Vidya*) and (b) the higher (*Para Vidya*).

The lower kind of knowledge consist of all the four *Vedas* – *Rig*, *Yajur*, *Sama* and the *Atharva*, the *Vedangas* – *Siksha*, (phonetics), *Kalpas* (rituals), *Vyakarana* (grammar), *Nirukta* (etymology), *Chandas* (prosody) and *Jyotisha* (astronomy). The higher kind of knowledge is one through which the imperishable is attained.

The lower kind of knowledge pertains to divinities, their worship and the different methods of attaining excellent regions through the performance of meritorious deeds like prayer, sacrifices etc. However, the imperishable Brahman is reached only through the higher kind of knowledge – *Brahma Vidya*. The essential difference between the two kinds of knowledge is that :

- (a) In the case of lower *Vidya* it gives rise to performance of actions to gain knowledge of the divinity and then follow it up with efforts to attain that divinity.
- (b) In the case of higher *Vidya*, all action ceases before the attainment of knowledge. Knowledge does not mean knowledge of any particular divinity or the connection between the knower and the known. It is the knowledge of the Knower himself. *Brahma Vidya* is the technique enabling one to reach Absolute experience. This knowledge is attained through a great effort from the *Sadhak* in the forms of *Viveka*, *Vichara*, *Vairagya* and *Abhyasa*. Absolute Spirit is experienced as existent everywhere, without distinctions, by those who have risen to the level of spiritual consciousness. This is the object of higher knowledge or *Para Vidya*.

If the Absolute Brahman is the sole object of our pursuit, then what about this world that we find ourselves in? Is it worthless? Sage *Angiras* further explains – as the web comes out of the spider and is withdrawn, the plants grow from the soil and the hair from the body of man, and so does the Universe (consisting both of animate and inanimate beings) spring from the Eternal Brahman. The world is

an emanation from the Brahman. We are living and moving in divinity manifesting as this world.

Sage *Angiras* proceeds to give an outline of the emanation of the world. *Brahman* expands by means of austerity, and from It primal matter is produced; from Matter *Prana* is produced; from that *Prana*, the mind, truth, the regions and the effects of actions.

In the second *Khanda*, *Angiras* deals with the nature of lower *Vidya*. Limitations and criticisms on *Apara Vidya* are intended to make one conscious of its imperfect state and then proceed beyond it. The sacrificial rites and rituals prescribed in the *Karma Kanda* of the Vedas come under *Apara Vidya*. In order to reap the full benefits of the rites or rituals, they will have to be performed flawlessly and with great care – exactly as per rules prescribed in the scriptures. Failure to do so will result in disastrous consequences. In any case the path of the lower *Vidya* is one of *Samsara* and *Samsara* is of the form of pain – and has to be rejected by intelligent people. The fruits of sacrificial rites, even when best performed, are finite and transient. Steeped in ignorance, rating themselves to be great and learned the deluded ones (the performers of these rites) go through the *Samsara* endlessly. Rituals of worship and good deeds certainly result in good *Karma*. However, the *Karma* has not adequate to get us across the sea of *Samsara*. Preparing to receive the highest knowledge, the seeker should forsake all forms of desire. Then in order to gain the knowledge of the eternal, the seeker should approach a *Guru*, who is well versed in scriptures and established in *Brahman*. The *Guru* will impart the knowledge of the *Brahman* by which alone the Imperishable Being is realized.

Continuing the discussions, the *Sage Angiras* gives an example. From a blazing fire countless sparks of various kind, but of similar form, shoot out. Similarly, from the Imperishable Being, different kinds of beings emerge, and return to it later on. The beings emerging from the Supreme differ from one another in their thinking. But the Absolute Self in all individuals remains unaffected. Life is made possible because of this dependence of individuals on the Supreme Self.

Thus far the Sage has explained the objects and nature of *Apara Vidya*. They all end up in *Samsara*. The *Upanishad* traces all experiences back to the ultimate cause. This ultimate cause, *Purusha*, forms object of *Para Vidya* or *Brahma Vidya*. From this *Purusha* proceed the vital energy *Prana*, the mind, the senses, *Aakash*, air, fire, water and the all supporting Earth. The universe, including all subjects and all objects, is only a condition supported by the Absolute, on the basis of which appearances are experienced by the cognising individual and without which the universe has no reality. The *Upanishad* gives a description of

the Universal Self like this - his head is the shining region of the heavens; his eyes are the sun and the moon; his ears are the quarters of space; his speech is the Veda full of knowledge; his vital energy is the universal air; the whole universe is his heart; his feet are the lowest earth.

This is a metaphorical illustration of the all inclusive nature of the Universal Being. The Universe is not His creation but His manifestation- His incarnation. He remains as its inner controller – *Antaryamin*. From Him proceed the sky, the Sun, Moon, showers of rain, all vegetation on Earth. Earth is the essence of food. Food produces energy and from energy all beings are produced. All Vedas came forth from Him. So too are austerities connected with sacrifices and the sacrifices themselves. From him are born Gods of diverse descent. In Him are found the oceans and the mountains; all rivers flow in Him in their various forms. Plants and the various tastes connected with food—all form the different parts of this Cosmic Body in which resides the Universal Self or the *Virat-Purusha*. The whole universe is *Purusha* alone. Actions and penances also are this immortal Supreme Self. The Absolute Self is not really experienced by any individual as it really is. Only its effects are experienced.

If the whole Universe is *Purusha* alone, it means that differences are unreal. Sage Angiras then urges the disciple that the Supreme Being is the only real goal to be attained in life. He then proceeds to advice on how to attain this goal. *OM* is the bow. The individual self is compared to an arrow. One should place this arrow sharpened by meditation on the bow. *Brahman* is the target. Drawing the bow with the mind fixed on *Brahman* hit the target. Constant meditation on *OM* allows the individual consciousness to take the form of *OM* itself which is unlimited in nature. The meditator ultimately becomes the object of meditation. *OM* being the symbol of *Brahman*, meditation on *OM* leads to realization of *Brahman*. The sage declares that the immortal, non-dual Supreme Self is the bridge to immortality.

Where is his *Brahman* located? He who is Omniscient and all knowing is established in the ether of the heart. He is seated in the core of every individual. This does not mean that the *Atman* is situated somewhere in space. It just means that it is felt as existence by the individual through the mind which defines one's personality. Because it is the mind that reflects the *Atman*, the presence of *Atman* is felt only where the mind manifests itself.

When the knots of the heart are broken, all doubts are cleared the evil effects of actions perish and the Supreme Being is beheld. The knots are *Avidya*, *Kama* and *Karma*. *Avidya* is ignorance. *Kama* is the medium. *Karma* is the effect. These three binding factors confine experience to an individual personality.

When ignorance, which is the root cause of all troubles, is destroyed by knowledge phenomenal experience is put to an end.

Summing up the sage tells that on Him neither the sun shines, nor the moon nor the stars; not even the lightning; what to speak of this fire; when He shines everything shines after Him. By His light this whole universe is illuminated.

***na tatra sūryo bhāti, na candra-tāarakam, nemā vidyuto bhānti,
kuto'yam agniḥ,***

tam eva bhāntam anubhāti sarvam, tasya bhāsā sarvam, idaṁ vibhāti.

This *mantra Mundaka-2* (2:2:10) is recited while performing *Harati* in our daily *pujas*.

The immortal *Brahman* is everywhere- above, below, to the right and the left. The *Upanishads* conclude that *Brahman* alone is the Absolute Reality.

The concluding chapter of this *Upanishad* gives us the right understanding of the *Paramatma* and the *Jivatma*- the Supreme Self and the individual self. It illustrates their unity, their distinction and their relationship with each other.

Two birds, united always and known by the same name, closely cling to the same tree. One of them eats the sweet fruit, the other looks on without eating. The two birds are the *Jiva* and *Ishvara*, both existing in an individual compared to a tree. The body is compared to a tree because it can be cut down like a tree. The body is the field of action and experience and it is the fruit of actions done already. Due to the limiting factors like *Avidya*, *Kama* and *Karma* the *Jiva* has to experience the results of its actions. The fruits enjoyed by the *Jiva* are of the nature of pleasure and pain. However, *Ishvara* is not limited by such adjuncts and has no actions whatsoever to perform. As such He does not have to experience the results for any actions. In the mantra, the Lord is designated as having a golden hue. This is to signify that His nature of knowledge is eternally inherent in Him – even as the colour of gold is something inherent in it.

When the individual has the vision of the Supreme Being the *Jiva* becomes free from blemishes, attachments and sorrows and gets united with the Absolute. The Supreme Being is manifested in all beings. Knowing this the wise man does not speak of anything else. The man's delight then lies in the Self only. *Brahma Varishtha* is one who has realised *Brahman* and whose action consists in Self knowledge preceded by renunciation of external consciousness. The Atman is attained through truth, penance, correct knowledge and *Brahmacharya* (self-control), observed continuously and without break. The Atman is beheld within in

the form of light and purity by the realised souls who are freed from all kinds of sins. The popular meaning of *Brahmacharya* is continence. However, it really means leading a life befitting the nature of *Brahman*. It is, in other words, *Charya* or moving/ acting / conducting oneself in accordance with the law of Brahman-which is the unity of existence. Such control is not merely the abandonment of objects but is the absence of taste for the objects. Bondage is not caused by the existence of objects but by the connection of the mind with those objects.

**“satyam eva jayate nānṛtam, satyena panthā vitato devayānaḥ,
yenākramanty ṛṣayo hy āpta-kāmā yatra tat satyasya
paramam nidhānam.”**

Truth alone triumphs, not falsehood. Through truth the divine path is spread out by which the sages, whose desires have been completely fulfilled, reach supreme treasure of Truth. Here the “*Truth*” being referred to is more than the conventional truth speaking. Truth is a symbol of perfection and a representation of the Divine Being. Adherence to truth, therefore, means embracing the universal nature of the Reality. Through Truth the consciousness blossoms into more expanded experience, but untruth attempts to stifle consciousness altogether. The sages got a vision of this Truth because they were absolutely free from such defects as deceit, delusion, fraud, pride, vanity and falsehood. They found the consummation of their desires and aspirations in this Absolute Truth. They became first desire-less and then sought the Truth. Desire breeds falsehood, and desireless-ness gives rise to Truth.

The Supreme Being is to be realized within the lotus of the heart. It is not grasped by the eye, not even by speech, nor by the other senses. It is not possible to know it through deeds. He, who meditates upon it with absolute purity (*Sattva*) of mind, as the indivisible Being, beholds it through the serenity attained in knowledge. Lot of groundwork needs to be done before reaching this point. To start with practice of virtues like truth is absolutely necessary, to be followed by the withdrawal of the senses and concentration of mind, leading to *Tadatmyata*, or absorption in the object of meditation.

Whatever is desired by a liberated sage of purified mind will come true. This is because *Sankalpa* of the sage (knower of Self) is rooted in *Satya* or *Truth*. Therefore let all those who seek their own good revere and worship the sage.

The Absolute Self is not to be obtained through discourses, through intellect, or through much hearing. Whom one wishes to attain, i.e., the Self or the Atman, by him alone is It attained. The *Upanishad* sets forth certain pre-requisites of

meditation on the *Atman*. The *Sadhak* should have intense devotion and the requisite mental strength and moral power without which concentration would be impossible. Attachment to worldly objects should be given up. Works done for the sake of personal gain will not help in the realisation of the Self. Realizing everywhere the all-pervading Brahman, deeply absorbed in contemplation of His being, they enter into him, the Self of all. As rivers flowing into the ocean lose themselves in the ocean, casting off name and form, so the knower, freed from name and form, attains the Divine Purusha who is higher than the high.

This concludes the *Mundaka Upanishad*.

Mandukya Upanishad

The *Upanishad* has been revealed to a great sage-teacher *Manduka*. The *Upanishad* belongs to the *Atharva Veda*. It contains just twelve *verses*. Yet it occupies a very important position in *Vedantic* literature because it underlines the essence of the entire *Advaita Vedanta*. In fact, one of the *Mahavakyas* “*ayam atma Brahma*” is derived from the *Mandukya Upanishad*. It is said that *Mandukya Upanishad* alone is adequate for an aspirant to achieve liberation.

The theme of this *Upanishad* is the exposition of the mystic syllable *AUM* (or *OM*). It is aimed at training the mind on meditation.

The *Upanishad* commences with a solemn declaration:

Mantra 1: Pranava or Omkara

Om ityetadaksharam idam sarvam,

tasyopavyakhyanam bhutam bhavat

bhavishyaditi sarvam omkara eva.

Everything is *OM*, indeed meaning –all this, whatever is visible, whatever is cognizable, whatever can come within the purview of sense-perception, inference or verbal testimony, whatever can be comprehended is all *OM*. *OM* is Pranava. It is the *Bija-mantra* for all *mantras* be it *Vaidika* or *Tantrika*. . *OM* is both a *Nama* and a *Rupa*, name as well as form. The Absolute Supreme is the *Rupa* (form) of *OM* which is the *Nama* (name). It is not merely a sound, though it is also a sound, and a very important aspect of *OM* that one has to bear in mind is that *OM* is not merely a chant or a recitation, a word or a part of human language but it is something more than all this. It is something which exists by its own right. We

do not create *OM* by a chanting of it, but we only produce a vibration sympathetic with the vibration that is already there by its own right and which is called *OM*. *OM* in essence is a cosmic vibration. It is not a chant made by us. It is said that *OM* is a Universal vibration with which creation commenced.

***aum ity etad akṣaram idam sarvam, tasyopavyākhyānam
bhūtam bhavad bhaviṣyad iti sarvam auṁkāra eva
yac cānyat trikālātītaṁ tad apy auṁkāra eva.***

Names go with the form. And for this reason all names in this world are perishable. When the form goes, so does the name. But Universal form is imperishable. Then the Universal name is also imperishable. Thus *OM* is *Akshram*. All that is past, that which is present and that which will be in the future is *OM*.

Mantra 2. Individual and the Absolute

***sarvaṁ hy etad brahma, ayam ātmā brahma
so'yam ātmā catuṣ-pāt.***

The mantra contains three statements –

1. All this is verily *Brahman*
2. This *Atman* is *Brahman*
3. This *Atman* has four quarters or *padas*.

We shall examine these statements.

“*Sarvam hyetad brahma:*” All this is, verily, *Brahman*. Thus begins the second Mantra. “All this creation is just the Absolute alone”, is the real meaning of this statement. All that can be regarded as what you call this universe is that *Brahman*.

“*Ayam atma brahma:*” The *Upanishad* goes one step forward. It declares that this *Atman*, (individual self) is also *Brahman*. Here you have; as it were, the quintessence of all *Upanishadic* teaching, the last word of the *Vedanta*, as you may call it, the culmination of the wisdom of the sages. The Universe which appears proximate to our senses, this *Jivatma* (Individual Self) of ours which also appears proximate to us and that *Brahman* which seems to be far away from our reach are all reconciled with the Absolute.

“so’yam ātmā catuṣ-pāt”

This subject, this Atman (Individual Self) is regarded as fourfold (four footed as it were) for the purpose of analysis. The fourfold of the Atman described in the *Mandukya Upanishad* are the four aspects in the study of the *Atman*, and not four distinguishable, partitioned quarters of the *Atman*. We have the physical, the subtle, the causal and spiritual aspects as the four aspects to be studied while analysing the nature of the *Atman*. These four stages are called *Jagrat*, *Swapna*, *Sushupti* and *Turiya* – the waking state, the dreaming state, the sleeping state and the transcendent spiritual state. These are the four states of consciousness and the study of consciousness is the same as the study of Absolute *Brahman*. Study of consciousness is the subject of this *Upanishad*.

Mantra 3. Waking state

***jāgarita sthāno bahiṣ-prajñāḥ saptāṅga
ekonaviṁśati-mukhaḥ sthūla-bhug vaiśvānaraḥ
prathamāḥ pādah.***

The first quarter is *Vaisvanara*. Its field is the waking state. Its consciousness is outward-turned. It is seven-limbed and nineteen-mouthed. It enjoys gross objects.

We commence the study by taking into account all reality as presented to us. The mind will not accept what it does not see or understand. The *Mandukya Upanishad*, therefore, takes this aspect into consideration and commences the work of analysis of the self from the foundation of sense-perception and mental cognition based on this perception.

Sense perception comes through *shabda*, *sparsha*, *roopa*, *rasa*, *gandha* – sound, touch, shape or forms, taste and smell through his respective sense organs. We do not see *Ishvara*, *Brahman*, *Omkara*, *Pranava* etc. We hear about all these but cannot see, hear or touch any of them. We cannot accept them unless a satisfactory explanation is given in regard to the visible. This immediacy of consciousness the sensory fact presented to us in our day to day life is called waking life or *Jagrat-avastha*. All experience we have gained is confined to waking life. To us life means waking life. In the words of Dr. S. Radhakrishnan “The waking state is the normal condition of the natural man, who without reflection accepts the universe as he finds it. The same physical universe bound by uniform laws presents itself to all men”.

Let us now try to understand the way we begin to know the world as it appears to us in the waking life. Its special feature is "*Bahihprajnah*". It is conscious of only what is external to us and not what is inside us. Our sense organs can experience the outside world and not what is within us. This is the peculiarity of the waking consciousness. The *Upanishad* says this consciousness is Seven-limbed and has nineteen mouths. This consciousness is called *Vaisvanara*.

It may be appropriate to understand the meaning of some of the words we will come across.

Jiva – refers to Individual soul

Visva – Individual soul in waking state.

Virat – Universal or macrocosmic aspect of Ishvara

The sum total of all *Visva* is *Virat*. The sum total of all physical bodies is *Virat*. The totality of gross universe is also *Virat*

Whatever exists in one's own body also exists in the Universe. The human body is a miniature Universe.

From the point of view of this *Upanishad* there is no unbridgeable gulf between *Jiva and Ishvara*. The seven limbs referred to in this *Upanishad* is a definition of the Cosmic self described in the *Chandogya Upanishad*. We just said that in the waking consciousness the *Jiva* is aware of only external objects. This is true of *Ishvara* also. Both are *Bahihprajna* (outwardly conscious) with a subtle difference. We will come to this little later.

For the *Paramatma*, the seven limbs are –

- 1.the shining regions of heaven may be regarded as His head.
- 2.His eyes are the Sun and the Moon.
- 3.Air is His breath
- 4.Fire (*Ahavaniya* fire, one of the three fires of the *Agnihotra* sacrifice) His mouth
- 5.Sky is His body.
- 6.Water is His urinary organ (kidney or bladder)
- 7.Earth is His feet.

This is the *Universal Atman, Virat*, from the point of view of the waking consciousness. This is what *Arjuna* saw as described in the eleventh chapter in *Bhagavad-Gita*. Just as we have consciousness animating our physical body, *Virat* is animating the physical Universe. This *Virat* is called *Antaryamin* because He is immanent in all things. For this *Virat-Purusha* there is no difference between living being and dead matter. He is present in the inanimate as well as in the animate by means of what are called the *Gunas of Prakruti* – *Sattva, Rajas* and *Tamas* – composure, activity and inertia. When He manifests Himself through *Tamas* alone, we call it inanimate existence.

Such objects as stone, rock, which, from our point of view, do not seem to have any consciousness animating them, and are examples of the *Virat-Purusha* through *Tamoguna Prakruti*, a quality of *Prakruti* in which *Rajas and Sattva* are hidden; *Tamas* is predominating over *Rajas and Sattva*. When *Rajas and Sattva* slowly reveal themselves more and more in larger quantity and extent, there is animation and life creeps into existence. From the inanimate we come to the animate. The first manifestation of life is through what we call *Prana* – the vital sustaining power in all living beings. *Prana* is functioning in the world of plants, vegetables, etc. But plants do not think as animals do. The function of thinking belongs to a higher order of Reality which we call as the animal world, with all its instincts and sensations. We now notice a greater degree of the manifestation of Reality. There is a level of *Sattva* in the humans, where we have not only functions of breathing and thinking, but also of understanding, logical discrimination etc. This is a level higher than that in the animals. We have to reach a still higher level than ordinary humans to reach the realm of *Ananda* or Divine light. And *Ananda* is equivalent to *Chit* and *Sat* – Consciousness and Being. At this level *Sat, Chit* and

Ananda become one. At this level only *Shuddha-Sattva* prevails – no mixing of *Rajas* and *Tamas*. So we see distinctions in the realm of *Jivas*. The *Virat, Vaisvanara*, does not have any distinctions. While for humans the awareness is “I am, and you are also there”, for the *Virat* it is “I am and there is no world outside me”.

According to the *Upanishad* the description is as if He has seven limbs. At the microcosmic level of *Jiva* the *Upanishad* tells us it has nineteen mouths. The function of the mouth is to consume things. In this sense our eyes, nose etc through which we take in vibrations may be regarded as mouths. There are nineteen functional organs of this wakeful consciousness which help us establish contact with the outside world. They are –

a) Five *Jnanendriyas* (Ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose).

b) Five *Karmendriyas* (Mouth, hands, feet, genitals and anus).

c) Five *Pranas* (*Prana, Apana, Vyana, Udana* and *Samana*).

The four-fold *Antahkarana chatushtaya* (*Manas-mind; Buddhi- Intellect, Chitta* (subconscious mind or faculty by which things are remembered); *Ahamkara* (egoism or self arrogating principle).

These are the nineteen mouths of the *Jiva* referred to in the *Upanishad*. With the help of these nineteen instruments we absorb the physical world outside us into ourselves. Our physical-consciousness not equipped to absorb anything super-physical. Our counterpart at the cosmic level is *Vaisvanara*. *Virat*, under the order of *Ishvara*, having entered the microcosmic body and having the intellect as his vehicle, reaches the state of *Visva*. The he goes by several names of – *Vijnanattma, Chidabhasa, Visva, Vyavaharika Jiva* etc.

Now coming back to *Bahihprajna*, or outward consciousness, while both the *Jiva* and *Ishvara* may be regarded as outwardly conscious, there is a subtle difference. While the consciousness relates itself to other objects and persons, it becomes the individual *Jiva*. In this process, the *Jiva* binds itself to the external objects – called *Samsara*. This leads to a desire and likes and dislikes. In the case of the *Virat* there is no desire. It only has an awareness of the physical cosmos. There is one other difference is. In the case of the *Virat* the whole Universe is comprehended in its consciousness. That is not possible for the *Jiva*.

Mantra 4. Dream State:

***svapna-sthāno'ntaḥ-prajñāḥ saptāṅga ekonavimśati-mukhaḥ
pravivikta-bhuk taijaso dvītiyaḥ pādah.***

The second quarter is *Taijasa*. Its field is the dream state. Its consciousness is inward-turned. It is seven-limbed and nineteen-mouthed. It enjoys subtle objects.

During dream, the mind creates various kinds of objects out of the impressions produced by experiences of the waking state. The mind reproduces the whole of waking life in dream through the force of *Avidya* (ignorance), *Kama* (desire and imagination) and *Karma* (action). The mind is the perceiver and it is also the perceived in a dream. The desires that are not satisfied during the waking state are gratified in the dream state. Dream is the state during which the *Atman* is referred to as *Taijasa*. The *Svapna Avastha* (dream state) is that state in which the senses are at rest. Here the object of experience is consciousness consisting of *vasanas* (affinities), the impressions of the past experience. The dream-state experience is called the experience of the subtle. *Sutratman* or *Hiranyagarbha*,

under the order of Ishvara having entered the microcosmic body subtle body and having the mind as his vehicle, reaches the Taijasa state. He goes by various names – *Taijasa*, *Pratibhasika* and *Svapnakalpita*.

The dreamer creates a world of his own during state. Mind alone works independently in this state. The senses are withdrawn into the mind. Mind also withdraws itself from the outside world and plays in the dream with vasanas and Samskaras. It enjoys objects made up of fine ideas which are products of desire. The difference between dream state and the waking state is – In the dream state there is the subtle experience by *Taijasa* in the form of vasanas, whereas experience in the waking state is with the gross. The world of dream being subtle, projected only by the mind, is regarded as *Pravivikta*, *Sukshma*, non-physical; – this is so both in the case of *Taijasa* and *Hiranyagarbha*. While *Hiranyagarbha* has Cosmic Knowledge, the *Jiva* has no such knowledge. *Hiranyagarbha* is *Ishvara's* form, and *Taijasa* is *Jiva's* form. Thus is the twofold mystery which dream bolsters up before us.

In the dream state, the state of consciousness by which subtle objects are perceived is called *Antahprajna* or inner perception. The *Visva*, or the *Jagaritasthana*, is *Saptanga* and *Ekonavimsatimukha*; and so is *Taijasa*, or the *Svapnasthana*. The seven limbs and nineteen mouths reference is relevant in this state as well.

Mantra 5; Deep sleep state

***yatra supto na kaṁ cana kāmaṁ kāmayate
na kaṁ cana svapnam paśyati tat suṣuptam
suṣupta-sthāna ekī-bhūtaḥ prajñānā-ghana evānanda-mayo
hy ānanda-bhuk ceto-mukhaḥ prājñas ṛtīyaḥ pādah.***

The third quarter or condition is *Prajna*. whose sphere is deep sleep, in whom all experiences have become one, who is essentially a mass of consciousness, who is full of bliss, who enjoys bliss and who leads the way to the knowledge of the two other states. When *Jivatma* experiences deep sleep, the functions of the nineteen organs come to a stop. The *Jiva* does not see or hear anything. There is no functioning of the mind. Egoism is also absent. However, the veil of ignorance, *avidya*, persists.

Under the orders of *Ishvara* he who is coupled with *Avyakta*, enters the microcosmic *Karana* body and reaches the state of *Prajna*. The other names for *Prajna* are – *Avicchinna*, *Paramarthika*, *Sushupti* *Abhimani*. Just like a bird, tired

after roaming, goes back to its nest – so too the *Jiva* tired, after actions during the waking and dreaming states, enters *Ajnana* and enjoys the bliss. All the knowledge of the waking and dreaming state enter into a oneness. *Visva* and *Tajjasa* have entered a condition of oneness. The experiences of the waking and dream state are not annihilated but remain in a seed state. They become a dense mass of consciousness during deep sleep- *Prajnanaghana*.

In deep sleep the mind is involved into its cause – *Avidya*. For this reason there is this veil of ignorance between the individual soul and the *Brahman*. Therefore the *Jiva* cannot attain the knowledge of *Brahman* during deep sleep state. The bliss enjoyed is termed *Avidya Avrita Sukha – bliss enveloped by ignorance*. When you wake up from deep sleep - you enjoyed the sleep but did not know anything. The remembrance when you get up from deep sleep that the *Sakshi* or the witness of three states exists. That *Sakshi* is *Brahman*.

You do experience bliss during deep sleep – but not the highest bliss of *Brahman*, the *Nirvikalpa Samadhi*. Only thing achieved is freedom from unhappiness. When you wake up from deep sleep, man is still ignorant and affected by the worldly objects. And that is why you do not attain *Brahmajnana*. Compare this to the state of a sage coming out of *Samadhi*. The *sage* has full knowledge of the self and is not affected by worldly objects. That is the difference between deep sleep and *Samadhi*.

Mantra 6; Ishvara

***eṣa sarveśvaraḥ eṣa sarvajñah, eṣo'ntāryami eṣa
yoniḥ sarvasya prabhavāpyayau hi bhūtānām.***

The word *Sarvesvara* means Lord of all meaning the physical and supra-physical Universe. All mental and physical worlds come out of *Ishvara* and He controls everything. He is omnipotent and as such He is the source and end of all creation.

Prajna is the causal state of the Universe. Macrocosmically, we regard this consciousness as the creator of the whole Universe. Microcosmically also, the same consciousness is the creator of the internal world of the *Jiva*. The description of *Sarvesvara (omnipotent)* and *Sarvajna (omniscient)* cannot be attributed to *Jiva* – since the *Jiva* is neither omnipotent nor omniscient. Yet the *Upanishad* does not make a distinction between the individual and the Cosmic, and harmonizes the relation between *Jiva* and *Ishvara*. The causal condition of the *Jiva*, namely *Prajna*, is regarded only as a part of the cosmic causal state of

Ishvara. Just as the whole world has come out of *Ishvara*, so also the waking and dream states have come out of deep sleep.

The *Prajna* is the knower of all as He is in all beings. He is *Antaryamin* (i.e.) the inner ruler and governor all beings from within. He has entered into all beings and directs everything from within. He is the source of all. From Him proceeds the entire world. While He is the origin of all, He is also the place of dissolution for all beings.

Ishvara does not exert from outside to create the worlds. He does not want any instruments or materials to work with while creating the worlds. He is Omnipotent. He wills it and everything comes into being. He is both the material and instrumental cause. . He projects this world and in the end withdraws it within Himself.

Mantra-7; The Transcendent Presence

***nāntaḥ-prajñam, na bahiḥ prajñam, nobhayataḥ-prajñam
na prajñā-ghanam, na prajñam, nāprajñam;
adr̥ṣtam, avyavahārayam, agrāhyam, alakṣaṇam,
acintyam, avyapadeśyam, ekātma-pratyaya-sāram,
prapañcopaśamam, śāntam, śivam, advaitam,
caturtham manyante, sa ātmā, sa vijñeyaḥ.***

Abstruse theories regarding Brahman cannot easily be grasped by men of ordinary learning. Two techniques have generally been employed to make it easier for them to grasp

1. Explain the unknown by giving examples from day to day life
2. Explain the unexplainable by denying the known entities. It is called “Neti Neti” (not this; not this) technique. In this case, the sage employs the second technique.

We have so far discussed the three states of consciousness – waking state, dream state and the deep sleep state. The seventh *mantra* in the *Mandukya Upanishad* adopted the “*Neti Neti*” technique to explain *Turiya*, the fourth state of consciousness. *Turiya* cannot be described in words. It is the transcendental state that has to be realised through meditation. *Atman* is beyond the reach of senses. It has no qualities, colour, shape or form. You cannot touch it or smell it. For this reason it is indefinable. Yet *Atman* is the sole essence of the consciousness of the Self. The fourth stage of *Turiya* is distinct from the waking state, the dreaming state, the intermediate state between waking dreaming

states and the deep sleep state. It is pure consciousness. *Turiya* is distinct from *Ishvara*. *Turiya* or *Brahman* has no relation with the world. However, *Ishvara* governs the world. *Brahman* is free from *Maya* whereas *Ishvara* is with *Maya*. *Swami Sivananda* explains that strictly speaking “*Turiya* is not a state. *Turiya* or *Brahman* is an embodiment of peace and bliss. It is the substratum for the other three states”. It is absolute existence, knowledge and bliss.

Mantra -8 - Atman as Pranava

**so'yam ātmādhyakṣaram auṁkaro'dhimātram pādā mātrā
mātrās ca pādā akāra ukāra makāra iti.**

In the previous mantras the Atman has been described from the view point of the four states – waking, dream, deep sleep and Turiya. In this mantra it is being described from the viewpoint of sound AUM. This will help meditation on AUM. Earlier it was said that the Self can be seen in four states or quarters (*padas*); *visva* – the waking state, *taijasa* – the dream state, *prajna* – the deep sleep state and *turiya* – pure consciousness. Turiya is the real nature of the Self.

The first three states (*padas*) of the Self are represented by the three letters (*matras*) of AUM. Hence this *mantra* says that the *padas* and the *matras* are the same. *Turiya* is beyond description; so it is *amatra*- beyond the *matras*. Some people may question as to why the same idea is being repeated in two different ways. The reason for that is that a few people may find it difficult to absorb the concepts given in the previous *mantras*. Those people may concentrate on AUM as the symbol of Ultimate Reality.

Mantra-9 - AUM syllable

**jāgarita-sthāno vaiśvānaro'kāraḥ prathamā
mātrā'pter ādimattvād vā'pnoti ha vai
sarvān kāmān ādiś ca bhavati ya evaṁ veda.**

The word Om represents the *Atman*. So the *matras* of Om represent the different conditions in which the *Atman* manifests itself. *Matra* “A” (*Akaara*) represents the first condition. – *Vaisvanara*. Just like “A” pervades in all letters of alphabets so also *Vaisvanara* pervades all things in the Universe. Just as “A” is the first letter in AUM, so also *Vaisvanara* is the first condition of *Atman*. The waking state is the first of the three states. He who knows it has all his desires fulfilled.

Mantra-10

***svapna-sthānas taijasa ukāro dvitīyā
mātrokarṣāt ubhayatvādvotkarṣati ha vai
jñāna-saṁtatim samānaś ca bhavati
nāsyābrahma-vit-kule bhavati ya evam veda.***

Now, the *Upanishad* proceeds further to a comparison of the second syllable of *Om*, namely 'U', with the second phase of the manifested *Atman*, namely, *Taijasa*. *Ukara* is the second syllable of *Om*, which can be compared with the second *Pada* or foot of the *Atman*. The *Ukara* is regarded as *Utkarsha* or elevated in the sense that it is beyond *Akara*, and comes after *Akara*. We can compare, in meditation, *Ukara* with *Taijasa*, the dreaming consciousness. Just as "U" is in between waking and sound sleep, *Taijasa* is also in between *Visva* and *Prajna*. He who knows this attains supreme knowledge. He is treated equally by all. Anyone ignorant of Brahman is not born in his family.

Mantra-11

***suṣupta-sthānaḥ prājño makāras tṛtīya mātṛā
mīter apīter vā minoti ha vā idaṁ
sarvam apītīś ca bhavati ya evaṁ veda.***

The *Upanishad*, then, proceeds with the comparison between *Makara* and the deep sleep state of consciousness. *Makara* is the third *Matra* of *Om*, and it is comparable with *Prajna*, the third state, causal, of the *Atman*. *Visva* and *Taijasa* are, as it were, measured by *Prajna* in *Pralaya* (involution) and *Utpatti* (evolution). *Visva* and *Taijasa* sink in *Prajna* during sleep and emerge out of him afterwards. This is symbolically represented as being measured by *Prajna*. When the syllable *Om* is repeated continuously, the letters "A" and "U" appear to merge themselves in "M" and emerge out of it again *Prajna* is identified with the letter "M". He who knows this will be able to measure all. He will be able to know the real nature of this world. He will be able to comprehend all within himself.

Mantra-12

***amātraś caturtho'vyavahāryaḥ prapañcopaśamaḥ sivo'dvaita
evam auṁkāra ātmaiva, saṁvīśaty ātmanā'tmānaṁ ya evaṁ
veda ya evaṁ veda.***

That which has no parts is called *Amatra*. *Om* is *Amatra*. It is the fourth quarter. It is pure *Atman*. The benefit derived from realising the *Atman* – is that

he attains immortality. He is not born again. *Visva* merges in *Taijasa*, *Taijasa* in *Prajna* and *Prajna* dissolves itself in *Turiya Atman – Brahman*.

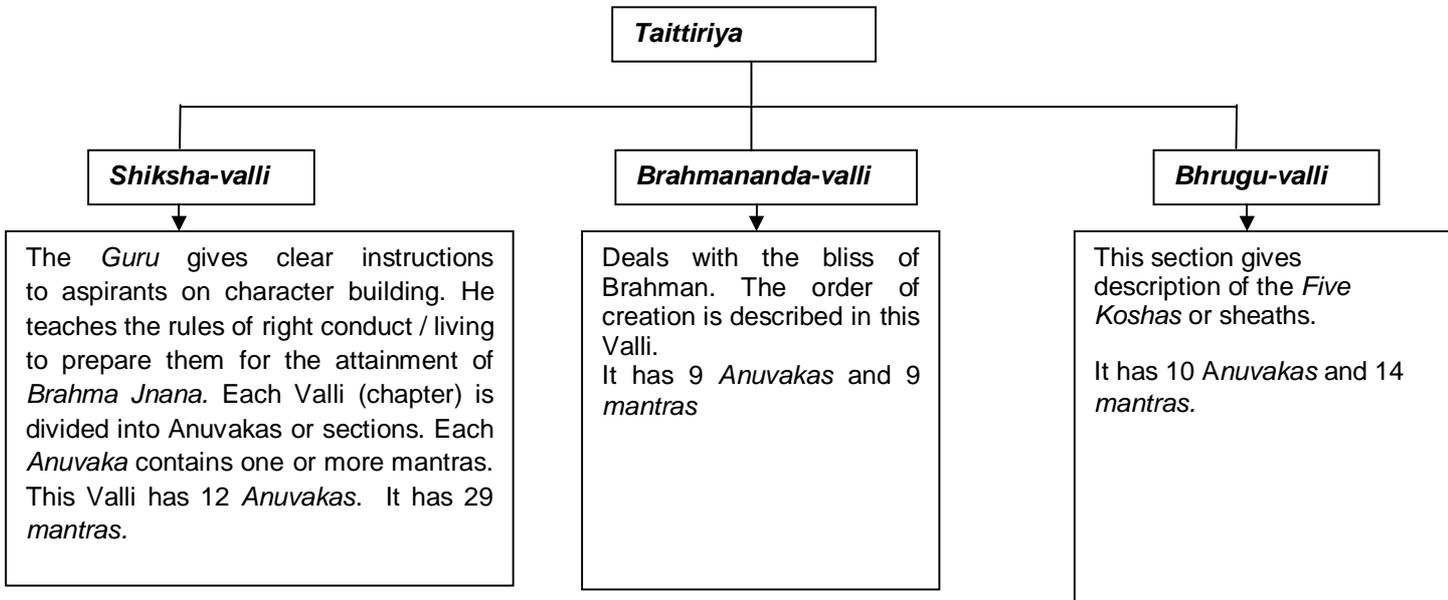
This concludes the *Mandukya Upanishad*.

Taittiriya Upanishad

This *Upanishad* is very popular, chiefly, owing to the fact that it is still chanted during Hindu religious ceremonies with proper *swarams* and intonations in all parts of India. In addition, it speaks of the rules of conduct beginning from student life to the fourth *Ashrama – Sanyasa* life revealing the depth of significance at each stage. It is divided into three parts according to *Sri Shankara*. They are:

The special feature of the second chapter, *Brahmananda-Valli* is that it proclaims that *Brahman* is *Anandamaya* or Supreme Bliss. This chapter is the most important among the three inasmuch as it deals directly with *Brahmajnanam* which is the sole purpose of the *Upanishad*.

The special feature of the third chapter, *Bhrigu-Valli* is the mention of the five sheaths, *Koshas*, of the *Atman*. The concept is mentioned in other *Upanishads* like *Brihadaranyaka* and *Chandogya*. However, *Taittiriya* handles it much more explicitly. The Vedantic doctrine of the three bodies (causal, subtle and gross) and the five sheaths or *Koshas* is directly based upon utterances in this *Upanishad*. It gives the most beautiful idea of leading the mind from the gross to the subtle and then to the subtler till the subtlest of all, the *Atman*.



Shiksha-Valli

1. Sections 1 and 12 contain peace chants. The utterance of these chants propitiates the *Devatas* (Gods). The spiritual paths are rendered smooth through their grace. All obstacles will be removed. You will have a good health and a good meditation
2. Section (*Anuvaka*) -2: Though the meaning of the text of the Upanishad is important, correct pronunciation of the *mantras* is critical. The power of the *mantra* lies in the sound and not in the text. Incorrect pronunciations rob the efficacy of the *mantra* and in the worst case may lead to disastrous consequences. For this reason, in the early days, learning Sanskrit is not merely reading books but chanting it under the guidance of an experienced Guru.
3. Section (*Anuvaka*) -3: It teaches on how to meditate on the combination of words. The word *Samhita* refers to conjunction of two word or letters of the *Vedic* texts. While reciting *Vedic* chants, the students get deeply involved in reciting and they find it difficult to direct their mind on the meaning of the texts that they are reciting. In order to draw the mind from the sound to the text, the mind is made to meditate over some symbolic significance given to the letters.
4. Section (*Anuvaka*) -4: It consists of *mantras* and rituals to be done by those who aspire for Divine knowledge and wealth. It starts with an invocation by the disciple praying for knowledge and worldly possessions. The prayer is addressed to "*Pranava*" (Om) the sound symbol of the Supreme *Brahman*. The *Anuvaka* also contains a prayer by the teacher – "As water flows from high to low, as months join to become a year, let good disciples come to me from everywhere". All the different mantras and sacred texts are considered as different branches (i.e.) expressions of the Divine *Om*. Since no great merit can be acquired without self-purification, the utterance of the sacred *Pranava* is recommended to purify the mind from all sins.
5. Section (*Anuvaka*) -5: In this section the Upanishad teaches the secret of meditation on *Brahman* in the shape of *Vyahritis*. One can obtain Self-realisation by meditating on the *Vyahritis*. The words "*Bhuh*", "*Bhuvah*", "*Suvah*", "*Mahah*", "*Janah*", "*Tapah*" and "*Satyam*" are called even *Vyahritis* or "*Sapta Vyahritis*". Besides the three *Vyahritis* "*Bhuh*", "*Bhuvah*", "*Suvah*", there is a fourth *Vyahriti* names "*Mahah*". This was discovered by *Mahachamasya*. The *Vyahriti* "*Mahah*" is *Brahman* and it pervades all the other *Vyahritis*. Among the worlds, heaven etc, are only the limbs of *Mahah*. The *Vyahriti Mahah* should be meditated upon as *Brahman*. The four *Vyahritis* should be meditated upon in four different ways. Therefore, there are in all four times four i.e., sixteen aspects of *Vyahritis*. This kind of

symbolic meditation of the *Pranava (Shabda Brahman)* is known as *Pratika Upasana*.

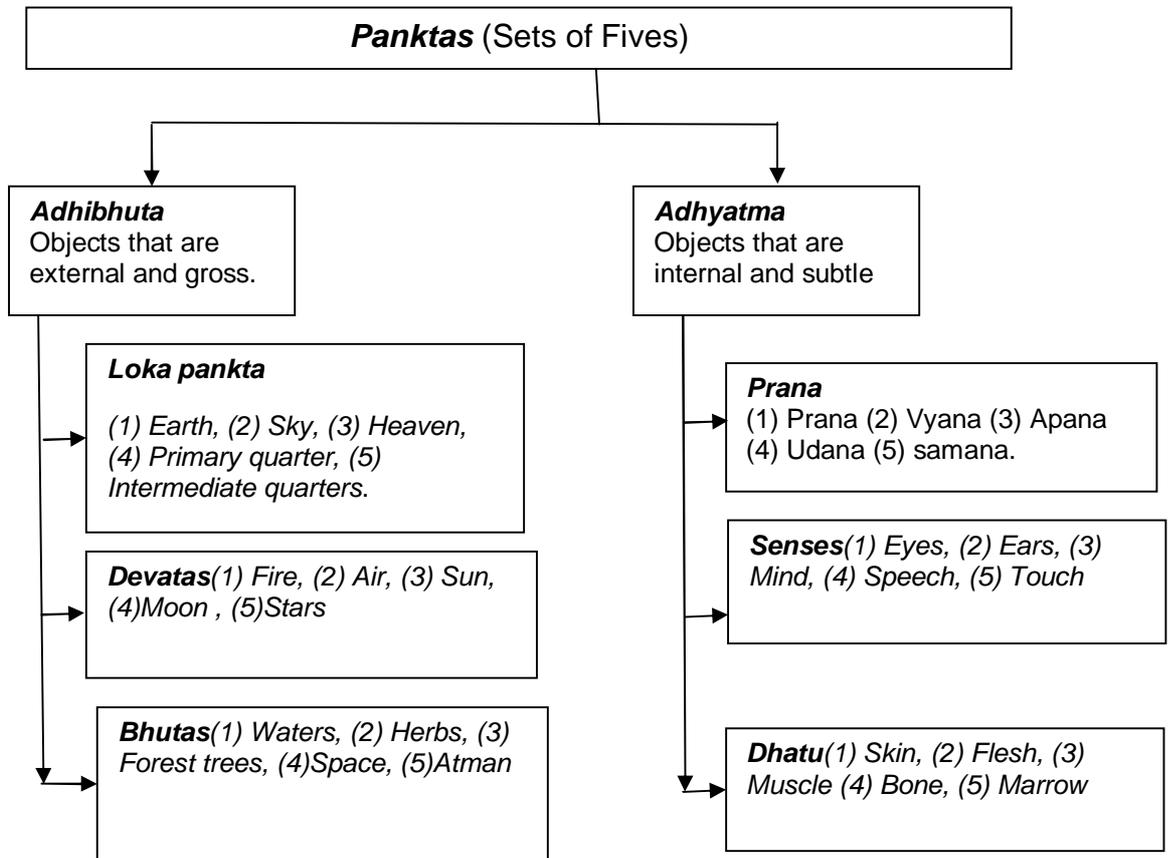
6. Section (Anuvaka) -6: The details of meditation are given in this 6th Anuvaka – the nature of entity to be meditated, path by which Brahman can be attained, fruits of meditation and the way to meditate are explained.

In the 5th Anuvaka, the object to be meditated upon is a symbol – the *Vyahriti*. In the 6th Anuvaka the object of meditation is *Brahman*. *Brahman* pervades the whole body. It is difficult for beginners to concentrate and meditate on this all-pervading body. So the *Rishis* have prescribed the cavity of the heart as His seat. . This will make the job of meditating on the *Brahman* easier for the beginners. Heart is also a vital centre for the human being. Hence it is regarded as the most suitable location for meditation on the *Brahman*. The heart is like a lotus with its head bent downwards. Here resides the *Pursha (Brahman)*.

The *Upanishad* then goes on to describe how a *Yogi* leaves his body at the time of his death. A very important *Nadi* known as *Sushumna Nadi* opens out above the heart. The *Nadi* is the path to reach *Indra*, the lower *Brahman*. It is the way for the realisation of *Brahman*. The *Yogi* enters the *Sushumna Nadi* with the help of *Udana Vayu* and leaves the body opening the skull. He then becomes one with the *Hiranyagarbha*.

The nature of *Atman* is always described in our scriptures as of golden effulgence, electric brilliance etc. This is done to import the idea that physical objects are perceived with the help of physical lights. In the same way, all perception becomes possible through the light of the *Atman*. Besides, it becomes very helpful for *Sadhaks* to contemplate upon the *Atman* as a flame of light located in the inner region of the heart. Meditate upon *Brahman* as possessing the qualities described above. This is the instruction of the spiritual preceptor, *Mahachamasya*

7. Section (Anuvaka) -7: The main objective of the *Upanishad* is to teach the highest truth that everything is *Brahman*. To make it easier, the aspirant is taken step by step towards this truth. In this *Anuvaka*, meditation is taught through a symbol of *Panktas* or fivefold sets of objects. These fivefold sets are found both within the body and the outside world. The two should be contemplated as identical with each other. Together they constitute the Universe which is a manifestation of Brahman.



8. Section (Anuvaka) -8:

This teaches meditation for superior students through the symbol *AUM*. Earlier we have seen meditation on *Brahman* through *Vyahriti* utterances. It was followed by meditation on *Brahman* via *Panktas*. Now the Upanishad talks about meditation meant for the highest class of aspirants. You should meditate on the syllable *AUM* as being *Brahman*. *AUM* is a mere sound. And as such it is insentient in itself and cannot be conscious of the worship offered. Yet as in the case of worship offered to an idol, the Lord is aware of the action of the worshipper. He will dispense the fruits to the *Sadhak*.

9. Section (Anuvaka) -9:

In this *Anuvaka*, the *Shruti* emphasises that the study of the Vedas must be combined with the practice of prescribed duties in the form *Nitya* and *Naimittika Karmas*. A great emphasis is laid upon the study and also on the teaching of Vedas. He must be righteous and truthful. He should control his senses and worship the Lord. He should perform *Agnihotra* and honour guests. He should perform social duties.

10. Section (Anuvaka) -10: After ensuring that the details regarding right thinking and right actions as per the details given in the previous *Anuvaka* have been strictly followed, divine visions and intuitive knowledge of the truth which leads to *Moksha* occur to him. By now the *Sadhak* is free from desires. The *Anuvaka* contains a statement by an enlightened sage, *Trisanku*, describing his spiritual experiences. The *Rishi* has seen in his divine vision the *Mantra* which describes his spiritual experiences. The recitation of this *Mantra* leads to purity and spiritual progress. The aspirant should repeat this *mantra* with faith and devotion.
11. Section (Anuvaka) -11: In this *Anuvaka*, the Guru gives the final instructions to the students who have completed their study under the preceptor. The Guru exhorts the disciple: Speak the truth. Do your duty. Never swerve from the study of the Vedas. Do not cut off the thread of the offspring. After completing the studies, the students return home to embrace the householder's life – which is the proper place for the discharge of worldly duties.
12. Section (Anuvaka) -12: The twelfth section contains a peace chant at the end of *Shiksha-Valli*

Brahmananda-valli

This second chapter, *Brahmananda-valli*, provides us with the essence of the entire *Taittiriya Upanishad*.

In the first chapter, *Shiksha-valli*, the students were initiated into different methods of concentration in the pursuit of *Brahma Vidya*. In this second chapter, the teacher leads them into the process of Self-Discovery. As the nucleus of such discovery is the individual seeker himself, the different layers surrounding this core in the form of concentric circles are analyzed and laid open with a view to make the seeker aware of his innermost real identity or in other words to make him recognize his own personality.

For the purpose of this scientific analysis, the *Upanishad* for the first time in the *Vedanta* literature considers the individual as an entity consisting of five different sheaths of matter, each covering the other with varying degrees of grossness, the outermost being the grossest. This theory in technical language is known as *Pancha Kosha* or five sheaths. Before we take up the *mantras* proper a bird's eye view of the *Pancha Kosha* analysis is presented below to make the subject easier to follow.

The personality of a complete man comprises of five layers which are referred to in *Vedanta* as *Pancha Kosha*. 'Kosha' means a covering or sheath. *Pancha Kosha* means the Five Sheaths. The scabbard of the sword covers the sword. It is of the same shape as the sword. It indicates the presence of the sword, even though it covers the sword from one's sight. The scabbard is always

different from the sword and does not affect the sword in any way. Similarly the Soul or the Self is covered by the five sheaths. Hence the Self or the Soul is generally referred to as the In-dweller.

The chapter starts with a peace chant. This prayer is for a mutual good feeling between the preceptor and the disciple.

1. Section (Anuvaka) -1: This section starts with the declaration that “the knower of the *Brahman* attains the Supreme” (*brahmavit apnoti param*). In reference to that is the following hymn repeated: *Satyam, Jnanam, Anantam Brahma. Brahman* is Truth, Knowledge and Infinity. This sentence defines the nature of the *Brahman* and also exhausts the definition of *Brahman*. It is to be noted that these adjuncts are defining the *Brahman* and not qualifying Him. The qualifying adjuncts serve to distinguish the object from all others of the same species. On the other hand, the defining adjuncts aim to distinguish the thing from all else in the whole world.

Also, these three words are not connected with each other but are independent of each other. That is – *Satyam* is *Brahman*, *Jnanam* is *Brahman* and *Anantam* is *Brahman*. *Satyam* refers to Him as changeless. In contrast changing forms are referred to as *Vikara*. The word *Jnana* refers to knowledge or absolute consciousness. By Infinite is meant – where one sees nothing else and knows nothing else.

In reference to the individual being, this Pure consciousness is called “*Pratyagatman*”, the inner soul. Again in reference to the Universe, it is called *Brahman* or *Paramatman*. From the *Brahman* was born *Akasa*. *Akasa* is that thing which has sound as its attribute and affords space for all objects that have a form. From that *Akasa* comes into being *Vayu* – the air – with two properties (a) the property of touch which is its own (b) the property of sound belonging to *Akasa*. From *Vayu*, the air, is born fire having three attributes comprising of two preceding attributes of sound and touch and the attribute of “colour or form” which is its own. From Fire came water which has four attributes – taste which is its own and the three preceding attributes of sound, touch and form. From water came Earth with five attributes – smell which is its own together with four preceding ones of taste, sound, touch and form.

Bhuta- Guna Matrix is given below:

		GUNA				
B	Akasa	Sound				
H	Vayu	Sound	Touch			
U	Agni	Sound	Touch	Form		
T	Apah	Sound	Touch	Form	Taste	
A	Prthvi	Sound, touch and smell	Touch and smell	Vegetable	Taste and smell	From Earth; food from the her

It is true that all creatures without exception are modifications of Food. And all of them are descended from *Brahman*. Yet, human beings among them are an exception from other creatures. Why? (1) Human being alone are qualified and entitled to perform *Karma* and acquire knowledge (2) He alone is competent to follow scriptural teachings. (3) He alone seeks God (4) He is endowed with intelligence, reason, judgement and discrimination (5) He thinks, reasons, reflects and meditates. (6) He knows what is good and what is evil; what is right and what is wrong (7) Man alone wishes to attain the innermost *Brahman* by knowledge (8) By meditating upon *Koshas* one after another, he realises their true nature. (9) The *Shruti* tries to lead the aspirant from the grossest aspect (the body) to subtler and subtler aspects until he can grasp the subtlest – the innermost *Atman*.

For the purpose of analysis the *Shruti* considers the individual as an entity consisting of five different sheaths, each covering the other with varying degree of grossness, the outermost being the grossest. Technically, these are referred to as *Pancha Koshas*.

2. Section (Anuvaka) -2: All creatures born on Earth are products of food. After they are born they live and grow by food. At the end they are dissolved or absorbed in food. This is the cycle. For this reason food is called “*Jyeshtham*”- the first cause of all living beings. Food is also referred to as “*sarva aushadham*” – a cure for everything. If a person worships on all food as *Atman* he will obtain all food. The exposition of the first of the “*Koshas*”, the *Annamaya Kosha* is completed. The *Shruti* proceeds to show that the individual soul is identical with *Brahman* who is within and beyond the five sheaths starting from *Annamaya Kosha* (food-sheath) down to *Anandamaya Kosha* (bliss-sheath). These sheaths are different layers of our personality.

When we are at the gross level we are happy with material things; when we are at the mental level we become thoughtful and imaginative; when we are at the intellectual level we enjoy intellectual pursuits. For all these we need some external support. But when we are at the level of bliss, there is nothing but bliss. Nothing supports that bliss. We are completely absorbed within ourselves. We are not aware that we have a body or mind or intellect. The *Annamaya Kosha* is also referred to as *Sthula Shareera*. The body is called *Annarasa*, the essence of food, because it is the personification of what we eat and which gets transformed into muscles, bones etc.

Within the *Sthula Shareera*, gross body, is the *Sookshma Shareera*, the subtle body. It consists of several layers. After discussing about *Annamaya Kosha*, the *Shruti* proceeds to explain the nature of *Prana* and the *Pranamaya Kosha*. Just as in the previous case, *Pranamaya Kosha* is also falsely identified with the *Atman*. The *Pranamaya Kosha* is more subtle than the *Annamaya*. The vital forces of the *Pranamaya Kosha* perform the different functions of the body – digestion, circulation of blood, excretion etc. The whole physical body is pervaded by the *Pranamaya Kosha*. Discussions about *Koshas* appear elsewhere in this book.

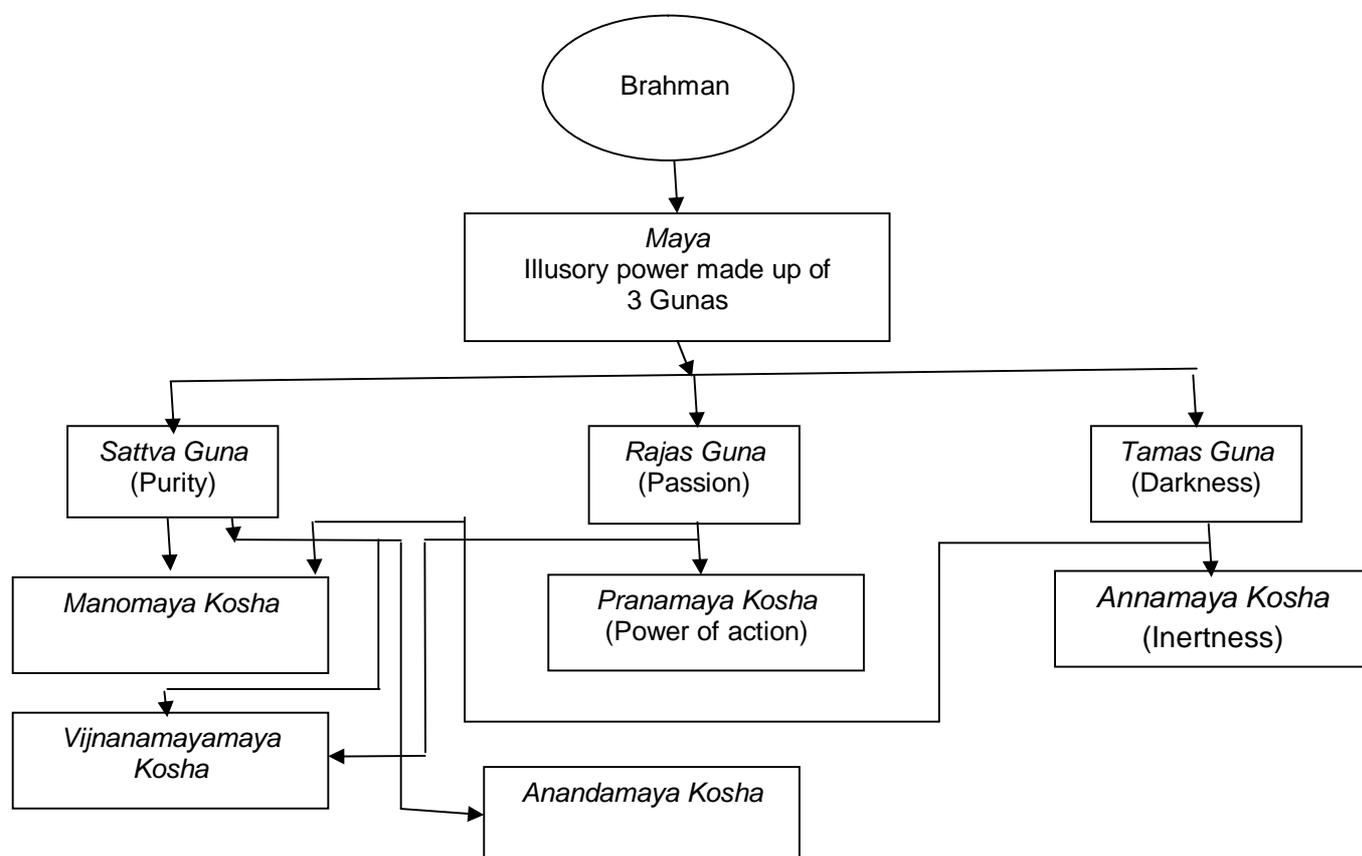
3. Section (Anuvaka) -3: Whether they are human beings or animals, the organs follow *Prana*, the vital breath, which enables the organs to perform their respective functions. Inside the *Pranamaya Kosha* there is *Manomaya Kosha*. *Manomaya Kosha* is made up of *Vrittis* or *Sankalpas* (thoughts). It is subtler than the *Pranamaya Kosha*. It controls the *Pranamaya Kosha*.

4. Section (Anuvaka) -4: Inside the *Manomaya Kosha* there is *Vijnanamaya Kosha*. *Vijnanamaya* is the determinative knowledge. The determinative knowledge is an attribute of the intellect. It is the determinative faculty which guides the mind and enables it to come to the right conclusion. When the mind is in doubt, *Vijnanamaya* comes to the aid and helps in determining on what should be done. While *Manomaya* is composed of *Vrittis*, or states of mind, *Vijnanamaya* is the owner of the states of mind. It is an agent of all thoughts.

5. Section (Anuvaka) -5: Inside the *Vijnanamaya Kosha* there is *Anandamaya Kosha*.. This *Kosha* is made up of latent impressions of love and other forms of happiness. The *Anandamaya* is the seed body or causal body (*Karana Shareera*) This body functions during deep sleep. It is the *Anandamaya* self who feels “I am happy”, “I am the doer”. When the mind is purified by austerity, knowledge, pious and devotion it becomes free from “*Tamas*”.. The joy manifests itself in a higher and higher degree in the mind and is rendered purified and clear.

A description of the five sheaths has been given in order to make us realise that the Supreme Brahman is beyond the Five sheaths. He lies within the five sheaths and is also the Self of them all.

Manas (mind) and intellect (*Buddhi*) are products of *Jnana Shakti*. There is



Ichha Shakti also in the mind. A desire arises in the mind due to *Ichha Shakti*. Through *Jnana Shakti* man gets the knowledge on how to possess the desired object. Through *Kriya Shakti* man exerts and possesses the object. The *Annamaya Kosha* constitutes the gross physical body (*Sthula Shareera*). It operates during the waking state. The *Pranamaya*, *Manomaya* and the *Vijnanamaya* constitute the subtle or astral body. This operates during the dreaming state. *Anandamaya Kosha* constitutes the causal body (*Karana Shareera*). It operates during the state of deep sleep. During deep sleep the

thin veil of *Anandamaya Kosha* separates the individual soul from the Supreme soul, *Brahman*.

6. Section (Anuvaka) -6: After discussing the sheaths surrounding the indweller, the *Upanishad* now takes up a dialog about the indweller Himself. The section starts with handling the doubt regarding the existence or non-existence of *Brahman*. The *Upanishad* goes in great detail regarding the origin of creation. If somebody has no faith in the existence of *Brahman* then he leads a sensuous life. He is vicious. He has no right conduct. This world is everything for him. He identifies himself with the physical body and other *Koshas* thus mistaking them for real Self. He gets caught in the abyss of ignorance. He goes through the endless cycle of *Samsara* (births and deaths). The doubt regarding the existence of *Brahman* arises, primarily, due to the reason that *Brahman* is beyond the sensuous experience. So the argument goes that what is not seen does not exist. This argument is un-tenable - because the *Shruti* declares that *Akasa* and everything else in the creation have been born out of *Brahman*. It is common experience in the world that a thing exists if something else is born from it. If the objects in this world are products of nothing, then they could not be perceived by the senses. But we are able to perceive all the objects of creation. It stands to reason to say that *Brahman* exists.

The *Upanishad* says that before creation, *Brahman* brooded over the matter and made *Tapas*. He thought about the arrangement of the world to be created. He created this universe with space, time, names and forms, wherein all beings enjoy according to the nature of their *Karmas*. He then entered the names and forms and became many as the seer, hearer and thinker. The *Shruti* denotes the *Brahman* as not only the efficient cause of creation but also the material cause for it. This combination of two different kinds of causes in one Being is poetically described that having created the Universe, He entered into it. The *Shruti* also reveals in a wonderful way the truth about Reality. The crucial test of the Real is our abiding consciousness of it – that which appears as existent in our consciousness for all time and is not negated by any another experience is Real. The Universe appears so real to us. If that be so, then how much more real must the cause from whom it has derived its Reality.

7. Section (Anuvaka) -7: - After the dissolution (*Pralaya*), everything was in an undifferentiated and un-manifested state of existence. *Brahman* transmuted Himself into visible or manifested Universe by His own inherent power without any extraneous assistance. *Brahman* is both the material and efficient cause of the universe. For this reason *Brahman* is called “*Sukrita*”-meaning self made. This *Brahman* is bliss itself. All sensual pleasures are only reflections of that supreme bliss of *Brahman*. In addition, all physical actions in this world are made possible only because of *Brahman*. Therefore,

the seeker must believe that the Lord does exist and provide joy for everyone. The Shruti goes on to give a number of reasons for us to believe in the existence of *Brahman*.

8. Section (*Anuvaka*) -8: *Vayu* (wind), *Agni* (fire), *Indra* (Lord of the *Devas*) are *Yama* (Lord of death) are all lords by themselves. They preside over different functions of the Universe. They regularly perform their functions according to certain laws. The regular discharge of their functions is possible only if there is a controller. Therefore, *Brahman*, their cause and controller exists. Their existence is entirely dependent on Him. They discharge their duties, as if they are afraid of Him.

The *Devas* are thirty three in number. They are the receivers of oblations offered while performing the sacrificial rites. They are: - (a) *Vasus* -8; (b) *Rudras*-11 (c) *Adityas* -12 (d) *Indra* (e) *Prajapati*. The *Shruti* tells that – the Being who is the Innermost Self, *Atman*, of the man is the same as the One who gives energy and light to the Sun. He is also the same as the One in all the *Devas*. Becoming one with *Brahman* is the goal of life. Knowledge is the means for attaining this end. *Moksha* is eternal and it cannot be obtained by rituals.

9. Section (*Anuvaka*) -9 - This verse gives a summary of the whole teaching contained in *Brahmananda valli*. *Brahman* is beyond the scope of speech and thought. The speech has the power of describing only those objects of this world that are conditioned by name and form.

Similarly, the mind has the power of knowing only those objects which have a name and form. But *Brahman* has no name or form. As such He is indescribable and incomprehensible. He who knows the invisible, unqualified, un-nameable *Brahman*, which is sinless, which is free from desires, which is free from the relation of enjoyer and enjoyment , which is eternal is not afraid of anything. The cause of fear, created by ignorance, has disappeared.

The knower of *Brahman* is not affected by such thoughts as – “why have I not done what is good”, “why have I done evil actions?”. This is because he understands that good and bad are but different manifestations of the same *Atman*. *Dharma* and *Adharma* are different aspects of the same *Brahman*.

This ends *Brahmananda Valli*.

Bhrigu-Valli

Bhrigu Valli of the *Taittiriya Upanishad* explains the knowledge of *Brahman* through a dialogue between a teacher and a student.

1. Section (Anuvaka) -1 - *Bhrigu* approaches his father and teacher *Varuna* to seek knowledge of *Brahman*. *Varuna* tells his son that Eye, ear, mind and speech help perception. These are the gates to the perception of *Brahman*. They are the gates to the magnificent city of *Brahman (Brahmapuri)*. You have to enter into the city of *Brahman* through these gates. *Varuna* then proceeds to give a description of *Brahman*. “*Brahman* is that from whom all living beings are born; by Him when born they live; at the time of dissolution (*Maha pralaya*) they enter into Him”. The teaching given by *Varuna* to his son is incomplete. Of all aids to the attainment of *Brahman*, penance is a pre-eminent aid. So Sage *Bhrigu* performed penance. The *Smriti* says “one-pointedness of mind and the sense organs is indeed the highest penance”.

2. Section (Anuvaka) -2 - *Bhrigu* came to know that food is *Brahman*, because all the creatures are from food, they live by food and while departing they enter food. Food is the material cause of the Food-sheath – *Annamaya Kosha* (i.e) physical body. So *Bhrigu* concluded that food is *Brahman* because it has distinctive marks of *Brahman*. He was not happy with this result of his investigation. He approached his father for further enlightenment. Once again his father recommends Penance as the means to realise *Brahman*.

3. Section (Anuvaka) -3 - *Bhrigu* reflected over the matter for a second time and did penance. He came to the conclusion that *Prana* or life is *Brahman*. Life is the cause of birth of physical body. It is also the cause for its sustenance. When *Prana* departs from the body, death takes place. *Prana* only energises the body. It is only through *Prana* that the mind and senses function. As *Prana* is the efficient cause of birth, sustenance and death of body – surely life must be *Brahman*. Yet, *Bhrigu* was unhappy with this conclusion. The reasons are (a) *Prana* is non-intelligent (*Jada*). (b) It has a beginning and an end. It cannot be *Brahman*. He returned to his father.

4. Section (Anuvaka) -4 - His father once again advised *Bhrigu* to do penance. And *Bhrigu* did. He thought that mind is more subtle than the physical body and *Prana*. It is intelligent also. Thought only leads to action and sustains life. Through thought only man reincarnates and takes bodies. The entrance of *Prana* into the womb is dependent on mind only (by an act of mind only man comes into this body (*Prasna Upanishad*)). Death takes place when the man gives up by thought all attachment to the body. So mind is the cause for the birth, sustenance and death. Therefore Mind must be *Brahman*. Yet, *Bhrigu* was not satisfied. Mind has a beginning and an end. It has no self-

luminosity. So how can it be *Brahman*? Once again *Bhrigu* returned to his father for further enlightenment.

5. Section (*Anuvaka*) -5 - *Bhrigu* reflected over the matter for the fourth time. *Vijnana* or Knowledge is subtler than the mind. Knowledge accomplishes sacrifice. It is the cause for the birth of the body through its acts. It controls and directs the mind, the senses and the body and propels them into action. It also acts as cause for the sustenance of the body. It causes dissolution by engaging in battle and brings about death. Knowledge takes the subtle body after death to other regions and brings it back again to this earth. Knowledge appears to answer the requirements of *Brahman* and hence it must be *Brahman*. Once again *Bhrigu* was uneasy with the conclusion. Knowledge is the agent of all actions of the *Jiva* and also the enjoyer of the fruits of actions. It is associated with pain. It is not pure. It is not free from the conditions of life – sorrows, miseries, troubles etc. *Akasa* and other elements cannot be produced by knowledge. Therefore knowledge cannot be *Brahman*. *Bhrigu* returned to his father. He was asked to do more penance

6. Section (*Anuvaka*) -6 - This time *Bhrigu* understood that Bliss is *Brahman*. From Bliss all beings are born. They live by Bliss. While departing they enter Bliss. This is the knowledge learnt by *Bhrigu*. His father, *Varuna*, slowly led him to these conclusions.

7-10 Sections (*Anuvaka*) -7 to 10 - These later sections of this chapter include contemplation of *Brahman* through the symbol of food. Food is glorified as food is the basis for any living being. The Shruti says – do not speak ill of food. Do not abandon food. Accumulate plenty of food for the distribution to travellers. Do not turn away anybody who seeks shelter. *Brahman* should be meditated upon as being satisfaction in rain ; as power in the lightning; as fame in the cattle; all things that exist in *Akasa* should be contemplated as *Brahman*.

Aitareya Upanishad

The *Aitareya Upanishad* forms part of the *Aitareya Aranyaka* of the *Rig Veda*. It is divided into six sections or *Khandas* (when peace chant is counted as a *Khanda*). With such counting, the Upanishad came to be referred to as “*Atmashatka*”. This refers to six sectioned dissertation on the Atman. The Upanishad derived its name from its author “*Mahidas Aitareya*”. In a symbolic language, the Upanishad”, describes the creation of the Universe. In essence the Upanishad says –

- ❖ Atman is the only Reality
- ❖ Treats evolution through hunger and thirst, of food, of the entrance of the Self into the body
- ❖ It deals with the conception and the three births of man

- ❖ One is released from the cycle of birth and death through knowledge of Brahman
- ❖ Atman and not Prana is the only cause of everything
- ❖ Whole Universe is a manifestation of Brahman
- ❖ Individual soul is identical to the Supreme soul

The Shruti indicates that it is very difficult to practice *Brahma Vidya* without absolute renunciation. *Sri Adi Shankara* agrees that *sanyasa* is necessary for attaining self-realisation.

Part -1; Chapter-1

The first section describes creation. It uses the word “*Brahman*” for Universal consciousness and “*Atman*” for individual consciousness.

In the beginning, before creation started, there was nothing save *Atman*. The Universe was one with the *Atman* – it was in an un-manifested or “*Avyakta*” state. It had no manifested difference of name and form. Then, *Atman*, omniscient by nature, thought I shall create. The purpose of creation is for the enjoyment of the results of Karma by living beings. At this stage, it may be appropriate to explain some of the terms that we normally come across.

Take the example of a craftsman, potter, making pots. To do his job, the potter requires three things.

1. Raw material clay is needed by the potter. This is called the *material cause*.
2. Instrument needed to shape the raw material – potter’s wheel. This called *instrumental cause*.
3. Intelligence needed to make the pot. Here it is the potter. He is referred to as the *efficient cause*.

There is nothing outside of Brahman. He is everything. As such He has no material to build the worlds. He is omniscient and omnipotent. He becomes both the material and efficient cause in building the Universe. The mighty juggler creates Himself as other than Himself in the form of Universe. As such, creation is interpreted as a developmental course rather than bringing into being something not hitherto existent. In other words, there is no such thing as creation. It is only a projection of what lies in a potential state (*Avyakta*, as stated early). At the end of the previous cycle (at the point of dissolution) the totality of beings at that time remains in the form of *vasanas*. At the start of the new cycle, these *vasanas* are projected by the Supreme Being according to the quality of their actions (*karma*). The point to be noted is that although “creation” is the will of *Brahman*, the end result is not based on His whims and fancies but by the nature of the past actions of the created

beings.

He created the five rudimentary elements (*Pancha Mahabhutas*). He then created four fields for the functioning of this Universe. These are identified in the Upanishad.

1. *Ambaha* – it is the world that contains water that supports life. It is above the heavens
2. *Marichyaha* - the sky or the inter-space below known as *Marichyaha*. And it permeates various regions – because the Sun's rays pervade it.
3. *Maram* – This is the Earth. It is called *Maram* because all creatures die here.
4. *Apah* – The world of waters.

He thus created the four worlds wherein all living beings could enjoy the fruits of their *Karma*. Having done that, He wanted to create rulers for the protection of the worlds. Thus thinking, He lifted up "Purusha" from the waters and gave him a shape by joining appropriate limbs. He wanted to give this lump the shape of a man.

A hole in the shape of a mouth manifested itself from that mass. From the mouth came out the organ of speech and from speech the fire – the controlling deity of the organ.

Then the nostril separated out. From the nostrils, the organ of breath; from breath, air-the controlling deity of the organ.

Then the eyes were separated out; from the eyes, the organ of sight; from sight, the sun- the controlling deity of the organ.

Then the ears were separated out; from the ears, the organ of hearing; from hearing, the quarters of space - the controlling deity of the organ.

Then the skin was separated out; from the skin, hairs, the organ of touch; from the hairs, plants and trees, air - the controlling deity of the organs.

Then the heart was separated out; from the heart, the organ of the mind; from the mind, the Moon - the controlling deity of the organ.

Then the navel was separated out; from the navel, the organ of the *Apana*; from the *Apana*, Death, *Varuna* - the controlling deity of the organ.

Then the virile member was separated out; from the virile member, semen, the organ of generation; from the semen, the waters- the controlling deity of the organ.

Part-1; Chapter -2

When this part of creation was over, all the divinities, Agni and the rest, so created fell into the great ocean of Samsara, filled with waters of miseries resulting from ignorance, desire and Karma. The world (Samsara) is always compared to an ocean owing to the difficulties in crossing it. Then the Supreme Atman subjected them to hunger and thirst. The divinities said to their creator: "Give us an abode residing in which we may be able to enjoy our food". The Supreme Being brought a cow and then a horse and the deities were not happy. Finally, the Supreme Being brought a human being. The deities were happy and entered the human being through his various organs.

Fire becoming speech entered the mouth. Air becoming Prana (smell) entered the nostrils. Sun becoming sight entered the eyes. The deities of quarters becoming sound entered the ears. Herbs and trees becoming hair entered the skin. Moon becoming the mind entered the heart. Death becoming Apana entered the navel. Water becoming semen entered the regenerative organ. Hunger and thirst also sought an abode. They were made co-sharers with other deities.

Man is the best of God's creation. Man is endowed with higher intelligence, discrimination and reasoning. Animals do not have these attributes. The human body alone is referred to as "*Karmayatana*". *Karmas* can be done by this body alone. All other bodies are "*Bhogyatana*" – bodies intended for sensual enjoyments alone.

Part-1: Chapter -3

Having created the worlds and the protectors, the Lord turned His attention to creating food for all of them. He brooded over the water, already created, and out of it was created the food. The water referred to here stands for the five elements. Different senses urged by hunger and thirst run after the food to catch it. In the end it was caught by the out-breath called *Apana* through the cavity of mouth. *Apana* is one of the five forms of life-breaths. It regulates the digestive system.

After finishing His tasks thus far, the Lord thought "How can all these live without me? Who am I? What is my nature? Whose ruler am I? If I do not enter the human body and be witness of the bodily and mental activities- then no one will know or care to know of My existence or My nature. He entered through a door or cleft called "*Vidriti*". Ishvara enters the body as Jivatman and has three abodes corresponding to the three states – waking, dreaming and deep sleep. The Supreme Self dwells in each of these. The right eye is His dwelling place while we are awake; the mind is His dwelling place while we dream; the lotus of the heart is His dwelling place in the deep sleep state. Having born in the form as Jiva He realised the unison of elements with Him.

Therefore the Supreme Lord is called as “*Idandra*” or directly as “*Indra*”. In this mantra anything other than the *Atman* is denied.

Part-2; Chapter-1

Creation continues through procreation. In this section the creation of the human body is described. It is described as three births of the Jiva. The person is a germ in the semen which is the vigour drawn from all the limbs of the father. Thus the first conception of *Jiva* is in man, in the body of the father. He then deposits the semen in the womb of the mother. This is the first birth of the Jiva or man travelling in *Samsara*. The seed becomes one and inseparable with the woman and does not cause any suffering to her. She carefully nourishes the embryo while taking care that she is properly nourished. She then nourishes the child after its birth. This is the second birth of the Jiva.

The father nourishes the child just before and after the birth by performing such natal ceremonies as *Jata Karma* etc. In fact, the father is nourishing his own self, since the father is born in the shape of the son. The religious *Samskaras* which are performed during pregnancy and after child birth enables them to tread the path of righteousness. Having discharged his duties the father gets old and departs from this world. After departing he is born again. This is his third birth.

Thus procreation is done for the continuation of the world, but not for obtaining emancipation. Man is caught in the wheel of births and deaths. On account of ignorance he is hurled in the ocean of *Samsara*. At some stage he realises, through strenuous struggle, the *Atman* as described in the *Shrutis* and attains emancipation like *Rishi Vamadeva*. The *Rishi* attained self realisation while he was in the womb of his mother. He came to know of the births of all gods like *Agni*, *Vak* etc. This was due to his meditation in his previous births.

Part-3; Chapter-1

Seekers of Brahman long to get rid of their *Jivabhavatva* – which is impermanent and is subject to the cycle of birth and death. They long to obtain universal selfhood “*Sarvatmabhava*” with the help of *Brahma Vidya*.(science of self). They began to enquire: “Who is this Brahman?”. How shall we worship Him like *Sage Vamadeva* did and obtained immortality?

Here we have two *Brahmans* – (1) The individual soul (2) Universal soul. They are both the *Atman* of this body. But only one of them must be the *Atman* fit to be worshipped or meditated upon. Then who is He that is to be meditated upon. Then a thought regarding the differentiation between the two arose. Out of these two one of them serves as an instrument of cognition. With the help

of various senses it makes us perceive everything. This is not the real object for meditation. On the other hand, the Atman who stands behind all senses and the mind must be meditated upon. What is meant by this? The basic question is – who is it that cognises? The answer is: By that which having become sight sees form; by that which having become hearing, hears sound; by that which having become sense of smell smells odours; by which having become organ of speech utters speech consisting of names such as cow, horse etc. having become sense of taste knows what is sweet and what is not.

It is consciousness, mastery, knowledge of arts comprehension, retentive power of mind, perception, fortitude, reflection, independent power of thinking, distress of mind caused by diseases etc, memory, volition, application, any pursuit for maintenance of life, desire – all these are indeed the names of Consciousness (*Prajnanam*). “What is called *Prana* is indeed *Prajna* and what is called *Prajna* is indeed *Prana*”: *Brahman* is distinct from the senses, sense-perceptions, mind and the various *Vrittis* of the mind. It is the unchanging, self luminous, self-existence, constant witness of all mental modifications.

He is *Brahman*. He is Indra. He is *Prajapati*. He is all these Gods. He is the five great elements. He is all that is born – egg born (oviparous; like birds), womb born (viviparous; like men), sweat born (like lice), sprout born, horses cows, elephants, men; whatever ever else that breaths, moves or flies and those which are immovable – all these are guided by wisdom and are supported by wisdom. In fact, the Universe has Wisdom for its guide. Wisdom is the basis or stay of all. Truly, Wisdom (*Prajnanam*) is *Brahman*.

Atman who is of the nature of consciousness is the lower Brahman (*Apara Brahman*) and is referred to as *Hiranyagarbha*. He is the cosmic *Prana* and is the life principle (*Kriya Shakti*) dwelling in all living bodies. He is described as *Prana* or *Prajnanatma*. He is all these Gods- *Prajapati*, the first born, who has a body and form from whom all protectors of the world are born. From *Hiranyagarbha* down to the smallest living creature, Brahman receives different names and forms under conditions of different bodies. When one attains knowledge of Brahman the appearances and plurality vanish.

This ends the Aitareya Upanishad.

Chandogya Upanishad

Chandogya Upanishad is one of the primary *Upanishads*. Together with the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* it ranks among the oldest *Upanishads*. While *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* is the largest among the *Upanishads*, *Chandogya* is the second largest. It is associated with *the Kauthuma Shakha* of the *Sama Veda*. It is part of the *Chandogya Brahmana*, which has ten chapters. The first

two chapters of this *Brahmana* deal with sacrifices and other forms of worship. The rest of the eight constitute *the Chandogya Upanishad*.

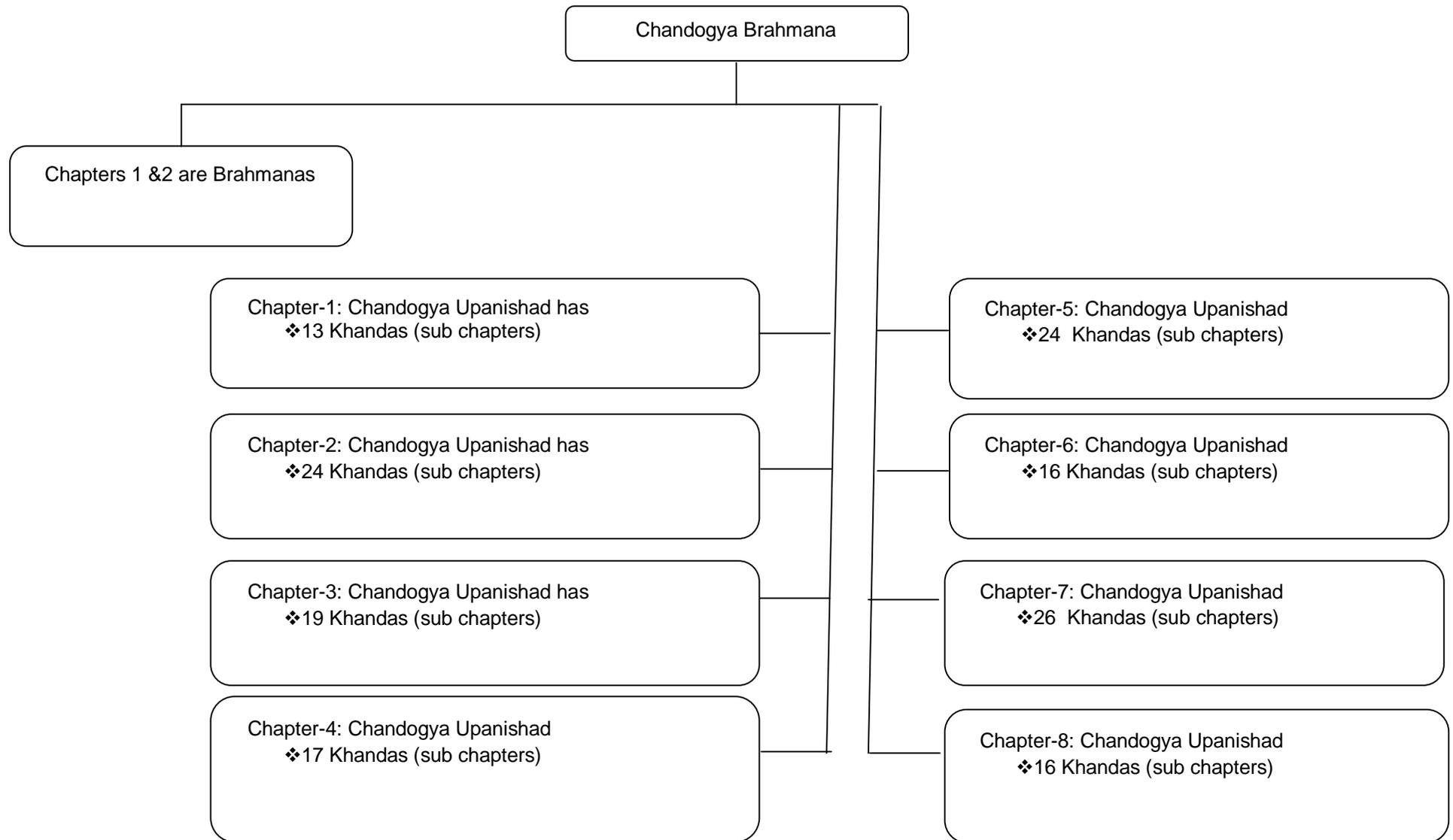
The name of this *Upanishad* is derived from the word *Chanda* which refers to a poetic meter in which it is written. This long *Upanishad* is interspersed with many stories to illustrate its teachings. Just as the *Mandukya Upanishad* focused on the meaning of *Om*, so also this *Upanishad* begins with an instruction that one should meditate on *OM*, as a loud chant, the *Udgitha*. “The essence of all beings is the earth”, it continues, “the essence of the earth is water, the essence of water is plants, the essence of plants is a person, the essence of a person is speech, the essence of speech is the hymn of the *Rig Veda*, the essence of the hymn is the chant, and the essence of the chant is the *Udgitha* which is *Om*. Speech and breath are held together by *Om*.”

The importance of *Chandogya Upanishad* is due to the fact that it directly deals with the true nature of *Brahman*, the Supreme Self and its identity with the Individual Self. It is an ancient and authentic source on the fundamentals of *Vedantic* philosophy. *Sri Veda Vyasa* and *Sri Shankaracharya* make maximum references to *Chandogya Upanishad* in their works. Of the 28 *Vidyas* we come across in *Upanishads*, 17 are contained in *Chandogya Upanishad*. It gives an idea of the broad spectrum of its coverage.

The diagram that follows clarifies the structure of the *Upanishad*.

Though the *Upanishad* mainly deals with of Non-duality, yet in it are described forms of *Upasana* (meditation and worship) as the means for attaining good results – results almost as good as Liberation. These forms of *Upasana* purify the inner sense organs and thereby become illuminative of the true nature of Reality. It becomes clear that for the realization of *Brahman*, the *Savikalpaka* form of meditation will be useful. For this reason the *Upanishad* sets forth right at the start detailing various forms of *Upasana* of *Brahman*. In the first chapter of *Chandogya*, *Upasanas* which form part of *Sama Veda* are detailed. In the second, the ritual of *Sama* is detailed. In the third, the *Upasana* of *Surya* known as *Madhu Vidya*, *Gayatri Upasana* and *Shandilya Vidya* are all given. In the fourth, *Samvarga Vidya* and the sixteen-phased *Brahma Vidya* are taught. In the fifth three more *Vidyas* – *Prana*, *Panchagni* and *Vaiswanara* are elaborated.

A brief summary what is contained in the *Upanishad* is being covered here.



Chapter-1

AUM Meditation

The first chapter – beginning with the words "One should meditate upon the syllable "OM", the *Udgitha*, has been devoted to the treatment of the manner of meditation of the constituent factors of the "Sama"- which leads to various results. Towards the end, the *Upasana* of *Stobha* syllables has been described.

The first chapter of *Chandogya Upanishad* contains thirteen khandas. In these thirteen khandas, the Upanishad depicts the importance and greatness of the syllable "AUM"

The first *Khanda* deals with the *Upasana* of *Udgitha* – the syllable *AUM*. The Upanishad tells that syllable *AUM* should be meditated upon. What is the reason? " The essence of all beings is the Earth; the essence of earth is water; the essence of water is plants; the essence of plants is a person; the essence of a person is speech; the essence of speech is *Rig Veda*; the essence of *Rig Veda* is *Sama Veda*; the essence of *Sama Veda* is *Udgitha* – which is *AUM*".

The 2nd *Khanda* ordains that *Udgitha* should be meditated as *Prana*. It further goes on to tell a story to explain the holiness of *Prana* and how it remains untouched by evil while all other senses get tainted by evil. In the 3rd *Khanda* it is stated that *Udgitha* should be meditated upon as Sun and *Vyana*. The 4th *Khanda* reveals about meditation on AUM. It tells the story about how the Devas meditated upon *Svara* (AUM) and became immortal. The 5th *Khanda* tells that one who meditates on the Sun and its rays and its rays as separate from each other or *Prana* and its functions as separate (such as speech) from each other would beget many children. In the sixth *Khanda* one more *Upasana* on *Udgitha* for obtaining all-round health is indicated. In the 7th *Khanda* we are told that AUM should be meditated as *Purusha*. Here the equality of AUM, *Purusha* (present in the right eye) and the Sun is indicated. The 8th *khanda* narrates the story of *Pravahana*. Here, three wise men – *Silaka* son of *Salavat*, *Chaikitayana* of the line of *Dalbhya* and *Pravahana* the son of *Jivala*, all versed in the *Udgitha*, discuss about *Udgitha*. The syllable AUM is generally used to indicate assent. When a person assents to something, he would say OM (meaning yes). Now assenting to something or giving permission to something is gratification. Thus a person meditating on AUM, indeed, becomes a gratifier. The 9th *khanda* is a continuation of the 8th with the wise men continuing their discussion on *Udgitha*.

The 10th khanda offers a clarification on the merits derived when one performs the sacrifice knowing the meaning of the syllable AUM. When a person performs the sacrifice with full faith, knowing the true meaning of Udgitha he is rewarded with far greater benefits than one who goes about the routine not knowing the meaning and the significance. In the 10th chapter we find the story of *Ushasti*, son of *Chakrayana*, reduced to a stage of abject poverty. He was forced to beg food from a keeper of elephants. The keeper offers him beans from out of a bowl he was eating. However, *Ushasti* refuses to drink water offered by the elephant keeper. The significance is explained as follows. No demerit falls on a learned man, when, under trying conditions, he is forced to commit a mean act e.g. eat unclean food. However, the action will be judged faulty if it was performed while other alternatives (that are not mean) are available to save his life. In khanda -11, the story of Ushasti continues and it is brought out that one ought to meditate upon the deities of *Prastava*, *Udgitha* and *Pratihara* (parts of *Sama* sung by the priests in the Vedic rituals) in the shape of Breath, Sun and Food respectively. In khanda 12, Sun is meditated upon as the “Lord of Food”. khanda -13 describes the result of meditating upon the letters of *Stobha* (which forms part of *Sama*)

Chapter-2

Meditation on Sama

Chapter-1 deals with meditation on parts of *Sama*. In chapter-2, the *Shruti* discusses meditations on the full body of *Sama* (that is, *Sama* with all its parts). This chapter has 24 *khandas*. The full body consists of five parts. For this reason it is referred to as *Pancha Vidha Sama*. One needs to meditate on the fivefold *Saman* as the five worlds. The five parts are –Earth is the syllable *Him*, Fire is *Prastava*; Sky is *Udgitha*, the Sun is *Pratihara*, Heaven is *Nidhana*, -This is with reference to ascending regions. The meditation of whole *Sama* is good. The excellence which did not belong to that covered in chapter-1 is covered by this meditation of the whole *Sama*.

From the 2nd to 7th *khanda*, the *Upanishad* instructs that the Five-fold *Sama* be meditated upon with different references such as – Regions, Rain, water, seasons, animals and finally as sense organs.

The 8th *khanda* now talks about the Seven-fold organs of *Sama*. Two more organs, in addition to the existing five, are brought into light, namely – *Adi* and *Upadrava*. The fruit of *Upasana* of the Seven fold *Sama* for the worshipper is that he will never face scarcity of food. The 9th *khanda* talks about fruits of meditation of the Seven fold *Sama* viewing it in the movement of Sun in the sky.. The worshipper attains the form of the Sun. In the 10th *khanda*, we read about *Upasana* of syllables of Seven-fold *Sama* (*Sapta Vidha Sama Namakshara Upasana*).

Chapters 11 to 21 describe how some Sama mantras are to be viewed.

In the 23rd khanda, we are told that there are three branches of duty.

(1) Sacrifice, Study and Charity.

(2) Austerity

(3) Student to spend his life in the house of his Guru. Any person who has fulfilled his duties as mentioned above obtains the world of the virtuous. However, fulfilling these duties or meditating on *Sama* alone does not fetch him Immortality. Immortality can only be achieved by firmly grounding himself on the *Brahman*.

Prajapati brooded on the worlds (performed meditation and penance). From them three-fold knowledge evolved. On further brooding, three syllables – *Bhuh, Bhuvah, and Svah* issued. These are called *Vyahrtis*. He continued brooding on the *Vyahrtis* and the syllable “Om” issued, which is *Brahman*. Just as all leaves are attached to the stalk all speech is attaché to the syllable “Om”.

In the 24th khanda the *Upanishad* explains that the morning oblation belongs to the *Vasus*; the mid-day libation to the *Rudras* and the evening libation to the *Adityas* and *Visve-devas*.

Chapter-3.

Meditation on the Sun and Shandilya Vidya

This chapter has 19 *khandas*. Out of the 19, the first eleven *khandas* deal with the *Upasana* of the *Vedas*, the *Sun*, *Vasus*, *Rudras*, *Maruts* etc. This is known by as *Madhu Vidya*. The 11th khanda details the benefits of the *Vidya*. The 12th and 13th *khandas* deal with *Brahman* through *Gayatri*. The 14th *khanda* states about the *Shandilya Vidya*. *Shandilya* was a great *Rishi* and he had this revelation of the Supreme Being. This meditation begins with a proclamation of the all-comprehensiveness of the *Brahman* - “*Sarvam Khalvidam Brahma*”

“Sarvam khalvidam brahma tajjalāniti śānta upāsīta | atha khalu kratumayaḥ puruṣo yathākraturasmipuruṣo bhavati tathetaḥ pretya bhavati sa kratuṁ kurvīta - 3.14.1

This is a very famous passage in the *Upanishad*. We have to meditate that everything comes from That, everything is sustained in That and everything returns to That. Inasmuch as it is the cause of all things, every effect in the form of this creation is contained there. There is no separation between the cause and the effect. In other words, there is an undifferentiated relationship between the cause and the effect. This means we, as thinkers, are vitally connected with the *Brahman* on whom we have to think. We can think on

something outside us and we can also think on the whole Universe which is outside us. But how can we think on something in which we are ourselves involved? The mind refuses to think when the meditator is part of that which is being meditated upon. There is no such thing as mind thinking itself.

The individual is an embodiment of action performed through his will. And whatever we will, we become that. We have affirmed something very intensely in our previous life, and the reward of those affirmations is the present series of experiences we are going through. The corollary is – if we want to become the Absolute itself, we should spend our thoughts centred on *Brahman*. The *Upanishad* goes on to give some further details as to how we should conduct our meditation in our present life.

The whole world is permeated by this Being. The Self of this Being is as vast as space – *askasatma*; all actions are its actions – *sarvakarma* (it is the fingers of God working through these phenomena of nature); anything you smell is an activity of That Being – *sarvagandha*; all tastes are its activity – *sarvarasah*. This great Being is in one's own heart and is as fine and subtle as one can conceive. It is subtler than the rice, grain, and mustard seed. At the same time it is as vast as the whole creation.

Sandilya, who was a great sage, proclaims this great knowledge: "This great Being whose actions are all the actions, whose desires are all the desires, whose functions are all the functions through the senses, is inside me and It is That which is inside everything."

The 15th khanda describes for begetting long life and valour for one's son. It is told that a well disciplined son is necessary for the salvation of the father. Hence, it becomes necessary to find out how longevity for the son could be obtained. This *khanda* deals with meditation and *Japa* required for this purpose. The 16th khanda deals with meditation required for one's own longevity. It is called *Purusha Vidya*.

In *Purusha Vidya* a person is described as the sacrifice. The first 24 years is regarded as morning oblation, the next 44 years as mid-day oblation and the third 44 years as the third oblation. The *Vidya* says that anyone who knows this *Vidya* lives for 116 years without sickness or disease. The details of this *Vidya* are given in the *mantras* 1 to 7 of the 16th and 17th *khanda* of chapter-3. The 18th *khanda* deals with meditation on *Brahman*.

Chapter-4

Samvarga Vidya

The first, second and third khandas deals with the story of king *Jaanashruti* and *Rishi Raikva*. The king was well known for his charity and goodness of heart. He was a great sage as well. One night he saw some flamingos flying past. He overheard the birds speaking about a *Rishi Raikva*, the man with a cart, and his greatness. The king was greatly interested in meeting with this *Rishi*. He commissioned a search for the *Rishi* and with great difficulty his messengers located the *Rishi*. The king went and met with *Rishi Raikva* and offered him great wealth and his daughter in marriage with the request to teach what he knew. The *Rishi* finally agreed to teach after he was convinced about the king's sincerity. The *Rishi* initiated the king into the mystery of meditation on the all-absorbing Being. Because of the character of all-absorption, the great Being on which *Rishi Raikva* was meditating came to be known *Samvarga*. The *Rishi* explained of a symbolic cosmic air where everything is absorbed into it, everything rises from it, everything is maintained in it and everything goes back into it. It is on this *Vayu*, the great deity that *Raikva* was meditating. Due to fear of this great Being, the planets, the stars and the Sun direct their courses in a given manner. The fire burns due to fear of It and the rain falls due to fear of It. Death performs its duty due to fear of It. At the micro-cosmic level, inside the individual there is the *Prana* operating in a similar role. The *Samvarga Vidya* teaches on how the external and internal controlling factors could be brought together in meditation and envisaged as a single Reality.

The 4th to the 9th khanda deals with the story of *Satyakama* his efforts to know Brahman and the teachings he received. Khandas 10 to 15 deal with the story of *Upakosala* and his progress in learning about *Brahman*. The 17th khanda deals with penances for mistakes committed during a sacrifice.

Chapter-5;

Panchagni and Vaisvanara Vidyas

Panchagni Vidya

The *Panchagni Vidya* is detailed in Chapter V – *khandas* 3 to 10. Basically, it deals with a common phenomenon in our lives – the phenomenon of life and death. Though we witness birth and death in our everyday life, we do not know why people are born and why they die. The causes are not known. The *Upanishad*, in these meditations, tries to introduce us to a new type of knowledge which could be the solution to our sorrows.

Once again the *Upanishad* commences with a story. *Svetaketu Aruneya* becomes very arrogant after completing his *Vedic* studies. He goes to the

court of the king of *Panchaladesa*, *Pravahana* by name. The king notices the arrogance of *Svetaketu* and asks him 5 questions. (1) Do you know where people go after they die (2) Do you know where people come from when they are reborn (3) Do you have any idea of the paths by which the soul ascends. The paths are known as *Devayana* and *Pitriyana*. What are the differences these two paths (4) Why is it that the yonder world is not overflowing with people (5) Do you know what are 5 oblations that are offered and how the fifth oblation as liquid becomes a human being. *Svetaketu* did not know the answers for any one of them. In great agony and frustration he rushes to his father and narrates his humiliation. His father confesses that he also does not know the answers for these questions. The curious father, *Gautama*, then goes to the court of the king, as a humble student, seeking answers to these questions. The knowledge that the King, *Pravahana*, passed on to the father has been called "*Panchagni Vidya*".

The five fires, called the *Panchagni*, mentioned here are not actually fires in the physical sense. They are meditational techniques. The fire itself is symbolic of a sacrifice which one performs through contemplation.

What are the five fires?

- (a) Celestial region (Heaven)
- (b) the Atmosphere (consisting of rain and wind)
- (c) the Earth
- (d) Man
- (e) woman

are conceived as the five stages of fire.

These five stages of fire become the object of meditation known as the *Panchagni-Vidya*. These fires together with five acts of the Universe are conceived of as sacrifices. What are the five acts of the Universe? Fire, fuel, smoke, flame, coals and sparks are the five acts.

The *Upanishad* tells us that the whole universal activity of creation may be conceived of as a kind of sacrifice – *Yagna*. In a *Yagna* no *ritual* is isolated. They are all inter connected and form a single comprehensive act. In a similar way the whole universal manifestation is a continuous inter connected process. On that basis, births, deaths and other phenomenal experiences are not isolated factors. True knowledge is obtained when we reach a stage at which we can find the connection between the visible effects that we experience, with the invisible causes that produced them. This *Vidya* explains

the phenomenon of birth and death. While telling us about the birth, the *Vidya* talks about the stages of descent of the soul into the physical body which it puts on when it comes to the world. The journey of the soul after it leaves the body is also detailed. The *Upanishad*, in its exposition of the *Panchagni-Vidya*, takes the standpoint of the wider background that operates behind every event in the phenomena of natural processes. Things are not what they seem to be; there is a deeper significance behind every visible process or activity in Nature.

The departure of the soul is briefly given below –

When the *Jivatma* leaves the body, the following also leave –

The five senses of knowledge (*Jnana Indriyas*). (2) The five senses of action (*Karma Indriyas*) (3) *Mans* (Mind) (4) *Mukhya-Prana* (Principal vital air). When the *Mukhya Prana* departs the other *Pranas* also depart (5) The five elements – Ether, Air, Fire, Water and Earth in subtle form.

The power of speech stops. A person may be able to think but cannot speak

The thinking function stops. Life may still be there

The *Prana* reaches the soul or *Jivatma*. After this the soul joins with the five gross elements (*Panchabhutas*). They all depart from the body

Those who have performed well during their life time go to *Chandraloka* and enjoy themselves there. When they have nearly exhausted the rewards for their good deeds they return to earth – with some residual *Karma*. The souls return the way they went. From the heaven to ether, ether to air, to smoke, then mist, to cloud and from the cloud he rains down. He is born as rice, corn, herbs, tree etc. This as food is eaten by man who passes it on to a woman. The family he is to be born into is regulated by the remainder of *Karma*.

Chandogya Upanishad written by *Swami Krishnananda* and “What becomes of the soul after death” by *Swami Sivananda* are excellent references on this topic.

Vaisvanara Vidya

The *Vaisvanara Vidya* is detailed in Chapter V – *khandas* 12 to 18. The *Upanishad* tries to bring a greater understanding regarding the *Atman* and the Supreme *Brahman*. Once again a story is told to drive home the point. Six wise men learned in Vedic lore, themselves great meditators, could not come to a conclusion as to the final destination of their meditations. The names of the great men are – *Prachinasala Aupamanyava*, *Satyayajna Paulushi*, *Indradyumna Bhallaveya*, *Jana Sarkarashya*, *Budila Avastarasvi* and *Aruni Uddalaka*. They decided to approach King *Ashvapati*, a great meditator on the Principle called *Vaishvanara*.

The king *Ashvapati* asked each one of them a single question – “What is it that you are meditating already?”. Their answers are given below.

Aupamanyava: I meditate on Heaven as the Supreme Being

Satyayajna: I meditate upon the Sun as the Supreme Being.

Bhallaveya: I meditate upon the Cosmic Air as the Supreme Being.

Jana Sarkarashya: I meditate upon the all-pervading space as the Supreme Being.

Budila Avastarasvi: I meditate upon the water as the Supreme Being.

Aruni Uddalaka: : I meditate upon the Earth as the Supreme Being.

The king then addressed them and said “You are all very sincere in your meditations. But all of you have not realised that you have committed errors in your meditations. In fact, you have made two mistakes.

1. You have considered some parts of whole as the whole. You have considered the finite as the infinite. The mind is accustomed to think in only finite objects.
2. The second mistake you are making is – you are considering *Atman* as an object, as if it is outside you. When you say Space, water etc, realise that all of them are outside you. How can *Atman* be outside you? How can your own self be external to you? Self cannot be outside itself; it cannot be an object of itself. Two points you have to learn. A finite thing cannot be regarded as Infinite. External thing cannot be considered as the Self. Whatever you have obtained through these discrete meditations can be obtained through a single total meditation on *Vaishvanara Atman*. If you can envisage in a comprehensive way from the highest to the lowest, and if it can be the *Atman* and the Supreme Self at the same time, then that is *Vaisvanara Atman*.

Chapter-6:

Teaching by Uddalaka to Svetaketu

There lived a great sage by the name of Uddalaka. He sent his son Svetaketu to a gurukul to study. The son underwent the whole course of education. – *Vedas, Shastras* and *scriptures*. As it quite often happens *Svetaketu* became arrogant with his knowledge. The father, *Uddalaka*, noticed this. He called his son and asked him whether he has studied everything? The father then asked him “Do you know That, by knowing which, everything is known? Do you know That by which unheard becomes heard and the un-thought becomes thought?. The son went pale and replied that he had never heard, let alone be

taught, such things. He then humbly requests his father to enlighten him further on the topic.

The dialog that follows between the father and son forms the basis of *Uddalaka's* teaching on the oneness of the Self.

Uddalaka says that by knowing one lump of clay all things made of clay are known. You call the manufactured articles as pot, mug, jug etc. The differences lie in the shapes that you see and the names you call them by. In other words, these differences that arise are due to the concepts in your mind.

Sage *Uddalaka* continues.

In the beginning, there was a single Reality, without a second. There was nothing outside it; or different from it. Some people say that in the beginning there was non-existence and that the Universe was born out of it. That is impossible. You cannot have existence be born out of non-existence. Then the Supreme Being or *Sat*, thought to Himself "let me be many". Then out of Himself, He projected the Universe. Having thus projected, He then entered into every being and everything. All that is, has its self in Him alone. He is the subtle essence of all. Names and forms came into existence on account of this action of multiplication.

The bees go to different flowers and collect the essences of those flowers and what they have collected is called honey. This mass of honey cannot distinguish the essence of one flower from another. Everything has become indistinguishable. Similarly, all creatures when they reach that One Existence, whether in dreamless sleep or in death, know nothing of their past or present existence. All distinctions vanish. The pure Being is the Self of all and is behind all your activities, behind your sleep, behind your birth, death and indeed behind the whole process of Universal evolution. "O Svetaketu, That thou art (*Tat Tvam Asi*).

Uddalaka continues with his teaching. The rivers flow in different directions – east or west and finally enter the Ocean. In the end they do not know from which river they came from. Similarly, all beings in creation tend towards the ocean of the ultimate Being. When they go there they cannot distinguish themselves, for they become one with the Being. This is the Reality, this is the Being of all things, and you too are that – "*Tat-Tvam-Asi*"

Uddalaka goes further. Look at this big tree. If someone cuts off one of its branches, some juice will flow from the severed branch indicating that life is still there. If another branch is cut off, the result will be the same and life continues. And what is life? It cannot be defined. One day the whole tree may dry up indicating the departing of life from the tree. Death does not mean

death of the life principle itself. In this example, it just indicates that particular form is dead.

Though the bodies may be many, the shapes may be many the Self is only one. That you are *Svetaketu – Tat Tvam Asi*”.

Svetaketu was excited and requested for more of the knowledge his father was teaching him. *Uddalaka* asked his son to bring a fruit from the *Nyagrodha* tree (Banyan tree). He then asked his son to break it open. He asked what “what do you see inside it. The boy replied “I see small granules”. Now, split the small seed, the father asked. With great difficulty the son managed to split the seed. Now what do you see, the father asked. The son replied that he cannot see anything. *Uddalaka* told *Svetaketu* that the large tree grows from the subtle essence that cannot be seen by the naked eye. Is it not a miracle? So is this vast Universe. The essence of the whole Universe is the Self of the whole Universe. And that *Svetaketu*, “That art thou”

Uddalaka then asked his son to bring a little salt and put it in a cup of water. He then asked his son to return the next day. He asked *Svetaketu* to bring the salt back from the water. He could not because the salt has become one with water. The father then asked his son to taste the water which he did and told it tastes salty. *Uddalaka* explained that in the same way, though we cannot see Brahman in this body, He is indeed there. Though the salt cannot be seen in the water, it can be verified by other means. So is the case with Brahman.

When a man is fatally ill, his relatives gather around him and ask him “ Do you recognise us? If the senses are active he would recognise them. Once the senses are withdrawn into the mind, he can think but not speak. Towards the last stages, the mind stops its functions and he cannot think. At this stage the mind is withdrawn into the *Pranas*. The will only be breathing and thinking and sensing ceases. Finally, the breath also gets withdrawn. When *Prana* is gone mere heat or fire is there. When heat is also withdrawn into the Supreme Being there is no consciousness and there is no bodily life.

Chapter-7:

Sanatkumara’s instructions on Bhuma Vidya

Narada is a Divine sage who has fulfilled all his responsibilities and attained all knowledge. There was practically nothing that he did not know. In addition he was a great saint and sage. Yet he felt inadequate and suffered from a lack of peace. This renowned person now comes as a humble disciple to Sage *Sanatkumara* – son of Lord *Brahma* and requests the master to teach him. What follows came to be known as *Bhuma Vidya*.

The previous chapter discussed about the unity of Being and Self. This teaching is meant for a disciple of the highest grade. It has not discussed

anything about lower Realities an account of which may be needed for disciples of a middle grade. True, the lower reality is not excluded from the higher one, as the higher includes the lower, and the highest is everything and is all-inclusive. Yet a clarification from a Master like *Sanatkumara* will be greatly cherished by the mankind.

Sanatkumara enquires as to what *Narada* wants him to teach. He further says "Let me know what you have already learnt. If there are any gaps, I shall tell you that". *Narada* humbly gives a full list of all the branches of learning that he has studied and mastered. It was an impressive list. *Sanatkumara* looks at him intently and replies "All these are only names. This knowledge is nothing. Name enables you to have an idea of that object. Name is known but the contents are not known and as such we do not have a control on the object just knowing its name. This is the status of theoretical learning. However, though this may be theory, it is not without any utility. It has an importance in that it is the beginning of knowledge. This is the first step"*Namopassava*". Therefore meditate on "Name" as *Brahman*.

Narada then asks "Is there anything superior to Name"

Sanatkumara replies "Yes, there is. And that is Speech. Everything that one learns – Vedas, sciences etc has speech as its background. Speech is the cause for the name. The cause is superior to effect. Speech is superior to all objects of sense, the Five elements, pleasure, pain, virtue, vice, good bad and all objects of knowledge and, in fact, every subject that *Narada* has knowledge of. The Master told *Narada* to meditate on Speech as *Brahman*".

Narada then asks "Is there anything beyond speech". Yes, there is, *Sanatkumara* answers. It is the Mind.

Mind controls speech. Mind is the cause of all expressions. Just as a folded palm can contain two small fruits, the mind can contain within itself both speech and name. The mind is responsible for anything that we achieve in this world, because what we call world is nothing but the field of experience. So, *Narada* meditate on the Mind as *Brahman*, the Absolute. We should control the mind completely and rule over it, by identification of our true Being with everything that the mind can think of. This is one stage in the process of meditation.

Narada persisted and asked "Is there anything superior to the mind". *Sanatkumara* replied "Yes, surely there is. *Sankalpa* is greater than the Mind".

Behind the mind there are forces more concentrated in their nature. There is this creative will operating as a directive intelligence for the mind. It is termed as "*Sankalpa*". So *Sanatkumara* told *Narada* to meditate on *Sankalpa*.

Narada was thrilled. He asks "Is there anything more than will"

There surely is. It is memory replies the Master.

The will cannot operate unless there is a cohesive force behind the functions of thought. This function of the mind which we call as will would not be possible unless there is another capacity which we call as memory. There are two essential criteria needed before the will can be directed. (a) Capacity of remembrance or retention of experiences (b) an awareness of the target towards which the will is going to be directed. This function which is precedent to the rise of will is called *Chitta*. Beyond the will is the power of memory and retention. Everything is rooted in memory.

Sanatkumara directs *Narada* to meditate on *Chitta* as *Brahman*.

Narada then asks “Is there anything beyond *Chitta*”

Sanatkumara replies “Yes, there is, *Narada*. It is *Dhyana* (concentration).”

Concentration is fixity of mind. Wherever we find stability of any kind we will discover concentration. The Upanishad says that Earth contemplates – on account of its stability and fixity of character. Whoever obtained success, whether he is a God or human being, obtained it through the power of concentration of the mind. Nothing in life has any sense or meaning when concentration is absent.

So *Narada* meditate on concentration (*Dhyana*) as *Brahman*.

Narada pursues and asks “Is there anything superior to *Dhyana*”.

Vijnana (understanding) is superior to *Dhyana* replies *Sanatkumara*.

The problems which one will face in the practice of concentration will have to be understood beforehand. Hence Understanding is superior to Concentration. In life the meaning that we discover is based on the understanding we have derived from our experiences. Where the understanding is not there the meaning is absent.

Narada asks is there anything superior to *Vijnana*?

Yes, *Balam* (Strength) is superior to *Vijnana*.

The Master says that mere understanding in theoretical form is of no use – as it is application of theory in one’s brain. There is need to connect one’s understanding with realities of mind. So strength is superior to understanding. Strength means a blend of functions of mind with the functions of the body.

Is there something greater than strength asked *Narada*.

That which gives strength is superior to strength. That is called as “*anna*” – Food. *Sanatkumara* continues – Water is superior to food. Here it refers to

water principle. In general subtler principles are superior grosser ones because they are more pervasive in character. You will notice that water principle is superior to Earth principle.

Meditate on water principle

Fire principle is superior to water. Hence meditate on Fire.

Air principle is superior to Fire. Space (Akasa) is superior to Air.

So meditate on Akasa.

Is there anything superior to Akasa.

Yes, *Smara* is superior to Space (Akasa). Consciousness of self existence which we feel as identical with our own consciousness (*Smara* refers to this consciousness) is superior to space. If we ourselves are not there then there is no question space being there.

Now Hope (or aspiration for betterment) is superior to Space. So meditate on "Asa".

In answer to Narada's further questioning Sanatkumara says Life is superior to Asa. Without life everything is meaningless. The greatest knowledge is the knowledge of life – not merely the knowledge of objects of sense.

Sanatkumara declares that he who knows the eternal truth is the true knower. When a man has realised the eternal truth he declares it. But to realise, he has to first reflect upon it. A man with faith and reverence reflects on eternal truth. A person who struggles to achieve self-control attends on a Guru. Once he attains self-control he finds joy in it. There is no happiness in the finite. The source of true happiness is infinite – neither the mind nor the external world. And what is happiness. "Happiness is plenum, happiness is completeness, it is totality and it is absolute". The term *Bhuma* is used in this Upanishad. Roughly translated it implies absoluteness in quality as well as quantity, uncontaminated, permanency of every type, immortality, infinity and eternity. Brahman of all the Upanishads is the same as *Bhuma* mentioned here in this Upanishad. That alone is happiness.

Sanatkumara then goes on to define *Bhuma*. "Where one sees nothing except one's own Self, where one hears nothing except one's own Self, where one understands nothing except one's own Self, that is *Bhuma*, the Absolute. Where one sees something outside oneself, where one hears something outside oneself, where one understands or thinks something outside oneself, that is the finite."

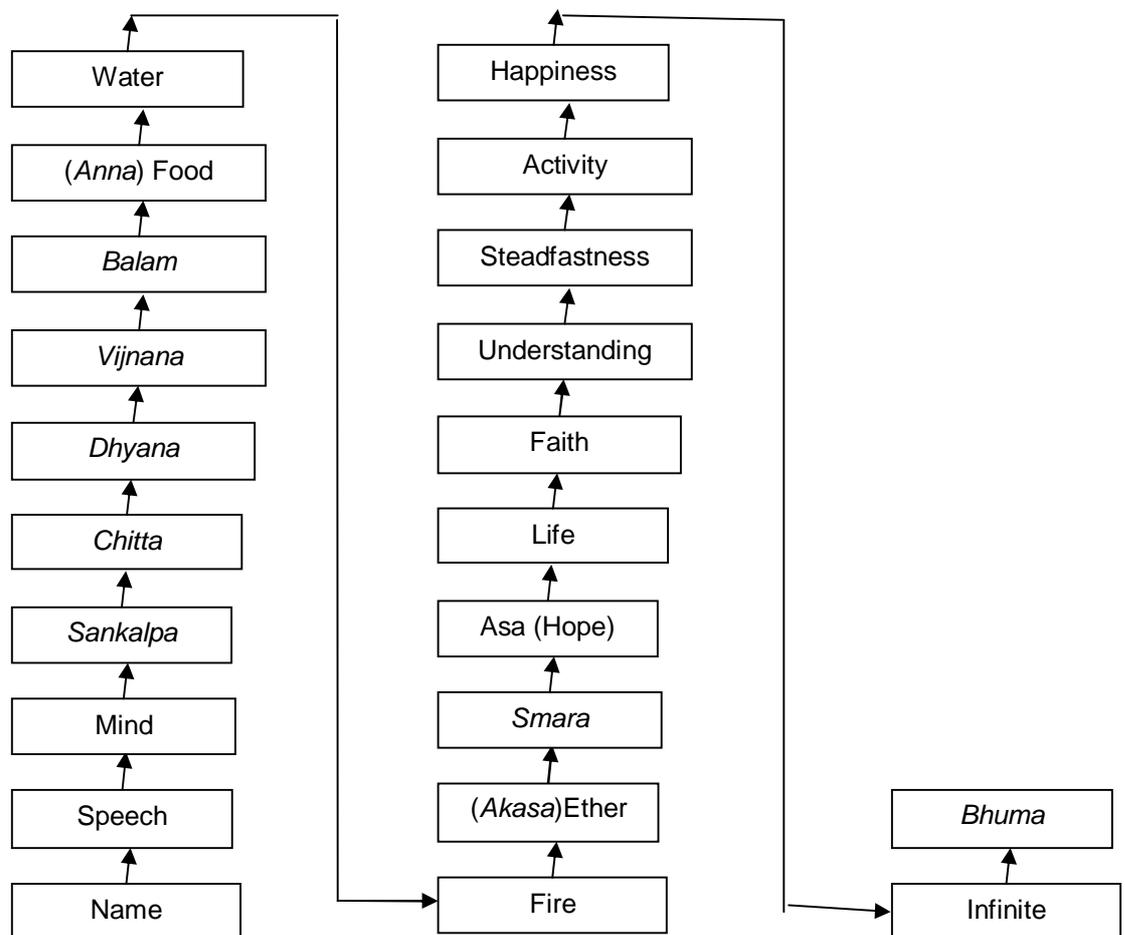
Narada asks where *Bhuma* is located.

Sanatkumara replies that “It is self-supported, self-complete and self-existent. It is not a relative Being. It is an absolute Being. It is everywhere. The whole cosmos is filled with it.

He who knows and meditates upon the truth of the Self realises that the whole Universe issues from it.

Given below is a sketch to summarise the various levels of realities discussed between Sage *Sanatkumara* and Sage *Narada*.

Bhuma Vidya



Chapter-8;

Dahara Vidya

Dahara Vidya occurs in the Chandogya Upanishad, Chapter 8; Khanda-1

This is one of the greatest of the *Vidyas*. The all-pervading and all-inclusive nature of the Self is stressed upon in this *Vidya*. In this meditation, the meditator feels the whole universe as his Self and excludes nothing from the One Self. This *Vidya* further explains the identity of the external and the internal, the objective and the subjective, the macrocosmic and the microcosmic, the universal and the individual-*Brahman* and *Atman*.

The Upanishad tells us that there is a city of *Brahman*, the Absolute, within our own Self. A very small lotus like abode exists in our own heart. In this little abode there is little space that shines by its own light. This is the city of *Brahman*. What is inside this city of *Brahman*? Do not be fooled. Do not be under the impression that it is geometrically small. That which is inside can magnify itself to any extent. The whole of the heaven and the Earth can be found inside this little space. The principle of Five elements – Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Ether and whatever else you can find outside are present inside this little space. The Sun, Moon and stars can be found inside our heart. The Upanishad also says that whatever you cannot see outside can be seen within this space. The reason for this is our heart is the true representative of the Ultimate Reality. The outer world cannot be regarded as such a representative. Why do we say that? The outer world is only that aspect of Reality which can be comprehended by our senses. Whatever the senses are incapable of grasping cannot be contained in the external world. Our experience is limited by our senses. All investigation in the field of spirituality is internal only and not external.

Absolute is Universal in its nature. And this makes it very hard for the mind to comprehend. This chapter confines itself to the heart of the individual. When we talk about heart, we are not talking about the physical heart. Heart here is just a symbol representing the consciousness which is located within this body. Though located within the body, it cannot be limited or contained on account of its super-physical nature. Not only that. This heart which we are about to discuss is a mysterious thing. What is the mystery? To start with - whatever we desire is available in one's own heart. The objects of one's desire are contained here and shall be available for experience, the moment they are invoked in an appropriate manner.

What happens to this heart when one gets old or when the person dies? Does it also wither and die? The Upanishad clarifies – this heart does not get old, does not die or get destroyed. That is because it is the city of God. In fact, what we refer to as heart is the *Atman*. As *Atman*, it is free from any affliction,

sorrow, aging destruction etc. It feels no hunger, no thirst and is self-existent. It asks for nothing because whatever it desires will materialise at once. It's will is pure in character and uncontaminated by any falsehood. However, the more this will of the human being is drawn out, the more does it get contaminated by the evil of externality. And the more does it get contaminated the more difficult does it become in contacting objects of one's desire. By the same reason the more inward we go towards our own Self, the greater will be the strength of our will and consequently the greater will be our chances in obtaining objects of our desire. This will happen when our consciousness, will and thought functions are rooted in Truth. This is the meaning of *Satya-kama* and *Satya-sankalpa*.

Upanishad tells us about the power of the will of a person who has Self-realisation, and the capacity that person has. Nothing is impossible for that person. If he wants to see his forefather in the other world, he can see him at once. His wish will be fulfilled instantly. There is one condition though. The will has to be exercised in a proper manner. The will has to be in-tune with the law of the Atman.

In the case of people who are not rooted to Truth, their actions are limited by factors outside their control – similar to the case of subjects under a king. There will be a limit on what such conditioned people can achieve. The external conditioning force may be due to the king, as in this example, or due to some powerful laws of nature. Karma is a very powerful law of nature. It leads one to re-birth and suffering. So the actions performed by an individual yield only transient results. As a consequence, our actions in this world bring about conditions which give us conditioned happiness. Limited results follow all actions.

Actions performed in this world produce transient results. Not only that, virtuous actions do produce beneficial results in the other world. But those results are also transient in nature. Just as secular actions produce limited results in the secular world, so do religious acts and virtuous deeds produce limited results in the other world. Even if we perform a wealth of virtuous acts in this world and after death reach shining regions of paradise, they will yield only limited experiences, because, after all, all these experiences are action-born.

However, it is different in the case of those great people who know what this Atman is. They are not limited by the outside laws. As the knowers of the Atman, Upanishad says, they know what the ultimate Reality is. Then the law of the outside world becomes the law of the inside world. The law of the Atman is the law of the Universe. Therefore, there is absolute freedom for those who are knowers of this great secret. Whatever they will, it expresses itself in experience at once.

When we understand the Reality, there is no such thing as this world and another world. There are not many worlds; there is only one vast continuum of experience. Extending this thought, when we talk about people who have left this world, those who are yet to be born - we are only talking about them whom we carry in our own heart, in the Ether of our consciousness. The various *Lokas*, in the so-called external *Universe* are present in our heart. They can be invoked from within us by the strength of the mind. The greatest obstacle to this perception of the Universe arises when the Consciousness gets locked up in a body. Explaining differently, - in every kind of cognition there is a cognition of Reality. However, we mistake the Being for objects on account of the habit of the mind to define things in different ways.

The moment the consciousness is freed from bodily attachment, it rises upwards like a flame of brilliance. There is a composure. This composure which has arisen on account of freedom of consciousness from bodily shackles is *Samprasada*. At this stage one recovers his real nature and shakes off the notion of connections with bodies. This is the real Atman free from all entanglement. This is immortal. This is also what we call as Brahman. What we call as Truth, is Brahman.

What is Satyam? The Upanishad says Satyam is – Sa-ti-yam. The first letter stands for immortal; the second for mortal; the third yam refers to that which holds them together. That which holds mortal and immortal together is Antaryamin. The Supreme Reality holds the subject and object together-meaning consciousness matter. The means for realisation of the great Truth is being explained. The word Brahmacharya is used. The conduct of Brahman is called as Brahmacharya. It is a total abstraction of the senses which recognises itself alone, to the exclusion of everything else. Self control is the highest austerity that can be practiced. A person with no control over his senses cannot enter the city of Brahman.

Brhadaranyaka Upanishad

This *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* is the oldest and the greatest of all the Upanishads. Sri *Shankara's Bhashya* on this *Upanishad* is the best among his commentaries. The theme of this *Upanishad* is to establish the unity of *Brahman* and the *Atman*. It comprehends both the *Upadesa* and revelation of the true nature of the mystic experience of the *Brahman - Atman* identity and the *Upapatti* or logical explanations of that great doctrine of *Advaita* through the employment of dialectic modes argumentation.

The *Upanishad* consists of three *Khandas*. The first one is called *Madhu Khanda*. It conveys the main teaching of the *Advaita* doctrine and is of the nature of *Upadesa*. The second *Khanda* is called *Muni-Khanda*. This gives logical arguments and explanations confirming the soundness of the

Upadesa. The third one is called *Khila-Khanda* and deals with certain *Upasanas*.

The *Upanishad* consists of :

- (a) 3 *Khandas*
- (b) 6 *Adhyayas* (chapters)
- (c) 47 *Brahmanas* (sections)
- (d) 427 verses or *mantras*

It is in this *Upanishad* that we come across the famous *Pavamana mantra* “*asa to ma sad gamaya; tamaso ma jyotir gamaya; mrutyor ma amrutam gamaya*” (Lead me from the un-real to the real; from darkness to light; from death to immortality- Refer *Madhu Khanda; Udgitha Brahmana; Mantra 28: 1-3-28*). The *Upanishad* is very voluminous. So we will be dealing with, not the entire *Upanishad*, but only with some selected sections of it.

Maitreyi Vidya

This is a narration of a conversation between the great sage *Yajnavalkya* and his wife *Maitreyi*.

The sage tells his wife “I am going to retire from the life of a householder and enter into the fourth order in life (*Sanyasa*). I now intend to divide my property between you and *Katyayani* (second wife) before I take up to renunciation”. For this *Maitreyi* responded “you propose to divide the property between the two of us. Is it possible for us to be happy by possession of material comfort and property? If I am the owner of the entire earth, and if the wealth of the whole world is mine, will I be perpetually happy, or will there be some other factor which will intrude upon my happiness in spite of my possession of the values of the entire world? Is it possible to attain immortality through wealth”.

Yajnavalkya told the truth “No, you cannot be happy. Yes, you will be comfortable – but you will be in the same state in other respects. Immortality is not possible through possessions.” *Maitreyi* then asks that if it is insecure to start, then what good can she get from the riches that her husband is proposing to give her. She then requests her husband to tell her as to what she should engage herself in so that she will be eternally happy. *Yajnavalkya* was happy to hear the question. The whole subject turns into a discourse on eternal and temporal wealths. Wealths such as physical, social, comfort giving objects go under the category of temporal wealth. In the case of such kind of wealths, possession is conditioned by time. On the contrary, Permanent wealth is not conditioned by time. The sage explains that not one person or

wealth is dear in this world, but what is dear is that condition which is imagined to be present after possession of the object or that relationship.

Yajnavalkya goes on with his exposition to *Maitreyi*. Neither the husband is dear to the wife, nor the wife is dear to the husband. What is dear is a condition which they try to bring about in their mind by that relation. That condition is always missed, and so the happiness expected never comes. He advises *Maitreyi* that it is the *Atman* which is to be meditated upon. Anything outside you cannot belong to you and cannot satisfy you. It will leave you and eventually bring sorrow to you. It is the *Atman* that appears as all these things. This point is not grasped by the mind. *Yajnavalkya* brings home the point that the effect cannot be known unless the cause is known – because the effect is a manifestation of the cause. The sage gives an example. The sound made by a percussion instrument cannot be properly identified if the instrument is far away and not visible to the eyes. Smoke sparks are emitted from the fire kindled with wet fuel. In the same way the *Rig Veda*, *Yajur Veda*, *Sama Veda*, mythology (*purana*), the arts (*vidya*), the *Upanishads*, verses (*slokas*), aphorisms (*sutras*), elucidations (*anuvyakhyanas*) and explanations (*vyakhyanas*) are all a part of breath of this Infinite Reality. All these have been extracted from the Supreme Self. *Yajnavalkya* then said that when a lump of salt is dropped into the water it immediately gets dissolved and then it cannot be separated. From there-on samples of water taken from anywhere will taste as saltish. In a similar way, when the individual Self comes out as a separate entity from the elements its separate existence gets destroyed. After it becomes one with the Absolute Self it does not have consciousness. Individuality arises by identification of the Self, through ignorance, with the elements. Where there is consciousness of the Self, individuality is no more. As long as there is duality – one sees the other, one hears the other, one smells the other etc. However, for an enlightened soul “the all” is dissolved in the Absolute Self. In such a case who is there to be seen by whom etc. By what shall we reveal the intelligence that reveals all?

Akshara Vidya

By the 3rd chapter of this *Upanishad* we are entering central portion of this *Upanishad*. One king *Janaka* was a great knower of the self. This king was curious to find out as to who was the most learned person in his country. He then organised a huge sacrifice in his palace and thousands of sages, saints and scholars from all over the country were invited. He announced in an open court that the wisest among them will be awarded 1000 cows and other riches. No one from the stunned audience made a move. Sage *Yajnavalkya* was in that court and he ordered his disciple to take the cows to his house. This move by the sage upset all the other learned men at the venue. One

after another they started putting questions to *Yajnavalkya*. Using this debate as a basis the *Upanishad* reveals some of the profound truths.

Gargi, the daughter of *Vachaknu*, addressed the sages in the hall and said “ I shall ask *Yajnavalkya* two questions. If he is able to answer them, then no one from among you can ever defeat him. He will be the great expounder of the truth of *Brahman*. Addressing *Yajnavalkya*, she said I dart two pointed arrows of questions at you. Be prepared to answer them. That of which they say is above the heaven and below the earth; that which is between heaven and earth as well; that which was in the past, that which is in the present, and shall be there in the future. If there is something like that, on what is it founded?” The Sage answered that it is un-manifested Ether – “*avyakrita Akasa*”. And *Gargi* accepted the answer.

Her second question was “ In what is the un-manifested Ether rooted?”

The Sage answers, that it is the imperishable Absolute. The great ones call it as *Akshara*. It is not gross because it is not visible as an object; it is not subtle because it is not different from the gross. You cannot call it long; you cannot call it short, because it is not in space. It cannot be called as possessed of any colour, because colour is the perception of the eyes. And it is already ruled out as being an object of any kind. So it has no colour. It cannot be associated with anything; it cannot be related to anything. It stands by itself. It cannot be regarded as the cause of anything, also. It does not cast a shadow. It is light by itself. It is not darkness also, because it sees everything. It is not space; it is not air; it is not water; it is not earth; it is not an object; it is not individual; it is not you; it is not me. It stands by itself. It has no space. You cannot grasp it through the senses of taste, sight, hearing, etc. It has no eyes; but it sees everything. It has no ears; it hears everything. It has no speech, but it speaks, and all the languages are known to it. It has no mind; it thinks all things. It has no *Prana* ; it does not breathe. It is not an individual being. It has no mouth. It has no organs. It has no measure of any kind, sensory or psychological—It is not inside; it is not outside. It does not consume anything—and it is not consumed by anyone. Neither it wants anything, not is wanted by anybody. Nothing is an object to it, and it is not an object to anyone. Such a mysterious thing is the ultimate Reality This is the *Para Brahman*.

Ushasta-Kahola Vidya

The debate at King *Janaka's* place to identify the wisest among those assembled continues.

It was *Ushasta's* turn to pose a question to *Yajnavalkya*. He asks "the transmigration of the Self based on his merits and de-merits has been adequately documented. The question arises as to whether the individual self within all that migrates from body to body exists or does not exist. If it exists what is it like?".

Yajnavalkya answers- "This is yourself that is within all" Explaining within all, the Sage says "that which breaths through the Prana is the individual self of the body and organs. It is that principle distinct from the body and organs which make them function." Pressed for further explanation, *Yajnavalkya* says "you cannot see that which is the witness of the vision. You cannot hear what which is hearer of hearing; you cannot think that which is the thinker of the thought; you cannot know that which is the knower of knowledge. This is yourself that is within all. Everything else but this is perishable".

Kahola Kausitakeya continues with the questioning. His question was very similar to that by *Ushasta..* *Yajnavalkya* gives a different answer. The Atman is a tremendous Reality. Once you have known it you will never ask for anything else. It is Atman that frees you from the tortures of hunger, thirst, sorrow, confusion, old age and death. It is the absence of the realisation of this Atman that makes us grief-stricken in many ways. Our experiences in this life basically are psychological, biological, social etc. Atman is transcendent to all these. Having known the Atman people renounce everything. For most of us, there are basically 3 desires – (a) build a family with children (b) accumulate wealth (c) work and build name and fame. People who have realised Atman no longer want them. They live like mendicants. Having renounced learning of every kind, he becomes like a child. This is the consequence of immense learning and realisation. You may ask "How does a man who has realised Atman conduct himself? The Upanishad says that there is no set limit for this great person. Whatever standard he sets forth will become a standard for others to follow. You may imitate him but he is not expected to imitate others"

Uddalaka-Aruni Vidya

We now arrive at a very important section of the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. It is here that we come across the famous *Antaryamin Brahmana*.

It was the sage *Uddalaka*'s turn to question *Yajnavalkya*. He had basically two questions for which he wanted explanations. (a) "All the worlds, all beings are strung in a thread. What is this thread? (b) Do you know about the immanent principle, the Antaryamin?"

Yajnavalkya explains as follows. The Supreme Vital force of the cosmos is regarded as the thread on which everything is strung. All bodies in this world are formed in the mould of this Vital energy. The Vital Force has taken the shape of all forms which includes forms of the outside world and forms of all individual beings. That Universal Vital Force is the thread. In the case of the individual body it is the power which holds the bodies in proper positions. And every body, individual or otherwise, is strung on this thread and controlled by it. It is His Will and His Action that appears outside as the action of the people. This Vital Force holds the limbs of the body in unison and synchronised when the body was alive. When the action of this Vital Force is withdrawn, at the time of death, the parts of the body fall apart- because this Vital principle is absent.

Now to the second question related to the immanent principle. It is the Antaryamin – the one that controls everything from within. The discussion is now moving towards a principle which is capable of controlling anything yet cannot be seen or known!. It is called the internal Reality of the cosmos – Antaryamin. *Yajnavalkya* says that the Vital principle is inside this very earth holding the earth as a compact completeness. It is the cause of the very existence of earth and the earth is not aware of its presence. In fact, the whole earth is the body of this principle. It is sitting inside the earth and working. And this is your own Self. It is the Immortal Being This Atman, which is your Atman, which once again is your own Self is the Internal Ruler. It is immortal. In fact, it is the only thing that is immortal – everything else is mortal. When everything is active, this is not active. This is the goal of everyone. This is the Antaryamin. It is the true Ruler of everyone- Earth, Water, Fire, Air, Ether, the physical organs etc. All the gods, all the celestials, all elements are controlled by this Antaryamin. He is internal to all beings – you, me and everything else. Internal organs like – Prana, eyes, ears, mind etc are also controlled by Him. In fact, there is no separate group of gods, or celestials, other than this. There is no world, or universe, outside this. And there are no individuals external to it. No gods, no world, no individuals! All these three sets of apparent reality are only the manifestations, or rather appearances, of this one Supreme Being.

What we call as Antaryamin is the Atman, the Self, the Consciousness. You cannot see it, but it sees you and everyone. It can hear everyone and yet no one can hear it. If anyone thinks, it is that which thinks; if anyone hears, it is that which hears; if anyone sees, it is that which sees. If anyone understands anything, it is not you or I that understand, it is that which understands. If

anyone does anything, it is that which does it. This is the Reality and everything else is useless.

This concludes our brief examination of the famous *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*.

Chapter VI - Gitas

Bhagavad Gita

Introduction

In today's world, prominence is given to Science and Technology and their applications. They provide comfort to citizens. Equal stress should be laid on humanities also. The concepts of right and wrong do not belong to the domain of science. Yet a study of ideas based these concepts are essential as human action and happiness depend on them. The *Bhagavad-Gita* is valuable guide of the supreme ends of life.

Every scripture has two sides - one temporary and perishable and the other eternal and imperishable. The perishable side belongs to the times of the commentators and to the people of that period and the particular country in which it was written. The eternal truths or messages the scriptures present are applicable to all ages and countries. The vitality of the scripture consists in its power to produce from time to time commentators who confirm the truths, from their own experience, relevant to their period. *Bhagavad-Gita* has been recognised for centuries as an orthodox scripture of the Hindu religion possessing equal authority with the Upanishads and *Brahma Sutra* with the three together forming the triple cannon (*Prasthanas -Traya*). All *Acharyas* are obliged to justify their special doctrines by an appeal to these three authorities. The Upanishads contain many different suggestions about the nature of the Absolute Reality and its relation to the world. The *Brahma Sutras* are terse and obscure. On the other hand the Gita gives a more consistent view.

A number of eminent scholars, in modern times, have written books on the Gita and some excellent versions are available in English as well. However no translation of Gita could bring out the dignity and beauty of the original. Its melody and magic of phrase are difficult to recapture. Commentaries on the Gita were written by the famous *Acharyas*- *Sri Shankaracharya*, *Sri Ramanujacharya* and *Sri Madhvacharya*. They wrote commentaries in support of their own traditions (*Sampradaya*) and in refutation of others. In this short article we are not attempting a detailed analysis of this great poem Gita consisting of 700 verses. We will try to bring out a summary of the hexads with explanations based on the *Vishishtadvaita* doctrine. Again this article is based on the English translation of *Sri Ramanuja Gita Bhashya* by Swami Adidevananda. *Sri Yamunacharya* wrote a brief analysis (*Gitartha Samgraha*) of the teaching of *Gita*. *Sri Ramanujacharya* commented on the entire *Gita* on the lines set by *Sri Yamunacharya*.

According to *Sri Yamunacharya*, as given in his *Gitartha Samgraha*, *Gita* of 18 chapters is divided into 3 Hexads. The first hexad, consisting a group of six

chapters, deals with the Individual Self. The means of attaining it consists in *Jnana Yoga* and *Karma Yoga*. The next hexad deals with the Supreme Lord *Sriman Narayana*, the seat of all power and auspicious attributes. Salvation can be achieved only through His grace. None the less, one has to be worthy to be the recipient of His grace. The worthiness is attained through the practice of *Bhakti* which develops with the dawn of knowledge of the Self preceded by the performance of duties (*Karma Yoga*). In the last hexad details of earlier chapters are treated for completing them. Following is a summary of topics covered in each chapter.

Chapter-1:*Bhagavad-Gita* opens with a description of the scene of the battle field at *Kurukshetra* where the *Kaurava* and *Pandava* armies were gathered ready to start the war. Surveying the opponents gathered for the battle, *Arjuna* was overtaken with grief, compassion and perplexity. He was confused as to what *Dharma* was and what *Adharma* was. He takes refuge at the feet of Lord *Krishna* for his help and direction.

Chapter-2 In order to remove *Arjuna's* delusion, Sri *Krishna* imparts the knowledge of Sankya and Yoga. They comprehend in their scope the eternal self and disinterested activity

Chapter-3 The need to perform works without attachment to any fruits other than the pleasure of the Lord and for the protection of the world is stressed

Chapter-4 The chapter treats matters such as – The Lord's nature; the varieties of *Karma Yoga* and the eminence of knowledge in it.

Chapter-5 The ease and fast efficiency of *Karma Yoga*; the mode of knowledge of Brahman i.e. the individual self are elaborated.

Chapter-6 The teaching in this chapter includes – Practice of *Yoga* (concentration and meditation), the four-fold divisions of *Yogins* and the means to success in *Yoga*

Chapter-7 This chapter discusses – Exact Knowledge of Himself; His concealment by *Prakruti* and the surrender to Him in order to overcome this; also classifies various types of devotees.

Chapter-8 In this chapter are discussed – distinctions of what are to be understood and acquired by each of the three classes of devotees

Chapter-9 In this chapter are discussed – The Lord's eminence; His undiminished supremacy as the Divine even when He appears as an incarnation; the excellence of Mahatmas who seek God alone; the discipline of *Bhakti*.

Chapter-10 The chapter discusses – infinite auspicious attributes of the Lord; His absolute control over everything so as to generate *Bhakti* in the minds of aspirants.

Chapter-11 *Vishvaroopā darshana* given to His devotee, *Arjuna*

Chapter-12 The superiority of *Bhakti Yoga* is taught; details of qualities to be acquired; modes of *Sadhana* to be practiced are given by the Lord.

Chapter-13 The chapter discusses – nature of the body; means for the realisation of the self; nature of self; cause of bondage; discrimination between self and body

Chapter-14 In this chapter are discussed – *Gunās* and their binding effect; how to eliminate their hold

Chapter-15 The Supreme person is declared to be other than the self; He pervades, sustains and rules over Universe.

Chapter-16 Discusses distinction between Divine and demonic natures in order to establish what is truth and what is right conduct.

Chapter-17 This chapter discusses- What are ordained by *Shastras* and what are not.

Chapter-18 This last chapter discusses – mental state required for ascribing the agency to the Lord; the necessity for developing *Sattvic* quality; spiritual culmination of discharging one's duties; *Bhakti Yoga* which forms the essence of *Bhagavad-Gita*.

Essence of First Hexad

Sri Ramanujacharya starts the *Gita - Bhashya* with salutations to his predecessor, *Sri Yamunacharya*. It is then followed up with glowing descriptions of Lord *Narayana's* attributes. The *Acharya* points out that though the purpose of his incarnation was to relieve the burden on Earth, an equally important reason was to be available to all common men and women and give them an opportunity to see Him with their own eyes and take refuge in Him. Such opportunities do not come frequently – but may be once in a Yuga.

The actual commentary starts with *Arjuna* surveying the *Kaurava* warriors facing him. When he saw his grandfather, teachers, cousins and friends facing him he was grief stricken. He saw that the war would lead to the ruin of an entire clan and perishing of its ancient values. He threw his bow and arrows and sat with his heart overwhelmed with grief. He saw a great accrual of sin in waging the war and lost all desire for it.

Sri Krishna points out that the resolve to abstain from his duty as a *Kshtriya* leader was born out of a false notion that man is only a body (*Prakruti*) and the destruction of the body amounts to destruction of an entity known as man. This false notion can be removed by the knowledge of the truth about oneself. And this truth is that one is essentially *Atman*. *Sri Ramanuja* refers to it as *Brahman*. According to the *Vishishtadvaita* School the Realities are

Supreme Being: *Cit - Acit visistam* (qualified by both consciousness and unconscious entities)

Prakruti: *Acit visistam* (qualified by insentience only) *Atman* or individual soul: *Cit visistam* (qualified by only consciousness only)

The individual soul *Atman*, is *Anu* (atomic) in the *Ramanuja* system. Its individuality is not lost even in a liberated state. In the liberated state its attributive consciousness (*Dharmabhuta-Jnana*) becomes fully extended and has no obstructions. He becomes *Vibhu* (unlimited) and in this sense is *Brahman*. Commenting on Gita Ch.13,12 – “*Anaadi matparam brahma na sat tan nasaad ucyate*” *Sri Ramanuja* himself gives a justification for interpreting *Brahman* as *Atman*. “*Mat-para*” means one with me (*Ishvara*) as one’s superior. The one here refers to *Brahman* (i.e) the *Atman* who is a *Sesha* of *Ishvara*. *Atman* is associated with the quality of “infinite extensiveness” in its pristine state. Under the load of *Karma* it is conditioned to be within the body. This condition is only temporary and is true when it is under a state of bondage. When the *Atman* is liberated from bondage it regains its unlimited state and for this reason can be described as *Brahman*.

In its essential nature, the *Atman* is unaffected by any of its transformations of its material vestments such as body-mind. Thus weapons cannot cut it, fire cannot burn it, and wind cannot dry it. In fact nothing can destroy it. Not understanding this truth, *Arjuna* wanted to abandon his duty and take to a hermit’s life. To free *Arjuna*, his friend and disciple, from the false identification of the Essence in man with the body *Sri Krishna* preaches to him that the path that *Arjuna* wanted to follow will only lead him infamy on Earth and perdition thereafter. That is the price one pays for abandoning one’s *Svadharm* (duty in life).

The real path to higher evolution lies through *karma Yoga* and *Jnana Yoga* – the paths of work and knowledge. Though they look different as paths, in fact, they seek the same end. *Jnana Yoga* consists in the cultivation of a mental attitude that is exclusively riveted on the *Atman*. It will need fortification through a long practice of *Karma Yoga*. Though the path of *Jnana Yoga* is theoretically possible, in practice, however, it is impossible for anyone with body consciousness to follow it. Even if one succeeds to at least claim a partial success, the chances of the mind being blown away by the *Vasanas* or

tendencies of the mind. On the other hand *Karma Yoga* is suited to all aspirants. It consists in the discharge of all works ordained by the scriptures (3 kinds are there – daily obligatory duties, occasional duties, and desire prompted duties). *Karma Yoga* consists in performing all these duties without an eye on the fruits. To maintain such an attitude one must have the knowledge of being the *Atman* at the core and not the body. This is where *Jnana Yoga* is needed.

Sri Krishna advises that even those competent to practice *Jnana Yoga* should resort to *Karma Yoga* for 2 reasons – (a) there is nothing in it that obstructs the growth of *Jnana* (b) One will set an example for a vast majority to follow. So *Sri Ramanujacharya* advocates a combination of these two *Yogas* for the harmonious development of one's spiritual life.

Essence of the Second Hexad: Bhakti Yoga

Chapters 7th to 12th are covered by the second Hexad. In this Hexad the doctrine of *Bhakti* is elaborated. In the *Vishishtadvaita* system *Bhakti* is built on the foundation of *Jnana* and not a preparatory discipline to *Jnana* as in the *Advaita* system. In addition the meaning of *Jnana* differs vastly between the two systems. In the *Advaita* system it is the intuitive understanding that the *Jiva* is one with the *Ishvara*. However, in the *Vishishtadvaita* system it is the understanding that one is the *Atman* and not mere body-mind. One who has achieved it is referred to in the *Gita* as *Sthita-Prajna*. An aspirant who has achieved this state gets a continuous memory of *Ishvara*. And *Ishvara* is the over-lord (*Sesi*) to whom the aspirant is liege (*Sesha*). This understanding of one's correct relationship with *Ishvara* is the higher aspect of *Jnana* that helps devotion to attain fullest maturity. When the *Jiva* gets established in *Atman* consciousness (*Atmaavalokana Buddhi*) then a continuous and unobstructed flow of consciousness towards Lord *Narayana* starts occurring. This is *Bhakti* in its highest form and described by expressions such as *Para-Bhakti* and *Parama Bhakti*. Unless this is achieved, the load of *Karma* obstructs the flow of memory towards the Lord.

Before a stable *Bhakti* gets established, some preparatory work could be practiced. The practice of *Karma Yoga* ably informed by *Jnana Yoga* in the practice of the 3 kinds of works indicated earlier can be performed as an offering to *Purushottama*, the Supreme Being. These can be done by all aspirants at any stage. There are other aids to devotion like worship of images in temples, visiting holy places etc.

The description of Supreme Being takes centre stage in the second Hexad. He is the origin, support and dissolving ground of the whole Universe. Though He is distinct from and unaffected by it, He is one whole with the animate nature (*Jiva*) and the inanimate nature (*Jagat*) forming His two powers or *Prakritis*. These two powers (*Jiva- Jagat*) constitute the Cosmos which forms

His body. The body-soul (*Sarira-Sariri*) relationship between Ishvara and His *Prakritis* is used by *Sri Ramanuja* to explain the *Mahavakya* (“*Tat Tvam Asi*”) of the *Vedanta*. *Tat Tvam Asi* (meaning That Thou Art) declares some kind of identity between the Supreme Being (“*Tat*”) and *Jiva* (“*Tvam*”). *Sri Ramanuja* interprets that the relationship between *Ishvara* and Cosmos as a whole on the one hand and every *Jiva* on the other hand is explained by his body-soul (*Sarira-Sariri*) doctrine. The mighty *Ishvara* who is the in-dweller in the cosmic body is also in-dweller in every *Jiva*. “*Tat*” refers to *Ishvara* as the in-dweller of the Cosmic body, and “*Tvam*” refers to the same *Ishvara* as the in-dweller of the *Jiva*. Thus all bodies, Cosmic and Individual are held together in an indissoluble relationship (*Aprthak-siddhi*) in one and same *Ishvara*. As an example, waves which we see as distinct from water in the ocean as a whole cannot be separated from the ocean. It can have no existence separate from the ocean. Similarly, in the relation between *Ishvara* and the *Jiva-Jagat*, the distinction between them is eternal and in the nature of things.

As the *Jiva-Jagat* constitutes His body and are His *Prakaaraas* (modes) He can be called the material cause of the Universe (for, this Universe is completely moulded by His will). He is also the instrumental cause of the Universe (*Nimitta-Kaarana*) in its evolution and dissolution. The *Karmas* of the *Jivas* are what make them work in a particular way. But the sanctioning will of God is essential for the fulfilment of the *Karmas*.

Bhakti is generated by contemplation on the Divine mystery and majesty. His mystery consists in that He manifests this Universe of both living and non-living beings and also dwells in them as their Soul. At the same time, it is not He that is contained by them but it is He who contains them. He pervades everything without being affected or limited by them. His will is their support from without and His pervasion from within. And His majesty consists in being the All-creator. He is the only Being free from the hold of *Karma*. Also it is He who distributes and makes operative the *Karma* of all beings up to Brahma. At the end of the Cosmic cycle, the whole Universe dissolves into His *Prakrti* (Nature) and become latent in it. At the beginning of a new cycle it comes out of that nature. The Universe constitutes His body both in the latent and patent conditions. And He has absolute control over it. These activities do not bind Him in any way or at any stage.

His majesty is further declared by an enumeration of His *Vibhutis* (glorious manifestations) which cover all faculties and entities in the Universe. It is declared that He supports this entire Universe by a fragment of His Being. To those who are steadfast in their devotion to Him, He bestows that illumination of understanding by which they come to Him.

He is not only a God of mystery and majesty, but also a God of love to whom the devotees are very dear. To those who adore Him by an act of supreme

self-surrender, He is like a loving father forgiving all their short comings. He accepts all worship and grants their fruits. Even those who worship other deities, without knowing that *Narayana* is the Supreme Being, are, in fact, worshipping *Narayana* only. His worship is very simple. The sole requisite is devotion. Lord *Narayana* accepts with joy even a flower, leaf or water from a pure hearted devotee. He says “whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in sacrifice, whatever you give in charity, whatever austerity you perform- do that as an offering to Me”. This is real renunciation, *Sanyasa*, and one who does this is freed from the bonds of *Karma*. He will attain liberation and go to Him. His grace extends even to sinners and those considered unfit for emancipation. It is declared “Even a confirmed sinner, if he worships Me with unwavering faith and devotion, must indeed be considered righteous, for he has taken the right resolve. Soon he will become righteous and attain to lasting peace. No devotee of mine will ever perish”.

The Gita divides devotees into four classes. (a) *Aarta* (one seeking relief from misery). (b) *Jijnasu* (One in quest of Atman). (c) *Artharathi* (one seeking worldly objects) (d) *Jnani* (the knowing one. According to *Gita* all these devotees are generous (*Udarah*). But *Jnani* is considered by the Lord as His own *Atma* (self). *Jnani*, in fact, has no quest. He feels supreme satisfaction in the realisation of his servant ship (*Seshatva*) to God. Such a devotee is as dear to the Lord as a calf is to the mother cow. This conception of the *Jnani* emphasises the inseparable closeness to the Lord but not the oneness of the *Jiva* with the Lord. The Lord speaks of such devotees as His very self. Lord *Narayana* is the only means for attaining Him.

Arjuna becomes curious and wanted to experience the Supreme Divine. Lord *Krishna* grants him the special power to perceive the Cosmic form of the Lord. In that limitless form *Arjuna* sees the whole Universe with the infinite *Prakrti* and countless *Jivas*; he also sees *Devas*, *Asuras*, *Gandharvas* and many others; in addition he sees all that our ordinary understanding reveals as past, present and future; he also sees the battle of *Kurukshetra* which is yet to be fought and many warriors on both sides rushing headlong into His fearful mouth to meet with destruction. Lord *Krishna* explains that what *Arjuna* is seeing is His manifestation as Time, in which all beings are generated, sustained and consumed. *Arjuna* was made to understand that the fighting and destruction is being done by the Lord Himself and *Arjuna*'s involvement is only to be a semblance of His instrument in the task. The glory of the Cosmic form fills *Arjuna* with awe. He prays to Lord *Krishna* to appear as his usual gentle form. Sri *Krishna* resuming the gentle form informs *Arjuna* that the form he has witnessed is very difficult to behold and only those who take refuge in Him with unswerving devotion will be able to know this form in truth.

Chapter-12, which forms the conclusion of the 2nd Hexad begins by a query from *Arjuna* as to which of the two is a better knower of Yoga –

- (a) those who adore you in utter devotion considering you as he supreme end
- (b) those who meditate on the *Akshara* (the indestructible) and *Avyakta* (the Unclear). In *Advaitic* interpretation *Akshara* and *Avyakta* are interpreted as changeless and formless.

According to *Sri Ramanujacharya* these words describe *Jiva* in its pristine nature. The *Jiva* is further described as *Anirdesya* (not subject to verbal definition), *Sarvatraga* (pervading everywhere) and *Achintya* (not graspable by thought). The Lord gives a clear answer. (a) Both these aspirants ultimately reach the same goal. (b) For an embodied being (one with body consciousness) task of concentration on the real self and feeling that it is his real nature is very difficult (c) Resignation to the Lord is easier and is a direct path. In this case the Lord Himself becomes the redeemer. *Sri Ramanujacharya* clarifies that success in practices such as *Dhyana* (meditation or continuous one-pointed thought), *Jnana* (knowledge of the self) and *Abyasa* (repeated practice to remember the Lord) can be achieved only after the effects of sinful *Karmas* have been eliminated. This achievement is possible only through works done as offering to the Lord, without an eye on their fruits. Thus *Karma-phala-tyaga* is the genesis of all spiritual development. For one who has achieved this and having absolute faith and spirit of surrender to the Lord, the pure path of devotion is possible. Such a devotee is not required to follow *Jnana Yoga*. From the second Hexad we get two views of the Divine nature –

- a) Its transcendence (Paratva)
- b) Saulabhya (easy accessibility). How are they to be reconciled?

His Paratva comes out from such ideas as – not easily accessible to such divine beings as Lord Brahma and Lord Shiva; manifesting the whole Universe with a fragment of His Being and not affected by it at all; His being the will operating the whole Universe including periodic dissolution into its causal condition and bringing it back to a manifested state etc ; Side by side is depicted His Saulabhya (easy accessibility). Easy accessibility does not mean cheap accessibility. It means He reveals Himself easily to those who yearn for Him and have unswerving devotion to Him. Such a devotee is called a Jnani. Jnani depends on God like a calf does on its mother cow. His Saulabhya is also shown during His role as an incarnation. . For the world welfare He is born as a man while still retaining His divinity. *Sri Ramanujacharya* describes this as *Jagad-upakriti-maanusha*. His easy accessibility is given with an example. When a lame man wants to mount an elephant, the elephant bends its knees to enable the man mount it. The elephant has not lost its elephantine nature.

Essence of the Third Hexad

This Hexad covers chapters 13 to 18. In this Hexad a more detailed examination on *Atman*, *Prakrti* and the Supreme Being takes place. A more detailed examination on how the *Gunas* of *Prakrti* bind the *Atman* is presented. In the 13th chapter *Prakrti* is demonstrated as the object that is seen (*Kshetra* or the Field). The *Purusha* is demonstrated as the Seer (*Kshetrajna* or the Field-knower). From the 14th chapter to the 17th, the three *Gunas* - *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* and their functioning on all aspects of human life are elaborated. This explains on how *Prakrti* maintains a hold on the *Purusha*. Extreme dominance of *Tamas* generates a demonic nature which leads the soul to “Naraka”, whose three gates are described as – sexuality, anger and greed. The 15th chapter is called as *Purushottama Yoga* and is a very important chapter. It is clearly pointed out that there are three entities; (1) *Kshara* (the changeful body-entangled Jiva) (2) *Akshara* (the changeless *Atman*, also described as *Kutastha* (this refers to liberated *Jivas* taken as a whole and are of uniform nature of bliss-consciousness. They are unaffected by any change like the body-bound souls (*Ksharas*). (3) *Purushottama*- the Supreme Being who is above all spirits, both liberated and un-liberated (*Kshara* and *Akshara*). He pervades the three worlds and maintains them all by His will. Lord *Krishna* declares Himself to be that *Purushottama*, distinct and superior to both *Kshara* and *Akshara*.

In the 18th chapter it is maintained that *Sanyasa* (renunciation) and *Tyaga* (abandonment) are identical in their real meaning. Krishna gives His view that abandonment of fruits alone is valid. Yet holy acts like worship, charity, austerity and ordained duties should never be given up as they form the means for the purification of the aspirants mind. The four *Varnas* are explained as character types according to the dominance one or the other of the three *Gunas*. Duties in life allocated in scriptures to the different character types are meant for their higher evolution. They have to be discharged conscientiously as offering to God. By discharging one’s duties (*Svadharmas*) as worship to the Lord, man obtains greater spiritual competence.

The meditation process for attaining the *Brahman* to be followed by one who has attained this state of purification is next described. Once *Brahman* consciousness is attained, devotion of the highest order for the Supreme Person naturally flows from the consciousness of such a devotee. He will then realise who He is and how great He is. Through that Supreme Devotion he enters into Him. It is stressed that it is not knowledge but devotion born out of it is the cause for *Mukti*. In the succeeding verses, *Gita* ascends to a crescendo of its teaching. In chapter 18, Verse 66 we come across the well known *Charama Sloka*, quoted below –

***Sarvadharmaan parityajya maam ekam saranam vraja |
Aham thvaa sarva paapebhyo Moksha yishyaami maa sucha: ||***

“Completely relinquishing all *Dharmas*, seek Me alone for refuge, I will relieve you from all sins. Grieve not.” Some clarification is essential here. Relinquishment here does not mean giving up of all devotional duties. In this instance, relinquishing all *Dharmas* means the complete relinquishment of the sense of agency, possessiveness, fruits in the practice of *Karma*, *Jnana* and *Bhakti Yogas*. It is in realising the Lord as the agent, object of worship, the means and end in the pursuit of *Moksha*.

Bhakti and Prapatti

In his *Gita Bhashya*, *Sri Ramanujacharya* does not clearly state his views on the *Prapatti marga*. However, his views come out clearly in his *Gadya Traya*. *Bhakti* refers to practising love of God, taking in various positive aids in such practice, with the idea that if we take those aids as the means, we can thereby attain Him. *Prapatti* means the acceptance of one’s utter helplessness to be redeemed by any means that one could adopt, and resigning to the Lord both as the means and end. In the *Vaishnava* tradition these two are illustrated by what are called *Markata Kishora Nyaya* and *Maarjala Kishora Nyaya*. In the *Markata Kishora Nyaya* a baby monkey holds on tightly to its mother while being transported from place to place. Its safety depends on how tightly it is holding on to the mother. In the case of *Maarjala Kishora Nyaya* the mother cat carries the baby without any effort from the baby. The case of *Prapatti marga* is similar to the *Maarjala Kishora Nyaya*. The devotee’s absolute resignation to the Lord makes the Lord both the means and end.

Other than this, there are other distinctions, in terms of form and requirements, between the *Bhakti marga* and the *Prapatti marga*. The *Bhakti marga* described by *Sri Ramanujacharya* is open only to those who are eligible for the Upanishadic way of *Upasana*. Performance of ritualistic works prescribed for the twice-born classes along with *Jnana Yoga* (meditation on the difference between *Atman* and body-mind) is essential. Only when this *Jnana Yoga* is practiced will the *Karma Yoga* be really detached. Both these disciplines require the study of *Vedas* and *Upanishads*. Study of *Vedas* and *Upanishads* is open only to the twice born. This would mean the practice of these two disciplines is restricted to the twice born classes. *Bhakti* is the end product of the practice of *Jnana* and *Karma Yogas*. From this it is seen that the competence of the *Bhakti Yoga* is restricted to a small section of the people.

Does that mean there is no way for the liberation for the vast majority of people? Yes there is. It consists in *Prapatti*, the absolute surrender to the Lord that we talked about. This *marga* requires no *Vedic* studies, rituals or *Upanishadic* meditation. Absolute faith and trust in God is adequate. Thus the Lord is made both as the means and the end. *Gita* has many passages which yield this meaning. Refer to chapter 32, verse 9. Lord Krishna says “By taking

refuge in Me even men of evil birth, women, *Vaisyas* and also *Sudras* attain the Supreme state". The classes referred to are not eligible for *Vedic Upasanas* and for that reason excluded from *Bhakti marga*.

If these verses are taken together it will be evident that *Gita* does not insist for redemption on *Vedic Upasana* or ritualism. *Sharanagati* to the Lord alone is adequate.

Other Geetas

There are a number of other Gitas

“Gita means a song. There are several other Gitas in Hindu Scriptures in addition to the Bhagavad Gita. However, Bhagavad Gita is the most popular and well known one

Following are some –

(1) Anu gita	(11) Gopika gita (Bhagavatam)	(26) Sriti gita (Bhagavatam)
(2) Ashtavakra gita(teaches sanyasa)	(12) Guru gita	(27) Surya gita (teaches visista advaita)
(3) Avadhoota gita (teaches sanyasa)	(13) Hamsa gita	(28) Suta gita (skandha purana)
(4) Bhikshu gita	(14) Hanumad gita	(29) Uddhava gita
(5) Bhramara gita (Bhagavatam)	(15) Harita gita	(30) Uttara gita(teaches sanyasa)
(6) Bodhya gita	(16) Iswara gita (Kurma purana)	(31) Vasishta gita
(7) Brahma gita I (skandha purana)	(17) Kapila gita(reg Hatha yoga)	(32) Vibhishana gita
(8) Brahma gita II(Yoga vasishta)	(18) Manki gita	(33) Vicakhyu gita
(9) Devi gita	(19) Parashara gita	(34) Vritra gita
(10) Ganesha gita (Ganesha purana)	(20) Pingala gita	(35) Vyasa gita (Kurma purana)
(11) Gopika gita (Bhagavatam)	(21) Rama gita (adhyatma Ramayana)	(36) Yama gita (Nrsimha purana)
(12) Guru gita	(22) Ribhu gita	(37) Yama gita (Agni purana)
(13) Hamsa gita	(23) Rudra gita	(38) Yama gita (Vishnu purana)
	(24) Sampaka gita	
	(25) Siva gita	

Yoga Vasishta

Yoga Vasishta is one of the revered spiritual texts like the *Bhagavad Gita*. It was written by the celebrated Maharshi Valmiki. It is one of the longest texts

in Sanskrit after the Mahabharata. It consists of 32,000 shlokas including numerous short stories and anecdotes to illustrate its contents.

Prince *Rama* returns from touring the country. He returns in an utterly disillusioned mood. King *Dasaratha* expresses concern to *Brahmarishi Vasishtha*. The sage begins his discourse to *Rama*. This discourse comes out as *Yoga Vasishtha*. *Yoga Vasishtha* is divided into six parts –

1. Dis-passion
2. Qualification of the seeker
3. Creation
4. Existence
5. Dissolution and
6. Liberation.

Brahmarishi Vasishtha is one of the *Saptarishis*. He is the *Manasa putra* of God *Brahma*. *Arundhathi* is the wife of the sage. Apart from the monumental *Yoga Vasishtha*, he has written another treatise on astrology by the name “*Vasishtha Samhita*”.

Brahmarishi had an ashram in Ayodhya spread over 40 acres. Today all that remains is a small *ashram* in about one fourth of an acre. The ashram has within it a well that is believed to be source of river *Sarayu*. Many spiritual minded people visit this ashram and find enormous spiritual energy around this well.

Chapter VII - Miscellaneous

Does God exist?

Most of the people worship God, and nearly all of us do pray to Him at some point in life or other. The Hindu system does not insist that we should pray a certain number of times per day or month. Nor does it insist that we should go to the temple a certain number of times. In fact, it does recognize that we are involved in *Samsara* and this calls for our active involvement in duties other than praying.

Keeping this in mind, as Hindus, we can offer our prayer in simple words or in more elaborate ritualistic manner. We can offer our prayers from home as well. Prayer can be offered in any one of the three different forms – (a) *Kaayika* (physical) (b) *Vachika* (oral) (c) *Maanasa* (mental).

According to the *Bhagavata Purana*, the practice of devotion could take nine different forms. They are – (1) Hearing about God (*Kaayika*) (2) Singing about His greatness (*Vachika*) (3) Remembering Him (*Maanasa*) (4) Serving Him through the service of all beings as His embodiments (*Kaayika, Vachika, Maanasa*) (5) Worshipping Him in Holy images (*Kaayika, Vachika*), (6) Paying obeisance to Him (*Kaayika, Vachika, Maanasa*) (7) Practicing the attitude of a servant towards Him (*Kaayika, Vachika, Maanasa*) (8) Cultivating loving intimacy with Him (*Maanasa*) (8) Surrendering one's, body, mind and soul to Him (*Kaayika, Vachika, Maanasa*).

Yet, with all this, under severe stress, with nowhere to go, and in sheer desperation we get a fundamental doubt – *Does God exist?* Does He exist at all anywhere or are we accepting this blindly? We feel guilty when this thought arises. But there are a number of others - atheists, agnostics and others who will raise this question anyway.

This is not a question that has been raised just today. It has been raised by a number of people at different times. You just have to read the *Puranas*. Also, this is not a problem faced by the Hindu religion only. Other religions have also been facing this question. A number of books have, in fact, been written on this subject. The matter has now been thoroughly complicated and confused. At times, one wonders, whether the question is being raised purely with a spirit of enquiry.

Vedas are the Holy Scriptures and authoritative texts for the Hindu religion. How does our traditional Vedic system approach this question?

Before trying to answer, one has to understand what the definition or *Lakshana* of God is. Never give a proof or evidence of existence or otherwise

before clearly defining what you are after. What do you mean by the word God? After knowing exactly what we are looking for, we will be in a better position to answer the question. If not, it will lead to a greater confusion. Each one of us have our own concept of God and to answer the question we have to know what the concept of God is.

Vedas have a very clear definition of God and there is no ambiguity there. The *Lakshanas* of God is – *Chaitanya Swaroopa; Jnaana Swaroopa; Prajnaana Swaroopa; Vignaana Swaroopa; Chidroopa.*

Chaitanya, in English, is referred to as Consciousness. And what is Consciousness? This is also defined in our scriptures. Consciousness is that principle because of which we are aware of everything around us. That Consciousness is God. It is awareness. So the question of “Does God exist” may now be rephrased as “Does Consciousness exist?” All our experiences in this world are due to our consciousness. In other words, the world of experience of ours is the result of our consciousness. Every experience of life or every activity of life is possible because we are endowed with consciousness.

Lord Krishna in Bhagavad Gita says

***Utkraamantam sthitam vaa api bhunjanam vaa gunanvitam
vimudhaa na anupashyanti pashyaanti Jnaana cakshusah (15-10)***

Meaning –

“The deluded are those who misconceive the body as the *Atman*. They are incapable of discriminating between the two. They can not see the Atman either while it is residing in the body or when it is leaving it. However, those who possess the eye of knowledge perceive the self as being different in all conditions”.

If consciousness refers to awareness, then the question of “Does consciousness exist?” may be rephrased as “Are you aware of everything around you?”. Is there anyone in this room who is not aware of things around him? We are all conscious beings and are aware of everything around us. So the existence of God is proven. We are in the proximity of God all the time.

The next question that might arise is - what is the nature of this consciousness? What is His *Swaroopa*? Science has not been able to come up with an answer. It is not a material, physical, chemical or a biological principle. Nor is it a neurological principle. Science does not have an answer to the question of – what is the nature of consciousness. However, our scriptures have an answer.

Lord *Krishna* says –

***Yasmaat ksaram ateeto ham aksaraad api chottamah
ato' smi loke vede cha prathitah purushottamah(15-18)***

Meaning-

As I transcend the perishable and am also superior to the imperishable. I am well known as the *Purushottama* (the Supreme Being) in both Vedic and secular literature.

In *Kathopanishad*, one of the major *Upanishads*, we find *Yamadharma* enlightening his pupil, *Nachiketa*, on the nature of God. He says –

“He, who has known, that (i.e. *Atman*) which is without sound (*Asabdham*), without touch (*Asparsam*), without form (*Aroopam*), without taste (*Arasam*), eternal and without smell (*Agandhavaat*), without beginning or end, beyond the great (*Mahat*) and unchanging, is freed from the jaws of death” Chapter 1, *Valli* 3, 15

Yamadharma further proceeds to describe *Brahman* to his student as follows –

***Yena roopam rasam gandham shabdaan sparscha maithunaan
Yete naiva vijanaati kimatra parishishyate yetuth vai thatu -***

Chapter 2, *Valli* 1, 3

“The Brahman is at the back of all sense perceptions (form, taste, smell, sound, touch and sexual pleasure) mind and intellect.”

The God or consciousness is a non- material and non-energy principle. This non- material principle is beyond all the laws that govern the matter. In addition, all the objects in this world, big and small, living or non-living, are governed by “Time and Space”. But this *Chaitanya*, which is God, is not governed even by Time or Space. Therefore the scriptures use the word *Ananta Chaitanya* with reference God. Hence, in answer to the question on the form of God, it is said *Ananta Asanga Chaitanya Swaroopa*”

This *Asanga, Ananta Chaitanya* which is a non material principle and which is in every one of us is God. This visible body of ours, including all its internal parts like hands, legs, brain etc are all activated by the invisible *Chaitanya*, which is God.

How old are the Vedas?

Indus Valley Civilization, Aryan Invasion of India and other stories

Introduction

The Vedic culture has been pervading the Indian subcontinent for thousands of years. The antiquity and continuity of this culture can be seen from the

recordings in the oldest annals of mankind – the Vedas. One naturally wonders – how old are the Vedas? The study of history is important. The antiquity of a culture's history and the achievements of its people provide the nation with an identity and a sense of self esteem.

While the chronological establishment of Indian history is important, political considerations in India took precedence when its rulers discovered that carefully implanted distortions would serve them well in subjugating the proud Indian race. Western indologists misrepresented the historical data available and put forth theories based merely on speculation and pre-conceived beliefs. This served a social and political purpose of domination, proving the superiority of western culture and religion. At the same time, the Hindus were made to feel that their culture is not the great thing their ancestors had said it was. In fact, some of the Indians felt ashamed of their culture, that its basis is neither historical nor scientific. As a result, they started believing that the main line of civilization was first developed in the Middle East, and then in Europe. The thought has grown that the Indian culture is peripheral and secondary to that developed elsewhere. Western Vedic scholars participated in the carefully orchestrated strategy of discredit, divide and conquer the Hindus.

As a result, the compelling reasons for the Aryan Invasion theory were neither literary nor archeological but political and religious. This is all history. More relevant is what the Hindu scholars and Archeologists are doing about it. If they accept the misrepresentations of their own culture silently and passively, the state of affairs will continue and they will have no one to blame except themselves. One has to feel that misrepresentations of their culture are not a matter to be taken lightly. A number of Hindus read and accept whatever that was written by the scholars like Max Muller, Monier Williams and others. It is about time that Hindu scholars carefully study the information and evidence available and try to establish the dating of the Vedas.

Background

According to currently established chronology, it all started with the invasion of a so called *Aryan Race* around 1500 B.C. The invaders, described to be light skinned tribes from central Asia, ruthlessly and forcefully subdued the original inhabitants, dark skinned Dravidian of the land. They proceeded to impose on the locals an alien language and culture. The invading hordes settled down on the banks of river *Sindhu* (Indus) and within few centuries (1200 B.C) compiled the *Vedas*. Subsequently the *Brahmanas*, *Samhitas*, *Puranas* and numerous other scriptures were composed. The inference is that the text of the *Rig Veda* was composed by them during the early stages of their presence in India, when they were still busy invading, conquering and establishing settlements all over the Punjab and the northwest, later to spread out all over northern India. .Where does the Ramayana and the *Mahabharata*

fit in? A probable date of 1000B.C to 300 B.C was allocated. This so called pre-Aryan civilization is said to be evidenced by the large urban ruins of what has since been called as “Indus Valley Civilization” The ruins of this early Indus Valley Civilization dated 3000 BCE are at *Harappa* and *Mohenjodaro*. A British archaeologist Wheeler was supposed to have been the first who forwarded the Aryan Invasion theory. Suggestions then existed which indicated that the Vedas were indeed composed by tribes, the so called Aryans, outside of India!! They then brought the Vedas to India.

Invasion Theory

The date of invasion is quoted as 1500 B.C. How was this date arrived at? Well known scholars of the nineteenth century believed in Biblical chronology. According to this the date of creation of Earth is widely supported as 4000 B.C. The flood was dated around 2500 BC. Keeping these two dates the date for the Aryan Invasion was speculated at 1500 BC. Since the Indus valley culture was earlier than this, they concluded that it had to pre-Aryan. Western Indologists also made questionable interpretation of the *Rig Veda*, ignoring the sophisticated culture presented within it. In the end, the Vedic culture was said to be that of the primitive nomads who came out of central Asia. The hypothesis of an Aryan invasion was based the conflicts between the light skinned Aryans and the dark race of “*Dasyus*” described in the Vedic literature. This aspect is said to have been reinforced by the skeletal findings in the excavated sites in the Indus valley. Let us now examine how the facts line up.

Facts vs Speculations

Literary Evidence

For the Indo-Aryan invasion of India no direct evidence is available. Indian Vedic scholars like *Sri Dayanand Saraswati* and *Sri Bala Gangadhar Tilak* rejected the Aryan Invasion theory based on literary analysis. If the invasion theory is correct, then it would call for concrete evidence regarding

- a) Foreign lands
- b) Migration from foreign lands to India
- c) References to non-Aryan aboriginal inhabitants
- d) References to conflicts between the so called Aryan invaders and the non-Aryan aboriginals

A thorough examination by scholars like *Shrikant G. Talageri* revealed that the *Rig Veda* itself does not contain one single reference which provides the actual evidence in respect of any of the four points mentioned above. All conclusions have been arrived at based on inferential speculation. Not a

single reference suggesting that an invasion occurred appears in the 10552 verses of the Rig Veda. Also the Rig Veda does not contain any reference to any foreign place west of Afghanistan from where these invaders were supposed to have come. Once again the Rig Veda contains no reference to people speaking non-Indo-European languages – which is what non-Aryan basically means.

Ambedkar arrives at the following conclusions,

- 1) The Vedas do not know of any such race as the Aryan race.
- 2) There is no evidence in the Vedas of any invasion of India by the Aryan race and its having conquered the *Dasas and Dasyus* supposed to be the natives of India.
- 3) There is no evidence to show that the distinction between *Aryans, Dasas and Dasyus* was a racial distinction.
- 4) The Vedas do not support the contention that the Aryans were different in color from the *Dasas and Dasyus*.

Scientific Verification

A number of statements and materials presented in ancient Vedic literature can be shown to agree with modern scientific findings. A number of archaeological findings and their analysis have brought the Aryan invasion theory in serious doubt. In fact the Aryan invasion theory, as it is presented, raises a paradox. On the one hand we have a vast Vedic literature without any archaeological findings associated with them. And on the other hand we have 2500 archaeological sites from Indus- Sarasvata civilization without any literature associated with them. As evidence started pouring in, it became more evident that the two cultures (that of the invader and the invaded) are one and the same. The paradox, then, ceases to exist.

Sarasvati Factor

The largest concentration of Vedic culture appears in an area of Punjab and Rajasthan near the dry banks of ancient Saraswati and Drishadvati rivers. The Vedic culture was said to have been founded between the banks of these two rivers. The mighty river Saraswati was lauded as the main river in the Vedas. Vedic people were fully acquainted with this river and revered it. It was one of the largest rivers then. However, the river Saraswati dried up. When did it dry up? Several independent studies indicate the period to be 1900 B.C.E. What sort of studies was conducted? Using modern scientific methods, such as satellite imagery and dating techniques, it can be shown that the ancient statements of the Vedas are factual, not mythical as erroneously propagated. High resolution satellite images have verified descriptions in The Rig Veda of the descent of the ancient Saraswati River from its source in the Himalayas to the Arabian Sea. The Saraswati River and its civilization are referred to in the

Rig Veda more than fifty times, proving that the drying up of the Saraswati River was subsequent to the origin of the Rig Veda, pushing this date of origin back into antiquity, casting further doubt on the imaginary date for the so-called Aryan Invasion. The significance of this date is that the composition of the Rig Veda must be well before that.

Evidence of port city Dwaraka

Marine archeology has been utilized off the coast of Gujarat to discover the ancient port city of Dwaraka. Marine archaeological findings seem to corroborate descriptions in the Mahabharata of Dwaraka as a large, well-fortified and prosperous port city, which was built on land reclaimed from the sea, and later taken back by the sea.

Apart from Dwaraka, more than thirty-five sites in North India have yielded archaeological evidence and have been identified as ancient cities described in the Mahabharata. Similarly, in Kurukshetra, the scene of the great Mahabharata war, Iron arrows and spearheads have been excavated and dated by thermoluminescence to 2,800 B.C.E., the approximate date of the war given within the Mahabharata itself.

Astronomical Dating of Vedas

Examination of the Rig Veda, *Puraanas* provide dates of events that took place thousands of years back. Since these dates contradicted the prevalent views of European historians, the Sanskrit texts were academically attacked with a view to disprove the authenticity of the contents. Max Muller, tried to interpret the astronomical evidences as imaginary, "pious frauds" created by cunning *Brahmanas*. Numerous references were considered as unauthentic and unreliable.

Let us examine how this dating is done.

There are 4 Special days in a Tropical Year

- (a) Winter Solstice (Starting of *Uttarayan*);
- (b) Spring Equinox (*Ugadi*);
- (c) Summer Solstice (Starting of *Dakshinayanam*);
- (d) Autumn Equinox.

The Earth takes 365.25 days to cover one full orbit around the Sun. And that is 360 degrees. In one day the Earth covers 0.9856 degrees. This is referred to as the **tropical Year**.

A **sidereal year** is the time taken by the Earth to orbit the Sun once with respect to the fixed stars.. Hence it is also the time taken for the Sun to return

to the same position with respect to the fixed stars after apparently traveling once around the elliptic. It was equal to 365.256363004 days at noon 1 January 2000. One sidereal year is roughly equal to $1 + 1/26000$ or 1.0000385 tropical years.

The difference is caused by the precession of the equinoxes (meaning that the Earth wobbles on its axis). The effect of this is- that roughly for every 60 tropical years we will fall short of the sidereal year by 1 degree. More exactly for every 71.6 years we are short of the sidereal year by one degree. In India we follow a 60 year cycle and each year has a name (*Prabhava to Akshaya*). So, once in every $(71.6 * 360)$, which equals 25,776 tropical years we are short by 360 degrees or one full cycle. In addition the Sun takes 960 years (say 1000 years) to step through a *Nakshatra*. In very rough terms, an equinox or solstice will occur at immediately the previous *Nakshatra* in about 1000 years later. And we have 27 *Nakshatras* in the Hindu calendar.

As an example (Ref "Dating of Ramayana and Vedas by Dr. P.V. Vartak"). , in the year 1998 A.D the Sun at the summer Solstice (21st June) is in *Aardra*. During the time of Ramayana, it was in *Swaati*. The precession has an anti-clockwise direction. So we have to count in reverse direction from mid *Swaati* 195" to *Aardra* 65.5". It comes to 129.5". Taking the rate of precession at 71.6 years per degree we have $(129.5 * 71.6) = 9272.2$ or 9272 years. Subtracting 1998, we get 7274 B.C years as the date of *Ramayana*.

A number of modern day scholars have done work on astronomical dating of *Puranas* and *Vedas*. Dr. P.V. Vartak has written an excellent book titled "Scientific Dating of Ramayana and Vedas". It is recommended for reading.

In conclusion, it has been believed that there is no evidence to determine the dates of events in the Vedic / Ramayanic era. Some historians of the past even refuse to acknowledge that Rama and other characters from the Ramayana even existed. However, more evidence is coming to light to indicate dates for various events and for the Vedas as well. To decipher the astronomical encoding has not been a trivial task, and not many have attempted to do so. It should be noted that the ancient Indians had a perfect method of time measurement.

Dates in Ramayana as Calculated by Dr. P.V. Vartak

Incident	Date	Hindu Calender
Rama's Birth	Tuesday, 4 th Dec 7323 B.C	Uttaraashadha Chaitra Suddha 9 th Punarvasu
Bharata's Birth	Wednesday, 5 th Dec 7323 B.C	Chaitra Suddha 10 th Pushya
Lakshmana & Shatrugna's Birth	Thursday, 6 th Dec 7323 B.C	Chaitra Suddha 11 th Aslesha
Marriages	Friday, 7 th April 7307 B.C	Bhaadradpada Suddha 3, U. Phalguni
Exile to Forest	Thursday, 29 th Nov 7306 B.C	Chaitra Suddha 9 th , Pushya
Dasharatha dies	Wednesday, 5 th Dec 7306 B.C	Chaitra Pournami
Ravana's death	Sunday, 15 th 7292 B.C	Phalguni, Amavasya
Rama's return to Bharadwaja's Ashram	Saturday, 5 th Dec 7292 B.C	Chaitra Vadya, 5th
Rama's entry in Ayodhya	Sunday, 6 th Dec 7292 B.C	Chaitra Vadya, 6th

Veda / Upanishad	Approx Date
Rig Veda	23920 B.C
Taittiriya Braahmana	8000 B.C to 4650 B.C
Mahabharata	5480 B.C
Prasnopnishad	5761 B.C
Isopanishad	5480 B.C
Vishnu Purana	1906 B.C
Maitraayaniya Upanishad	1909 B.C
Kausitaki Brahmana	2320 B.C
Susruta Samhita	1710 B.C
Matsya Purana	2000 to 1600 B.C
Chankya lived	370 B.C and 283 B.C
Kalidasa lived	About 500 CE
Varaha Mihira lived	About 520 A.D

Shraddha

What is Shraddha ?

It is a very subtle qualification and is often misunderstood; it is commonly translated as Faith or belief. This translation has created a lot of confusion and problems. In the modern concept Faith is invariably associated with superstition – blind belief, without any enquiry. It has become a demarcatory word between religion and science. Faith is generally associated with religion and is regarded as a “friend” of religion. Faith is regarded as an enemy of science – because you believe it without conducting any enquiry. In this

situation where Religion considers Faith as a friend & Science considers Faith as an enemy. So we are landed with a view that Religion and Science are enemies!!

The scientists say that in Faith you accept things. This means you accept things without enquiry. Where ever there is faith, there is no enquiry -there is no questioning. However, science is based on questioning or enquiry. In other words, Science depends on enquiry for progress. When enquiry stops - progress of science also stops. Since the view of science is that Faith accepts things without questioning, it is stopping the progress of science. So wherever there is faith, science is not possible. When there is no science there is no progress. On this basis it is viewed that Faith belongs to the stone ages & Science belongs to the age of enlightenment. Many people are afraid now to say that they are religious – because they fear they may be considered as belonging to the dark ages. At the same time they want to pose as scientists, as rationalists; pose that they do not take anything lying down but have spirit of enquiry, have a spirit of questioning. So people want to avoid the word Shraddha & keep away from it.

Is that the truth? We will now examine.

First, the traditional word Shraddha cannot be translated as faith at all. There is no English equivalent for Shraddha at all. Let us look at it in another way. What actually does the word Shraddha refer to? Shraddha refers to a unique form of knowledge which is arrived at after a very subtle form of enquiry. What is the subtle form then? It is a form of enquiry which is rarely, if at all, employed these days. And this subtle form of enquiry is not just today's evolution. Our sages have been using this form of enquiry for 1000s of years. This form of enquiry was being used by them to gain special knowledge of important things.

What is that enquiry? It asks the most fundamental question? And what is that question? The question is, let us say –“Is there a world existing in front of you?”. Yes, that is the question. If I say that it is existing –then a next question comes up. And that is “how do I know it is a fact and not a fiction? Have you seen anyone conducting this type of enquiry? Most people do not make this enquiry? Even modern scientists do not make this enquiry but take it for granted or accept it. In such a case, our seers would call these modern people as superstitious.

Our seers have raised this question and arrived at a very important knowledge. They accept that the world exists and they also accept that the world is a fact because it is revealed by our sense organs. The world revealed by the sense organs is taken as a fact, because we consider the sense organs as valid sources of knowledge. Then another question comes up –

how do you know that the sense organs are valid sources of knowledge? Sense organs are valid sources of knowledge because they are the primary sources of knowledge. The next question then is -why do we say primary sources of knowledge are valid. The answer is – validity or correctness is inbuilt in every primary source of knowledge. Therefore, validity or trustworthiness is the intrinsic nature of every primary source of knowledge. As you notice, we have arrived at this answer by a series of queries or questions. Validity is inbuilt in every primary source of knowledge.

In Sanskrit, validity inbuilt is called “**Swatah pramaanya**”.

This understanding or knowledge you arrive at is then called “*Swatah pramaanya jnanam*”. This understanding “*Swatah pramaanya jnanam*” is called Shraddha. So Shraddha has nothing to do with superstition at all. We have 5 sense organs or primary sources of knowledge. Each one is independent. The primary source of knowledge in our tradition is called “*Upa Jeevya Pramanam*”. Jnanam of swatah pramaanya of an upajeevya pramanam is called Shraddha. Whatever is revealed by a sense organ is an ultimate fact. Science also says this. We are not questioning an existing world because it is an “*Upa Jeevya Pramanam*”. So Shraddha is not superstition, it is not belief, it is not against enquiry; it is a knowledge borne out of a deep & fundamental enquiry. Then how can Shraddha be an enemy of enquiry? In fact, it promotes enquiry. In our tradition, we have thousands and thousands of books of enquiry – Siddhi grandhas, Vichara grandhas. In fact, all our tradition is based on dialogue- not monologue. It is not as if – I say so and you better listen. The teacher promotes enquiry. The person who does not have Shraddha has not made a fundamental enquiry and has taken things for granted & and such a person is superstitious. It is a knowledge that is essential before you start studying the scriptures.

We have 5 Primary sense organs and every sense organ reveals a unique fact. We then have 5 primary sources of knowledge. The knowledge revealed by each sense organ is valid by itself. No other source is required for validation. The ears have no right to challenge the knowledge revealed by eyes. We do not say “I believe” the ship is green. We just say ‘ship is green’.

If you are interested we can offer one more primary source of knowledge – *Upajeevya pramaanya*. Take it only if you are prepared to use it as a primary source of knowledge. If you do so, it will expand your field of knowledge. And that is the Vedas. They are a blessing given to us by our seers. Use it as the sixth primary source of knowledge. Veda is an *Upajeevya pramanam*.

One primary source of knowledge will not obstruct a second one. It will not hurt the knowledge gained through the others. Every primary source of

knowledge will expand your horizon of understanding – provided you treat it as a primary source of knowledge. If you have Shraddha, we are prepared to offer Veda as a primary source of knowledge. Our scriptures refer to Veda as *Pratyaksha* – to indicate that Veda is a Primary sense organ. Vedas as you all know are called Shrutis – revealed to our ancient highly respected seers. These seers are a few and selected ones and do not suffer from any physical disability. They are also totally unbiased. So we can rely on what they communicated to us. This method is used even today– though in a different field – in legal cases. We take the words of the witnesses as true. The opposition tries to make the witness look unreliable. The accused is also put to death on the basis of witness produced. If someone says he does not want to use the Vedas as the primary source of knowledge his horizon is limited. The choice is his. This does not mean that we disrespect or disregard other religions. Mahatma Gandhi said it best –

"The truest test of civilisation, culture and dignity is character and not clothing. My religion forbids me to belittle or disregard other cultures, as it insists under pain of civil suicide upon imbibing and living my own." – Mahatma Gandhi

Mantras

Planet earth where we all live is a wonderful place. Apart from being the abode for millions of living beings, it is also a storehouse for a whole lot of energy sources. No one can say for certainty that we know each and every one of the energy sources.

Human beings have been trying for many years to gain control of the energy sources and then put them to use. Work done towards this is in the realm of scientists and engineers. Some are put for good causes and some others for disastrous causes.

Much before the modern day scientists appeared on the scene, the *Rishis* from India have also been trying to find ways and means to identify, access, and put to use energies or *Shaktis* available in abundance in the Universe. For this reason they could be referred to as seer scientists. There is one basic difference though. Whereas the modern day scientists relied on machines and computers for their research work, the tools the seer scientists employed to gain control have been vastly different. Spiritual powers and *Mantra Shakti* were predominantly the tools they used.

This difference in approach directly results in differences in their outcome. The work of the modern day scientist, being the result of human endeavor can not escape attendant shortcomings such as inadequate design, bugs etc. Resulting failures may lead to disastrous consequences. On the other hand, the work done by the *Rishis* is carried out at the super-physical levels. One

should not imagine that work done at super-physical levels is haphazard and unpredictable. Law reigns supreme in every sphere - physical or super-physical. So the work done by the Rishis conforms to and is governed by the laws of nature. One good thing about the laws of nature is that all processes eventually revert to equilibrium or a stable position. And this safeguard always ensures that things do not get out of control. Otherwise the Universe would not have survived for so many years.

While trying to understand the work done thousands of years back by the *Rishis*, we will first deal with *Shaktis* in general and then follow it up with the means used to access them.

At the start of creation when manifestation took place, the primary differentiation is into Consciousness and Power (*Shakti*). This *Shakti*, in turn, differentiates further into innumerable powers corresponding to the multifarious functions which have to be performed in a manifested universe. Each power or *Shakti* is matched by a corresponding function of consciousness. These *Shaktis* and associated consciousnesses are the *Devis* and *Devatas* of Hinduism. Each function and power is given a particular name and form. On further investigation the seer scientists found out that each *Devata* is the presiding deity for a particular combination of sounds. This combination of sounds is called a *mantra*. For each *Devata* there is a specific *mantra*. When *mantra Shakti* is awakened by *Sadhana*, the presiding *Devata* responds.

Now what is a mantra and how are they constructed and who is eligible to construct them?

Mantra is composed of certain letters arranged in a definite sequence of sound of which the letters are the representative signs. *Mantra* must be intoned in the proper way according to *Svara* (rhythm) and *Varna* (sound). *Bija-Akshara* is a seed letter. It is a very powerful mantra. All *Devatas* have their own *Bija-Akshara*. Generally, the *Bija-Mantra* consists of a single letter. Sometimes it constitutes of several syllables. Though the *Bija-Mantras* have a significant inner meaning, they may not convey any on their face. The form of the *Bija-Mantra* is the form of the *Devata* signified by it. Examples of some *Bija-Mantras* are given below.

Five *Mahabhutas* (Ether, Air, Fire, Water and Earth) *Ham, Yam, Ram, Vam, Lam*

<i>Parabrahman</i>	<i>Aum</i>
<i>Shiva</i>	<i>Haum</i>
<i>Mahalakshmi</i>	<i>Shreem</i>
<i>Saraswati</i>	<i>Aim</i>
<i>Ganesh</i>	<i>Gam</i>

The basic principle underlying a *mantra* is that this Universe of ours is made up of different kinds of vibrations and energies working at different planes. We are familiar with the vibrations and energies that we experience in our every day lives at the physical plane – for example light, sound. However, the ancient *Rishis* have identified presence of vibrations and energies at the super-physical levels. They have also discovered that thoughts, emotions and even subtler worlds (*sookshma lokas*), to which reference is made frequently in our religious literature, are based on vibrations and energy plays. Further investigation by the *Rishis* revealed that not only all manifested worlds are based on various kinds of vibrations and energies but all these vibrations, in turn, are connected with one another and can be traced to one fundamental all embracing vibration. This primary vibration is the source of all other vibrations and is called “*Naada*”. The Ultimate Reality which is responsible for *Naada* is referred to as *Shabda Brahman*.

Another fact that has to be understood in the theory of *mantra yoga* is the existence of a relationship between vibrations, forms and consciousness.

Sounds are vibrations. Vibrations give rise to definite forms. Combination of sounds creates complicated forms. When a tuning fork is kept in touch with a metal plate carrying sand particles, the particles arrange themselves in a particular form. The form is unique to the frequency of the tuning fork. This is an experiment most of us might have conducted at schools. More elaborate experiments have been conducted by scientists to study the relationships between sound and forms. The conclusions are – (1) Sounds produce shapes (2) Particular notes give rise to particular forms (3) If you desire to produce a particular form then you must produce a note of definite frequency.

A particular vibration will keep elements of a form together and the form will fall apart when the vibration ceases. These vibrations need not necessarily take place in the physical plane – but they may take place on different planes depending on the nature of the form and the life acting as the soul for it. The repetition of *Panchakshara* mantra produces the form of Lord Shiva. The repetition of *Ashtakshara* mantra produces the form of Lord *Narayana*. The repeated repetition of the mantra produces in the mind, the form of the *Devata* connected with the *mantra*. And this form in turn becomes the center of our consciousness.

If vibration is related to both form and consciousness then we can use vibration to do two things – (a) use vibrations to produce different kinds of natural phenomena (b) bring about changes in consciousness.

Tantric literature gives a number of *mantras* which can be used to bring about some specific desired results. It just utilizes powers hidden in certain combination of sounds to yield the desired results. *Mantra Yoga*, on the other

hand, utilizes powers hidden in certain combination of sounds for the unfolding human consciousness. *Japa*, which refers to physical or mental repetition of mantras produces vibrations in different planes and enables the *Saadhaka* to reach deeper layers of consciousness.

How are *mantras* constructed? *Mantra* is essentially a combination of sounds. Sounds can be represented by the alphabets of a language. Hence *mantras* are constructed by arranging the letters of the alphabet in certain combinations with necessary directions for their exact and correct pronunciation. Obviously, this can only be done by a person who knows the subtler properties of the different sounds. No one can predict the effect produced by a certain combination of sounds without a thorough investigation and experimentation. These experiments have to be performed both on the physical and super physical planes. It is then obvious that only great Rishis who know the effects produced by sounds and their combinations are qualified to construct *mantras* and pass them on to the *Saadhakas* for their *Japa*. The particular *Rishi* who has discovered or constructed the mantra after the necessary investigation is called the *Rishi* of that particular mantra. Naturally, the power of the *mantra* is dependent on the potency of the sound combinations used and the investigations on its pronunciation and effects carried out by the *Rishi*.

Japa is nothing but the repetition of a *mantra*. The verbal repetition is called *Vaikhari Japa*. Repetition in a whisper is called *Upamsu Japa*. Mental repetition is called *Manasika Japa*. The *Japas* have been listed in the increasing order of their potency. There are rules prescribed to be followed during *Japa*. Strict adherence is called for.

What is the difference between a *Mantra* and a Prayer? *Mantra Shakti* depends on the potency of the sound combinations. But prayer, which is an equally powerful tool, depends on the devotion of the *Saadhaka*. Imagine on what can be achieved by the combination of a *mantra* and a prayer. Is there one such. Yes there is. *Gayatri* is a combination of a *mantra* and a prayer.

Consevation during Vedic times

"..... Such wealth I have seen in this country, such high moral values, people of such calibre, that I do not think we will ever conquer this country, unless we break the very backbone of this nation, which is her spiritual and cultural heritage, and , therefore , I propose that we replace her old and ancient education system, her culture for if the Indians think that all that is foreign and English is good and greater than their own they will loose their self esteem , their native self-culture and they will become what we want them , a truly dominated nation"

Lord McCauley Monday 2nd February 1835

British were not the first to occupy India. The country was occupied, plundered and ruled by a number of conquerors. Each employed their own technique to quickly subjugate the people. Brutal, subtle and psychological methods were employed. The end justified the means.

The prevailing notion is that forestry as a “Science” and “Practice” originated in the Western Europe and further advanced in North America. . However, the truth is – principles of Forest conservation and sustainable management were fully entrenched in “pre-historic” India. Forestry traditions have been documented in religious texts in India for a long time. The *Upanishads* and *Vedas* contain several references to directives on the use of resources based on religious teachings and with a deep sense of ethics. The *Vedas*, *Upanishads* and *Puranas* strongly bring home the point that the ultimate responsibility for preserving the Earth’s resources rests on mankind.

Vedas are authoritative documents for the Hindus. Some people think that the *Vedas* only talk about the Supreme Being and our relationship with Him. That is not exactly the case. *Vedas* address a variety of subjects – Science, arts, Drama, Medicine, engineering, Love, warfare, economics etc. A section of topics at the end of each *Veda* (*Rig*, *Yajur*, *Saama*, *Adharva*) deal with the Supreme Being (*Parabrahman*) and His relationship with *Jeevas* and *Prakruti* (matter). These terminal sections are appropriately called *Vedanta* (that which comes at the end of *Vedas*). They are also referred to as *Upanishads*.

The time line of Vedic civilization which gave rise to these scriptures is thought to be between 8000 to 1500 BC.

- We will address the current topic in the following sequence.
- What the Vedic literature aimed at achieving
- What the Vedic literature said
- Guidelines for Practice
- Emperor *Ashoka* and his pioneering work
- First “Veterinary hospital” in the world.
- Participatory Forest management
- Religion as a tool

Vedic Literature - Aims & Achievements:

- a) On conservation, they are aimed at preventing over-exploitation of land, forest and resources to ensure sustainability of resources.
- b) Conservation ethics stress the need to harness renewable sources of energy (like solar energy)
- c) Refrain from acts that result in the depletion of forests for obtaining firewood.

- d) Ecological balance is sought to be derived from an understanding of the interdependence of biotic (dealing with living organisms) and non-biotic (dealing with non living organisms – light etc) components.
- e) The religious texts show a lot of importance to vital natural resources such as water, and water resources.

What the Vedic literature said

According to *Upanishads*, resources must be utilised to create wealth. Excessive exploitation of the Earth must be forbidden. It says:

*“Wealth must not be despised – that should be the vow
Wealth must not be wasted - that should be the duty
Wealth must be developed manifold – that should be the determination
The Earth should be treated as a wealth by itself “*

Taittiriya Upanishad (3/7-9)

Isopanishad further goes on to say

*“You should nurture yourself
with only that portion of resources
which has been showered upon you.
Must not covet anything more than that, for after all to whom do these natural
endowments really belong to?”*

Isopanishad Verse-1

Energy and environment

Verses in ancient literature exhibit the importance given to harnessing natural resources.

*.....harness all round
the energies held fast by stars
and the earth. Collect all over the nutrition
inherent in the tress and make use of all
energies available in running waters.*

Rig Veda (6/47/27) & Yajur Veda (29/53)

*“may we, with the help of bright solar energy
be free from all wrongs committed against the inviolable earth,
so that wealth can be produced”*

Rig Veda (5/82/6)

Religion and ethics of conservation

During the Vedic period, the importance of maintaining the man-nature balance appears to be the dominant thought in our scriptures. Conservation ethics also places emphasis on the equitable sharing of the benefits of natural resources.

“wealth should be equitably distributed among all people. And for that matter one must treat all persons as being the same as one’s own self”

Srimad Bhagavata (7/11/10)

Guidelines for Practice

The Hindu idea is that the whole world is a forest. To keep this world as it is, we have to keep this world forest intact. From this stems the concept of cultural landscapes such as – forests, groves, sacred corridors etc.

1. Vedic traditions affirm that every village will be complete only when certain categories of forest vegetation or trees are preserved in around its territory. Examples are – *Mahavan, Shrivana and Tapovan*.
2. *Mahavan* or the great natural forest is, perhaps, equivalent, to “protected areas” of today. It adjoins the village and provides a place where all species can co-exist. If the original forest is cleared, for some reasons, it required that another kind of forest be established in its place.
3. *Shrivana* (forest of wealth) provides essential goods and services to humans and live stocks. Examples are – fodder, timber, roots, herbs etc. It also maintains soil fertility, air and water quality besides providing shelter.
4. *Tapovan* is the home for the sages. Being sacred, no animal or tree could be harmed in these forests. It is set aside as a place for the practice of religion.

In the post –*Vedic* period, this tradition continued; in addition to considering landscapes as valuable and sacred, additional units were added. Examples are – temple forests, monastery forests, sanctified and sacred trees.

Later *Vedic* periods sought to exemplify the bond between the Indian people and the trees. *Varahamihira’s* book *Brhat Samhita* (700 AD) describes the relationships between irrigation tanks and trees. He provided detailed technical instruction on tank construction and prescription on species to be planted on the embankments.

According to him, the banks of the tanks should be shaded (planted) with mixed trees. *Arjun, Banyan, Mango, Pipal, Java plum, Ashoka and Mahua* have been mentioned.

A number of books have been written. *Parashara's* book (400 BC) "*Krishi parashara*" (agriculture); *Kashyapa's* book (800AD) "*Kashyapiya Krishisookti*" are the notable examples.

Emperor Ashoka and his pioneering work

During Emperor *Ashoka's* reign (273-232 BC) planting of medicinal herbs and trees beside shade trees along the roads and fruit plants on the waste lands was mandatory. One of the rock edicts of the emperor issued in 257 BC illustrates this practice. Wherever medical roots or fruits are not available he had them imported and grown.

First "Veterinary hospital" in the world

A landmark development occurred during Emperor *Ashoka's* reign. He established hospitals for the medical treatment for humans and animals. Thus the first veterinary hospital in the world was established.

Participatory Forest management

During the Vedic age, each village was responsible through its *Panchayat*, or a committee of five elders, for maintaining the forests in its territory. Implicit in this is the concept of participatory forest management, which forms the main component of the forest management paradigm today. Also no village would be complete without its woodlands in and around the houses. Every village must have a cluster of five great trees "*Panchavati*" – symbolizing the five primary elements – *Pancha Mahabhootas*; Earth, Water, Fire, Air and Ether.

Religion as a tool

Several trees and shrubs were regarded as sacred because of their medicinal qualities as well as their proximity to a deity. *Pipal* is a very good example. Sometimes threads are tied around certain trees, to seek a boon. *Parijatha* is considered a divine tree. During *Chaturmasya*, the four months of rainy season of July to October, it is believed that Gods will rest on the plants and trees. During this period the trees are worshipped and never cut. If cutting is absolutely necessary, it is only done after asking forgiveness by chanting mantras.

Indian religious literature is replete with ideas of forest conservation, utilisation and regeneration.

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Objects of Human Aspirations (Purusharthas)

Every intelligent man seeks to know 2 things (a) the world around him (b) more about himself. The point is that you cannot understand the world without knowing something about yourself. At the same time you cannot know and understand about yourself excluding the world – you are part of this world. Man has been trying to understand both these. Study of the world has taken the shape of Science. And study to know himself has taken the shape of psychology. Indian thinkers did not separate the goal of life from the view of life. Your view of life matures by what you want to achieve in your life. Your view of life leads you to attain some goals of life.

In Sanskrit, the word *Artha* has many meanings. In this context, it means "goal". What is sought after by everyone is called *Purushaartha*. Purusha in this case does not refer to a male person only. It also refers to females as well. In fact, *Purushaartha*, here refers to *Manushya artha*. In essence, we would like to discuss about the goals sought after by all human beings. What about animals and plants? Don't they have goals? It is true that human beings have a number of features that are also found among the animals. For example – *Ahaara* (food), *Nidra* (sleep), *bhaya* (fear), *procreation* etc. Yet, they do not possess the rare gifts such as – intellect, far sightedness, planning etc. Intellect or *Buddhi* is the difference. When a human being does not employ his *buddhi* – he is equivalent to an animal (*buddhya vihina pashubhih samaana*). Foresight is power.

Planning for the future is a natural consequence of *Buddhi* at work. For the improvement of our future, we think and we plan. We plan for both the short term and long term goals to be achieved. These goals are *Purushaarthas*.

We may have hundreds of goals to be achieved in our lives. All the goals have been classified into 4 categories. They are called "*Chaturvidha Purushaarthas*".

Artha

So what is the first Purushaartha? It is Artha. This first *Purushaartha* starts very early in life. This word also has many meanings. In the present context it means “security”. Security for survival. All measures that you take, which will allow you to survive come under this category. For example – Food, Clothing, shelter, health, wealth are all measures taken to provide you “survival”. These measures you take require planning. Planning requires foresight. Foresight is power. You then have secondary levels to provide you more security. Children, Insurances, Pensions etc. At some stage we pass the minimum required levels of *Artha* for security and start hoarding.

Kaama

The second Purushaartha is “*Kaama*”. This refers to comfort. It is not essential as the first Purushaartha. But it is nice to have them and enjoy. Entertainment, comfort etc are all there to provide you pleasure. In fact, it is not money alone that rules the world. Pleasure is a more powerful force than property. Sri Ramakrishna says “ Kamini and Kanchana are the two most powerful forces of ignorance”

All human beings love pleasure. They seek pleasure both immediate and distant. Nature exists to be enjoyed and her capacity to entertain seems to be infinite (Bhuma). It is for this reason it is called *Bhumi*. In the first Purushaartha we noticed that its usefulness lies in providing security or shelter. In this second Purushaartha, men and women look for its “capacity to entertain”.

In real life pursuit of anything may be done in moderation. Kama, when pursued without limits is dangerously corruptive - except in one case of God-love. The process of turning lust into God-love can be done by one method only – regulating activities according to the limits set by Dharma. That takes us to the next Purushartha – Dharma.

Dharma

The third Purushaartha is “*Dharma*”. Human conduct is different from the animals because it knows the difference between right and wrong. Our Rishis have told that man has a duty to natural elements, bhutas, as well as to all other creatures in the world. We are asked to perform yagnas or sacrifices to 5 classes – Bhuta Yagna, Athithi Yagna, pitruyagna and Deva yagna. Dharma is defined as an invisible form of wealth. What do you mean by that? Some people refer to it as “ Good Fortune - Adrishta”. Money, housing etc are visible form of wealth. Dharma is an invisible form of wealth. Even then, this invisible form of health, Dharma, can be acquired by appropriate means. However, for acquisition you have to start working in this

present life. Since it is possible to acquire or achieve it, it is a goal. Dharma contributes in two stages.

(1) In first stage, it contributes to our well being in this very life itself.

(2) Dharma will contribute in our next birth also – especially at the very early stages of our next life.

All of us know that the early stages of our life are not under our control. Parentage, wealth, social surroundings, health are not in control of the child. Dharma performed in this life will give us a good start or advantage in the early stages of our next life. We also hear now that the experiences in the childhood influence our adult lives as well. However, we are not in a position to control our childhood experiences. How my parents will bring me up, what sort of surroundings I will live under, what educational opportunities will be available to me –will not be under my control. The invisible wealth, Dharma that I collected in my previous life will decide my present childhood opportunities and experiences. The childhood experiences will determine my future adult life. So *Punya sampadana* is a very important goal. There are a number of ways by which you can earn *Dharma Purushaartha* – the invisible wealth. The three human goals (*Purushaarthas*) – *Dharma, Artha and Kaama* have many things in common. So these 3 put together are referred to as “*Preyah*”. So *Preyah* refers to *Dharma + Artha + Kaama Purushaarthas*. Out of this the Dharma is very powerful. So people refer to the three as – Dharma, Artha and Kaama.

Moksha

The fourth Purushaartha is Moksha. Now Moksha means freedom from slavery. Slavery from what? It is slavery from the Preyah – the three Purushaarthas. It is an internal freedom. Why do you refer to the 3 Purushaarthas as leading to slavery? Take the case of Artha Purushaartha. When you do not have enough wealth or children you start feeling the lack of it. You start thinking about the “lack” continuously. Eventually, the feeling of lack leads you to have a feeling of emptiness. You cannot get rid of it from your mind. Any kind of feeling a “lack” is a slavery. Any object by virtue, of its absence that can create emptiness is capable of enslaving me. Similarly, when you have too much of it – instead of the lack you start feeling the strain. Too much money, too many houses to manage, too many children etc also puts pressure on you. This pressure you cannot get rid of. Both start preying on your mind. When you examine it you will see continuous thinking of the Preyas lead either to a feeling of vacuum or of strain. And you become a slave of it. So some objects create problems due to their absence. And some other objects create problems due to their presence. There are some objects

that create problems both by their presence and absence. All these will eventually make you a “Daasa” – a slave. Quite often, man is caught up in Samsara – the problems of Artha; the limitless pursuit of Kama and confusion about Dharma drives him to desperation. He may seek to an escape from society and start to retreat to forests and Ashrams. Thus Vairagya becomes the first step towards Moksha. Nivrtti, turning from nature to spiritual nature, only comes to those who have suffered the agonies of life in the fields of Artha, Kama and Dharma. But a renunciation like this provides just a freedom from the obligations of the three Purusharthas. This is not yet absolute freedom. In fact, the next stage is Nirvana. It is attained by right thought and meditation and is helped by – ahimsa, kindness, purity, and renunciation of the ways of this world. This is also described as Brahmanirvana. At this stage, the individual soul feels one with the Supreme Self. It is referred to as Kaivalya – meaning Freedom from all limitations. What is essential is the quiet surrender (Saranagati) to the Supreme spirit. Moksha is not the result of individual effort alone but a gift from Parabrahman – mere fruits of Karma alone will not lead you Moksha but the grace of the Divine is the deciding factor.

Karma

"As is his desire, such is his purpose; as is his purpose, such is the action he performs; what action he performs, that he procures for himself" [Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, IV, 4, 5] .

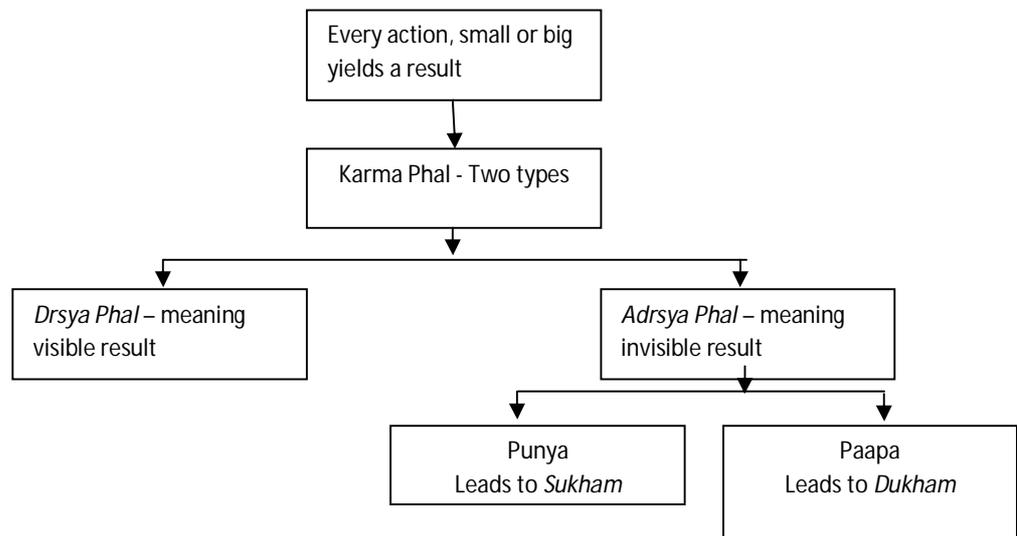
The concept of Karma is a unique contribution from Hinduism to the world. The concept of Karma, determining the fate of individuals comes originally from the Vedas. The Hindus believe in Karma more than on anything else. So we should know more about Karma.

The two pervasive features of all nature, connection with the past and creation of the future, are present at the human level. The connection with the past at the human stage is denoted by the word *Karma* in the Hindu systems.

Simply stated – it is cause and effect. Every action – small or big produces results. Karma is the action and *Karma-Phala* is the fruit. The whole Universe is held together by a number of rules – called Dharma. The action of individuals is called Karma. Each individual acts according to his nature called *Swabhava*. The Dharma of the Universe provides that certain previous karma must lead to a new karma or results. This chain of karma is called by us as FATE – and every Hindu seeks salvation from it.

According to this concept, the future of an individual depends upon what he does or does not do with his life. In other words previous actions lead to subsequent action – karma and karma phal. The Hindu theory is that thought

and feeling, as well as actual speech or deeds (*Manasa, Vaacha and karma*) - all form part of the karma and create effects. The chain of Karma, the bondage of works, continues from hour to hour and from birth to birth – which is the Hindu fate and from which the Hindus seek salvation. There are a few things about karma we should know about.



Types of Karma

Sanchita Karma: It is the sum total of the accumulated Karma of previous lives. It is the burden of your past. This needs to be exhausted at some stage in your spiritual journey

Prarabda Karma: It is that part of the Sanchita Karma which is currently activated in your present life and which influences the course of your present actions. Depending on the nature of your present actions, you are either exhausting it or creating more karmic burden for yourself.

Agami Karma: It is the karma that arises out of your current life activities. You will experience the consequences of it in the coming lives. In fact, it is added to the *Sanchita Karma*.

Kriyamana Karma: This is the Karma whose consequences will be experienced by you in the near or distant future in your current life.

Sequence of Karma phal

The sequence in which you will experience the Karma phal will not be known to anyone except the Lord. You can not expect to make a donation, go home and look forward to receiving the benefits for the good actions you have done.

Worthiness of the Karma

The lord is the sole judge of the worthiness of your actions and He will decide the Karma phala.

The whole Universe – the various parts constituting it, the individuals (both human and non-human) is held together by a number of rules of action – called Dharma. The action of the parts and individuals is called Karma. Each individual, be it a man or animal, has a *Swabhava* or nature according which it acts. But beyond and above all these minor laws is the great dharma of the Universe which provides that certain previous karma or action must lead to certain new karma or results. This is the chain of karma, the bondage of works, which is the *Hindu Fate* from which the Hindus seek salvation.

From this understanding, Karma is not so much a principle of retribution as one of continuity. Good produces good and evil will produce evil. It emphasizes the importance of right action. The law of Karma is not to be confused with either a hedonistic or judicial theory of rewards. It is just a result for your action. Also, you may notice that the Supreme Being did not initiate the action which has given you this result. It was entirely your decision to take action in the manner you did and you are now reaping the rewards for it.

At the time of death, every individual loses his physical body only. The subtle body, called Self, will continue. Along with the Self is packaged the unrewarded Punyas and Paapas. These Punyas and Paapas have to produce Sukham or Dukhams. So another physical body is required. There can be no interaction with the world without the physical body. And there can be no experience of Sukham or Dukham without interaction. Punarjanma is getting associated with a new physical body. Mind you- the Self is still the old one (Self has not changed but body has changed). While experiencing sukham and dukham in the new body, the individual performs more actions and consequently acquires more Punya and Paapa. Many of these get unrewarded and the individual gets ready for still another new body. This is called the cycle of birth and death – Samsara. God does NOT determine the type of birth and the type of experiences. Both are decided by the Punya and Paapa. When did all this start? From Anaadi-kala. How do you break this cycle? Only Moksha will break this. This is the Law of karma. You have to think about it and understand it. Claiming ignorance will not help. Understanding the law of karma has some advantages.

- a) It explains the differences and disparities in living beings. Why are innocent children born handicapped? This is because of – Paapa
- b) I can accept my suffering even though I have not done any mistakes in this Janma.

- c) I can take charge of my future. My future will depend on my present actions. I understand that (a) the world does not determine my future (b) God does not decide my future. I alone am responsible for my future.
- d) The answer to the question – why do evil fellows enjoy and good fellows suffer. The evil fellow is enjoying the punya of their past. The good fellow is suffering due to his past Paapa.
- e) Accept suffering as a means of exhausting the Paapa.
- f) Science talks about visible physical order. Karma talks about invisible moral order.

Fate and Fatalism

The average Hindu does believe in Fate. The popular belief is that Lord Brahma, the creator, writes on the forehead of every being before they are sent out into this world. This leads us to think that everything in a man's life has been predetermined. Nothing is left for the man to do. This is called fatalism.

In ancient India, there were some schools that believed in Fatalism (*Niyati* or determinism). One such well known sect was known as *Ajivaka sect*. *Gosala* was the head of this sect. He lived during the times of Buddha and, in fact, he had many discussions with Buddha. Buddha finally moved away from him. According to Ajivakas, there is no place for free will. All human effort is a waste of time. Every being is subject to fate and had to live accordingly.

Hinduism does not support Fatalism. That means – it does not support the theory that everything is pre-ordained and you have little choice other than follow the plan laid out for you by God. There are a couple reasons for it.

1. If everything is fixed by God and you do not have a choice in acting, then God is responsible for the actions. If you are driving a motor car and all actions are as per your wish, then in case an accident occurs – you are held responsible for it and not the motor car. By the same argument, if everything is preordained, then God becomes responsible for the actions and the Karma will follow Him. But the Supreme Being is above Karma. He is untainted.
2. Every minute a man faces situations that call for his action. The choice of which way to act is his. He has the freewill. He is not dictated by God to act one way or other. He will certainly be conditioned by his own *Swabhava*. And once he acts, then the *karma-phala* is also his. He then has no control on the *karma-phala*. *Puranas* tell us that *Hiranyakashipu*, *Ravana*, *Kamsa*, *Duryodhana* all received advice but

they acted out of their own freewill and as per their *Swabhava*. They then received their *karma-phala*.

3. If *Maya*, *Avidya* or *Prakruti* are all very powerful and there is no escape from them, then salvation will just remain as a dream and bondage of *Samsara* will be eternal – unless there is something which is Free and far more powerful than any of these. This entity the Hindu teachings find in the *Paramaatma*. He is *Eshwara* and without His consent nothing can be done. If *Maya* is His creation, then He alone can help us overcome it.
4. It is the power of sanction from Him that forms the element of free will in our lives. It is up to the man to either use it ignorantly or knowingly. If used ignorantly it is succumbing to the *Maya* and *Prakruti*. If used knowingly, the freedom of the soul becomes one with *Sharanagati* to the Supreme Being. This is the choice offered to the human soul. It is to be remembered that - God's love is manifested in and through law.
5. Talking about the element of freewill, the problem of human freedom is confused somewhat by the distinction between the *self* and the *will*. The will is only the self on its active side. The freedom of the will really means the freedom of the self. It is determination by the self. However, the range of one's natural freedom of action is not unlimited. No man has the universal field of possibilities for himself. One other point to be noted is - Our demand for freedom must reckon with a universe that is marked by order and regularity – by the Dharma. Dr. Radhakrishnan gave a beautiful example on this – “Life is like a game of bridge. The cards in the game are given to us. We do not select them. They are traced to past *Karma*. But we are free to make any call as we think fit and lead any suit. Only we are limited by the rules of the game. We are more free when we start the game than later on when the game has developed and our choices become restricted. But till the very end there is always a choice”. Man can actively mould the future instead of passively suffering the past. The past may become either an opportunity or an obstacle. Everything depends on what we make of it and not what it makes of us.

Factors that interplay with human actions

It is true that for any action to succeed, two factors are needed.

1. Human effort (Manushya Prayatna)
2. Divine sanction (Daiva anukoolyam)

Yes, a man may try - but he may still face forces that oppose the success. Hindu scriptures identify three forces that play a part.

- a) Individual actions performed by the person according to his free will (*Adhyatmika*)
- b) Actions by other living beings – be they human or non-human (*Adhibhutika*). Included in this are actions by other human beings such as – friends, relatives, enemies, strangers, government, plants, animals, insects etc.
- c) Intervention by some super natural forces. (*Adhidaivika*). In this category come – acts of nature, acts of gods, unintended causes etc.

In the case of human beings individual will (*Adhyatmika*) plays a predominant role followed by extraneous factors (*Adhibhutika*) and acts of god (*Adhidaivika*)

All *Veda mantras* are concluded by uttering *Om Shantih, Shantih, Shantih*

Shanti refers to Peace and tranquility.

During our prayers we conclude them by uttering *Om Shantih, Shantih, Shantih*

By uttering *Shantih* three times, we are praying for protection from the actions listed above.

Conclusion

Great souls find profound peace in the consciousness that the stately order of this world, now lovely and luminous, now dark and terrible in which man finds his duty and destiny can not be subdued to known aims. It seems to have a purpose of its own of which we are ignorant.

In our relations with human failures, belief in *Karma* inclines us to take a sympathetic attitude and develop reverence before the mystery of misfortune. The more understanding we are, the less do we pride ourselves on our superiority. Faith in *Karma* induces in us the mood for true justice or charity which is the essence of spirituality. We realize how infinitely helpless and frail human beings are. When we look at the warped lives of the poor, we see how much the law of *Karma* is true. If they are lazy and criminal, let us ask what chance they had of choosing to be different. They are more unfortunate than wicked.

Understanding – I

Any religion that has withstood the test of time for more than 1000 years will have to be recognized as a great religion. Into this category come Christianity, Islam and a few others. Long before them, 3 religions stood the test of time for 1000s of years – Hinduism, Zoroastrianism and Judaism. Nearly all religions try to explain the relationship between man/woman and God; between the known and the unknown and to make the unknown more knowable.

Few years back, nearly everyone knew the basics of our religion. What was common knowledge then has now become exclusive knowledge. Unless we know our system well how can we hope to teach our children?

Vedas or Shrutis as they are often referred to are authoritative documents for the Hindus. As you all know, there are four Vedas – Rig, Yajur, Saama and Adharva. Now, sections that come at the end of each of these Vedas are called Vedantas. They are also popularly known as Upanishads.

Upanishads discuss about Paramaatma, Jeevatma and Prakruti (which are referred to as the three *Tattvas*.) and their relationship. We shall now try to understand Jeevatma.

The enquiry starts like this.

Who are you?

We can reduce the whole creation into two factors. One is the *subject "I"*. The other is the *object "this"*. In Sanskrit these two words are "*Aham*" for I and "*Idam*" for this. *I am the subject and everything else is the object of my knowledge*. I am the subject- *Sun* is the object of my knowledge. *Moon* is the object of my knowledge. *Stars* are the objects of my knowledge. *You too* are objects of my knowledge. Plants, flowers, animals, men, women, children are all objects of my knowledge. There are many sounds, colours, forms, scenes and all of them will be "objects". There is only one subject "I" and so many different objects. I may mistake one object with another – but I will never mistake an object for a subject. For example, I have - my wife, my children, my family. They are all very dear to me. But I do not say I am the child. I do not say I am my wife.

It means An object cannot be referred to by the word "I". It can only be referred to by the word "this".

I now ask you a question – who are you?

Your reply is let us say - I am Desai

Your reply may also be- I am the son of *Krishnamoorthy*. That means, the “son” reveals the nature of “I. All these answers are related to the physical body of yours.

It is with respect to this physical body alone I have the “I” sense. When someone touches your body, you do not say “my body is touched”. You just say “I am touched”. When the body is walking, I do not say “my body is walking”. I say “I am walking”. If the body is tall, I say “I am tall”. If it is fair “I am fair”. If the body is here, then I am here – it is not that my body is here and I have gone out for a walk. If the body stands, I stand. If the body sits, then I sit. Whatever, the physical body does, I do that. So I am the physical body.

So, the answer to the question of “who are you” should have been “I am the physical body”. Is this a correct conclusion? Let us examine this a little more closely.

Who am I?

When I say “I am tall” – it is because this body of mine is tall and I *know* it. It is similar to my *knowing* that the tree is tall. The sky is blue and I know it. That man is fat and I *know* it. I know about the tree, sky and the fat man – because they are all objects of my knowledge. Similarly, my body is also an object of my knowledge. If my body is an object of my knowledge – then it is surely not “I”. I am mistaking the object (in this case, it is the body) to be the subject

I am not my eyes, my ears

We often say, that I see through my eyes. In the same way when I am blind – I say “I know I am blind”; Since I know about the eyes – I am the knower, I am the seer. Similarly I am not my ears. We also say that I hear through my ears. So I am not my ears. If we think it to be so, once again we are mistaking the object (in this case, it is the eyes or ears) to be the subject.

I am not my mind

All thoughts come from the mind. All conclusions take place in the mind alone. If this is the case – then “I” should be the mind. When my mind is angry, then I am angry. When my mind is cheerful, then I am cheerful. When my mind is quiet, then I am quiet. When my mind is restless, then I am restless.

Wait. Why do you say you are restless when your mind is restless?

When your dog is restless, you do not say you are restless. No, I do not do that.

If that is the case, why do you say you are restless when your mind is restless?

That is because, I know the restless mind. If you know the mind, which is now restless, then you not the mind. You are in fact a witness to the restless mind.

The mind is an object. Once again you are making the mistake of confusing an object to be the subject.

I am not my memory

If you say, I am my memory. That is also not true. If I forget something, I am there to recollect from memory. It is not as if, I have gone with the memory. In fact, I was the one who collected and stored the incidents in my memory. I am the one who know exactly what I had breakfast, what I liked and what I disliked from it. I am the one who is aware of what exactly happened. Therefore my memories can not be me.

I am not my intellect

To say that “I” am a Doctor of medicine, an accountant is not true – because I am aware of it. Again, I am not born as a Doctor or as an accountant. These are skills I gathered as I progressed in life.

I am not ignorance

To say that I am ignorant is also not true. I have the knowledge to know that I do not know. I may not be aware of some of the things in life but I am aware of quite a few other things.

Who am I?

So, I see that I am neither knowledgeable nor ignorant. But who is that “I”, because of which I am aware of every thing. I am aware of my physical body, aware of my sense organs (eyes, ears etc), aware of my ignorance, aware of my knowledge, aware of my emotions, aware of my hunger. I am the subject. I am the awarer – and awareness is there.

Awareness is there when the object is there. When the object is removed, the awareness is still there. Awareness is there whether you are awake or asleep. What are the dimensions of awareness – how big? How tall? Awareness has no dimensions. Awareness has no colour. It has no front or back. In fact, it has no form. All forms are objects of this awareness. In a similar way – the body, the mind, the memories, knowledge, ignorance are all objects of my awareness. The word “I” refers only to the subject – which is awareness, which is consciousness. And Consciousness is called “Cit” in Sanskrit.

In fact, everyone is an awarer. I am an awarer; you are an awarer. Ant is an awarer. Mosquito is an awarer. The tree is an awarer. Knowledge itself may be different – you may know something and I may know some other thing. There could be differences in the sense organs. There could be differences in the body, in the intellect. But there are no differences in the awarer.

Let us take this further.

When the awareness (*Cit*) blesses the mind, the mind becomes conscious. In the Sun light I see various objects – their size, their form, their colour etc. They all shine because the Sun is shining. In other words, the Sun shines and all others shine after him.

But the Sun shines, because my mind is behind my eyes. The same way, the ears shine only when the mind is behind the ears. The nose shines when the mind is behind the nose. However, nothing illuminates the “I” – the consciousness. It shines of its own accord. A thought comes, a thought goes – but “I” remains shining. Space; I am aware of space. Time; I am aware of time. That means, thoughts, space, time etc may come and go – but I still find myself shining. I, the “*Cit*” survives time, space etc. It has no beginning and it has no end. That which exists at all times is called “*Sat*”.

So far, we have understood that “I” (awareness / *aham*) is “*Cit*” – consciousness. We have also understood, it has no beginning and no end. For that reason it is “*Sat*”. “*Sat*” is “*Cit*” and “*Cit*” is “*Sat*”.

Let us now investigate a little further.

We are going to investigate happiness – Ananda.

The whole world essentially consists of 3 items – Time, place and object.

Is happiness an object? Take a house for example. You feel very happy seeing it. You want to buy it. You check with the owner whether he wants to sell it. Yes, Sir – he wants to sell it and sell it quickly. From the time he bought it, he had misfortune after misfortune. He thinks it is due to the house and wants to get rid of it. So you see, the same house is a source of happiness for you and unhappiness for him. Hence, an object is not the source of happiness.

In the same way, place is not the source of happiness for you. You like Chennai. But another man thinks it is a boring place.

And Time can not be a source of happiness. Have you ever heard a man say that every morning at 5 AM, he feels happy?

The truth is – Happiness is your nature. Ananda is your true nature. You do not say – that is happiness. You always say “I am happy”. Happiness is an NOT an object.

In the same way that I say I am happy, I may also say I am unhappy. Then is “unhappiness” your nature? No. Think carefully. You do not say you are unhappy – but you complain that you are unhappy. You complain when you do not feel your normal self. Happiness is your real nature. Unhappiness is not.

1. So summarizing –
“I” (*aham*) am “**Sat**,” “**Cit**,” “**Ananada**”. I am Jeevatma.
2. Jeeva is not the body. It is not the intellect. It is not the mind.
3. It has no beginning or an end. It is eternal.
4. It has no form. It can not be burnt or drenched or destroyed..
5. Jeeva is there in you. It is there in an ant. It is there in a mosquito. Jeeva is the same. So, it has to be infinitesimally small. The Jeeva does not change its size as the body grows nor does it change its size when it enters another body.
6. Jeeva is essentially Happy". It is his nature. However, due to the load of Karma his happiness is reduced. Once Jeeva gets released from the bondage, he recovers his happiness.
7. The knowledge or "*Jnaana*" of Jeevatma is infinite. They can perceive and understand everything. However, due to the load of Karma his knowledge is reduced. Once Jeeva gets released from the bondage, he recovers his knowledge.
8. Though the Jeevas possess identical characteristics, the one thing that separates them is the load of Karma.
9. Jeevatma is also called as “*Cit*”, *Soul*, *Self*, *Atma*, *Chetana*.

Sanskrit Nataka

Introduction

All literature in Sanskrit is classified into two categories – (1) *Drishya* (2) *Shravya*. All that can be seen or exhibited falls under the category of *Drishya*. That which can be heard or recited falls into the category of *Shravya*. Drama falls into the first category and poetry into the second category. References regarding Sanskrit drama are noted in *Pathanjali's Mahabhyasa*, *Vatsayana's Kama sutra*, *Kautilya's Artha Shastra* and *Panini's Ashtabhyam*.

Bharata Muni wrote a treatise on *Natya Shastra* which laid down the foundation for classical Sanskrit drama. He alludes to the Vedic origin of Sanskrit drama. Indra the king of *Devat*as requested Lord Brahma, the creator, to make an entertainment accessible to all classes of society. Lord Brahma then composed a *Shastra* taking dialogue from *Rig Veda*, music from *Sama Veda*, the art of representation and imitation from *Yajur Veda* and sentiments from *Atharva Veda*. This *Natya Shastra* was revealed to Bharata muni, who with his hundred sons brought it to earth. Bharata muni was said to have been a contemporary of Sage Vyasa who wrote the epic *Maha*

Bharata. Natya Shastra appears to have been meant for theater practitioners. One important aspect about Sanskrit drama is that it is well codified and conventional.

Sanskrit drama is a combination of music, dialogue, gesticulation and imitation.

Once again we come across the argument that Indian dramas were influenced by Greek drama. Their arguments are based on certain features common to both the traditions such as introduction of heroes; the division of play into scenes, acts etc; the development of type roles; all actors leaving the stage at the end of an act etc. However, Indian scholars have argued that a careful examination reveals that while a few similarities to exist, major differences cannot be ignored.

S.No	Nataka	Greek drama
1	Intended for men with literary taste & scholarship	Plays are intended for masses
2	Absence of tragic ends	Displays tragedy
3	Recitation of verses is used	Chorus is preferred
4	Importance to dancing is given	Not much importance to dancing
5	Aim is realisation of Rasa and attainment of eternal bliss	
6	Shifting of scenes from earth to heaven is often seen	
7	Imitates particular state of mind	Imitates action
8	Purvaranga is an integral part of Sanskrit plays	
9	The scope covered by Natya Shastra is wider than that covered by the western equivalent. It took into account every aspect of theatrical relevance including – theatre architecture, costumes, make-ups, dance, music, play construction, poetic compositions, grammar, ritual observances etc	

Characteristics of Sanskrit drama

Natya Shastra mentions about some major characteristics required of Sanskrit drama:

1. It is composed of sacred material

2. It is meant for audience that is well versed in the performance of the tradition
3. It is performed by members of the highest rank in cast
4. It requires a special knowledge and skill to execute. A complete understanding of dance music, recitation and ritual language is essential
5. Training is a hereditary process
6. Must be performed on consecrated ground
7. It serves the purpose of education and entertainment.
8. Sanskrit drama is called Rupaka. One-act plays are called Upa-rupaka
9. No play should end in tragedy
10. Prose is mostly accompanied by emotion laden poetics
- 11 The hero, the king and Brahmins speak in Sanskrit while lower people speak in Prakrit language
- 12 The play depicts both joy and sadness while the Vidushak (comedian) provides laughter.
- 13 Death cannot be depicted on the stage
- 14 Actions like eating, biting, scratching, kissing and sleeping are not depicted on the stage.
- 15 Love is the major theme of most of the plays.
- 16 Acts are varied in number and length

Elements of Rupaka

There are three elements for a Rupaka. They are (a) Vastu or plot of the play. (b) Rasa (c) Neta or the hero

Vastu (Plot)

Plot may be divided into two parts-

- (a) Principal plot (Adhikarik). It refers to the main characters and pervades throughout the story.
- (b) The subplot (Prasangik). It is added to the main plot. All characters except the hero may be involved in the sub-plot. The subplot is again divided into two categories – Prakara and Pataka. These are episodes written to hinder and develop the normal flow of the story. Whereas Pataka may be quite long, Prakara would be an incident of limited duration.

Principal plot Vastu has three – Bija, Bindu and Karya. Bija refers to the seed or plot; Bindu refers to drop or the fall and Karya refers to the climax. The source for the plot may be from history or mythology

Avasthas

There are five Avasthas (stages) in the development of a plot- (a) Aarambha (beginning) (b) Yama (effort to bring out the Rasa) (c) Prapthyasha

(prospect)

(d) Niyatapti (removal of obstacles) (e) Phalagam (obtaining the desired result).

The five Avasthas are united by five Samadhis (junctures)

Rasa

Rasa or sentiment is the base of all Sanskrit plays. It arises bhavas. Before getting down to *rasa-bhava*, We will try to understand *abhinaya*. The word literally means “leading towards,” with the implication in performance of leading the audience towards an emotional response (*rasa*), but it is generally used to mean the actor’s art of expressing feeling. It covers everything that an actor may use on stage to communicate the play’s meaning and the character’s emotions and intentions to the audience.

Abhinaya

Abhinaya has four components:

- (a) gesture and movement (anything to do with the body)
- (b) speech and singing (anything accomplished with the voice)
- (c) costume and make-up (anything using outside objects, including the few props or set elements that appear in *Sanskrit* drama)
- (d) “representation of the *Sattva*” or the portrayal of emotion.

Abhinaya comprises the whole of an actor’s craft. The movements and gestures of the actors, such as the hand or eye movements which they learn in years of training and apprenticeship convey a lot to the audience. With good *abhinaya*, the gestural codes seem spontaneous and natural even though they have been carefully worked out and codified over centuries. Most of the published studies on Indian classical theater provide lists of the scores of codified movements and gestures Indian actors and dancers use. Many are depicted in temple carvings. The whole aim of *abhinaya* is to depict the feelings of the character (*bhavas*) and convey them to the audience so that they will respond with the desired “mood” (*rasa*) appropriate for the play. The *Natyashastra* introduced the theory of *bhava* and *rasa*, so central to Indian aesthetics. It had a profound effect on most of the traditional art forms of India.

Bhava

Bhava means an emotional state or mood, portrayed by the dancer-actor.



Rasa, “taste” or “essence”, refers to the sentiment that the *bhava*, manifested by the actor, should evoke in the audience. The *rasas* were originally eight in number, but the post-*Natyashastra* tradition added a ninth one.

1. The Erotic (*srngara*),
2. The Comic (*hasya*),
3. The Pathetic (*karuna*),
4. The Furious (*raudra*),
5. The Heroic (*vira*),
6. The Terrible (*bhayanaka*),
7. The Odious (*bibhatsa*),
8. The Marvellous (*abhuta*) and
9. The Tranquil (*santa*).

According to Bharata, the actor-dancer should be able to elicit the *rasa* experience in the audience through the *stahyi bhava* or permanent emotion.

Neta (Hero)

The hero (nayaka) may be a god, demi-god or a mortal. There are four kinds of heroes

S.No	Hero	Qualities	Comments
1	Dhirdaatta	Calm and magnanimous	Ideal hero with all 8 manly characteristics
2	Dhirodhata	Violent	Lacks one of 8 manly characteristic - Ravana
3	Dhiralalita	Graceful & Good looking	Not serious
4	Dhirashanta	Peaceful	Peace loving & patient

Each of them is again classified into Dakshina (gallant), Satha (sly, Dhrstha (bold) and Anukula (or devoted to heroine)

The eight characteristics for a hero are – (1) Shobha (handsome), (2) Maadhurya (sweet in behaviour), (3) Gambhira (combination of pride and strength) (4) Dhairya (courageous), (5) Tejas (charismatic), (6) Bilaas (With broad outlook and open thought) (7) Laalitya (humourous and adorable) (8) Audarya (generous and magnanimous)

Nayika (Heroine)

Heroines are classified into eight categories.

(1) Vaasakasajjika (dressed up for union) (2) Virahotkandhita (distressed by separation)

(3) Svaadhinabhartrka (having husband under subjection) (4) Kalahaatarita (separated by squarrel) (5) Khandita (enraged) (6) Vipralabdha (the deceived) (7) Prositabhartrka (whose husband is on travel) (8) Abhisarika (who due to infatuation with a lover goes out to meet him)

Other characters

The characters of Sanskrit dramas are types rather than individuals. We just listed the characteristics of Nayaka and Nayika. The villain of the play is called Pratinayaka.

The comedian is called Vidushaka. He may even be a highborn Brahmin. He may possibly be intelligent; he is usually lazy, while his humour is spiced with eroticism. Because of his social background he is able to move freely in the social hierarchy. Thus he can be a close friend or a personal servant of the hero. However, only he is allowed to add social and even political criticism to the play and he translates the hero's Sanskrit lines into vernacular language.

The troupes included various professionals, from minor actors to make-up assistants, stage technicians, musicians and the conductor of the orchestra. Music had a central role in the Sanskrit dramas.

The key figure of a troupe, as well as the actual play, is *sutradhara*, or the theatre director. He was supposed to have expert knowledge of all aspects of theatre. He also took an active role in the actual performance by introducing the actors and the play to the audience, in the prologue, and often guiding and commenting upon the flow of the story.

Presentation of the play

Before the play actually begins, a benedictory verse called "Nandi" is recited. It prays to the deity for the removal of all impediments that may arise during the performance of the play. Sutradhara retires after the Nandi and enters again to introduce the play. The prologue alludes to the poet's literary

attainments, the occasion of production, the group of actors producing it etc. The play is divided into acts and scenes. The act must not be too long, must be full of Rasa prefixed, if needed by interludes. Even if tragedy is absent, tragic situations are developed with great skill. The interlude is a device which is used to communicate to the audience certain past and future events which have a direct bearing on the plot. The performance ends with a benedictory verse wishing welfare to all.

Aim of Sanskrit drama

The realisation of aesthetic bliss of Rasa is the highest purpose of Sanskrit drama. It can promote moral consciousness in the spectator. The drama is intended to achieve harmony out of chaos and produce restfulness out of disturbances. As an example, it is the hero Rama who should be followed and not the villain Ravana. Virtue should never be defeated. It is a powerful weapon against social, economic and political evils.

Languages

The language of Sanskrit dramas, is characterised by the blending of classical Sanskrit with local Prakrit languages. The royal heroes and Brahman priests, ascetics and high officials use Sanskrit, while women, children and all low-caste characters speak Prakrit. Thus the plays, already at the level of language, reflect the social and gender hierarchies of their time. This intermingling of languages may also have been intended to make the plays understandable for those spectators who did not understand Sanskrit.

Another characteristic of the dramas is the blending of prose and verse. The verses are mainly in Sanskrit, although, for example, nine of *Shakuntala's* 194 verses are in Prakrit. The alternation of languages as well as prose and verse widens the scale of linguistic expression from "high" to "low", from noble to vulgar, and anything in between.

Immortal Playrights

Asvaghosa

He was one of the earliest writers. He wrote about Buddhist teachings following the rules laid down in Natya Shastra. His work in fragmented form came to light.

Bhasa

13 plays by him have survived. Swapna vasavadatta is among his best known works. He composed plays based on Ramayana, Mahabharata and Puranas. The plays by him are listed below-

(1) Dootavaakya (2) Karnabhaara (3) Urubhanga (4) Pacharaatra (5)

Avimaaraka : (6) Pratijnayaugandharaya (7) Charudatta (8) Balacharitra (9)

Pratimanaataka ; (10) Madhyamavyaayoga (11) Abhisheka (12) Svapna
vasavadatta (13) Dootaghatokacha

Kalidasa

Kalidasa was a contemporary and court poet of King Vikramaditya (57 BC). There are about 41 works attributed to him. However, the following seven are widely known.

Two Lyric poems – Ritusamhara and Megha doota

Two Maha Kavyas – Kumarasambhavam and Raghuvamsham

Three plays – Malvikagnimitram, Vikramorvasheeyam and Abhijana
Shakuntalam

Harsha

He was the composer of three Sanskrit works – Nagananda, Ratnavali and
Priyadarshika

Sudraka

Mricchakatika

Vishakhadatta

Mudrarakshasa

Hindu symbology

Introduction

From time immemorial human beings have been using symbols for various purposes. You can find symbols in every field – science, engineering, medical, legal, ruling establishments, flags, logos – you name it. It will not be far from truth to say that, there exists no field that does not employ symbols. In fact, word itself is a symbol. For example, the word “tree” (spoken or written) is not the tree itself. It is just a symbol for it. A personal name is a symbol representing the person.

The symbol could be an object, picture, written word, sound or even a mark that represents something else by association, resemblance or convention. So religion, in fact all religions, have their own symbols. These symbols instantly connect the individual to the inner self. Naturally, symbols will make a sense or have an effect only when approached with appropriate understanding and the right attitude.

In every religion, there are three parts – philosophy, mythology and ritual. Philosophy gives the essence of the religion. Mythology plays a different role. Through stories, fables and lives of great men they bring out how these men faced trials in their lives and the examples they set in the conduct of their lives. Rituals give to philosophy a more concrete form, so that everyman can grasp it. Ritual is a karma. In the early stages, most of us cannot grasp the abstract spiritual points made in the explanations given in the religious texts. These may start making sense, after we have grown spiritually. What appears to be easy while studying the texts may not be easy to comprehend when it comes to real practice. This is where symbols come to our help. It is not wise to ignore rituals and symbology altogether. Let us now have a look at some of the symbols used in the Hindu religion.

The mystic Mantra “OM”

In the Hindu symbology, “OM” is the most pronounced sacred sound symbol or “*Nada Brahman*”. It is also called the “*Pranava*” mantra. It is regarded as the symbol of the *Parabrahman*. OM encompasses all the aspects and the angles of the creative power and has no substitute. Thus, this monosyllable mantra is crowned as the supreme in Vedic scripture. When OM is pronounced we utter three letters A U M. All triplets are considered to be represented by OM. Some examples are given below.

A	U
M	
Brahma	Vishnu
	Shivam
Saraswati	Lakshmi
	Durga
Rajas	Sattva
	Tamas
Prakruti	Jivatma
	Paramatma
Body	Mind
	Soul
Past	Present
	Future
Sat	Chit
	Ananada
Jagrat	Swapna
	Sushupti

Shiva Linga

Shiva meaning “auspicious one” is a major Hindu deity. It means He is not affected by the three *Gunas* – *Sattwa*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. Followers of

Hinduism who focus their attention upon *Shiva* are called *Shaivites* or *Shaivas*. *Shiva* is usually worshipped in the form of *Shiva Linga*.

Shiva's form

Lord *Shiva* wears a deer skin. He has a trident on His right hand. He has fire and *Damaru*. He wears five serpents as ornaments. He wears a garland of skulls. He is pressing with His feet a demon. *Panchakshara* itself is His body.

- a) Third eye: Lord *Shiva* is depicted with a third eye with which He burnt *Kamadeva*. For this reason He is called *Tryambakam*. The third eye depicts the eye of knowledge.
- b) Crescent moon: Lord *Shiva* bears a crescent moon on His head. This is why is called *Chandrasekhara*. The waxing and waning phenomenon of the moon symbolises the cycle through which the creation evolves.
- c) Ashes: Lord *Shiva* smears *Bhasma* or ashes on His body. The significance is – ashes are left over after the diverse names and forms disappear.
- d) Matted hair: Lord *Shiva* sports a matted hair
- e) Blue throat: One of the items that emerged when the milky ocean was churned was poison. Lord *Shiva* drank this poison. His throat turned blue due to the venom of the poison. For this reason He is referred to as *Neelakanta*.
- f) Sacred Ganga: King *Bhagiratha*, after a lot of Tapas, got his wish to bring the sacred river Ganga from heaven to earth fulfilled. But the task of withstanding the force of the hurling Ganga became an issue. *Bhagiratha* prayed for the assistance of Lord *Shiva*. The Lord took the river Ganga on His head and tied her up. Later at the request of *Bhagiratha* He released her. After this, Lord *Shiva* is referred to as *Gangadhara*. Ganges represents nectar in the *Sahasrara*.
- g) Tiger skin: The Lord is often shown seated upon a tiger skin. Tiger represents lust. His sitting on tiger skin symbolises that He has conquered lust.
- h) Serpents: Lord *Shiva* is, often shown, garlanded with a snake. This denotes His wisdom and charity.
- i) Nandi: This is the name of the bull that serves as His *Vahana* (mount). *Rishabha* or bull represents *Dharma Devata*. Lord *Shiva* rides the bull. The significance is that Lord *Shiva* is the protector of *Dharma*.

- j) *Rudraksha*: *Rudra* refers to Lord *Shiva*. *Aksha* refers to the eye of *Rudra*. This is a bead from a tree. This is considered to have emanated from the eye of Lord *Shiva* when He burnt the *Tripura asuras*. This is one of the holy symbols worn by *Shaivites* along with the Holy Ash. This is worn as a single bead or as garlands of beads.

The twelve Jyotirlingas

For the followers of *Shiva*, the most important pilgrim centres are the twelve *Jyotirlingas*. Reference to these *Jyotirlingas* is also found in the *Shiva Purana*. Lord *Shiva* is said to have revealed Himself to the devotees in the form of *Jyoti* or light. For this reason they are called *Jyotirlingas*. The 12 *Jyotirlinga* shrines, popularly known as the *Dwadasa Jyotirlinga* shrines are considered to be very holy by the Hindus. The *Jyotirlinga* temples have a rich tradition and each temple has a legend attached to it. They are situated in different parts of India. The southernmost of these is located at *Rameshwaram*, while the northernmost is located in the snowy heights of the *Himalayas* at *Kedarnath*. These temples are closely linked with legends from the *Puranas* and are rich in history and tradition. The twelve *Jyotirlinga* temples are the following.

- 1.Somnath Jyotirlinga Shrine
- 2.Mallikarjun Mahadeva Temple
- 3.Mahakaleshwar Temple
- 4.Nageshwar Jyotirlinga Temple
- 5.Rameshwar Jyotirlinga Temple
- 6.Grishneshwar Jyotirlinga Temple
- 7.Tryambakeshwar Jyotirlinga Temple
- 8.Bhimashankar Jyotirlinga Temple
- 9.Kedarnath Jyotirlinga Temple
- 10.Omkareshwar Jyotirlinga Temple
- 11.Baijnath (Vaidhyanath) Jyotirlinga Temple
- 12.Vishwanath Jyotirlinga Temple

Vishnu Worship

Saligrama Shilas

Much as the devotees of *Shiva* worship *Shiva Linga*, the devotees of *Vishnu* worship *Saligrama*. Many people consider *Saligrama* to be a special avatar of Lord *Vishnu*. In some parts of India, *Tulasi vivaha* with *Saligrama* is conducted with great reverence. *Tulasi* signifies Goddess Lakshmi.

It is usually black in colour with the symbol of *Sudarshana chakra*. The *chakras* can be seen both outside and inside. The *Saligrama* stone is not believed to be just another stone found in the nature. It is found only at *Gandaki* River situated high in the *Himalayas* in Nepal. There are a number of types of *Saligrama* available, the classification being based on colour, size,

shape, openings (called *dwaras*), *chakras* etc. Following are some examples

1	<i>Lakshminarayana Saligrama</i>	It is light dark in colour, has one opening, four <i>chakras</i> and one line.
2	<i>Pradyumna Saligrama</i>	It is small in size, has one <i>chakra</i> on the top, and has crooked openings.
3	<i>Aniruddah Saligrama</i>	It is round in shape. Has a light yellow colour and has a smooth glass like appearance. Brings peace and happiness to the owner.
4	<i>Vasudeva Saligrama</i>	Worship of this is considered as equivalent to worshipping <i>Krishna</i> himself. Round in shape, shiny, with one opening surrounded by two <i>chakras</i> . It is believed that it will bring to its devotees their heart's desires.
5	<i>Sankarshana Saligrama</i>	Has two <i>chakras</i> facing each other. It is narrow in the front and wider at the rear. It is believed that it will bring Knowledge to the <i>Brahmacharis</i> .
6	<i>Narasimha Saligrama</i>	Worshipped with great devotion. It has two <i>chakras</i> and the shape varies. The devotee of this <i>Saligrama</i> becomes a “ <i>sarva sanga tyagi</i> ” (renunciate) and a <i>Jitendria</i>
7	<i>Lakshmi Narasimha Saligrama</i>	Not as ugra as the <i>Narasimha Saligrama</i> . This <i>Saligrama</i> is thus an embodiment of pleasantness. This has a wide opening, has two <i>chakras</i> and has a garland like of line. This brings to the devotees peace and solace.
8	<i>Hayagriva Saligrama</i>	Has the face of a Horse and has two <i>chakras</i> . Not so appealing in appearance.

		Suited for <i>Jnanam</i> (education).
9	<i>Sudarshana Saligrama</i>	Has an ordinary form with one <i>Chakra</i>
10	<i>Gadadhara Saligrama</i>	Very ordinary with one <i>chakra</i>
11	<i>Madhusudana Saligrama</i>	Cloudy in colour and has the shape of a wheel. Has the sign similar to the foot print of a calf. Considered very Holy.
12	<i>Lakshminarayana Saligrama</i>	Has one opening and a line shaped like a garland. Has a colour of dark clouds and four <i>chakras</i> . It is very rare and special. It is said to fulfil all the desires of the devotees.
13	<i>Lakshmi Janardhana Saligrama</i>	Same as above (12) but does not have the garland shaped line.
14	<i>Vamana Saligrama</i>	Small in size. Has two small wheels and a cloudy colour. Neither a garland nor any indication of holes is visible.
15	<i>Sridhara Saligrama</i>	Same as (14) above, but has a garland like line. It is believed that the devotee will be showered with great prosperity
16	<i>Raghunatha Saligrama</i>	Two openings, four <i>chakras</i> and a sign similar to the foot print of a calf.
17	<i>Damodara Saligrama</i>	Large and round in size and is commonly found in temples. It has two <i>chakras</i>
18	<i>Ranarama Saligrama</i>	It is round and medium in size, with two <i>chakras</i>
19	<i>Rajarajeshwara Saligrama</i>	Same size as (17), but with seven <i>chakras</i> and the sign of an umbrella (<i>Chatri</i>). It is believed that it will bring <i>Raja Yoga</i> and <i>Raja Sanmanam</i> to the devotees

20	<i>Anantha Saligrama</i>	Pitch black with 14 <i>chakras</i> . It is regarded as the Holiest of the <i>Saligramas</i> . It is very rare to find
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Tilaka

Tilaka is a mark worn on the forehead. It is regarded as a mark of auspiciousness. All Hindus wear it, at least, during *puja* and festival occasions. It is worn on the forehead. The marks that Hindu men and women wear on their foreheads are known as *Pundras*. They may be vertical (*Urdhva*), horizontal (*tiryak*) or circular (*vartula*.)

The practice of wearing *Tilaka* dates back to *Rig-Veda* period. As time passed on, the practice of marking *Tilaka* increased in variety. Devotees of *Shiva* and *Vishnu* used their own styles. Enough support from Vedic literature is quoted indicating the reasons for the style and need to wear them. They are not being worn as a symbolic gesture. Specific parts of the body where the marks have to be worn and the accompanying mantras to be uttered while wearing them are also prescribed.

Shaivite Tilak

The *Shaivites* mark their body with *Bhasma* and *Tripundra tilaks*. *Bhasma* means smearing the body with ashes. *Tripundra tilak* is wearing three horizontal lines with Bindi or dot in varied sizes between the eyebrows. Since the Bindi is applied in the *ajna chakra*, the space between the eyebrows, it has a cooling effect. The significance of applying the three horizontal lines of *Bhasma* is as follows. When the third eye of the *Jiva* is opened, the three kinds of afflictions – *Adhyatmika*, *Adhidaivika* and *Adibhautika* are burnt to ashes. The three *Karmas* – *Sanchia*, *Prarabdha*, and *Agami* – are also burnt.

The ash or *Bhasma* is prepared out of burnt cow dung. According to scriptures there are five types of *Bhasma* depending on the breed of cow from which it is prepared. These are *Vibhuti*, *Bhadra*, *Bhasma*, *Ksara* and *Raksa*. There are locations prescribed for the application of the ashes. Typically – neck, right side of the neck, cheeks, eyes, mouth, heart, navel, right and left shoulders, right and left elbows, right and left wrists, back of right and left palms and shoulder blades. The act of smearing ash at various parts is accompanied with the uttering of specific mantras. Apart from the *Bhasma* the devotee sports the *Tripundra Tilak*. Once again there are designated places for the application of *Tripundra* as well.

Vaishnavaita Tilak - Urdhvapundra

The *Vaishnava* argument is that the body must undergo many *samskaras*. This is done basically to make the body more pure and thereby aid the

Jivatma in the path of spiritualism resulting in achieving the ultimate goal of God realisation. The *Pancha – Samskara* is superior to all *samskaras*. In fact, the title “*Iyengaar*” in Tamil is said to have been derived from “*lyndu angam udayavar* or *lyendu kaaryangal udayavar*”. This refers to “*Pancha Samskaras*”. It may also refer to the five “*angas*” (limbs) of *Prapatti*.

Pancha Samskaras

The *Pancha Samskaras* (Five *samskaras*) are as follows.

- i. **Thapa Samskara:** The acharya embosses the impressions of *Shankam* (Conch) and *Sudarshana Chakra* (Discuss) on the left and right arms of the disciple respectively. These two are the weapons of Lord *Maha Vishnu*.
- ii. **Pundram:** To wear the *Dwaadasha Urdhva Pundram* (12 *Tiruman* and *Srichoornam*).
- iii. **Naamam:** To be initiated by the *Acharya as Ramanuja Dasan*. This is to indicate that one is forever the servant of Lord *Sriman Narayana* and *Sri Ramanujacharya*.
- iv. **Mantram:** To get the initiation of “*Rahasya traya mantras*” (*Ashtakshari, Dvayam, Charama slokam*)
- v. **Ijyai:** To learn the worship of Lord *Narayana* in proper form

Pundra Samskaram

The *Sri Vaishnava* concept is that our body is like a temple. The Supreme Lord *Narayana* resides, along with His consort, in *Vyuha* and *Upa-vyuha* (also called *Vyuha-antara*) form in different parts of our body. The *Sri Vaishnava* marks are only external display of the *Upa-vyuha* forms of the Lord. This is known as *Pundra Samskaram*.

Pundra is an abbreviated form for the word *Urdhvapundra*. It signifies wearing on the forehead the symbolic mark in the shape of the Lord’s lotus feet. The orthodox *Sri Vaishnava* is expected to wear the twelve *Pundras* (*Thiruman*) with the chanting of the twelve names of Lord *Narayana* – commonly known as the *Dwadasha Nama* of Lord *Narayana*. The significance lies in the purification of the body. The list of *Dwadasha Namas* is indicated in the table below. The salutation to the Lord has to be done with folded hands (*Anjali mudra*). The Lord’s names are pronounced prefixed by *Pranava*. For example “*Keshavaya Namaha*”.

The *Upa-vyuha* forms of Lord *Narayana* are the presiding deities of the twelve *Adityas*.

The appropriate *Upa-vyuha* is invoked through *anga-nyasa* (gestures) with devotion and reverence while investing each set of *Urdhva-pundra*.

No	Vyuha - the source	Vyuhantara or Upa-vyuha (Dwadasha Namas of Lord Narayana)	Month	Name of Aditya	Location for the Urdhva- Pundra
1	<i>Vasudeva</i>	<i>Keshava</i>	<i>Margashira</i>	<i>Mitra</i>	Forehead
2		<i>Narayana</i>	<i>Pousha</i>	<i>Pusha</i>	Lower abdomen (centre)
3		<i>Madhava</i>	<i>Magha</i>	<i>Bhaga</i>	Chest
4	<i>Sankarshana</i>	<i>Govinda</i>	<i>Phalgun</i>	<i>Tvashta</i>	Front neck (centre)
5		<i>Vishnu</i>	<i>Chaitra</i>	<i>Vishnu</i>	Lower abdomen (right)
6		<i>Madhusudhana</i>	<i>Vaishakha</i>	<i>Aryama</i>	Right arm
7	<i>Pradyumna</i>	<i>Trivikrama</i>	<i>Jyeshtha</i>	<i>Vivasvana</i>	Neck (right side)
8		<i>Vamana</i>	<i>Ashada</i>	<i>Amshumana</i>	Lower abdomen (left)
9		<i>Sridhara</i>	<i>Shravana</i>	<i>Parjanya</i>	Left arm
10	<i>Aniruddha</i>	<i>Hrishikesh</i>	<i>Bhadrapada</i>	<i>Varuna</i>	Neck (left side)
11		<i>Padmanabha</i>	<i>Ashvina</i>	<i>Indra</i>	Back (lower spinal)
12		<i>Damodara</i>	<i>Kartika</i>	<i>Dhata</i>	Back (upper spinal)

The *Upa-vyuha* form of Lord *Narayana* is externally represented by the *Urdhva- Pundra*. The “*Tiruman*” represents the Lord and the “*Sri Churnam*” represents *Devi Mahalakshmi*.

Achamana and Prokshana

All acts, rituals and symbols have a deep philosophical significance. They give you an opportunity to think of God frequently. In addition they help you to for a change in state of mind from *Tamas* and *Rajas* to *Sattva*.

Achamana refers to an act of sipping water three times, while repeating the names of the Lord. This is an internal purification. *Prokshana* refers to the act of sprinkling water over the body. It is an act of external purification when bathing is not possible.

The mantras to be repeated while sipping water three times are – *Achyutaya namah* (prostrations to the immutable Lord); *Ananthaya namah* (prostrations to the unlimited Lord); *Govindaya namah* (prostrations to the Lord well known

by the name of *Govinda*). Then the *Dwadasha namas* of the Lord are repeated touching the various parts of the body – *Keshavaya namah, Narayanaya namah, Madhvaya namah, Govindaya namah, Vishnave namah, Madhusudhanaya namah, Tivikramaya namah, Vamanaya namah, Sridharaya namah, Hrishikeshaya namah, Padmanabhaya namah and Damodaraya namah*

Offering food to God and *Pancha Pranas*

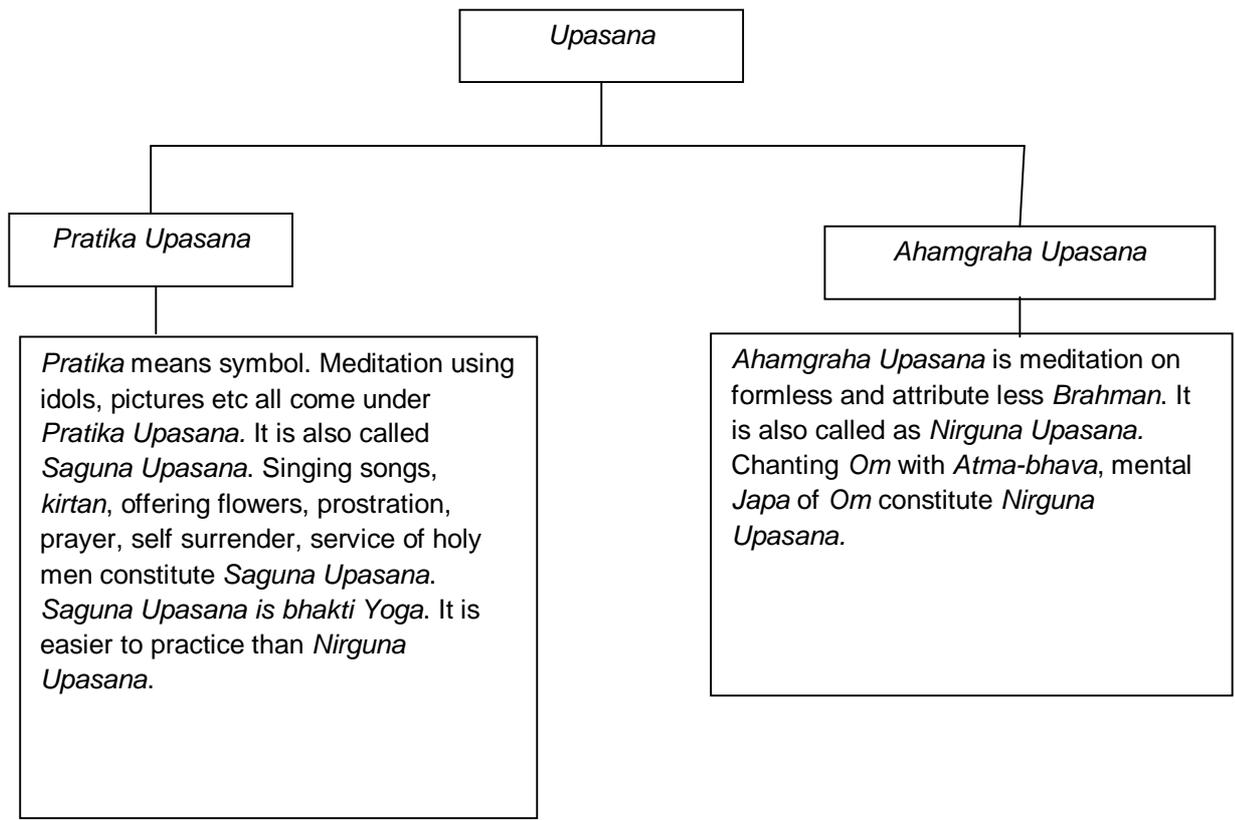
Before taking food, the food is offered to the five Pranas and the Supreme Lord seated in the heart. This is done along with the repetition of mantras – *Pranaya Svaha, Apanaya Svaha, Vyanaya Svaha, Udanaya Svaha, Samanaya Svaha* and lastly *Brahmane Svaha*. Before eating the food, we offer it to the deities who dwell in the body in the form of *Prana, Apana* etc

Hindu Upasana and Rituals

Upasana or Worship

Worship is the effort on the part of an *Upasaka* (he who does *Upasana* or worship) to reach the presence of God. *Upasana* literally means sitting near God. In the process the *Upasaka* reveals an expression of devotion, reverence, love to the Lord and a spiritual thirst to hold communion with Him.

As the *Upasaka* sits near the Lord and meditates, a change is brought around gradually. His mind is steadied and emotions quieten down. A *Shuddha Bhava* develops. Over a period of time *Rajas* and *Tamas* are destroyed. Eventually the mind becomes that on which it is meditating. *Upasana* is of two kinds. Refer to the chart below.



Puja

Puja is a common term for ritual worship. *Archana*, *Vandana*, *Bhajana* etc are all synonyms of the same act. They may, however, stress different aspects of it. The object of worship is a particular form of a deity whom the devotee worships. It could be an idol (*Pratima*), picture, *Linga* or *saligrama*. They all help the aspirants to attain one-pointedness of mind and purity of heart.

Do Hindus worship hundreds of Gods?

Hinduism is the oldest religion in the world. In fact, the term "Hinduism" was coined after the British arrived. It was originally called "Sanatana Dharma". It has been there for 1000s of years. During this time it has faced many challenges - perhaps, more than any other religion. However, it is still there. It is still relevant.

The misconceptions about Hinduism are endless. We are going to address one of the misconceptions now. What is that? Time and again Hinduism has been accused of polytheism - that is worshipping many Gods. Is that true?

Vedas are Holy Scriptures for Hindus. They are authoritative documents. There is no mention at all in the Vedas regarding many Gods. They talk about only ONE Supreme Being - Para Brahman; Eshvara.

1. In the Rig Veda. In the 10th Mandala (book); 129th hymn we come across - Nasadiya Sukta. It talks about the origin of creation. It describes the situation after the great "Pralaya". This Hymn is conceptually extremely provocative and is popular among scientists and thinkers such as Carl Sagan. It says clearly, there was only ONE; No other; He was the creator; He is the Para Brahman; There are not many Gods;
2. Then let us look at Purusha Sukta. The Purusha Sukta is the 90th Sukta in the 10th Mandala - in the Rig Veda. Purusha refers to the Supreme Being. Para Brahman. He is described as the source of all creation.
3. The earliest statement on the Nature of Reality occurs in the first book of the Rig Veda. *"Ekam Sat-Viprah Bahudha Vadanti"*. "That which exists is One. But sages call it by various names." God, *Ishvara, Krishna, Lakshmi, Parvati, Yahweh, Allah*, etc, they are all names that different people use to describe the same.

Now let us look at some of the Maha Vakyas (great sayings).

- a. **"Ekam evadviteeyam Brahma"** (Brahman is one without second);
- b. **"Prajnanam Brahma"** (Consciousness is Brahman) - Aitareya Upanishad
- c. **"Tat tvam asi"** (You are that) - Chandoyopanishad.
- d. **"Ayam Atma Brahma"** (Atman and Brahman are the same) Mandukyopanishad "Aham Brahmasmi" (I am Brahman).
- e. Brihadaranyaka Upanishad. Without any limitations like Avidya etc the Atman is Brahman.
- f. **"Sarvam Kalvidam Brahma."** (All that we see is Brahman)

From all this we reach the conclusion that - we are not talking of many Gods; we are also not talking of one God; we are saying there is only God.

Now to the question of Gods like - Rama, Krishna, Ganesha, Shiva. Worship is possible in two ways (a) for Saguna Brahman (b) Nirguna Brahman.

- (a) Nirguna Brahman: It refers to Abstract meditation (i.e.) worship of Formless, attribute-less Brahman. It is not easy. It may be practiced by highly advanced Yogis.
- (b) Saguna Brahman: Concrete meditation. Worship of *Parameshvar* as *Rama*, *Krishna*, and idols etc fall under *Saguna Brahman*. Easier for people like us - who require some help in concentration. Everything like temple worship, *Puja*, homa etc fall under the category of worshipping *Saguna Brahman*.

What about worshipping other Gods like - Sun, Moon and others?

These are Other Gods brought out by the *Supreme Brahman*. They are called *Vibhutis* (manifestations) of the Supreme Being. They are *Devatatas* with extraordinary powers. However, they derive their power from the Supreme Brahman.

Idol worship

Human beings are slaves of symbols. Animals do not have this problem. Man lives in a world of symbols. His education is full of symbols – Physics, Chemistry etc. Governments have symbols. Parties have symbols. Music has symbols. Photographs of families are also symbols. Companies and their products have symbols. In fact, the man's name is also a symbol. The symbol instantly brings to the mind a picture of the object. We are all quite happy in using these symbols. Yet, when we use symbols to focus our mind on our favourite Gods we have questions raised. We shall now try to understand our reasons to worshipping idols.

As explained earlier we do have enlightened Sadhaks practicing Nirguna Brahman Upasana. However, for an average person involved in Samsara it will be a very difficult task. He needs some aid in focusing his attention. He adopts Pratika Upasana. Pratika means a symbol. Meditation on idols, pictures of Lord Rama, Krishna, Shiva, Rajarajeshwari come under this category. We have just stated that Hindus believe that God is everywhere. Extending this thought God is there in the idol that I am worshipping. When I worship the idol, I am not worshipping the stone in front of me. I am worshipping the God within that idol. In the Vaishnava tradition, the idols are referred to as Archa avatar. And there are four classes of them. They are :

- (1) Svayamvyakta: This refers to the class of idols that are believed to have been self-created. Examples are idols found in temples such as Srirangam, Tirupati, Kanchi etc.
- (2) Divya: This refers to idols that have been installed and consecrated by Divinities such as Brahma, Indra and others
- (3) Arsha: This refers to idols that have been installed and consecrated by sages and seers such as Bhrigu, Markandeya and others
- (4) Manusha: Refers to idols / images installed and consecrated in temples or in their houses. Other religions also do have symbols before which they kneel and offer prayers.

Pratima, the idol, is a substitute or symbol. The image, though it is made of stone, wood or metal, is precious for the devotee as it bears the mark of his Lord. It stands for something which he holds as holy and eternal. He superimposes all the attributes of the Lord on the image when he prays. The idol will remain an idol but the worship goes to the Lord. The *Sadhak* feels the presence of the Lord in the Idol and pays all the respects due to a Master of Masters and the Lord of Lords. In his unbridled emotion, he pours out –

***“Tvameva Mata cha pita tvameva tvameva bandusca guru
tvameva***

***tvameva Vidya dravinam tvameva tvameva sarvam mama deva
deva”***

Meaning

O Lord of Lords (*Deva, Deva*), you are my mother (*Mata*); You are my father (*pita*); You are my sole relative (*bandhu*); You are my Guru; You are my knowledge (*Vidya*); You are my wealth (*dravinam*); You are everything to me (*sarvam*). It is true that everyone in this world is driven by symbols. A flag is not a piece of cloth – it is a national symbol. The government seal is not any rubber stamp – it carries a symbol of authority. Idol worship is not peculiar to Hinduism. The Christians worship the cross. The Mohammedans keep the image of the *Kaba* stone, when they kneel and do prayers. Even a *Vedantin* has the symbol of OM for fixing his wandering mind. The divinity of the all pervading God is shining in every atom of His creation and He is there in the

idols as well. According to the *Vaishnava* system *Sriman Narayana* is present in consecrated images (*Archavata*r) also.

The ways and rules for worship – *Puja Vidhi* are described in Hindu scriptures. There are sixteen steps described when you want to worship an idol – *Shodasha Upachara*. The details are given below. All the steps are accompanied with the chanting of mantras.

No	<i>Upachara</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
1	<i>Aavahana</i>	Invoking the God.
2	<i>Aasana</i>	Here it means welcoming God to take His seat in the idol or the symbol which we are worshipping. In essence, it is the offering of one's heart as the throne or seat
3	<i>Paadya</i>	It is washing the feet of the idol or symbol. Here the water offered is devotion to the feet of God
4	<i>Arghya</i>	Offering water to the hands of the God. Once again it refers to offering oneself into the hands of the God
5	<i>Aachamana</i>	Offering pure water for sipping
6	<i>Snaana</i>	Ceremonial bathing with milk, sugar, honey and water
7	<i>Vastra</i>	Offering new and beautiful clothes and wrapping them around the idol. This means, donning oneself with divine wisdom and living in a world untainted by passion
8	<i>Upavita</i>	Offering of the sacred thread. Reference here is – to be filled with pure thoughts
9	<i>Vilepana</i>	Refers to besmearing the body of the Supreme Being with musk, red powder and sandalwood paste. We are adoring the Lord with all that is noble in man
10	<i>Pushpa</i>	Offering of flowers. It means that we are offering our heart
11	<i>Dhupa</i>	Burning of incense. It refers to burning our sins by the fire of wisdom

12	<i>Deepa</i>	The wick of light which is kept or waved before the holy symbol of the God. This refers to burning the egoistic mind and <i>Karma</i> .
13	<i>Naivedya</i>	Offering of the food – offering of great mantras or prayers.(a) <i>Taambula</i> : Offering of betal leaf and betal nut to purify the mouth after food. This is the word of wisdom emanating from the feast of mantra. : (b) <i>Jala</i> : Water to rinse the mouth. <i>Vasanas</i> or subtle desires are thrown out while rinsing : (c) <i>Madhuparka</i> : Fruits offered after the rinsing of the mouth. Fruits refer to the four types of liberation (1) <i>Saaroopya</i> – attaining the likeness of God. (2) <i>Saalokya</i> – living in the abode of God. (3) <i>Saamipy</i> a: living near God (4) <i>Saaujya</i> : Merging in God
14	<i>Pradakshina and Namaskara</i>	Perambulation and salutation
15	<i>Mantrapushpa</i>	Offering of flowers and red rice for peace.
16	<i>Sayya</i>	Offering the most beautiful bed to God for Him to rest. This refers to offering our pure heart to God and praying to Him to make our heart as His abode

There are different stages of worship. The first stage is idol worship and forms the seed from which his understanding will grow. At this first stage the *sadhaka* superimposes the God and his attributes on the idol. Gradually, he will see the Lord in the idol and in all creatures, in all the names and forms in this universe. He will feel His presence everywhere. He will then be able to perform mental worship. Eventually, with unceasing worship on the Supreme *Brahman*, he will inch towards *Brahma Saakshatkaara*.

For various people, practice of elaborate rituals or *Yogas* may not be possible. *Moksha* will then remain a dream for them and *Samsara* will be eternal. However, it is not as if their cause is lost. In the *Bhagavad Gita* Lord *Krishna* assures -

**“Sarvadarman Parityajya Mam Ekam Saranam Vraja |
Aham tva Sarva Papebhyo Mokshayishyami Masuchaha ||”**

This is the noblest of all *Shlokas* in the *Bhagavad Gita*. To *Sri Ramanujacharya*, this is the final verse (*charama Shloka*) of the whole *Gita*. So these are the final verses of Lord *Krishna* to *Arjuna* in the 18th chapter, 66th *Shloka* of the *Gita*. The meaning is - if the aspirant has no capacity to perform *Sadhanas like Karma Yoga, Jnana Yoga or Bhakti Yoga* etc, he can perform this alternative *sadhana* through *charama sloka*. "Having given up all *Dharmas* or rites unintentionally, surrender to the Lord alone. I will release you from all sins and give *Moksha*". It explains that Lord as the only *Upaya* or means to be adopted.

Homa or Havan

Homa (also known as homam or havan) is a Sanskrit word which refers to any ritual in which making offerings into a consecrated fire is the primary action. Homa is an important religious practice in Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism.

Homa and Aradhana are basically offering of intensive Puja to different Gods and Goddesses. Some call it Homa Puja; some call it Homam or Homan. People do Homa Puja and Aradhana to get faster spiritual effects or to get benefits like - To get peace of mind and happiness , peace at home (griha shanti) and at workplace

Although a consecrated fire is the central element of every homa ritual, the procedure and items offered to the fire vary by the occasions for the ceremony, or by the benefit expected from the ritual. Procedures invariably involve -

- The kindling and consecration of the sacrificial fire;
- The invocation of one or more divinities; and,

The making of offerings (whether real or visualized) to them with the fire as a media, amid the recitation of prescribed prayers and mantras. The goal of all Homams is the prosperity of the people at large by energizing and protecting the environment. The Sun is considered as the main source of energy supply, and fire is considered as a representation of the Sun's energy.

How the Homam is performed?

Each Homam is performed strictly according to scriptures. These are conducted by fully learned and experienced Vedic scholars. The ingredients required for these homams are different for each homam. Each homam is performed after praying (Sankalpa) for the specific relief / benefit desired for the individual.

Yagyas

Yagna is a ritual of sacrifice.

A Vedic (*shrauta*) Yagna is typically performed by an *adhvaryu* priest, along with a number of additional priests such as the *hotar*, *udgatar* playing supporting roles, by reciting or singing Vedic verses.. Usually, there will be one or three fires at the centre of the offering ground and items are offered into the fire. Among the items offered as oblations in the Yagna are large quantities of ghee, milk, grains, cakes or soma. The duration of a Yagna depends on the type; some can last a few minutes, hours or days and some even last for years, with priests continuously making offerings to the gods accompanied by the singing of sacred verses. Some Yagnas are performed privately, others with a large number of people in attendance.

A typical Hindu marriage is a Yagna, because Agni is supposed to be the witness for all marriages. Brahmins and certain other castes receive a *yagyopavita* "sacred thread" at their upanayana rite of passage. The *yagyopavita* symbolizes the right of the individual to study the Vedas and to carry out Yagnas or homas.

There are 400 yagyas described in the Vedas. Of these, 21 are theoretically compulsory for a Brahmin. They are also called *nityakarmas*. The rest of the Yagna are optional, which are performed for specific benefits- *kamyakarma*

Reasons for doing Shraaddha

Prana

The nucleus of all activities of the body is the *Prana*. It gets its work done through *Upa-Pranas* or secondary *Pranas* just as a king gets his work done by his subordinates. Each of these *Upa-Pranas* have their own work areas and they operate from specified action centres so to say. However, it must be noted that there is only one vital-breath or *Prana*. The five Pranas are – (a) *Prana* (b) *Apana* (c) *Vyana* (d) *Udana* (e) *Samana*. Different names are given to it on account of the different duties it performs in the body. The fivefold nature is a functional division.

The *Prana* dwells in the eye, the ears, nose and mouth enabling them to see, to hear, inhale and exhale and speak. *The Apana* is in the organs of excretion and procreation and initiates the process of discharge of the wastes and procreation. Between the *Prana* and *Apana*, in the region of the navel is located *Samana*. The body energy and vitality produced by digestion is equally distributed by its function. The lotus like heart is the seat the subtle *Atman* known as *Lingatma*. From within the space of the heart seventy

thousand energy channels branch out. *Prana* moves *through* all these channels giving energy to all the limbs and senses. For this reason, it is also referred to as *Vyana*.

At the time of death *Udana*, raises *by* the *Susumna-nadi* (One of the energy channels) which goes up to the top of the head taking the soul after it and departs the body. It reaches regions of the blessed or that of the condemned depending upon the good or bad actions performed. Evidently, *Udana* is the subtle aspect of the *Prana* which not only pervades the whole system, but also controls the *Linga sharira* (subtle body) in which the soul resides.

The Body

This physical body is composed of five great elements or the *Mahabhutas*, namely, earth, water, fire, air and ether. The *Devas* or gods are endowed with a divine or luminous body. The fire *Tattva* is predominant in them. In man the earth *Tattva* is predominant in us. In the case of aquatic animals the element of water predominates. In the case of birds the element of air predominates.

Hardness of the body is due to the portion of earth (*Prithvi*); the fluidity in us, is due to portion of water (*Apah*); the warmth that you feel in the body is due to fire (*Agni*); moving to and fro and such other activities are due to air (*Vayu*); space is due to *Akasa* or ether. *Jivatma* or the individual soul is different from the five elements.

After death these elements are dissolved. They reach their original sources from the inexhaustible storehouse of nature. The element of earth goes and joins its storehouse of *Prithvi Tattva*. The other elements also go back to their sources.

The dead body is bathed and newly clothed and is taken to the cremation ground where it is laid on the funeral pyre. The *Mantras* that are now chanted are addressed to the spirit. The spirit is invoked to throw out from its body its five *Pranas* or the vital airs, so that they may mingle with their counterparts in the external air. The body is then addressed to dissolve itself with its five material components of earth, water, fire, air and ether from where it originally arose. The body is then offered to fire. The spirit which is thus driven out of the body in consequence of the dissolution begins its onward march to the Beyond. The respective functions of the organs are blended with the presiding gods. Sight goes to the Sun from where it had its power of vision; speech goes to the fire, life-breath to the air, the ear into the quarters, the body into the earth, hairs into annual herbs, hairs of the head into trees and blood and semen into waters.

Pancha Pranas

Vayu is wind or air. *Vayu* is *Prana* or vital force. *Prana* moves the senses or *Indriyas*. *Prana* generates thoughts. *Prana* moves the body and causes locomotion. *Prana* digests the food, circulates the blood, excretes urine and motion. *Prana* causes respirations. It is through *Prana* you see, hear, feel, taste and think. The sum total of all *Pranas* is *Hiranyagarbha* or Lord *Brahma*. *Prana* is manifestation of *Prakritis*. Gross *Prana* is breath. Subtle *Prana* is vital force. Just as there is the subtle bladder within the football, so also there is the subtle body or *Sukshma Deha* within this gross body. *Udana Vayu* draws out the subtle body from the gross body at the time of death. It is this subtle body that goes to heaven and works in the dreaming state. *Udana Vayu* is the vehicle of transport for all *Pranas*. Its abode is the throat.

This immortal Soul or *Atman* which is the source and support for all the *Pranas*, mind, intellect, senses and the body abides in the chambers of your heart. This *Atman* is in the heart where there are a hundred and one arteries. Every one of these has seventy-two thousand branches. *Vyana* which does the circulation of blood moves in these arteries. A dead body cannot speak, cannot see. It remains like a log. It is the soul that enlivens, galvanises, moves and directs the body, mind and senses.

Udana, which goes up through one of these, leads you to the higher worlds by means of your meritorious actions, to the evil worlds by means of your evil deeds and to the world of men by a mixture of both deeds.

Onward March to the Beyond

The soul in its disembodied form hovers about its original and familiar places for ten days. It is in the form of a ghost during these ten days. The astral body takes shape from day to day with the formation of the head, eyes, and other limbs of the *Linga Sarira*, fed and nourished by the sesame and water poured out in libation over the stones which represent the ancestors.

The soul is fully embodied on the eleventh day. It starts on its journey to the judgement seat of Lord *Yama*, the God of death. It takes one full year from the time of death to reach Lord *Yama*'s place. The path is beset with obstacles, distress and difficulties. The man who has done the most wicked deeds suffers more. But the difficulties can be removed and the journey be rendered easy and comfortable by the oblations and offerings given by the son of the deceased during the first year of the soul's journey and by feeding pure and learned Brahmins. The son should offer rice-balls to the father, without weeping. Death is certain for those who are born, and birth is certain for the dead.

This is inevitable. Therefore, you should not grieve over it. The ten days' rites should not be neglected. The son should perform the *Sapinda* ceremony on

the twelfth day and the sixteen monthly offerings. The soul is sustained on its onward march to the judgement seat by the libations offered to it by the son.

The soul is scorched on the way by intense heat, but the gift of an umbrella by his son on the eleventh day gives pleasant shade above his head. The path is full of great thorns, but the gift of shoes helps him to go riding on horses. The miseries of cold, heat and wind are dreadful there, but he goes happily along the way by the power of gift of clothes. There is great heat and there is no water, but drinks water when thirsty, through the gift of a water-pot by his son. The son should make a gift of a cow.

Chitragupta, the recorder of fact, the Accountant-General in the Kingdom of Lord *Yama* informs the soul of his good and bad actions in his earthly life after the end of one full year. The soul leaves off its *Pretatva* or the garb of a traveller on this day. He is raised to the status of a *Pitri* or Ancestor.

Ancestor-worship is one of the fundamental doctrines of Hinduism. There are three stages:

in the ancestral life viz., father, grandfather and great grandfather, and mother, grandmother and great grandmother. These are the ancestors to anyone living here. He who has done meritorious actions on this earth-life becomes united with his ancestors in the *Pitri-loka* and lives with them.

Those who have given up the performance of *Sraaddha*, *Tarpana* and other religious rites on account of wrong influence, ignorance and egoism have done great harm to their ancestors and themselves. They should wake up now. They should start doing these ceremonies from now. It is not too late now.

Departure of Soul

At the time of death when the breathing becomes difficult the Jiva or the individual self (*Atman*) that is in the body goes out making noises. The departure of the *Atman* is immediately followed by the departure of the vital force (*Prana*). It is presided over by the Supreme self-luminous Atman. It goes making noises because it is afflicted by the pain as the vital parts are being slashed. Loss of memory is caused as a result of this vital and excruciating pain. He is then put in a helpless state of mind on account of the pangs felt. At this point in time man cannot think of God. He should have practiced much earlier a suitable means for that end. When the man is about to die, the various organs withdraw themselves into their original sources and help no more the function of the organs. In death there is a complete withdrawal of the organs into the heart or the heart-lotus or *Akasa* of the heart.

Knowledge, work and past experience are the three factors in deciding the future of an individual. One should, therefore, cultivate virtues, perform good

actions so that he may attain a desirable and agreeable body with desirable enjoyments.

Soul's journey after death

The soul accompanied by the chief vital air (*Mukhya Prana*), the sense-organs and the mind. It takes with itself ignorance, good and evil actions and the impressions left by his previous existence, leaves its former body and obtains a new body. When the soul passes from one body to another he is enveloped by the subtle parts of the elements which are the seeds of the new body. He rises on the road leading through the smoke and so on, to the sphere of the moon. After enjoying the fruits of his good actions he again descends to the earth with a remainder of the *Karma*, by the route he went or differently. When the *Karma*, which gave the soul a birth as a god in heaven, is exhausted, the remaining *Karma*, good or bad, brings him back to the earth.

It is not possible that in one life the entire *Karma* of the previous life is worked out. Because a man might have done both good and bad deeds, as a result of which he is born as a god, or as an animal. The working out of both kinds of *Karmas* simultaneously in one birth is not possible. Hence although the result of virtuous actions is exhausted by the enjoyment in heaven, there still are other *Karmas* in store according to which a man is born again in good or bad environments. The soul has a vision of the body to come.

Shraaddha

The *Karma Kanda* of the *Vedas*, the sacred books of the *Hindus*, has laid down different duties for man according to his position in life and according to the order to which he belongs. All these injunctions are embodied in the book called *Manusmriti*. *Manusmriti* is the code of law and conduct for the *Hindus*. Kings and rulers of the past were guided by the rules contained therein for the maintenance of peace and order in the country. The *Manusmriti* has divided human society into four main divisions known as *Brahmana*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaisya* and *Shudra*. It has also made four divisions of the different stages of life of an individual viz., *Brahmacharya*, *Garhasthya*, *Vanaprastha* and *Sannyasa*. *Brahmacharya* is the life of a student, *Garhasthya*, the household life, *Vanaprastha*, the life in the forest given to religious pursuits, and lastly *Sannyasa*, the life of a mendicant after renouncing all worldly activities. These are the four *Ashramas* of life.

For a householder the scriptures have imposed the *Pancha Maha Yajnas*, the five great sacrifices as obligatory duties of life. The neglect of these duties entails penalty. These great sacrifices are:

1. *Deva Yajna* (sacrifice to gods),

2. *Rishi Yajna* (sacrifice to Rishis),
3. *Pitri Yajna* (sacrifice to ancestors),
4. *Bhuta Yajna* (sacrifice to animals), and
5. *Atithi Yajna* (sacrifice to guests). The *Sraaddha* ceremony comes under *Pitri Yajna*. It is the sacred duty of the householder.

Every householder should perform the *Sraaddha* ceremony for his ancestors. *Pitris* are forefathers who dwell in the *Pitri-loka*. They possess the power of clairvoyance and clairaudience. When *Mantras* are recited, they exercise a tremendous influence through their vibrations. The *Pitris* hear the sounds through the power of clairaudience and they are pleased. They bless those who offer the oblation. In *Sraaddha*, the essence of food offerings is taken up by the Sun's rays to *Suryaloka* and the departed souls are pleased with the offerings.

It is the imperative duty of all householders to perform *Sraaddha* and *Tarpan* to please the *Rishis* and *Pitris*. The *Gita* and the *Upanishads* clearly bear testimony to the fact that the performance of *Sraaddha* is very important. It is only the deluded souls with perverted intellect who misconstrue things and neglect to perform the sacred ceremonies and consequently suffer. They are misguided by false reasoning and logic.

Sraaddha ceremony is done once in every year. A day of the *Pitris* is equal to one year of human computation. This is the reason why we have to perform *Sraaddha* ceremony once in a year.

If we perform *Sraaddha* ceremony once in every year, it is equal to daily performances of *Sraaddha* for the *Pitris*. In their calculation we, their sons, live only for a few days, because the longest period of human existence of 100 years is merely 100 days for them.

Some people entertain the doubt, "When the *Jiva* undergoes transmigration and takes another birth after leaving this physical body, is it necessary that we should perform *Sraaddha* ceremony for him? He is no more in the heavens. To whom will the oblations reach?" In the ninth chapter of the *Gita*, Lord *Krishna* has made it very clear that those virtuous persons who perform sacrifices for the attainment of heaven attain to those worlds of enjoyments. "They having enjoyed that spacious world of *Svargas*, their merit (*Punya*) exhausted, enter the world of the mortals; thus following the *Dharma* of the triad, desiring objects of desires, they attain to the state of going and returning." This establishes the theory of attainment of heaven after death, and rebirth in the mortal world after the exhaustion of virtuous acts. The enjoyments in heaven and peace of the soul are enhanced by the performance of *Sraaddha* ceremony. The suffering in worlds other than

heaven according to the merits of one's own actions is mitigated by the performance of *Sraaddha* ceremony by his sons. So in both cases the performance of *Sraaddha* is a great help. The *Pitris* remain in heaven (*Pitriloka, Chandraloka*) for a very long period.

According to the theory of transmigration, even if the individual is to take another birth immediately after his death, the performance of *Sraaddha* adds to his happiness in his new birth. So it is the imperative duty of everybody to perform *Sraaddha* ceremony for his parents and forefathers. *Sraaddha* ceremony should be performed with great *Sraddha* (faith) as long as you live.

Some people argue and say that if a man once performs *Sraaddha* ceremony to his forefathers at Gaya and other places of religious importance, he need not do it every year thereafter. This is not a general rule and does not apply to all. It applies only in certain exceptional cases. If people take shelter under this exception and discontinue *Sraaddha* ceremony by once offering *Pinda*, etc., at Gaya, they do so out of sheer ignorance. They consider it merely a burden to perform *Sraaddha* ceremony and avoid it. They have not discharged their duties properly.

The various religious observances imposed upon mankind by the *Shastras* tend to purify the ignorant man. The goal of *Karma Yoga* is purification of the mind. *Sraaddha* ceremony, being one of the obligatory duties, as per the injunctions of scriptures, also tends to purify the mind. Besides this, the forefathers are also pleased and their good wishes and blessings tend to our material and spiritual growth.

Chapter VIII - Selected Stutis



***Vedahametam Purusham Mahaatantam Adityavarnam tamasah
parasthath***

Tameva viditwati mrutyumeti naanyaha pandha vidyateyanaya

Swetashvaropanishad. 3.8

Introduction

I know the Supreme Purusha, who is of the colour of the sun and is beyond all darkness. It is only by knowing Him that one goes beyond death. There is no other way by which one can get there.

Everyone prays, some more often than others. Even a heavily indoctrinated atheist will pray one day. Prayer involves (a) someone who prays (b) altar at which a person offers his prayers (c) the mode of prayer. Prayer always has a purpose. You pray because you desire something. Even when you pray for mental clarity (Antahkarana shuddhi), peace of mind or the ultimate Moksha it is still a desire. Implicit in praying are three important truths (a) acceptance of his or her limitations - on the part of the person who is praying (b) acceptance of a superior Self who can grant your wishes. (c) acceptance that the Lord will listen to your prayers and grant your wishes. Acceptance is the first and direct result of prayer- the melting of ego. Prayer is worthless without devotion or Bhakti.

At times you achieve what you prayed for within a short time. Quite often, the results do not occur within a short time and are not seen by the anxious devotee. The unseen results will manifest in time and we call it (Kripa) grace. You can pray for yourself or for the welfare of others you love.

Prayer can be said in simple words or in a more elaborate ritualistic manner. Ramana Maharshi has described that prayer may be offered in any one of the three different forms- (a) Kaayika (physical) (b) Vacika (oral) (c) Maanasa (mental). Ritual is physical form of prayer. Singing the praise of the Lord is an oral form of prayer. Chanting a mantra silently is a mental form of prayer.

The practice of devotion takes the following nine different forms –

(1) Hearing about God (2) singing about His greatness (3) remembering Him (4) serving Him through the service of all beings as His embodiments (5) worshipping Him in Holy images (6) paying obeisance to Him (7) practicing the attitude of a servant towards Him (8) cultivating loving intimacy with Him (9) surrendering one's, body, mind and soul to Him.

		<i>Kaayika</i> (physical)	<i>Vacika</i> (oral)	<i>Maanasa</i> (mental)
1	Hearing about God	▲		
2	Singing about His greatness		▲	
3	Remembering Him			▲
4	Serving Him through the service of all beings as His embodiments	▲		▲
5	Worshipping Him in Holy images	▲	▲	
6	Paying obeisance to Him			▲
7	Practicing the attitude of a servant towards Him	▲	▲	▲
8	Cultivating loving intimacy with Him			▲
9	Surrendering one's, body, mind and soul to him	▲	▲	▲

Everything that is done should be dedicated to Lord Narayana.

***Kaayena vacha manas'endriyair vaa
buddhyaatmanava prakrute' svabhaavaat
karomi yad sakalam parasmai
Naraayanayeti samarpayami***

Whatever is done according to one's natural capacity by one's body, words, mind senses Buddhi and the self – all that should be dedicated to Lord Narayana, the Supreme Being.

Worship is the expression of devotion, reverence and love to the Lord. The Upaasaka prays to the Lord for granting him his wishes. The word Upaasana literally means sitting near God. Worship of the Lord has a number benefits – (a) purifies the heart (b) generates harmonious vibrations (c) steadies the mind (d) purifies and ennobles the emotions (e) harmonizes the five sheaths (f) eventually leads to God realization. Upaasana is of two kinds.

Pratika Upaasana: *Pratika* refers to a symbol. *Pratika Upaasana* is, in fact, *Saguna Upaasana* – that is worshipping God with a form. Meditation on idols, pictures of Lord Rama, Krishna, Shiva, Rajarajeshwari come under this category.

Ahamgraha Upaasana: Refers to *Nirguna Upaasana* on formless, attribute less *Akshara* or transcendental *Brahman*.

According to Sri Ramanujacharya (Vishishtadvaita) the Supreme Being is not a featureless, attribute less, indefinite and vague presence unsuited for worship and adoration. The Supreme Person has an archetypal form and pervades everything as their in dweller. In Himself, that is in His Swaroopa, He partakes of the following fivefold characteristics –

Satyam: Refers to truth that is unconditioned and changeless.

Jnanam: Refers to permanently un-contracted and all-comprehending knowledge as the Supreme subject

Anantam: Refers to infinity – not limited by categories of time, space etc.

Ananda: Refers to immeasurable and unmitigated bliss

Amalatva: Refers to stainless or incorruptibility (i.e.) freedom the hold of *Karma*

These are His inherent attributes that form His *Swaroopa* (inherent nature). Basically, these attributes are manifested in Him in relation to finite beings. However, He has additional qualities referred to as His *Swabhava* which is unrelated to anything.

In addition to these, the Supreme Being has manifested in Him countless auspicious qualities (known as *Kalyana Gunas*) described as His *Swabhava*. The characteristics forming the *Swabhava* are identified with six major qualities (*Bhagas*) described in the *Vishnu Purana* as powers characterizing the *Bhagavan* (God). They are *Jnana* (omniscience), *Bala* (Omnipotence), *Aishwarya* (lordship), *Shakti* (creative power), *Veerya* (immutability), and *Tejas* (splendour). *Sri Ramanujacharya* identified the *Upanisadic* Supreme *Brahman* with Lord *Narayana*. In *Gadya Trayam*, one of the major and brilliant works of *Sri Ramanujacharya*, more of this can be read. I have made an attempt to provide a commentary on *Gadya Trayam*.

While *Saguna Upaasana* is concrete meditation, *Nirguna Upaasana* is abstract meditation. The nine fold path of devotion detailed above constitutes *Saguna Upaasana*. Chanting of OM with *Atma Bhava* will come under *Nirguna Upaasana*. Practitioners of *Saguna* and *Nirguna Upaasana* attain the same goal. However, practice of *Nirguna Upaasana* places more demands on the *Sadhak*. A person choosing this path will have to give up attachment to his body from the very beginning of his spiritual practice.

The *Vedic Rishis* have viewed the entire Universe as a manifestation of the Supreme Being. Earth, water, fire, air, space are all His manifestations. Going one step further these *Rishis* have nominated each one of these manifestations as a *Devata* (God).

“Ekam sath vipraa bahudha vadanti”

There is only one Supreme Being. However, He is being referred to by different names.

We must clearly understand that in our religion, which I will call it as *Sanatana Dharma* (and not as Hindu religion) we worship one Supreme Being (*Parabrahman*). We have been accused of polytheism (worshipping of many Gods) which is incorrect.

When the *Rishis* offered their prayers to *Agni, Vaayu, Indra, Varuna*, they are, in fact, offering their prayers to that one Supreme Being who is supporting all these powers. As such when we pray for a targeted objective such as a healthy life or for a success in business or studies, for reaching greater heights in spiritual progress we are still praying to that one Supreme Self. It is for this reason that a major portion of the *Vedas* have been presented in the form of mantras / prayers. These prayers have come in a number of different forms.

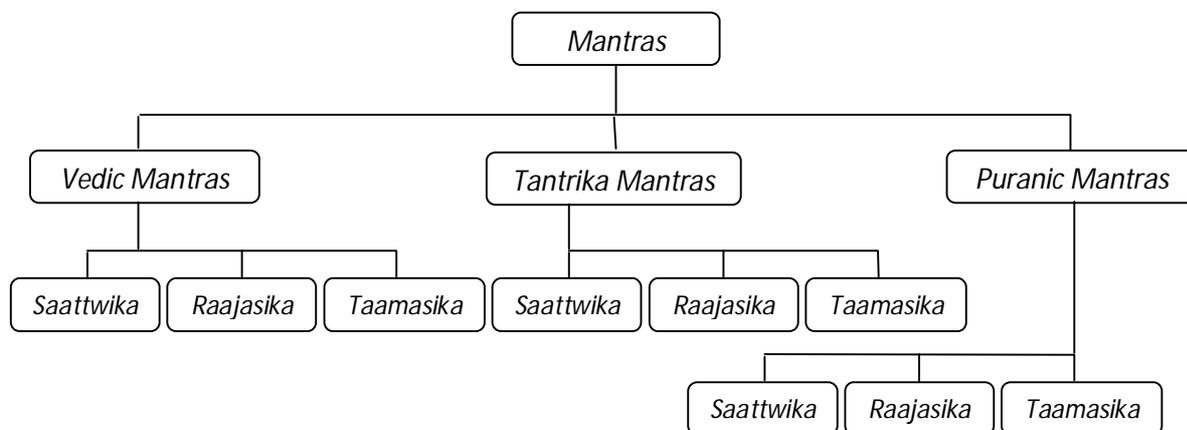
Mantras

“Mananath traayate iti mantraha” *Mantra* is a sacred word with thought power. There are various kinds of *Mantras*.

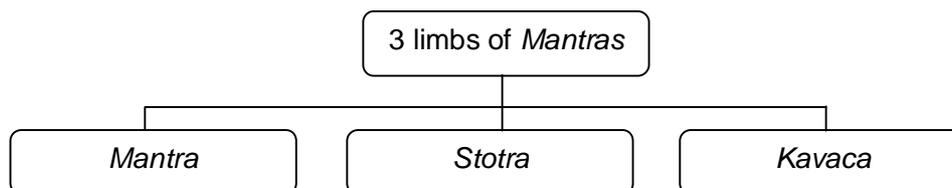
Saattwika Mantras: These are chanted for illumination, supreme divine love and realization of God.

Raajasika Mantras: These are chanted for progeny and worldly prosperity.

Taamasika Mantras: These are chanted for destroying or harming others.



There are three different classes in *Mantras*. They are called the “three limbs of *Mantras*”



(1) Mantra: As indicated earlier is, thought power, given in a few syllables or words for meditation.

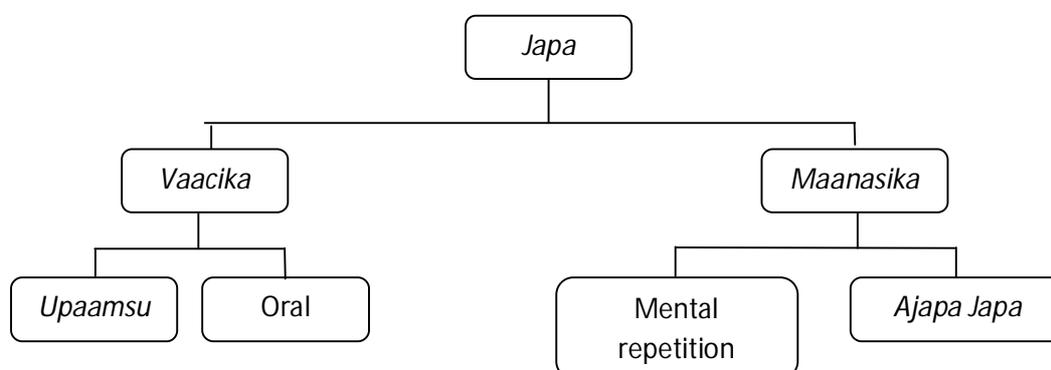
(2) Stotra : Refers to a prayer to a deity. This can be in two forms

(a) General *Stotras* are prayers for general goodness that has to come from God according to His will

(b) Specific *Stotras* refer to prayers offered from individuals seeking fulfilments of specific desires.

3) Kavaca: These *mantras* are used as armours for protection. A number of mantra armours are found in *Puranas*.

Japa: The importance of sound and proper intonation forms the basis for the effectiveness of *mantras*. Repetition of the holy incantation of the *mantra* is what is called *Japa*. The syllable “*Ja*” destroys birth and death cycle. The syllable “*pa*” destroys sins. That which destroys sins and puts an end to the birth-death cycle is called *Japa*. *Japa* can be classified as follows -



Vaacika: Refers to oral repetition of a *mantra*. This is classified into two categories – *Upaamsu* and oral

Upaamsu: Refers to the oral repetition of a mantra without making any sound. This is when the *Sadhak* repeats the mantra and others sitting even nearby will not be able to hear the sound.

Oral: In this case the mantra is repeated and the sound may be heard with lip movement. This is when the *Sadhak* repeats the mantra within the hearing of others.

Manasika: Refers to mental *Japa*. Once again there are two categories.

Mental repetition: The *Sadhak* does a mental repetition of the mantra.

Ajapa Japa: Refers to meditation on the breath. The *Sadhak* performs a meditation on the spirit of the mantra and the meaning of the sacred word without a movement of the tongue or the lips.

You may have noticed that all Veda *mantras* conclude with the words – *Om Shantih Shantih Shantih*.

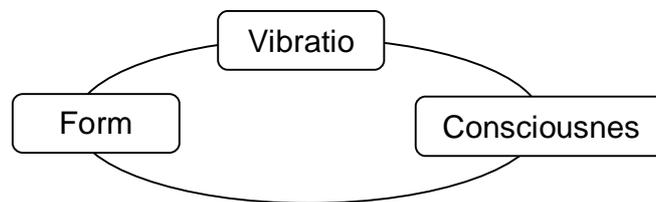
Shanti means peace. There is a reason behind repeating the word *Shantih* thrice. We usually encounter problems from three agencies.

- 1) Problems which we create for ourselves – such as physical ailments and mental stress.
- 2) Problems due to others
- 3) Problems due to nature and others that are beyond our control – such as rain, thunder, Fire

By uttering *Om Shantih Shantih Shantih* we are praying for protection from these agencies.

At this stage, it may be in order to try and get a better understanding of *mantra* and *Japa*. How are *mantras* constructed?

The basic principle underlying a *mantra* is that this Universe of ours is made up of different kinds of vibrations and energies working at different levels. We are familiar with the vibrations and energies that we experience in our everyday lives at the physical level – for example light, sound. However, the ancient *Rishis* have identified presence of vibrations and energies at the super-physical levels. They have also discovered that thoughts, emotions and even subtler worlds (*Sukshma lokas*), to which reference is made frequently in our religious literature are based on vibrations and energy plays. Further investigation by the *Rishis* revealed that not only all manifested worlds are based on various kinds of vibrations and energies but all these vibrations, in turn, are connected with one another and can be traced to one fundamental all embracing vibration. This primary vibration is the source of all other vibrations and is called “*Naada*”. The Ultimate Reality which is responsible for *Naada* is referred to as *Shabda Brahman*.



Another fact that has to be understood in the theory of mantra yoga is the existence of a relationship between vibrations, forms and consciousness.

An example is – light and sound vibrations are received by our sense organs (eyes and ears) and the form is recognized by our consciousness. When both these vibrations are cut off the form is not perceived on the physical plane.

A particular vibration will keep elements of a form together and the form will fall apart when the vibration ceases. These vibrations need not necessarily take place in the physical plane – but they may take place on different planes depending on the nature of the form and the life acting as the soul for it.

If vibration is related to both form and consciousness then we can use vibration to do two things – (a) use vibrations to produce different kinds of natural phenomena (b) bring about changes in consciousness.

Tantric literature gives a number of mantras which can be used to bring about some specific desired results. It just utilizes powers hidden in certain combination of sounds to yield the desired results. *Mantra Yoga*, on the other hand, utilizes powers hidden in certain combination of sounds for the un-folding human consciousness. *Japa*, which refers to physical or mental repetition of mantras produces vibrations in different planes and enables the *Sadhak* to reach deeper layers of consciousness. The eternal consciousness of the Supreme is everywhere and is beating all the time against the walls of our mind. It is our lack of sensitivity that is preventing us from recognizing it.

How are *mantras* constructed?

Mantra is composed of certain letters arranged in a definite sequence of sound of which the letters are the representative signs. *Mantra* must be intoned in the proper way according to *Svara* (rhythm) and *Varna* (sound). *Bija-Akshara* is a seed letter. It is a very powerful mantra. All *Devatas* have their own *Bija-Akshara*. Generally, the *Bija-Mantra* consists of a single letter. Sometimes it constitutes of several syllables. Though the *Bija-Mantras* have a significant inner meaning, they may not convey any on their face. The form of the *Bija-Mantra* is the form of the *Devata* signified by it. Examples of some *Bija-Mantras* are given below.

Five *Mahabhutas* (Ether, Air, Fire, Water and Earth) *Ham, Yam, Ram, Vam, Lam*

<i>Parabrahman</i>	<i>Aum</i>
<i>Shiva</i>	<i>Haum</i>
<i>Mahalakshmi</i>	<i>Shreem</i>
<i>Saraswati</i>	<i>Aim</i>
<i>Ganesh</i>	<i>Gam</i>

Mantras are constructed by arranging the letters of the alphabet in certain combinations with necessary directions for their exact and correct pronunciation. Obviously, this can only be done by a person who knows the subtler properties of the different sounds. No one can predict the effect produced by a certain combination of sounds without a thorough investigation and experimentation. These experiments have to be performed both on the physical and super physical planes. It is then obvious only great *Rishis* who know the effects produced by sounds and their combinations are qualified to construct *mantras* and pass them on to *Sadhakas* for their *Japa*. The particular *Rishi* who has discovered or constructed the mantra after the necessary investigation is called the *Rishi* of that particular mantra. Naturally, the power of the mantra is dependent on the potency of the sound combinations used and the investigations on its pronunciation and effects carried out by the *Rishi*.

The crucial point to remember in regard to the Japa is that it is not a mechanical repetition of a name. What is required is complete focus of all the powers of the individual towards a definite end. One should remember that nothing can be gained in this world without an effort and nothing can be gained suddenly. You must be prepared for a long, persistent and earnest effort. It is a gradual process. There are no short cuts.

Gayatri Mantra

(*Rig Veda 3.62.10*)

The *Japa* (meditative utterance) of the *Gayatri* is an integral part of *Sandhya*, the daily practice of the Hindu. This mantra is capable of unfolding our spiritual faculties in a remarkable manner.

Understanding the nature of Gayatri:

In Hindu scriptures, the word *Gayatri* is used in 3 different senses. (a) The well known *Gayatri mantra* which is recited during *Sandhya* (b) For the meter or *Chandas* in which the above *mantra* is cast (c) For the *Devi* (or Goddess) who wields the power of this mantra.

At the start of creation when manifestation takes place, the primary differentiation is into Consciousness and Power (*Shakti*). This *Shakti*, in turn, differentiates further into innumerable powers corresponding to the multifarious functions which have to be performed in a manifested universe. Each power or *Shakti* is matched by a corresponding function of consciousness. These *Shaktis* and associated consciousnesses are the *Devis* and *Devatas* of Hinduism. Each function and power is given a particular name and form. The form given has a deep symbolic reference with a view to give a concept of the particular divine function or power.

It is said that the *Rishis* have recognized 330 million *Devatas* of various gradations who have their abodes in various *Lokas* or regions. Each *Devata* has a name or *mantra* for which he is the presiding deity. When a *Sadhak* chants the specific *mantra* he is, in fact, invoking the particular *Devata* or *Shakti*. The mind, occupied in the contemplation of such a deity, takes the shape of that deity or becomes as powerful and pure as the deity.

To effectively propitiate a deity two essential requirements exist –

(1) *Bhakti* or devotion. (2) *Mantra Kriya*.

Chanting a mantra without devotion becomes mechanical and is not beneficial. At the same time, when a *Sadhak* chants a mantra with devotion with neither the external form of worship (with knowledge of its esoteric meaning) nor internal worship (such as

sacrificing the ego or the burning of all desires) the chanting does not yield the full benefits.

That brings us to the question on what particular function that *Gayatri Devi* performs. The main function of *Gayatri* is the liberating function of the Supreme *Brahman* which frees the *Jeevatmas* from bondage. Bondage is brought about by the *Jiva* identifying itself with matter (*Prakruti*). Self realization starts when the *Jeeva* realizes the error in this cognition. The more we identify ourselves with matter or *Prakruti*, the more we become slaves of our vehicles and environment. The more we identify ourselves with *Self* or consciousness the more we free ourselves from *Jada Jagat* (material Universe) and our journey towards realizing *Para Brahman* begins.

This realization can take place at 3 levels – Intellectual, intuitional and Real. The word Real is being used here to convey *Pratyaksha Jnana* or realization. The 3 forms of *Gayatri* used in *trikala- Sandhya* (worship performed at 3 junctures of the day) are connected with these 3 stages.

At the early stages, it is possible to acquire some knowledge of *Brahman* and His functions in the Universe by studying various books. This knowledge is purely intellectual- just theoretical knowledge without being backed by any personal experience. Yet this is an important step for further progress.

This leads to the next step of knowing *Brahman* through intuition or spiritual perception. By long and continued practice of moral disciplines and the practice of *Dhyana* (concentration) and *Upaasana* (continuous thought of God) the mind of the seeker is purified and develops the power to receive the Divine. At this stage the seeker's faith is strengthened by the glow of love and develops into *Paraa Bhakti*. His mind, without external simulation, goes towards God in place of sense objects.

The devotee then feels a great attraction towards the God and the feeling will start intensifying. By then the devotee is madly in love with the Supreme Self and is always in intimacy with the divine.

This kind of perception is indirect perception of the Reality. By now the *Sadhak* starts recognizing the immanent Reality through various forms. *Sadhak* then passes on to the more exalted stage of *Parama Bhakti* and continues to be in direct touch with the Supreme Self. And the Supreme Self is also the Universal Mind in which the knowledge of all the *Vedas* is contained. It can then be seen that the effective way of knowing the *Vedas* is through *Gayatri* or any other means which brings about this gradual unfoldment of our consciousness. For this reason *Gayatri* is referred to as Mother of the *Vedas*.

I have stated that the function of the Gayatri is to free the *Jeeva* from bondage and to wipe out the sins. It should not be understood that *Gayatri Upaasana* at the end of each day is a convenient way to destroy all sins committed during the day. It is to be understood that the *Upaasana* counteracts tendencies to commit sins or evil actions and strengthens spiritual prowess.

The Gayatri Mantra

***Om Bhoorbhuvasuvah
Tat Saviturvarenyam Bhargo Devasya Dheemahi
Dhiyo yo nah prachodayaath***

To start with, we have to understand a couple of things –

- (1) Gayatri mantra is not a pure mantra alone! It is, in fact, both a mantra and a prayer.

A pure mantra depends for its effectiveness upon the power of the *mantra Shakti* – the power inherent in the sound. In a few cases, the mantra may not appear to carry a meaning on the face of it. Gayatri mantra has inherent in it a tremendous power. This mantra is then combined with a prayer. Prayer, offered with intense devotion and feeling, once again, has a tremendous power. Thus when the power of the mantra is combined with the power of the prayer we then get a very potent tool for the unfoldment of our spiritual potentialities.

- (2) The mantra can be viewed to consist of three well defined parts

- a) The first part consists of the *Pranava* and *Maha Vyahritis*
- b) The second part consists of *Tat Savitur Varenyam Bhargo Devasya Dheemahi*
- c) The third part consists of *Dhiyo Yo Nah Prachodayaat*

Let us now consider the purpose of these three parts –

The purpose of the first part is to arouse the spiritual powers which are latent in the heart of every human being. The spiritual powers are transformed from a potential to an active form. The potency inherent in the sound of the first part does this function.

The purpose of the second part is to stimulate in the mind of the *Sadhak*, an intense resolve to come into contact with the consciousness of *Savita*, the presiding deity of our solar system.

The purpose of the third part is to bring about an attitude of self-surrender on the part of the *Sadhak*. This is essential for the flow of Divine grace (*Kripa*)

Pranava - OM

Pranava, the humming sound produced by the one lettered word *OM* is not an ordinary mantra. *OM* is formed by adding the three letters A,U,M. A represents the physical plane and the waking state, U represents the astral or mental plane and the dreaming state, M represents all the deep sleep state and that is unknown and the reach of the intellect even in our waking state. *OM* is regarded as the symbol of *Parabrahman*. It is indicated in the Yoga sutra – “ tasya vaachakah Pranavah”. In fact, the whole Mandukya Upanishad is a commentary on the Pranava. Chant OM for an hour and any other word also for one hour. You will feel the difference yourself.

OM is regarded to consist of eight limbs – *Akara, Ukara, Makara, Ardhamatra, Nada, Bindu, Kala and Shakti*. All triplets are considered to be represented by *OM*. Some examples are given below –

A	U	M
Brahma	Vishnu	Shiva
Saraswati	Lakshmi	Durga
Rajas	Sattva	Tamas
Body	Mind	Soul
Gross	Subtle	Causal
Jagrat	Svapna	Sushupti
Past	Present	Future
Sat	Chit	Ananda
Creation	Preservation	Destruction
Prakruti	Jivatma	Paramatma
Birth	Life	Death

It is impossible for an average reader to understand the occult significance and the meaning attached to the names referred to in these *Mantras*. The *mantra Hrim* is said to be the *Sthula Pranava* and the *AUM* as the *Sukshma Pranava*.

The *Japa* of *Pranava* is, by itself, an independent and powerful means of spiritual unfoldment . Its inclusion in the *Gayatri mantra* increases enormously the effectiveness of *Gayatri*.

Maha Vyaahriti

Bhoorbhuvasuvah

What *Pranava* is to the *Ishvara* of our solar system the *Maha Vyahritis* are to the presiding deities of the lowest three planes in which we live in our everyday life – namely the physical, astral and mental planes. In the Hindu scriptures they are called *Prithvi, Antariksha and Swarga*. The three deities or *Devas* of the three *tattwas* (principles) which predominate on the three planes are – *Agni, Vaayu and Aditya*. The three *Maha Vyahritis* are the *Bija Mantras* (seed *mantras*) of the three deities. It is true that *Ishvara* is Lord of all in the Universe. Yet the powers aroused by the *Maha Vyahritis* are indirectly derived from the Lord Himself. The general power of the *Pranava* is supplemented by the special powers of the *Maha Vyahritis*. A story from *Chandogyopanishad* throwing some light on the *Maha Vyahritis* is interesting.

Once *Prajapati* performed *samyama* (yogic meditation) on the nature of the Universe (*Vishwa*) and found that the essence of the physical world (*Prithvi*) was *Agni*, that of the Astral world (*antariksha*) is *Vayu* and for the lower heaven (*swarga*) is *Aditya*. On further meditation he found that the essence of *Agni* was *Rig Veda*, that for *Vayu* was *Yajur Veda*, and that for *Aditya* was *Sama Veda*. On further investigation he found that the essence of *Rig Veda* was *Bhuh*, for *Yajur Veda* it turned out to be *Bhuvah* and for *Sama Veda* it was *Suvah*. *Prajapati* then reflected on the *Maha Vyahritis*. Out of this reflection was born *OM*. As the veins pervade all leaves so does *OM* pervade all *Vaak* (sound)

Though these things belong to different categories, the story brings out the fact that that they are inter-related. The reason for this is – that all these are derived from the same Supreme Reality which differentiates in different ways to produce *Shaktis* of different types. In the same way the *Maha Vyahritis* may be considered as a differentiated form of *Pranava*.

From this story, we can understand that the *Maha Vyahritis* are the *Bija mantras* of the three *Devas Agni, Vaayu and Aditya*. They are also the presiding deities for the lowest three planes in which we live our ordinary lives, namely the physical (*Prithvi*), astral

(*antariksha*), and mental (*svarga*). These are also the *Devatas* of the three principles or *tattvas* which dominate the three planes. We will come to that shortly

We now come to the second part of the Gayatri mantra –

Tat Savitur Varenyam Bhargo Devasya Dheemahi

In short it means – we meditate upon the divine light of that adorable Sun of spiritual consciousness which stimulates our power of spiritual perception. However, there is far more to it when you probe into it.

This is, in fact, an invocation to *Savita* for more light or more enlightenment. It is a call of the individual self to the Supreme Self for the ultimate goal in life.

And who is *Savita*?

This refers to the Sun in the Solar system. Our understanding of Sun is - that it is the source of all kinds of energies which are needed for life support in the Solar system. But the ancient Rishis have pointed out that the Sun's role is not limited to being the centre and source for physical life only. In fact, it nourishes other aspects of life as well – physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. This Devata, this mighty and stupendous consciousness, is referred to as *Surya Narayana*. Hence, the reference to *Savita* is not just for the globe of fire that we see and feel but for the complete entity including the spiritual Sun of consciousness. One, who has realised the mystery behind the Sun, would have gone a long way in realising the mystery behind the cosmos. Hence, the *Savita* of the Gayatri mantra is a fitting objective for a *Sadhak*.

What is *bharga*? – the light of *Savita*.

The spiritual Sun is the very core of the spiritual consciousness. That spiritual consciousness is stepped down in the various lokas or planes. We contact this minimized versions of His consciousness at different levels by going into deeper layers of our own consciousness. However, the Ultimate reality is indivisible and changeless. When it appears as a limited version or conditioned consciousness of grades (*bharga*) at different planes, one must understand that we are just experiencing the reflection of the Ultimate Reality in our mind (*chitta*) which gives us an impression of different types of consciousness.

Why is this called *Varenyam*?

Varenyam in Sanskrit means “excellent”, and for that reason the most desirable and should be sought after. Naturally, from what has been written earlier, its ability to unfold our consciousness and take us on a path that will put an end to the cycle of births and deaths is the single most important reason for desiring it.

dhimahi

It is a *sankalpa* or assertion of determination.

Now we come to the third part –

Dhiyo Yo Nah Prachodayaat

As explained earlier, the *Sadhak* surrenders himself completely. Complete self-surrender implies destruction of all forms of ego. This is an essential condition for the flow Divine *Kripa*. The word “*dhiya*” means *Buddhi* and “*Prachodayaat*” means may (He) unfold. The meaning works out as – May He unfold our *Buddhi* (consciousness)

One important point to be noted is that the prayer contained in the Gayatri mantra is for the benefit of all human beings. In the utter absence of any selfish motives lies the tremendous spiritual power of the mantra and its *Sadhana*.

Sacred thread and its importance

Japa of *Gayatri* is an integral part of *Sandhya*, the daily practice of *Hindus*. So it may be in order to understand the significance of the sacred thread.

Upanayana samskara means the discipline through which the third eye is opened. It is also known as *Yagnopavita samskara*, or the sacred thread ceremony. Normally, it is done to the boy at the age of around eight years by the parents. It is a great initiation given to the boy to maintain celibacy and study the *Vedas*. The mother is the first guru to the child, and he grows and follows his instructions. She instructs the boy to engage his mind in studying scriptures and meditate on the great *Gayatri mantra* which will be imparted to him on that day.

The Guru blesses the child with the sacred thread chanting the following mantra.

**Om Yagnopavitam paramam pavitram
prajapater yat saham purastat
ayushyam agreyam pratimunca subhram
yagnopavitam balam astu tejah**

Meaning –

Om. This holy thread is supremely sacred; progenitors have blessed this thread. By wearing it over the body one attains longevity. The *yagnopavitam* or the sacred thread blesses with strength, radiance and illumination.

The sacred thread is a symbol of purity given during the ceremony of *Gayatri* initiation. It reminds the *Sadhak* of his responsibility to meditate and maintain purity.

There are three strands of in the sacred thread. The most important meaning of the three strands is – *ida*, *pingali* and *susumna nadis*. Through these the *Kundalini* energy manifests as prana and consciousness. The holy thread itself is the symbol of sacrifice of ego. For this reason, it is called the thread of sacrifice or *yagnopavita*

Apart from the three *nadis* the sacred thread also symbolises a number of triads. For example – *Brahma*, *Vishnu*, *Shiva*; *Mahasaraswati*, *Mahalakshmi* and *Mahakali*; the *three gunas Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*

Before we conclude, it is important to note that the famous Gayatri mantra is one of a class of mantras of its type. Every important deity has a Gayatri mantra. A few examples are given below.

1. ***Vishnu Gayatri***

*Om Narayana vidmahe vasudevaya dhimahi
tanno Vishnu prachodayat*

We know *Narayana*; we meditate on *Vasudeva*; may *Vishnu* inspire that (knowledge and meditation) of ours.

2. ***Shiva Gayatri***

*Om tatpurusaya vidmahe mahadevaya dhimahi
tanno rudrah prachodayat*

We know that Spirit (*Purusha*); we meditate on mahadeva; may *Rudra* inspire that (knowledge and meditation) of ours.

3. ***Dakshinamurthi Gayatri***

*Om Dakshinamurtaye vidmahe dhyanaasthaya dhimahi
tanno dhisah prachodayat*

We know *Dakshinamurthy*; we meditate on (Him) who is plunged in meditation; may the Lord of thoughts (*dhisah*) inspire that (knowledge and meditation) of ours.

4. ***Ganesha Gayatri***

*Om Ekadantaya vidmahe vakratundaya dhimahi
tanno danti prachodayat*

5. ***Rama Gayatri***

*Om Dasarathaye vidmahe Sitavallabhaya dhimahi
tanno Rama prachodayat*

6. **Krishna Gayatri**

*Om Devakinandanaya vidmahe vasudevaya dhimahi
tanno Krishna prachodayat*

7. **Durga Gayatri**

*Om Katyayanyayai vidmahe Kanyakumari dhimahi
tanno Durga prachodayat*

8. **Lakshmi Gayatri**

*Om Mahadevyai cha vidmahe Vishnupatni cha dhimahi
tanno Lakshmi prachodayat*

9. **Saraswati Gayatri**

*Om Vagdevyai cha vidmahe Kamarajyaya dhimahi
tanno devi prachodayat*

10. **Surya Gayatri**

*Om Bhaskaraya vidmahe mahadyutikaraya dhimahi
tanno Aditya prachodayat*

Maha Mrityunjaya Mantra

(Shukla Yajur Veda samhita 3.60; Rig Veda Mandala 7, Sukta (chapter) 59, Mantra 12)

***Om Trayambakam Yajamahe
Sugandhim Pushtivardhanam
Urvarikam-iva Bandhanan
Mrityor Mukshiya mamrtaat***

Sugandhim means fragrance;

Pushti vardhanam means nourishes well;

Trayambakam refers to Lord Shiva who has three eyes;

Yajamahe means we worship Him;

Urvarikamiva means even as the cucumber is severed from its bondage;

Mrityoha Bandhanath means from the clutches of death;

Mukshiya means liberated;

Ma *Amritat* means not to be released from immortality

We worship the three eyed Lord (Shiva) who is fragrant and who nourishes all beings well. May He liberate us from death even as the cucumber is severed from its bondage (to the creeper). May we not be released from immortality.

The meaning for the word *Mrityunjaya* is – to win over death. The mantra is prescribed for gaining a victory over death.

Victory over death does not mean that by a *Japa* of this *mantra*, we can prevent the deterioration of the body leading ultimately to death. When the Self (*Jiva*) departs from the body death results. No one can escape death. However, the *Jiva* does not die. It is immortal. It is the body that falls off. *Jiva* and body are two separate identities. By the grace of *Eshwara* a Jnani comes to realize this difference. To realize this difference, even when one is alive is a true victory over death. This mantra is a prayer to the Lord to grant him this knowledge.

People believe that the *Japa* of this mantra before stepping out of one's house will provide protection from dangers.. When it is recited referring to someone who just died, it is believed, the dead person will attain *Sadgati*. It is also believed that reciting this mantra referring to someone who had an accidental death, will provide *Atma Shanti*.

Ganapati Mantra

(Yajur Veda 4.5)

***Om Ganaanam tva Ganapatigm Havamahe
Kavim Kavinaam upamasrava stamam
Jyeshtharajam Brahmanam brahmanaspatha
Aanassrnavannutibhi seeda saadanam
Maha Ganapathiye Namah Om***

<i>Ganaanaam</i>	Of all groups of <i>Devas</i>
<i>tva</i>	you
<i>ganapatim</i>	their leader
<i>havaamahe</i>	we worship
<i>kavim</i>	the visionary
<i>kavinaam</i>	of all visionaries
<i>upama shravah tamam</i>	who has attained great fame through various similes
<i>jyeshtharajam</i>	who is the most exalted who shines in the hearts of
devotees	

<i>brahmanaam</i>	of the knowers of <i>Brahman</i>
<i>brahmanaspatah</i>	O Lord of <i>Vedas</i>
<i>nah</i>	our
<i>srnvan</i>	listening
<i>utibhih</i>	with all protective means
<i>aseeda</i>	please sit
<i>saadanam</i>	at the altar of fire ritual, in our heart
<i>Maha Ganapatiye</i>	to the <i>Maha Ganapati</i>
<i>Namah</i>	our <i>Namaskaram</i> - salutations

Through praises we worship you, the Lord of *Vedas*, the leader of all groups of *Devas*, the visionary of all visionaries, the one who has great fame through various similes, the most exalted of the knowers of *Brahman* and the one who shines in the hearts of devotees. Listening to our prayers of praise, please sit at the altar of fire ritual in our hearts, with all protective means.

It is customary to worship Lord *Ganapati* before starting on any auspicious venture. It is believed that Lord *Ganapati* will remove any obstacles that may come in the way. For this reason, He is referred to as Lord *Vigneshwara*. However, in this mantra He is being looked upon, not just as a *Devata*, but as *Parameshwara* Himself. This is so because He is being addressed by the word *Brahmanaspate* – meaning “O Lord *Brahma*, the *Veda Shastra*”. The word *Brahma* here refers to the body of knowledge known as *Vedas*. And He is the *Pati* or Lord for it. Hence while addressing Him as *Brahmanaspate*, He is being referred to as the Lord of the *Vedas* – the role of *Parameshwara*.

We worship you, *Parameshwara*, the Lord of *Ganas*, all living beings and even of the *Devas* – being their creator and protector.

Shanti Mantras

When ever we undertake a task, it is essential that we approach it with the right mental attitude. This preparation will greatly enhance the chances of success in our undertaking. It is for similar reasons that we have a number of *Prakaras* (enclosures) in our temples. As the devotee goes round each *Prakara*, his concentration improves and his mind gradually gets focused on the deity he is going to worship. The chanting of *Shanti mantras*, before the recitation of the *Vedas* helps the *Rishis* to gradually focus on the *Vedas* they intend studying. The practice is to recite the *Shanti mantras* before reciting holy texts such as *Upanishads and Sooktas*

All *Veda mantras* are concluded by uttering *Om Shantih, Shantih, Shantih*.

Om is the symbol and representative of *Brahman*. It is uttered for securing all-round auspiciousness. *Shanti* refers to peace and tranquility. Generally, the troubles that we normally face fall into three categories (also referred to as *Trivida Taapa*)–

The problems are caused by us. Illnesses - physical and mental, suffered by us are examples of this kind. They are referred to as *Aadhyaatmika*

Problems caused due to others. They are called *Aadhibhautika*

Problems caused due to nature – Rain, thunder, fire are examples of this kind. They are called *Adhidaivika*

By uttering *Shantih* three times, we are praying for protection from them. Let us now have a look at a few *Shanti mantras*.

Shanti mantra-1

***Om Saha naavavatu, Sahanau Bhunaktu Saha Veeryam
karavaavahai,
Tejasvi Navadheetamastu Ma Vidvishavahai
Om Shantih Shantih Shantih***

This is a prayer offered from both the teacher and the student at the time of the student commencing his education. The prayer is for the successful completion of the education without any obstacles or short comings.

This occurs as the *Shanti Mantra* for the *Katha*, *Svetasvatara* and the *Maha Narayana Upanishads*

Om, May He protect us both (teacher and the taught). May He cause us both to enjoy the bliss of Mukti. May we both exist to find out the true meaning of the scriptures. May our studies be fruitful. May we never quarrel with each other. Let there be three fold peace (*Shantih, Shantih, Shantih*).

Shanti mantra-2

***Om Sham No Mitrah Sham Varunah, Sham No Bhavatvaryamaa
Sham Na Indro Brihaspatih, Sham No Vishnururukramah
Namoh Brahmane, Namaste Vayo, Twameva Pratyaksham
Brahmasi, Twameva Pratyaksham Brahma Vadishyami
Ritam Vadishyami, Satyam Vadishyami
Tanmamavatu, Tadvaktaramavatu
Avatu Mam, Avatu Vaktaram
Om Shantih, Shantih, Shantih***

This is the Shanti Mantra for the Taittiriya Upanishad.

As already explained, at the start of creation when manifestation takes place, the primary differentiation is into Consciousness and Power (Shakti). This Shakti, in turn, differentiates further into innumerable powers corresponding to the multifarious functions which have to be performed in a manifested universe. Each power or Shakti is matched by a corresponding function of consciousness. These Shaktis and associated consciousnesses are the Devis and Devatas of Hinduism.

This whole world of ours is governed by the play of the various *Shakties*. *Shakties* governing activities in the visible or gross world are each considered a *Devata*. Similarly, *Shakties* governing activities in the subtle world (not visible to the naked eye) are also regarded as *Devatas* (deities). They are referred to as *Abhimani Devata* (guardian spirit). Each of the *Devatas* in turn governed an activity in the physical world and a faculty of the human being.

For example, *Aryama* is considered to be the *Abhimani Devata* for Sun in physical world and the eye of the human being. *Mitra* is considered as the *Abhimani Devata* for the Day in the physical world and the *Prana* of the human being. The message for us is that we should learn to live with these powerful *Shakties* governing aspects in the world. This Shanti mantra is a prayer to the various *Devatas* to protect us.

The deities invoked here may be regarded as the delegate among whom the Supreme distributes some of His powers. They might be considered as manifestations of the One who lives behind them. This may also be understood from explanation given above – that the Supreme *Shakti* differentiates into innumerable powers corresponding to the multifarious functions which have to be performed in a manifested universe.

Man is often considered as a Universe in epitome. Similarly, the various deities that rule over the cosmic functions are also conceived to have their corresponding rulership in the personality of the man. This has been the observation of the ancient *Rishis*.

The meaning of the verse is given below –

May *Mitra*, *Varuna*, *Aryaman*, *Indra*, *Brhaspati* and all pervading Vishnu be propitious to us and grant us welfare and bliss. I bow down to *Brahman* in loving reverence. O *Vayu*, I bow down to thee in adoration. Thou verily art *Brahman* perceptible. I shall declare (*vadishyami*) thou art right; Thou art the true and the good. May that Universal being *Vayu* preserve me. May He preserve the teacher. May *Brahman* protect me. May He protect my teacher.

Om Shantih, Shantih, Shantih.

Mitra He is the guardian spirit of *Praanavrtti* or the in-breathing and the day. He calls men to activity, sustains Earth and Sky, and beholds all with un-winking eyes.

Varuna Governs the night and the breathing out. He is commonly associated with *Mitra*, and is celebrated as the king of Gods and the Lord of the Universe. In the hymns several grand attributes and functions are ascribed, such as presiding over water in the sea, upholding Heaven and Earth, possessing extraordinary power and wisdom, hating falsehood, seizing transgressors with his *Paasha* (noose), pardoning sin, and bestowing immortality

Aryaman He is regarded as the regent of the Sun and of Eyes. He is chief of the *Pitrs*.

Indra Indra is the governor of the atmosphere and the Upper regions. He presides over the Gods. He has vanquished a number of demons and is considered a benefactor of the man. The Vedas praise his power and energy. He is frequently invoked. He governs power and hands of the man.

Brhaspati He is the God of wisdom and eloquence. For this reason he is deemed the genius of speech and intellect. He is the deity in whom piety and religion are personified.

Vishnu He is identified with the Supreme all-pervading Reality – *Parabrahman*. He is often invoked with Indra. He is the chief of the *Adityas*. He is the guardian spirit of the feet.

The various deities attempt to thwart efforts of an ordinary or ignorant man in gaining Self-Knowledge or realization of the *Atman*. These are the various tests that a man is required to undergo before he can be proved to be a worthy candidate for this knowledge. Man who has not realized *Atman* is like an animal for the deities. These peace invocations are meant to win the blessings of the gods to make the course of the *Sadhak* smooth and easy.

Shanti mantra-3

Om Bhadram Karmebhiih Shrunuyama Devah

Bhadram Pashyema - Akshabhir- Yajatrah

Sthirairangais – Tushtuvam – Sastanubhiih

Vyashema Deavahitam Yadayuh

Swasti Na Indro Vriddhashravah

Swasti Nah Pusha Visvavedah

Swasti Nah Tarkshyo Arishtanemih

Swasti No Brhaspatirdadhatu

Om Shantih, Shantih, Shantih.

Good is one thing and pleasant is quite another thing. These two, prompt entirely different courses of action from us. They also yield different end results. In life we face this choice very often. The wise having examined both distinguish one from the other. With great care the wise man selects the good to the pleasant. The foolish driven by greed and desires opt for the pleasant. The *Katha* Upanishad presents a discussion on this topic in the form of a dialog between the King of Death and a young sage *Nachiketa*.

To enable us make wise choices as we sail through our lives, we require a firm control on our *Indriyas*. This mantra is a prayer seeking Divine help in choosing the right from the wrong.

The meaning for the mantra is given below –

Om. O worshipful ones (*Devatas*) may our ears hear what is auspicious. May we, who are proficient in the *Yagna karmas*, see what is auspicious. May we sing your praise, live our allotted span of life in perfect health and strength. May *Indra* extolled in the scriptures by ancient teachers, the all-knowing *Pushan* (*Surya*, the Sun), *Tarkshya* (*Garuda*, Lord *Vishnu*'s mount) who saves us from all harm, *Brhaspati* who protects our spiritual lustre, vouchsafe prosperity in our study of the scriptures and practice of truths contained therein.

OM Shantih, Shantih, Shantih

Shanti mantra-4

***Om Tacham yoraavrnimahe, Gaatum yagnayaa
Gaatum Yagna pataye Daivee svastirastu nah
Svastirmaanushebhyaha Oordvam jigaatu bheshajam
Sham no astu dvipade sham chatushpade
Om Shantih, Shantih, Shantih***

Sages from the *Vedic* times treated life like a great *Yagna*. . This is a prayer for the successful completion of this *Yagna*. Every created object is for this *Yagna*. This prayer is for the well being of all of them

We pray and worship the Supreme for the welfare of all. We pray for the successful completion of this *Yagna*. We pray for the welfare of those performing the *Yagna*. May the *Devatas* do well to us (*svastih astu*) and for the whole mankind. May the trees and

plants (*bheshajam*) grow up to be tall (*oordvam jigatu*). May the welfare of bipeds (*dvipade*; – two footed animals) be taken care of and they are happy. May the welfare of quadrupeds (*chatushpade*; four - footed animals) living with us in this world be taken care of.

Shanti mantra-5

***Om Poornamadah Poornamidam Poornat Poornamudachyate
Poornasya Poornamadaya Poornamevavasishyate
Om Shantih, Shantih, Shantih***

This verse serves as the *Shanti mantra* for two *Upanishads* - the *Brihadaranyaka* and *Isaavaasya Upanishad*.

All living beings, both movable and immovable, came out of the Supreme Being. He, who sees all beings in the Supreme Self, and the Supreme Being in all beings, hates no one. Hence loving the *Prakruti* and other *Jivas* in this world is as good as loving the Supreme Being.

<i>Adah</i>	The Supreme Being, <i>Brahman</i>
<i>Poornam</i>	is whole; complete; Full
<i>Idam</i>	This <i>Prakruti</i>
<i>Poornam</i>	is whole; complete; Full
<i>Poornath</i>	From completeness (from Supreme Being)
<i>Poornam</i>	completeness (<i>Prakruti</i> which is complete)
<i>Udachyate</i>	comes-forth
<i>Poornasya</i>	From completeness
<i>Poornam</i>	completeness
<i>Aadaya</i>	taken away
<i>Poornam eva</i>	completeness alone
<i>avasishyate</i>	remains

When translated –

That is whole; this is whole;
From that whole this whole came
From that whole, if this whole is removed
What remains is a whole.

The meaning is –The *Brahman* is full – complete. The whole *Prakruti* is also full – complete. From that *Brahman*, who is complete, has come this world of beings, *Prakruti*. However, from that full (*Brahman*) when this full (*Prakruti*) is taken out – what remains is still full.

Om Shantih, Shantih, Shantih

These *Shruti mantras* are short and profound.

Incidentally, for those who are mathematically inclined, this verse also serves as a definition for Infinity.

Shanti mantra-6

***Asato maa sadgamaya
Tamaso maa jyotir gamaya
Mrityormaa amritangamaya
Om Shantih, Shantih, Shantih***

Asato maa sadgamaya

Asat refers to *Unreal, non-existence, untruth, ignorance*

Tamaso maa jyotir gamaya

Tamasaha refers to – darkness or ignorance;

Maa refers to me ;

Jyotih refers to light or enlightenment;

Gamayaha means lead me.

The meaning of this stanza is – Lead me from the darkness of ignorance to a state of enlightenment.

Mrityor maa amritam gamaya

Mrtyoha refers to – death;

Maa refers to me ;

Amritam means immortality;

Gamayaha means lead me.

The meaning of this stanza is – Lead me from death to immortality

Lead me from the unreal to the real

Lead me from darkness to light

Lead me from death to immortality

This is a prayer for the *Sadhak* whose sights are clearly set at higher levels, who is seeking enlightenment, and who wants to escape from the bondage of *Samsara*.

Shree Sooktam

Sooktas come under the category of Stuti Slokas. The word *Sookta* is from *Su + Ukta* meaning very well told. *Shree Sooktam* is in praise of Goddess *Maha Lakshmi* – the consort of Lord *Narayana*. This *Sooktam* is a compilation of a number of *Sooktas* available in *Vedas* and *Puranas*. *Sadhaks* chant this *Sookta* having complete faith that the grace of *Maha Lakshmi* will be bestowed on them.

1. ***Om Hiranyavarnam Harinim suvarna rajatasrajam Chandram
Hiranmayim Lakshmim Jaatavedo ma aavah***

O, *Agni Deva (Jaataveda)*! Please invoke on my behalf the Goddess *Maha Lakshmi*; the Goddess who shines with the complexion of gold (*Hiranyavarnam*), destroyer of all sins (*Harinim*), who wears silver and gold ornaments (*suvarna rajatasrajam*), blooming like the moon (*Chandram*), who is the embodiment of all wealth - to come here and shower her grace on me

2. ***Thaam ma aavaha jatavedo Lakshmi manapagaamineem
Yasyaam hiranyam vindeyam kaamaswam purushaanaham***

O, *Agni Deva* invite *Maha Lakshmi* by whose grace I received gold, cows, horses, friends and relatives to come here and never leave me (*anapagaamineem*).

3. ***Ashva poorvaam radha madhyaam hasti naada prabodhineem
Shriyam devimupahvaye sreermaa devirjushatam***

I invoke (*upahvaye*) *Sreedevi (Shriyam devi)*, who has a line of horses in front (*Ashva poorvaam*), a series of chariots in the middle (*radha madhyaam*), who is heralded with the trumpeting of elephants (*hasti naada prabodhineem*) to come and shower her grace and reside happily within me (*maa jushatam*).

4. ***Kaam sosmitaam hiranyaprakaram aardhram jwalantheem
truptaam
tharpayantheem Padme sthitaam padma varnaam thaam
upahvaye sriyam***

I hereby invoke (*upahvaye*) that *Shri (Lakshmi)* who always has a pleasant smile on her face (*smitaam*); lives in a golden fort (*hiranyaprakaram*), is full of mercy (*aardhram*), is divinely resplendent (*jwalantheem*), is the embodiment of absolute bliss (*truptaam*), grants bliss (*tharpayantheem*), is seated on the lotus (*Padme' sthitaam*) and is beautiful like the lotus (*padma varnaam*).

5. ***Chandram prabhasam yashasa jvalanteem shriyam loke deva
jushtam udaaraam
taam padminimim sharanam aham prapadye alakshmir me
nashyatam tvaam vrne***

I take refuge at the feet of *Sri Lakshmi*, who is beautiful like the moon (*Chandram*), effulgent in a divine glow (*prabhasam*), who is blazing with renown (*yashasa jvalanteem*), is adored by the gods (*deva jushtam*), is full of mercy (*udaaraam*), wears a lotus in her hand (*padminim*). I surrender to that *Sri Devi* (*sharanam aham prapadye*) and pray (*vrne*) that she remove poverty from me (*alakshmir nashyatam*).

6. ***Adhityavarne tapaso adhijaatho vanaspathisthava vrukshodha
bilwah,
Tasya phalaani tapasa nudanthu mayaantharayascha baahya
alakshmi.***

O *Devi*, resplendent like the Sun (*Adhityavarne*) you have created (*adhijaatho*) with your penance (*tapasa*) the bael tree (*bilwah vruksha*), considered as the king of the forest (*vanaspathi*). The fruits of this tree (*tasya phalani*) created by you destroy the inner ignorance (*maya antharayah*) and the inauspicious tendencies (*alakshmi*) rising due to the external senses (*baahya*).

7. ***Upaithu maam deva sakhah keerthishcha maninaa saha,
Pradhur bhoothosmi rashtresmin keerthim vrudhim dadhathu me.***

O *Lakshmi*, may *Kubera* (*deva sakhah*), the god of wealth and the lord of fame (*keerthishcha*) follow me (*upaithu*) with all the wealth (*maninaa saha*). Through your grace, I am born (*pradhur bhoothah asmi*) in this country (*asmin rashtre*) that has a heritage of wealth. Bestow (*dadhathu*) on me fame (*keertim*) and prosperity (*ridhim*).

8. ***Kshutpipaasa malaam jyeshtaamalakshmim nashayamyaham,
Abhoothim asamrudheem cha sarvam nirnudha me grahat.***

I shall destroy (*nashayamyaham*), *Jyeshta Devi* (*Alakshmi*), the elder sister to *Lakshmi*, the embodiment of inauspiciousness and evil such as hunger and thirst (*Kshutpipaasa malaam*). O *Lakshmi*, drive out (*nirnudha*) from my abode (*me grahat.*) all misfortunes and poverty (*sarvam abhoothim asamrudheem*).

9. ***Gandhadwaaram duradharsham nithyapushtam kareeshineem, Eshwaree sarva bhoothaanam thaamehopahvaye shriyam.***

I invoke *Maha Lakshmi (tham shriyam)* who is always sweet smelling (*Gandhadwaara*), who can never be defeated (*duradharsham*), who gives health and prosperity (*nithyapushtam*), who has everything (*kareeshineem*) and who is the goddess (*eshwareem*) of all beings (*sarva bhoothaanam*) to come and grace (*upahvaye*) me here.

10. ***Maanasah kamamaakuthim vachah sathya masheemahi, Pashunaam roopamannasya mayi sreeh shrayathaam yashah.***

O Sri Devi (*Sreeh*)! I would like to enjoy the noble desires (*Kaamam*), the happiness (*aakuthim*) that arises from within me (*manasah*), the truth (*satyam*) in my speech (*vachah*) and the happiness derived due to an abundance of cattle (*pashunaam*) and food (*annasya*) at my disposal. May I gain (*shrayatam*) fame (*yashah*).

11. ***Kardamená praja-bhutá mayi sambhava kardama Sriyam vásaya me kule mátaram padma-máliním***

O, *Maharshi Kardama (Kardama)*, may *Maha Lakshmi*, who was born as a daughter in your house (*praja-bhuta*), grace me with her presence (*mayi sambhava*). Make mother (*mataram*) *Sri Lakshmi*, the goddess of wealth (*sriyam*) who always adorns a garland of lotus flowers (*padma-malinim*), to have her abode (*vasaya*) forever in my family (*me kule*).

12. ***Apah srujantu snigdhaní Chiklíta vasa me grihe Ni cha devím mátaram shriyam vásaya me kule***

Sage *Chiklita*, you are the son of *Sri Maha Lakshmi*. Request Her to provide (*srujantu*) us with holy water (*apah*) and good food (*snigdhaní*). Please come live (*vasa*) in my (me) house (*grihe*). Please request mother (*mataram*) devi (*devim*) Sri Devi (*shriyam*) to live (*vasaya*) in our (*me*) family (*kule*) forever.

13. ***Aardhraam pushkarineem pushteem pingalaam padma malineem Chandraam hiranmayeem Lakshmim jatavedo ma avah***

O *Agni deva (jatavedah)*, please invoke (*avah*) for me (*ma*) *Maha Lakshmi (Lakshmim)*, who is full of mercy (*aardhraam*), who is seated on a lotus (*pushkarineem*), who is the presiding deity for nourishment (*pushteem*) for all, who has a complexion of *Kum Kum (pingalaam)*, who wears a garland of lotuses (*padma malineem*), pleasant like a moon (*Chandram*) and wears gold ornaments (*hiranmayeem*)

**14. Aardhram yah karineem yashtim suvarnaam hema maalineem
Suryam hiranmayeem Lakshmim jatavedo ma' avah**

O Agni Deva (*jatavedah*), invoke for me (*ma' avah*) the goddess *Maha Lakshmi* (*Lakshmim*) who is full of mercy (*aardhram*), is very solemn (*karineem*), carries an ensign of authority (*yashtim*), has a beautiful complexion (*suvarnaam*), is resplendent like the Sun (*Suryam*) and who is radiant wearing golden ornaments (*hema maalineem*)

**15. Thaam ma avaha jathavedo Lakshmi manapagaamineem,
Yasyaam hiranyam prabhootham gaavo dasyoswaan
vindheyam purushaanaham**

O Agni Deva (*jathavedo*), be pleased to bless me (*avah*) so that goddess *Sri Devi* (*tham Lakshmi*), by whose grace (*yasyaam*) I will get countless (*prabhootham*) gold (*hiranyam*), cattle (*gaavah*), maidservants (*dasyah*), horses (*aswaan*) and servants (*purushaan*) will never leave me (*me' anapagaamineem*).

**16. Yah suchih prayatho bhoothwa juhu yaadajya manvaham
Sriyah panchadasharcham cha srikaamah satatam japeth**

He, who (*yah*) prays for the grace of *Sri Maha Lakshmi* (*srikaamah*), should be pure in body (*suchih*), control his senses (*prayatah*), perform *homa* (*juhu yaath*) everyday (*anvaham*) with ghee (*aajyam*), and (*cha*) always (*satatam*) chant (*japeth*) the fifteen mantras (*panchadasharcham*) of *Sri Devi* (*sriyah*) given above.

**17. Anandah, Kardamashaiva Chikleeta ithi vishruthah,
Rishayasthe thrayah proktha swayam sreereva devatha**

The three (*thrayah*) famous (*vishrutha*) – *Ananda*, *Kardama*, and *Chikleeta* are the *Rishis* (*proktha*) and *Sri Maha Lakshmi* herself (*swayam*) is the *Devata* for this *Sookta*.

**18. Padmanane padma ooru, padmakshi padamasambhave,
Twam maam bhajaswa padmakshi yena sowkhyam labhamyaham**

O Goddess who has a face beautiful like a lotus (*padmanane*), thighs like a lotus (*padma ooru*), eyes like a lotus (*padmakshi*) and who was born out a lotus (*padmasambhave*), please grant me (*twam bhajaswa*) all that will you think will give me a good life.

**19. Aswa-daayee go-dayee dhana-dayee maha dhane,
Dhanam me jushathaam devi sarva kaamamscha dehi me'**

O *Maha Lakshmi* (*devi*), goddess of wealth (*maha dhane*), who grants horses (*asva-daayee*), cows (*go-daayee*) and wealth (*dhana daayee*) please give me (*me'*) that wealth (*dhanam*) which will give me (*dehi*)

me') the same happiness (*jushathaam*) as when all your wants (*sarva kaamaan*) are fulfilled.

20. ***Puthra, pouthra, dhanam dhaanyam hasthyaswadigave' radham, Prajaanaam bhavasi maataa ayushmantham karothu maam.***
You are the mother (*maataa*) of all people (*prajaanaam*). Please grant me sons (*putra*), grandsons (*pouthra*), wealth (*dhanam*) and grains (*dhaanyam*). Also grant me elephants (*hasti*), horses (*asvah*), cows (*gave'*), chariots (*radham*) and others. Grant me a long life (*ayushmantham karothu*).

21. ***Dhanamagnirdhanam vaayurdhanam sooryo dhanam vasuh Dhanamindro Brhaspati varunam dhanamashnute***
All the Devas like *Agni, Vaayu, Surya, Vasus* (eight *Vasus*), *Indra, Brhaspati, Varuna* enjoy their wealth only due to your grace.

22. ***Chandraabhaam Lakshmeeshaanam Sooryaabhaam shriyameeshwarim Chandra sooryaagni varnaabham Sri Maha Lakshmi upasmahe'***

I pray and meditate (*upasmahe*) on that *Sri Maha Lakshmi*, who shines like the pleasant Moon (*Chandraabhaam*), who is the inner strength for all the *Devas* (*eeshaanaanam*) and who is resplendent like the Sun (*sooryaabham*) . She is *Sri devi* (*shriyam*). She is *Eeshwari*. The splendour of the three *Devas* Sun, Moon and the *Agni* is due to *Sri Devi*.

23. ***Vainatheya somam piba somam pibatu vrthraha Somam dhanasya somino mahyam dadhatu sominah***
O, *Garuda deva* (son of *Vinata*, hence *Vainatheya*) drink *soma rasa*. May *Indra*, who killed the *Vrthrasura* also drink the *soma rasa*. I intend performing *Soma yaga* (*sominah*). Hence, please grant (*dadhatu*) me (*mahyam*) plenty of wealth (*dhanasya somam*).

24. ***Na krodho na cha matsaryam na lobho naa shubha mathih, Bhavanthi krutha punyanam bakthaanaam Sri suktham japeth sada.***

The devotees who do holy deeds (*krutha punyanam*), never get angry (*krodhah na bhavantih*), are never jealous (*matsaryam*), never stingy (*lobhah*) and they will never think of bad deeds (*na ashubha mati*). And for the devotion to grow, they should often (*sada*) chant (*japeth*) *Sri Sooktam*.

25. ***Varshanthu te vibhavari dhivo abhrasya vidyuthah,
Rohanthu sarva beejanya brahma dvisho jahi.***

O goddess *Sri Devi*, by your grace may dark clouds accompanied with lightning (*abhrasya vidyuthah*) provide us rain (*varshantu*) day (*dhivo*) and night (*vibhavari*). May all the seeds (*sarva beejaani*) germinate well (*apa rohantu*) and grow. May all the people who abuse god (*brahma dvisha*) be eliminated (*jahi*).

26. ***Padmapriye, padmini, padmahasthe, padmalaye,
padmadalaayathakshi.
Viswapriye Vishnu manonukoole tat paada padmam mayi
sannidatwa***

She who is fond of the lotus flower (*Padmapriye*), was born in the lotus flower (*padmini*), holds a lotus in her hand (*padmahasthe*), lives in the lotus flower (*padmalaye*), has broad eyes like the petal of the lotus flower (*padmadalaayathakshi*), very dear to entire world (*Viswapriye*) and who conducts herself in an endearing manner to her Lord *Sri Maha Vishnu* (*Vishnu manonukoole*) –that *Sri Devi* please place your (*tat*) lotus feet (*paada padmam*) on me (*mayi*) and grace me (*sannidatwa*).

27. ***Ya sa padmasanastha Vipula katitati padma pathrayathakshi,
Gambheera varthanabhi sthanabhara namitha shubra
vastottareeya,
Lakshmeer divya gajendrai mani gana khachithai snaapitaa hema
kumbhai,
Nithyam sa padmahastha mama vasathu gruhe sarva mangalya
yuktha***

Let that Goddess *Lakshmi*, who (*Ya*) is seated on a Lotus (*padma asanastha*), has large (*vipula*) hips (*katitati*), has wide eyes like the petal of the Lotus flower (*padma patra aayata akshee*), has a deep navel (*gambheera aavartha nabhih*), who is slightly bent because of her heavy busts (*sthanabhara namitha*), who wears divine cloths and upper cloth (*shubra vastra uttareeya*), who takes bath (*snaapitha*) in holy waters taken in golden vessels (*hema kumbhaih*) studded with precious stones (*mani gana khachitaih*) and poured by divine elephants (*divya gajendrai*), who holds a lotus flower in her hand (*padma hasta*) and who possess everything that is auspicious (*sarva mangalya yukta*) – always live in my house (*mama vasathu gruhe*).

28. **Lakshmeem ksheera samudra raja thanayam Sri
rangadhaameswareem,
Dasi bhootha samastha deva vanithaam Lokaika deepaankuraam,
Sriman manda kataksha labdha vibhava brhmendra
gangaadharaam
Twaam trilokyakutumbineem sarasijaam vande Mukunda priyaam**

Salutations (vande) to Goddess Lakshmi, who is - the source of all wealth (Lakshmeem), daughter of the king of the ocean of milk (*ksheera samudra raja thanayam*), is the ruling deity for the holy city of *Sri Rangam* (*Sri rangadhaameswareem*), is served by all the deva maidens (*Dasi bhootha samastha deva vanithaam*), who is the single source of light for the entire world (*Lokaika deepaankuraam*), whose mere sidelong glances have raised important deities such as *Lord Brahma*, *Lord Shiva* and *Lord Indra* to exalted statuses (*Sriman manda kataksha labdha vibhava brhmendra gangaadharaam*), for whom all the beings in the world constitute the family (*trilokyakutumbineem*), who arises in lotus ponds (*sarasijaam*), who is the beloved of *Lord Mukunda* (*Mukunda priyam*).

29. **Siddha Lakshmir moksha Lakshmir jayalakshmi saraswathi,
Sri lakshmir vara Lakshmi cha prasanna mama sarvada**
By merely thinking about you, as *Siddha Lakshmi* you fulfill desires, as *Moksha Lakshmi* you grant *Kaivalya*, as *Jayalakshmi* you grant victory, as *Sri Lakshmi* you grant wealth, as *Vara Lakshmi* you grant boons. May you be always pleased with me.

30. **Varankushau pashamabheethi mudraam,
Karai vahantheem , Kamalasanasthaam,
Baalaarka koti prathibhaam trinethraam,
Bajehamadyam jagadeeshwareem thwaam**

The Goddess *Sri Lakshmi* is *Aadi Shakti*. She is *Jagadeeshwari*. Her two palms indicate *Vara* and *Abhaya mudras*. She also holds the weapons – *paasha* and *ankusha*. She shines with the effulgence of innumerable rising Suns. I offer my prayers to the Goddess.

31. **Sarva mangala Mangalye, Shive, Sarvaartha saadhake,
Sharanye Trayambake, Devi narayani namosthutte
narayani namosthutte, narayani namosthutte**
Among the auspicious ones you are the most auspicious (*Sarva mangala Mangalye*). You are the Devi who grants everything that is auspicious (*Shive*). You grant everything that is desirable (*Sarvaartha saadhake*). You are the deity most suitable for everyone to take refuge

under(Sharanye). O Goddess *Narayani* with three eyes (*Trayambake*) I salute (*namah asthu*) thee (*The*’).

32. ***Sarasijanilaye sarojahaste dhavalataraamshuka gandhamaalya shobhe’
Bhagavati Harivallabhe’ manogne tribhuvanabhootikari praseeda mahyam***

Sri Maha Lakshmi stays on the lotus flower (*Sarasijanilaye*). She carries a lotus in her hand (*sarojahaste*), wears auspicious white cloths (*dhavalatara amshuka*) and a sweet smelling garland (*gandhamaalya*). O *Bhgavathi*, consort of *Sri Maha Vishnu* (*Harivallabhe’*), who fulfills the desires of all (*manogne*), who protects all the three worlds (*tribhuvana bhootikari*) - bless me with your grace.

33. ***Om Vishnupatneem khamaam Deveem Maadhavaveem
Maadhavapriyaam
Vishnoh priyasakheem Deveem namaam Atchutavallabhaam***

O *Maha Lakshmi*, consort of *Maha Vishnu* (*Vishnupatneem*), *Bhoodevi* (*khamaam Deveem*), you are present in the *Tulasi* plant (*Maadhavaveem*). *Devi* is very dear to *Madhava* (*Maadhavapriyaam*), *Sri Vishnu* (*Vishnu priyasakheem*). I salute (*namaame*) the *Devi* who is always with *Sri Maha Vishnu* (*Atchuta vallabhaam*).

34. ***Om Maha Lakshmi cha vidmahe, Vishnu patnee cha dheemahi,
Thanno Lakshmi prachodayath***

Let us know about *Maha Lakshmi*. For that reason let us meditate on Her, who is the consort of *Sri Maha Vishnu*. May Goddess *Lakshmi* help us in this.

35. ***Sreevarchasyamaayushyamaarogya maavidhaath pavamaanam
maheeyatheh
Dhanam Dhaanyam pashum bahuputralaabham shatasamvatsaram
deerghamaayuh
Runa rogaadi daaridya paapa kshuda pamrutayavah
Bhaya shoka manasthaapaa nashyantuu mama sarvadaa.***

O *Maha Lakshmi*, bless me with *Varchassu*, and life with no short comings (*aayushyam*). May winds (*pavamaanam*), that will always (*sarvadaa*) give me good health (*aarogyam*), be blowing (*maheeyathe*). May I get wealth (*dhanam*), grain (*dhaanyam*), cattle (*pashum*), many sons (*bahu putra laabham*) and a life (*deerghamaayuh*) of hundred years (*shata samvatsaram*). May I not be subjected to – debts (*runam*) , ill health (*rogam*) , poverty (*daaridyam*), hunger (*Kshuda*), sudden death

(*apamrtuyavah*), fear (*bhayam*), grief (*shokam*) and mental worries (*manah taapah*)

36. ***Shriye jaata shriya aniryaya shriyam vayo jaritrubhyo dadhaatu
Shriyam vasaanaa amrutatwamaayan bhajanti sadyah savitaa
vidadhyoon***

Those who approach *Sri Devi* (*shriya aniryaya*) will be blessed with abounding riches (*shriye jaatah*). Wealth (*shriyam*) and longevity (*vayah jaritrubhyh*) will be presented (*dadhaatu*). Enjoying great wealth (*shriyam vasaanaa*) they will reach a state that is beyond death (*amrutatwamaayan*). In a short time (*sadyah*) they will obtain (*bhajanti*) fame (*savitaa*) and victory (*vidadhyoon*).

37. ***Shriya yevynam tatchriyaamaadadhaati
santatamruchaa vashatkrutyam sandhattam sandheeyate prajayaa
pashubhih Ya yevam vedaa***

All that is good is due to *Sri Devi* Herself. Those that realise this will reach *Sri Devi*. One must always perform *Yaaga* accompanied with proper mantras. Those that do this will be blessed with the wealth of progeny and cattle.

***Om Maha Lakshmi cha vidmahe, Vishnu patnee cha dheemahi,
Thanno Lakshmi prachodayath
Om Shantih, Shantih, Shantih***

Let us know about *Maha Lakshmi*. For that reason let us meditate on Her, who is the consort of *Sri Maha Vishnu*. May Goddess *Lakshmi* help us in this

Purusha Sooktam

(Rig Veda 10.8.90)

The word *Purusha* here refers to the Supreme Being – *Parama Purusha*, the Supreme *Purusha*; *Purushottama*, the best among the *Purushas*; He is *Sriman Narayana*. He is the source and basis of all creation.

The *Purusha Sookta* finds a place in all the Vedas, with slight variations. Though the original *Purusha Sookta* mantra is found in *Rig Veda*, it also occurs both in *Shukla Yajur Veda* (in *Vajaneya Samhita*) and *Krishna Yajurveda* (*Taittiriya Samhita*). With minor differences it is found in *Saama* and *Atharva Vedas* also. This shows its supreme importance. Detailed instructions are available on the use of this *Sutra* in fire Sacrifices.

Among the Veda mantras, *Purusha Sooktam* stands out for its *mantra Shakti*. It is regularly chanted in temples, at home - while performing *homa* or offering prayers to

God at home. Tradition has it that the *Sookta* is to be recited daily along with *Bhagavad Gita* or *Vishnu sahasranama* chanting.

Basically, the Vedas are divided into three major sections –

1. *Samhita* deals with prayers by the *Devas*
2. *Brahmana* deals with details regarding *yagas*
3. *Aranyakas* Examines fundamental truths

We notice that the *Purusha Sookta* addresses all these three sections. It starts with the praise of the Supreme Being, Lord *Narayana*, referred to as *Purusha*. It then tells us that this world of beings has emerged as a result of the fruits of His sacrifice. It then goes on to tell about the ways and means to overcome ignorance and realise God. Hence, this *Sookta* may be regarded as a condensed *Shastra*.

***Om Tacham yoraavrnimahe, Gaatum yagnayaa
Gaatum Yagna pataye Daivee svastirastu nah
Svastirmaanushebhyaha Oordvam jigaatu bhashajam
Sham no astu dvipade sham chatushpade
Om Shantih, Shantih, Shantih***

Sages from the *Vedic* times treated life like a great *Yagna*. . This is a prayer for the successful completion of this *Yagna*. Every created object is for this *Yagna*. This prayer is for the well being of all of them

We pray and worship the Supreme for the welfare of all. We pray for the successful completion of this *Yagna*. We pray for the welfare of those performing the *Yagna*. May the *Devas* do well to us (*svastih astu*) and for the whole mankind. May the trees and plants (*bhashajam*) grow up to be tall (*oordvam jigatu*). May the welfare of bipeds (*dvipade*; – two footed animals) be taken care of and they are happy. May the welfare of quadrupeds (*chatushpade*; four - footed animals) living with us in this world be taken care of.

**1 *Om Sahasra seershaa purushah; Sahasraaksha sahasrapaath.
Sa bhoomim viswatho vruthwa. Athyathishtaddhasangulam***

The Supreme Being (*Purusha*) has thousands of heads (*Sahasra seershaa*); has thousands of eyes (*Sahasraaksha*); has thousands of feet(*sahasrapaath*). He (sah) envelops (*vruthwa*) the entire universe (*viswatah*) and yet transcends it by ten inches (*Athyathishtad-dhasangulam*)

The Supreme Being is Omnipresent. This is being expressed in a poetic way. He has thousands of heads. All our heads are His. He has thousands of eyes. All our eyes are His. He has thousands of feet. All our feet are His. He is cognizing through every mind, seeing through every eye, working through every limb. He not only pervades the entire universe but transcends it as well.

2 ***Purusha eveda sarvam. Yad bhootam yacha bhavyam.
Utha amruthathwasya eesana. Yad annena athirohathi***

Essentially, the whole universe is He Himself. Whatever was (*yad bhootam*), whatever is (*idam*) and whatever will be (*yath bhavyam cha*) – are all (*sarvam*) His (*Purushah eva*) manifestations. In addition (*uthah*), He is the only authority (*eesanah*) who can confer immortality (*amruthathwasya*). He transcends (*athirohathi*) all this world of objects (*annena*).

3 ***Ethaa vaanasya mahimaa atho jyaayagscha purushah
Paadhosya vishwa bhoothanee. Tripaadasyamrutham divi***

The whole manifest universe (*ethaa vaan*), visible to us, is His (*asya*) splendour (*mahima*). Yet (*athah*), He (*Purushah cha*) transcends it very much (*jyaayan*). By a small part of His splendour, literally by one-fourth (*paadah*), He supports this universe (*bhoothanee vishwa*) at all times – in the past, present and future. However, a major part of His splendour literally three quarter (*tripaad*), is beyond the range of the manifest universe (*divi*) and embodies immortality (*amrutham*).

The limitless splendour of the Supreme Being is being discussed here. In a short period of our lives here, we have not come to grips to fully understand the processes that have made this universe stay and function as a unit, and serve as an abode for millions of living beings. From time to time, events and tyrants have threatened to upset its balance and peace. Yet, through His grace, peace has always been restored. However, all this is being supported by Him, for millions of years, by just a fraction of His powers.

We will now be talking about one of the important subjects raised in the Vedas – *Yagna or Yaga*.

Our ancient sages, taking a broad view, have come to regard the whole world process as a great *Yagna*.

We notice that all that is born eventually dies. Flowers bloom only to wither and fall off by the end of the day. Yet the dead ones have been responsible for the birth of new ones. The withered ones have given way to new blooms. Creation feeds on itself. This cycle reminds us of a *Yagna* in progress.

We have a part to play in this universe. For our living we take from this universe a number of items (eg) air, food and water. We, in turn, return these back to the universe – in some other form. We are born with some intelligence and capabilities. By a proper use of it, we return it back to the world at large. This process of take and give is a basic process. This is rule of a *Yagna*. Everyone has a responsibility to follow this.

Within this broad *Yagna* of the world process, lie the specific *yagnas*, and *homas* that people perform. Offerings such as ghee (clarified butter) and others are made during the performance of the *yagnas* and *homas*. While performing these rituals, we pray to *Devatās* to fulfill our desires. The *Bhagavad Gita* (3.11) tells us that through these *yagnas* we should please the *Devatās* and they in turn will respond to fulfill our desires.

Purusha Sooktam tells us that Creation also occurred as a result of a *Maha Yagna* wherein, the Supreme Being made Himself as the offering.

The *Purusha Sookta* describes of a two stage creation process. The first stage is called *Poorva Shrsti*. During this stage the creation of the universe is handled. – consisting of sentient beings – both living and non- living. This is explained in 1.4 and 1.5. The second stage is called *Uttara Shrsti*. During this stage creation of food for living beings and similar matters is handled. This is handled in 1.6

4. *Tripaad urdhwa udaith prurushah paado syehabhavaath puna. Thatho vishva n vyakramath.Saashanaanashane abhi*

Three parts (*tripaad*) of the splendour of the *Purusha* (*Purushah*) is beyond (*urdhwah udaith*) the range of the manifest universe. Only a part (*paadah*) of Him (*asya*) has manifested again and again (*punah*) and evolved (*abhavaath*) as the world of matter and individual selves. After that (*thathah*) He has permeated (*abhivyakramath*) all (*vishvath*) the sentient and non-sentient beings (*saashana anashane*).

5. *Tasmaat viraad ajaayata viraajo adhi poorushah Sa jaato atyaricyatah paschad bhoomimatho purah*

From the *Purusha* (*tasmaat*) emerged the Cosmos, the universe (*viraat ajaayata*). Along with that (*viraajo adhi*) came forth, the cosmic person the first creator, *Brahma* (*Purushah jaatah*) and he grew to pervade everything (*atyarichyatah*). He (*sah*) then (*paschat*) created the Earth (*bhoomim*) first and then the various bodies (*purah*) – both divine and demonic.

From the Supreme Being, *Sriman Narayana*, came forth the Universe. Along with that, the creative aspect of the Supreme Being, *Brahma*

came forth. *Brahma* grew very large after being born and included everything within him. For this reason the universe is called *Brahmaanda*. *Brahma* then created this earth and gave form to the *Devas*, humans and animals.

6. ***Yatpurushena havishaa | devaa yajnam atanvata |
Vasanto asyaaseedaajyam | greeshma idhma Sharaddhavih***

Then the *Devas* performed the sacrifice – *Srshti-Ygana*. However, there existed nothing at that time – save the Supreme *Purusha* himself. So the *Devatas* performed the *Yagna* making the Supreme *Purusha* (*Purushena*) as the sacrificial offering (*havishaa*). For the *Yagna* so performed (*atanvata*) by the *Devatas*, the spring season (*vasantah*) became the ghee (*aajyam*); summer (*greeshma*) became the twigs (*idhmah*) and autumn (*sharad*) became (*aaseeth*) the rice offering (*havih*).

The Supreme Being, *Sri Maha Vishnu*, has pervaded everything in the universe and protects it. Even the *Havis* offered while performing the *Yagna* has also been pervaded by Him. The person for whom the *Havis* is offered is once again *Sri Maha Vishnu*. Such is the nature of the Supreme lord and is being expressed in the above *Rik*.

7. ***Saptaasyaa san paridayah trih sapta samidah krtaa
devaa yad yajnam tanvaanaah abadnna purusham pashum***

For this *Yagna* (*asya*), the five *Mahabhutas* together with night and day (*sapta*) represented the seven boundaries (*paridayah*). Twenty one (*trih sapta*) *tatwas* represented the sacrificial faggots (*samidah*). The *Devatas* (*devaa*) started (*tanvaanaah*) the *Yagna* tying (*abadnna*) *Brahma* (*yat purusham*) as the sacrificial beast (*pashum*).

When this *Yagna* was started, *Srishti* has not commenced. Material required for performing the *Yagna* have not been created, for example, *Kusha* grass, trees etc. So in this first *Yagna*, elements then available in nature, or *Prakruti*, were used. Available elements fell into two categories – those available in *Prakruti* externally and those available internally.

Yagna kunda, the sacred fire is invoked on an alter and is always fenced to ward off from the ill effects of evil forces. For the first *Yagna*, elements available externally were utilized to form the fence. And those were the *Pancha Maha Bhootas* (*Akasa, Vaayu, Agni, Apah* and *Prithvi*) together with night and day. – Altogether seven.

Now for the *Samidah* – twenty one sacrificial faggots. For this, elements available in *Prakruti* internally were chosen. Five *Jnana Indriyas*, organs of perception, (Ear, skin, eyes, tongue, and nose) Five *Karma Indriyas*,

organs of action, (speech, hands, legs, anus and genitals), Five physiological functions (*Prana, Apana, Vyana, Udana* and *Samana*), Four *Antahkaranas*, inner instruments, (*Manas, Buddhi, Ahamkara* and *Chitta*) together with *Dharma* and *Adharma* constitute twenty one sacrificial faggots.

The creator *Brahma*, himself, was used as the sacrificial beast. The *Yagna* commenced.

8. ***Tam yajnam barhishi prokshan purusham jaatamagratah
Tena devaa ayajanta saadhyaa rushayascha ye***

In the *Yagna* (*barhishi*) they sprinkled (*prokshan*) water on the first (*agratah*) created (*jaatam*) *Yagna- Purusha* (*yajnam purusham*), *Brahma*. After that (*tena*) *Devatas* (*devaa*), achievers (*saadhyaa*) (those who dwell in the *Vaikunta*), *Rishis* (*rushayah cha*) and all others who were there proceeded with the *Yagna* (*ayajanta*).

The *Yagna* commenced with the purification of *Brahma* by sprinkling water on Him. Thus was performed the first sacrifice by the *Devas* and *Rishis*.

9. ***Tasmaad yagnaat sarva hutah sambrtam prshadaajyam
pashoog staag schakre vaayavyaan aaranyaan graamyascha ye***

From this great *Yagna* (*tasmaad yagnaat*), the celebrated *Srishti Yagna* (*sarva hutah*), came out (*sambrtam*) curd (*yogurt*) mixed with ghee (clarified butter) - *prshadaajyam*. *Brahma* then created (*chakre*) birds (*vaayavyaan*), wild (*aaranyaan*) tame animals (*graamyascha*) and other living beings (*pashoon*)

10. ***Tasmaad yajnaat sarvahutah ruchah saamaani jignire
chandaagmsi jignire tasmaat yajus tasmaad ajaayata***

From this great *Yagna* (*tasmaad yagnaat*), the celebrated *Srishti Yagna* (*sarva hutah*), came out (*jignire*) the *Rig Veda* mantras (*ruchah*), *Sama Veda* mantras (*Saamaani*). From this rite were born (*jignire*) the metres (*chandaamsi*), the scheme of versification used in writing *Slokas*. *Yajur Veda* (*Yajuh*) also issued (*ajaayata*) from this (*tasmaat*) *Yagna*.

We now see that from this *Yagna* rose the *mantras* for the *Rig* and *Sama Vedas*. *Yajur Veda* also came out from this *Yagna*. *Chandas* also issued from the *Yagna*.

Chandas is a scheme of versification used while writing *Slokas*. Based on the number of letters, there are seven different *Chandas*.

<i>Gayatri Chandas</i> has	6 letters
<i>Ushnith Chandas</i> has	7 letters
<i>Anushtup Chandas</i> has	8 letters
<i>Brhati Chandas</i> has	9 letters
<i>Pankti Chandas</i> has	10 letters

Tushtup Chandas has 11 letters
Jagathi Chandas has 12 letters

11 *Tasmaadashvaa ajaayanta ye ke chobhayaadatah
gaavoha jagnire tasmaat tasmaat jaataa ajaavayah*

From the *Yagna* (*tasmaat*) rose (*ajaayanta*) horses (*ashva*). Animals having two rows of teeth (*ye ke ubhayaadatah*) and cattle (*gaavah*) also came from there (*tasmaat jagnire*). Sheep (*ajaah*) and buffalos (*aavayah*) came out (*jaatah*).

12. *Yat purusham vyadadhuh kathidhaa vyakalpayan
mukham kimasya kau baahoo kavooroo paadaa uchyete*

Into what forms (*kathidhaa*) did the *Devas* cast (*vyakalpayan*) *Brahma* (*Purusham*) when (*yath*) they used Him as the sacrifice (*vyadadhuh*)? What (*kim*) did His (*asya*) face (*mukham*) become (*aaseeth*)? What was told (*uchyete*) about His hands (*bahoo*)? What was told about His thighs (*ooroo*) and feet (*paadaa*)?

One cannot imagine the amount of thought that went in before the projection of the human being. In addition, how would the various sections of human beings be represented in the form of the Supreme Being was also given a thought.

13 *Brahmano asya mukhamaseet baahoo raajanya krtah
Ooru tadasya yad vaishyah padbhyaagm shoodro ajaayata*

His (*asya*) face (*mukham*) became (*aseet*) the Brahmin (*brahmanah*), His hands (*bahoo*) became *Kshatriya* (*raajanyah*) and His thighs (*ooru*) became *vaishya* (*vaishyah*). From His feet (*padbhyaam*) *shoodras* (*shoodrah*) were born (*ajaayatah*).

The *brahmanahs* were projected from the head or the power of thought and discrimination of the Lord. The *Kshatriyas* were projected from His arms or power of protection and preservation. The *vaishyas* were projected from the thighs or the power acquisition and distribution. Finally the *shoodras* were projected from the feet or power of support and movement.

14. *Chandramaa manaso jaatah chaksho sooryo ajaayata
mukhaadindraschaagnischa praanadvaayurajaayata*

Then, from the Supreme Being, was born the various luminous beings, bodies and the different worlds.

The Moon (*Chandrama*) was born (*jaatah*) from His mind (*manasah*). The Sun (*Sooryah*) was born (*ajaayata*) from the eyes (*chaksho*). *Indra* (*Indrah Cha*) and *Agni* (*Agnih cha*) were born from His face (*mukhaath*). *Vayu*, the wind god, was born (*ajayata*) from the breath (*Vaayuh*).

15. *Naabhyaa aaseedantariksham sheershnau dhyauh samavartata*

padbhyaam bhoomir dishah shrotraat tathaa lokaagm akalpayan

The space (*antariksham*) emerged (*aaseeth*) from His navel (*naabhi*). The world of gods or heaven (*dhyauh*) emerged (*samavartata*) from His head (*sheersha*). The Earth (*bhoomih*) emerged from His feet (*padbhyaam*) and the quarters (*dishah*) from His ears (*shrotraat*). All the lokas (*lokaan*) emerged (*akalpayan*) in the same manner (*tathaa*). What is the relationship between us and the Supreme Lord who has been described as having thousand heads, who has committed Himself as the sacrificial beast and created this Universe for us to live? After having been born and enjoyed this world what will be our duty? It rests in realizing Him.

16. ***Vedaahametam purusham mahaantam aadityavarnam tamasastu paare Sarvaani roopaani vichitya dheerah naamaani krtvaabhivadan yadaaste***

I (*aham*) have known (*veda*) that (*etam*) glorious (*mahaantam*) Supreme and magnanimous (*dheerah*) Being who has created (*vichitya*) from within Himself various (*sarvaani*) forms (*roopani*), called them by different names (*naamaani*), maintains them all; who is resplendent like the Sun (*Aditya varnam*) and is beyond (*paare*) all ignorance / darkness (*tamasah tu*).

While recording their experiences, the declaration of “I have known the Supreme Being” by the ancient sages ought to push us to a similar resolve that I should also know Him. The Rishis attained completeness in their lives by discovering some ultimate truths and importantly the purpose of life. Following their footsteps will give us opportunities to attain spiritual perfection.

What do we gain by knowing Him. This is explained in the next verse.

17. ***Dhaataa purastadhyamudaajahaara shakra pravidvaan pradishashchatasrah Tamevam vidhvaanamrta iha bhavati naanyah pandhaa ayanaaya vidhyate***

Brahma (*Dhaataa*), the creator, knew the Supreme Being (*udaajahaara*) from the beginning (*purastaat*) and revealed Him to *Sakra* (*Indra*). *Indra* looked around (*pravidvaan*) in the four directions (*pradishah chatasrah*) and realized His glory. Hence, even today, he who knows Him (*tam*) and the creation thus presented above as pervaded, permeated and possessed by the Supreme Being will attain (*bhavati*) immortality (*amrtah*) here (*iha*). There is no (*n vidyate*) other (*anyah*) way (*pandhaa*) for *Moksha* (*ayanaaya*).

18. ***Yagnyena yagnya-mayajanta devah taani dharmaani prathamaanyaasann***

***Te ha naakam mahimaanah sachante yatra poorve saadhyah
santi devaah***

Devatas (devah) worshipped (*ayajanta*) the Supreme Being (*yagnya*) through this *yagna* (*yagnyena*). These (taani) were to become (*aasan*) the first (*prathamaani*) Dharmas (*dharmaanij*). Those who follow the dharmas (*te mahimaanah*), will truly reach (*sachante*) the highest abode (*naakam*) where (*yatra*) the Devatas (*devaam*) and achievers (*saadhyah*) who performed the first (*poorve*) Yagna live (*santi*).

The Devas performed the first sacrifice by consecrating the cosmic body of God Himself. This sacrifice (or renunciation of selfishness and all of one's possessions) has become the basis of all religions.

Purusha Sooktam is complete with the 18 *mantras* given above. However, in the south of India quite often, the first *mantra* of each of *Uttara Narayanam*, *Narayana Sooktam* and *Vishnu Sooktam* are chanted with *Purusha Sooktam*. So they are given below.

The following is from *Uttara Narayanam*.

19. ***Adbhyah sambhootah prthivyai rasaacha vishvakarmanah
samavartataadhi
Tasya tvashtaa vidadhadroopameti tatpurushasya
vishvamaajaanamagre***

The Universe was born (*sambhootah*) from water (*adbhyah*) and the elemental essence (*rasaath*) of the earth (*prthivyai*). First (*adhi*) *Brahma* was born (*samavartata*) from the Supreme Being who created this earth (*vishva karmanah*). After perfecting (*vidadhat*) the forms of *Brahma* (*tasya*), the Supreme Being (*tvashata*) has pervaded (*eti*) everything. The world of forms created by *Brahma* (*tat Purushasya*) existed from the beginning (*agre*) of creation (*ajanaam*).

20. ***Vedaahametam purusham mahaantam aadityavarnam tamasah
parastat
Tamevam vidhvaanamrta iha bhavati| naanyah panthaa vidyate
ayanaaya***

I know the glorious (*mahaantam*) Supreme Lord who is resplendent like the Sun (*aadityavarnam*) and is beyond all darkness / ignorance (*tamasah parastat*). He who realizes Him (*tham*) like this will attain (*bhavati*) immortality (*amrtah*) here (*iha*). There is no (*n vidyate*) other (*anyah*) way (*pandhaa*) for *Moksha* (*ayanaaya*).

21. ***Prajaapatischarati garbhe antah ajaayamaano bahudhaa vijaayate
Tasya dheeraah parijaananti yonim mareecheenaam padamichanti
vedhasah***

The Supreme Being (*Prajaapati*) is moving (*charati*) around the world (*garbhe antah*) as an active principle. Though He is unborn (*ajaayamaanah*), being the Self of all, He manifests (*vijaayate*) Himself in various (*bahudhaa*) forms. Wise men (*dheerah*) realize very well (*parijaayante*) His (*tasya*) true form (*yonim*). Gods like *Brahma* (*vedhasah*) seek (*ichanti*) the position (*padam*) which great sages like *Marichi* (*Mareecheenaam*) have attained.

The position of Lord *Brahma* is the most coveted one. However, after thousands of years, at the time of dissolution (*Pralaya*) the *Shrshti* comes to an end. After 100 Brahma years, the duration of *Brahma* also comes to an end. However, that is not the case with realized souls like the great sage *Marichi*. He who realizes *Bhagavan* will become *Bhagavan* (*Brahmavith Brahmaiva bhavati*). Hence there is no death for such great people. For that reason, Gods like *Brahma*, desire to become *Rishis* on this earth. The message that we get from here is that though born as human beings we must take advantage of the unique opportunity given to us and try to search and seek *Sriman Narayana*.

22. ***Yo devebhya aatapati yo devaanaam purohitah
Poorvo yo devebhyo jaatah namo ruchaaya braahmaye***

I salute (*namah*) the resplendent (*ruchaaya*) Supreme Being (*braahmaye*), who is the source behind the effulgence (*aatapati*) of the various *Devatas* (*devebhyah*), who is the Guru (*purohitah*) for all the Gods (*devaanaam*), who was there before (*poorvah*) any God (*devebhyah*) evolved (*Jaatah*).

23. ***Rucam braamham janayantah deva agre tadabruvan
Yasvaivam braahmano vidhyaat tasya devaa asan vashe***

At the beginning (*agre*) while revealing (*janayantah*) the truth (*rucham*) about the Supreme Being (*braahmam*), *Devatas* declared (*abruvan*) that whoever (*yah tu*) with steadfast resolve seek and realize Him as explained above will have even the *Devatas* (*Devaah*) in their grasp (*vashe asan*).

24. ***Hreeshcha te lakshmeeshcha patnyau ahoraatre paarshve
nakshatraani roopam/ ashvinau vyaattam***

Hreedevi, the essence of modesty and *Lakshmidivi* who is the source of all wealth are your consorts. Night and day are thy two sides. The stars are thine own divine form. The divine doctors, *Ashwini* *Devatas* represent your smiling face.

Day and night is indicative of time. Just as the body is supported by its side, so also *Shrshti* is based on time. The mention of stars brings to mind *Shrshti*. The wonderful vast and variegated world of forms that we witness and admire everyday is but a fraction of His glory. Exhibition of even this miniscule renders us speechless. Mind boggles when we

think of the glory of the Supreme Being whose creation extends far beyond of what we see. With a view to get us to admire His glory as a creator, it is indicated here that *Shrshti* is His form. It will remind us that behind everyone of His creations like the Sun, Moon, stars, ocean, mountains and trees is His Divine will making each of them work for the benefit of all living creatures.

25. *Ishtam manishaanaa amum manishaanaa sarvam manishaanaa*

Please grant us (*manishaanaa*) what we desire (*Ishtam*). Grant us (*manishaanaa*) happiness (*amum*) in this world. Grant us (*manishaanaa*) all that is for now and beyond.

***Om Tacham yoraavrnimahe, Gaatum yagnayaa
Gaatum Yagna pataye Daivee svastirastu nah
Svastirmaanushebhyaha Oordvam jigaatu bhashajam
Sham no astu dvipade sham chatushpade
Om Shantih, Shantih, Shantih***

Narayana Sooktam

(Taittiriya Aranyakam 4.10.13)

This Sooktam explains about meditation.

Before meditation, one has to recite this and contemplate on the meaning, which in turn will help the *Sadhak* reach deeper levels of meditation. In the beginning the glory of God described. It is then followed by a step by step instruction on how to direct one's mind during meditation - where and how to meditate.

It is customary to recite *Narayana Sooktam* along with the *Purusha Sooktam*. The ideas expressed in this *Sooktam* form the basis for meditation on the Supreme Being. Reciting this *Sooktam* before commencing on meditation will greatly aid in developing intense meditation.

***Om Saha naavavatu, Sahanau Bhunaktu Saha Veeryam
karavaavahai,
Tejasvi Navadheetamastu Ma Vidvishavahai
Om Shantih Shantih Shantih***

Meditation does not mean to merely sit in front of an image, stare at it or just imagine of a familiar form. First we must try to understand where we stand in His divine presence. We must then be able to picture His resplendent beautiful form in our mind. For this reason, the following five mantras describe His glory.

1. ***Om. Sahasraseersham devam vishvaksham vishvasambhuvam
Vishvam Narayanam devamaksharam paramam padam.***

I meditate on the effulgent (*devam*) Supreme Being, *Sriman Narayana* (*Narayana devam*), who has thousands of heads (*Sahasraseersham*) and many eyes (*vishvaksham*). He is the producer of joy in the universe (*vishvasambhuvam*), is imperishable (*Akshram*), and supremely auspicious. He exists in the form of the universe (*vishvam*) and is the master of it (*paramam padam*).

2. ***Visvathah paramaanithyam visvam narayanagm harim,
Visvamevedam purushasthadvisva mupajeevitha.***

I meditate on Lord *Sriman Narayana* (*Narayana*), who is superior (*paramath*) to the universe (*vishvatah*), who is permanent (*nityam*), who exists in the form of the universe (*vishvam*), who is the destroyer of all sin and ignorance (*harim*).

3. ***Pathim visvasyatmeshwaragm shaasvathagm shivamachyutham,
Narayanam mahaagneyam vishvaatmaanam paraayanam***

I meditate on Lord *Narayana* who is the lord (*patim*) of the universe (*vishvam*), ruler of individual souls (*aatma eshwaragm*), who is permanent (*shaasvathagm*), imperishable (*achyutham*), supremely auspicious (*shivam*), supremely worthy of being known (*mahaagneyam*), the ruler of individual souls (*vishva atmaanam*) and who is worthy to take refuge in (*paraayanam*).

4. ***Narayana paro jyothiraathmaa Narayanah parah
Narayanaparam brahma tatvam Narayanah parah
Narayanaparo dhyaatha, dyaanam Narayanah parah***

Lord *Narayana* is the supreme light (*Narayanah parah jyotih*). Lord *Narayana* is the supreme Self (*Narayanah parah aatma*). Lord *Narayana* is the supreme Reality (*Narayanah parah tatvam*) and as such designated as *Brahman* (*Narayanah parah Brahman*). He is the supreme to be meditated upon (*Narayanah parah dhyaatha*), and He is the Supreme meditation (*Narayanah parah dyaanam*).

You do not have to go in search of the Lord. The Supreme Lord *Narayana*, complete with all the glories indicated above, is resident within our own self – *Antaryamin*. This is explained in the next mantra.

5. ***Yaccha kinchit jagat sarvam drishyate srooyate api vaa,
Antarbahischa tat sarvam vyaapya Narayana sthitah.***

Whatever there is in this world (*jagat sarvam*) known through seeing (*yaccha kinchit*) or (*api vaa*) known through hearing (*srooyate*) is fully (*tat sarvam*) permeated (*vyaapya*) within (*antah*) and without (*bahih cha*) by Lord *Narayana*. He remains as the Supreme Truth.

Meditation is the final step in realizing Lord Narayana. The next mantra indicates where one's mind should concentrate while meditating. The place for the meditation is in the region of the heart.

6. ***Anantham avyayam kavigm samudrentam vishva sambhuvam,
Padmakosha pratheekaasham hridayam chaapyadho mukham***

One should meditate upon the Supreme, the limitless (*Anantam*), unchanging (*avyayam*), all knowing (*kavigm*), the cause of happiness of the world (*vishva sambhuvam*), dwelling at the end of the sea (*samudre antam*) as the goal of all striving. The place for His meditation is the ether in the heart, the heart which is comparable to an inverted lotus bud (facing down).

The key word “*samudre antam*” is to be noted for its special significance. *Vedanta* explains to us that the Supreme Lord is at the end of the ocean called *Samsaara*. The raging sea of life for-ever boiling with tall waves of desire, anger and other consuming emotions is the *Samsaara saagara*. As long as tall waves of desire, anger and other consuming emotions hold their sway, we cannot hope to reach the Supreme Being. Meditation will be possible only after the mind fully calms down. Does it mean that only people who have given up all desires are capable of serious meditation? The answer is – yes. Meditation practiced with the single object of realizing God belongs to the highest order. The other kind where the meditation is done as a routine and life goes on after it is done with, is simple meditation meant to improve concentration.

7. ***Adho nishtyaa vitastyaante naabhyam upari tishthati,
Jwaalamaalaakulam bhaati visvasya aayatanam mahat***

This *Rik* tells us about the location of the heart. It should be known that the heart, we are talking about, is located below the Adam's apple (*nishtyaa adhah*) and at a distance of a finger span (*ante*) above (*upari*) navel (*naabhyam*). It is shining (*bhaati*) with a garland of flames (*Jwaalamaalaakulam*). It is the great abode (*mahat aayatanam*) of the Universe (*visvasya*).

The heart that is being referred to here is not the organ that circulates the blood. Everyone is familiar with the location of this heart. On the contrary, what is being referred to in the *Rik* is the “spiritual” heart. Three distinct features for this spiritual heart are being described here. (a) It is just about three finger spans above the navel. The organ heart, that we are all familiar with, is also at about the same distance from the navel – but it is slightly to the left. The spiritual heart is to the right of this organ and almost at the center. (b) It is shining, as if, with a garland of flames. (c) It is brilliant. These special features are not applicable to the

organ heart. The question is whether we will reach the stage of perceiving this. Whether we do it or not, it is there for all the mankind.

With an understanding that we should meditate with our heart, a number of people try to meditate concentrating their mind in the region of our organ heart. Try they might, till the end it will remain a futile exercise. What we should be concentrating on is the “spiritual” heart” - on the “lotus of the heart”. True meditation is possible only there. For many of us the lotus of our heart remains just a bud only. First we have to open this bud into a flower. To succeed in this, earnest efforts in terms of *Japa* and prayers are essential. Till he locates his spiritual center, the *Sadhak* will find his mind wandering. This is a challenge.

The Supreme Being, *Maha Vishnu*, projected out of Himself the great Universe; and having projected out of Himself the Universe, He entered into every being and everything. He is the subtle essence of all. For this reason He is called the *Antaryamin*. This Rik indicates the great abode of the Supreme Being in the body

8 *Santatam shilaabhistu lambatya kosha sannibham*
Tasyaante sushiram sookshmam tasmin sarvam pratishthitam

Like the bud of the lotus (*aakosha sannibham*), suspended in an inverted position (*lambati*) and surrounded by arteries (*shilaabhi*), is the organ –heart. In the middle of it there is a narrow space – a miniature *aakash* (*sookshmam sushiram*). Everything (*sarvam*) is supported (*pratishthitam*) in it (*tasmin*).

In essence, this Rik tells us that there is a miniature *Aakash* within the heart. *Chandogya Upanishad* describes this in the following manner -

As large as the Universe outside, even so large is the universe within the lotus of the heart. Within it are heaven and earth, the Sun and the Moon, the lightning and all the stars. What is present in the macrocosm is also present in the microcosm. Though old age comes to the body, the lotus of the heart does not grow old. At the death of the body, it does not die. The lotus of the heart where *Brahman* exists in all His glory – that and not the body, is the true city of the *Brahman*. *Brahman* dwelling therein, is untouched by any deed, ageless, deathless, free from grief, free from hunger and thirst.

9. *Tasya madhye mahaanagnir visvarchir vishvato mukhah*
So agrabhug vibhajan tishthan aahaaram ajara kavih

In (*tasya*) the middle (*madhye*) of that (narrow space of the heart or *susumna*) remains the un-decaying (*tishta*), all knowing (*kavih*), omnifaced (*vishvato mukhah*) great fire (*mahaan agnir*), which has flames on every side, which enjoys the food (*aahaaram*) first presented before it (*agrabhuk*) and which remains assimilating the food (*vibhajan*) that has been consumed.

This is the next step in getting us to be introspective. As role of fire in the space is in the external world, so is this *Praana* for this body. This is the vital energy in our body. *Praana* performs all the tasks such as assimilation of food that has been consumed, distributing the energy consumed from the food to the various parts of the body, excreting the waste – all essential for the maintenance and growth of the body. As described above this *Praana* is situated in the narrow space of the heart. Since its tasks are covering every part of the body, it is described here as seeing all sides – (*vishvato mukhah*)

10. ***Tiryagurdhvam adhassaayi rasmayastasya santataa
Santaapayati svam deham aapaadataala mastakah
Tasya madhye vahni sikhaa aniya oordhvaa vyavasthitaa***

The rays (*rasmayah*) of this *Praana* (*tasya*) spread, scattering themselves vertically (*urdhvam, adhah*) and horizontally (*tiryak*), permeate (*saayi*) and always (*santataa*) the whole body. It warms (*santaapayati*) up its own body (*svam deham*) from the sole of the feet to the crown of the head (*aapaadataala mastakah*). At the center of this (*tasya madhye*) abides (*vyavasthitaa*) a tiny (*aniyah*) tongue of fire (*vahni sikhaa*) facing (*oordhvam*) up.

The departure of *Praana* from the body is called death. Soon after the departure of *Praana*, the body gets cold. The body is kept warm by the *Praana Shakti*. At the center of this fire, is the tongue shining brilliantly with its flame facing up. This tongue is the *Jeevatma* (or *Jeeva* – the individual self).

11. ***Neelatoyada madhyasthaad vidyullekheva bhaasvaraa
Neevaarashookavattanvee peetaa bhaasvatyanoopamaa***

The *Jeevatma*, shines (*bhaasvaraa*) with the colour of gold (*peetaa*). It is extremely thin (*tanvee*) as the awn of a paddy grain (*neevaarashookavat*) and very subtle (*anu upamaa*). Like a flash of lightening that flashes (*vidyut lekhat eva*) from the middle of a dark rain bearing cloud (*neelatoyadamadhyasthaath*).

Svetasvatara Upanishad and *Mundaka Upanishad* tell us that the *Jeevatma* is very subtle and self effulgent. It is also superior to the speech, mind and the sense organs. All these descriptions are efforts by our ancient sages make us realise the eternal truth.

12. ***Tasyaah sikhaayaa madhye Paramaatmaa vyavastitaha
Sa Brahma Sa Sivah Sa Harih Sendrah sokshara paramah svaraata***

Paramatma, the Supreme Reality dwells in the middle of that flame. He is *Brahma*. He is *Shiva*. He is *Vishnu*. He is *Indra*. He is eternal and self-luminous. There is no one superior to Him.

We now know where the individual self, *Jeevatma*, is located in the body. During the creative act, Lord *Narayana*, not only projects from

Himself the various categories of His creation, but also enters into each one of them. He is thus *Antaryamin*, *Sharirin* (indweller) of the cosmos as a whole and every part of it including the *Jeevatmans*. By that it should not be interpreted that He is contained within them. He is infinitely beyond their dimension. He is in fact, their container too. The *Sooktam* describes the location in the body where the Supreme Being dwells.

13. ***Ritam Satyam Param Brahma Purusham krishnapingalam
Oordhvaretam viroopaksham vishvaroopaaya vai namo namah***

Parabrahman is the material and efficient cause of the universe (*Satyam*) and all the beautiful things that we see (*Ritam*). Salutations to Him again and again (namo namah) who has permeated every living being (*Purusham*), who has a complexion that is a mixture of the dark hue of *Maha Vishnu* and the fair complexioned Lord *Shiva* (*Krishnapingalam*), who is very auspicious (*oordhvaretam*), has three eyes (*viroopaksham*) and whose form is that of the Universe (*vishvaroopaaya vai*).

In this manner, the Maha Narayana Sooktam turns us into an introspective mood and takes us to the presence of the Supreme Being. After that, serving the Lord with supreme devotion is true meditation.

14. ***Om Naaraayanaaya vidmahe Vaasudevaaya dheemahi
Tanno Vishnu Prachodayaath***

This is Vishnu Gayatri. We commune with Lord Narayana and meditate on Lord Vasudeva. May that Vishnu guide and inspire us.

***Om Saha naavavatu, Sahanau Bhunaktu Saha Veeryam
karavaavahai,
Tejasvi Navadheetamastu Ma Vidvishavahai
Om Shantih Shantih Shantih***

Meditation does not mean to merely sit in front of an image, stare at it or just imagine of a familiar form. First we must try to understand where we stand in His divine presence. We must then be able to picture His resplendent beautiful form in our mind. For this reason, the following five mantras describe His glory.

Mantra Pushpam

(Taittiriya Aranyaka 1.22)

Performing *Puja* is a very popular form of worship. Towards the end of the *Puja* the one *Veda mantra* that is soul stirring and inspiring to every devotee is the *Mantra Pushpa*. Even those who have not studied the *Vedas* completely chant the *Mantra Pushpa* at the conclusion of the *puja*. This mantra occurs in the *Taittiriya Aranyaka*.

The offering of flowers or *Pushpa* during worship is a very important ritual. It is called *Pushpanjali*. While offering *Pushpanjali* the devotee expresses his complete surrender to the Lord and seeks His grace and this is signified in the *Mantra Pushpa*.

Jala (water), *Chandra* (moon), *Agni* (fire), *Vaayu* (wind), *Surya* (Sun), *Nakshatra* (stars), *Megha* (clouds), rainy season are all aspects of *Prakruti* that we come across in everyday life. These get mentioned in this mantra. All these aspects are interdependent on each other. At the same time all these are rely on *Jala* (water).

In the *anuvaaka "Yopaam pushpa"* it is stated that *Jala* on which our lives are entirely dependent is also source on which the world is dependent on. Those who realise this will be blessed with wealth and *mukti*. Similarly, *Agni*, *Vaayu*, *Surya*, *Chandra*, *Nakshtras* (stars), *Megha* (clouds), rainy season all rely on water. *Jala*, in turn also relies on them – a case of mutual dependence. Those who realise this will be blessed with *mukti*.

I salute the Supreme Being who is available to us in the form of "ap"

***Om Bhadram Karmebhih Shrunuyama Devah
Bhadram Pashyema - Akshabhir- Yajatrah
Sthirairangais – Tushtuvam – Sastanubhih
Vyashema Deavahitam Yadayuh
Swasti Na Indro Vriddhashravah
Swasti Nah Pusha Visvavedah
Swasti Nah Tarkshyo Arishtanemih
Swasti No Brhaspatirdadhatu
Om Shantih, Shantih, Shantih.***

1. ***Om yo paam pushpam veda pushpavaan prajaavaan pashumaan
bhavati
Chandramaa vaa apaam pushpam pushpavaan prajaavaan
pashumaan bhavati
Ya evam veda***

He who (*yah*) understands (*veda*) the flower (*pushpam*) of the water (*apaam*) will become the processor of flowers (*pushpavaan*), cattle (*pashumaan*) and progeny (*prajaavaan*). *Chandra* (*chandramaa vaa*) is the flower (*pushpam*) of the water (*apaam*). He who (*yah evam*) understands (*veda*) this fact will be rich with cattle (*pashumaan*) and progeny (*prajaavaan*). This expresses the sacred relationship between *Apaam* and *Chandra*

2. ***Yo paamaayatanam veda aayatanavaan bhavati Agnirvaa
apaamaayatanam
aayatanavaan bhavati yo agneyaraayatanam veda aayatanavaan
bhavati
Apo vai agneraayatanam aayatanavaan bhavati ya evam veda***

He (yah) who understands (veda) the source (aayatanam) of water (apaam) becomes established in himself (aayatanavaan). Fire (*agni vaa*) is the source (*aayatanam*) of water (apaam). He, who understands this, becomes established in himself. He, who understands the source of fire, becomes established in himself. Water is the source of fire. He, who understands this, becomes established in himself.

3. ***Yo paamaayatanam veda aayatanavaan bhavati Vaayurvaa
apaamaayatanam
aayatanavaan bhavati yo Vaayurva aayatanam veda aayatanavaan
bhavati
Apo vai Vaayor aayatanam aayatanavaan bhavati ya evam veda***

He who understands the source of water becomes established in himself. *Vaayu* (wind) is the source of water. He who understands the source of wind becomes established in himself. Water is the source of wind and who understands this becomes established in himself.

4. ***Yo paamaayatanam veda aayatanavaan bhavati
Asau vai tapannapaamaayatanam aayatanavaan bhavati
Yo musya tapata aayatanam veda aayatanavaan bhavati
Apo vai amusya tapata aayatanam aayatanavaan bhavati ya evam
veda***

He who understands the source of water becomes established in himself. The scorching Sun is the source of water. He who understands the source of Surya (Sun) becomes established in himself. Water is the source of Sun. He who understands this becomes established in himself.

5. ***Yo paamaayatanam veda aayatanavaan bhavati
Chandramaa vaa apaamaayatanam aayatanavaan bhavati
Yaschandramasa aayatanam veda aayatanavaan bhavati
Apo vai chandramasa aayatanam aayatanavaan bhavati ya evam
veda***

He who understands the source of water becomes established in himself. *Chandra* is the source of water. He who understands the source of *Chandra* (moon) becomes established in himself. Water is the source of *Chandra*. He who understands this becomes established in himself.

6. ***Yo paamaayatanam veda aayatanavaan bhavati
Nakshatrani vaa apaamaayatanam aayatanavaan bhavati
Yo Nakshatraanaamaayatanam veda aayatanavaan bhavati
Apo vai Nakshatraanaamaayatanam aayatanavaan bhavati ya evam
veda***

He who understands the source of water becomes established in himself. *Nakshatras* (stars) are the source of water. He who understands the source of *Nakshatras* becomes established in himself. Water is the source of *Nakshatras*. He who understands this becomes established in himself.

7. ***Yo paamaayatanam veda aayatanavaan bhavati
Parjanya vaa apaamaayatanam aayatanavaan bhavati
Yah Parjanyaasyaayatanam veda aayatanavaan bhavati
Apo vai Parjanyaasyaayatanam aayatanavaan bhavati ya evam veda***

He who understands the source of water becomes established in himself. Clouds are the source of water. He who understands the source of clouds becomes established in himself. Water is the source of clouds. He who understands this becomes established in himself.

8. ***Yo paamaayatanam veda aayatanavaan bhavati
Samvatsaro vaa apaamaayatanam aayatanavaan bhavati
Yah samvatsarasyaayatanam veda aayatanavaan bhavati
Apo vai samvatsarasyaayatanam aayatanavaan bhavati ya evam
veda***

He who understands the source of water becomes established in himself. Seasons are the source of water. He who understands the source of seasons becomes established in himself. Water is the source of seasons. He who understands this becomes established in himself.

9. ***Yopsu naavam pratishtitam veda pratyeva tishtati***

He who understands that a boat is located in the water becomes established in himself. This will be commented upon towards the end.

10. ***Om Raajaadhiraajaaya prasahyasaahine' Namovayam
vaishnavanaaya kurmahe
Sa mae kaamaankaamaaya mahyam kameshvaro vaisravana
dadaatu
Kuberaaya vaishnavanaaya mahaarajaaya namah***

We (*vayam*) salute (*namah kurmahe*) *Kubera* (*Vaishnavanaaya*), the king of kings (*raajaadhi raajaaya*), who grants us great success (*prasahya saahine'*). May he (*sah*) the fulfiller of all desires (*kameshvarah*) and the king of wealth (*Vaishnavanah*) grant (*dadaatu*) us enough wealth to fulfill (*kaamaakaamaaya*) all our desires (*kaamaan*). Once again we salute king (*mahaarajaaya*) *Kubera* the lord of wealth (*vaishnavanaaya Kuberaaya*).

Water, Moon, Agni, Vaayu, Surya, Clouds, seasons- are all various *amshas* of the *Prakruti*. These are all getting mentioned here. Though they are all independent entities, they are interdependent. At the same time, water is the key element on which everything else is dependent.

The first four mantras state that he who understands this becomes established in himself. The 9th mantra talks about a boat. The 10th mantra praises the God.

Often, while describing the passage of life water and ocean are mentioned. The description of the source for water as moon and clouds, in fact, reminds us that life on earth is supported by Prakruti that has amshas like the moon, clouds etc. For this reason, Prakruti will need to be revered and worshipped. The use of water and flowers during poojas is to signify this worship of Prakruti.

We should not stop with the worship of Prakruti. We should go beyond that. For progressing beyond that stage, the 9th mantra talks about a boat. The boat, in fact, is no other than the Supreme Being Himself. Reminding us that we should realize Lord, the 10th mantra praises His glory. We should sail past the rituals, and seek to realize the Lord within.

***Om Bhadram Karmebhih Shrunuyama Devah
Bhadram Pashyema - Akshabhir- Yajatrah
Sthirairangais – Tushtuvam – Sastanubhih
Vyashema Deavahitam Yadayuh
Swasti Na Indro Vriddhashravah
Swasti Nah Pusha Visvavedah
Swasti Nah Tarkshyo Arishtanemih
Swasti No Brhaspatirdadhatu
Om Shantih, Shantih, Shantih.***

Aditya Hridayam

People during the Vedic times were not viewing Sun merely as a planet that rises in the morning and sets by night. They recognized Him as the Supreme Being supporting life on earth and a provider of energy and food. More importantly, He inspires people to have righteous thoughts and perform actions to suit. People pray to Surya to grant them wealth required to lead their day to day lives happily and also for the spiritual power needed to lead higher levels of life.

Aditya Hridayam – the hymn to the Sun God- is ascribed to great sage *Agastya*. It forms a part of the *Yuddha kaanda* written by Sage *Valmiki*.

The first two Slokas describe the circumstances under which the Sage *Agastya* initiated this hymn to *Sri Rama*. Fourth and fifth *Slokas* indicate the benefits in reciting the Hymn. *Slokas* from six to fourteen describe *Surya Narayana* in various manifestations. In *Slokas* from sixteen to twenty-one obeisance to the God is being offered. *Slokas* twenty six and twenty seven contain the advice by the Sage *Agastya* to *Sri Rama*.

There is only one Supreme Reality and all the *Devis* and *Devatas* that we hear about are all the *Vibhuti*s or manifestations of this *Parabrahman*. Among the *Devatas*, *Aditya* (*Surya*) the son of *Aditi* is highly celebrated and greatly revered. Being a *Vibhuti* of Lord *Narayana* he is often referred to as *Surya Narayana*. In fact, the Slokas in *Aditya Hridayam* may be interpreted both in terms of the God *Surya* and Lord *Narayana*. It is a common practice to recite the hymn on every Sundays.

1. ***Tato Uddha parishraantam samare' chintayaa sthitam
Raavanam chaagrato drshtyaa uddaaya samupasthitam***
2. ***Daivathascha samaagamyaa drishtu mabhyaagato ranam
Upaagamyaa bravee draama magastyo bhagavaan rushih***

Then the all-knowing Sage *Agastya*, who had come and joined the *Devatas* to witness the fierce battle witnessed *Rama* lost in deep thought, utterly exhausted in battle and still facing *Ravana* who has come prepared for a fresh encounter. The sage approached *Rama* and spoke to him thus.

3. ***Rama Rama mahaabaaho shrunu guhyam sanaatanam
Yena sarvaanareen vatsa samare' vijayishyasi***

O *Rama*, mighty armed *Sri Rama* listen to this ancient secret whereby you can vanquish in battle all your foes.

4. ***Aditya Hridayam punyam sarva shatru vinaashanam
Jayaavaham japenitya makshayam paramam shivam***
5. ***Sarva mangala maangalyam sarva paapa pranaashanam
Chintaashoka prashamana maayurvedhana muttamam***

The holy hymn of *Aditya Hridayam* is addressed to the Sun deity. It is very auspicious. If earnestly chanted, it will get rid of all your enemies and bring you victory and unending felicity. This most auspicious hymn will destroy all sins, mental, physical illnesses and bestows long life.

6. ***Rasmimantam samudyantam devaasura namaskrutam
Poojayasva vivasvantam bhaskaram bhuvaneshvaram***

Worship the Sun God, who is held in great veneration by both the *Devas* and *Asuras*, possessed of golden coloured rays when he has fully risen in the early mornings, eclipses all other luminous bodies, the resplendent lord of the Universe by whose effulgence all others shine.

7. ***Sarva Devaatmako hyesha tejasvee rasmibhaavanah
Yesha devaasuraganaan lokaan paati gabhastibhih***

He is verily the soul of all the *Devas*. He is self luminous and the sustainer of all with his rays. He protects the inhabitants of all the worlds, the *Devas* and *Asuras* with rays that nourish and energize them.

8. *Yesha Brahmaa cha Vishnuscha Shiva Skandah Prajaapatih Mahendro Dhanadah Kaalo Yama Somo Hyapaam patih*

The presiding deity of the Sun is indeed all the following - *Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Skanda* (the son of Goddess *Parvati*), the nine *Prajaapatih* (Lord of creatures), *Mahendra* (king of the *Devas*), *Kubera* (Lord of wealth), *Kaala* (Lord of time), *Yama* (Lord of death), *Soma* (*Chandra*, the one that nourishes all), and *Varuna* (Lord of waters). It really means that they are all the manifestations of one Supreme Being.

9. *Pitaro vasava saadhyaa hyaschinou maruto manuh Vaayurvahnih prajaapraanaa rutugartaa prabhaakarah*

He is also the *Pitrs*, *Vasus* (the eight dispensers of treasures), the *Saadhyas*, the twin *Ashwini Devas* (the celestial physicians), the *Maruts*, *Vayu*, *Agni*, the vital *Praana* in all created beings and the sole cause for all the seasons that we experience.

10. *Aditya Savita Suryah khagah pooshaa gabhastimaan Suvarna sadrusho bhanur hiranya retha Divaakarah*

He (Sun) is the son of *Aditi* (mother of all the *Devatas*), creator of the Universe, inspirer of action, travels by the sky, He nourishes the world feeding it with rain, has a golden hued brilliance and he is the maker of the day.

11. *Haridaswah sahasrarchi saptha sapthir mareechiman, Thimironmadhana shambhu sthwashta marthanda amsuman.*

He has greenish coloured horses, has countless number of rays, rides on seven horses and dispels darkness. He bestows happiness and prosperity. He removes all misfortunes. He is the infuser of life in an otherwise mundane existence and an omnipresent Being with his rays penetrating everywhere.

12. *Hiranya garbha shishira thapano bhaskaro ravih, Agni garbha adithe puthra shanka shishira nasanah*

Surya deva is the store house of all riches. He has a soothing influence on the minds of all His devotees. He is the source of heat and light for the world. He is praised in the *Vedas*. He has great fire in His womb. He is the son of *Aditi*. He melts all frost.

13. *Vyomanadha sthamobhedi rig yajur sama paaragah, Ghana vrushti rapaam mithro vindhya vedhi plavangamah*

Surya Deva is the Lord of the Sky. He dispels darkness. He is the master par-excellence of the three *Vedas* – *Rig, Yajur* and *Sama*. It is through His grace that we get heavy rain. He is the friend of the waters. He is the friend and benefactor of all pure minded people. He travels very fast in the sky, crossing the *Vindhya* ranges in one bound.

14. *Aathapee mandali mruthyu pingala sarva thaapanah,*

Kavir vishvo maha thejaa rakthah sarvodbhavah

O Deva, you are the one who gives heat. You have a global shape. You inflict death (on impediments). You have a golden yellow colour (as rising Sun). You heat everything (during mid day). You are exceedingly energetic, beloved of all and the generator of all action.

15. ***Nakshatra graha thaaraanam adhipo, vishva bhaavanah,
Thejasam aphi thejasvi dvaadasaathman namosthute***

He is the Lord of the stars, planets and constellations. He is the origin of everything in the Universe and the resplendent cause of the luster of anything brilliant. He is the one with twelve forms and is known as Dvaadasha Aditya. They are – *Indra, Dhaata, Aryama, Mitra, Varuna, Indra, Vivasvan, Pusha, Parjanya, Ansh, Bhaga, Twasta* and *Vishnu*. I salute Him.

16. ***Namah poorvaya giraye, paschime giraye namah,
Jyothirganaanaam pathaye dinadhipathaye namah.***

Salutations to the presiding deity of the Eastern mountains (where the Sun rises) and the Western mountains (where the Sun sets). Salutations to the Lord of stellar bodies and also to the Lord of the day.

17. ***Jayaya jaya bhadraya haryasvaya namo namah,
Namo nama sahasramsho adithyaya namo namah.***

Salutations unto Him that ordains victory. Salutations unto Him who rides on green steeds. Salutations to the thousand rayed Lord, the son of Aditi.

18. ***Nama ugraya veeraya sarangaya namo namah,
Namah padma prabhodaya, maarthandaaya namo namah***

Salutations to the terrible one (who is relentless to the offenders who fail to keep their senses under control) and to that hero with awe inspiring valor. Salutations to the one who traverses fast and whose emergence makes the lotuses bloom (awakener of the lotus in the heart).

19. ***Brhameshaanachutheshaya sooryadhithya varchase,
Bhasvathe sarva bhakshaya roudraya vapushe namah***

Salutations to the over-lord of Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu and to Him who inspires created beings into action. Obeisance to the lord who is, in fact, the intrinsic effulgence in the Sun. He is the illuminator, devourer of everything and has a fierce form.

20. ***Thmognaya himagnaya shathrugmaya amithathmane,
Kruthagnagnaya devaya jyothisham pathaye namah.***

Obeisance to the Lord who dispels all darkness (of ignorance) and fear that grips like frost. Salutations to Him who destroys the foes (both internal and external) of all his devotees, ungrateful beings and who is self-effulgent and the lord of all stellar bodies.

21. ***Taptha chamikaraabhaaya vahnaye vishva karmane,
Namasthomabhinignaya ruchaye loka sakshine***

Obeisance to the Lord who is shining like molten gold: Salutations to the transcendental fire, the fire of supreme knowledge; salutations to the Lord responsible for the creation of the Universe, for Him who is the destroyer of darkness (ignorance included), and for the glorious self-effulgent Lord who is the ultimate cosmic witness.

22. ***Naasa yatyesha vai bhootham tadeva srujathi prabhuh
Payathyesha thapathyesha varshatyesha gabhasthibhih***

Salutations to the Lord who destroys everything that was and creates them once again. Salutations to Him who, heats water with His powerful rays, and returns it as rain.

23. ***Yesha suptheshu jagarathi bhootheshu parinishtithah
Yesha chaivagni hothram cha phalam chaivagni hothrinam***

Salutations to the Lord who is awake when all the beings in the world are asleep. He is both the sacrificial fire and the fruit enjoyed by the worshippers thereof.

24. ***Vedascha kratavaschaiva krathoonam phalameva cha,
Yani kruthyani lokeshu sarva yesha ravih prabhuh***

Lord *Surya* is the Lord of all action in this Universe. He is verily the Vedas, the sacrifices, such as the *Yagas*, prescribed therein and the fruits thereof.

25. ***Yena mapathsu kruchreshu kaanthareshu bhayeshu cha,
Keerthayan Purushah kaschin aavaseedhathi Raghavah.***

O *Raghava*, he who recites this hymn in times of peril, when in grievous distress, when lost in wilderness, when seized by fear, will not lose heart. He will be saved from the distressing times.

26. ***Poojayasvaina mekegro deva devam jagat pathim,
Ethath trigunitham japthva yuddeshu vijayashyasi***

O *Rama*, worship this God of all Gods, Lord of the Universe with a single minded devotion. Reciting this hymn thrice in a day you shall emerge victorious in your battle with the mighty *Ravana*.

27. ***Asmin kshane mahaa baaho Ravanam thwam vadhishyasi,
Evamukthwaa tadaa Agasthyo jagama cha yada gatham***

O mighty armed *Rama*, if you do as indicated you shall triumph over *Ravana* and kill him this very moment. Having spoken thus the great sage *Agastya* returned from whence he came.

28. ***Eta chruthva mahaa thejaa nashta shoko bhavath thada,
Dhaarayaamaasa supreetho Raghavah prayathathmavaan.***

Having heard this, the illustrious *Raghava* was greatly pleased and freed himself from all worry. Filled with great enthusiasm and with a pure heart he meditated on Lord *Aditya*.

29. ***Adhithyam prokshya japthvaa thu param harsha mavaapthaavan,
Thiriraachamya suchir bhoothva dhanuraadhaaya veeryavaan***

Sri Rama cleansed himself by performing *Aachamana*, and then gazing intently at *Aditya* he performed, with great devotion, the *Aditya Hridaya Japa* thrice. Experiencing great felicity, he took up the mighty bow and got ready for the battle.

30. ***Ravanam preshya hrushtaathmaa yudhaaya samupaagamath,
Sarva yathnena mahathaa vadhe thasya drutho
bhavath.***

Seeing *Ravana* in front of him he was delighted and went forth with great enthusiasm to fight the battle. He put forth all his effort he decided to kill *Ravana*.

31. ***Adha ravi ravada nireekshya Ramam,
Mudithamanaah paramam prahrushyamaana,
Nisicharapathi samkshyam vidithva,
Sura gana Madhya gatho vachasthvarethi***

When *Rama* meditated on the *Surya deva* by reciting the *Aditya Hridaya*, the Lord *Aditya* was very pleased. Surrounded by all the *Devatas*, Lord *Surya* realised that the destruction of the King *Ravana* was imminent. He looked at *Rama* with delight and exclaimed do not delay Hurry up.

Gadya Trayam

Eastern religions are distinguished by the emphasis they lay on experience than on authority. They have their own rituals, mythologies but the basic conception that is dominating is the renewal of consciousness. The purpose of religion is spiritual and not merely metaphysical conversion. The thrust is on the displacement of ignorance, *Avidya*, by knowledge, *Vidya* or awareness. For the Indian people the idea of religion has always been one of direct experience of the Divine. *Vidya*, vision and wisdom is the goal of the *Upanishads*.

Vedanta is based on scriptures and traditions. Should it then be called a theology or philosophy? Neither is correct. It is a *Darsana*, a world view. The word *Darsana* means-seeing. It is ultimately based on experience. The scriptures tell us that the doctrines given by them are records of experiences.

The topics commonly discussed in *Vedanta Darsana* are – (1) The nature of the physical world, its origin and evolution (2) Nature of the human and other beings (3) Existence of God, His nature and attributes (4) The goal of human life and the way of attaining it. *Prasthanatraya* (three great paths) are the basis for commentaries written on *Vedanta Darsana*. *Upanishads*, *Brahma sutra* and the *Bhagavad-Gita* constitute the *Prasthanatraya*.

The commentary written by *Sri Shankara Bhagavatpada* is the most notable one in the *Advaita Saampradaya*. The word *Advaita* means non-dual, “one without a second”. The system recognizes *Brahman* (the Absolute) as the only reality and denies permanent reality to all others such as *Jagat* (world) and the *Jivas* (individual souls). The entire world of manifestation and multiplicity is not real in itself but seems to be real only for those who live in ignorance (*Avidya*). Only the wisdom that the Supreme Reality and the Individual Self are identical can bring us redemption. It is *Maya* that causes the world of phenomenon. *Maya* is *Avidya* at cosmic level. According to this philosophy, *Brahman* associated with *Maya* is *Saguna Brahman* (*Brahman* with attributes). *Sri Shankara* emphasizes that *Brahman* can be comprehended only through its “*Swaroopalakshana*”. *Swaroopalakshana* refers to its essential characteristics. The essential characteristics of *Brahman* are – *Sat* (eternal reality), *Chit* (pure consciousness) and *Ananda* (unalloyed bliss). *Sat-Chit-Ananda* is not merely its characteristics. In fact, it is its essence.

The path to *Mukti* or liberation is involved and not easily available for ordinary people. It involves a few stages. The first is the practice of a fourfold discipline called *Saadhana Chatustaya*. The second stage involves training under a competent Guru.

Vishishtadvaita Vedanta Darsana is not a creation of *Sri Ramanuja* alone. The twelve *Alvars* as also *Acharyas* like *Naathamuni*, *Yamuna* and *Sri Ramanuja* evolved the system out of the more ancient teachings. However, *Sri Ramanuja* is the best exponent. For this reason, it is often referred to as the *Ramanuja Darsana*. The system accepts both the *Sanskrit Prasthanatraya* and the Tamil *Prabandhams* as equally authoritative. Hence the philosophy is also called “*Ubhaya Vedanta*”.

While the *Advaita* system recognizes *Brahman* as the only reality, *Vishishtadvaita* accepts three entities as ultimate realities – (1) *Brahman* (2) *Jiva* or *Chit* (3) *Prakruti* or *Achit*. Of these, *Brahman* is the absolute and independent reality. The other two, *Jiva* and *Prakruti* are dependent realities. The three together are referred to as *Tattvatraya*.

Sri Ramanuja also disagrees with the assertions of the *Advaita* by *Sri Shankara* that the Supreme Being is *Nirguna* (without attributes) and *Niraakaara* (without a form). According to him, in all theisms, God must be supremely adorable and infinitely good personal being. He cannot be quality-less impersonal being as if He is not responsive to prayers and worship.

Sri Ramanuja proposes the Supreme Lord with an archetypal form. In addition, drawing substance from various *Puranas* the *Acharya* goes on to elaborate the *Swaroopas* (*Satyam, Jnanam, Anantam, Anandam, Amalatvam* etc) and *Svabhavas* (*Bala, Aishvarya, Skakti, Veerya, Kaarunya, Audaarya* etc) of the Supreme Being.

Prapatti is a special introduction by *Sri Ramanujacharya*. It is the concept of total surrender. It is specially addressed to those who are unable to practice *Karma Yoga, Jnaana Yoga* or *Bhakti Yoga*. Its main characteristics are to conceive what is in conformity with the will of God and to reject what is disagreeable to Him (more about this at a later stage); to seek Him as the sole refuge and protector and surrender to Him completely without any qualification.

Yet it must be emphasized that it is not invented by him to suit the occasion. The following points may be noted.

1. There are references to "*Prapatti*" as a superior means in the *Vedas, Upanishads, Itihasas and Puranas*.
2. *Bhakti* and *Parama Bhakti* are the end products of a long and difficult course of discipline of the head and the heart. Only few people may be equipped with the necessary intellectual capability and social environment required for the practice of it. However, *Prapatti* is an independent path which guarantees the same benefits. More of this will be discussed at a later stage in this chapter.
3. As an extension to the practice of *Prapatti*, the accessibility (*Saulabhya*) of the Supreme Being (*Sriman Narayana*) to a simple devotee has been specially handled. *Brahman* is not, for *Sri Ramanujacharya*, a featureless, attributeless, indefinite vague presence unsuited for worship and adoration. The Supreme person has an archetypal form (which does not limit Him and he can take any form He wishes). According to the *Sri Vaishnava* theology, the Supreme Being has five aspects. Refer to the diagram given below –

Para: *Sriman Narayana* in His transcendent status of *Vaikuntha*.

Vyuha: These are emanations of the Supreme *Sriman Narayana*

Vibhava: Special manifestation as *Avatara*.

Antaryamin: Indweller in the Universe as a whole and in all its parts.

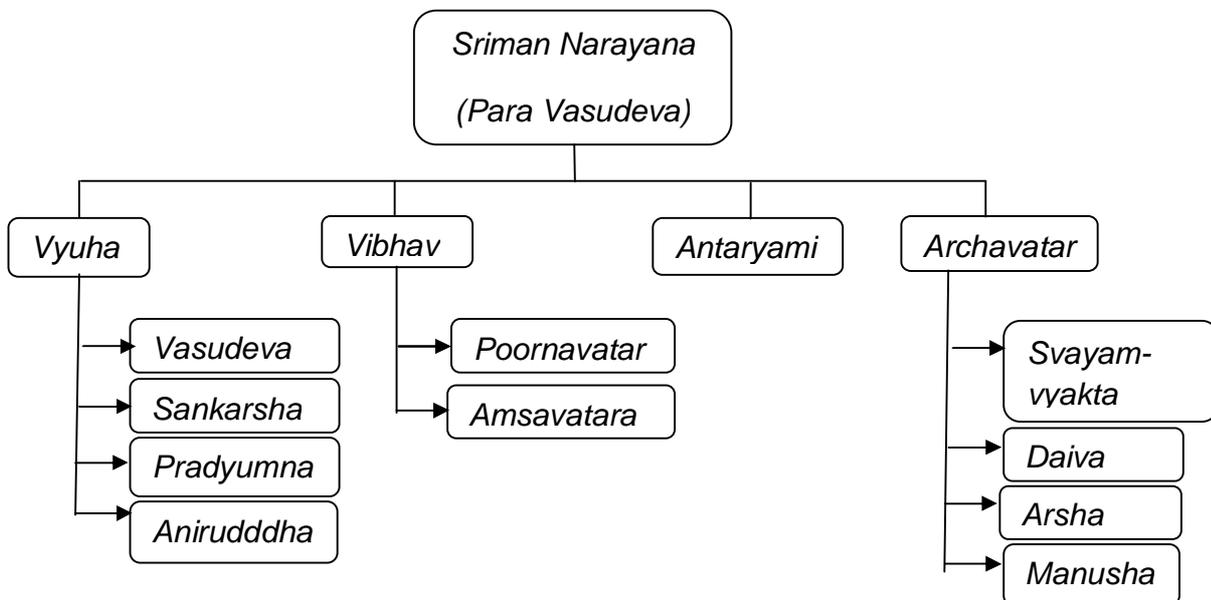
Archa: Consecrated Divine images in great temples.

A more detailed discussion on the aspects of the Supreme Being is being included at the end of this chapter.

In *Gadya Trayam*, we will be seeing Lord *Narayana* in His transcendent status and the *Archavatar* being discussed.

4. *Gadya Trayam* consists of three prose pieces composed by *Sri Ramanujacharya*. In these commentaries the *Acharya* emphasizes *Bhakti/ Prapatti* as the surest means to attain salvation. In the *Vaishnava parlance*, *Gadya Trayam* ranks in importance to the other popular *Trayas* like – *Loka Traya*, *Kaala Traya*, *Tattva Traya* (*Cit, Acit and Ishvara*), *Nama Traya* (*Narayana, Vishnu, Vasudeva*) etc.

It has already been indicated that Eastern religions are distinguished by the emphasis they lay on experience than on authority. *Gadya Trayam* is a work based on the direct experience by the *Sri Ramanujacharya*.



The “*Brahmotsavam*” at *Srirangam* takes place in the Tamil month of *Panguni*. On the last date (under the asterism *Uttiram*) the *Utsava moorthy* of Lord *Ranganaatha* is seated on the same dias as the Goddess *Ranganayaki*. This is celebrated only once a year. On one such occasion, *Sri Ramanujacharya*, fearing the fate of his self and humanity in this *Samsara* poured out his heart to the Divine couple. The outcome of this dialogue is *Saranaagati Gadya*. This is in the form of a dialogue between the *Acharya* and the Divine couple.

5. *Sri Ramanujacharya* denotes the Supreme Being as *Brahman, Narayana, Bhagavan, Purushottama, Vishnu* etc. *Sriman Narayana* takes characteristics such as – *Satyam* (Truth unconditioned and changeless), *Jnanam* (all comprehending knowledge), *Anandam* (immeasurable bliss), *Amalatva* (incorruptible purity –

freedom from karma). They are known as His *Swaroopa* or inherent nature. knowledge), *Anantam* (excellence unlimited categories of time and Apart from these, the *Acharya* goes on to describe His *Kalyana Gunas* – countless auspicious qualities. These are called *Svabhava*. The popular ones are – *Jnaana*, (omniscience), *Bala* (omnipotence), *Aishvarya* (lordship), *Shakti* (creative power), *Virya* (immutability), *Tejas* (splendour), *Gambhira* (inestimable grandeur), *Audaarya* (generosity), and *Karunya* (compassion). With these attributes the *Acharya* rejects the concept that the Supreme Being is without any *Gunas*. *Gadya Trayam* deals elaborately with the *Swaroopa* and *Kalyana Gunas* of *Sriman Narayana*.

6. In the theology of *Sri Vaishnavism* the concept of *Sri* has a great importance. On account of the importance attached to the Divine consort, the system has come to be known as *Sri Vaishnavism* and the God as *Sriman Narayana*. *Sri*, the consort, is co-eternal with Lord *Vishnu*. She is *Anapaayini* (ever united with Him). She is the Mother of the Universe who extends Divine accessibility to even unworthy men. As a mother Her love extends to even the most undeserving. In the *Vaishnava* rituals, prayer to *Sri* for Her grace takes precedence over the prayer to Lord *Narayana* Himself.

Accordingly, the text of *Saranaagati Gadya* begins with a prayer to *Sri Devi*. The *Acharya* seeks that *Sri Devi* should intercede on his behalf and see that Her beloved husband, Lord *Ranganaatha*, accepts the *Acharya's* prayers and grant his wish of accepting his service.

7. The Supreme *Brahman*, *Sriman Narayana*, is the creator, container and the cause for everything – *Sarvakaaranatva*. He transcends everything (*paratva*). Yet how is He then easily accessible by all His devotees? How do you explain His easy accessibility – *Saulabhya*? Two opportunities are presented – (a) during an *Avatara* (b) Images or *Archas* that stand for extreme accessibility.

We have known incarnations such as *Sri Ramachandra* and *Sri Krishna*. The Lord appears as a human being and lives among them. During the *Avatara*, the Lord leaves behind highly evocative stories of his activities and spiritual revelations. However, *Avataras* appear once in an age only. Men are then left to contemplate on the accounts of their lives.

Consecrated images, *Archas*, give an excellent opportunity. *Archas* may be classified into four categories.

- (a) *Svayam-vyakta*: This refers to a class of Images that are believed to have been self-created. Examples are - images found in temples such as *Srirangam*, *Tirupathi*, *Kanchi* etc.
- (b) *Divya*: Refers to images that have been installed and consecrated by Divinities such as *Brahma*, *Indra*.

- (c) Arsha: Images installed and consecrated by sages and seers such as *Bhrigu and Markandeya*
- (d) Manusha: Images installed and consecrated by men and women either in temples or in their houses.

The worship of idols consecrated by Divine presence is of *Vedic* origin. “We read in the *Atharva-Veda* that a sage, *Atharva* by name, pays obeisance to a “*prastara*” (stone) which belongs to sages and is sanctified by Divinity. “*Prastara*” is the precursor of the colloquial “*patthar*”. It is clear some stone is referred to in the Vedic verse. From *Panini’s* aphorisms (5.2.101; 5.3.96; 5.3.99) we know that in the 5th century BC images were made both for selling and worshipping. We are here reminded in *Valmiki’s* narration that (1) *Rama* and *Sita* spent a night of devotion in temple dedicated to Him (2) flags were hoisted in temples (3) *Rama*, *Sita* and *Lakshmana* visited temples dedicated to *Vishnu* and other deities in the hermitage of *Agastya*.

According to the Vaishnava theology, consecrated images have a Divine presence. *Sriman Narayana*, unlike in incarnations, is always there as the *Archa* for the devotees to commune with through the senses of vision and touch and through devoted adoration. *Sri Ramanujacharya*, himself, sets a great example while worshipping at the temples in *Kanchipuram* and *Srirangam*.

8.Sriman Narayana:

The form: The basis of assigning a form to the Deities is in the *Vedas*. The *Rig Veda* refers to His masculine form. He is tall and has a superb physique. *Yajur Veda* refers to His right and left hands. *Isa Upanishad* reveals that the Deity’s form as the most gracious.

The complexion: According to *Bhagavatam*, the colour of the Divine is blue like a blue lotus (*indivara*). His form is very youthful. While Lord *Vishnu* is blue, the complexion of Goddess *Lakshmi* is golden hue.

The Puranas tell us these divine *Ayudhas* (missiles) are not merely ordinary inert objects. They have anthropomorphic aspects as-well. These *Ayudhas*, when not in actual use, assume personal forms and attend The Puranas tell us that divine ornaments and *Ayudhas* (missiles) are not merely ordinary inert objects. They have anthropomorphic aspects as-well. The *Ayudhas*, when not in actual use, assume personal forms and attend on the Master. They do have a Divine nature in them. Thus it should be understood that the ornaments and the missiles associated with *Lord Narayana* have two aspects – impersonal and personal. In their impersonal aspect they serve as a jewel or a missile. However, in their

personal and anthropomorphic aspect they serve the Lord as His servant and perform specific duties.

The ornaments:

The prominent ornaments of Lord Narayana are – (a) *Vaijayanti* (b) *Vanamaala* (c) *Kaustubha*

(a) *Vaijayanti*: It is a knee long necklace studded with five jewels, namely – Emeralds, Rubies, Pearls, Diamonds and Sapphires. However, in her anthropomorphic aspect she is a deity and superintends the five elements of the earth – *Prithvi* (earth), *Apas* (water), *Tejas* (Agni), *Vayu* (Air), *Akasa* (ether)

(b) *Vanamaala*: It is knee long garland of sylvan flora, with a *kadamba* flower at the center.

(c) *Kaustubha*: It is a beautiful Ruby pendent for the neck. This is exclusively worn by Lord Vishnu alone. In its anthropomorphic aspect it is a deity and superintends individual souls.

Another exclusive mark of Lord *Narayana* is *Srivatsa*. It is the foot print of Sage *Bhrigu*, which He always wears on His chest. The sage wanted to test the Lord's excellence and struck Him on the chest with his heels while He was reposing. The Lord got up and instead of showing anger at the insult started massaging the sage's foot. The sage then felt very much ashamed. In its anthropomorphic aspect, it is a deity superintending the *Prakruti*.

The Divine missiles:

The *Rig Veda* reveals that Lord *Vishnu* has a conch, a disc and a mace in His hands. The *Puranas* have added a lotus to this list. Thus in His four arm form, the Lord has a conch, a disc, a mace and a lotus.

Panchajanya: The name of *Vishnu's* conch is *Panchajanya*. However, in his embodied state, he superintends the *Tamas* predominant ego.

Sudarshana: This is Lord *Narayana's* discus. During normal times, He attends and serves the Lord. In his embodied form he superintends the cosmic mind.

Kaumodaki: It is the name of *Sri Vishnu's* mace. It is said to be His affectionate weapon. It is golden in colour and is too heavy for anyone other

than the Lord to lift. In her personal aspect she superintends the Intellect.

Saarnga: *Saarnnga* is Lord *Vishnu's* bow in impersonal appearance. But in his personal appearance he superintends rajas- predominant ego. The bow is ever ready to protect persons of devotion.

Nandaka: The name of the Lord's sword is *Nandaka*. It is so called because it gladdens devotees in its presence by destroying their antagonists. It is omniscience personified and is, therefore called, *Vidyadhara*. In his personal he superintends the cosmic knowledge.

Notes: (1) *The Gadya text in English is not being included. For one thing, the beauty of the masterpieces cannot be brought out. Secondly, it is not easily readable. It is recommended that the reader procures a copy either in Sanskrit, Hindi, Telugu or Tamil.*

(2) *The translation of the text is not literal : Gadya Trayam consists of three Sanskrit prose pieces composed by Sri Ramanujacharya. They are – Sharanagati Gadyam, Sriranga Gadyam and Vaikuntha Gadyam. Out of this, Sharanagati Gadyam is a long piece. Sriranga Gadyam is an abridged version of the same. The third Vaikuntha Gadyam is believed to have been composed by him while he was at Melkote.*

In the *Sharanagati Gadyam* the *Acharya* offers to the Lord in general terms. In the second *Sriranga Gadyam* he offers his prayers particularly addressed to *Lord Sri Ranganaatha* –present in the town of *Sri Rangam* in archa form. In *Vaikuntha Gadya* he offers his *Upadesa* to all devotees regarding what could be expected in the Land of ultimate bliss – *Vaikuntha*.

Gadya Trayam is credited as a commentary on the *Dvaya mantra*. *Dvaya mantra* is referred to as *Mantra ratna*. This along with *Stotra ratna* (by *Sri Yamunacharya*) and *Purana ratna* (*Vishnu Purana*) establish the essence of *Sri Vaishnavism*. The first part of the *Dvaya mantra* speaks of *Sharanagati* (unconditional surrender) at the feet of the Lord and the second part talks about service to the Divine couple.

Sharanaagati Gadyam

Sharanagati Gadyam is a record of conversations between *Sri Ramanujacharya*, Lord *Ranganaatha* and His consort Goddess *Ranganayaki*. On *Panguni uttiram* day in *Srirangam* while Lord *Ranganaatha* sat in court with His consort on His Divine throne, *Sri Ramanuja* stood before them, surrendered himself and his all, to the Divine couple and begged that all his earthly sins be pardoned and that he be accepted in the service of the Divine couple. He got so accepted and in addition he was assured that all his spiritual protégés would be accorded the same benefits.

The text of the *Sharanagati Gadyam* begins with a prayer to Goddess Sreedevi. Sreedevi is in eternal association with Lord Narayana. The *Dvaya mantra* emphasizes this point. She is ever present to intercede on behalf of devotees who approach Him. By Himself, He may either accept the request of the devotee because of His innate mercy or reject the request because of His sense of justice which calls for punishment for sins committed. Sri, the mother, sees to it that the devotee is forgiven and his prayers accepted.

**1. Om. Bhagavannabhimataanu roopa Swaroopa
...ananya sharanah sharana maham prapadye.**

Free Translation:

O Sreedevi, mother of the Universe, more particularly my mother, Divine queen of the Supreme Lord of all the *Devas*, pure and faultless, ever inseparably united with Him, full of all auspicious qualities, with virtues liked by the Lord, worthy and matching those of *Bhagavan Narayana* having a divine charming form, I seek resort in you. I have no other resort and you are my sole resort.

Commentary:

- (1) The characteristics forming *Svabhava* of Lord *Narayana* are identified with six qualities (*Bhagas*) described in the *Vishnupurana* as powers characterizing the *Bhagavan*. They are (a) *Jnana* (omniscience – all knowing) (b) *Shakti* (creative power) (c) *Bala* (omnipotence) (d) *Aishvarya* (lordship) (e) *Virya* (immutability) (f) *Tejas* (splendour). Lord *Narayana* has the *Bhagas*, and for this reason He is always addressed as *Bhagavan*.
- (2) The word *Narayana* refers to the indwelling supporter of all (creations). The need for mentioning the word *Narayana* is to remind us that *Narayana* and *Sreedevi* are inseparable. She is *Vishnupatni* and He is *Sriyahpati*. They are inseparable – *Vishnoh esa Anapaayini*.
- (3) She is dear to Him (*abhimata*) in all respects – in form and qualities (*anuroopa* and *vigraha*)
- (4) The word *Guna* is used twice. The first one refers to *Roopa Guna* and indicates beauty of form and limbs. The second one indicates *Kalyana Guna* and refers to auspicious qualities like love, affection accessibility etc.

- (5) Some of the Kalyana gunas that characterize the Goddess are enumerated. Vibhava denotes possession great and enjoyable wealth. Being His beloved wife, all that is His is also Hers. Hence, She has *Aishvarya* (lordship and sovereignty). Even the *Sarveshvara* listens to Her. *Sila* refers to the ability to mix freely. This one word contains – easy accessibility, motherly love and affection.
- (6) ***Padmavanaalayam*** indicates that She is a resident in a cluster of lotuses.
- (7) *Bhagavati* - The word is used to indicate fitness for worship and respectability.
- (8) The word ***Shriyam*** signifies a number of things. *Shriyate* is one who is worshipped by all beings to act as a mediator for acceptance by the Lord. *Shrayate* is one who seeks the Lord for saving the devotees who approach the divine couple. She patiently hears the devotees and makes them heard by the Lord. She forgives the faults of Her children. The word *Devim* indicates the aspect of divinity associated with Her.
- (9) ***Nityanapaayinim*** denotes that she inseparable from Lord *Narayana*.
- (10) ***Niravadyam*** denotes Her faultless quality
- (11) ***Deva Deva Divyamahishi*** means She is the queen of the emperor of emperors.
- (12) ***Akhila jagan maataram***. Means mother of all beings in the universe.
- (13) ***Asman maataram***. She is my mother.
- (14) ***Asharanya sharanyam***. Indicates she is the refuge for a refuge-less person like me, says the *Acharya*
- (15) ***Ananya sharanah***. I have no other place to go.
- (16) ***Sharanamaham prapadye***. I pray to the divine mother to grant me refuge.

2. ***Paramarthika Bhagavacharanaaravinda ...***

..... sharanaagatih yathaavasthita avirataastu me

Free Translation:

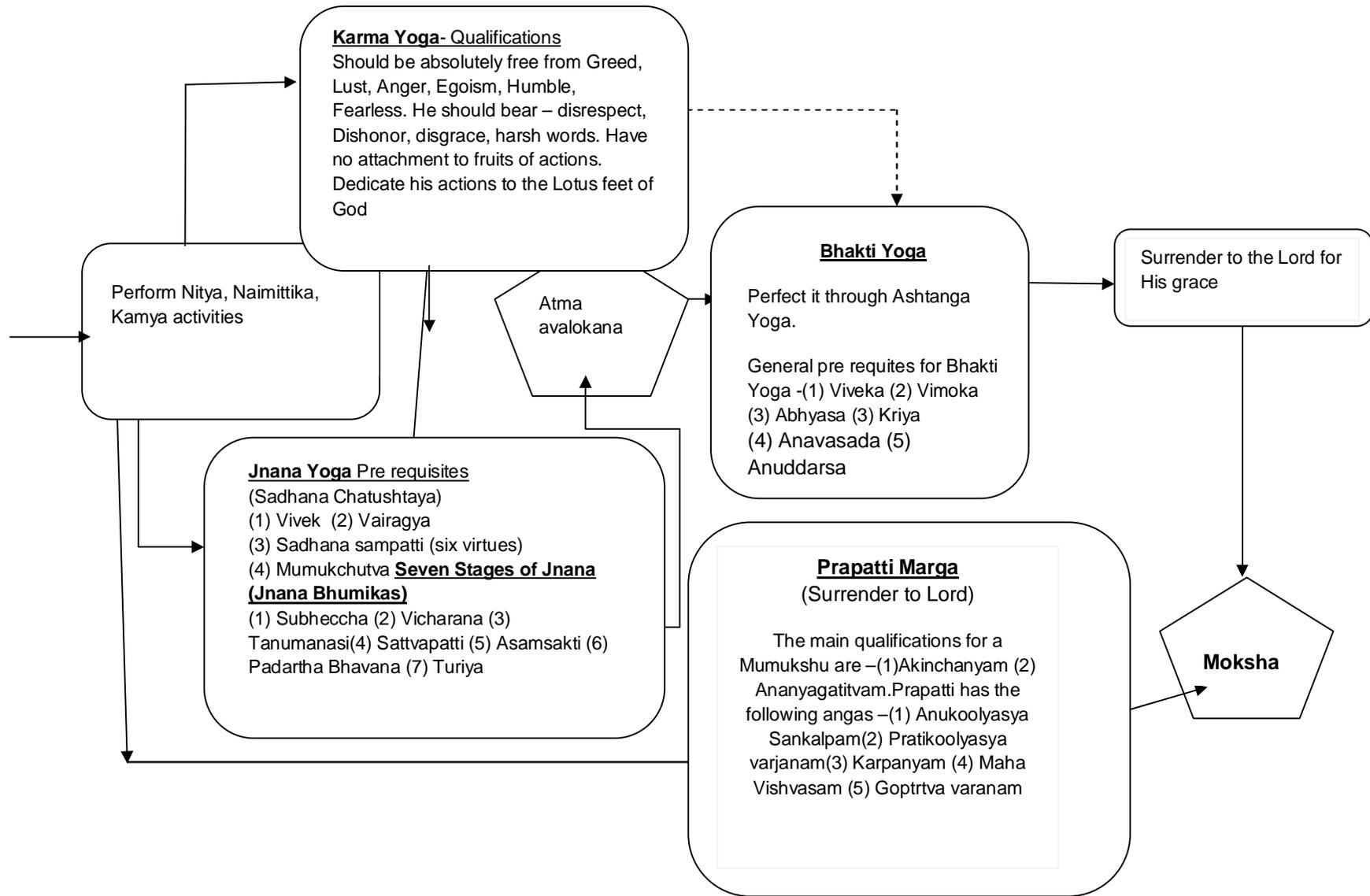
O *Sreedevi*, I pray and seek your blessings that my sincere and true *Sharanagati* at the feet of Lord *Narayana* be accepted and my desire granted. The one and only desire that I have is to be in the service (any form of service) of the Lord at all times and under all circumstances. Having attained the infinite and unsurpassed bliss of *Bhagavad Anubhava*, full, continuous, eternal, clear, and having no other end in view – the experience which has resulted from *Parabhakti*, *Prajnanam* and *Parama-Bhakti*, may I become the eternal servant of

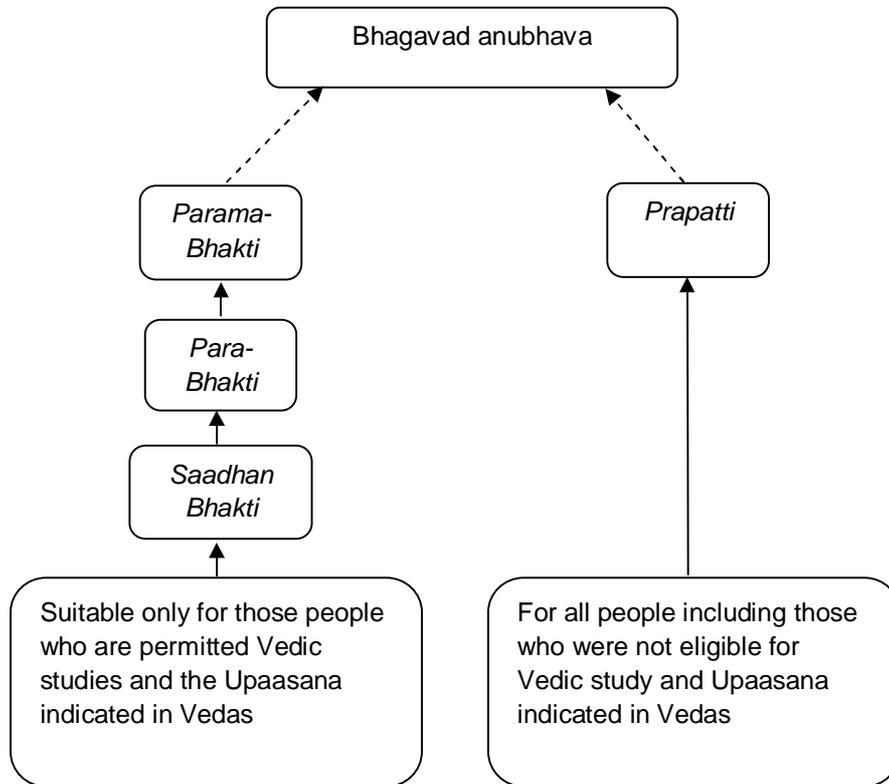
Bhagavan finding my sole joy in fulfilling all His purposes in all states and situations without any exception, owing to the infinite and unequalled delight arising from such an experience. This is the ultimate desire that anyone can have and nothing better is possible. At the same time the reward of the joy of Divine experience is also the ultimate that anyone can receive.

One gets to reach the state of *Bhagavad Anubhava* or Divine experience, gradually, and in stages based on well founded and single minded devotion – *Parabhakti* (for a vision of the Lord); *Parajnaana* (direct perception); and *Paramabhakti* (eagerness for a continuous and un-interrupted experience directed at the lotus feet of the Lord) are the stages.

Commentary:

- (1) After a formal expression of surrender at the feet of Mother, *Sri Ramanujacharya* goes on to convey his desire, a one and only desire, that She persuade the Lord to accept his *Sharanagati* prayer. The prayer is for the Acharya to be accepted as a *prapanna* and *kainkaryapara* (servant). The prayer is for the Acharya to be accepted for eternal and devoted service. The devotion and earning for service on the part of the *Acharya* is already there and is evident. However, the *Acharya* felt it appropriate to pray for and obtain it.
- (2) The *Acharya's* desire to be of service to *Lord Narayana*, any type of service as long as it is un-interrupted full and clear, he says is due to the incomparable joy of Divine experience (*Bhagavad Anubhava*) that becomes possible while in service. However, the Divine experience is not easily obtained. It is a result of well founded devotion and the devotee goes through the stages of *Parabhakti*, *Parajnaana* and *Paramabhakti*. It may be appropriate to here to understand the stages of development given in the Vaishnava system.
 - (2.1) *Bhakti* is described as the knowledge of Ultimate Reality as one's highest treasure and the consequent excessive adoration and attachment to Him. *Sri Ramanujacharya* equates *Bhakti* with *Dhyana* (means concentration of mind on Him) and *Upasana*(continuous thought on Him).The system divides *Bhakti* into three stages of development.





(2.2) *Sadhana Bhakti*: The first requisite for an aspirant at this stage is a strong faith in God as the highest value and a sense of utter transitoriness of worldly achievements. He will then have to turn to the scriptures and a *Guru* who will impart knowledge on the Self, Nature and God. Duties of life have to be done without attachment. For a success in this one must have an understanding of oneself as an *Atman (Atmaavalokana)*. For this both *Karma Yoga* and *Jnaana Yoga* have to be practiced together. With a strong contemplation a highly qualified aspirant can try to overcome the identification of the *Atman* with the body. For an average aspirant this is very difficult.

(2.3) *Para Bhakti*: A number of disciplines will need to be practiced for developing *Sadhana Bhakti* into *Prema Bhakti* (loving devotion). Briefly they are as follows –

- (1) *Viveka* (Practice of discrimination)
- (2) *Vimoka* (Resisting impulses of passions like anger, sexuality, jealousy etc)

- (3) *Abyasa* (Practice of disciplines like – worship, Japa, visiting holy places etc)
- (4) *Kriya* (Performing fivefold disciplines of life- perform fire sacrifices, duty to Rishis, duty to ancestors, duty towards mankind, duty towards to plants animals)
- (5) *Kalyana* (Practice of virtues like Satya (truth), Arjava (straight-forwardness), Daya (Kindness), Daana (benevolence) and Ahimsa (love to all animals)
- (6) *Anavasaada* (Freedom from despair, pessimism)
- (7) *Anuddharsa* (Capacity for not yielding to excitement, depression and preserve an even temperament)

By long and continued practice of these moral disciplines and by the practice of *Dhyana* (concentration) and *Upasana* (continuous thought of God) the mind of the aspirant gets purified and develops the power to perceive the Divine as his inner self. *Divyadristi* becomes possible as a matter of Grace of the Divine and one sees all as in Him as His body. This is the synthesis of *Para-Bhakti*, *Parajnaana* and *Parama-Bhakti*. This stage is marked by unalloyed devotion and the devotee has occasional vision which kindles his desire for this to become constant. At this stage his faith is strengthened by the glow of love and develops into *Para-Bhakti*. The mind of the *Bhakta*, even without external stimulation goes towards the Lord in place of sense objects.

This is intensified when the devotee begins to feel the great attraction of the Lord. *Bhakti* by now would have developed to a -stage called *Parama-Bhakti*. The devotee becomes mad with love and longing and is always in intimacy with the Lord. There arises in the aspirant a higher knowledge that he is merely a part or liege of the Lord and the Lord is the *Sesi* (the Master).

(2.4) *Prapatti*: There is a view that *Parama-Bhakti* is identical with another path, known in this school, as *Prapatti*. However, there are some differences. *Prapatti* is taking refuge in Lord *Narayana*. It is an independent path offered to all those who do not have the intellectual equipment and the social environment called for by the *Bhakti marga*. The devotional attitudes that are essential in taking refuge are as follows –

- (1) Resolve to subordinate one's will to that of Lord *Narayana* at all times
- (2) Avoidance of all that is contrary to His will
- (3) Firm faith that the Lord is the saviour of all
- (4) Acceptance that the Lord's protective grace is always with one.

- (5) A feeling of one's pitiable state owing to a realization of the insufficiency of one's self effort in the pursuit of *Moksha*.
- (6) Resigning oneself absolutely to *Lord Narayana's* care and protection. All these attitudes of mind are involved in the *Parama-Bhakti* path also and in this sense *Prapatti* and *Parama-Bhakti* are identical. However, the *Parama-Bhakti* is the end product of a long and difficult course of discipline and it is not open to all. On the contrary the demands on suitability for those who take to *Prapatti* are miniscule in comparison and it is open to all. The devotee with unalloyed and unshakable faith in *Lord Narayana* and His saving grace will surely be rewarded. Strong faith in God, resignation to Him and non-attachment are qualities that link man with Him and elicit His grace. These are more fundamental to *Moksha* than the self-effort of man.

(2.5) *Sri Ramanujacharya's* prayer to *Sri Devi* starts with "***Paaramarthika Bhagavat charanaaravinda Ugala aikaantika atyaantika***". *Parama* means supreme. The choice of the word *Paaramarthika* refers to the desire for the highest reward. And the reward that the *Acharya* is seeking is ***Bhagavat charanaaravinda Ugala*** – the lotus feet of *Bhagavan* Himself. The word *Bhagavan* is used to refer to the Supreme Lord complete with all His auspicious and desirable qualities. Using the word ***aikaantika*** *Acharya* conveys that he has no other desire other than this one. The word ***atyaantika*** means eternal. The *Acharya* desires for uninterrupted, eternal service directed at the lotus feet of the Lord which in turn provides him with eternal ***Bhagavad Anubhava***.

(2.6) "***Para-Bhakti, Para-Jnaana, Parama-Bhakti Krita Paripoorna anavarata Nitya vishadatama ananya prayojana anavadhikaatisaya***".

Para-Bhakti, Para-Jnaana, Parama-Bhakti refers to the various stages that have been crossed to reach the pinnacle from where *Bhagavad Anubhava* has become possible. ***Paripoorna*** qualifies the *Bhagavad Anubhava*. He desires for the divine experience that has the *Bhagavan* in full glory, not in parts. Such an experience should be uninterrupted- ***anavarata***. It should also be ***Nitya*** – continuous. The *Acharya* desires for a clear comprehension, without any doubt or confusion. He emphasizes that this intense devotion is an end in itself and not a means to some other end – *ananya prayojana*. *Bhagavad Anubhava* of the Lord in His heavenly abode (*Paramapada*) is an experience in limitless bliss

(2.7) "**Priya Bhagavad anubhava Janita anavadhikaatisaya preeti kaarita kainkarya** "

As a result of the limitless ecstasy of the divine experience a yearning for service to the beloved is born.

(2.8) "**Asheshavastochita asesasataika ratiroopa Nitya kainkarya praaptya apekshayaa paaramaarthika Bhagavad charanaaravinda Sharanagati yathaavasthita avirata astu me'** "

Now the *Acharya*, having stated he has a desire for service, qualifies the service he has prayed for. **Asheshavastochita** indicates that he prepared to do service in any state – in the court, in the inner apartments or anywhere that is desired. **asesasataika ratiroopa** indicates that the *Acharya* is prepared to do all kinds of service without any exception (waving the fan, holding the umbrella) the primary object being that the Lord should be pleased. With this prayer, the *Acharya* offers total surrender, *Sharanagati*, at the lotus feet of the Lord - **Bhagavad charanaaravinda Sharanagati**. The choice of the *Bhagavad* implies that the Lord, who has the full power, knowledge and authority, can grant this desire without any assistance or approval. **Paaramaarthika** here means true and proper form. **Yathaavasthita** means as it should be. In essence, it rejects all other means except *Sharanagati*. **avirata astu me'** – This signifies that the state of total surrender will continue, uninterrupted, till the wish is granted.

3. **Astute; tyaiva sarvam sampasyate**

This is *Sri Devi's* reply to the *Acharya*. She says "So it shall be. By it (*Sharanagati*) all your wishes will be fulfilled. It is also interpreted that the fruits of his *Sharanagati* will continue to be available to all his spiritual heirs.

4.1 **Akhila heya pratyanka kalyana eikataana**
..... **jnaanaanadaikasvaroopa**

Commentary

Having received the blessing from *Sri Devi*, the *Acharya* proceeds to directly address Lord *Narayana*, since he is seeking eternal and loving service to the Lord Himself.

Having come face to face with *Sri Devi* and Lord *Narayana*, the *Acharya* in his

exuberance, gushes forth bringing out all the pre-eminent aspects of the Lord. This is not to be considered flattery for many reasons. There is no one anywhere near to the Lord in terms of the *Gunas* and His capabilities. Not even the *Devas* can comprehend the range of the Lord's powers and capabilities. So no praise can do any justice to His pre-eminence.

Heya refers to anything that is undesirable. In the case of matter, the susceptibility to change with time is inherent and is not desirable. *Jeevas* are of three grades –

Nityasuris, Muktas and Baddhas. - **The Nityasuris** (*Adi Shesha, Garuda, Vishvaksena* and *Sudarshana*) have never been in bondage of *Karma* and *Samsara*. They are always in attendance on Him and serve Him.

The Muktas are those who after many births have been liberated from *Samsara*.

The Baddhas refer to the majority of us who have not been liberated from *Samsara*.

All these categories of *Jeevas* have some short coming or other. The *Nityasuris* are in service; the *Muktas* are dependent; the *Baddhas* undergo the cycle of birth and death. However, Lord *Narayana* is free from all these. He is distinctly different from all others other than Himself. Moreover, He is not tainted by coming into contact with anything lowly. On the contrary, He can destroy all evil in others.

kalyaana eikataana – it means He is the abode of everything that is auspicious with no possibility at all of being in-auspicious in any part.

svetara samasta vastu vilakshana – means that He is distinctly different from every one of the others – other than Himself.

ananta – means infinite. He is not limited by space or time. He is immanent in all in all objects – sentient and non-sentient

jnaanaanadaikasvaroopaa – It means He is *Jnaana aikasvaroopaa*. He is self effulgent knowledge. He is the source for all knowledge. Similarly He is also *ananda aikasvaroopaa*. *He is pure bliss.*

4.2 ***Svabhimataanuroopaikaroopaachintya******gunanidhi divya roopa***

Sri Ramanujacharya then proceeds to describe the auspicious Divine form – *Divya mangala vighraha*.

Just as God has a special name, though He may have several other subsidiary ones too, He has also got a special Divine form which is not a manifestation of a formless consciousness or a temporarily assumed one to favor a devotee, but an ultimate fact. The excellences of the Divine form are given in the Gita Bhashya by Sri Ramanujacharya. The form described is as follows – “His one permanent celestial form is a treasure store of infinite qualities such as radiance, beauty, fragrance, tenderness, charm and youthfulness which are inconceivable, celestial, wondrous, eternal, flawless, supremely excellent and appropriate to Him” Very often, we come across descriptions of beauty and grace of the Divine form. *Maharshi Vyasa* has described the beauty and elegance of the form of *Sri Vishnu* in sonorous words and fascinating style. The basis of assigning form to the deity is in the Vedas. The devotees pray to Him not to conceal His form from them. The descriptions given by *Sri Ramanujacharya* in the *Sharanagati Gadya*, on the form of *Lord Vishnu* are the most vivid of the Deity you can ever find in any literature

Free Translation

Your divine form is most agreeable and suitable for you. It is unchanging, incomparable, divine and wonderful, eternal, pure faultless, of incomparable brilliance, possessed of unique loveliness of form and limbs exuding a very pleasant odor, charmingly soft, ever youthful – a form that is far beyond anything ever witnessed by anyone, possessing all excellences in infinite measure.

Commentary:

Sva abhimata – The Lord can take any form He likes. In this case, it is a form which confirms to His wish and is dear to Him

anuroopa – The form exudes all Divine qualities.

ekaroopa – The form is changeless. In the case of human beings, our form changes all the time – from to death. That is not the case with Lord Narayana.

Achintya – cannot be understood by comparing it with anything or anybody. The fact is- there is nothing comparable to it.

Divya – Divine. Among the three elements of *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas* constituting the *Prakruti*, *Sattva* is considered *Ashuddha* or impure as there is a mixture of *Rajas* and *Tamas* in it. . The *Vaishnava* system recognizes a category outside *Prakruti*, designated as *Shuddha-Satva* or Pure *Sattva*., which has not even the slightest of *Rajas* and *Tamas*. For this reason it is not included in *Prakruti*. *Shuddha-Sattva* has a very important place in the theology Of *Sri Ramanujacharya*. It is called non-material spiritual stuff and this is the stuff which constitutes the body of *Lord Narayana*.

Adbhuta – means wonderful

Nitya niravadya – means eternally faultless. The structure and the form of the Lord are faultless or blemish less.

niratishaya aujvalya – The Lord's form dazzles with incomparable brilliance. The bright rays emanating from His body are similar to those of a million Suns in brilliance.

soundarya, saugandhya – The beauty of the each one of the limbs, the entire body structure and the overall form are breathtaking. There is nothing comparable to this anywhere. For this reason, devotees fortunate to see Him, pray not to conceal His form from them. The Lord's body exudes a very pleasant odor.

Sau-kumarya- indicates that He is most charming.

Laavanya – Refers to the Lord's enchanting beauty of the form as a whole.

ananta gunanidhi- Lord Narayana is treasure house of innumerable excellences.

Divya roopa- indicates that His form is celestial

4.3 svaabhaavika anavadhikaatishaya **.....kalyaana guna ganaugha mahaarnavaa**

The Acharya now moves on to describe the *Kalyana gunas* – countless auspicious qualities.

Free Translation

The Lord is addressed here as a vast ocean filled with countless fitting (natural) incomparable, insuperable auspicious qualities. The characteristics forming *Svabhaava* (inherent nature) are identified with six qualities (*Bhagas*) described in *Vishnu Purana* as powers characterizing the *Bhagavan* (God). They are *Jnaana* (omniscience – all pervading knowledge), *Bala* (omnipotence), *Aishvarya* (lordship), *Shakti* (creative power), *Virya* (immutability) and *Tejas* (splendour). The auspicious qualities are, countless. The Acharya then brings to light a few of the kalyaana gunas.

Commentary:

Svabhavika anavadhika atishaya – The most natural, basic and limitless excellence of the Lord are being described

Jnaana – refers to His all pervading knowledge

Bala – Refers to His ability to carry the entire cosmos by sheer will

Aishvarya – Refers to His unparalleled lordship over the entire cosmos.

Virya – Refers to His ability to bear and rule all the worlds without a sign of tiredness; unalterable nature despite the material cause of all creations.

Shakti – refers to His ability for creation, activate His creations, ability to carry out unbelievable and unimaginable tasks.

Tejas – Splendour

The above six are inherent qualities which are unique to the Lord. The next set of kalyaana gunas are for the benefit of His devotees.

sausheelya – ability to freely mix with every other being without any trace of condescension. Examples are *Sri Rama*'s interactions with *Guha* and *Shabari*.

Vaatsalya – It signifies tender protective love like the one exhibited by a mother cow towards the young calf. *Sri Ramanujacharya* describes the Lord as “*aashrita vaatsalya vivasaha*” – one who is overwhelmed by tender protective love for the devotee who is absolutely dependent on Him

aarjava – means straightforwardness. Also signifies oneness in thought and deed.

sauhaarda – well intentioned friendliness

saamya – accessible to all.

kaarunya – mercy to all. He shows mercy and compassion to all creatures without expecting any praise or profit

maadhurya – sweetness. He is sweet to all beings under all circumstances.

gaambhirya – inestimable grandeur

audaarya – generosity

chaaturya – means He is very clever.

sthairya – He has a great strength of mind and firm determination

dhairya – courageous and absolutely fearless

shaurya – ability to destroy the enemies of all His devotees.

paraakrama – courage to be always in the offensive in the presence of enemies

satya kaama – whatever the Lord desires will come true

satya sankalpa – whatever the Lord resolves will come true. This and the above are unique qualities of the Lord.

krititva – The Lord feels satisfied when the devotees wish has been fulfilled.

kritajnata – remembrance. Once the devotee surrenders to the Lord, He overlooks all his faults and remembers only his surrender.

aadi asankhyeya kalyaana guna gana ogha mahaarnavaa – He possesses these and many more countless auspicious qualities which are not mentioned. He is like an ocean of *kalyaana gunas*.

1.4 **svochita vividha vichitraanantaascharya aparimata divya bhooshana**

Having described Lord *Narayana's kalyaana gunas*, the *Acharya* proceeds to describe the ornaments that He adorns. They are exclusive and befitting the Supreme Lord.

svochita – These ornaments match the beauty of His form

vividha – a variety of ornaments are worn by the Lord.

vichitra – a range of colorful ornaments are worn by Him

anantaascharya – immensely wonderful

nitya niravadya – ever without any fault. These ornaments are also *Nityasuris* (ever emancipated souls, whose sole aim is to serve the Lord)

niratishaya – indicates the limitless excellence of the ornaments

saugandha – ornaments have a sweet odor

sukha sparsha – soft to the touch

niratishaya aujvalya – points to the limitless splendour of the ornaments

kireeta, mukuta, cudaavatamsa – refers to a variety of crowns worn by Him – one to signify His absolute Supremacy; another to signify His easy accessibility by His devotees; a third to signify His chivalry

makara kundala – an ornament for the lower lobe shaped like a *makara* (sea fish)

graiveyaka – refers to a necklace

haara – rows of chains adorning the chest

Keyoora – armlet

kataka – ornament for the fore arm.

Srivatsa – This refers to the unique mark on the chest of Lord Narayana. It is listed here as a jewel

kaustubha – a celebrated ornament worn only by Lord Narayana indicative of His Supremacy

muktaadaama – a string of exquisite pearls

udaraabandhana – waist band

peetaambara – a beautiful yellow dress worn by Lord Narayana

kancheeguna – a golden belt enhancing the luster of peetaambara
noopura- exquisite anklet worn by the Lord. This is where the devotees want to keep their heads.

aadi aparimita divya bhooshana – He adorns these and many more divine ornaments.

4.5.1. ***svaanuroopaachintya shakti***

..... ***kalyaana divyaayudha***

The Acharya now moves on to describe the divine weapons that the Lord carries. It may be appropriate to recall the earlier observation regarding the ornaments and weapons that the Lord sports. We said earlier – the divine ornaments and *Ayudhas* (missiles) are not merely ordinary inert objects. They have anthropomorphic aspects as-well. The *Ayudhas*, when not in actual use, assume personal forms and attend on the Master. They do have a Divine nature in them.

svaanuroopa – ***Befitting*** the Lord, the weapons shine like ornaments and adorn Him

achintya shakti – means unimaginable prowess. The weapons, when employed, carry incomprehensible prowess.

shanka, chakra, gadaa, asi, saargna- Among the *Ayudhas* that the Lord carries are – Panchajanya (conch), Sudarshana (chakra), Koumodaki (gadaa), Saargna (bow).

asankyeya divya aayudha – countless celestial weapons are carried by the Lord.

4.6. ***Svaabhimata nityaniravadyaanuroopa***, ***.evambhoota bhoomi neelaanaayaka***

Here the *Acharya* praises the consorts of Lord *Narayana* – *Sreedevi*, *Bhudevi* and *Neeladevi*.

O Lord, you are the beloved consort of *Sreedevi* (*Srivallabha*). Befitting you, *Sreedevi* is eternally (*Nitya*), faultless and possesses countless unlimited unsurpassed auspicious qualities like sovereignty, glory and graciousness. *Neeladevi* and *Bhudevi* who also have similar auspicious qualities are your consorts

4.7 *svachandaanuvartti svarupa sthiti*
.... *Parichaarikaa paricharita charana yugala*

Free Translation

The *Acharya* now describes the attendants, or *parijanas*, who serve the *Lord Narayana* and *Sri Devi*. O Lord, you are served by a host of followers, men and women waiting at your Divine feet to minister to your needs and comforts. Their nature, existence and actions conform to your will and pleasure. *Ananta (Adi shesha)*, *Garuda*, *Vishvaksena* and others, together with their wives, are serving you and their sole delight is in pleasing you. They are endowed with essential features such as – eternal and faultless service, unsurpassed knowledge, devotion, activity and unlimited ability to get things done in service.

Commentary:

Sesha, Seesasana, Garuda pramukha, naanaavidha ananta parijana, parichaarika: The leading personalities (*pramukha*) serving (*parijana*) the Lord are *Adi Sesha*, *Vishvaksena* and *Garuda*. In addition there are countless attendants, male and female, (*naanaavidha, ananta parijana, paricharika*) doing a variety of services. They are waiting at your Divine feet to be of service to you.

svacchandaanuvrtti: It indicates that their (*parijana*) actions are in conformity of the Lord's wishes. They could intuitively foresee the needs and desires of the Lord. An example is the legendary service of *Lakshmana* to *Sri Rama*.

asesasesataika ratirupa: These celestial attendants attend to the needs of the Lord when commanded. However, they are eager and engage themselves in all forms of service to the Lord. Their service is eternal (***Nitya***).

niravadya niratishaya Jnaana, kriya, aishvarya: Remembering that these attendants are outstanding celestial beings, they are endowed with countless beneficent and desirable qualities such as unsurpassed knowledge, devotion, activity and unlimited ability to act in Lord's service. In addition they carry out actions (*kriya*) consistent with their knowledge. They have an enormous ability to command others and get things done in the Lord's service (*Aishvarya*).

4.7. Paramayogi vaakmanasaa paricchedyā.....
.....niratishaya Sri Vaikuntanaadhaa

Sri Ramanujacharya then shifts his attention to the abode of *Lord Narayana – Paramapada – Vaikunta*. *Vaikunta* of divine splendour and the bodies of all its denizens, consisting of *Lord Narayana's* constant attendants (*Nityasuris*) and liberated *Jivas* are made of *Suddha-satwa*. Time, to which all entities are included in *Prakruti* are subject, has no sway on it.

Free Translation:

O, Lord of *Vaikunta* the eternal, faultless and immeasurable land. It abounds with innumerable objects and places of enjoyment all appropriate to you. This abode is infinitely wonderful, supreme in glory, faultless, unchanging (immutable) and beyond the comprehension of even the greatest of *Yogis*.

Commentary:

The abode of *Lord Narayana (Vaikunta naadha)* is a land of immeasurable greatness and is incomprehensible and cannot be described even by Supreme *Yogis (Paramayogi vaakmanasaa paricchedyā)*. One cannot site an example to describe the land, because, nothing like that exists other than itself. It has been created entirely as per His desire (*svaabhimata*). It is full of many kinds of (*vividha*), wonderful (*vichitra*), enjoyable sights, sounds, fragrance (*bhogya*). Also, it abounds with enjoyable objects (*bhogopakarana*) like unfading flower gardens and have attendants eager to serve and the like. It has places of enjoyment (*bhogasthana*). Full with all these, the place is amazing beyond all belief (*ananta aascharya*) because the objects of enjoyment present ever new facets (*ananta mahaavibhava*) – all of immeasurable greatness. Jewels, thrones, gardens, rivulets, pools appropriately located beautify the places. These appear to be neither new or old or crafted by anybody. The entire abode is infinite in dimension (*ananta parimaana*). The *Vaikunta* remains ever the same (time has no sway on the place), free from any flaws, and great beyond all measures. However, the enjoyers of this wealth (*Bhoktas*) have only one goal – to be of service to the Divine couple and they derive their pleasure in seeing the pleasure of the Divine couple.

4.9. *svasankalpaanuvidhaayi` svarupa sthiti*

..... *Vibhava laya leela*

The *Acharya* now handles the subject of the role of Lord *Narayana* in the creation, sustenance and dissolution of *Prakruti* and the *Jivas*.

Some Background on the *Vishishtadvaita* system

The *Vishishtadvaita* system accepts three entities as ultimate realities (a) *Brahman* (b) *Jiva* or *Chit* (c) *Prakruti* or *Achit*. Of these, *Brahman* is the absolute and independent reality. The other two *Jiva* and *Prakruti* are dependent realities. The three together are called “*Tattvatraya*”. The *Jivas* and *Jagat* are held together in inseparable union (*Aprthaksiddhi*) with the Supreme Being, Lord *Narayana*. They have no existence apart from Him. There can be no separation between *Jiva* and *Brahman*. Similar is the case between *Jagat* and *Brahman*. In a state of ignorance the *Jiva* may not know it. *Jiva* and *Jagat* always exist as a part of *Brahman* as His Body or Mode. *Jivas* and *Jagat* exist in two states – one during *Pralaya* (dissolution) and the other during *Srishti* (creation). *Pralaya* and *Srishti* are eternally continuing states like day and night. The motivating power between these two states is the will of God. In the *Pralaya* state *Jivas* and *Jagat* would be reduced to their primordial condition and would be latent in the *Brahman* without any distinction. In *Srishti*, caused by the will of *Brahman* they gain potency and diversity through a process of evolution.

Free Translation:

O Lord, creation, sustenance and dissolution are your sport (Lord *Narayana*'s *Lilavibhuti*). This world of your creation is filled with diverse, wonderful and innumerable objects of enjoyment, instruments of enjoyment and places for enjoyment. *Samsara* involves the interplay of *Prakruti*, *Purusha* and *Kaala*. By nature all these three are ever under your control.

– Commentary:

sva sankalpaanu vidhaayi: The nature, existence and activity of the worlds follow your will

Prakruti: Among these, Prakruti is the substratum of the three Gunas – satva, rajas and tamas. It is conditioned by Kaala and for this reason it changes in size and form. It is Jada (not self revealing; insentient) by category. It is used and consequently responsible for good and bad experiences of the Jivas.

Jivas: It is Ajada (sentient) by category. It is associated and sustained by *Prakruti* in the form of food. In the system of *Sri Ramanujacharya* *Prakruti* along with *Karma* is called *Avidya* (ignorance) and *Maya*. *Prakruti*, activated by *Divine* will functions in order to bring the *Karma* of the *Jivas* to fruition.

Kaala: *Kaala* occupies a special position in the system by *Sri Ramanujacharya*. While *Brahman* and *Jiva* are characterized under *Cit*, all others come under *Prakruti* as *Achit* (insentient). However, outside the bounds of *Prakruti* there is an entity (entity without the three *Gunas*) which is called *Kaala* (Time). *Kaala* resides in Him but does not dissolve in Him during *Pralaya*. It is called insentient. It is a special *Vibhuti* (unique glory) of Lord *Narayana*. The whole creative and dissolution process of *Prakruti* is regulated by this category by the will of God. The *Prakruti* has countless number (*ananta*) of (*vividha*), wonderful (*vichitra*), enjoyable sights, sounds, fragrance (*bhogya*). Also, it abounds with enjoyable objects (*bhogopakarana*) like flowers, gardens and have attendants eager to serve and the like. It has places of enjoyment (*bhogasthana* **svasesateka Swaroopa:** *Prakruti, Jivas and Kaala* are subservient to the Lord.

4.10. **satya kaama satya sankalpa parabrahmabhoota Purushottama mahaavibhute Sriman Narayana srivaikuntanaatha**

The Acharya goes on praise the Lord highlighting some of His outstanding qualities. He follows it up with a renewal of his request to accept *Sharanagati* at the Lord's feet.

satya kaama: His wishes will always come true.

satya sankalpa: Whatever He resolves will come true.

parabrahmabhoota: He who is recognized as the Parabrahman – the Supreme Being

Purushottama: He is the best of all beings

mahaavibhute: He who possesses limitless wealth.

Sriman: Lord of Goddess Sri.

Narayana: He who is the *Ayana* (dwelling place) i.e. the source, support, and dissolving ground of all *naras* or Jivas including inert matter too. He is the Supreme Being. By addressing the Lord as *Sriman Narayana*, the *Acharya* implies that the Divine couple forms the Supreme goal to be attained.

srivaikuntanaatha: Lord of *Vaikunta (Paramapada)*

**4.11 apaarakaarunya sausheelya vaatsalya audaarya aishvarya soundarya mahodadhe
anaalochita vishesaasesaloka saranya pranataartihara aashrita
vaatsalyaikajadhe**

The *Acharya* then goes on to describe the special qualities of *Lord Narayana* in relation to providing protection to all who come to Him. He is giving expression which claims the Lord's "aashrayaniyatva".

apaara Kaarunya: The word *apaara* means limitless. *Apaara Kaarunya* means infinite compassion. The Lord shows mercy to even those people who consider Him as their enemy.

sausheelya: He mixes easily with all people coming to meet Him

vaatsalya: signifies tender protective love
audaarya: Generosity. He gives His devotees what they prayed for and yet feels as if He is the beneficiary.

aishvarya: inestimable lordship

soundarya: excellent formation and beauty of the limbs.

mahodadhe: means an ocean. The above qualities are boundless in magnitude.

anaalochita visesa: *Aalochita* means carefully thought out and considered. Here the Lord's refuge is granted to any devotee without any consideration for birth, conduct or knowledge.

asesaloka saranya: The *saranya* or refuge is available for the residents of any *loka*. There is no distinction or preference. He is the universal refuge.

pranataartihara: He who removes the ills of all that come to Him.

aashrita vaatsalyaikajaladhe: Refers to His boundless love and affection to His devotees. Even undesirables such as the worst sinners are treated as desirables. That is the incomparable glory of *Lord Narayana*.

4.12 **Anavarata viditanikhilabhoota jaata**

.....satya kaama satya sankalpa sakaletara vilakshana

The *Acharya* continues with his praise of the Lord and pleads for the grant of his requests.

anavarata viditanikhilabhoota jaatayatmya: Refers to one who knows the true nature of all beings all the time. This indicates the Lord is omnipresent (present everywhere including within us. *Vyaapnoteeti Vishnuh*. He who pervades everything is Vishnu. He pervades everything but nothing ever pervades Him) and omniscient (all knowing). He knows our shortcomings and our helplessness.

ashesha charaachara bhoota nikhila niyamana nirataa: One who commands everything, both objects / beings *chara* (mobile) and *achara* (immobile). There is nothing that is not subservient to Him.

ashesa chid achid vastu seshibhboota: He is the Lord and possessor of all that is sentient and non-sentient. It would appear that the *Acharya* is mildly implying that it would be duty of the master to take care of his possessions (should you not take care of my needs as well).

nikhila jagadaadharaa: Refers to the Lord as the sustainer of all the worlds. The Acharya is pleading why the Lord is forgetting his existence.

akhila jagat svamin: Refers to the Lord as the master of the entire Universe. The Acharya pours his anguish and pleads with Him to remove our sins and take us with Him and be under His protective wing forever.
asmat svamin: Acharya now directly addresses Him as my *svamin* – my master.

satya kaama: The Lord does not need anything from the devotee – except his devotion. We, the Jivas, do not have any right to claim anything from Him. He could lift us from this *Samsara* through His grace, provided He is pleased with us and desires it. He does not require a permission or agreement from anyone.

satya sankalpa: The will of the Lord always comes true. Acts which seem impossible to us will come true with His will. The *Acharya* implores the Lord to lift even this worthless (me) to the level of the *Paramapada* where he could serve Lord *Narayana*.

sakaletara vilakshana: Lord *Narayana* is the essence of everything that is Supreme. There is nothing comparable to Him. His form, His nature, His qualities are all unique. The *Acharya* questions the Lord – all these superior aspects are they not meant for the benefit of His devotees? Are they not meant for the benefit of the entire worlds? Surely, they are not meant for His personal enjoyment? Your protection to us will only be complete if You make all these auspicious aspects available for the benefit and enjoyment of all your devotees.

4.13 ***arthi kalpaka aapatsakha Sriman Narayana asharanya sharanya
ananya sharana stvat paadaaravinda ugala sharanamaham prapadye
atradvayam***

arthi kalpaka: *Kalpaka* is the name of a divine tree which fulfills all the wishes of the seeker. Here Lord *Narayana* is being referred to as the *Kalpaka* tree for His devotees. He grants the wishes of all those who seek Him.

aapatsakha: He is real friend in distress. The *Puranas* are replete with incidences where He came and rescued His devotees.

Sriman: He is ever associated with Sri Devi

Narayana: Lord Narayana has taken care of us all the time because of natural irrevocable relationship.

Here it may be in order to review the *Sri Ramanuja's* metaphysics. As earlier indicated, the *Vishishtadvaita* system accepts three entities as ultimate realities (a) *Brahman* (b) *Jiva* or *Chit* (c) *Prakruti* or *Achit*. Of these, *Brahman* is the absolute and independent reality. The other two *Jiva* and *Prakruti* are dependent realities. The three together are called "*Tattvatraya*". *Sri Ramanuja's* task as a *Vedantin* is to formulate a theory of unity of all existence in the face of the multiplicity posed by *Prakruti* and *Jivas*. According to the Acharya, the unity lies in the fact of *Prakruti* and *Jivas* being held together in-separable union (*Aprthaksiddhi*) in the Supreme Being called – *Brahman, Ishvara, Narayana, Purushottama* etc. It should be understood that the dependence entirely is on the part of *Prakruti* and *Jivas*. He is not dependent on them. *Sri Ramanuja* has used several expressive terms to describe this inseparable and integral unity. Some of these are – *Sareera – Sariri* (body and soul); *Sesa-Sesi* (subordinate and the principal); *Prakaara- Prakaari* (mode and substance). The irrevocable relationship described above may be understood in this light.

asharanya sharanya: The Lord is the refuge for all those who not have a refuge

ananya sharana stvat paadaaravinda ugala sharanamaham prapadye:

Addressing the Lord the *Acharya* says that he may be not worthy of the Lord's protection. But he has no other refuge to go to and seeks Lord *Narayana's* lotus feet as his sole refuge.

Atradvayam (manusandeya): The *Dvaya* mantra is to be repeated here. (To be repeated inaudible to others).

e) **Pitaram, Maataram, daran**
.....Sharanam tevravam vibho

These two couplets are from the Puranas. They lend support to the thoughts expressed by the Acharya.

Free translation:

Renouncing father (*Pitaram*), mother (*maataram*), wife (*daran*), son (*putran*),

relatives (*bandhun*), friends (*sakhin*), teachers (*gurun*), jems (*ratnani*), wealth (*dhana dhaanyaani*), lands (*ksetrani*), house (*grhaani*) and also *dharmas* aimed at some goals (*sarva dharmamcha*), all desires (*sarva kamamsaca*), I seek you my rightful master (*saranamte aavrajam vibho*). I take refuge at your holy feet – which measured the entire worlds (*loka vikranta charanam*)

Commentary.

It is important to understand the implication of Sharanagati or total surrender. Refuge at the feet of the Lord will remain as the sole aim for the devotee. Nothing else matters. This automatically involves renunciation of everything that binds one to this world in the pursuit of service to the Lord. Both material and even relationships may require to be renounced.

f) *Tvameva Mata cha pita tvameva tvameva bandusca guru tvameva tvameva Vidya dravinam tvameva tvameva sarvam mama deva deva*

Free Translation

O Lord of Lords (*Deva, Deva*), you are my mother (*Mata*); You are my father (*pita*); You are my sole relative (*bandhu*); You are my Guru; You are my knowledge (*Vidya*); You are my wealth (*dravinam*); You are everything to me (*sarvam*).

Commentary

The *Acharya* appears to stress that having renounced everything, he still has got the Lord with him (who is his mother, father, bandhu etc). So really, he has not lost anything from renouncing.

**g) *Pitasi lokasya Charaa charasya*
*.....lokatraye pyapratima prabhava***

This verse and the next are verses 43 and 44 of chapter-11 of *Bhagavad-Gita*. These are words of praise from *Arjuna* after witnessing the cosmic form of Lord *Krishna*. *Acharya*'s words and feelings run parallel to that of *Arjuna*. You are the father of the world of the moving and unmoving. You are the object of its worship and its venerable teacher. None is equal to you, how then could there be a greater one than you in the three worlds, O Lord of incomparable greatness.

h) *Tasmaat pranamya*

... priyaayaarhassideva sodhum

Free Translation

Therefore bowing down and prostrating my body before you, Adorable Lord, I seek thy grace. Thou, O God, should bear with me as a father to his son, as a friend to his friend, as a lover to his beloved.

Commentary

The supplicant begs to be pardoned for past offences. He recognizes the need for being forgiven in view of his past actions where he acted unmindful of the Lord. The Supreme is not to be regarded as a transcendent mystery, but also as close as a father is to the son, as a friend to the friend and as a lover to the beloved. These human relations find in God their fullest realization. God as a father is a familiar conception.

i) *Manovaakkaayai.....*

....sarvaanashesha tah kshamasya

Free Translation

O Lord please forgive me for all the sins that I have committed. The sins include those committed by thought, words or deeds (*mano vaakkyayai*) over a long (limitless) time. Also forgive me for sins accrued as a result of my doing prohibited acts (prohibited by the *Shastras; akratyakarana*), by not doing prescribed duties (*kratyaakarana*), offences committed towards You (*Bhagavadapachaara*) or your devotees (*Bhaagavadapachara*), Forgive me also for any inexcusable offences committed by me in the past (*krtaan*), those that are being committed by me now (*kriya maanaan*) and those that I might commit in the future (*karishyamaanaan*). Please forgive all my sins (*naanaa vidha ananta apachaaraan*) without any exception (*sarvaanasheshatah*).

Commentary:

It was commented earlier that the devotional attitudes that are essential in taking *Sharanagati* (refuge) are – (a) Resolve to subordinate one's will to that of Lord *Narayana* at all times (b) Avoidance of all that is contrary to His will (c) Firm faith that the Lord is the saviour of all (d) Acceptance that the Lord's protective grace is always with one (e) A feeling of one's pitiable state owing to a realization of the insufficiency of one's self effort in the pursuit of *Moksha*.

It may be noted that Sri *Ramanujacharya* is carefully following each and every one of the steps indicated above. Now the *Acharya* is addressing item (b) above - avoidance of all that is contrary to His will. What are the actions that will go contrary to His will? Major *apachaaras* are listed below.

(1) *akrtyakarana* (2) *krtyaakarana* (3) *bhagavad apachaara* (4) *bhaagavad apachaara* (5) *asahaya apachaara*

(1) *akrtyakarana*: This *apachaara* results when acts prohibited by *Shastras* are done. Examples are – causing misery to animals, stealing, telling lies, eating food that should not be eaten, extolling unworthy people with speech only meant for the Lord.

(2) *Krtyaakarana*: This *apachaara* results when one does not carry out duties prescribed in the *Shastras* due to laziness, ignorance etc.

(3) *Bhagavad apachaara*: This *apachaara* results when one commits sin against the Lord. For example – stealing wealth meant for worshipping the Lord etc.

(4) *Bhaagavad apachaara*: This *apachaara* results when one insults devotees of the Lord, making fun of the handicapped etc.

(5) *asahaya apachaara*: All offences against the Lord's devotees are *asahya*. Not being able to bear the well-being of the Lord or His devotee belongs to this class. Sins committed against one's *Acharya* also come in this category. Lord *Narayana* considers any offences committed against His devotees are unpardonable.

Manovaakkayaih refers to acts done through mind, speech and body. In fact, these three are the vehicles of *Karma*. They are also the vehicles which help us to either realize God or lose Him altogether. Out of these three, mind is the cause of bondage. *Karma-phala* for some of the acts committed in a fraction of a second cannot be wiped out even after hundreds of re-births.

j) ***Anaadikaalapravrttam***
.....vartisyamaanam cha sarvam ksmasva

Here the *Acharya* is seeking a pardon from the Lord for actions resulting from ignorance and perverse understandings.

Free translation:

O Lord, please forgive me for my ignorance and perverse understanding of the nature of the *Jiva* and the Universe as a whole. Please pardon me for all the perverse actions arising out of this misconception – actions related to everything in the past, present and the future to follow.

Commentary:

The *Acharya* sites two key areas where misconceptions readily occur – knowledge about the Self (*atman*) and knowledge regarding *Prakruti*. Perversity in knowledge is called “*vipareeta Jnaana*”. In the case of the *atman* examples of misconceptions are

- (a) identifying *atman* with the body
- (b) Understanding that the *atman* is self-willed (*svatantra*) and not dependent on the Lord
- (c) assuming that the *atman* is subservient to the others and not the Lord.

In the case of *Prakruti* an example of misconception is – (a) conceiving beings

as man, animal, tree, reptile etc instead of recognizing that every created being as His form.

These misconceptions lead to perversity in actions. As done earlier the *Acharya* is seeking pardon for every one of the actions – those committed in the past, those that are being done now and those likely to be done in the future.

k)Madeeyaanaadikarma
...iti vaktaaram maam taaraya.

Free Translation:

As a result of deeds committed by me over many years / births (*anaadi karma pravaaha pravrttaam*) I have acquired this body and the ignorance. The ignorance casts a veil over my Lord (*bhagavat svaroopo tirodaanakarim*). This ignorance is caused by the relationship between the *atman* and the *Prakruti*. Apart from this, *Prakruti* has other ill effects in that it produces perverse conceptions as-well (*vipareeta Jnaana*). One such is identifying the body with the *atman*. The other examples are - only the body appears to exist; there is only self government by the *atman* and not by the Lord. As the root cause for all these *Prakruti* aids the Lord's sport in a number of subtle ways. The three fold qualities of *satva, rajas and tamas (gunamayim)* form the basis of the *Prakruti* of the bodies acquired by the *Jivas*.

Having described the cruel effects of the body, which is really a manifestation of the *Prakruti*, the *Acharya* prays for the deliverance from the association. (*maam taraya*).

Commentary

The *Acharya* has repented for his deeds and prays that he be pardoned. Here, he begs the Lord to help him shed his body and take him across. The effects of *Prakruti* (of which the body is a part) are also described here. The grace of the Lord is essential for our *karma* and ignorance to be dissolved. The body itself is part of *Prakruti*. Like *Prakruti* it cannot also be destroyed. However, the relationship between the Self and *Prakruti* could be snapped. Once the Self is lifted from the mire of *Samsara* (or separating the *atman* from the body) the true nature of the soul should shine forth. However,

this can only be achieved with the grace of Lord *Narayana*. Hence, the prayer from the *Acharya* to help him shed his body and take him across.

**l) *teshaam jnaani nityaukth*
*.....sa cha mama priyah***

This is verse 17 from chapter 7 of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. The following two are verses 18 and 19 of the same chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Sri Krishna classifies His devotees into four kinds (refer verse 16, chapter 7 of *Bhagavad-Gita*). (a) Man in distress (b) the seeker for wealth (c) the seeker for knowledge (c) Man of wisdom. Expanding-

- a) The afflicted, those in distress, who have suffered losses, pray to the Lord for relief.
- b) The seeker for wealth, want to improve their material position. They are *dhana-kaama*.
- c) The seeker for knowledge. This group is devout and upright and wish to know the truth.
- d) The man of wisdom. They are *jnaanis*, they who know. This Jnaana or wisdom is really devotion to one alone, *ekabhakti*.

Of the four classes of people, three are *phala-kaama* or desirous of rewards. The last category of people is the best. They are single minded worshippers. Others ask for favours, but the sage asks nothing and refuses nothing. He yields himself completely to the Divine, accepting whatever is given to him. His attitude is one of self-oblivious non-utilitarian worship of God for His own sake. *Sri Ramanujacharya* prays to Lord *Narayana* to transform him into this *jnaani*.

***udaarah sarva evai te*
*..... Eva 'nuttamam gatim***

All the above mentioned four classes of people are noble indeed. But the *jnaani* is regarded by Lord *Krishna* as His very soul. The *jnaani* is perfectly harmonized and resorts to the Lord alone as his highest goal. Prayer is an effort of man to reach God. It is assumed that there is an answering presence in the world. The idea being that if we pray it shall be granted. In reality, through the exercise of prayer we kindle a light in our consciousness which will gradually show our pride, selfishness, greed and fears. This paves the way for the building up of a harmonized personality. We start to pray to know more of the Divine. Prayer then becomes a way of life. The *Jnaani* knows God as He is and loves Him for what

He is. The first three categories of people attempt to use God according to their ideas. On the contrary, the *jnaanis* wish that they be used as per the will of God. “Thy will, not mine, be done”. For this reason *Sri Krishna* rates them as the best of them all. *Sri Ramanujacharya* begs the Lord to transform him into this type of *Jnaani*.

bahunaam janmanaam
.....mahatma sudurlabhah

At the end of many lives, the man of wisdom resorts to me. The realization of truth is a work of many ages. One cannot expect to obtain the reward until one has sounded well the depths of experience and all its complexities. All this will take time. It takes nine months to make a baby, but it will take a much longer time to make a spiritual one. At the end, he realizes that *Vaasudeva* is all. It refers to the God’s imperishable majesty felt by the wise devotee who is humble and trustful. It is a consciousness of humility towards God who is everything and who truly is. Such a man is great. His equal cannot be found in this world or any other (*Sudurlabha*).

iti slokatryodita jnaanunan maamkurusva

Sri Ramanujacharya prays to the Lord to make him one possessed with such knowledge (devotion).

m)purushassa parah Paatha! bhaktyaa
..... parabhakti yuktam maam kurusva

The Acharya earlier prayed for knowledge in the form of devotion which is preliminary to intense devotion in its three stages. Here he prays for intense devotion which leads to the goal of *kainkarya* (service to the Lord). *Parabhakti* is continuous uninterrupted meditation with love and affection. This leads to *Parajnaana* a state where a mental vision of the Lord becomes possible. This leads to *Parama Bhakti* where the devotee becomes mad with the love of God and cannot sustain a single moment without Him. The prayer here is for leading the *Acharya* to the first stage – *Parabhakti*. This will eventually lead to the second and third stage.

14. ***parabhakti Parajnaana paramabhakteka svabhaavam maam kurusva***

Please make me eternally of the very nature of these stages of bhakti
The Acharya is not looking at *Bhakti* merely as a means to attain his goal of service!! He is seeking *Bhakti* as an aid to his service of the Lord. According to the *Acharya*, service without intense love is lifeless.

15. ***parabhakti Parajnaana paramabhaktyeka svabhaavam
.....nitya kinkaro bhavaani***

You may recall that the *Acharya* while addressing *Sreedevi*, in the 2nd *curnika* talked in detail about the nature of service resulting from deep devotion – *parabhakti, Parajnaana and Parama bhakti* ... The *Acharya* after receiving the blessing of the Goddess, reiterates here his desire on similar lines.

“I beg that I be accepted as your eternal servant (engaged in un-interrupted service to you). Having enjoyed the experience of the Lord resulting from the three stage development it urges me to perform service in all forms and under all circumstances. This urge in me has arisen due to the unlimited love and devotion to You.

16. ***evambhutamatkainkarya praapyupaayataayaa
.....ratiroopa nityakinkaro bhava***

Thus far, we have noted that the *Acharya* has first approached *Sreedevi* and sought Her blessing to get his single desire fulfilled. His desire was to serve the Lord eternally in any role that is assigned to him. Having got the assurance and blessing of the Goddess he directly approaches the Lord *Narayana* to grant him his wish. Then he enumerates the various *kalyaana gunas* of the Lord. He quoted verses from the *Gita*. He renounced all his worldly possessions and relatives and sought the Lord as his all.

The *Acharya* then proceeds to nullify the negative aspects that might hinder his achieving his goal. He prays to the Lord to forgive all the sins committed by him in the past, those that he is committing now and those that he may

commit in the future. He then requests the Lord to take him across and help him shed his body.

All the above is regarded as a practical commentary on the *Dvaya Mantra*. The first part of this mantra speaks of the means, namely, surrender (Sharanagati) at the feet of the Lord. The second part speaks of the end, namely eternal service to the Divine couple.

Having heard the prayers from the *Acharya*, the great Lord *Sriranganatha* was extremely pleased with his devotee and repeats the words of Sri *Ramanujacharya* before assuring him saying "I am pleased to grant that all your wishes be fulfilled". The *Acharya* was overwhelmed. The rest of the *Sharanagati Gadyam* are the words expressed by the Lord and the assurances given by Him.

Free Translation:

Having heard from the *Acharya*, Lord *Sriranganatha* said –

- a) Even though you might not have followed the paths prescribed in the scriptures for attaining the desired goal of service to me.
- b) Even though your immense load of sins may obstruct your following the spiritual paths;
- c) even though you might have acted in a manner that displeased me;
- d) though you might have incurred displeasure of my devotees through your actions;
- e) though you might have committed unpardonable sins
- f) even though your essential nature (*atma-svaroopam*) may have been veiled by perverse *ahankaara*
- g) even though you may have been steeped in perverse impressions gathered from previous births which cause and result in the twin features of – *ahankaara* and *apachaara*
- h) even though you might have been bound to matter (*Prakruti*) which lead you to *ahankaara* and *apachaara*
- i) even though you may suffer from obstruction to the three stages of total devotion (*Parabhakti, Parajnaana, Paramabhakti*) constantly directed solely towards my lotus like feet
- j) obstructions resulting from connection with the body (*Prakruti*) in the form of the three sorrows (*aadhyaatmika, aadibhautika and aadhidaivika*
- k) pleasures and pain resulting from material experiences which deserve to be rejected and the limitation of knowledge

Despite all the shortcomings you enumerated, you have in some form uttered the *Dvaya Mantra*. Purely by my grace, having –

- (a) got rid of all the obstructions to the three stage devotion (*Parabhakti* etc) directed for ever at my lotus-like feet
- (b) developed the three stage devotion at my lotus like feet
- (c) realised My essential nature, My Divine form, My auspicious qualities, My worlds of sport and of bliss'
- (d) comprehended the real nature of your (*acharya's*) self as solely Mine and completely subject to My will
- (e) expressed the wish of enjoying Myself (the Lord)
- (f) expressed the desire to be in service to Me only
- (g) expressed the desire to have a total and un-interrupted experience which is always pleasing, clear and an end in itself.

17. ***evam bhootosi***

“ I confirm that you have become my servant.

You will ever be a servant of Mine, pleased in performing loving service in all forms, at all times and under all conditions, urged by the immense pleasure resulting from your experiences of Myself”.

When the *Acharya* heard all this from the Lord, it occurred to him that the mere utterance of the *dvayam* was responsible for his being blessed

18. ***Aadhyaatmika aadhibhautika adhidaivika.....***
.....atraiva srirange sukhamasva

Free Translation:

“Freed from all traces of obstacles and miseries that come up due to your association with the body, in the form of *aadhyaatmika, aadhibhautika, adhidaivika* categories, you shall live happily at *Srirangam* till your body falls constantly repeating the *Dvaya mantra* and meditating on its meaning in the manner you have done”.

Commentary:

The Lord confirms that the *Acharya's* wish to perform eternal service to the Lord has been granted. He commands that the *Acharya* continue his service at *Srirangam* with his body just as he would do in the land of bliss – *Paramapada*.

Obstacles and miseries in this world come from three sources –

- (a) *aadhyaatmika*: Refer to difficulties that arise due to us. Physical and mental stresses and ailments are examples for this kind.
- (b) *Aadhibhautika*: Refers to the problems faced from other beings.
- (c) *Adhidaivika*: Refers to problems that arise from outside our control.

Examples are – rain, fire thunder etc.

(It is noted that all *Vedic* chants end with *Om Shantih, Shantih, Shantih*. The reason for repeating *Shanti* three times to get “*Shanti*” from the three categories of problems mentioned above)

The Lord assures the *Acharya*, being an exceptional devotee and also being one who has been assured to receive the greatest gift (eternal service to the Lord) he will not be facing any of the three obstacles mentioned above (*aadhyaatmika, aadhibhautika, adhidaivika dukhavignanagandharahitasvam*). The Lord indicates that the *Acharya* should constantly chant the *Dvayam* (*Dvayavakta*) and meditate on its meaning as well (*artha anusandhaana saha*). The Lord indicates that the *Acharya* pass his time here itself (*atraiva*) in *Srirangam* (*srirange*) till his body is cast off (*yaavaccarirapaatam*).

19. ***sarirapatasamaye.....***
... nityakinkaro bhavisyasi

Free Translation:

“When you shed your body you will, by My grace, attain true and extensive knowledge. You will be thinking of Me only. Your current resolve that the “Lord is my Supreme goal” will not be diminished. You will be rid of the gross and subtle *Prakruti* (body, attachment, desire etc). Without any delay you will attain the privilege of eternal and uninterrupted service to Me”.

Commentary:

Here the Lord is giving an idea of what awaits him after he sheds his body.

“You will be unique when you shed your body (*sarirapaata samayetukevalam madiyayaa evadayaya atiprabuddha*). You will be blessed with a great expansion of knowledge. All this will happen due to My grace”. Before receiving His grace, *Acharya* was aware of himself and the Lord. After receiving His grace, he would have the Lord as the sole subject (since the awareness came as a result of His grace). He will only be aware of the Lord’s resplendent form with all the attributes and His immense wealth (*Vibhuti*). With immense faith that the Lord will take care of him, the *Acharya* will be able to cast off his body easily as one would do with an old garment (*jirnamiva vastram sukhena imam prakrtim sthula sookshmarupam visrjya*). The refinement of mind is not possible for ordinary people. These short comings are met by *Uppaasakas* who try to gain the end through their own efforts. If this effort is surrendered to the Lord (*matprasaada labda*), there will be no obstacles to these benefits. Salvation is assured.

Lord Sriranganatha details some of the benefits the *Acharya* will be receiving due to His grace. (a) A single minded devotion, perfected at the end of the three stage *Bhakti Sadhana*, directed at the glorious feet of the Lord (*maccaranaaravinda ugala ekaantika aatyantika Parabhakti, Parajnaana, Paramabhaktih*) (b) As a culmination of this intense devotion a complete

experience of me based on immense love (d) Pleased with your love towards Me and your eagerness to serve, I accept you to serve me eternally.

20. ***ma te bhudatra samshayah***

Let there be no doubt regarding this in your mind.

21. ***anrtam noktapurvam
.....iti mayaivahyuktam***

Free Translation:

I have never told a lie. Nor will I do it in future. *Rama* never speaks a double world. "To him who surrenders to me once and says "I am yours", I offer protection from all beings. This is my vow". These are the words were pronounced by Lord *Rama* while offering protection to *Vibhishana*. Lord *Krishna* tells *Arjuna* on the eve of the *Mahabharata* war "Renounce all dharmas (prescribed means for salvation) and surrender yourself solely to me. I will rid you of all your sins. Grieve not". The Lord says that both words were spoken by Me (*itimayaivah uktam*).

Commentary:

It may be in order here, to understand the difference between Bhakti and Prapatti.

Bhakti means practising love of God, taking various positive aids in such practice with the idea that if we take those ideas as the means, we can thereby attain Him.

Prapatti, on the other-hand, means acceptance of one's utter helplessness to be redeemed by any means and resigning oneself to Him. You are then accepting Him both the means and end of your efforts. In the Vaishnava tradition these two are illustrated by what are called *Markata-Kishora nyaya* and *Maarjaara-Kishora nyaya*.

Markata-Kishora nyaya refers to the case of a baby monkey. It holds on tightly to its mother while being transported depending for its safety and chance of reaching the destination on the strength of its hold.

Maarjaara-Kishora nyaya refers to the case of kitten being transported. The young cat remains where it is placed and the mother cat carries it to the destination without any effort on the part of the young one. And there is no risk on the way. *Prapatti* means this kind of absolute resignation to the Lord, making Him both the means and the end.

22. ***atastvam tava***
...nissamshaya sukha masva

You may safely rest without any fear or doubt in the matter of your true knowledge about Me and your realization about me.

This ends *Sharanagati Gadya*.

Emanations of Sriman Narayana

We shall now briefly discuss the aspects or emanations of the Supreme Being, Sriman Narayana.

Lord *Vishnu's Parama-pada* is *Vaikuntha*. There the Lord is seated in all glory on a beautiful throne. The colour of the deity is that of blue lotus. He is clad in yellow garment.

The doctrine of *Chaturvyuha* is very ancient. It is referred to in both the *Mahabharata* and the *Puranas*.

The Supreme Being ***Vasudeva*** is the first. He is so called because all beings, *Brahma* and others live in Him during Pralaya or because He lives in all beings. In Him all the six divine qualities – *Jnaana, Bala, Aishvarya, Virya, Shakti and Tejus* are simultaneously manifest.

During the process of creation, the Supreme Person is called ***Pradyumna***. The divine qualities of *Virya and Aishvarya* are prominent in Him. He is the inner controller of all including *Brahma*. His knowledge of all righteousness is superb. It is He who presents *Vedas* to *Brahma*.

During the process of preserving the creation, the Supreme Person is called ***Aniruddha***. The divine qualities of *Shakti and Tejus* are prominent in Him. None can resist the divine activity of maintaining law and order. He is the inner controller of the

Manus and others who are associated with Him during preservation. During the process of destruction the Supreme Person is called **Sankarshana**. The divine qualities of *Jnaana* and *Bala* are prominent in Him. He is the inner controller of *Rudra*, *Yama* and others.

The doctrine of *Vyuha* got a further extension in the Agama literature. Each member of the *Chatur-Vyuha* emanated into three other forms – referred to as *Vyuhantaras*.

Emanations of Vasudeva are – **Keshava, Narayana, Madhava**.

Emanations of Pradyumna are – **Trivikrama, Vaamana, Sridhara**

Emanations of Aniruddha are – **Hrishikesa, Padmanaabha, Daamodara**

Emanations of Sankarshana are – **Govinda, Vishnu, Madhusudhana**

These twelve emanations are said to be the divinities superintending the Sun in twelve months. The names of the twelve Sun deities are – *Dhaataa, Aryamaa, Mitra, Varuna, Indra, Vivasvaan, Pusa, Parjanya, Amsa, Bhaga, Tvastaa and Vishnu*. The Sun is one, but is adored under these names in the twelve months from *Chaitra* to *Phaalguna* respectively.

The twelve *Vyuhantara* forms and the parts of the body they control are given below.

Vyuhantara	Parts of body controlled
<i>Kesava</i>	Forehead
<i>Narayana</i>	Lower abdomen (centre)
<i>Madhava</i>	Chest
<i>Govinda</i>	Front neck (centre)
<i>Vishnu</i>	Lower abdomen (right)
<i>Madhusudhana</i>	Right arm
<i>Trivikrama</i>	Neck (right side)
<i>Vamana</i>	Lower abdomen (left)
<i>Sridhara</i>	Left arm
<i>Hrishikesha</i>	Neck (left side)

<i>Padmanabha</i>	Back (lower spinal)
<i>Damodara</i>	Back (upper spinal)
<i>Vasudeva</i>	Top of the Head

Since the human body is made out of *Prakrti* (matter) which also forms the body of the Lord, these *Vyuhantara* forms reside in the parts of the body noted against each form. Further, these forms are supposed to represent the twelve signs in the universe, corresponding to the twelve zodiacs. After wearing *the Sri Vaishnava* marks (*Dvadasa urdhva-pundram*) on the spots indicated, which externally display the *Vyuhantara* forms, the Lord is saluted by chanting the appropriate name with folded arms near the corresponding part of the body

Having studied briefly about the *Vyuhas* of Lord *Narayana*, we may briefly study about the others – *Vibhavas*, *Antaryamin* and *Archa*.

Vibhavas:

In a strict sense, an *Avataara* means a descent as its etymology shows. But the word is used to denote any of the three modes (manifestation, descent or birth) of the Lord contacting us in a tangible form. There is no binding on the *Bhagavan* of when He must assume an *Avataara*. The purpose of an *Avataara* is threefold – (a) Protection of those who are noble in character. (b) Destruction of the wicked (c) the re-establishment of virtue.

Divine manifestation is twofold. (a) Primary (b) Secondary.

(a) **Primary:** The Primary or *Swaroopa Avataara* is that where the Lord Himself is acting as in the case of Lord Krishna. Here the divine contact is direct. People, who were fortunate to live through the life and times of *Sri Krishna*, could hear His voice, talk to Him and even touch Him.

(b) **The secondary:** Also called *aavesaavataara* is where He acts through some individual soul as in the form of *Parashurama*. Here the divine contact is indirect. It is said that the Lord *Narayana* does not assume any bodies born of men and women. On the other hand, the Lord manifests His own eternal form which is made up of bliss and consciousness. This sort of manifestation of the Lord is said to be His birth, and nothing else.

Antaryamin:

Prakruti and *Jivas* exist as His eternal and inseparable modes. God only wills the *Srishti* or projection of *Prakruti* into categories and their combinations. The shapes that these take depend on the *Karma* efficiencies of the *Jivas* involved in the cyclic process of time. God only provides the manifesting power. He is not responsible for the evil and sufferings involved in the creative process. The diversification itself does not complete the creative process. The Supreme *Brahman* has to enter into each of these bodies. He is therefore the indweller of all including the *Jivas*. However, it should be remembered that the pains and enjoyments of the *Jivas* are solely due to their *Karma*. God is untouched by the bondage of *Karma*.

Narayana Sooktam gives a good description of Indweller. *Antaryami Brahmana* of the *Bhavadaranyaka Upanishad* talks about the *Sareera-Sariri* (Body-soul) relationship. This runs partly as follows – “He who dwells in all beings but is within them, whom none of the beings know, whose body is all beings and who controls all beings from within. He is never seen but the Seer, He is never heard, but is the hearer...”

Archa Avatar (consecrated images)

When the image of God is installed and consecrated with sacred mantras, God in His boundless generosity and infinite love for His devotees enters into the image and makes it His real form. He does not just reside in the image, but becomes the image itself. The concept of *Archa avatar* has a significant place in the *Vaishnava* tradition. It is also at the heart of the temple tradition in India. This increases the accessibility or *Saulabhya* to an ordinary devotee. We have already discussed the categories into which the *Archavatar* has been divided into.

Given below is a table that summarises the major aspects of the *Vyuhas*

Sriman Naryana

Para Vasudeva

Vyuha	Predominant Qualities	Presides Over	Activity		Vyuhantara	Colour	What they carry in their Four hands
<i>Vasudeva</i>	Jnana Bala Aishvarya Virya Shakti Tejus	Chitta	Transcendence	→	<i>Kesava</i> <i>Narayana</i> <i>Madhava</i>	Golden Dark Sapphire- Blue	Four Chakras Four Conches Four Maces
<i>Sankarshana</i>	Jnana Bala	Jiva-Tattwa (Life principle)	Sublation (Pralaya)	→	<i>Govinda</i> <i>Vishnu</i> <i>Madhusudhana</i>	Fair Saffron Lotus	Four bows Four ploughs Four pestles
<i>Pradyumna</i>	Aishvarya Virya	Mano- Tatwa (Mind principle)	Creation (Srishti)	→	<i>Trivikrama</i> <i>Vamana</i> <i>Sridhara</i>	Fire Rising Sun White Lotus	Four swords Four thunderbolts Four spears
<i>Aniruddha</i>	Shakti Tejus	Ahamkara	Preservation (Sthiti)	→	<i>Hrishiksha</i> <i>Padmanabha</i> <i>Damodara</i>	Lighting Sun Indragopa- insect	Four mallets Five weapons Four nooses

Shriranga Gadyam

This piece, in essence is an abridged version of the *Sharanagati Gadyam*. It is explicitly addressed to Lord *Ranganaatha* of *Srirangam* and for that reason is called *Sri Ranga Gadyam*. While the *Sharanagati Gadyam* is often referred to as the long *Gadyam*, *Sri Ranga Gadyam* is referred to as the short *Gadyam*.

The Acharya prays for the supreme goal of being accepted in the service of the Lord. He seeks the Lord's feet as the ultimate means for achieving his desire.

To the devotee who has chosen the path of *Prapatti* for gaining salvation it is essential that –

- i. he should spend his time in devoted service to the Lord
- ii. worship and serve Him in His temples
- iii. serve His devotees
- iv. if the above were not possible – meditate on His name and qualities
- v. if lacking in depth of devotion – at least utter the *Dvayamantra* and its import

The *Acharya* intends that this *Sriranga Gadyam* as fit for repetition in the presence of the Lord by devotees to fulfill their desires.

Churnika-1

1

Svaadheena trividha chetana
.....nityakinkaro bhavaani

Free Translation

Acharya has just one desire and he prays for the fulfillment of it -the desire to be in eternal and devoted service to the Lord. The Lord, *Narayana* is the acceptor of the service. One of the meanings or interpretations of the word *Narayana* is His Lordship over the two lands – (a) the land of His sport – meaning the world we live in (b) the land of bliss – *Paramapada*.

While making his request, the Acharya brings to focus two telling points. (1) He is the Lord of the Universe and of the *Vaikunta*. For this reason there is no need for Him to consult any one in doing what He wants. (2) He has innumerable auspicious qualities including those that favour His *Aashritas* (those who seek His protection). On the basis of these the Lord should easily be able to grant his wishes.

Commentary

Svaadheena ... Bhagavantam

Lord *Narayana* has complete control over the variations in the nature, existence and activity of both the conscious (*Chetana*- animate) and non-conscious (*A-Chetana* - inanimate) forces. And the entire creation consists of *Chetana* and *A-Chetana* varieties only.

Chetana- animate or living force is classified into three groups (*tri- vidha- chetana*). Similarly, *A-Chetana* – inanimate kind is also classified into three groups.

The classifications of *Chetana* are –

- (a) *Samsari*: Under this category come Jivas who have not completed their Karma-phala and as a consequence are going through the cycle of birth and re-birth experiencing happiness and misery. Their ability to know and understand is limited
- (b) *Muktas*: Under this category come Jivas who, were once in bondage and freed after many years by the grace of the Lord, and have been liberated from the bondage to the body. The absence of such bondage will enable their intellect to fully blossom. They exist in a state of eternal happiness in the service of the Lord
- (c) *Nitya* They are ever free and have never been in bondage. They are engaged in ageless and eternal service to the Lord.

The classifications of *A-Chetana* are –

- (a) *Shuddha satva* Characterized by total by total purity. *Paramapada*, the material land of the Bliss is made up of this material. It is made up of five Divine components and referred to as Panchopanisamaya (1) *Paramesti* (2) *Pumaan* (3) *Visva* (4) *Nivrtti* (5) *Sarva*. It is changeless in nature, that is, Time has no sway on it. It is helpful to the protective activities of Lord *Narayana* in His forms as *Vyuha* and *Vibhava*.
- (b) *Prakruti* It is made up of a mixture of the three *Gunas* – *Satva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. This is the material making up this world of ours, men, women and even personages like *Indra* downwards. It is subject to changes and Time has a sway on it. The proportion of the three *gunas* varies depending on the good and bad actions of the Jivas. Their effect is to hide the true knowledge of the

embodied soul, the Supreme Being, the true goal in life and the means to the goal.

(c) *Kaala* (Time) is different to *Prakruti*. It controls the existence of *A-Chetana* (inanimate stuff) and *Samsari*. Birth, growth, death is completely controlled by Time. However, it has no sway over *Paramapada*, *Muktas* and *Nityas*. Lord Narayana's sway over *Chetana* and *A-Chetana* consists in being their inner-being, *Antaraatma*, and controlling them.

Klesha karmaadi ashesha dosha asamsprstam

Since the Lord is the inner soul, is it possible for the faults and defects of the body stain the soul? The answer is – the faults of the body do not touch the Lord.

The causes that lead to misery are, (*klesha karmah adi*) - ignorance, self-importance, greed, desire, anger and similar such faults. These causes affect both men and gods (*Devas*) alike, who have varying life spans, differences in nature and intelligence. These causes result in – ageing, sufferings from diseases etc. The Lord is '*asamsprstam*' – untouched by these faults.

Thus far, *Sri Ramanuja* has pointed out the complete control that Lord Narayana has over everything that has been created, both land and beings. The *Acharya's* point is that the Lord should have no difficulty in accepting *Sri Ramanuja* as His servant.

The *Acharya* then proceeds to highlight that the Lord is just not Power. In addition He is endowed with a number of inherent qualities (*Svaabhaavika*) which favours His *Aashritas the* (devotees who take refuge in Him). The *Acharya* is pleading with the Lord to exercise His infinite and wonderful qualities (*anavadhika atishaya*) to grant his wish. The six principal qualities and sample of twelve Kalyana Gunas (auspicious qualities) out of the infinite number that He possesses is given below.

1. *Jnaana*All comprehending knowledge.
2. *Bala*Omnipotence
3. *Aishvarya*Lordship
4. *Viryal*mmutability
5. *Shakti*Creative Power
6. *Tejas*Splendour

Besides these principal qualities, Lord Narayana possesses innumerable Kalyana Gunas (auspicious qualities). A few of them are listed below. The first 12 relate to His concern for His devotees. The next 3 relate to the enemies of His devotees. The last 4 qualities enumerate His relationship with His devotees.

Lord's Concern for the devotees.

- | | | |
|-----|-------------------|--|
| 1. | <i>Sausilya</i> | Natural ability to freely mix even with the lowliest, completely unconscious of His infinite greatness |
| 2 | <i>Vaatsalya</i> | Affection, in the same way a cow shows its affection to its calf |
| 3 | <i>Maardava</i> | Gentleness |
| 4. | <i>Aarjaya</i> | devotees whether present before Him or not. |
| 5 | <i>Sauhaarda</i> | Affection/ Friendship; thoughtful of the welfare of His devotees whether present before Him or not. |
| 6 | <i>Saamya</i> | Equality. He treats all His devotees equally without any bias |
| 7 | <i>Kaarunya</i> | Compassion. Selfless sorrow at the distress of others. |
| 8 | <i>Maadhurya</i> | All round sweetness – even while fighting with His enemies. |
| 9 | <i>Gaambhriya</i> | Inimitable grandeur. He is un-mindful of the greatness of what He gives and the smallness what He receives. |
| 10. | <i>Audaarya</i> | Generosity. He is happy that He is able to fulfill wishes of His devotees. |
| 11. | <i>Chaturya</i> | Skilful. He is very clever in overlooking and hiding the shortcomings of His devotees |
| 12. | <i>Sthairya</i> | Stability of purpose or resolve. Even under great pressure from enemies, He would not flinch from His resolve to protect His devotees. |

For the enemies of His devotees.

1. *Dhairya* : He is never afraid of anyone and is absolutely confident of His abilities. His crowning of Vibheeshana, even before the war has started is an example.
2. *Shaurya* Supreme bravery.

3. *Paraakrama* Unbelievable valour

Relationship with devotees.

- 1 *Satya Kaamah* He makes the desires of all His true devotees to come true
- 2 *Satya sankalpa* His resolves for His devotees come true
- 3 *Krititva* When the desire of His devotee is granted, it is He who feels elated and fulfilled.
- 4 *Krtajnata* Remembering a good act. A simple prayer from His devotee seeking His help will be remembered and all other faults forgotten

Only some of His auspicious qualities have been enumerated above. However, there are countless others which are not highlighted above (*asankhyeya guna gana augha mahaarnavam*).

Parabrahma bhootam Purushottama.... Nitya kinkaro bhavani

Acharya then addresses the Lord with words like – *Parabrahman* (Superior Being who is immense and immeasurable); *Paramatma* (Superior person distinct from all others); *Sriranga saayinam* (gives immense pleasure to all His devotees with His reclining form at the Srirangam temple); *asmad swaminam* (my Lord).

The Acharya then brings up the topic about self. His wish is to be eternally subject to the Lord's command, ever at His service and deriving supreme joy from it (*Nitya niyaamy Nitya daasaika rasaatma*).

The next few words highlight stages of *Parabhakti* etc. The single minded desire to have to have the mental experience of the Lord (*tadeka anubhava*); Single minded devotion to the Lord only (*Tadeka priyah*); Experiencing the Lord clearly and wholly without any interruption (*Paripoornam Bhagavantam nirantara manubhooyah*). The word *Paripoorna anubhava* indicates experiencing the Lord's essential nature – His form, His auspicious qualities and all His wealth.

The Acharya begs to be accepted as the Lord's eternal servant (engaged in un-interrupted service to you). Having enjoyed the experience of the Lord resulting from the three stage development, he wishes to perform service in all forms and under all circumstances.

Churnika-2

The second sentence (*Curnika*) conveys the surrender (*Sharanagati*) by the *Acharya*. He conveys his imperfections, lack of virtues and confesses he has no other refuge. He pleads to be accepted in the Lord's service.

Swaatma Nitya niyaamy.....
.....sharana maham prapadye.

Free Translation:

Basically, the *Acharya* is seeking refuge at the feet of the Lord *Narayana*. In the process, he pours out his personal shortcomings and his inability to overcome the bonds of *Samsara*. Yet, he expresses his intense desire to be of service in all forms and under all conditions to the Lord. The *Acharya* seeks refuge at the feet of the Lord and His grace to release him from the bondage of *Samsara* and fulfill his desire.

Commentary:

The *Acharya*, thus far, has conveyed in his prayers the desired objective – *praapya*. After dwelling on the auspicious qualities of *Bhagavan Sriman Narayana*, the *Acharya* conveys that his essential nature is suitability to be ever commanded by Him. Aware of this nature, the *Acharya* meditates constantly on His great lordship (*anavadhikaatishaya svaamy*) and His auspicious qualities (*akhila guna gana*). The devotion which leads to the realization of service is *Parabhakti*. The fruit for this devotion is permission from the Lord to accept the services of the *Acharya* in all forms and under all conditions. In addition, well defined knowledge (*tadupaaya samyakjnana*) regarding the *Self* and *Parabrahman* would lead to devoted service.

The *Acharya* then continues to enumerate his personal short comings and declares his inability to overcome them without the grace of Lord *Narayana*. He tells, he is lacking in personal qualities (*tadanuguna saativikaastyadhi samasta atma guna vihinah*) like – virtue (*satva*), mastery over inner and outer senses, and absence of ego, conceit, and faith in the grace of the Lord etc. Continuing beyond the lack of virtues, the *Acharya* confesses that he is a storehouse of sins (*duruttaraananta tadviparyaya jnana kriyaanugunaadi paapavaasanaa mahaarnavaan tarnimagnah*) collected due to the inevitable association with *Prakruti*. He cries out at his state of immersion in the ocean of sin and the prospects of committing more sins as time passes on.

Reference is made to the veiling nature of *Prakruti*, (otherwise called *Maya*), when it is associated with the Self (*Atma*). Due to this *Maya*, the body is identified with the soul. *Maya* is impossible to overcome without the direct help from Lord *Narayana*. The well informed can differentiate the two like the presence oil in gingili seed or fire in the firewood.

I do not find any means to cross this ocean of *Samsara* (cycle of birth and death) over infinite periods yet to come. O Lord, who is sought by all beings that are born (*nikhila jantu jata sharanya*), I seek refuge in you. He addresses the Lord as “*Sriman Narayana*”. Sri has a reference here to Goddess Sri Maha Lakshmi, who is sitting next to the Lord. The address includes Mother *Maha Lakshmi* to intercede on behalf of the *Acharya* and request the Lord to forgive all previous lists of offences (committed over many previous births) and satisfy the desires of His devotee.

The *Acharya* seeks refuge at the lotus feet of Lord *Narayana* – *tava charana aravinda yugalam sharana maham prapadye*.

Churnika-3

After taking refuge at the feet of the Lord, the *Acharya*, begs for an immediate fulfillment of his desire with a firm faith that the Lord will respond to his prayers.

Eva mavasthitasyaapi
.....nitya kinkarataam praarthaye

Though I am in this state (a storehouse of accumulated sins and short comings) having nowhere to go, I seek refuge at your lotus feet. O Lord you are well known to be moved to intense sorrow looking at the misfortunes of your subjects (As *Sri Rama* he has exhibited intense sorrow at the distress of His subjects. That is His nature). Witnessing my misery in *Samsara*, have pity on me and grant my wish. The *Acharya* addresses the Lord *Paramakaarunika* and *Bhagavan*. The first one highlights the extreme merciful nature of the Lord. As Lord *Rama*, He was prepared to forgive even *Raavana*, overlooking all his misdeeds, provided the demon king takes refuge at His feet. The second one, *Bhagavan*, highlights that the Lord has all the knowledge and power to bestow deliverance to any one He considers worthy. He does not need to consult anyone nor does He need permission from anyone to do whatever He wishes. Such being the case, the *Acharya*

implores the Lord to grant his wish. And what is the wish? To be accepted for eternal service (*daasyam*) to the Lord.

Churnika-4

Tavaanubhooti sambhoota
.....na jaane' gati manyadha

O Lord, please grant the pleasure of eternal service to you resulting from the joy of experiencing you. This is my only desire. O Master (*naadha*), out of mercy (*kripaya*) for my distress please grant me this desire. I do not know of any other means (*na jaane' gati manyadha*)

Churnika-5

Sarvaavasthocita
.....kurusva maam

O Lord be pleased to grant me the love of service to you, an eternal service unto you under all circumstances and at all times. I look forward to you for all my needs.

Churnika-6

Evambhoota tattva
..... me' manastavamevaadyaiva kaaraya

Even if I do not possess the true knowledge of the goal or lack adequate sincerity for the knowledge, do grant me the correct perception of the means and the goal

Churnika-7

Apaara karunaambudhe'
..... mama naadha namostute

Acharya then expresses the qualities of Lord *Ranganatha* which would lead to the grant of his prayers.

Apaara Karunaambudhe' – He is the ocean of mercy

Anaalochita visheshaashesha loka sharanye' – you are fit to be sought (as refuge) by all irrespective of differences due to birth, level of knowledge etc

Pranataartihara – He removes the distress of all, including those who are refuge-less, who seek Him with firm faith

Aashrita vaatsalyaika mahodadhe – He is ever ready to forgive the faults of His devotees – like a cow that cleans up the body of a new-born calf. His greatness in this regard is limitless like that of an ocean (mahodadhe')
anavarata vidita nikhila bhootajaatayadhaatmya` - He controls the existence of all beings at all times. He also knows the truth about all beings. You know everything about every being, including me

Satyakaama – His desires are ever fulfilled

Satyasankalpa – His will always comes true

Aapatsakha – Friend in distress

kaakustha – Sri Rama who saved the crow from death

Sriman – The Divine Mother is with you

Narayana

Purushottama

Sri Ranganatha

Mama Naatha

Namostute'

I am Yours- not mine. Utilize me for your pleasure – in Thy service.

The *Acharya's* appeal is passionate. He holds nothing back. There is no ambiguity in his request. What he wants is simple – yet rarely asked and much rarely given.

Sri Ranga Gadyam concludes with this.

Sri Vaikuntha Gadyam

In the *Sharanagati Gadya* the *Acharya* stressed that *Prapatti* is the easiest means (*Upaaya*) and is open to all to attain the Lord. Apart from the Bhakti, Jnaana and Karma yogas, *Prapatti* features as a completely independent means for attaining the Lord. These are all the means to attain the Lord. When you practice any one of these and succeed, what is there at the end of it? The *Upaaya* (means) has been discussed and it remains for us to know the *Upeya* (the end result).

In this Gadyam, It would appear, that there are six sections by which the topic has been handled

1. The *Acharya* describes the uniqueness of the *sharanya* – the object of refuge. The *Acharya* declares that to attain that object (the *Lord Narayana* Himself) *Prapatti* (taking refuge at the feet of the Lord) is the only means. The *Acharya* places his faith on God's qualities like *Saulabhya* (easily approachable) and *Sausheelya* (mixing freely with inferiors)
2. In the second section the *Acharya* states that expressing his desire once will be adequate. However, he will repeat this often for two reasons. (a) to keep his mind focused on his objective (b) to spend time fruitfully meditating on Lord *Narayana*.
3. In the third section, the path taken by the *prapanna* (devotee who has surrendered to the Lord), after he is sheds his mortal remains, all the way up-to the *Vaikuntha* is described. The *Acharya* then goes on to describe the Lord's exquisite form, the ornaments that he wears, the company of people surrounding Him and serving Him, the weapons that He sports and the Land of bliss itself is described.
4. In the fourth section, it is revealed that the Lord accepts the request made by the *prapanna* who then goes on to serve the Lord.
5. The fourth section tells about the state of the *prapannas* serving Him. They stare at His glorious form, making up for the many years that have taken them to reach this state.
6. The sixth section describes the way the Lord makes enquires regarding the welfare of His devotees.

Yaamuraarya sudhaambhodhi

..... ***Sandarshayaa mahyam.***

The *Gadyam* starts with the *Acharya* stating that he will bring out the spiritual wealth passed on by *Sri Yamunacharya* for the daily experience of the devotees. *Sri Yamunacharya* or *Alavandar*, as he was popularly referred to, was a very well-known *Vishishtaadvaita* philosopher. It was he who was responsible for getting *Sri Ramanuja* write the *Sri Bhasya*. He was, by himself, a brilliant debater and a writer. Following is a list his works-

1. *Chathusloki* a popular prayer in praise of Goddess *Lakshmi*
2. *Stotra Ratnam* a prayer in praise of Lord *Narayana*
3. *Siddhitrayam* consisting of (1) *AtmaSiddhi*. (2) *Samvitsiddhi* and (3) *Ishwara Siddhi* which describe the *Vishishtaadvaita* school of thought, describing a relationship between the Self, *Paramaatma* and *Prakruti*
4. *Agama Pramanya* stating the authority of *Pancharatra agama*
5. *Maha Purusha Nirnayam* describing that the ultimate reality is the god-goddess pair *Goddess Maha Lakshmi* and Lord *Narayana*
6. *Gitartha Sangraha* a commentary on the *Bhagavad Gita*
7. *Nityam*
8. *Maayaa Vaadha Khandanam*

The Bhakti yoga mentioned, in fact, refers to Prapatti.

Churnika-1

Svaadheena trivdha chetanaachetana Swaroopa sthiti

.....***tatgata svabhavena sharana manuvrajeth***

Free Translation

While wishing eternal service to Ishvara, Lord Narayana, the only means of attaining this goal is, Prapatti, to seek refuge at His lotus feet. He is the Master and controls everything in this Universe. He does not need to consult anyone or take permission from anyone while satisfying His devotees. Among the Lord's innumerable auspicious qualities (*Kalyana Gunas*) the key ones are *Saulabhya* (easy to approach) and *Sausheelya* (mixing freely with inferiors). These are qualities of the *Bhagavan* that make Him take compassion on us

This is the essence of this section

Commentary:

The Supreme Being, Lord Narayana, is in complete control (*Svaadheena indicates this*) of everything in this Universe – *Chetana* (sentient - meaning live, responsive and conscious), *Achetana* (non-sentient beings meaning - not live, not responsive not conscious), Divine beings, Time, their very nature, qualities, and their very existence itself (*Sthiti*). The Curnika starts with – “*Svaadheena Trivida chetana Achetana Swaroota sthiti*” *Svaadheena* refers to the state of complete control. It refers to the complete control of the three types. This has already been explained in *Sri Ranga Gadyam*.

Lord Narayana is quite the opposite of any other Master – be it among the humans or *Devas*. He is untouched by any faulty, lowly qualities - “*asesa dosha asamprstam*”. The Lord is free from all faults. For example – He is free from *klesa* (person subject to desire and hate), *karma* (virtuous and sinful acts) *adi* (similar) defects. He is the abode of all that is noble and auspicious. In addition He is the abode of innumerable noble and auspicious qualities. These qualities have not been acquired as a result of any boon given to Him. They are a part of Him. His greatness cannot be comprehended by the mind much less expressed in words. The “*svaabhaavika anavadhika atishaya Jnana Bala aishvarya Veerya Shakti tejah*”. These have been explained in *Sri Ranga Gadyam*.

The Acharya addresses Lord Narayana as “*Bhagavantam*”. There is a special purpose in this. The Supreme Being has special qualities referred to as *Bhagas*. The special qualities are possessed by Him only and no other. They are – *Jnana, Bala, Aishvarya, Veerya, Shakti and Tejas*”. Though we refer to others as Bhagavan, it is only out of our reverence to them.

Before making his special and only request the *Acharya* recalls his special relationship with the Supreme Lord. “*Svaamitvena, Gurutvena, Suhrutvena cha parigrhya*”. He is the Lord, preceptor and friend. In fact, this special relationship is enjoyed by not just by the *Acharya* alone, but by everyone in this world. “*Tat paada aravinda Dvaya paricharya, eka manorathah aikantika*”. Having accepted Lord Narayana as the Lord, it is only natural that one should consider himself as the servant. The servant then wishes for service. He seeks personal service to the lotus feet of the Lord. That is the

only goal of the *Acharya*— *eka manoratha*. While this is the end in view, the means proposed to be adopted is *Prapatti*.

Other means such as *Jnana* and *Bhakti* are also recommended in the scriptures for gaining the grace of the Lord. However, the *Acharya* confesses that while they are suitable for devotees with greater will and capacity, they are not suitable for a man like him steeped in ignorance, Karma etc. “*kalpa koti sahasrenapi*” – just as a ball of cobweb will not germinate, even if soaked in water for thousand days, the *Acharya* says he will not qualify for the Lord’s grace if he follows the other means. *Prapatti* is the only means suitable for him to pursue.

He is confident that *Bhagavan Narayana*, with countless auspicious qualities, will overlook his shortcomings and grant him his wish. Why is the *Acharya* confident? The Lord is an ocean of compassion (*akhila satva dyaika saagarasya*). His compassion is for all living creatures without any distinction. In addition, He overlooks the faults of all His devotees. He does not wait to examine (*anaalochita*) whether the seeker is ignorant or learned, theist or atheist, ethical or un-ethical, humble or haughty. His grace is available for all (*Akhanda Jana*) without any differentiation whether he is human or *Deva*. He mixes with everyone without considering His own superiority and the lowliness of the other person. This characteristic is always with Him.

Having dealt with the auspicious qualities of the Lord, the *Acharya* proceeds to talk about His form and the body. The extraordinary beauty and the symmetry of the form of the Lord has never been experienced by any one – be they Gods, humans or animals (*akhila jana hridaya anandasya*). Everyone who met Lord *Rama* was wonderstruck at His extraordinary beauty.

How does the Lord feel about the devotees approaching Him? The *Acharya* explains it as – *ashrita vaalsalyaika jaladhe*’. For all those who sought Him (*ashrita*), He overlooks all their faults and admires only their good aspects. His love for His devotees is like that of a cow for a new born calf (*vaatsalya*). He does not think of a single moment’s separation from those truly devoted souls - *-bhakta Jana samshlekaishya bhogyasya*

He has the pleasure of the company of innumerable souls (devotees) in *Paramapada* serving Him. He has all the facilities for the enjoyment of these pleasures and these facilities are under His control – *Nitya Jnaana kriya aishvaryadi bhoga saamagri samrddhasya*. Where are all these facilities

located? It is at 'mahavibhuteh'. It is in the infinite land of the bliss - referred to as *Nitya Vibhuti* or *Paramapada*. Lord *Narayana* resides here together with Mother *Sri Maha Lakshmi*. The Lord is the personification of bliss and ever fulfilled desires (*avaapta samasta kama*). If that is the case what role does *Sri Maha Lakshmi* fulfill? The answer is – the Lord's pleasure is in uplifting souls. She is His companion and mediates between the sinful souls and the Lord. She pleads with the Lord on behalf of the sinners. As a reminder, the land we all live in is called "*Lilavibhuti*" – land of sport. It is the land of sport for Lord *Narayana*.

May the devotees seek the lotus feet of the Lord (*sree mat charana aravinda ugalam*) with the firm conviction that nothing else will deliver us (*ananya atma sanjeevanena*). May you be fully concentrated on this single goal and nothing else (*tat gata sarva bhavena*). Take refuge at the lotus like feet of Lord *Narayana* (*sharana manu vrajet*).

Churnika-2

Tatascha pratyaha aatmojeevanaaya aiva anusmaret

The question is – Is seeking *Saranaagati* once adequate? Of course, the Lord has declared that He will provide protection to anyone who has sought Him saying "I am yours". However, declaring once is one thing and seeking Him day in and day out with no other thought except Him on the mind is quite another matter. The latter exhibits a complete surrender. For the uplift of the self (*aatmojeevanaaya*), everyday remembering is required (*Pratyaham*)

Churnika-3.1

Chaturdasha bhuvanaatmakamandam srimati vaikunthe' divyaloke

The *Acharya* then describes the divine land of bliss, *Srivaikunta*, the beauty and splendour of which is beyond comprehension and words even for the great *Brahma*. *Srivaikunta* is far beyond the egg shaped unit containing the fourteen regions which includes the *Bhooloka* the region we live in – there are seven regions above *Bhooloka* and seven below it. The *andam* also includes the areas that separate the fourteen regions (*avaranas*). Each region is ten times larger than the one below it. The seven *avaranas* are constituted by the same principles that constitute *Prakruti* – water, fire, ether

etc. These regions, constituted by various principles, are yet related by cause and effect (*kaarya kaarana jaatamateetya*). Beyond all this mass of *Prakruti*, - which though eternal is continuously subject to change, creation and dissolution – is situated *Srivaikunta*. Contrary to *Prakruti*, *Srivaikunta* is changeless. It is referred to here as *Parama vyoma* (i.e.) *Paramapada*. It is very vast and several times the size of *Prakruti Mandala*. It is also very clear and nothing is hidden. In this Divine land (*Divya loka*'), constituted out of *Shuddha Sattva*, there is no veil of ignorance limiting the knowledge.

Churnika-3.2

Sanakavidhi shivaadibhirapyacintya
..... svabhaavmiti paricchettumayogye'

The splendour and wealth of *Srivaikunta* is beyond the comprehension of great sages like *Sanaka* and other Gods like *Brahma* and *Shiva*. This *Divine Loka* is populated by great souls like *Nityas*, countless in number (*anantaih*). *Nityas*, you may recall, are eternally free souls and do not go through the cycle of *Samsara*. Steeped in complete realization of Lord Narayana their only activity is service to the Lord. Their enjoyment is *Bhagavad Anubhava*. In addition there are divine persons (*divyapurishaih*) and great souls (*mahaatmabhih*) serving the Lord. The Lord, in turn, cannot bear separation from these great souls. *Srivaikunta* is eternally populated (*apurite'*) by such great souls.

Churnika-3.3

Divya aavarana shata sahasra aavarane
..... divya alankaara alankrte

The Acharya then proceeds to describe the wealth of the land of the Bliss.

The term *Divya* has been used to indicate the uniqueness of the place. We are used to admiring the beauty of the nature around us here in *Bhoomandala* (earth). *Srivaikunta* is an entirely different region. To start with, it has been made out of a different stuff altogether – *Shuddha satva*. It has been specially created by the creator of creators and the Supreme Lord resides there. The region has hundreds of thousands of fortifications (*aavarana*). The word fortification has been used to indicate the immense wealth of the place. In fact, there is no danger either to the Lord or the wealth

of the place from anyone. Rows of *Kalpaka* trees (*divya kalpaka taru shobhite'*) lend great beauty to the paths around the place.

The magnificent temple of the Lord stands at a central location. Innumerable number of gardens surrounds this temple. (*divyodyaana shata sahasra kotibh aavrete*). The gardens and the temple, covering a vast area (*ati pramaane*), serve as the playground for *Sri Vaikunta Naadha* and His consorts.

Having described the location of the temple in a general way, the Acharya proceeds to give more details of the temple. He starts with the hall of audience located in the temple (*kasminschi*). The special hall of audience (*divya asthana mantape*) is studded with different varieties of rare gems (*vichitra ratnamaye*). It has a countless number of pillars studded with precious stones (*divya ratna sthambha shata sahasrakotibh rupashobhite*). The floor itself is paved with a variety of rare divine gems. (*divya nana ratna krta sthala vichitrite*). The hall is decorated with many canopies, drapes and other furnishings (*divya alankara alankrte*)

The *Acharya* reverts back to the temple gardens. Varieties of trees beautify the garden. Sweet smelling Flowers with different colours (*nana nana gandha varnaih*) from varieties of trees, scattered everywhere [*paritaih* (flowers), *patitah* (fallen from the trees), *patamaanaih* (still falling), *paadapasthaisca* (still remaining on the tree)] in the garden, render an exquisite beauty to the place. Beautiful flower gardens (*divya pushpavanaih upashobhite*) with bunches of rare flowers (*divya pushpaih shobhamanaih*) with sweet smell surround the place.

Details of other salient aspects of the garden are given. *Parijata*, *harichandana* and *kalpaka* trees are lined up in the garden. It has a large number of resting and sporting places (*mantaps*) decorated with fine flowers and precious stone (*antahsthan Pushpa ratnaadi nirmita divya leela mantapa shata sahasrakoti roopa shobhitaih*). Though these gardens are continuously used, their breath taking beauty never stopped to inspire a sense of astonishment on the inmates. Innumerable hillocks of sport (*kreedaa shailaih shata sahasraih alankrte*) break the monotony. Some gardens are exclusively for the use of the Lord, some for the use by *Sri Devi* and some others are for general use. The sounds made by birds like parrots, cuckoos, peacocks and others fill the air

The Acharya then gives detailed descriptions of ponds, tanks and lakes intended for aquatic sports. Steps leading to the water are studded with

pearls, corals and other precious stones (*mani mukta pravaalakra sopaanaih*). The singing by a large number of birds could be heard. The tanks are filled with pure water tasting like nectar. Royal swans (*divya raja hamsaavali virajitaih*), spotless white in colour, swim around in the water.

Churnika-3.4

nirastaatishaya rasataya
..... mahati divya yoga paryanke' ananta bhogini

The couch on which Lord Narayana and His consorts are seated is described. Seats affording great comfort (*nirasta atishaya aanandaika rasatayaa*) are located artistically and cleverly between flower bedecked spaces. Clusters of bees, drinking honey from the divine flowers provide an exhilarating feeling for the visitors there. The gentle breeze is saturated with fragrance gathered from trees like *chandana* (sandal), *agaru* (lacquer), *karpoora* (camphor). The Lord is seated on a spacious divine seat provided by the great serpent – *Adishesha*.

Churnika-3.5

Srimadvaikuntha aishvaryaadi divyalokam
..... sriyaa sahaasinam

Lord Narayana's consorts and attendants are described here. The presence of Mother, *Sri Mahalakshmi* ever united with the Lord, by Her very presence makes this divine and amazing *Sri Vaikuntha* glow with a rare brilliance. She matches the Lord with her qualities such as *Sheela* (miscibility), *Roopa* (bodily form), *guna* (merit), love, affection and so on. In addition the Lord is served by divine attendants such as *Adishesha* (*sheshaashana* – refers to them who live on the remnants of Lord's meal), *Vishvaksena* and others.

Churnika-3.6

***Pratyagrormeelita sarasija sadrsha nayana yugalam
.....chaturbhi raajaanu vilambhi bhirbhujair virajitam***

In the next few lines the Acharya describes Lord Narayana Himself. The Lord is the essence of perfection in all aspects. He has wide eyes like the freshly blossomed lotus (*pratyagra unmilita sarasijadrsa nayana ugalam*): His complexion is like that of clear blue cloud (*svaccha neela jeemuta sankasham*); He is resplendent with the yellow silk adorning His waist (*atyujvala peeta vaasasam*); He shines with His own radiance (*svayaa prabhaaya*); He is extremely faultless (*ati nirmalayaa*); He is very cool (*ati sheetalaya*); He is very youthful (*ati komalaya*); He exudes the brilliance of a gem (*svaccha maanikyaabhaya*); He illuminates the entire Universe (*krtsnam jagat bhaasayantam*); His beauty is un-imaginable, Divine, and is like a wonderful ocean of nectar filled with youthful beauty (*achintya Divya, Adbhuta, nitya yauvana Svabhava Laavanya amrta saagaram*). Curls of forelocks play on His tender forehead moist with mild sweat.

His face and eyes open up with joy (*prabuddha mugda ambuja chaaru lochanam*), like a tender lotus, on seeing His devotees. His raised eye brows resemble a creeper while showing concern to His devotees (*savibhrama bhrulata*). He has beautiful lips (*ujjvala adharam*). He has a bewitching smile (*shuchi smitam*); has beautiful cheeks (*komala ganda*); has a raised nose (*unnasam*); has a slim and conch like neck whose beauty is enhanced by the locks of curly hair and the long ear rings.

Sri Maha Lakshmi embraces the Lord out of sheer joy when she notices that her children (devotees) were protected and taken care of by the Lord. The blue lilies worn by Mother on Her ears, Her ear rings and braids of hair all leave their marks on His hands during this act. His four arms, long as they are and reaching down to His knees, flourishing like branches of a *Kalpaka* tree provide protection to His devotees.

Churnika-3.7

Ati komala divya rekhaalankrta taamra karatalam Divya aayudhais sevyamaanam

His beautiful rosy palms are decoratively marked by figures such as lotus, conch, and discus. He has slim, long rosy fingers ending with shining fine finger nails. Valuable, dazzling rings adorn these fingers. As for His feet, they are like fresh blossomed lotuses. The jewels appear more beautiful and radiant adorning the Divine form of Lord Narayana. The beautiful Crown (*ati manohara kireeta mukuta chooda vatamsa*) adorning His head is indicative of His Lordship over the Universe – they also indicate His accessibility to all and love to all beings. Ear drops with fish motif (*makara kundala*) adorn His ears. Neckbands (*griveyaka*) and rows of chains (*haara*) of unbelievable beauty adorn His chest. Arm bands (*keyura*) and circular bands (*kataka*) adorn His arms and wrists.

Srivatsa, mole like mark, distinctive of Lord *Narayana* could be seen on His chest. *Srikaustubha*, the incomparable chest jewel, distinctive of the Lord and rows of stringed pearls (*muktaadaama*) could be seen. He wears a band above the navel (*udara bandana*) and a dhoti made out of golden yellow silk cloth, once again distinctive of the Lord *Narayana*. He wears anklets (*nupura*) and many more jewels not specifically described here. It is to be noted that all the jewels are worn by the *Para Brahman* Himself. As such, they are different from any other similarly termed jewels. In fact, they are the personification of the Lord Himself. They are soft and flower like to the touch (*atyanata sukha sparshaih*). They exude sweet fragrance (*divya gandhaih*). They are decorated by divine ornaments (*bhushanaih bhushitam*). The Lord wears a garland of unfading flowers known as *Vaijayanti*.

The Lord is served by the celestial weapons like conch (*shanka*), discus (*Chakra*), mace (*Gada*), sword (*Nandaka*), bow (*Saargna*) – the five weapons (*Pancha aayudhas*).

Churnika-3.8

***Sva sankalpa maatraavaklapta jaga janmasthiti dhvamsaadike
..... Naaraayanam dhyaana yogena drstvaa***

The Acharya then proceeds to describe the wealth of His attendants and His own qualities which please His devotees.

The first reference is to *Sri Vishvaksena* - who is the Lord's *Senaapati*, and it is with him that the entire wealth of the Lord is entrusted. *Sri Vishvaksena* is capable of managing the creation, protection and destruction of all movable and immovable objects by his mere thoughts. The Lord delegates all His powers to this trusted deputy. Besides, the Lord is served by other close attendants like *Garuda (Vainateya)*. Still there are innumerable attendants like *Gajavakra* and his group called *gananaayakaas*. All these attendants, by their very nature, are free from the bondages of *Samsara* for ever (*svaabhaavato nirasta samasta saamsaarika*). For this reason they are referred to as *Nityas*. They are born for service unto His lotus feet (*bhagavat paricharyaa kaarana योग्याih*). In turn, they are also ever sustained by the pleasure of service to the Lord (*bhagavat parichayaika bhogaih*).

Now the *Acharya* goes on to describe the graceful looks of the Lord. With His graceful looks (*divya kataaksha*) is pleasing to the entire world (*vishvam aahlaadayantam*). Words emanating from His partly opened mouth add beauty to His mouth. Admirable characteristics like clarity, sweetness of voice make it more pleasant. Pregnant with ideas (*bhaava garbhena*), His words fill the innermost recesses of the hearts of His devotees (*akhila jana hridaya antaraani aapurayantam*), and serve like nectar (*amrita*) to His devotees. The devotees realise Lord *Narayana* through the vigorous discipline of meditation (*Bhagavantam Narayanam dhyaana yogena drstava*).

Churnika-3.9

***Tato bhagavato Nitya svaamyam aatmano nitya daasyam
..... Bhagavat paricharyaayam asam vardhayitva***

Having described the *Srivaikunta*, the gardens, the temple, the attendants, *Maha Lakshmi* and the Lord Himself, the *Acharya* could not contain his expectation, eagerness and anxiety. Inevitably, the questions are now being posed – when am I going to see Him? When will I Realise Him? When will I be accepted into His service?

While itching to be admitted into the service of *Bhagavan Narayana*, who is the rightful goal, the Acharya enumerates and stresses his true relationship with the Lord. “You are my true Master (*mama naadham*); You have been our Master for generations (*mama Kula daivatam*); You have been my saviour in all emergencies obtained through proper succession (*mama kula dhanam*); You have been most enjoyable to me (*mama bhogyam*); You have taken care of me like a mother (*mama maataram*); You have raised me like a father (*mama pitaram*); You are all to me (*mama sarvam*). Similar statements are contained in the *Upanishads* – “*maataa, pita, bhraataa, nivaasah, saranam, suhrt gatim Narayana*” (*Narayana* is my mother, father, brother, place of residence, sole means for salvation, friend and my goal. The Acharya cries out- when shall I actually see Him with my eyes (*saakshhat karavaani chakshusha*)? When can I have His lotus feet on my head (*kadaa ham Bhagavat paadaambujadvaya sirasaadhaara ishyaami*)? When shall I approach the two lotus feet of the Lord, being rid of worldly pleasures and devoid of love and hate associated with worldly life? When shall I be graced by the cool gaze of Lord’s eyes and be commanded by Him in His friendly voice? The desire of the Acharya to be admitted into the service of the Lord is expressed as above.

Churnika-3.10

***tayaiva aashayaa tatprasaadopabrmhitayaa
..... pranaamya aatmaanam bhagavate nivedayet***

The approach to the Lord with an intense desire to be accepted into His service is now being detailed.

The Lord is seated on the *Sesha* couch with *Sri Maha Lakshmi* attended by *Garuda* (*Vainateya* – son of *Vinata*) and other *Nityasuris*. To this Lord *Narayana*, ever wedded to *Sri Maha Lakshmi* surrounded by all His retinue (*samasta parivaaraaya srimate Narayanaya namah*), I offer myself, even from far, by repeated prostrations and raising up (as a mark of great affection and regard) (*utthaiya utthaiya punah punah pranaamya*). The salutations are being offered with a feeling of awe and bowing before Him (*atyanta saadhvasavinayavanato bhutva*). While approaching the Lord devotees are looked upon with great friendliness and sympathy by the Lord’s attendants and others. Devotees approach the Lord after showing respect to them and receiving their permission to see Him. While approaching the Lord, the great *Moola mantra* is chanted. The devotee then falls at the feet of the Lord with

the request “O Bhagavan please make this lowly self solely yours and accept me in all services in boundless measure”. *Bhagavato nivedayet* – surrender this self solely to the Lord.

Churnika-4

***tato bhagavataa svayamevaatma sanjeevanena
..... krtaanjaliputah bhagavantamupaasita***

The devotee, after conveying voluntarily to the Lord his desire to be accepted for eternal service, waits for His acceptance. The Lord, in turn, conveys His acceptance with a very loving and affectionate look (*amaryaada seelavata ati premaanvitena avalokanena*). The devotee is accepted to serve the Lord at all times, at all places and under all circumstances (*sarva desa sarva kaala sarvaavasthochita atyanta sesa bhaavya*). Having thus been accepted, the devotee stays before the Lord in great humility – with folded hands and bowed head (*atyanta saadhva savinayaavanatah kinkurvaanah krtaanjaliputah*).

Churnika-5

***tatascha anubhooyamaana bhaava viseshah
..... avalokenaavalokayannasita***

Having just been accepted into the Lord’s service, the devotee is completely overtaken by the joyous experience of watching the majestic form of Lord *Narayana*. Watching Him the devotee starts experiencing the greatness of the Lord, as the protector of the Universe; still more His nature, essential qualities such as His purity, overflowing and incomparable affection and many more. This astounding experience leaves the devotee totally absorbed and incapable of any action – seeing, doing or cognizing (*anyat kinchit kartumdrstam smartum ashktah*). They remain gazing at the Lord. Fearing that the great experience may be cut short, the devotee pleads that the service should last forever.

Churnika-6

***tato bhagavataa svayameva atma sanjivanena
.....sarvaavayavah sukhamaasita***

The devotee, at first, hesitates to go near to the Lord being aware of his lowliness against His immeasurable greatness. However, with a gracious

look and a smile the Lord encourages and invites the devotee to come nearer in a sweet voice. He removes all the uneasiness on the part of the devotee (*samasta kleshaapaham*). When they are placed on the head of the devotee (*shirasi krtam dhyaatvaa*), the Lord's lotus feet (*srimat paada aravinda ugalam*), are extremely comforting (*niratishaya sukhaavaham*). The devotee feels that he is immersed in an ocean of bliss (*amrita saagara antar nimagna*) and the joyous experience spreads throughout his body (*sarvaavayavah sukhamasita*).

This is an account of the experience awaiting a devotee, who surrenders himself completely to Lord Narayana.

As long as one is alive in this world one should keep thinking of Lord Narayana praying for the release from *Samsara* with the confidence that the Lord will surely grant it. It is a practice of our elders to meditate on the last portions of *Sri Vaikunta Gadyam* before retiring to bed.

This ends *Sri Vaikunta Gadyam*

Sri Vaishnava Mantras

In general, the human body must undergo a number of *Samskaras* before one is ready for God realization. The *Vaishnavaitis* regard that among all the *Samskaras*, the *Pancha-Samskara* is superior to all. According to them true life as a *Vaishnavaitite* starts with *Pancha-Samskara* – the five *Samskaras*. During *Smaashrayanam* the *Pancha-Samskara* is performed. *Smaashrayanam* means to approach (*Acharya*) with all sincerity. The *Acharya* initiates the person as his *Sishya*. On the part of the *Sishya*, this means, that he or she will live as per the wishes of the *Acharya*.

Vaishnava Brahmins in the south of India have a title “*Iyengar*”. They are called so since they follow the five *Samskaras* - “*Iyendu angam Udayavar*”. The *Pancha Samskaram* gives

Pancha Samskaras

The *Pancha-Samskara* refers to the five *angas of Prapatti*. They are –

Thaapa Samskaram:

Here, the *Acharya* embosses the impressions of Conch and Discus on the left and right arms of the disciple. *Sudarshana Azhvar's* protection is always given to the devotee. *Panchajanya*, the Conch shatters all evils.

Pundra Samskaram:

The Acharya makes the disciple aware of the places on the body where the *Upavyuha* forms of the Lord are to be saluted – they are twelve in all. During this initiation the disciple is made aware of the names of the Lord and His consort associated with each *Upavyuha* form of Lord Narayana and of the way he has to offer his salutations. Each *Upavyuha* form of Sriman Narayana is externally represented by the “*Oordhva Pundram*” (*Tiruman Kaapu* or *tilak*). The *Tiruman* represents the Lord and the “*Sri Choornam*” represents the consort. The twelve “*Oordhva Pundrams*” are known “*Dwaadasha Oordhva Pundram*”

Nama Samskaram:

The Acharya adds the name “*Daasa*” at end of the disciple’s name. It signifies that the disciple will be a servant of Lord *Sriman Narayana* and *Sri Ramanuja* forever.

Mantra Samskaras

Among the *Pancha-Samskaras*, *Mantra Samskara* is rated high. This *samskara* involves the learning from the *Acharya* of three esoteric *Srivaishnava mantras* along with their invocatory verses. The mantras are (a) *Ashtaaksharam* (also referred to as the *Moola mantram* or *Thiru Mantram*) (b) *Dwaya mantram* (also referred to as *Mantra Ratna*) (c) *Charama Shloka*.

Yajna (Yaaga) Samskaram

In this *Samskara*, the *Acharya* teaches the disciple *Bhagavad Aaradhana*. *Aaradhana* is the way of worshipping Lord *Narayana*. Basically two forms of *Aaradhana* are recognized – (a) *Baahya* (external) (b) *Manasika* (internal).

In this section we will be discussing *Mantra Samskara*. As indicated earlier, the initiation of the *Mantras* must be through a competent *Acharya* (*Sadaacharya* – who is eligible to perform *Smaashrayanam* to others) and

only to disciples considered deserving by him. This is to enable the devotee to get linked to the *Parampara*. The *mantras* are highly potent and contain deep philosophical meanings. It is only initiated to disciples who have undergone *Smaashrayanam*. The utterance of *Pranava* (AUM) in public is restricted. However, anyone without any restriction to cast or creed can chant aloud in public “*Namo Narayana*”.

Ashtaaksharam

The Ashtaaksharam (referred to as Moola mantra or Thiru mantram) is “Aum Namō Narayana”. It consists of eight syllables and three words.

This *mantra* has been initiated to *Sri Pundareeka* and the great *Bhakta Prahlada* by *Sage Narada* himself. Lord *Narayana* has initiated this to *Tirumangai Azhwar*.

- (a) The first word is *Pranavam* (*Aum*) and it has three letters.

The first letter “a” (*akaaram*) refers to Lord Vishnu. A is the beginning of all letters and Lord Vishnu is the origin of beings. The Lord, in turn, provides a complete protection to all souls – at all places, at all times and in all states.

The second Letter: “u” (*ukaaram*) refers to Goddess *Lakshmi*.

The third letter “m” (*makaaram*) is the 25th letter in the Sanskrit alphabet. Similarly, the soul or *Jivatma* is the 25th tattva (First *tattva* is matter; the second is *mahat*; then the 5 gross elements starting from Ether; then the 5 subtle elements starting with sound; then the 5 *Jnanendriyas*; then the 5 *karmendriyas*. The total number of *tattvas* so far is 23; The 24th is *Manas*; The 25th *tattva* is the *Jeevatma*). Summarizing the *Jivatma* is a servant of Lord *Narayana* and Mother *Maha Lakshmi*.

- (b) The second word of the *Tiru-mantram* has two letters – “na” and “ma”. This leads to two meanings.

The first one is- *Namah* refers to salutations to Lord *Narayana*. The second meaning arises when you split it as two words – *Na Maha*. It means “not mine” Now *Namah* can be interpreted to mean –I am not mine. I am only a servant to the Lord, I belong to the Lord. Nothing is mine. Everything belongs to the Lord. Independence is not mine. I am depending on the Lord. Mastership is not mine. I am not the master of anybody, including myself. *Lord Narayana* is the master of everyone.

- (c) The third word of the *Tiru-mantram* is “Narayana”.

The word “ra” refers to that which perishes and hence to “*achetana*”. Thus “nara” refers to that which does not perish and that is - *Chetana* or *Jivatma*. That which does not perish includes the Lord also Now the word “ayana” has three interpretations - (1) A resting place or abode (2) “*Upaya*” or means (3) Fruit or objective

Against this background, what is the meaning for the word *Narayana*? We come with two interpretations –

(1) When “ayana” is interpreted as the resting place, the *Narayana* has two meanings-

- a) One who is the resting place for all *Naras* – *Chetanas and Achetanas*. He contains all *Naras*. Hence, He is bigger than all of them put together. his quality of the Lord is referred to as “*Bahir Vyaapti*”
- b) One who’s resting place is *Naras* – this refers to all *Chetanas and Achetanas*. He is contained in each one of them. Hence He is smaller than the smallest of them. This quality is referred to as “*Antar Vyaapti*”

So far we have talked about the various interpretations of the words in the *Ashtakshara*. *Scholars have put them together, and ten different meanings are now available for the Ashtakshara*. They are given below.

Ashtakshara is, just not a *Mantra* to be mechanically repeated. The surrender to the Lord has to be total and not conditional. Attitude of approach, mental and physical (*Bhaava*) has to be that of a servant.

- (a) Salutations to Lord *Narayana*
- (b) I surrender myself to the Lord. My existence is merely for the pleasure of the Lord. I surrender the protection of myself to the Lord.
- (c) I am the servant to Lord *Narayana* and Mother Sri *Maha Lakshmi*. I am not subservient to anyone else. I am totally dependent on them
- (d) I surrender myself to the Lord. He is my only protector

- (e) I will do service to only Lord *Narayana* and *Sri Maha Lakshmi*. My service is purely for the pleasure of the Lord and Mother and not for myself.
- (f) I will do service to the Lord and Mother at all times. I will also do service to *Bhagavathas*.
- (g) I own nothing. I belong to the Lord. Anything and everything that I have belongs also to the Lord.
- (h) I do not have any *Upaya* (means) other than *Prapatti* – a total surrender at His feet. I want Him to bless and release me from the cycle of birth and death and do service to Him.
- (i) I cannot protect myself. The Lord has to protect me. I pray to Him to overlook all my sins and bless me with eternal service to Him.
- (j) I belong only to the Lord. I will do eternal service to Him.

Dwaya Mantram

The *Dwaya Mantra* is referred to as the *Mantra Ratna*. This helps the *Sadhaka* to perform *Sharanagati* to Lord *Narayana*. It is recommended that this Mantra be repeated as a *Manasika Japa* continuously without any regard to time or place.

Dwayam is considered even superior to *Ashtaaksharam*. This is because *Dwayam* directly states both the *Upaaya* (means to be adopted for salvation) and *Upeya* (indicates the fruit to be gained) whereas in the *Ashtaaksharam* it appears in a concised form. The *Dwayam* illustrates the means to be adopted and the prayer for the goal. Since this illustrates the two meanings, it consists of two lines. Since it has two lines, it is called *Dwayam*.

The mantra consists of two sections –

Poorva Khandam – “*Sriman Narayana Charanau Sharanam Prapadye*”
Uttara Khandam - “*Srimate Narayanaaya namah*”

Different scholars have interpreted this *Mantra* in different ways. They are all based on the grouping of the words. Some have treated the *Dwayam* as one part (since only one *Mantra* is involved). Others have treated it as two parts or more. However, the essence remains the same. Here, we will give an

interpretation treating the *Mantra* as consisting of ten words. The words are given below.

1. *Sri*
2. *Math*
3. *Naaraayana*
4. *Charanam*
5. *Sharanam*
6. *Prapadye*
7. *Srimathe*
8. *Naaraayana*
9. *Aya*
10. *Namaha*

Let us examine each of these words and observe what they convey

- a) **Sri** - The common understanding of Goddess *Sri Mahalakshmi* is that She is the Goddess of wealth. Wealth is something you can only enjoy while you live in this world. Does that mean that Her role is finished once a person dies?

She is *Loka Maata* and like Lord Narayana She has a direct interest in the welfare of all Jeevatmas. And as such She has a number of other functions as well. One such is the recommendatory function. She also leads the *Jeevas* to take refuge at the lotus feet of Lord *Narayana*. This recommendatory function that She performs is called as "*Purusha karat vam*".

The word "Sri" has six different interpretations. All these confirm the recommendatory role that She fulfills. They are - (a) Sreeyathey (b) Srayathey (c) Shrunothi (d) Shraviyathi (e) Shrunathai (f) Shreenathai.

Taking the first word "*Sreeyathey*" it gives the meaning that all go to the Goddess with a request to make them acceptable to the Lord and shower His kindness.

The second form of "*Sri*" yields the meaning that *Sri Mahalakshmi* freely reaches Lord *Narayana* and requests the Lord to accept the *Jeevas* and bless them

- b) **Math** - The word *Math* is attached to *Sri*. It signifies togetherness at all times.. Goddess Sri Mahalakshmi is inseparable from Lord *Narayana*. For this reason She is also referred to as “*Anapaayinee*”. This togetherness will ensure that whenever the Jeevas approach the Lord, *Mother Mahalakshmi* is always there to plead on behalf of the Jeevas. She pleads that their faults and sins be overlooked and accept the plea of the *Jeevas* for liberation.
- c) **Naaraayana** - While on this, some of the *Kalyana Gunas* of *Bhagavan Narayana* may be recalled. They are (a) *Vatsalyam* (Love) (b) *Swaamitvam* (Lordship) (c) *Sowsheelyam* (mixing with every one irrespective status etc) (d) *Soulabhayam* (Easy to approach) (e) *Jnaanam* (knowledge) (f) *Shakti* (ability to accomplish anything). These essential attributes (*Samuchitha guna jatham*) of the Lord are relevant in this context. The sternness of the Lord melts at hearing the pleas from the Goddess. He forgives the *Jeevas*.
- d) **Charanam** - *Charanam* refers to the feet of Lord *Naaraayana*. The feet of the Lord are resting on the lap of the Goddess. They are, in fact, the centre for all the qualities attributed to the Lord. The form and the body are all auspicious and are referred to as “*Divya Mangala*”.
- e) *Sharanam* - *Sharanam* is the means to attain the Lord is to take refuge at His feet. This is the *Upaaya*.
- f) *Prapadye* - The *Jeeva* takes refuge at the feet of the Lord.
- g) *Srimathe* - We now come to the *Uttara Khandam*. *Srimathe* refers to the Lord who is always in union with Sri Mahalakshmi. The request is being made to render eternal service (*Kainkaryam*) to the *Divya Dampathi* – Lord *Narayana* and Sri Mahalakshmi.
- h) *Naaraayana* - This indicates that He is the supreme Lord for all the *Lokas*. As such it is appropriate that all services are to be performed to Him only.

- i) Aya - This indicates a prayer to perform service to the Lord. Rendering service includes – service at all places, at all times and at all stages. The request also implies the removal all obstacles to performing service. The *Jeevatma* has taken refuge at the feet of the Lord. As a fruit for this refuge a request is being made to give permission to serve the Lord eternally.
- j) Namah - Here the request is being made to remove “*Kainkarya Virodhi*”. The only purpose for the *Jeevatma*’s request to render service to Lord Narayana and Sri Mahalakshmi is for the happiness of the Divya Dampathi – not for the happiness of the *Jeevatma*. If the *Jeevatma* starts to enjoy the service then it becomes a “prabala thara virodhi”. The request here is for the removal of this obstacle. This is the explanation for the word “*Namaha*”.

Charama Shloka

No one wants to suffer much less die. In fact, we do not want to even get old. Yet, in real life this cannot be prevented. Both scientists and seers from India have been looking for a solution. The Indian thought has been centered around the fact, that if one can get out of the cycle of birth, death and rebirth then we could achieve *Moksha* and thereby eternal happiness.

And how do you get out of this cycle? For the *Kaliyuga* (the present era) two prominent means are available. (a) *Bhakti* (b) *Prapatti*.

A number of people are under the impression that *Bhakti means* is suitable for a common man during the current times and what is being practiced today is the *Bhakti marga*. In fact, both the assumptions are wrong. This does not mean that *Bhakti marga* will not lead us to *Moksha*. It is a much more difficult route to follow and even minor slips will derail the efforts. More importantly, it is not open for all (sex and caste restrictions apply).

We will try to understand the requirements for each *marga*

There are some activities that everyone has to perform irrespective of which yoga he chooses to pursue on his way to salvation. They are called *Nitya* and *Naimittika* karmas.

Nitya karma refers to activities that one has to perform compulsorily. By performing these one does not get any benefits or Punya. However, not performing these will incur sin or Paapa. Example is Sandhyaavandana. These are called Ajna kankarya.

Naimittika karma refers to activities which one has to perform on particular occasions. Example is Tarpana during eclipse time. There are some activities which are desirable to perform. By performing these you get Punya. However, not performing these will not attract Paapa. They are called Anujna Kankarya.

(a) **Karma Yoga**

Karma Yoga is consecration of all actions and their fruits to Lord. In other words, it is the performance of duties with no thought of reaping of any benefit. It is to be done as a service to the lord and purely for the purpose of pleasing Him and not yourself. It is the *Yoga* of action which purifies the heart and prepares the *Antahkarana* (the heart and the mind) for the attainment of Divine light or attainment of the knowledge of the self. When you act, what binds you to *Samsara* is not the action but the idea of *doer-ship* and *enjoyer-ship*. If you act with the thought that you are acting as an instrument in the hands of God and without expectation for the fruits of the action then it does not bind you. Surrender both the action and the fruits to God. When *Karma Yoga* is properly done *Karma Yoga* can lead to *Jnana Yoga*. Or *Karma Yoga* can also directly lead to *Bhakti Yoga* – bypassing *Jnana Yoga*.

(b) **Jnana Yoga**

The aim of *Jnana Yoga* is *Atma-Saakshatkaara*. Unceasing meditation on the true nature of the self (atman) is the means to be adopted to obtain a direct vision of the self (*Atmaavalokana*). This is possible only after one has attained control over the mind and senses. Once this has been achieved it will, in turn, help to achieve realization of God by *Bhakti Yoga*. The practice of *Jnana Yoga* requires strict observance of *Yoga* practice as described in the *Bhagavad Gita*. The eightfold moral and spiritual discipline as detailed in *Ashtanga Yoga* will need to be practiced. This is not an end in itself. The practice of *Bhakti Yoga* or meditation on God will be the next step from the stage of *Jnana Yoga*. The bliss derived from *Paramatma Saakshatkaara* is far superior to *Atmaavalokana*.

(c) **Bhakti Yoga**

Bhakti and *Prapatti* are the two *Saadhya Upaayaas* (means) through which the *Baddha Jeevatmas* become eligible to be considered for the grant of *Moksha*. It must be stressed that these two methods by themselves do not

guarantee the attainment of *Moksha*. In the end it is the grace of *Sriman Narayana* that will decide as to who will be blessed with this ultimate goal of *Moksha*.

Bhakti Yoga cannot even be started before achieving *Atma- Saakshatkaara* by performing *Karma Yoga* or *Jnana Yoga*.

Bhakti Yoga is the most difficult to practice. Even if one succeeds in faultlessly practicing the *marga*, the award of *Moksha* is not guaranteed to occur at the end of the present birth of the *Sadhak*. It may take a few births before it can materialize.

Sometimes, *Bhakti* is interpreted as “devotion” to *Sriman Narayana* which need not be the matured state of *Jnana* as expressed in scriptures.

There are seven pre-requisites for *Bhakti Yoga*. They are –

- (1) Viveka: Discrimination in the food that you take
- (2) Vimoka: Only desire is to meditate on Lord *Narayana*
- (3) Abhyasa: Practice worshiping Lord *Narayana* with vigour as per details given in scriptures
- (4) Kriya: Proper adherence to *Varna ashrama dharma* (note some *varnas* are not eligible to do this)
- (5) Kalyana: Practice virtues like truthfulness, integrity, compassion, benevolence, ahimsa etc
- (6) Anavasaada: Freedom from despair due to disappointments and calamities
- (7) Anuddarsa: Avoid excessive joy or absence of it

It must be pointed out, one still needs the grace of God to be granted *Moksha*.

(d) Prapatti

There is a common belief that, in this *Kali Yuga*, *Bhakti marga* is the most suitable means for a common man to attain *Moksha* and what is being practiced now is *Bhakti marga*. In fact, both the assumptions are incorrect.

In this age of *Kali Yuga*, *Prapatti* offers a sublime path for attaining the grace of Lord *Narayana*.

Prapatti is self surrender or *Saranaagati*. God is the devotee’s sole refuge and the only saviour. So the desire to surrender to Lord *Narayana* and to serve Him is in the nature of things.

Prapatti is also referred to by other names – (*Atma*) *nikshepa*, *Nyasa vidya*, *Tyaaga*, *Saranaagati*, and *Bhara Nyasa*. It can be performed by anybody irrespective of age, sex or caste. The details are given *Ahirbudhnya samhita*. There are references to it in the Puranas as well. The main qualifications for a *Mumukshu* (one desiring Moksha) wanting to adopt *Prapatti* are as follows –

- (1) *Akinchanyam*: Destituteness which may result from (a) Lack of mental / physical strength or knowledge of scriptures to adopt Bhakti Yoga. Also cannot tolerate delays
- (2) *Ananyagatitvam*: Seek Lord Narayana as the sole refuge and does not accept any other reward other than Moksham
- (3) *Anukoolyasya Sankalpam*: Only do acts that will please Lord Narayana and Goddess Maha Lakshmi
- (4) *Pratikoolyasya Varjanam*: Avoid doing acts that will displease the Divine couple
- (5) *Kaarpanya*: Feeling utter helplessness and total dependence on His grace
- (6) *Maha Vishvasam*: Intense faith in Divya dampatis
- (7) *Goptriva Varanam*: Begging Lord Narayana for offering protection
- (8) *Kartrutva Tyaga*: Reject the idea that you are responsible for doing the acts. It is due to the Lord's grace that you are able to perform the act of Prapatti
- (9) *Mamata Tyaga*: Give up the thought of mine. Everything is being done for the pleasure of the Lord.
- (10) *Phala Tyaga*: Give up the thought that the fruit for performing Prapatti goes to you. It belongs to only to Lord Narayana.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Chapter 18, *Sloka* 66 we come across the famous *Charama Sloka*. This is the noblest *Sloka* in the *Bhagavad Gita*. This has been extensively commented upon by *Acharyas* and *Scholars*. For a common man / woman, ignorant of *shastras*, unable to stand-up to the rigid demands of Karma yoga / Jnana Yoga / Bhakti Yoga and looking for a *Tarunopaya*, Lord *Krishna* throws the life line and a guarantee.

The Sloka is given below –

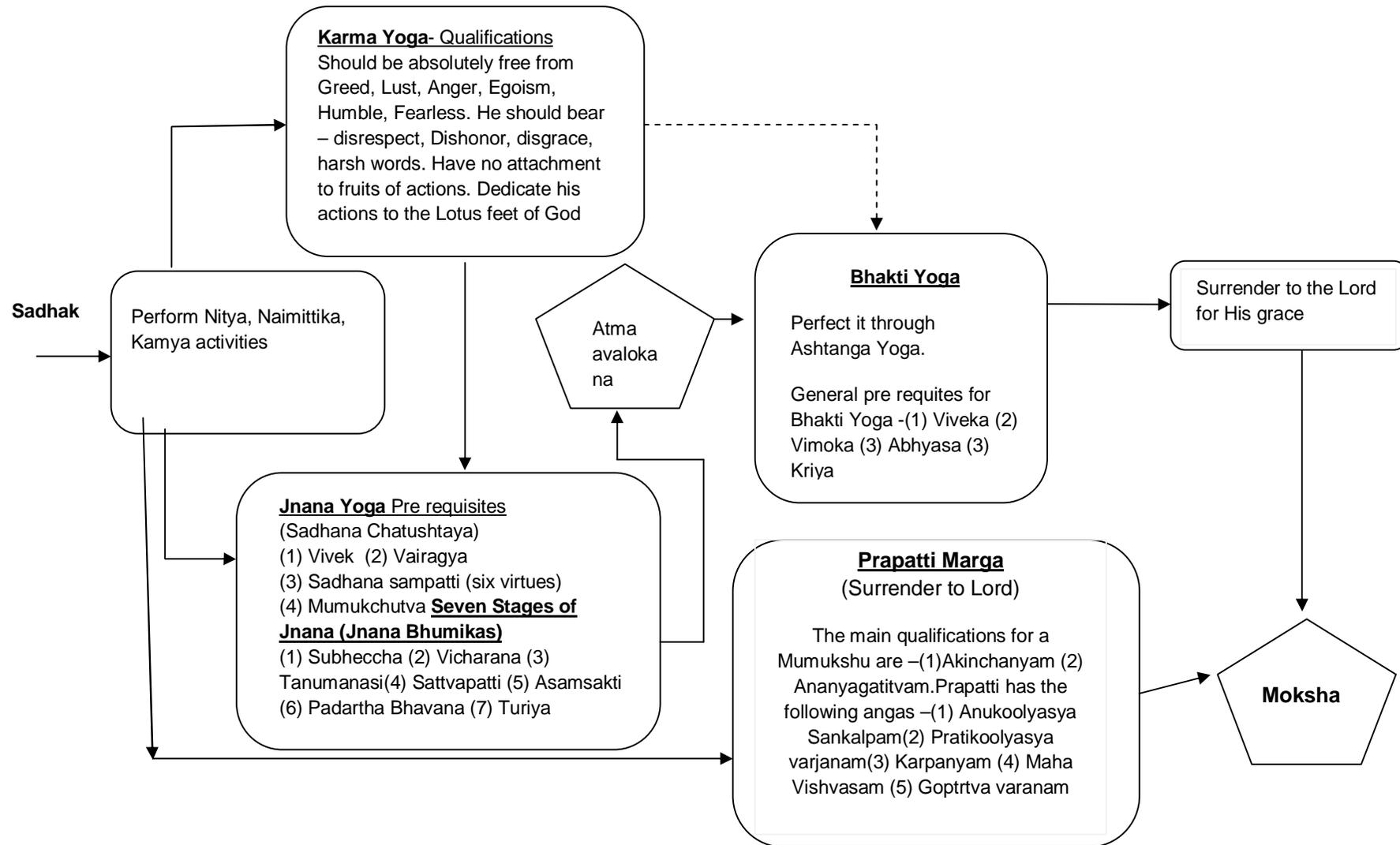
*Sarvadharmaan parityajya maam ekam saranam vraja |
Aham thvaa sarva paapebhyo Moksha yishyaami maa sucha: ||*

In short it means –

Only those, who have mastered *Shastras* and acquired exceptional command, can practice *Karma yoga*, *Jnaana yoga* and *Bhakti yoga* successfully. Others will conclude, after their difficulties in practicing, that these yogas are not meant for them. They will then drop out in their quest for *Moksha* altogether.

“As a result, the above three *yogas* are recommended only for the knowledgeable and competent ones in *Shastras*. All the others, who are overwhelmed by their personal deficiencies, are instructed to approach Me and surrender unto Me. I will stand in the place of all these difficult upaayams and grant them the fruits of *Moksha*”.

Refer to diagram given below.



Chapter IX - Hindu Yoga

Introduction

Indian thinkers did not separate the goal of life from the view of life. Man's view of life matures by what he wants to achieve in his life. This resolve, in turn, leads him to attain some goals of life.

In Sanskrit, the word *Artha* has many meanings. In this context, it means "goal". What is sought after by everyone is called *Purusha artha*. Purusha in this case does not refer to a male person only. It also refers to females as well. In fact, *Purusha artha* here refers to *Manushya artha*. We may have hundreds of goals to be achieved in our lives. All the goals may be classified into 4 categories. They are called "Chaturvidha *Purusharthas*". The *Purusharthas* are – *Artha, Kama, Dharma* and *Moksha*. The fourth one, *Moksha*, is God realisation.

There are five spiritual paths for God-realisation. They are *Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raja Yoga, Jnana Yoga* and *Prapatti marga*. It must be stressed here, that *Yoga* is not to be understood in the naturalist view, but in the *Aadhyaatmika* way. *Yoga* really means Union with God. It must be cautioned that the goal of *Moksha* is not an easy fruit to get at – irrespective of the path chosen. In addition, notwithstanding the path you choose and the perfection you may achieve at it, ultimately God's grace is essential. At the end, it is the grace of the God that will result in *Moksha*

Karma Yoga

Karma Yoga is the path of action. Work brings as its effect or fruit in terms of either pleasure or pain. In addition, each work adds a link to our bondage of *Samsara* leading to repeated births. This is the inexorable law of *Karma*. *Karma Yoga* teaches a way by which this link to our bondage could be avoided. *Karma* when it is done with the right mental attitude, right spirit, right-will through *Yoga*, without attachment, and expectation of fruits, without the idea of agency or doership, and with a mind balanced in success and failure – then the link to bondage does not occur. The *Karma Yogi* should dedicate his actions at the altar of God with the feeling of *Ishvara-arpana*. Non attachment brings freedom from sorrow and fear. As he dedicates his actions at the Lotus feet of the Lord, he develops devotion to God and approaches Him nearer and nearer. A rigid moral discipline and control of senses are indispensable for the practice of *Karma Yoga*. Practice of *Brahmacharya*

is essential. Cultivation of a number of virtues are also essential such as – tolerance, adaptability, sympathy, mercy, equal vision, balance of mind, patience, perseverance, humility, generosity, nobility, self-restraint, control of anger, non-violence, truthfulness, eating habits, simple living and endurance are essential.

The practice of *Karma Yoga* does not demand that you should possess enormous wealth. You can serve with your body and mind. God is more pleased with one who helps the helpless people than with a rich man conducting *puja* with pomp and vanity.

Jnana Yoga

Jnana yoga is the path of knowledge. The student of *Jnana yoga* has to equip himself with four means. They are (a) Discrimination (*Viveka*) (b) Dispassion (*Vairagya*) (c) the six-fold virtues otherwise called *Shat-Sampat*-viz., tranquillity (*Sama*), restraint (*Dama*), renunciation (*Uparati*), endurance (*Titiksha*), faith (*Shraddha*) and concentration (*Samadhana*). In addition the *Sadhak* must have a strong earning for liberation (*Mumukshutva*). Then he hears the scriptures sitting at the feet of a competent *Guru* who is both (a) learned in scriptures (*Srotriya*) (b) well established in *Brahman* (*Brahma-Nishta*). After this the *Sadhak* practices reflection which will result in dispelling all doubts. Finally, he practices deep meditation on *Brahman* which will lead to *Brahma Saakshatkaara*.

There are seven stages of *Jnana* or knowledge: viz., (1) aspiration for the right (*Subhechha*) (2) Philosophical enquiry (*Vicharana*) (3) Subtlety of mind (*Tanumanasi*) (4) Attainment of light (*Sattvapatti*) (5) Inner detachment (*Asamsakti*) (6) Spiritual vision (*Padarthabhavana*) and (7) Supreme freedom (*Turiya*).

It may be appropriate to state here that there is a vast difference in the meaning of *Jnana* between the *Advaita* and *Vishishtadvaita* systems. In the *Advaita*, it is the intuitive understanding that the *Jiva* is one with the *Ishvara*. In the *Vishishtadvaita* at the first level it is to be understood that one is *Atman* and not a mere body- mind. An aspirant who has achieved this moves on by gradual effort to get a continuous and unobstructed flow of consciousness towards the Supreme Lord.

Raja Yoga

Raja yoga is the path that leads to union with the Lord through self-restraint and control of mind. It teaches on (a) how to control the senses and the thought waves

(*mental Vrittis*) that arise from the mind (c) how to commune with God. While physical discipline is taught in *Hatha Yoga*, *Raja yoga* teaches mental discipline.

Eight limbs of Raja Yoga: *Yama*, *Niyama*, *Asana*, *Pranayama*, *Pratyahara*, *Dharana*, *Dhyana* and *Samadhi* are the eight limbs of *Raja yoga*. This is also referred to as *Ashtanga Yoga*. *Yama* and *Niyama* constitute the ethical discipline which purifies the heart.

Yama - consists of (1) *Ahimsa* (non-injury) (2) *Satya* (truthfulness) (3) *Brahmacharya* (continence) (4) *Asteya* (non-stealing) and (5) *Aparigraha* (non-receiving of gifts conducive to luxury).

Niyama - is observance. It consists of (1) *Saucha* (internal and external purity) (2) *Santosha* (contentment) (3) *Tapas* (austerity) (4) *Svadhya* (study of scriptures and Japa of mantras) (5) *Ishvara- Pranidhana* (self surrender to God). He who is well established in *Yama* and *Niyama* will make a quick progress in *Yoga*.

Asana, *Pranayama* and *Pratyahara* are preliminary accessories to *Yoga*:

Asana is steady pose.

Pranayama is regulation of breath.

Pratyahara is withdrawal of senses from their objects.

Dharana is concentration of mind on any object – *chakra* or *Ishta-devata* for example.

Dhyana is meditation on one object.

Samadhi – *Dhyanana* leads to *Samadhi*, where the meditator and the meditated become one. All *Vrittis* or waves of the mind subside. Concentration is the key to success. It may take some time to master but it is essential to attain *Samadhi*.

Bhakti Yoga

Due to lack of an appropriate word, the term *Bhakti* is sometimes used to imply “devotion” to the Supreme Being which need not be the matured state of *Jnana* called for. It is generally assumed that processes like *Bhagavat Kalyana Guna sravanam*, *Nama sankeertanam*, visiting holy places, bathing in holy rivers, conducting rituals etc automatically assure the devotee of salvation or *Moksha*. This

is not true at all. It is not everything that becomes *Bhakti*. Surely these acts culminate in either *Bhakti* or *Prapatti* (to be dealt with a little later). Yet there is still a fair way to go to achieve the goal. Let us understand *Bhakti*.

There are seven general pre-requisites for *Bhakti Yoga*. They are – (1) *Viveka* (discrimination. Purification of body through proper intake of satvik food) (2) *Vimoka* (Freedom. Renounce all desires other than meditating on God) (3) *Abhyasa* (practice. Worship the Lord with full enthusiasm. Would involve strict adherence to scriptures etc) (4) *Kriya* (work. Proper adherence to varnashrama dharma mainly dealing with pancha maha yajnas.) (5) *Kalyana* (auspiciousness. Practice virtues like truthfulness, integrity, compassion, benevolence, *ahimsa* etc) (6) *Anavasada* (being without any despair due to disappointment and completely forgetting all past sorrows) (7) *Anurddharsa* (absence of exaltation. No excess joy or absence of it).

In essence, *Bhakti* may be equated to *Dhyana* and *Upasana*. *Dhyana* means concentration of mind on Him and *Upasana* is continuous thought of Him. *Sri Ramanujacharya* divides *Bhakti* into three stages of development – (a) *Sadhana Bhakti* (practice of devotional means) (b) *Para Bhakti* (higher devotion) (c) *Parama Bhakti* (Supreme devotion).

Sadhana Bhakti is a strong faith in God. The aspirant then turns to the scriptures and teachers (who impart correct knowledge of Self, Nature and God). Duties of life have to be done without attachment. *Karma Yoga* and *Jnana Yoga* have to be practiced together. Aspirant must overcome the identification of Self as Body. All this is possible for a highly qualified aspirant but almost impossible for an average one.

Vishishtadvaita scholars argue that severe practice of *Karma* and *Jnana Yoga* can only bring forth a stage for performing *Bhakti yoga*. The person performing *Jnana yoga* (constant meditation on self or Jivatma) is known as *Kevala*. It results in *Atma Saakshatkaara* (self realisation). On the contrary, the person performing *Bhakti yoga* is called *Jnani*. This results in God realisation. The perfection of *Bhakti yoga* is through *Ashtanga Yoga* described above.

Prapatti Marga (Bhara Samarpana Yoga or Nyasa Yoga)

Vishishtadvaita scholars point out that *Bhakti Marga* does lead the devotee to attain *Moksha*. However, it may take several births to achieve it. It can only be practiced by scholars who have studied *Shastras*. One may ask the question “Can you love

God really? Does every part of your being respond to the love of God?" This is a very important question. Nobody can love truly unless God grants one such love through His grace. To love truly means that one cannot live without love of God. Some great men, like the *Alvars* or the *Saiva* saints withstood this test. An ordinary man may find that he is not capable of reaching any level, either because of his birth or because of his status or because of his condition or because of the debacle that comes to man at any time. As such a large section of people find they ineligible to practice it. He may ask "To whom shall I go? Who will save me?"

This leads us to an important *Yoga* to which *Sri Vaishnavism* has referred to as *Bhava Samarpana Yoga* or *Nyasa Yoga*. This is a unique feature of *Gita*. Says our Lord "sarvadharmam parityajya mam ekam saranam vraja; aham tvam sarvapapebhyo moksayisyami, ma sucah" – "If you cannot do all the three yogas and even if you are lingering over, surrender all of them and take me alone as your sole Refuge. Surrender unto me and I shall take you through the whole yoga." *Yogaksemam vahamyaham*. Here *ksema* is freedom; and *Yoga* is again to eternally abide with one's God, in all parts. This *Mantra* has been expounded with extraordinary lucidity by the *Sri Vaishnava Acharyas*. The *Alvars* have stated this position of Omnipotence of God's grace firmly. In essence surrender is the fundamental thing that will lead us further to the ultimate state of living in God. Do not have any doubts about God's grace. Your capacity for reasoning into God's nature or your capacity to perform *Yajnas* is very limited. And we do not, nowadays, have even teachers to tell us how to perform them. For example, we all are aware that we are not able to do *Karma Yoga*, nor able to follow *Jnana Yoga*. Most of us do not know how to do *Ashtanga Yoga*. *Gita* says, "I am the path. I am the *Upaya*; I am your *Purushartha*; in me you shall find your freedom."

If a man is solely devoted to God and surrenders to Him, he has done all that has to be done. If he does it, and does it consistently through *abhyasa*, that is, pursues it, holding on to the feet of the Lord without those vices of mankind, namely *asuya*, envy and greed, he will achieve the goal, namely God Realisation which is *Moksha*. That is how the whole thing has been so brilliantly summarized in the last chapter of the message of *Gita*.

Here *Sri Aurobindo* brilliantly explains the beginning of spiritual life or describes God's *Yoga* as leading to Divine Evolution. He says "You must find the Lord acting through you in every one of your limbs and in every one of your parts and see the transformation of mind and body." The surrender of each part is necessary. You may say it is a very difficult process. You may say, "How can I surrender?" the answer is "Do not worry. Be surrendering to God. Only keep yourself fit for God. Do not obstruct God's activity". God's love for man is something very different from

man's love for God. When you surrender your entire offering of love to God, then God reveals His love to you by giving Himself to you. His takes up residence in you consciously, moulds it and changes you completely. This is what we mean by the descent of God which leads to the ascent of the man.

The main qualifications for a mumukshu to adopt *Prapatti* are:

(1) ***Akinchanyam***: Destituteness which may result either due to one's lack of mental and physical strength to adopt *Bhakti Yoga*, lack of requisite knowledge from *Shastras*, prohibition by *Shastras* regarding the adoption of *Bhakti Yoga*

(2) ***Ananyagatitvam***: Seeking the Supreme Lord *Sriman Narayana* as the sole refuge with complete aversion to all fruits other than *Moksha*

Prapatti has the following five *angas* (accessories).

(1) ***Anukoolyasya Sankalpam***: Determination to perform whatever is pleasing to *Sriman Narayana*

(2) ***Pratikoolyasya Varjanam***: Avoidance of acts that are displeasing to *Sriman Narayana*.

(3) ***Karpanyam***: Feeling of utter helplessness. Utter dependence on the mercy of the *Divya Dampati* is needed.

(4) ***Maha Vishvasam***: Intense faith that *Sriman Narayana* will certainly grant *Moksha* Extensive knowledge in various fields of *Shastras* wouldn't necessarily yield this supreme unshakable faith.

(5) ***Goptriva Varanam***: Begging *Sriman Narayana* for offering protection. This is the prayer to the Lord for granting *Moksha*

Performance of *Prapatti* is done with *satvika tyaga*. The three components of the *satvika tyaga* are:

1. ***Kartrutva tyaga***: One should shed the doership attitude and realize that *Sriman Narayana* is the actual doer, since it is the ocean of His *daya* that is responsible for one to perform the act of *Prapatti*.
2. ***Mamata tyaga***: One should give up the thought of "mine" while performing *Prapatti*. It is also done for the pleasure of *Sriman Narayana*.

3. **Phala tyaga:** One should give up the thought that the fruit of performing *Prapatti* belongs to him/her and realize that the fruit of *Prapatti* also belongs to *Sriman Narayana*.

In the *Vaishnava* tradition demands made on the devotees, practicing *Bhakti* and *Prapatti* are illustrated by what are called *Markata Kishora Nyaya* and *Maarjala Kishora Nyaya*. In the *Markata Kishora Nyaya* a baby monkey holds on tightly to its mother while being transported from place to place. Its safety depends on how tightly it is holding on to the mother. In the case of *Maarjala Kishora Nyaya* the mother cat carries the baby without any effort from the baby. The case of *Prapatti marga* is similar to the *Maarjala Kishora Nyaya*. The devotee's absolute resignation to the Lord makes the Lord both the means and end.

Chapter – X - Of Bodies, Sheaths, Avasthas and Gunas

Introduction

The purpose of life is to realize one's essential nature. But it is not easy to achieve. We tend to identify the *Atman* with the body. This is called *Deha-Adhyasa*. This is the greatest obstacle to Self-Knowledge or *Atma-Jnana*. To get over the delusion, ancient seers have made a systematic and detailed analysis and proved that Jiva is not the body. The study of the three bodies, the five sheaths, and the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep helps a man to understand that he is different from these modifications. He has to transcend all these in his journey to Self-knowledge.

Bodies

The *Jiva* is enveloped by several layers (or bodies) of matter. These are there to assist in our objective awareness. The physical or gross body consists of three bodies.

(a) The physical or gross body (*Sthula shareera*)

(b) the subtle body (*Sookshma shareera*)

(c) causal (*Karana shareera*) are the three bodies.

Brief details about them are given below. From the time of birth, the body undergoes changes and they are called *Shad-bhava-vikaras*. The human being gradually gets drawn into *Samsara* and the links are explained below.

From *Ajnana* (ignorance), *Aviveka* (non-discrimination between real and the unreal) is born.

From *Aviveka* is born *Ahamkara* (ego).

Ahamkara, in turn, leads to *Raga-dvesha* (likes and dislikes).

Karma (action) arises from *Raga-dvesha*.

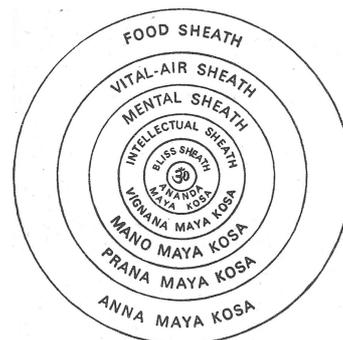
From *Karma* the body or *Deha* is produced.

This chain of *Samsara*, involving birth and death, will continue till a deliberate effort is made. This can be done by destroying *Ajnana* (ignorance), the root cause for the *Samsara*, through the attainment of knowledge of *Brahman*.

Sheaths

The human being is composite of physical and psychological aspects that function together as a holistic system. The *Kosha* system refers to these different aspects as layers of subjective experience. The layers range from the dense physical body to the more subtle levels of emotions, mind etc.

Kosha means sheath. There are five illusory *Koshas*. These *Koshas* envelop the *Atman* (Self). Due to ignorance man naturally identifies himself with these illusory



sheaths. The diagram given above illustrates the point.

The five sheaths

(1) *Annamaya*; (2) *Pranamaya*; (3) *Manomaya*; (4) *Vijnanamaya* and (5) *Anandamaya Kosha*.

Man identifies himself with the *Pranamaya Kosha* and thinks 'I am hungry, I am thirsty, and I did this action.' In fact, the *Pranamaya Kosha* is quite foreign to the real Self. Man identifies himself with the *Manomaya Kosha* and regards himself as the thinker and thinks 'I am angry, I am lustful, I am greedy.' In fact, the *Manomaya Kosha* is entirely distinct from the real Self of man. Man identifies himself with the *Vijnanamaya Kosha* and regards himself as the cognisor and thinks 'I am intelligent, I know everything, I am the enjoyer.'

Man identifies himself with the *Anandamaya Kosha* and feels 'I am happy.'

Both the *Vijnanamaya* and the *Anandamaya Koshas* are quite foreign to the real Self of man.

Through meditation the intellect of the man becomes pure. He develops the faculty of true discrimination between the real and the unreal, between the permanent and impermanent. Step by step he abandons one *Kosha* after another and eventually attains the knowledge of unity with Brahman.

The *Annamaya Kosha* constitutes the gross physical body. The *Pranamaya*, the *Manomaya* and the *Vijnanamaya Koshas* constitute the *Linga Shareera* or subtle body (astral body). The *Anandamaya Kosha* constitutes the causal body (*Karana Shareera*). The physical body is formed of the essence of food. The subtle body is formed of un-compounded elements. The casual body is formed of *Samskaras* or *Moola Ajnana* (primitive ignorance). The Birth and death are the *Dharmas* (attributes) of the *Annamaya Kosha*. *Anandamaya Kosha* is the cause for the remaining four sheaths.

Hunger and thirst are the *Dharmas* of the *Pranamaya Kosha*. *Moha* (delusion) and *Shoka* (grief) are the attributes of the *Manomaya Kosha*.

The *Atman* is ever pure and unattached. He is absolutely free from the *Shad*

Urmis or six waves of the ocean of *Samsara*, viz., birth, death, hunger, thirst, delusion and grief.

The physical body operates during the waking state. The subtle body functions during the dreaming state; and the causal body operates during deep-sleep state. During deep-sleep it is the thin veil of *Anandamaya Kosha* that separates the individual soul from the supreme Soul or *Brahman*.

The following table gives brief details of the bodies and the *Koshas*. *Jagadguru Shankaracharya* has written commentaries on all the principal *Upanishads*. He explains that *Maya* is the material cause of the Universe. *Maya* is made up of the *Gunas* – *Sattva* (purity), *Rajas* (passion) and *Tamas* (darkness). *Tamas* is the cause of *Annamaya Kosha*. So inertness predominates in this *Kosha*. It is not endowed with *Kriya Shakti* (power of action) or *Jnana Shakti* (power of cognition).

Rajas is the cause of the *Pranamaya Kosha*. It is endowed with *Kriya Shakti* (power of action). The cause of the *Manomaya Kosha* is *Sattva* mixed with *Tamas*. Therefore the *Tamasic* qualities, hatred etc., are present in the mind.

The cause of the *Vijnanamaya Kosha* is *Sattva* mixed with *Rajas*. Man as mind and intellect (*Buddhi*) is a product of *Jnana-Shakti*. Through *Jnana-Shakti* man gets the knowledge as how to possess his desired objects. Through *Kriya Shakti* he exerts and possesses the objects.

Gunas, Avasthas and Vrittis

Gunas

The mind has three *Gunas*. They are

- (a) *Sattva* (light, bliss, goodness);
- (b) *Rajas* (passion and motion)
- (c) *Tamas* (inertia, darkness).

There are three *Vrittis* in the mind corresponding to the three *Gunas*.

(1) *Santa Vritti* (peace) comes out of *Sattva Guna*. Equilibrium comes out of this *Guna*.

(2) *Ghora Vritti* comes out of *Rajo Guna*. Anger comes out of this *Guna*.

(3) *Mudha Vritti* comes out of *Tamo Guna*. This *Guna* yields carelessness, laziness and drowsiness.

Sattva Guna:

Fearlessness and purity of heart will be displayed. It is favourable for the attainment of *Moksha*. The mind will always be steady. The person may stick to one place for a long time. The person will keep friendship with persons for a long time. There will be purity of thought (*Bhava Samsuddhi*) and purity of heart (*Sattva Samsuddhi*).

Rajo Guna:

The person will be troubled by a hostile force which will pull him down to *Samsara*. He will exhibit vices like *Damba*, *Darpa*, and *Krodha* etc. The person will be restless. It will force him to continuous work. *Rajasic* type always wants company and talk. They have a tendency to look into defects of others. They remember bad deeds done to them by others and forget good deeds done by them. At times intense *Rajas* turns into *Sattvic*.

Tamo Guna:

Tamas has two basic characteristics: *gurutva* (heaviness) and *avarnaka* (the capacity of covering or concealing). Due to its *gurutva* *guna*, it suppresses and dominates over *rajas* and *Sattva* *gunas*. The third characteristic or the result of *Tamoguna* is *visada*, which refers to ignorance (*ajnana*), delusions (*moha* or *mithya jnana*), depression and similar properties

Avasthas

Avasthas Mind has got three *Avasthas* (states) – *Jagrat* (waking state), *Svapna* (dreaming state) and the *Sushupti* (deep sleep state).

Jagrat Avastha_(waking state):

The individual soul is called awake as long as it is connected with external objects by means of the modifications of the mind. It identifies itself with the gross body

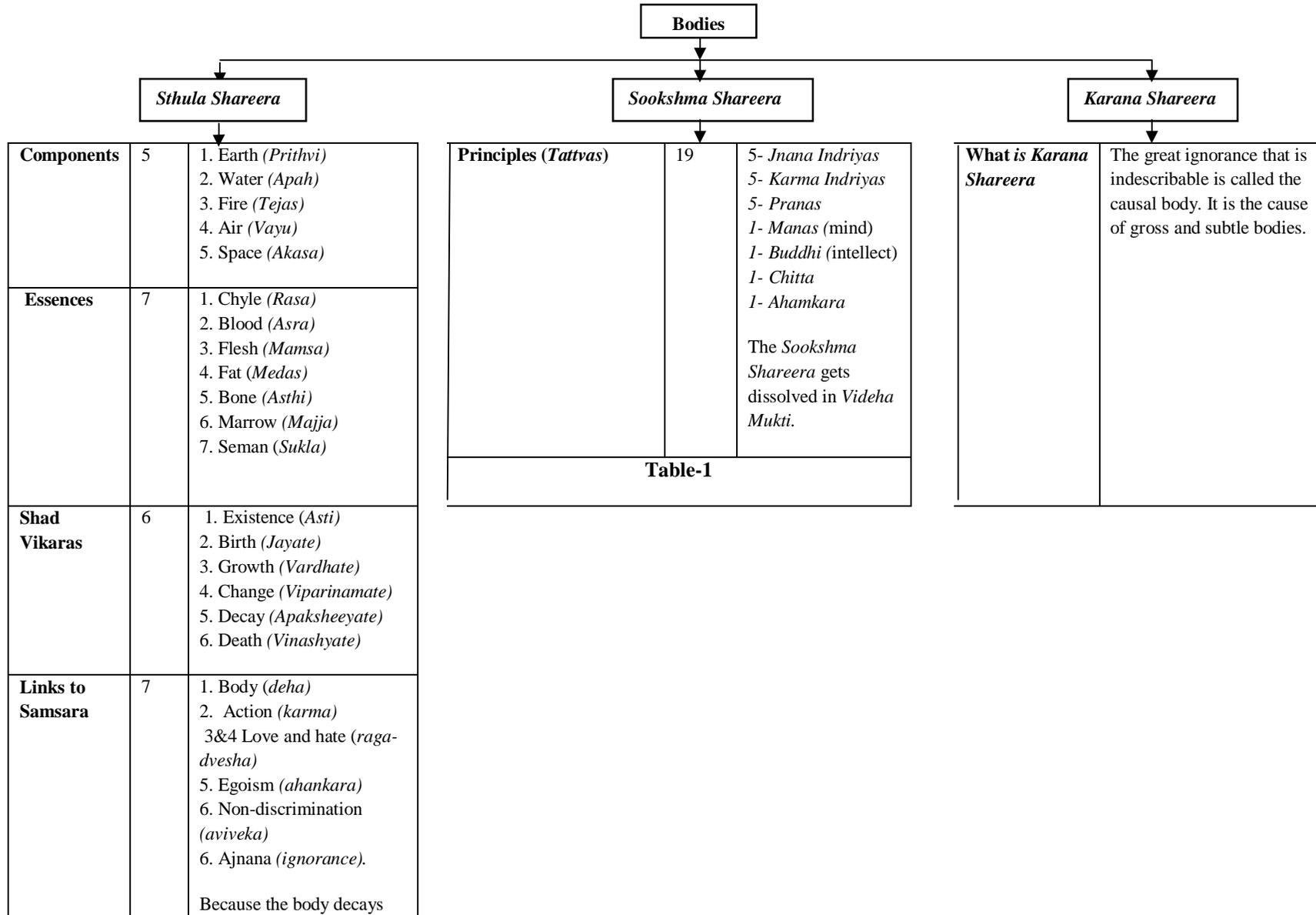
which is one of those external objects. During waking state the mind occupies the brain

Svapna Avastha (dreaming State):

In dream, the senses are thrown off. The senses are quiet and absorbed in the mind. Mind alone plays during dream state. Objects observed during waking state are used by the mind to project various forms. In the dream, the mind assumes different forms – flowers, mountains etc. In a dream, you could be talking to people whom you never met. The objects seen perceived during a dream have an external reality to the dreamer only and no one else. The mind is the subject. It is also the object. The seer and the seen are one. The perception takes place through an internal organ called “*Manas*”. So it is called “inner perception”. The difference between the waking state and the dreaming state is this. During waking state the mind depends on outward impressions. During dream state the mind creates its own impressions and enjoys them. In other words, in the *Jagrat* state objects exist independent of the mind. In the *Svapna* state, objects are manufactured out of the mind. When the mind drops to waking state, all dream objects vanish.

Sushupti Avastha (deep sleep state)

When the mind enters *Puritat Nadi*, the state of deep sleep sets in. In *Dridah Sushupti* (dreamless sleep) there is no play of mind. In here there is no play of Indriyas or organs. There is neither *Raga* nor *Dvesha* (attraction or dislike). You feel that you have existed even during sleep as soon as you are awake. *Vedantins* build their philosophy around this *Sushupti Avastha*. *Sri Shankara* observes that the phenomena of duality caused by the action of the mind are present in the waking and dreaming states only, but absent in deep sleep state. In waking and dreaming states, there is the play of the thoughts (and the simultaneous occurrence of names and forms) and hence the world as well. In dreamless sleep, there are no thoughts; and hence, there is no world too. We taste the nature of absolute bliss in dreamless sleep, where a man is cut off from the distracting world. It is the mind that creates differences, distinctions, duality and separateness.



Roots - Hindu Yoga

		(<i>Sheeryate</i>) due to old age it is called <i>Sharira</i> . Because it is cremated or burnt (<i>dahyate</i>), it is called <i>Deha</i> .
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Sheaths – Table-2

Kosha means sheath. The body has 5 sheaths. The *Atman* is covered by these 5 sheaths. *Anandamaya Kosha* is the subtlest of them all. In decreasing order of subtlety come the rest of the *Koshas* – *Vijnanamaya Kosha*, *Manomaya Kosha*, *Pranamaya Kosha* and *Annamaya Kosha*.

1. Annamaya Kosha

2. Pranamaya Kosha.	It is the food sheath. It is called so because it lives on food. It is the gross		
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	Location of <i>Koshas</i> in the <i>Shareera</i>		
	<i>Sthula Shareera</i>	<i>Sookshma Shareera</i>	<i>Karana Shareera</i>
1. <i>Annamaya Kosha</i>	◆		
2. <i>Pranamaya Kosha.</i>		◆	
3. <i>Manomaya Kosha</i>		◆	
4. <i>Vijnanamaya Kosha</i>		◆	
5. <i>Anandamaya Kosha</i>			◆

Table-3

Roots - Hindu Yoga

	body made up of 5 gross elements		
3. Manomaya Kosha	It is made up of <i>Pranas</i> (vital airs) plus the 5 <i>karmendriyas</i> (organs of action)	<p>There are 5 Mukhya Pranas plus 5 Upa Pranas</p> <p>(a) <u>Mukhya Pranas - 5</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Prana</i> 2. <i>Apana</i> 3. <i>Vyana</i> 4. <i>Udana</i> 5. <i>Samana</i> <p>(b) <u>Upa Pranas - 5</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Naga</i> 2. <i>Kurma</i> 3. <i>Krikara</i> 4. <i>Devadutta</i> 5. <i>Dhananjaya</i> 	<p><u>Functions</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Prana</i>: Inhalation & Exhalation 2. <i>Apana</i>: Excretion of farces & Urine 3. <i>Vyana</i>: Circulation of blood 4. <i>Udana</i>: (a) Helps digestion (b) Takes <i>Jiva</i> to rest in deep sleep (c) Separates astral body from physical body at the time of death 5. <i>Samana</i>: Digestion of food <p><u>Functions</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <i>Naga</i>: Burping 2. <i>Kurma</i>: Opening & closing of eyelids 3. <i>Krikara</i>: Causing hunger 4. <i>Devadutta</i>: (a) Nourishing the body (b) Decompose body after death (c) Eject child out of womb at the time of child birth
4. Vijnanamaya Kosha	This is the Mind sheath	It consists of- <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mind (<i>Manas</i>) 2. Subconscious (<i>Chitta</i>) 3. Plus Five <i>Jnanendriyas</i> (Sense organs) 	

Roots - Hindu Yoga

5. Anandamaya Kosha	It is the Intellectual sheath	It consists of- Intellectual and the ego working with the help of Five <i>Jnanendriyas</i>	
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	How many sheaths operate during		
	Waking state	Dreaming state	Deep sleep state
1. Annamaya Kosha	◆		
2. Pranamaya Kosha	◆	◆	
3. Manomaya Kosha	◆	◆	
4. Vijnanamaya Kosha	◆	◆	
5. Anandamaya Kosha	◆	◆	◆
Table-4			

	<i>Sattva Guna</i>	<i>Rajo Guna</i>	<i>Tamo Guna</i>
1. Annamaya Kosha			◆
2. Pranamaya Kosha		◆	
3. Manomaya Kosha	◆		◆
4. Vijnanamaya Kosha	◆	◆	
5. Anandamaya Kosha	◆		
Table-5			

<i>Vikaras & Dharmas of various Koshas</i>	
1. Annamaya Kosha	Vikaras: Existence, birth, growth, change, decay and death
2. Pranamaya Kosha	Dharmas: Hunger, thirst, heat and cold.
3. Manomaya Kosha	Vikaras: <i>Sankalpa- Vikalpa</i> (thinking & doubting), anger, lust, harsha (exhilaration), Shoka (depression) and Moha.
4. Vijnanamaya Kosha	Functions: Discrimination and determination, <i>Kartritva</i> and <i>Bhoktritva</i> (agency and enjoyership)
5. Anandamaya Kosha	Dharma: Experience of happiness.
Table-6	

Chapter – XI - Sanatana Dharma

Definition of Dharma

That which brings well-being to man is *Dharma*. The word *Dharma* is derived from the root *Dhar*, meaning to hold. That which holds the whole creation from macrocosm to microcosm is *Dharma*. It is the eternal *Divine* law of the Lord. The entire creation is held together and sustained by the law of the Supreme Being. *Dharma* covers not just external deeds only but also the internal or mental practices. According to the *Hindus*, *Dharma* comes from the Divine and leads you to the Divine. It is difficult to find a word in English which is equivalent to the word *Dharma* in *Sanskrit*. Sometimes it is defined as “righteousness” or “duty”. The best definition for *Dharma* has been given by *Rishi Kanada*, the founder of the *Vaiseshika* system of philosophy. He defines it as “*Yato-bhyudayanihsreyasa-siddhih sa dharmah*”. It means “that which leads to the attainment of *Abhyudaya* (prosperity in this world) and *Nihisreyasa* (total cessation of pain and attachment to eternal bliss hereafter) is *Dharma*”.

Changing Dharma

In the matter of Dharma, the Vedas are the ultimate authority. Hinduism prescribes different duties for different people. Rules for men are different from rules for the women. Rules for different Varnas and Ashramas vary. However non-violence, truth, non-stealing, cleanliness and control of senses are duties common to all men. Dharma also depends upon time, circumstances, age and degree of evolution. Under special circumstances variations are allowed (e.g.) Aapad dharma.

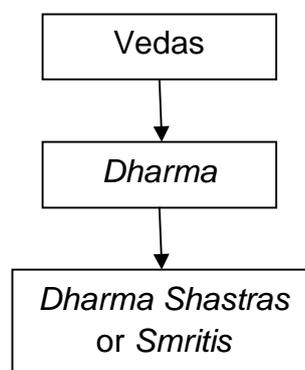
According to tradition in ancient days, there are fourteen branches of knowledge which are common to both general education and *dharma*. These are described as sources of *vidya* and *dharma*. The fourteen “*chaturdasa vidyas*” are – four *Vedas*, six *Vedangas* and six *Upaangas*. The six *angaas* of *Veda* are: *Siksha*, *Vyakarana*, *Chandas*, *Niruktam*, *Jyotisham* and *Kalpa*. The four *Upaangas* are: *Puranas*, *Nyaya*, *Mimamsa* and *Smritis*. The *Smritis* deal with the *Dharma Shastra* portion *Vedangas*. Between the *Vedangas* and *Upaangas*, almost all branches of knowledge are covered. Apart from these fourteen branches of knowledge four other branches of knowledge, known *Upavedas*, are included in the general education.

Vedas do mention here and there the duties and rites to be performed by us. *Dharma Shastra* deals with them in a codified form. However, it must be

emphasised that *Vedas* are the root of all dharma – “*Vedo Khilo dharmamulam*”. The work that the *Vedas* bid us to perform is both for our own wellbeing as-well as for the good of the world. But the rites and duties are not given in an orderly form in the *Vedas*.

The sixth *Vedanga*, *Kalpa*, contains *Dharmasutras*, *Grhyasutras* and *Srautasutras* relate rites based on *Vedas*. But *Sutras* (written by *Apastamba*, *Gautama* and others) are brief and do not constitute a detailed guide. This gap is filled by *Dharma Shastras* and they elaborate upon what is given in the *Dharmasutras* without leaving any room for doubt.

Manu, *Parasara*, *Yajnavalkya*, *Gautama*, *Harita*, *Yama*, *Visnu*, *Sankha*, *Likhita*, *Brhaspati*, *Daksa*, *Angiras*, *Prachetas*, *Samvarta*, *Acanas*, *Atri*, *Apastamba* and *Satatapa* are the eighteen sages who mastered the *Vedas* with their superhuman power and derived the *Smritis* from them.



As explained earlier *Vedas* are the root of all *Dharma*. However the rites and duties are not given in an orderly manner in the *Vedas*. *Dharmasutras*, *Grhyasutras* and *Srautasutras* relating to rites are based on the *Vedas*. Since *Sutras* contain only terse statements *Dharma Shastras* have been written to elaborate and make them easier for people to follow. *Dharma Shastras* are called *Smritis* and are in verse form. The *Smritis* contain detailed instructions on rituals to be conducted one has to perform through one's entire life. Thorough though they, variances have been found among the *Smritis*. These are sought to be cleared by “*Dharma Shastra Nibandhanas*”. These *Nibandhanas* do not leave out any rite or *Dharma* and differences have also been reconciled.

There is a wrong impression about the *Dharma Shastras* even among those who treat them with respect. They think that the rules and duties of the *Smritis* were formulated by their authors on their own. They call these authors "lawgivers" who, in their opinion, laid down "laws" that reflect their own views. Further they think that the *Dharma Shastras* were composed in the same way as Constitution. If the *Smritis* really represent the views of the authors there is

nothing wrong in what these people think about them. But those who want the *Dharma Shastras* changed do not seem to know that the *Smritis* do not reflect the views of the sages who composed them. What the authors of the *Smritis* have done is to present us in an orderly fashion what is already contained in the *Vedas*. The *Vedic* word cannot and must not be changed at any time and on any account. The same applies to the rules and laws laid down in the *Smritis*. It is not correct to discriminate between *Shruti and Smriti*. *Shruti*, *Smriti* and the *Puranas* all the three belong to the same tradition. The rites that are not explicitly mentioned in the *Vedas* but are dealt with in the *Smritis* are called *Smarta karmas* and those that are explicitly mentioned are called *Srauta karmas*. This does not mean that the *Smarta* rites are in anyway inferior to *Srauta*.

Kinds of Dharmas

Dharma was classified as under according to Manu.

- (1) *Sanatana Dharma* (Eternal Law)
- (2) *Samanya Dharma*: Universal *Dharma* includes – Contentment, forgiveness, self-restraint, non-stealing, purity, control of senses, discrimination between right and wrong, between real and unreal, spiritual knowledge, truthfulness and absence of anger.
- (3) *Vishesha Dharma*: (Special duty)
- (4) *Varnashrama Dharma*: (Duties of caste and order)
- (5) *Svadharmas* (One's own duty)
- (6) *Yuga Dharma* (Duty of the age)
- (7) *Kula Dharma* (Duty of family)
- (8) *Manava Dharma* (Duty of man)
- (9) *Stree Dharma* (Duty of female)
- (10) *Raja Dharma* (Duty of King)
- (11) *Praja Dharma* (Duty of subjects)
- (12) *Pravritti Dharma* (Duty in worldly life)
- (13) *Nivritti Dharma* (Duty in spiritual life)

Sanatana Dharma

Sanatana Dharma means the eternal religion. This is based on *Vedas*. This is the oldest living religions. Hinduism is known by the name *Sanatana Dharma*. The foundation of *Sanatana Dharma* is *Shruti*. The *Smriti* stands next in

authority to the *Shruti*. Hinduism is highly flexible and adapted to every human need. In fact, the history of India is a history of religion.

Samanya Dharma

Every religion has a generic form or *Samanya-rupa* and a specific form *Vishesha-rupa*. The generic form almost never changes and remains the same. It is not affected by changes in time, place etc. *Samanya Dharma* is the general law for all men. *Vishesha Dharma* deals with special cases.

Basics of Dharma

Puranas like *Padma Purana*, *Matsya Purana* enumerate a number of fundamentals of *Dharma*. Examples are – forgiveness, truthfulness, charity, non-violence etc. *Patanjali Maharshi* recommends that ten virtues should be practiced by all men. The first five constitute *Yama* or self-restraint. They are – *Ahimsa* (non-violence), *Satya* (truthfulness), *Brahmacharya* (celibacy in thought, word and deed), *Asteya* (non-stealing) and *Aparigraha* (non-covetousness). The next five constitute *Niyama* or religious observance. They are- *Saucha* (internal and external purity), *Santosha* (contentment), *Tapas* (austerity), *Svadyaya* (study of scriptures) and *Isvarapranidhana* (consecration of the fruits of all works to the Lord).

All the virtues may be regarded as branches of four cardinal virtues. They are (1) non-violence ;(2) truth (3) purity and (4) self control. The eternal cannot be attained without attainment of purity. *Brahman* is truth. Eternal cannot be attained without practicing truth. *Brahman* is fearlessness.

- (1) Ahimsa: *Ahimsa* or non-violence is the most important virtue. Practice of *Ahimsa* must be in thought, word and deed. The practice demands immense patience, forbearance endurance, infinite inner spiritual strength and great will power.
- (2) Truth: *Brahman* is *Sat*. Once truth must be observed in thought, word and deed. In *Taittiriya Upanishad*, it is said “*Satyam Vada – speak the truth*”
- (3) Purity: It comprises both external (body) and internal purity (mind). One must be pure in thought, word and deed.
- (4) Self Control: It implies control of both body and mind. Self control implies self-service, destruction of egoism, patience, endurance, forbearance and humility.

Varnashrama Dharma

The principle of *Varnashrama dharma* is one of the basic principles of Hinduism. The duties of the *varnas* are *Varna dharma*. The four *varnas* are *Brahmana*, *Kshatriya*, *Vaisya* and *Shudra*.

The division is according to *Guna* and *Karma*. *Sattva guna* predominates in *Brahmanas*; *Rajo guna* is predominant in the *Kshatriyas*; *Tamo guna* is predominant in *Vaisya*; there is no predominant *guna* in the *Sudras*. The philosophers correspond to the *Brahmanas*, warriors to *Kshatriyas*, trade to *Vaisyas* and action service to *Shudras*.

Ashrama Dharma

The four *Ashramas* or orders of life are – *Brahmacharya*, *Grihastha*, *Vanaprastha* and *Sannyasa*. The four *Ashramas* are stages in life. *Brahmacharya* or the period of studentship, *Grihastha* or the period of householder, *Vanaprastha* or the stage of forest dweller and *Sannyasa* or the life of renunciation. Each stage has its own duties. These stages help the evolution of man. The first two ashramas pertain to *Pravritti marga* or path of work. The last two stages pertain to *Nivritti marga* or the path of renunciation. Life is arranged in an orderly and systematic manner in *Sanatana Dharma*. There is opportunity for the development of the different sides of human activity. Due occupations and training are assigned to each period of life. Like in nature man's evolution is gradual and not revolutionary.

Yuga Dharma

Dharma changes according to the *Yugas*. Man is undergoing change. So his external form of *Dharmas* should change. That which is achieved through contemplation in *Satya Yuga*, through sacrifices in *Treta Yuga*, through worship of Lord *Narayana* in *Dvapara Yuga* may be attained through *Kirtanas* of Lord *Vishnu's* name in *Kali Yuga*.

Chapter XII - Hindu Theological Classification

Introduction

Hinduism is extremely liberal, tolerant, and elastic. This is the wonderful feature of Hinduism. A foreigner (visiting India) is struck with astonishment when he hears about the diverse sects and creeds of Hinduism. But these varieties are really the strength of Hinduism. They are certainly not its defects. There are various types of minds and temperaments. So there should be various faiths as well. This is but natural. This is the cardinal tenet of Hinduism. There is room in Hinduism for all types of souls- from the highest to the lowest and for their growth and evolution. Hinduism provides food for reflection for the different types of thinkers and philosophers from all over the world. All sorts of philosophy are necessary. What appeals to one may not appeal to another and what is easy for one may be difficult for another. *Sanatana-Dharmists, Arya-Samajists, Deva- Samajists, Jainas, Buddhists, Sikhs and Brahma-Samajists* rose from Hinduism, and emphasized one or more of its aspects.

Hindus believe that the *Vedas* are of divine origin and the term *śhruti* ("what is heard") refers to this. The *Hindu* belief that the cosmos is eternal; was not created and will always exist, also applies to the *Hindu* view of the *Vedas*. The *Vedas* is divine knowledge and is only "heard" by humans (*apauruṣeya* – meaning not of human agency). The *Vedas* is integrated into the life of *Hindus*, though many *Hindus* have never read it. Vedic mantras are recited at *Hindu* prayers, religious functions and other auspicious occasions.

The various Indian religious sects differ in their ideas about the *Vedas*. *Hindus* cite the *Vedas* as scriptural authority and they class themselves as "orthodox" (*āstika*). *Buddhism* and *Jainism*, two religious sects with a close affinity to *Hinduism*, do not regard the *Vedas* as scriptural authority and *Hindus* refer to them as "heterodox" or "non-orthodox" (*nāstika*). Hinduism places very little importance on criticism of other religions because *Hindus* believe that the path to God transcends all human thought. In this respect, a *Hindu* would not consider *Buddhism* or *Catholicism* to be wrong, only different.

The *Sutras* or aphorisms of *Sri Veda Vyasa* forms one of the basis for *Vedanta* philosophy. The *Sutras* have been differently interpreted by various commentators. These different interpretations formed the basis for the different schools of philosophy – *Kevala Advaita* (*Sri Shankaracharya*), *Vishishtadvaita* (*Sri Ramanujacharya*), *Dvaita* (*Sri Madhvacharya*),

Bhedabheda (Sri Nimbarkacharya), *Suddha Advaita* (Sri Vallabhacharya), *Acintya Bhedabheda* (Sri Chaitanyaswamy).

The *Upanishads*, *Brahma-sutras* and the *Bhagavad-Gita* are regarded as basic classics for *Vedanta*. *Upanishads* are many and are cast in a language, which is ancient. Except for the highly learned, they appear to project divergent metaphysical ideas! *Brahma-sutras* come to the scene at this stage. Their function was to co-ordinate the teachings and set forth a logical justification of the doctrines advanced. Reason was the supreme instrument in this process. While doing this, the substance of the thoughts were not well formulated. *Bhagavad-Gita* filled this gap. It draws up pictures of ideal life and offers comprehensive directions for ethical and spiritual realisation. The *Upanishads* and the *Brahma-sutras* offered little scope to the *Acharyas* for developing a philosophy of conduct and self-culture. The *Bhagavad-Gita* offered the greatest scope. By and large it is in the rendering of the philosophy of the *Gita* and the subtle differences in their interpretations that has led to the different systems of *Vedanta*

The Rig-Veda declares - Truth is one; sages call it by various names - "*Ekam Sat Vipra Bahudha Vadanti*." The *Upanishads* declare that all the paths lead to the same goal, just as cows of different colours yield the same white milk. Lord Krishna says in the *Gita*: 'Howsoever men approach Me, even so do I welcome them, for the path men take from every side is Mine.' All diversities are organized and united in the body of Hinduism.

In the following pages, we will examine some of the notable schools of philosophy.

Advaita Philosophy of Sri Shankaracharya

Brahman, the only Reality

The word *Advaita* means "non-dual", "one without a second". The system recognizes *Brahman* (the Absolute) as the only reality and denies permanent reality to all others such as the *Jagat* (the world) and the *Jivas* (individual souls). The word *Brahman* comes from the root "*Brah*" which means vastness, power, and growth. Thus, *Brahman* indicates the Supreme Being.

Anirvachaneeya Khyaati

However, this world consisting of you, me and millions of other living beings – the world of multiplicity is our day to day experience. Hence, it becomes necessary to offer an explanation as to how *Brahman*, the One without a second, appears as this world of multiple names and forms. The explanation given by *Advaita* is that it is an erroneous cognition - *Anirvachaneeya Khyaati*. An example for an erroneous cognition is given. Imagine the viewing

in semi darkness of a coil of a rope. You are convinced that a snake is superimposed on a rope and get frightened. You switch a light on. And you could see that it is just a coil of a rope. It is the darkness and your imagination that has played a trick on you. Similar is the case when dealing with this world. The darkness of ignorance is the cause of illusory presentation of multiplicity. In the presence of the light of knowledge, the illusion disappears. And the non-dual *Parabrahman* will be the ultimate truth that will be revealed. This superimposition is called “*Adyaasa*”. It is the cause for the “*Mithyajnaana*” (false knowledge). The perception of the snake is neither *Sat* (real) nor *Asat* (unreal). It is not unreal, since it has actually been perceived. It is also not real since it disappeared as soon as the darkness vanished. To explain such a peculiar phenomenon *Sri Shankara* creates a third type of perceived objects, which is called “*Sad – Asad vilakshana*”. The “*Khyaati*” or cognition itself is described as “*Anirvachaneeya*” – incapable of precise definition or description.

Ajnaana or Avidya

The basis for erroneous perception is termed *Ajnaana* or *Avidya* (Ignorance). This ignorance or *Avidya* is supposed to be *Bhaavarooopa* (existent) and has two powers or *Shakti*. The first power is “*Aavarana Shakti*”. It has the power to veil the true nature. The second one is “*Vikshepa Shakti*” - the power to transform. It showed the rope as the snake. The apparently transformed object is called “*Vivarta*” of the original. The theory that propounds this is called “*Vivarta vaada*”.

Maya

Now we are ready to explain how this world consisting of innumerable living beings has evolved out of the non-dual Reality called *Parabrahman*. The world that we live in and experience every day can be broadly divided into two categories – (1) the “*Drk*” – the one who sees (2) The “*Drisya*” – those that are seen. Both these in turn consist of innumerable living beings (*Jivas*) and countless objects of creation. It is *Avidya* or ignorance that causes the *Brahman* to appear as many *Jivas*. It is *Maya* that causes this world of phenomenon. *Maya* is *Avidya* at the cosmic level.

Three Degrees of Reality

Sri Shankara accepts three degrees of Reality.

1. **Praatibhaasika Satya:** It means apparent truth. The rope appearing as the snake illustrates this. It is illusory in nature.
2. **Vyaavahaarika Satya :** This is illustrated by our day to day experience. This has a much higher degree of reality and lasts for a longer time than the previous category. It lasts till one gets *Aatma Jnaana* or *Brahma Jnaana*.
3. **Paramaarthika Satya:** This is the highest truth and the only truth that exists. This truth is *Brahman* or *Aatman*. This *Brahman* or *Aatman* is *Nirguna* (without any attributes) and *Niraakaara* (without any form). Due to this, it is not possible to describe *Brahman* except, perhaps, in negative terms (*neti, neti* – not this, not this).

Creation

According to this philosophy, *Brahman* associated with *Maya* is *Saguna Brahman* (*Brahman* with attributes). It is this aspect of *Brahman* that is responsible for creation, preservation and destruction.

Sri Shankara proposes that this world of process is illusory – *Vivarta*. As such, the various steps towards evolution of it are not an important topic. In any case he characterizes such descriptions as giving the “*tatasthalakshana*” of *Brahman*. It means accidental or casual characteristics. He emphasizes that *Brahman* can be comprehended only through its “*Swaroopalakshana*”. *Swaroopalakshana* refers to the essential characteristics. The essential characteristics of *Brahman* are – *Sat* (eternal reality), *Chit* (pure consciousness) and *Ananda* (unalloyed bliss). *Sat-Chit-Ananda* is not merely its characteristics. In fact, it is its essence.

Jiva

This *Brahman* or *Aatman*, which is *Sat-Chit-Ananda*, has inexplicably got itself involved in the body-mind complex. This involvement is due to *Avidya*. Since, the origin of this involvement cannot be satisfactorily explained, *Avidya* is stated to be “*anaadi*” or that without any beginning. This involved *Aatman* is designated as “*Jiva*”.

This *Jiva* or *Aatman*-in-bondage performs actions motivated by desires, experiences pleasure and pain due to *Karma*. It undergoes the cycle of birth and death till it is liberated. *Sri Shankara* declares that this *Jiva* when shorn of its *Upaadhis* or limiting adjuncts like the body and mind is identical with *Brahman*. For both, the *Swaroopalakshana* is *Sat-Chit-Ananda*.

Sadhanas and Mukti

The main problem with the *Aatman* in bondage is its “*Taadaatmya*” or false identification with the body and mind. *Adhyaasa* or superimposition brings this about. The only remedy for this is de-superimposition or *Apavaada*. This process involves a few stages. The first stage is a preliminary fourfold discipline called “*Saadhana Chatushtaya*”. (1) *Viveka* (discrimination between the eternal and the non-eternal). (2) *Vairaagya* (dispassion). (3) *Shatka Sampatti* (cultivation of six virtues – *Sama, Dama, Uparama, Titiksha, Shraddha and Samadhana*). (4) *Mumuksutva* (desire for liberation). The second stage is to approach a competent *Guru* and learn the Truth from him. This will lead to the ultimate realization that one is *Aatman*. This realization leads to *Mukti* or liberation. This realization resulting in *Mukti* can be had while one is living in this body. It is called “*Jivanmukti*”. Then, *Mukti* is not liberation from transmigration but recognizing the already existing original state.

Vishishtadvaita Philosophy of Sri Ramanujacharya

The *Vishishtadvaita Vedanta Darsana* is not a creation of *Sri Ramanujacharya* (AD 1017-1137) alone. It started much earlier to him. The twelve *Alvars* like *Nammalvar, Kulasekhara* and *Andaal* as also *Acharyas* like *Naathamuni* (AD 824 to 924), *Yamuna* (AD 918-1038).

Sri Ramanuja evolved the system out of the more ancient teachings. However, *Sri Ramanuja* was its best exponent. As a result of the stupendous work he turned out in the cause of the system, it is often referred to as “*Ramanuja Darsana*”. The system accepts both the *Sanskrit Prasthanatraya* and the *Tamil Prabandhams* as equally authoritative. Hence, the philosophy is also called “*Ubhaya Vedanta*”.

Ontology

Vishishtadvaita accepts three entities as ultimate realities –

1. *Brahman* or *Ishvara*
2. *Jiva* or *Chit*
3. *Prakruti* or *Achit*.

Of these, *Brahman* is the absolute and independent reality. The other two, *Jiva* and *Prakruti* are dependent realities. The three together are called “*Tattvatraya*”.

The *Vedanta* of the *Upanishads* mainly preaches the doctrine of Absolute being, who is the non-dual source, substratum and dissolving ground of the many that constitute this world of our experience. *Sri Shankaracharya* interprets this Non-dual being in whom this world of many is a mere appearance ascribed by ignorance and not actually existing. He gives, however, a *prima facie* reality (*Vyaavahaarika Satya*) to the world of the many and also to the God who is its cause. This God is the *Saguna Brahman*. When ignorance is overcome by proper metaphysical insight, the aspirant realises that what he considered as his “I” is really the Absolute *Brahman* into whom the world and the God dissolve. According to *Sri Shankara* an unmodified and attributeless Consciousness alone is the ultimate reality.

Sri Ramanuja disagrees with this doctrine on the fronts of

1. *Saguna Brahman* ; who is less than the Absolute *Brahman*
2. theory of ignorance or *Maya* ; Compartmentalisation of reality into *Paramarthika* (ultimate reality) and
3. *Vyaavahaarika* (day to day reality).

Sri Ramanuja disagrees that the Supreme Being is *Nirguna* (without attributes) and *Niraakaara* (without a form). According to him, in all theisms God must be supremely adorable and infinitely good Personal Being, who is distinct from the world and the multiplicity of spirits. He cannot be a quality-less impersonal being as if He is not responsive to prayers and worship.

Sri Ramanuja proposes the Supreme Lord with an archetypal form, which does not, however, limit Him. The Lord can take any form He likes as He pervades every being as their indweller and container. The Lord is not one without attributes. Out of the countless attributes five are central. 1) *Satyam* (Truth unconditioned and changeless), (2) *Jnanam* (all comprehending knowledge), (3) *Anantam* (excellences unlimited by time, space etc), (4)

Ananda (immeasurable bliss) and (5) *Amalatvam* (stainless-ness or incorruptibility (i.e.) freedom from the hold of *Karma* which is the cause of all imperfections in *Jivas*.)

Apart from the above attributes, called as *Lord Narayana's Swaroopa*, He has other countless auspicious qualities (*Kalyana Gunas*). The important six qualities are identified as *Bhagas*. They are *Jnana* (omniscience), *Bala* (omnipotence), *Aishvarya* (lordship), *Shakti* (creative power), *Virya* (immutability) and *Tejas* (splendour). Few other significant qualities are *Gaambhira* (inestimable grandeur), *Audaarya* (generosity) and *Kaarunya* (compassion).

Metaphysics

Sri Shankara establishes the unity of the *Parabrahman* by his theory of *Adhyasa* (superimposition). According to him *Avidya* (ignorance) is the cause of this superimposition. In other words, multiplicity (of many *Jivas and Jagat*) is ultimately unreal. However, according to *Sri Ramanuja*, the plurality of the *Jivas* and the changeful order of the *Jagat* (Nature) are real. The unity lies in the fact of their being held together in inseparable union (*Aprthaksiddhi*) with the Supreme Being. They have no existence apart from Him. *Aprthaksiddhi* can be explained by an analogy. The body of the man consists of millions of individual cells. Each cell or part of the body may have its own function to do. All of them combined result in the formation of the body – unified as a whole by the will or life energy of the body. They solely serve the interests of the body. Apart from the whole (i.e. the body) they do not have a separate existence. If separated from the body they perish. The relationship between the *Jiva* and *Brahman* is similar. The only difference is – there can be no separation between them. They are inseparable – though in a state of ignorance the *Jiva* may not experience or understand it. The relationship between *Jagat* and *Brahman* is also similar. Hence, there is no separate origination as *Jivas* and *Jagat*. They always exist as part of *Brahman* as His body or mode.

According to *Sri Ramanuja*, the *Jiva* or individual self is different from the *Ishawara* though individually connected to Him as His mode. *Jiva* essentially is a conscious entity – *Jnana Swaroopa*. Its consciousness has two aspects. The first is its basic or substantive consciousness, called *Dharmi- Jnana*. By virtue of this *Dharmi-Jnana*, the *Jiva* has self-awareness and only that. The second is the attributive consciousness of the *Jiva*, called *Dharma-bhuta- Jnana*. It is this consciousness that makes it aware of others including *Ishawara*. In the state of ignorance, due to the load of *Karma*, the *Jiva* is almost one with the unconscious matter, the *Prakruti*. However, *Dharmi- Jnana* keeps up its individuality and the possibility of developing the *Dharma-*

bhuta-Jnana. Hence, what stands in the way of this expansion of *Dharma-bhuta-Jnana* is the load *Karma*. *Karma* is the effect of the actions of the *Jivas* in the previous embodiments. Divine will causes *Jivas* to obtain bodies suited for their enjoyment of their *Karmas*.

Jivas and *Jagat* exist in two states – one during *Pralaya* (dissolution) and the other during *Srishti* (creation). *Pralaya* and *Srishti* are eternally continuing states like day and night. The motivating power between these two states is the will of God. In the *Pralaya* State, *Jivas* and *Jagat* (or *Prakruti*) would be reduced to their primordial condition and would be latent in *Brahman* without any distinction. In *Srishti* (or creation), caused by the will of the *Brahman*, they gain patency and diversity through a process of evolution.

Insentient matter is known as *Prakruti*. It becomes dynamic by the will of *Lord Narayana*. Its dynamism expresses itself as the alternating process of *Srishti* and *Pralaya*. Involvement of *Jiva* in the recurring process of *Prakruti* is called *Samsara*. It takes the form of repeated successions of births and deaths, with loads of enjoyment and suffering determined by the effect of maturing load of *Karmas* called *Praarabdha* of the *Jivas*. This will continue till *Jiva* becomes aware of its true nature and its relationship with God. Release from this is called *Moksha*.

Means of Liberation

Mumukshus, or those desirous of liberation, have to know three things- (1) *Tattvatraya* or Reality (2) *Hita* or the means of attaining that Reality (3) *Purushaartha* or the nature of attainment.

We have already discussed *Tattvatraya*.

Scriptures have described *Hita* in various ways. They can be grouped under five headings referred to as “*Arthapanchaka*”. They are (1) *Sva-svaroop*a (One’s own nature). (2) *Para-Svaroop*a (nature of God). (3) *Purushaartha* (nature of four ends in life) (4) *Upaaya-Svaroop*a (nature of the means to liberation). (5) *Virodhi-Svaroop*a (nature of obstacles in spiritual path).

We have already discussed 1 and 2. *Purushaarthas* are four. (1) *Dharma* (practice of righteousness). (2) *Artha* (Material gains). (3) *Kama* (Pleasures and enjoyments in life). (4) *Moksha* (freedom from *Samsara*). *Mumukshu* should realise that the real *Purushaartha* is *Moksha*.

Upaaya, or the means of liberation, is fivefold. (1) *Karma*. This includes acts such as *Yagna*, *Dana*, *Sandhya*, *Panchayajnaas*, *Dhyana*, *Teertha yatra* etc. *Jnana* or *Jnana yoga* consists of self-renouncement (*Vairagya*) and ceaseless practice of contemplation on *Lord Narayana*. This leads to the realisation of the Self but not that of the Lord.

The next step is *Bhakti or Bhakti-yoga*. This marks the consummation of the moral and spiritual endeavour as attained in the other two *Yogas*. The seven aids to *Bhakti* are (1) *Viveka*. Purification of the body as a temple (2) *Vimoka*, which means inner detachment. (3) *Adhyasa*. It refers to ceaseless practice of God as the inner self. (4) *Kriya*. It refers to service to all beings. (5) *Kalyaana*. It is the practice of virtues. (6) *Anavasaada*. It is freedom from despair. Have faith in the Lord and leave the burden on Him (7) *Anuddharsa*. It is the absence of exultation.

Prapatti

It is the concept of total surrender. It is specially addressed to those who are unable to practice the Karma yoga, Jnana yoga or Bhakti yoga. Its main characteristics are to conceive what is in conformity with the will of God; to reject what is disagreeable to Him; to seek Him as the sole refuge and protector and surrender to Him completely. It can be practiced by anyone without any distinction of cast or creed.

Acharya abhimaana is the strong faith in the Guru and his affectionate attachment to the disciple.

The obstacles to the spiritual path (*Vorodhi*), which are the last of the *Arthapanchaka*, are again fivefold. (1) Obstacles to the realisation of the Self (2) To the realisation of God (3) To *Moksha* (4) To the means of the realisation (5) To the attainment of the goal.

State of Liberation

The liberated soul has a direct vision of *Brahman* in *Vaikuntha* and is absorbed in the eternal bliss of union with Him (*Saayujya*). To him the pluralistic world remains but the pluralistic view is removed. The distinction between *Brahman* and him remains but there is no loss of personality. He will continue forever to enjoy this state of bliss by serving *Brahman*.

Thus *Vishishtadvaita* is not dry metaphysics, but a philosophy of religion. In it, reason and faith are nicely synthesised. It guarantees the vision of God and salvation to all finite beings, human, sub-human or celestial. The view that God is immanent in all for the purpose of cosmic redemption inspires the feeling that the God of all religions is ultimately one, though various sects may give different accounts of Him.

Tenkalai and Vadakalai Schools of thought

The two different schools of thought came to light many years after Sri Ramanujacharya. The Vadakalai sect of Sri Vaishnavism associates

themselves with the great Acharya Vedanta Desika. Sri Pillai Lokacharya is associated with the Tenkalai sect. Acharya Desika has mentioned that there are no differences on essential points and the differences are in interpretation only. The following table highlights some of the differences

SI No	View Point	Vadakalai	Tenkalai	Comments
	Position & Role of Sri Mahalakshmi			
1		<p><i>Sri Mahalakshmi's</i> role and position:</p> <p>(a) She acts as a mediator pleading with <i>Sriman Narayana</i> to forgive the faults of the <i>Jeevatma</i> (the <i>Baddha</i> category) and grant his wishes)</p> <p>(c)Just as Lord Narayana She, by Herself, is the means for attaining Paramapada (<i>Upaya</i>)</p> <p>c) She is also the object of attainment (<i>Upeya</i>)</p>	<p>(a)Accept the view regarding the role of Sri Mahalakshmi as the mediator</p> <p>(b) Do not Accept the view that She is also the means for attaining Paramapada</p> <p>(c)Accept that She, along with Lord Narayana, is the object of attainment</p>	
2		<i>Sri Mahalakshmi</i> is <i>Paramatma</i> (along with <i>Sri Narayana</i>) and NOT a <i>Jeevatma</i>	<i>Sri Mahalakshmi</i> is a <i>Jeevatma</i> , like any of us	
3		<i>Sri Mahalakshmi</i> is infinite (<i>Vibhu</i>) in nature	<i>Sri Mahalakshmi</i> is atomic in nature, like a <i>Jeevatma</i> .	
4	<i>Kaivalya</i>	<i>Kaivalya</i> is inferior to <i>Paramapada</i> or <i>Moksha</i> . So <i>Kaivalya</i> is located outside <i>SriVaikuntha</i>	Accept that <i>Kaivalya</i> is inferior to <i>Sri Vaikuntha</i> . However, <i>Kaivalya</i> is located just outside <i>SriVaikuntha</i> but still within it. The liberated <i>Jeevatmas</i> , <i>Muktas</i> , enjoy eternally <i>Paramapada</i> .	" <i>Kaivalya</i> " wherein a person attains the state in which he simply meditates on his own self. Those who have performed <i>Jnana Yoga</i> perceive and enjoy their own souls
5	<i>Bhakti</i> and <i>Prapatti Margas</i>	Accept that <i>Bhakti</i> as the means for <i>Moksha</i> . However, <i>Bhakti Marga</i> is more difficult while <i>Prapatti</i> is easy and immediate	Does not accept <i>Bhakti Marga</i> as a means The <i>Jeevatma</i> is entirely dependent on Lord <i>Narayana</i> . So he is incapable of adopting <i>Bhakti</i> or <i>Prapatti Marga</i> as a means for Liberation	
6	<i>Prapatti</i>	<i>Prapatti</i> has to be a positive and specific act of surrender by the <i>Jeevatma</i>	Does not consider that a positive act of surrender is	

		<i>to Paramatma.</i>	necessary. The view is – (a) Knowledge of the <i>Swaroopa</i> of <i>Jeevatma</i> . (b) Confidence and mental acceptance that the Lord will grace him liberation is essential.	
7	Lord's grace (<i>Kripa</i>)	A positive effort must be made by the <i>Jeevatma</i> to win the grace of Lord Narayana. The Lord cannot grant <i>Moksha</i> in an arbitrary manner. He could be accused of partiality. It is like <i>Markata- Kishora Nyaya</i> . The baby has to make an effort in clinging to the mother while being transported.	Lord's grace is spontaneous. He is not answerable to anyone. He can grant <i>Moksha</i> to anyone He considers worthy. It is like <i>Marjala- Kishora Nyaya</i> where the bay does not have to make an effort. The mother grabs the baby and transports it.	
8	Sinners	When the Jiva surrenders, <i>Lord Narayana</i> overlooks the sins committed by His devotees.	Just like a mother cow does not hate the calf for the dirt on its body. The dirt is eventually cleaned by the mother cow.	
9	Performance of compulsory duties Sandhya-Vandana	The compulsory duties are laid down in the <i>Shastras</i> which is tantamount to Lord's commandments. All people will be expected to	For exalted souls, about to receive the Lord's grace, it will not be considered an offence to give up the performance these duties.	
10	Interpretation of Charana Sloka	The <i>Dharmas</i> that are referred to in the <i>Shloka</i> relate to the <i>Vidyas</i> in the <i>Bhaktiyoga</i> . Due to his inability, the aspirant seeking <i>Moksha</i> has already given up these <i>Vidyas</i> .	As per the <i>Shloka</i> all <i>dharmas</i> must be given up first, before seeking refuge of the Lord.	This is the noblest of all <i>Slokas</i> in the <i>Bhagavat Gita</i> . To Sri Ramanujacharya, this is the final verse of <i>Bhagavat Gita</i> (<i>Charama Shloka</i>) - chapter 18; <i>Shloka</i> 66. What does it say – "Sarvadharmam Parityajya Mam Ekam Sharanam Vraja Aham tva Sarva Papebhyo Mokshayishyami Masuchaha" The implied meaning as per Sri Ramanuja is- perform <i>Sadhanas</i> like <i>Karma yoga</i> , <i>Jnana yoga</i> , <i>Bhaktiyoga</i> etc, he can perform this

				<p>alternative Sadhana through Charama Shloka. The first part of the Shloka states - Having given up all Dharmas or rites unintentionally, surrender to the Lord alone. This is the thing to be done by the doer of Saranaagati. The second sentence assures. "I will release you from all sins and give Moksha; Do not despair". The message conveyed is - "Your knowledge is limited; Your ability is insignificant; Your life is short; You are also impatient of delay; Therefore do not go about seeking other <i>Upayas</i> which you cannot fully understand; which you cannot easily adopt to. Realise that I, who am easy to access to all, who am the Saviour of the worlds and who am endowed with attributes essential for a Saviour, am the only <i>Upaya</i> and perform the surrender."</p>
11	Lord's grief at the suffering of souls	One can have grief, when he finds himself incapable of removing the suffering of another. In this case, the Lord is capable of removing the suffering of any one. So there is no need for Him to grieve. Sri Rama has shown how a human would feel and how one should react on seeing the misery of others.	The Lord also grieves when a person is suffering	
12	Lord is everywhere	Lord is smaller than the atom in beings that are atomic in size. This is called "Antar Vyapti" (Immanence). He is also present in infinite sizes. This is called "Bahir Vyapti"(Transcendence)	His presence in atomic and infinite sizes is achieved by special powers that He possesses. It is called "Agatitha Ghatana Saamartya". He can perform anything which is not possible to anyone else.	

Dvaita philosophy of Sri Madhvacharya

Sri Madhvacharya (1239-1319) evolved a dualistic system of philosophy interpreting the *Prasthanas Traya* – *Upanishads*, *Bhagavad Gita* and *Brahma Sutra*. It is an unqualified dualism. It is also called *Sad Vaishnavism* in order to distinguish it from *Sri Vaishnavism* of *Sri Ramanujacharya*.

Sri Madhvacharya is known by several other names – *Ananda Tirtha*, *Sukha Tirtha*, *Poornaprajna*, *Purna-bodha*. His philosophy is also known by various other names – *Bheda-vaada*, *Tattva vaada*, *Bimba-pratibimba- vaada*.

Sri Madhvacharya's philosophy has many points in common with that of *Sri Ramanujacharya*. (1) *Hari* (*Sriman Narayana*) is the Supreme being (2) *Prakruti* or the world is real (3) *Jiva* is real (4) *Hari* is the independent reality, where as animate and inanimate objects are dependent realities – but they are different. (4) Perception, inference and scriptures (*Vedas*) are the three *Pramaanas* – means of knowledge.

Dvaita Philosophy

Sri Madhvacharya makes an absolute distinction between the Supreme Being and the animate, inanimate objects – it is a philosophy of absolute differences – it is *Atyanta Bheda Darsana*. He insists on *Pancha-Bheda* (5 great distinctions).

1. Distinction between *Sri Hari* and *Jeevatma*
2. Distinction between *Sri Hari* and matter
3. Distinction between *Jeevatma* and matter
4. Distinction between *one Jeevatma* and another

Tenets of Tattvavaada

There are nine important points to be noted.

1. *Sri Hari* (*Sri Vishnu*) is supreme
2. Universe is real
3. The five differences stated above are real
4. There is plurality of *Jivas* and all of them are dependent on *Sri Hari*
5. There are different grades among the *Jivas*.
6. *Mukti* is the experience of *Jiva's* own innate joy.
7. *Mukti* is achieved by flawless devotion to the Supreme Lord and having correct knowledge
8. The three *Pramaanas* are – *Pratyaksha*, *Anumaana* and *Agama* (scriptures)
9. *Sri Hari* is the only entity (primarily) described in all *Vedas*.

Divine Hierarchy (Taaratamya)

The Supreme Being is *Sri Hari*. He may be worshipped by all other deities and by everyone to their best ability. All other deities are iconic representatives of the Lord, and not independently authoritative figures. *Madhvas* believe that all deities except *Sri Hari's* eternal consort *Sri Maha Lakshmi* are “*aamukta Jivas*” (un-liberated souls) performing service to Him.

Madhvas have a hierarchy of deities after *Sri Hari*. This is important in consideration of worship, since each lesser deity is worshipped as an iconic representative of the next higher one. The idea is that, ultimately, all worship is meant for *Sri Hari* only. The system accepts a hierarchy of worth among deities other than *Sri Hari*. Each lesser deity is akin to an image in a mirror of the higher one. This concept of images captures (a) a notion of difference (since the object and image are not identical) (b) a hierarchy of worth (since the image does not have the same worth as the object). It is for this reason the philosophy is referred to as “*Bimba- pratibimba- vaada*”. This *Taaratamya*, imposes the discipline that the icon should never be worshipped as the Lord.

Supreme Being and His Consort

The Supreme Being is *Sri Hari* or *Sri Maha Vishnu* and He is the personal first cause. He lives in *Vaikuntha* along with *Sri Maha Lakshmi*. Both are Real. *Brahma* and *Vaayu* are His sons. One can know His nature through the study of *Vedas*. He manifests Himself through various *Vyuh*s and through *Avataras*. He is present in the sacred images. He is also the *Antaryamin* or inner controller of various souls. He creates, maintains and destroys the world.

He is free from *Doshas* or faults. He is endowed with all auspicious qualities. He is Omni-potent and independent. He is beyond time and space. He is greater than *Sri Maha Lakshmi*. However, there is no one else greater than *Sri Maha Lakshmi*. She is foremost of the dependents. She is His *Shakti* or Energy. She is co-eternal with the Lord and all pervading. She is *Nitya Mukta* (eternally free from *Samsara*).

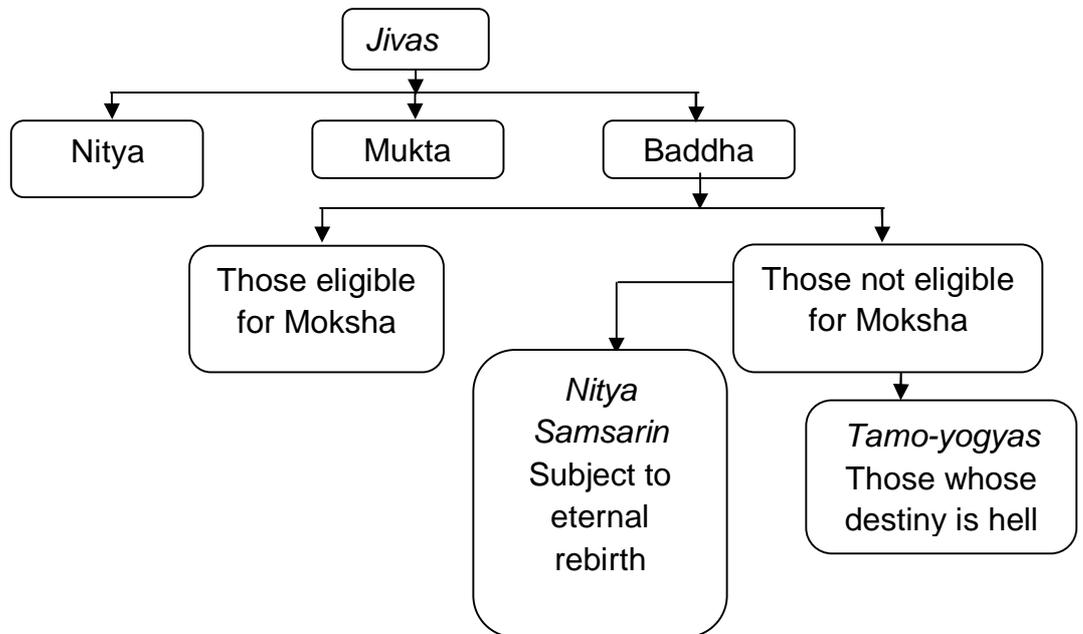
Prakrti

The Lord is the efficient but not the material cause of *Prakrti*. (because *Prakrti* is world stuff and is different from Him). *Prakrti* is the material cause of the world. All objects, bodies, organs of the soul are made out of *Prakrti*. The Lord energizes *Prakrti* through *Sri Maha Lakshmi*. *Avidya*, is a form of *Prakrti* obscuring the spiritual powers of the individual soul. Mahat,

Ahamkara, Buddhi, mind, the five *Jnanendriyas*, the five *Karmendriyas* and the five great elements are all modifications of the *Prakruti*.

Plurality and Classification of Jivas

There is plurality of *Jivas*. They are all atomic in size. No two *Jivas* are alike in character. There are different grades among them. The *Jivas* are different



from the Lord and *Prakruti*. Though limited in size, the *Jiva* pervades the body owing to the quality of its intelligence. They depend on the guidance of the Lord. The Lord impels the *Jivas* to action in accordance to their previous conduct. Bliss is their basic nature. However, the connections with material bodies due to their past *Karma* make them suffer and undergo the cycle of birth and death. This will go on till their impurities are removed. After that they attain *Moksha*.

As in *Vishishtadvaita* the souls are classified into *Nitya*, *Mukta* and *Baddha* categories. The following figure explains the classifications. Some souls are pre-ordained for final emancipation by their inherent aptitude. Some others are eternally destined either to wander in *Samsara* without end or to go to the world of darkness. *Sattvika* souls go to heaven. *Rajasa* souls revolve in *Samsara* and *Tamasa* souls fall into hell.

Bhakti is the means for Salvation

Bhakti is the only means for Salvation. All *Jivas* attain salvation through the grace of God. That grace comes to the devotee through the mediator – *Vaayu*, the son of Lord *Vishnu*. God cannot be approached directly. *Vaayu* is the mediator. The greater the intensity of devotion the greater will be His grace. Worship of God is the indispensable preliminary condition for obtaining His grace.

The worship of Sri Vishnu consists of four practices –

1. *Ankana*: Marking the body with His symbols
2. *Namakarana*: Giving names of the Lord to children
3. *Bhajana*: Singing His glories
4. *Smarana*: Constant practice of remembering God.

Achintya Bhedabheda Philosophy of Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

Chaitanya Mahaprabhu or *Gauranga* (1486 – 1534) is regarded as a great *Vaishnava* teacher. He was a saint as well as a social reformer. He had a large heart and accepted converts from Islam freely. His disciple *Haridas* was a Muslim *Fakir*. Popular belief is that he is an incarnation of Lord *Krishna*. He was a notable proponent of the *Vaishnava* school of *Bhakti Yoga* based on the philosophy of *Bhagavata Purana* and *Bhagavad Gita*. He worshipped the forms of *Radha* and *Krishna*. He has left one written record in *Sanskrit* called *Siksastaka*.

Chaitanya's epistemological, theological and ontological teachings are summarized as ten roots or maxims - *dasa mula*

1. The statements of *amnaya* (scripture) are the chief proof. By these statements the following nine topics are taught.
2. *Krishna* is the Supreme Absolute Truth.
3. *Krishna* is endowed with all energies.
4. *Krishna* is the ocean of *rasa*
5. The *jivas* (individual souls) are all separated parts of the Lord.
6. In bound state the *jivas* are under the influence of matter, due to their nature.
7. In the liberated state the *jivas* are free from the influence of matter, due to their nature.
8. The *jivas* and the material world are both different from and identical to the Lord.
9. Pure devotion is the practice of the *jivas*.
10. Pure love of *Krishna* is the goal.
11. *Krishna* is the only lovable blessing to be got.

Ultimate Reality

The ultimate reality is Lord *Vishnu*. He is *Sat-Chit-Ananda*. As he is free from the qualities of *Maya* and for this reason he is *Nirguna*. But then He is *Saguna* also because He is endowed with attributes – Omnipotent and Omniscience. He is the material and efficient cause of the world.

Just as the Sun has both light and heat, Lord *Krishna* has energies which are both mysterious and incomprehensible.

Creation

The Lord creates the Universe from the principle of *Mahat*. Beyond that, further work on creation is given to Lord *Brahma*. *Jivas* and matter are manifestation of God's energy.

Lord appears in Different Forms

The Lord assumes endless forms. He appears in *Avataras* also. He manifests as Brahman to *Jnaanis*; as *Paramatma* to yogins; and as Bhagavan full of glories and attributes to His *Bhaktas*.

Philosophy

His philosophy is called *Achintya Bhedabheda*. It represents the philosophy of inconceivable one-ness and also the difference. It occupies a position of midway between pure monism (God and soul as one entity) and pure dualism (God and soul are absolutely separate). The world and soul depend on God, though they are separate and distinct from Him. They are neither one with God nor different from Him. There is an incomprehensible "difference- non-difference" .

The Lord

Lord *Krishna* is recognized as *Svayam Bhagavan*. This title is used to represent to designate *Krishna* only. *Krishna* is accepted to be the source of all *Avatars*. The term *Svayam Bhagavan* refers to the absolute representation of the monotheistic God within Hinduism. God assumes infinite forms and the chief is that of *Krishna*. *Radha* is the essence of the delight giving power of Lord *Krishna*.

The Jiva

Jiva is of atomic size. He is the eternal servant of the God. He bears the same relationship to God that the Sun's rays bear to the Sun. The ray though it radiates from the Sun is not part and parcel of the Sun and it is also not the Sun. *Jiva* is partly similar to God in respect of his spirituality and at the same

time dissimilar to God due to his animal nature and susceptibility to the influence of *Maya*. Hence he is not God himself.

Jiva is bound by the power of *Maya*. *Maya* makes him forget his real, essential and divine nature. When he is thus influenced, he can have no knowledge of Lord *Krishna*. Lord *Krishna* out of his infinite mercy created the *Vedas* and reveals Himself to the *Jiva* through the media of scriptures, Guru and intuition. The *Jiva* is then convinced that the Lord *Krishna* is his Lord and saviour.

Jiva can have God realization through spiritual love or *Prema* to Lord *Krishna*. *Bhakti* overcomes the force of *Karma*. He is then freed from the cycle of birth and death. The devotee who has developed *Prema* is in constant communion with the Lord. He never cares for earthly objects or material success. *Krishna Prema* is regarded as a supreme attainment.

Other teachings

Veneration of the *Guru* is fundamental feature of *Sri Chaitanya's* teachings. Study of the *Vedas*, the *Bhagavata Purana* etc is inculcated. Mercy towards creatures, humility, purity of heart, truthfulness, freedom from mundane desires is essential. Distinction of caste is to be ignored. Anyone can obtain the grace of God.

Saiva Siddhanta Philosophy

The Saiva Siddhanta School is one of the most ancient schools of Saivism having a history of more than 2000 years. Currently it is popular mostly in the south of India. Its philosophy midway between *Sri Shankaracharya's Advaita* and *Sri Ramanujacharya's Vishishtadvaita*. Its literature consists mainly of

1. The 28 Saivaite Agamas
2. "Tirumurai" – a collection Saivaite hymns
3. "Periya Puranam" – collection of lives of Saivaite saints.
4. "Siva jnana bodhanam" written by Sri Maykandar
5. "Sivajnana suddhiya" written by Sri Arulnandi
6. Works by Sri Umapathi

Saivism was made popular in the south India by a number of well-known saints. The prominent ones among them are – *Appar, Sundarar, Sambandhar, and Manikkavachakar*.

The central doctrine of the *Saiva Siddhanta* philosophy is that Lord Shiva is the Supreme Reality. *Jiva* is of the same essence as *Shiva* but not identical. *Pati (soul), Pasu (bonds), Pasa (bonds)* and the principles that constitute the world – 36 *Tattvas* (as recognized by *Saivism*) are all Real.

Supreme Reality

The Supreme Reality is *Shiva*. He is infinite, pure consciousness, eternal, changeless, formless. Omnipotent, omniscient, beginning-less, ever pure, ever perfect. He is not limited by space or time. He is *Sat Chit Ananda*. Lord *Shiva* is God of infinite love. Out of infinite love for mankind, He assumes the form of a *Guru* so that all could know Him and attain *Shiva-Pada*. He helps to liberate individual souls from the earthly bonds.

The five activities of the Lord are called *Pancha Krityas*.

1. *Srishi* (creation)
2. *Sthiti* (preservation)
3. *Samhara* (destruction)
4. *Tirobhava* (veiling)
5. *Anugraha* (grace)

Shiva, Shakti and Maya

Lord *Shiva* pervades the whole world by *His Shakti*. In fact, He works through His *Shakti* and She is the conscious energy of the Lord. She is the very body of the Lord Himself. Lord *Shiva* is the first cause of the world; *Shakti* is the instrumental cause and *Maya* the material cause for it. This is best understood by an example. The potter is the first cause for the pot. The stick and the wheel are the instrumental causes while the clay is the material cause for the pot. *Shakti* (nature of *chaitanya*) acts as an intermediate link between Lord *Shiva* (pure consciousness) and matter (pure unconsciousness)

Evolution of Tattvas from Maya

The world undergoes evolution for the benefit of souls. In fact, the entire process of creation is for the sake of salvation of souls. The *Saiva Siddhanta* analyses the universe into thirty six *Tattwas* or principles. These *Tattwas* arise from *Maya*.

Maya is classified into two types. (a) *Shuddha Maya* (b) *Ashuddha Maya*. The *Shuddha Maya* (pure *Maya*) gives rise to five pure principles –

- (a) *Shiva Tattwa* (b) *Shakti Tattwa* (c) *Sadasiva Tattwa* (d) *Ishvara Tattwa* ;
(e) *Suddhavidya Tattwa*.

Using these five *Tattwas*, Lord *Shiva* creates bodies, organs, worlds etc for the pure souls.

The *Ashuddha Maya* is the cause for the *Prakruti- Maya*. This gives rise to twenty four *Tattwas* – *Pancha Mahabhutas* (air, water, ether, fire and earth); their five qualities (touch, taste, sound, colour and odour); Five *Karmendriyas*-

organs of action (feet, hands, rectum, genitals, mouth); Five *Jnanendriyas*-sensory organs (ears, eyes, nose, tongue, skin); four internal organs (mans, Buddhi, chitta and Ahamkara). These impure Tattwas are used by Lord Shiva for the creation of bodies, organs, worlds for impure souls.

Binding the soul

Similar to *Shiva*, the *Souls (Pasu)* by nature are infinite, all pervading, eternal and all knowing. However, due to their bonds (*Pasa*), they think they are finite, limited, ignorant and temporary. Three bonds or *Malas* (impurities) are responsible for this ignorance. (a) Anava (b) Karma (c) Maya

(a) **Anava**: This is the impurity that makes the all- pervading *Jiva* to think itself to be finite and atomic (*anu*). It is a natural impurity and will remain with the soul till it attains *Kaivalya* or sameness with Lord *Shiva*.

(b) **Karma**: On account of its limitations the soul does good or bad actions. *Karma* binds the soul to the consequences of its actions. *Karma* brings about the conjunction of the soul and the body. The results of the *karma* have to be worked out in the world and knowledge acquired.

(c) **Maya**: *Maya* is the material cause of this world. The soul gets experience and limited knowledge through *Maya*. It binds the *Jivas* to sense objects through desires and ignorance. The soul learns by long experience that this *Samsara* is full of pains and is transitory. The soul develops *Vairagya* (dispassion) and *Viveka* (discrimination between the real and un-real; between the permanent and impermanent). Eventually, the *Jiva* learns that it can attain eternal happiness only by attaining *Shivatva*. However, *Jiva* cannot know God through the knowledge of the senses or the knowledge gained by the mind. Yet, it is not as if He is unknowable. He can be known by *Pati-Jnana*, either through a Guru or by the Lord's grace. In *Shaiva Siddhanta* liberation is a gift from God. Knowledge of scriptures and routine prayers are not adequate for this ultimate gift. Lord Shiva, as a personal Guru, gifts it to devotees whom He judges as deserving.

Attainment of Shivatva or God realization

You must free yourself from the three bonds if you want to attain salvation. The bonds can be removed only through rigorous Tapas, proper discipline, help of a Guru and above all the grace of Lord Shiva. Four paths constitute

discipline and they are not alternatives to one another. Guru decides a suitable path for his disciple

a) **Charya** (observance): Involves serving Lord *Shiva* in a temple or a religious place. This is called *Dasa-marga* – the path of a servant. Various tasks such as – cleaning, cooking, gathering flowers etc may be performed.

b) **Kriya** (rites): Involves tasks such as worshipping the idol of Lord Siva, reciting mantras, dressing His idols etc. These are services similar to those performed by a son to his father. For this reason they are termed *Sat-putra-marga*.

c) **Yoga** (*Yama, Niyama, etc.*): Involves practicing *Yoga* exercises and meditation. This enables the devotee to live in constant company of the Lord. This is called *Sakha-marga* – the path of friendship

d) **Jnana** (path of knowledge): This is considered to be the direct and a superior path. It takes the *Jiva* closer to *Sat* or Truth.

When the aspirant practices in right earnest the path chosen for him, he obtains the grace of Lord *Shiva*. The Lord then instructs the soul, reveals Himself and illumines him. Attainment of *Shivatva* does not mean a complete merging of the soul with *Shiva*. The liberated soul does not lose its identity and continues as soul in God. *Shivatva* is thus an identity of essence in spite of difference – *Bheda- abheda*.

Jainism

Jainism is said to be an ancient system of thought founded by Jainas. The last of them in recorded history was Vardhamana Mahavira (540 BC) of Vaisali. The Jain tattvas, or principles, form the crux of Jain philosophy. It deals with the theory of karma, which provides the basis for the path of liberation. Jain literature explains nine fundamental tattvas. Without the proper knowledge of these tattvas, a person cannot progress spiritually. The proper understanding of this subject brings about (a) right faith (samyak- darshana), (b) right knowledge (samyak- jnana), and (c) right conduct to an individual. The nine tattvas are tabled below.

Jiva	Soul or living being (consciousness)
Ajiva	Non-living substances
Asrava	Influx of karma
Bandha	Bondage of karma
Punya	Virtue

Paap	Sin
Samvara	Stoppage or arrest of the influx of karma
Nirjara	Exhaustion of the accumulated karma
Moksha	Total liberation from karma

Punya and Papa are the diverse results of Asrava and Bandh. Some exponents of Jains do not treat them as separate tattvas. According to them, there are only seven principles instead of nine.

Soul (Jiva) or Living Being Substance

Jiva or Soul is the only substance, which in pure state possesses infinite knowledge, vision, power, and bliss. The pure soul is a liberated soul. The worldly soul is covered by karma particles. The karma subdues the natural qualities of the soul. The qualities of the impure soul are as follows:

- 1.Limited Knowledge, Vision, Power, and Bliss
- 2.Possesses a body (plants, hellish, animal, human, or angel)
- 3.Wanders into the cycle of life and death
- 4.Suffers from birth, death, pain, and pleasure

The ultimate goal of human life is to remove all karma particles, which are attached to the soul. Then the soul will become pure and liberated.

Non-Living (Ajiva) Substances

Except soul, everything else in the entire universe is non-living substance. The non-living substances are classified into five categories.

Matter	Pudgal
Space	Akasa
Time	Kaala or Samay
Medium of Motion	Dharmastikay
Medium of Rest	Adharmastikay

Out of five categories, only matter substance possesses body, colour, and senses. Karma is one of the categories of matter. It is known as karmic matter (karma pudgala). Karma particles are of very fine matter not perceptible to the senses. The entire universe is filled with such karmic matter. Every living being is covered by karmic matter from their eternal existence. It is the karmic matter that keeps the soul away from realization of its true nature. It is due to karma one feels pleasure and pain, reincarnates in the different form of life, acquires certain types of physical body, and the duration of life.

Asrava (Influx of karma)

Asrava is the cause, which leads to the influx of good and evil karma which lead to the bondage of the soul. Asrava may be described as attraction in the soul toward sense objects. The following are causes of Asrava or influx of good and evil karma:

Mithyatva	Delusion or ignorance
Avirati	Lack of self restraint
Pramada*	Unawareness of unmindfulness
Kasaya	Passions like anger, conceit, deceit, and lust
Yoga	Activities of the mind, speech, and body

Bandha (Bondage of karma)

Bandha is the attachment of karmic matter (karma pudgala) to the soul. The soul has had this karmic matter bondage from eternity. This karmic body is known as the karmana body or causal body or karma. Karmic matter is a particular type of matter which is attracted to the soul because of soul's delusion or ignorance, lack of self restraint, unmindfulness, passions, activities of body, mind, and speech. The soul, which is covered by karmic matter, continues acquiring new karma from the universe and exhausting old karma into the universe through the above mentioned actions at every moment. Because of this continual process of acquiring and exhausting karma particles, the soul has to pass through the cycles of births and deaths, and experiencing pleasure and pain. So under normal circumstances the soul cannot attain freedom from karma, and hence liberation. When karma attaches to the soul, its bondage to the soul is explained in the following four forms:

Prakruti bandha	Type of karma
Sthiti bandha	Duration of attachment of karma
Anubhava bandha	Intensity of attachment of karma
Pradesa bandha	Quantity of karma

Prakriti Bandha (type of karma)

When karmic matter attaches to the soul, it obscures soul's essential nature of perfect knowledge, perfect vision, bliss, perfect power, eternal existence, non corporeal, and equanimity. The different types of karma obscure different quality or attributes of soul. This is known as Prakruti bandha.

Prakruti bandha is classified into eight categories, according to the particular attribute of the soul that it obscures. These eight categories of karma are grouped into two major categories, known as Ghazi karma, which subdues the qualities of the soul, and Agate karma, which relates to physical body of the living beings.

Ghati karma

Jnana varaniya karma	Covers the soul's power of perfect knowledge.
Darasna varaniya karma	Covers the soul's power of perfect visions.
Mohniya karma	Generates the delusion in the soul in regard to its own true nature. The soul identifies itself with other eternal substances and relationships.
Antaraya karma	Obstructs the natural quality or energy of the soul such as charity and will power. This prevents the soul from attaining liberation. It also prevents a living being from doing something good and enjoyable.

Aghati Karma

Vedniya karma	Obscures the blissful nature of the soul and thereby produces pleasure and pain.
Nama karma	Obscures the non-corporeal existence of the soul and provides the body with its limitations, qualities, facilities, etc.
Gotra karma	Obscures the soul's characteristics of equanimity and determines the caste, family, social standing, and personality.
Ayu karma	Determines the span of life in one's birth, thus obscuring the soul's nature of eternal existence.

When a person destroys all of his ghati karmas, he attains keval jnana (absolute knowledge). At that time he is known as Arihant. However, he continues to live his human life until all his aghati karmas are destroyed. He attains liberation only after his death at that time all aghati karmas are destroyed.

Sthiti Bandha (Duration of attachment)

When karmic matter attaches to the soul it remains attached for certain duration before it produces the result. The duration of the attachment is determined according to the intensity or dullness of the soul's passions or actions when the karma is being attached to the soul. After producing the result, karma will separate from the soul. Anubhava Bandha or Rasa Bandha (Intensity of attachment): What fruits the karmic matter will produce are determined at the time of attachment by varying degrees of soul's passions.

Pradesa Bandha (Quantity of karma)

The intensity or dullness of the soul's action determines the quantum of karmic matter that is drawn towards the soul for attachment.

Punya (Virtue)

The influx of karmic matter due to good activities of the mind, body, and speech with the potential of producing pleasant sensations is called punya or virtue. Activities such as offering food, drink, shelter, purifying thought, physical and mental happiness result in producing punya karma.

Paap (Sin)

The influx of karmic matter due to evil activities of the mind, body, and speech with the potential of producing unpleasant sensations is called papa or sin. Activities such as violence, untruth, theft, unchastely, attachment to objects, anger, conceit, deceit, lust result in producing papa karma.

Samvara (Stoppage of Karma)

The method that stops fresh karma from attaching into the soul is called samvara. This process is a reverse process of asrava. It can be accomplished by constant practice of:

Right belief

Observance of vows

Awareness

Passionlessness

Peacefulness of vibratory activities

Nirjara (Exhaustion of the attached karma):

The attached karma exhausts themselves by producing their results when it is time for them to do so. At that time new karma attach to the soul. Unless the attached karma is exhausted before they start producing the results, it becomes difficult for the soul to be free. Therefore, it is necessary to exhaust all karmas before their maturity. This is done by rigorous austerities and penance. This process is called nirjara.

Moksha (Liberation)

Moksha is the liberation of the soul after complete exhaustion or elimination of all karmas. A liberated soul regains totally its original attributes of perfect knowledge, vision, power, and bliss. It climbs to the top of Lokas and remains their forever in its blissful and unconditional existence. It never returns again into the cycles of birth, life, and death. This state of the soul is the liberated or perfect state, and this is called "Nirvana."

Buddhism

Buddhism is the philosophy of withdrawal from Samsara which is the source of all suffering. Some say that since Buddha held that all is misery he is a pessimist. It is not so. He, like all those who went before him, found that every one seeks to get rid of misery and which is of different degrees. All experiences even the apparent pleasurable turn out to be only momentary enjoyments leading to greater unhappiness. Practices of penance or tapasya or Brahmacharya or performances of rituals and yajnas are in fact irrational since they do not discover the cause of this misery. Buddha was the first thinker to affirm that misery can be got rid by natural means provided we can find out the natural cause. This natural cause he found was desire. He discovered or analysed the chain of causes and effects issuing from this primeval or beginningless desire which leads to misery through avidya. The whole body of ours is just a conglomerate (skandha) or grouping of desires (trishna) and it is perishable. According to Buddha the soul or ego is perishable even as the body. Thus Buddha discounted the existence of a permanent soul or ego, though he affirmed the existence of a perpetual

stream of karma from one individual to another. The real avidya then is - not to know that all is suffering; not to know the cause of suffering; not to know that this suffering can be got rid of; and lastly not to know the path which leads to the cessation of suffering. Thus the central teaching of the Buddha, around which all his other teachings revolve, is the Four Noble Truths:

1. All beings, human and otherwise, are afflicted with all sorts of disappointments, sadness, discomfort, anxiety etc. In short they are subject to suffering.
2. The cause of this suffering is craving, born of the illusion of a 'soul'
3. Suffering has a final end in the experience of Enlightenment (Nibbana) which is the complete letting go of the illusion of 'soul' and the consequent ending of craving and ill will.
4. This peaceful and blissful Enlightenment is achieved through a gradual training, a path called the Middle Way, or the Eightfold Path.

The way to the end of all suffering is called the Middle Way because it avoids the two extremes of sensual indulgence and self-mortification. Only when the body is in reasonable comfort but not overindulged, does the mind have the clarity and strength to meditate deeply and discover the truth. This Middle Way consists of the diligent cultivation of virtue, meditation and wisdom, which are explained in more detail as the Eightfold Path:

1. Right Understanding
2. Right Thought
3. Right Speech
4. Right Action
5. Right Livelihood
6. Right Effort
7. Right Mindfulness
8. Right Concentration ('Right' in the sense of being conducive to happiness and Enlightenment.)

Right Speech, Action and Livelihood constitute the training in virtue or morality. For a practising lay Buddhist it consists of maintaining the five Buddhist precepts, which are to refrain from:

1. Deliberately causing the death of any living being;

2. Intentionally taking for one's own the property of another;
3. Sexual misconduct, in particular adultery;
4. Lying and breaking promises;
5. Drinking alcohol and taking stupefying drugs which lead to a weakening of mindfulness and moral judgment.

Buddha laid emphasis on the Samadhi through Jnana (Dhyana). He emphasised the monk-life of homelessness. Buddhist is one who cultivates the highest states of consciousness through Samadhi that leads to Nirvana or the dissolution of the chain of causation, cycle of births, and the extinguishment of the ego (the will to live).

Buddha negated individual soul's permanent existence. He did not speculate on the Ultimate Nature of Reality, which he negatively described as the Sunya or Nirvana, where there is total extinguishment of all change and process. Buddha thus is said to have taught the doctrine of un-atma or non-atman. He was also against the sacrificial means for getting out of misery. He did not accept the authoritativeness of the Veda. He also did not admit of anything permanent in this world. He however aimed at arriving at a state of non-change or nirvana which he saw is possible only through the annihilation of the ego, which he found to be just a conglomerate (skandha) of material elements which are bound by karma-avidya or trishna.

The value of Buddhism lies in the fact that it expresses a new meaning of dharma, contrasting it with karma. Dharma means the essential principle of motion or activity which reverses the karma-wheel, till all karma is extinguished and this is nirvana. Ethical life is the method of attainment of cessation of suffering both individual and collective. Dharma in the new sense comprising the eightfold path without the Vedic dharma became the most excellent truth of this system.

Right Understanding and Thought are the manifestations of Buddha-Wisdom which ends all suffering, transforms the personality and produces unshakeable serenity and tireless compassion. According to the Buddha, without perfecting the practice of virtue it is impossible to perfect meditation, and without perfecting meditation it is impossible to arrive at Enlightenment Wisdom.

Karma

Kamma means 'action'. According to the law of karma there are inescapable results of our intentional actions. There are deeds of body, speech and mind that lead to one's own harm, to others' harm, or to the harm of both. Such

deeds are called bad or unwholesome kamma. They are motivated by craving, ill will or delusion, and because they bring painful results they should not be done. There are also deeds of body, speech and mind that lead to one's own well-being, to the well-being of others, or to the well-being of both. Such deeds are called good or wholesome kamma. They are motivated by generosity, compassion or wisdom, and because they bring pleasant results they should be done as often as possible. The Buddha pointed out that no one, divine or otherwise, has the power to stop the consequences of good and bad kamma.

Re-birth

Karma and rebirth offer a plausible explanation to the obvious inequalities of birth - why some are born into great wealth whereas others are born into pathetic poverty; why some children enter this world healthy and full-limbed whereas others enter it deformed and diseased. A creator God is redundant in Buddha's scheme.

Soul

The Buddha taught that there is no 'soul', no essential and permanent core to a living being. Instead, that which we call a 'living being', human or otherwise, can be seen to be but a temporary coming-together of many parts and activities - when complete it is called a 'living being', but when the parts have separated and the activities have ceased it is not called a 'living being' anymore.

Chapter XIII - Samskaras

Introduction

The rites that pertain to the various stages of life of a man are called *Samskaras*. They are, in fact, purificatory rites which sanctify the life of the Hindu. They give a spiritual touch to the important events in the life of an individual from conception to cremation.

For the Hindu life is considered a sacred journey in which each milestone, marking a major biological and emotional change, is consecrated through a sacred ceremony. The word *Samskara* means a betterment of a thing. The cleansing process set in motion by the observance of *Samskaras* lead to the better of life and qualifies a person for spiritual upliftment. It is as if there is a deep rooted tendency in the heart the man to bring the chief events of his life in contact with a higher power. The variety of rites and rituals related to *Samskaras* help in the formation and development of personality. In the *Parashara Smruti* it is said, "Just as a picture is painted with various colours, so the character of a person is formed by undergoing various cascaras." Thus, the Hindu sages realised the need for consciously guiding and moulding the character of individuals, instead of letting them grow in a haphazard manner.

Origins

Kalpa Sutras are exegetical texts of the Vedas. Among these texts are

Srauta Sutras: Explain the rituals of sacrifices

Grihya Sutras:Explains rituals in domestic lives

Dharma Sutras:Deals with ethics, customs and laws

Grihya sutras designate the rules and customs for domestic life, including rites of passage and other home ceremonies, which are widely followed to this day.

Some important *Grihya sutras* are (1) *Apasthamba* (2) *Aswalayan* (3) *Boudhayana* (4) *Bharadwaja* (5) *Gobhila* (6) *Hiranyakesia* (7) *Jaimineeya* (8) *Khadira* (9) *Manava* (10) *Paraskara* (11) *Sankhayana* (12) *Varaha*.

They belong to different *Vedas* and *Shakas* and for this reason differ slightly in their contents.

Forty Samskaras

Forty *Samskaras* are prescribed in the scriptures. They are –

The forty *Samskaras* which are meant to purify the individual self consist of the following:

- a) Garbhadhana, pumsavana, simanta, jatakarma, namakarana, annaprasana, chooda karma, upanayana,
- b) The four rites like prajapatya (Vedavratas) performed during gurukulavasa (the years the celibate student spends in the home of his guru),
- c) The ritual bath on completion of gurukulavasa,
- d) Marriage,
- e) The five Mahayajnas performed everyday by the householder. (The pancha - mahayajnas are: brahmayajna, devayajna, pitrayajna, manusyayajna and bhutayajna. The chanting of the Vedas constitutes brahmayajna. Sacrifices and puja are devayajna. Tarpana is pitrayajna. Feeding guests is anusyayajna. And offering of bali to various creatures is bhutayajna.)
- f) Seven pakayajnas (astaka (anvastaka), sthalipaka, parvana, sravani, agrahayani, caitri, asvayuji)
- g) Seven haviryajnas (agniyadhana, agnihotra, darsa-purnamasa, agrayana, caturmasya, nirudhapasubandha, sautramani.)
- h) Seven somayajnas to be conducted by the householder (agnistoma, atyagnistoma, uktya, sodasi, vajapeya, atiratra, aptoryama)

The ancient seers observed that - If we wish to get released from the cycle of birth and death, we will have to contend against various obstacles like our attachments, desires, our feelings of hatred and fear. We will have to be disciplined and observe the rules related to our daily routine. If we can control our mind, subdue our passions and ego, then our feelings of anger, hatred, fear and sorrow will gradually wither away. The *Samskaras* and *Atmagunas* are interconnected. They will help us reach our goal of release from *Samsara*.

Prominent Samskaras

Among the *Samskaras* listed above some are prominent. They are sixteen in number. They are given below.

No	Stage	Name	Details
1	Pre-natal	Garbhadana	<i>Garbhadana</i> sacrifices the creative act. The husband repeats <i>Mantras</i> during <i>Ritu-Santi</i> ceremony. The new child is conceived amidst the vibrations of <i>Mantras</i> .
2	Pre-birth	Pumsavana	Performed in the 3 rd month of pregnancy with <i>Mantras</i> . The food sheath and vital sheath of the child is formed.
3	Pre-birth	Simantonnayana	Performed on the 6 th or 8 th month of pregnancy with <i>Mantras</i> . This protects the mother from evil influences and bestows health on the child. Recitation of <i>Mantras</i> and performance of the ceremony help in shaping the body of the child.
4	At birth	Jatakarma	Performed immediately after the birth of the child. The father welcomes the new born child. He prays for its long life, intelligence and well being.
5	Naming ceremony	Namakarana	Usually performed on the 11 th day. There is a practice in choosing the name for the child, based on the <i>Nakshatra</i> or asterism under which the child is born. One of the many names of Lord is commonly chosen.
6	3 rd month	Nishkrama	In the third month the child is allowed viewing of the fire and moon. In the fourth month he is taken out of the house for the first time to a <i>mandir</i> for a viewing of the Lord. The child is also exposed to the Sun.
7	6 th month	Annaprasana	Performed on the 6 th month. The child is given solid food for the first time. <i>Mantras</i> are recited and oblations offered to various deities.
8	1 st or 3 rd year	Chooda Karma	The tonsure or shaving of the head. During ancient times, they used to have " <i>sikha</i> " which was considered essential while conducting rites. It was worn in the ceremony with the chanting of <i>Mantras</i> . Vows are made to <i>Parameshvara</i> during the ceremony.
9	1 st or 3 rd year	Karnavedha	The <i>Karnavedha</i> or year boring ceremony is also performed with <i>Chooda Karma</i> .
10	5 th as per <i>Manu</i> & 8 th	Upanayanam	The most important ceremony that marks the beginning of the next stage in life- youth. It is his

	year as per <i>Yajnavalkya</i>		second or spiritual birth. <i>Upanayana</i> means bringing near – the boy is brought near to his spiritual teacher – <i>Guru</i> . The <i>Guru</i> invests him with the sacred thread, <i>Yagnopavita</i> , and initiates him by giving him the <i>Gayatri Mantra</i> . It is the start of the <i>Brahmacharya</i> ashram. This initiation makes him, <i>Dwija</i> , the twice born. The boy begins the life of study. He studies <i>Veda vidya</i> . It would take, normally 12 to 16 years to complete the learning of one Veda along with its <i>angas</i> . Refer below where the significance of the sacred thread is explained.
11	End of student stage	Samavarthana	Having completed the <i>Vedic</i> studies and the <i>Vratas</i> , the student presents an appropriate gift to his <i>Guru</i> . He then seeks a permission to take a formal bath signifying the end of studentship. He then returns home and performs the <i>Samavarthana</i> or returning ceremony.. He is now ready to enter the next stage in life – Marriage
12	Marriage ceremony	Vivaha	This marks the entry into the second <i>ashrama</i> . He begins his life as a house holder
13	Married life	Grahastya ashrama	He pays his spiritual debts by sacrifice, by study. He procreates children.
14	Renouncing the house holder's life	Vanaprasta ashrama	Man withdraws himself from all worldly activities. He prepares himself for taking <i>Sanyasa</i> .
15	Renouncing the world	Sanyasa ashrama	Renounces the world and leads a life of study and meditation.
16	Funeral rites	Anthyesthi	The man dies. His funeral rites are performed by his son and heir.

Notes:

Significance of sacred thread and other symbols

The sacred thread or *Yagnopavita* consists of three threads knotted together. The significance is that he who wears it should have control over his mind, speech and body (thought, word and deed). The holy thread itself signifies various triads, viz, Sat, Chit, *Ananda*; *Brahma*, *Vishnu*, *Shiva*; etc.

Pancha Maha Yagnas

Every house holder is expected to perform five great sacrifices every day. They are –

- ❖ *Brahma Yajna*: This is a sacrifice to *Brahman* or the *Vedas* or the sages.
- ❖ *Deva Yajna*: This is a sacrifice to the celestials.
- ❖ *Pithru Yajna*: These are sacrifices to one's ancestors discharged through the offering of *Pindas* during oblations
- ❖ *Manushya Yajna*: The *Athithi satkaram* or feeding one's guests with respect. Signifies one's debts to the community
- ❖ *Bhoota Yajna*: This *Samskara* consists of feeding the living entities (considered as extended human family) other than human beings.

Gunas

Apart from *Samskaras*, *Atma Gunas* help remove the ills caused by the sensory attachments. For this, we have to cultivate eight *Atma Gunas*. The *Samskaras* and *Atma Gunas* are interconnected. The list of *Atma Gunas* is given below:

No	<i>Atma Guna</i>	Details
1	<i>Daya</i>	Implies love for all creatures. Such love is the very fulfilment of life. There is no greater happiness than that derived by loving others. <i>Daya</i> is the backbone of all qualities.
2	<i>Ksanti</i>	It means patience. One kind of <i>Ksanti</i> is to patiently suffer disease, poverty, misfortune etc. The second is forgiveness. This implies loving a person even when he causes pain and suffering to you.
3	<i>Anasuya</i>	<i>Anasuya</i> is Sage <i>Atri's</i> wife. She was utterly free from any kind of jealousy. It is for this reason she is called as <i>Anasuya</i> .
4	<i>Saucha</i>	<i>Saucha</i> derives its name from <i>Suchi</i> . And <i>Suchi</i> means cleanliness. Cleanliness here refers to purity to be maintained in all matters – personal cleanliness, food, dress etc
5	<i>Anayasa</i>	<i>Anayasa</i> is the opposite of <i>Ayasa</i> - which refers to effort, exertion etc. <i>Anayasa</i> means to have a feeling of lightness, to take things easy and never to lose your temper.
6	<i>Mangala</i>	Indicates the need to keep an air of auspiciousness, dignity and purity. This by itself radiates a glow of happiness.
7	<i>Akarpanya</i>	Miserliness is the quality of a <i>Krpana</i> . <i>Akarpanya</i> is the

		opposite of miserliness. One must be generous
8	<i>Asprha</i>	<i>Sprha</i> means desire. <i>Asprha</i> is the opposite of it - that is being without desire. Desire has been the root cause for all troubles over the ages. It has, time and again, led to a complete destruction of the person. Endless performance of rites and continuous meditation eventually will lead a person to get over desires.

Ashrama Dharmas

Human beings have the ability for discrimination and judgement. And this makes them unique among all the created beings. For an orderly development of this ability the scriptures have prescribed a number of *Samskaras*. A careful following of these *Samskaras* leads one to attain the *Purusharthas* – goals in life.

Ashrama Dharma divides man's life into four stages – *Brahmacharya*, *Grhastha*, *Vanaprastha* and *Sanyasa*. Among these four *Grhastha ashrama* is the most important one. The other three ashrams depend on it. Under the shelter of a mother all creatures grow. Similarly, *Grhasthashrama* provides a shelter for the other three *ashrams*.

Brahmachari Grhasthascha
Vaanaprasthasathaa yatihah
Yetae grhastha

Vivaha Samskara

A man and woman enter the *Grhastha Ashrama* through marriage. Together they face a number of challenges and perform a number of duties. They raise their children, educate them and train them to be model citizens. When this is done the objective of marriage becomes successful.

On the occasion of a marriage friends and relatives gather for the function. They offer prayers for the prosperity of the family. Elders bless the youngsters. This procedure offers for the spiritual and social advancement of individuals.

The bondage of marriage holds the society together. Society cannot be regarded as composed of individuals. The true social unit is the family. It is essentially on the plan of the family that the society is constructed. In a family the social and personal instincts are blended and reconciled. To attack the institution of the family is an alarming symptom of social disorganisation.

Vivaaha, *Parinaya*, *Kalyana*, *Panigrhana*, *Udvahana* are Sanskrit words for marriage.

All the rituals carried out during the marriage ceremony have some meaning. Youngman looking to get married must be careful and alert. The same caution needs to be exercised by the parents of the girl. Marriages between two people having similar status in terms of looks, age and education, generally, lead to happy a married life. The rituals and procedures followed by people during a marriage vary from region to region based on family backgrounds.

Typical traditional steps, followed in the south of India are being described.

The steps are – (1) Arrival of the bridegroom (2) Honouring the bridegroom (3) Maha Sankalpa (4) Kanya dana (5) Madhuparka (6) Tying the Mangal sutra (7) Talambralu (8) Kankana Dharana (9) Brahma mudi (10) Pradhana Homa (11) Pani grhana (12) Sapta padi (13) Arundhati Darshana (14) Pledges between the bride and the groom (15) Asheervad

Arrival of the bridegroom and honouring him

A day before the auspicious time for the marriage the bridegroom arrives along with his friends and relatives and reaches the place organised by the *Kanya data*. The bridegroom is honoured. Discussions related to the family connections and *Gotra* take place.

Maha Sankalpa

This is an important step. During this time discussions take place mainly as to who is doing the *Kanya dana* (giving away in marriage), to whom it is being done and where it is being done.

Kanya dana

The bridegroom is symbolically viewed as Lord *Lakshmi Narayana*. The father of the bride, Kanya data, then washes the feet of the bridegroom. During this occasion the Kanya data says –

Kanyam kanaka sampannam
Kanaka abharanairvrtaam
Daasyaami Vishnave' tubhyam
Brahma loka jigeeshaya

“With a view to attain Brahma loka, considering you to be equivalent to Lord Vishnu, I give the hand of my daughter who is wearing all the precious gold ornaments”. Also during the marriage the bride vows “ I will never leave you under any circumstances of Dharma, Artha and Kama”. The bridegroom also pledges that he too will never desert her. “ *Dharmecha, arthecha, kaamecha naati charaami, naati charitavya*”

Madhuparka

During the marriage the bridegroom is offered “*Madhuparka*”. In a small vessel honey and yoghurt are mixed and offered. The vessel is tied with threads. It is symbolic of a great honour.

At an auspicious time, a small screen that separates the bride and the groom will be moved away and bridegroom will view the bride. This is called “*Sameekshana*”. The bridegroom then places Cumin (Jeera) and Jaggery on the head of the bride. Mantras are chanted at the time. The same ritual is performed by the bride as well. It is believed that the ritual will assist in increasing the affection between the couple many folds. Then the bridegroom ties a rope made out of sacred grass (darbha) around the waist of the bride. This ritual is called “*Yoktra Dharana*”. This ritual enables the bride to accept the responsibilities for conducting the Yagna called life.

Tying of the Mangala sutra

Tying of the *Mangala sutra* is the most important event in the marriage *Samskara*. Since it is considered as the key to all auspicious events, it is called *Mangala sutra*. The bridegroom invokes Goddess *Lakshmi* during the event and seeks Her blessings. All the elders, witnessing the marriage, touch the *Mangala sutra* and bless the couple. The bridegroom ties the *Mangala sutra* around the neck of the bride with three knots. The three knots represent the three deities – the Lords *Brahma*, *Vishnu* and *Shiva*. The welfare of the couple and the long term union is assured by the *Mangala sutra* and the three knots on it.

The tying of the *Mangala sutra* is conducted in front of a fire ceremony. *Agni*, the God of fire bears the witness. The following *Mantra* is uttered by the bridegroom during the ceremony.

***Maangalyam tantu naanena
Mama jeevana hetunaa
Kante' bandhaami subhage'
Twam jeeva sharadaam shatam***

Meaning “ I am tying this *Mangala sutra*, the cause for my living, around your neck. May you live a complete one hundred years”. The *Mangala sutra* is regarded as very auspicious.

Talambraalu

It is also referred to as “*Akshata aaropanam*”. During this ceremony a number of mantras are recited by traditional people. They all wish the couple – auspicious events to occur, for the progeny to increase, for prosperity and for them to lead a harmonious life.

Kankana

This signifies the *Rakshabandan*. It is tied to the right hand of the bridegroom and to the left hand of bride. They are retained for three days and removed on the fourth day.

Brahma mudi

The word Mudi refers to a knot. The end of the bride’s sari is tied to the “*Uttareeya*” (upper garment) of the bridegroom. This is called the *Brahma mudi*. This is said to signify the closeness and affection of the couple. During this ceremony, prayers are offered to Gods like *Varuna* to grant the couple stability and courage.

Principal Homa ceremony

The first *Homa* (ritual by fire) that the newlywed couple perform is called “*Pradhaana Homa*”. This will mark the beginning of the many *Homas* they would be performing over the coming years. This is called the *Pradhaana Homa*. The mantras that the bridegroom would be uttering are aimed at the growth and well being of their children.

While performing the *Homa*, the bridegroom will be invoking a number of Gods and adding *Dravyas to the fire*. It is believed that Lord Agni acts as the face of all Gods.

Panigrahana

During the marriage ceremony, the bridegroom will hold the five fingers of bride’s right hand. This is called *Panigrahana*. The bridegroom also pronounces “ during this auspicious occasion I am holding your hand. Due to the grace of the Lord, may we lead a long life and have worthy children”. Mantras praying for the health, wealth and Jnana are uttered. Such rituals bring to focus the auspiciousness of the occasion and the binding brought about by the marriage. While giving away Sita in marriage to Lord Rama, King Janaka says –

*Iyam Sita mama suta
Saha dharmachari tava
Prateecha chainam bhadram te’
Panim grshnishwa paaneena.*

“ *Sita* is my daughter. She is now your *Saha dharmacharinee*. Please accept her. May auspiciousness befall on you” – is the meaning for this *Shloka*. This indicates that rituals such as these are being followed in India for thousands of years.

Sapta padhi

Couples, who got married taking oaths in front of a Homa, take seven steps around the fire. This is called *Sapta Padhi*. A lot of importance is attached to this ritual. It is believed that even acquaintances who take seven steps together end up as close friends- "*Sakyam Saaptapadeenam*".

The mantras uttered during the ritual reveal that each step that the couple take during this ritual has significance.

Arundhathi Darshana

After the marriage ceremony has been completed, the couple are taken out and asked to view the stars – *Dhruva* and *Arundhati*. The significance is that the couple conduct themselves like the legendary *Dhruva* for steadfastness and *Arundhati* for fidelity

Pledges between the Bride and the Groom

The couple take a number of vows during the marriage. They are in the form of Sanskrit mantras.

Examples of vows from the bridegroom would look like this "May God Agni, bless you to develop an affection for the house you are entering. It is due to the grace of Lord Brahma that we have now become husband and wife. May HE bless us with long life. Similarly, the vows taken by the bride would look like this " You have taken my heart and I am married to you. I accept you as a person having a lot of samskara. Together we pray for a great progeny. May Lord Brahma bless us that we will always live with a great affection for each other. May Goddess Saraswathy bless us that we always communicate with each other with a lot of affection.

Asheervad

After that all the elders attending the marriage bless the couple. The blessings of elders do not go a waste.

Friends and relatives present the couple with items that would be useful in their day to day life. However, the Shastras do not mention or permit for dowries to be given on the occasion

Miscellaneous

The tilak that the bride and bridegroom wear during marriage ceremony are signs of auspiciousness. Exchange of beetle leaves is done on all auspicious occasions. New cloths are worn during the marriage ceremony. The bride is well decorated and looks the most important person on the occasion.

Chapter XIV - Seers of Kaliyuga

Introduction

As we all know, according to Hindu cosmology there are four *Yugas* – *Krita (Satya)*, *Tretaa*, *Dwaapara* and *Kali*. In the *Krita Yuga*, people had lot of mental strength (*manobala*) and hence the worship was done mentally. In the *Tretaa Yuga*, mental strength reduced and worship was done through the performance of sacrifices. In the *Dwaapara Yuga*, pujas etc started and God was worshipped in people's houses. In the present *Kali Yuga*, *Bhakti* is the only means to realize God. The lives and teachings of a number of spiritual leaders and *Acharyas* of this age aimed at making people understand *Bhakti* as the only means to liberation. To name a few well known saints – *Alwars* (from South India), *Sri Shankaracharya*, *Sri Ramanujacharya*, *Sri Madhvacharya*, *Sri Vallabhacharya*, *Sri Krishna Caitanya*, *Meera Bai*, *Sri NamDev*, *Tulasidas*, *Tukaram*, *Sri Annamacharya*, *Sri Tyagaraja*, 63 *Nayanar* saints from south India. It is the support of their lives that gave them more authority to their teachings than the philosophical writings of mere arm-chair philosophers and critics. Some of the miracles and extraordinary incidents attributed to them have been criticized to be projections of the pious imaginations of their followers. If nothing else it is, perhaps, the way of the Indian mind to convey the idea that these saints are endowed with extraordinary divine powers. But for this extraordinary power in them, their teachings could not have survived so many centuries influencing the lives and thoughts of innumerable generations of people.

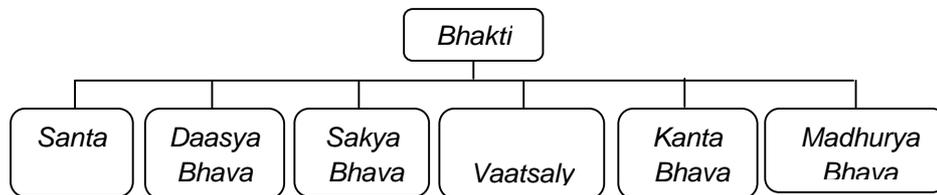
Before we proceed, one has to understand what *Bhakti* is and what it is not. It certainly is not a noisy session. It is also not a session where special poojas are promised provided certain desires are fulfilled. It is a firm, ceaseless and unshakable love of God, which surpasses every other form of affection and attachment, and which is based on and inspired by a full knowledge of His transcendent majesty. This is the only method by which one can attain *Moksha* or liberation. *Prapatti* (*Sharanagati* - absolute surrender to the Supreme Self) is considered to be even superior to *Bhakti*. It calls for an unshakeable faith in God and His saving grace. All actions by way of body, words, mind, senses, *Buddhi*, and the self – are all dedicated to the Supreme Being- *Paramatma*.

The lives and teachings of these saints of *Kaliyuga* aimed at the knowledge of God as the means to liberation. Such knowledge is called *Vidya* and the others as *Avidya* for it is not liberating knowledge – though not ignorance. *Sri Narada* expressed that even *ekaayana* did not help him to realize *Brahman* or the liberating knowledge (*Chandogya Upanishad*). It just means that a mechanical knowledge, conceding that

it is thorough, of the know-how of the *Agamas* will not help in realizing God. The key is that a deep insight into the love of God alone can lead to liberation.

The seers of the Kaliyuga were great experimenters in the spiritual life and adopted all modes of approach to the Divine Lord. God is, for them, pre-eminently the father, the mother, the friend, the husband or the Master. It is one of the greatest discoveries of the current seers (as different from the seers of the Vedic age) to show that a relation-less reality is a non-entity and is not an object of experience. It is a fully articulated relational reality that is the substance of experience.

The Yoga of *Bhakti* or devotion is a lot easier than the *Jnana* Yoga or philosophical meditations. In *Bhakti* Yoga, the devotee develops a very close relationship with the Lord. Gradually, he cultivates any one of the six *Bhavas* according to his nature. The six *bhavas* are –



The *bhavas* differ both in type and intensity. In the figure shown above the *bhavas* are arranged in the order of increasing intensity from left to right.

Santa bhava: *Dhruva* and *Prahlada* felt that God is their father. This is *Santa bhava*.

Daasya bhava: The devotee behaves like a servant. The roles played by *Sri Hanuman* and *Adi Sessa* towards the Lord are ideal examples.

Sakya bhava: In this case there is a sense of equality as between two friends. *Arjuna's* relationship with *Sri Krishna* is an excellent example.

Vaatsalya bhava: The devotee treats the Lord as his / her child. *Yashoda* and *Kaushalya* had this bhava.

Kanta bhava: This is the love of a wife towards her husband. *Sita* and *Rukmani* displayed this bhava.

Madhurya bhava: In this case the lover and beloved become one through the intensity of love. This also results in the most intense feeling of God love. Thinking, praising and singing the devotees are totally lost to the world. In the *Bhaagavata Purana* Lord *Vishnu* says "I, to whom devotees are dear, am like a slave without any freedom. My heart is in the grip of such devotees".

Alwars

Among the great seers of the present age we have selected the Alwars of South India for discussion. This is because the individual contributions of the great saints be it from the north or south of India, cannot be really distinguished. The *Tevaram* and the *Tiruvaachakam* which are the hymns of the *Saiva* saints of south India, the *Divya Prabandham* of the *Alwar* saints of south India, the songs of *Kabir* and *Meerabai*, the *Abhangas* of *Tukaram* and the *Ramayana* of *Tulsidas* - all of which are the outpourings of great realised souls – are wonderful scriptures. They contain the essence of the Vedas.

We are in the presence of mystics whose consciousness does not work in compartments. Evidently, deep mystics as all of them really are, they have revealed a new experience to the world consciousness – similar to the Vedic seers who saw all deities in one.

The *Alwars* composed approximately 4000 Tamil verses. In the 9th – 10th century, the philosopher saint *Nathamuni* took extraordinary steps to recover these verses. Saint *Nathamuni* arranged them as the *Divya Prabandham* (Divine collection), set many of them to music and rejuvenated the tradition of formally reciting them in temples

All the *Alwars* uniformly held that love of God is an end in itself. For them even *Moksha* is an inferior goal to the love of God. It is not merely the *Anubhava* or experience of the Divine nature in all its transcendence that was sought but the unconditional opportunity of service to the Divine Himself was prayed for. The knowledge of Him is blissful but the service to Him is even more blissful. This absolute and unconditional *Bhakti* is unattainable except to those who have accepted God as the saviour and end. One in a few millions might have reached this stage.

Alwars are said to have been the translators of the Veda – especially *Nammaalvar* and *Alwar Sathakopa*. It does not mean that a word to word translation has been made. On the contrary, the Tamil hymns breath the same spiritual atmosphere of the Vedic literature that sing the glories of one Supreme Being. The *Alwars* are *Vaishnavaites* seers, and are usually counted as twelve. They are mystics *par excellence* and their verses are an outpour of their mystic experiences. 4000 of their verses are collectively called *Naalaayira Divya Prabandham*. The *Alwars* belong to different periods. They came from a wide cross section of the society – brahmana, shudra and panchama. However, it is traditionally regarded that all the *Alwars* were special *amshas* of Lord *Narayana*.

Alwar is a tamil expression meaning - one who rules, who has mastery over others and command them. The *Alwars* teachings are like commands for the laymen. In a

way they commanded the Lord also by their devotion. They worshipped Lord Vishnu both as immanent in the universe and as transcendent beyond it. He appeared to them both as formless (*Nirguna*) and with form (*Saguna*). They believed that for the benefit of mankind the Supreme being, Sriman *Narayana*, assumed forms – (1) in Sri *Vaikuntam* with divine attributes as *Paravasudeva* (2) He appeared in the *Vyuha* form in the milky ocean for the purposes of creation (3) on the earth as Sri *Rama* and Sri *Krishna* and other *avatars* (4) He dwells permanently in the hearts of *yogins* as *Antaryamin* (5) In the images in temples erected for the Lord (*archa* form). According to them the one God *Sriman Narayana* appears in two spheres – one in the transcendent, which is called *Nitya Vibhuti* and the other in the material Universe which they called as *Lila Vibhuti*. They saw Him everywhere and in everything. They realized the presence of God in idols and sang in their praise with ecstatic joy and enthusiasm.

For the *Alvars* the knowledge of God was not a mere intellectual perception but one of direct *Anubhava*. Some worshipped Him as their father, some as beloved, some as their friend and companion and others as their master. For them the Supreme Self is not formless and attributes-less. On the contrary, He is full of divine attributes and not a *Nirguna Brahma*.

First Three Alvars (Mudhal Alvars)

*Poigai*alwar, *Boodatalwar* and *Peyai*aalwar are collectively called as *Mudhal Alvars* or the first *Alvars*. They lived during the same period.

Poigaialwar:

Tradition tells us that the first of them, *Poigai*alwar, was born at *Kanchipuram*, under the star *Sravanam* (*thiruvonam*) in the month of October – November (*Aippasi*). The period is reported to be the 7th C AD. The *Aippasi* month is the month of *Deepavali*. The saint who lit the earliest lamps on *Vaishnavism* was born during the month when the festival of lamps is celebrated!

The city of *Kanchipuram* has two sections – *Vishnu Kanchi* is full of *Sri Vishnu* temples and *Shiva Kanchi* has a number of *Sri Shiva* temples. *Yadhothakaari* temple is located in *Vishnu Kanchi*. Near to the temple is a *poigai* (meaning a small pond in Tamil). Tradition tells us that *Poigai*alwar was born in this *poigai* and hence his name. It is, generally regarded, that the saint was born under the *amsha* of *Panchajanya* - the conch that *Lord Vishnu* bears.

Boodatalwar

The saint was born at *Mahabalipuram*, near Chennai. In early times this *Kshetram* was known as *Kadal Mallai Kshetram*. The saint was born under the star *Dhanishta (Avittam)* and in the month of October – November (*Aippasi*). The period once again was the 7th C AD. *Mahabalipuram* is named after the great *Rakshasa* King *Maha Bali* who ruled this region and eventually surrendered his head to Lord *Narayana* born in the form of *Vamana*. It is, generally believed; that the saint was born under the *amsha* of *Kaumodakee* - the mace that *Lord Vishnu* bears.

Peyaiaalwar

The saint was born at Thiru Myilai (it is now called Mylapore), in the city of Chennai. The saint was born under the star of *Shatabhishak* (*Sadayam*) and in the month of October – November (*Aippasi*). The period once again was the 7th C AD. Sri *Aadhi Kesava Perumal* temple is one of the famous temples found in *Mylapore*. It has a small pond with beautiful water lilies. *Peyaiaalwar* was born in one of the *Alli* flowers in the pond. He is believed to be born under the *amsha* of *Nandaka*, the sword that *Lord Vishnu* sports. Among the seers born in the south of India the *Alwars* are highly venerated. Inevitably, a number of miracles are associated with their lives. As told by *Lord Vishnu* “I, to whom devotees are dear, am like a slave without any freedom. My heart is in the grip of such devotees”. Whatever the devotee desires or even commands will be attended to!! No wonder that incidents that we commonly consider impossible will occur.

One stormy night the three saints arrived, one after another, to take shelter at a way side house in a small village *Tirukkovalur*. The owner of the house let them in, saying that there is enough room in the *dehali* – if they do not mind standing. They started exchanging the religious experiences gathered by each of them. Soon they experienced that the *dehali* was getting more and more cramped. One of the saints lit a lamp with his yogic powers. They could not see any cause for the feeling. They then inferred that the object cramping them may, perhaps, not be visible for human eyes. They decided that a light which could dispel their ignorance or *Ajnana* may be needed. That was done. They could then see *Lord Vishnu*. Spontaneously they started elaborating the glory of the Lord who revealed Himself to them. By their Tamil verses they restated the truths of the *Upanishads*. The *Divya Prabandam* was born.

Tirukkovalur, the place where the incident took place and the *Divya Prabandam* first came into being is held in great veneration even out of the 108 *Divya Deshas*. The great *Vaishnava Acharya Vedanta Desika* composed a Shloka titled *Dehaleesa Stuti*.

Thirumazhisai Alwar

This *Alwar* was born in a place called *Tirumazhisai*, a small village to the west of Chennai. He was born under the star Makham in the month of Thai. It is also believed that he was born under the amsha of *Sudharsana* – the discus that Lord *Vishnu* sports. He was also called by the name *Bhaktisara* in recognition of the intense *Bhakti* and devotion he displayed.

It is reported that God has reacted to his devotion in a strange manner. While at *Kumbakonam*, worshipping in the shrine of Lord *Sarangapani*, he questioned the Lord the reason for his resting position and asked Him to get up and answer. In response to this, it is said, that the Lord attempted to rise from His serpent (*Adisesha*) couch. *Bhaktisara*, moved by this graciousness on the part of the Lord, sang with great ecstasy. The Lord stayed as He was at that moment. To this day, the *moorthy* of the Lord is seen as *Uttanasayee* (one lying down with head raised).

He has sung two poems or *Divya Prabhandas* – one called *Naanmugan Tiruvandadi* and the other called *Tiruchchanda Viruttam*. *Naanmugan Tiruvandadi* consists of 96 *Pasurams*, while *Tiruchchanda Viruttam* has 120 *Pasurams*.

The main theme of *Naanmugan Tiruvandadi* is the supremacy of Lord *Narayana* in relation to all other Gods. It is said of him that he has studied each of the other schisms or schools of thought and practiced each of them first hand before realizing that the highest truth is enshrined in the *Sri Vaishnava Siddhanta*. He had the help and guidance of *Peyyaaalwar* and for that reason said to be his guru.

His second work, *Tiruchchanda Viruttam*, is a rhythmical form of verse. It blossoms into a superb mystic poetry praising Lord *Narayana*.

Nammalvar

He was born under the same constellation as *Buddha* – *Vaikasi Poornima*, full moon in the month of *Vaikasi (Baisak)*. He was born in a clan “*Vellalar* tribe” at a place called *Thiru Kurugoor*, near *Tirunelveli* (the place is also called *Alwar Tirunagari*). The period is reported to be 880- 930 AD. It is believed that he was born under the amsha of *Sri Vishwak Sena*. He was also known by the names – *Maran*, *Saint Satokopa*. He is considered to be pre-eminent among the *Alwars*. Through his life and writings he appears to personify *Krishna trishna tattva* – the embodiment of the feeling of thirst for *Sri Krishna*.

As a baby he was extraordinary. He exhibited none of the symptoms of an ordinary child. He was born a saint – for, as his name indicates, he had conquered even at birth the *sata vayu* which envelops the soul, as it is being ushered into this world, in

ignorance. It is said that the child did not cry, eat or drink. His food was God, his breath was God, his enjoyment was God and his mind was God. Thus he verified the experience of Taittiriya (III, Bhruguvalli) and showed that it was not a mere inductive generalization of the ordinary mind that was being taught therein - but the real truth of the higher consciousness of God being the food by which one should attempt to grow into the divine nature and gain the freedom of the highest life.

Annam Brahmeti vyajaanaath. Annaddhhyeva khalvimaani bhutaani jaayante.

Annene jaataani jivanti annam prayamtabhisam vshamteeti. Tadvijnaya.

punareva pitara mupasasaara. adhihi bhagavo brahmeti. tagam hovaacha

tapasaa brahma vijijnasasva. tapo brahmeti. sa tapo tapyata. sa tapastatva.

Taittiriya Upanishad (III Bhruguvalli – anuvaka 2)

Bhrigu understood that food is Brahman – for all beings in this world are born from food; having been born, they remain alive by food; and on departing, they enter into food. Having thus reflected on the true nature of food he approached his father *Varuna* saying, “Revered Sir, instruct me about Brahman”. The father then said to him “Seek to know Brahman through austerity; austerity is Brahman”

As in the case of Buddha, the dominant feeling with *Saint Satakopa* was one of compassion, pity and sympathy towards all men and women driven to sin and suffering. While Buddha was driven away from Samsara by his sorrow, the Alwar’s sorrow drove him to God. He cries in agony to the Lord to release his fellow beings’ false knowledge and impure conduct.

It is said that a contemporary Alwar, *Madhurakavi*, while on a pilgrimage to the north observed a glowing light as a star on the southern sky. Intrigued by it, he followed it all the way from *Banaras* to *Thiru Kurugoor* (in Tirunelveli district in the south India). There he saw *Saint Nammalvar* seated blissfully under a tamarind tree. This meeting between the two, resulted in *Nammalvar* coming out of *Samadhi* which began at the time of his birth. *Nammalvar* then wrote 1,296 Tamil verses which set the standard in devotional lyric poetry. He wrote four *Prabandhas* – *Tiruvirutham*, *Tiruvasiriyam*, *Peria Tiruvanthadhi* and *Tiruvaoimozhi*. The intensity of God love of the Alwar is clearly seen in all his four works. It is not mere emotion divorced from intellect. Rather, it is truly emotion born out of *Jnana*. Mere *Jnana* eventually leads to dissection of God and God concepts and will be of little or no help to the pursuer. Similarly, mere faith and fervour border on sensuousness and sentimentalism leading the pursuer nowhere. A blend of *Jnana* and *Bhakti* is most beneficial to the human soul. While knowledge is apt to divide God, love will unite. The Alwars, especially *Nammalvar*, are said to be the translators of the *Vedas* into Tamil. This is not to be taken that the Vedic hymns have been translated word for word. On the contrary the Tamil hymns breath the same spiritual atmosphere of the of the Vedic

literature and sing the glories of one Supreme Being in His manifold personalities – *sarvaih vedaih aham eva vedyah*.

Madhurakavi Alwar

Madhurakavi (meaning sweet tongued poet) was born at *Tirukkooloor* situated, on the banks of river *Tamraparni*, a couple miles to the east of *Alwar Tirunagari*. By caste he was a Brahmin. He was the disciple of the great *Nammalvar*. He was born under the star *Chitra* in the Tamil month of *Chitrai* (April – May). It is significant to note that among all the *Alvars*, *Madhurakavi* was the only who has not sung verses in praise of the Lord! Instead, he sung in praise of the Lord's premier devotee *Nammalvar*. He declares that he knows of no God other than his Guru, *Nammalvar!*

The catholicity of the outlook of the vaishnavaites in spiritual matters is highlighted by the *Guru – Shishya bhava* (teacher- student relationship) between *Nammalvar* and *Madhurakavi*. The *Guru* and the *Shishya* were born in different castes. The disciple was much older than the *Acharya* who was a teenager at that time.

Madhurakavi was a great scholar having studied the *Vedas* and *Shastras*. He went on a pilgrimage to the North India and while there he got the vision of a bright light emanating from the south. Intrigued, he followed it for many days. Eventually, the bright light disappeared when he reached *Alwar Tirunagari*. On enquiry he heard of a young saint seated in *Samadhi*, from the time of his birth, under a tamarind tree. He rushed to the spot and found the young saint *Satakopa* in deep meditation. He prostrated before the great saint and tried to develop a conversation. But the saint never replied to him. *Madhurakavi* then posed a puzzling question hoping the young saint might consent to clarify his doubt. He did. It is interesting to note the question and the reply.

Q: If a small one is born out of *Chit* (consciousness) what will it eat and where will it stay?

A: It will eat it and lie in it.

The answer could be interpreted in two different ways – depending on the meaning given to the word *Chit*.

- 1.If *Chit* is taken to be referring to *Parama Chetana* or God, the small one refers to the individual soul- then the individual soul will live, move and have its being in God.
- 2.If *Chit* is taken to be referring to the individual soul and the small one to the body to which it is attached, being born in it – then the individual soul will enjoy the pleasures and pains of the body and have its existence in the body.

Madhurakavi recognized that he is in the presence of a great saint and spent the rest of his life as *Nammalvar's* disciple. When *Nammalvar* began to pour out his verses, *Madhurakavi* took it down and preserved it for posterity.

Madhurakavi wrote eleven verses wherein he highlighted the importance and potency of *Acharya Bhakti*.

Kulasekhara Alwar

Nidhi chala sukhamaa* *Sannidhi chala sukhama

Which one would you rather have – the riches of this world or the opportunity to be in the presence of the Lord and serve Him? The great saint Thyagaraja posed this question. Almost 1000 years earlier another saint had his answer ready - Saint *Kulasekhara Alwar*. He cries out “I do not desire the pleasures or riches of a king, seated on the neck of a state elephant. He alone is the king who fervently wears on his head the feet of Sri *Rama*.”

Kulasekhara Alwar was a *Kshatriya* by birth. He was a ruler of the *Chera* kingdom, part of present Kerala. He was reported to being the ruler in the 9th century. He was born under the star, *Punarpoosa* in the month of *Maasi*. He proved to be a great ruler and expanded his empire defeating the neighbouring *Chola* and *Pandiya* kings. He was a mighty warrior.

At the same time he was a great *Bhakta* as well. In addition, he was a *Sanskrit* scholar and well versed in *Sanskrit* literature including the *Vedas*. There are two works, one in *Sanskrit* and the other in *Tamil* ascribed to this king. The *Sanskrit* work is the well known *Mukunda Mala*. The *Tamil* work is *Perumal Tirumozhi* which consists of 105 *Pasurams* and forms part of the 4000 *Divya Prabandhas*.

It is said that the devotion of this king towards God extended to the Lord's devotees also. Sri *Rama*, Sri *Krishna* and Sri *Ranganatha* among the *archas* (idols in the temples) exercised great fascination over the mind of *Kulasekhara alwar*. *Vithuvakkodu* is a shrine near *Pattambi* in Malabar and is on the road from *Shoranur* to *Guruvayur*. To the Lord at *Vithuvakkodu* *Kulasekhara alwar* says –

“ Even if you spurn me, I have no one else to look up to; like a child put aside by its mother in anger, like a true wife ill treated by her husband, like a citizen looking up to king though he is a despot, like a lotus which unfolds itself only to the burning rays of the Sun; and like crops that always look up to the clouds that never come, I look up to you and rely on you and you alone, even though you do not want me”.

Periyalwar (Vishnu-Chitta)

Periyalwar was born at *Srivilliputtur*, now in *Ramanathapuram* district. He was a *Brahmin*. He was born in the month of *Aani* under the star *Swathi*.

When you close your ears lightly you hear a peculiar noise. *Periyalwar* says that it is due to the sound of waves from the milky ocean in his heart where his Lord *Narayana* and consort *Lakshmi* are reclining. No wonder he was named *Vishnu Chitta*. He cultivated an excellent flower garden at his house. He took a great interest in making flower garlands and offering them to the presiding deity at *Srivilliputtur* – Lord *Vata-patra Sayee*. One night he dreamt of Lord *Narayana* instructing him to go to the court of the king of *Madurai* and participate in a debate. *Vishnu Chitta* was not a scholar or well versed in *Vedas*. However, he went to the king's court and participated in the debate. The debate was to decide on who was the Supreme Being to whom the whole world owes allegiance. When his turn to speak came, even to his surprise, he launched into a great discourse on the superiority of Lord *Narayana*, *Srivaishnava siddhanta* supporting his statements with quotations from the scriptures! So spontaneously did he see the mantras without being taught or having undergone the course of recitals (*adhyayana*), it was considered to be an evidence of God's knowledge-granting grace.

It is told that the king of *Madurai* honoured the saint and arranged for a procession through the streets seated on an elephant. However, our saint's mind was fully occupied with Lord *Narayana* and the extraordinary grace He has shown. Suddenly he could see his Lord and with that the saint bursts out into a song praying for, or rather blessing Him with long life and all prosperity!

“*Pallandu Pallandu Pallayirathaandu, Palakoti noorayiram*”

many many years, many many thousand years ..the beauty of your feet be protected unhurt. The alwar exhibited parental love towards God - *Vaatsalya bhava*. In *Srivaishnava* parlance when a superior or older person utters words calling for the welfare inferior or a younger person it is called *Asheervadam* (blessing). However, when an inferior or younger person utters words calling for the welfare of a superior or older person it is called *Mangalasaasam*.

Two of the alwar's major works are - *Thiru Pallandu* (so called due to its opening words), *Periya Azhwar thirumozhi*. Every recitation of the 4000 *Divya Prabandhas* in temples or houses is done only after the recitation of the *Thiru Pallandu*.

Goda Devi (Andal)

Goda Devi (Andal in Tamil) is the only female among the Alvars revered in south India. She was born at *Srivilliputtur* in the month of *Ashada*, under the star *Puram*. The period is reported to be 8th century AD. It is believed that saint *Periyalwar* found her as a baby under a *Tulasi* plant. He took her home and brought her as his daughter. It is believed that she is born under the *amsha* of *Bhoo-Devi*.

From early childhood she was in love with Lord *Vishnu*. It is said that *Goda Devi* used to wear the garlands and flowers which her father devoutly made for the Lord of *Srivilliputtur*. The father when he came to know about it was greatly distressed and felt that it was a great sin to offer used garlands to God. But God made it known to *Periyalwar* that nothing pleased Him more than wearing garlands first worn by *Goda Devi*. *Vishnu Chitta* then understood the greatness of the child and how fortunate he was to have her as a Divine gift.

As she grew up into a lovely maiden, she resolved to marry none other than Lord *Sri Ranganatha* of *Srirangam*. It is believed that Lord *Ranganatha* went to *Srivilliputtur* and married *Andal* in great pomp. He remained at *Srivilliputtur* as *Ranga Mannar* in which form He is still there with *Andal*.

Her two compositions have been found to be masterpieces in poetry as well as truth consciousness. *Tiruppavai*, consisting of 30 stanzas, deals with a rite (*vrata*) to be observed by young unmarried girls in the month of *Margazhi* so that God may grant them the best husband. The other composition called, *Naachiyar Tirumozhi*, consists of 143 verses exudes *Krishna* love. As a composer of devotional lyrics she is regarded as an *Alwar*. She is also one of the consorts of the Lord,- a *Nachiyar*. By the garland of flowers she wore before offering them to Him, she is a consort of Divinity. By the garland of verses she composed she has a pride of place among the devotees. In essence *Poomaalai* (garland of flowers) and *Paamaalai* (garland of verses) are regarded as her two-fold offering.

Tondaradippodi Alwar

Vipranarayana was born in *Tirumandangudi*, in *Tanjore* district in a Brahmin family under the star *Jyeshtha*. He moved to *Srirangam* and started worshipping Lord *Ranganatha*. He reared a flower garden and used to offer flowers and *Tulasi* to the Lord. Very soon he became a victim to the wiles of a *Devadasi* (courtesan) by the name of *Devadevi*. Under her influence he forgot his routines and even the worship to Lord *Ranganatha*. In course of time, through the grace and mercy of the Lord he soon weaned from his ignorant ways and infatuation and turned into a great devotee.

Thus it is a story of a saint turned sinner. This saint wrote 55 *Prabandhas* in all – 45 verses from among them are called *Tirumaalai* (garland), the other 10 being called *Tiruppalli-Ezhuchi* (waking song). *Tirumaalai* touches the heights of religious fervour. *Tiruppalli-Ezhuchi* is a set of poems praying for the lord to get up from His bed.

The saint *Vipranarayana* was later called *Tondaradippodi alwar* – referring to the dust from the feet of true devotees. It appears as if the saint prayed that the Lord accept him as a servant of His *Bhaktas* – such was his humility and such was his devotion.

Tiruppanalwar

Tiruppanalwar was born in the month of *Krithigai* under the star *Rohini*. Tradition has it that as a baby he was found and brought up by a member of the *Panar* caste. His parents lived in a place called *Woraiyur* on the southern banks of the river *Cauvery* facing the famous shrine of Lord *Ranganatha*. The vocation of members of this caste appears to have been that of making *veena* like musical instruments called *Pan*. However, members of this caste were treated as untouchables.

The saint spent his life in singing the praises of the God. His heart yearned for a *Darshana* of Lord *Ranganatha*. Yet he could not cross the river much less enter the temple due to restrictions on his caste!

One day a priest, by the name of *Lokasaranga*, from the temple went to *Cauvery* to fetch water and found the great devotee standing and singing in ecstasy. The priest asked him to get out of his way and when the saint failed to respond threw a stone at him. The saint apologized and moved away. The priest when he reached the temple found to his horror blood trickling from the forehead of the Lord. That night he dreamt of Lord *Ranganatha* ordering him to physically carry the great devotee to His presence in the temple. The priest carried out the instructions. The great devotee had his wish fulfilled in serving the Lord. The erstwhile *Panar* became one with the Lord he so deeply loved. *Panar* became *Tiruppanalwar* and later *Pan Perumal*.

Tiruppanalwar composed only 10 *Pasurams*. It has become part of the *Mudalayiram* (first 1000) and is being recited daily as part of what is called *Nitya-anusandhaanam* (daily recitations). For an appreciative description in the *Archa* (idol) form of the Lord this *Prabandham* finds no equal.

Tirumangai Alwar

Saint *Tirumangai Alwar* was born in a village named *Kurayalur* in *Tanjore* district. He was born in the month of *Karthigai* (November- December) under the star *Karthigai*.

He was the last of the *Alvars*. It is reported that he lived during the 8th century AD. The *Alwar* was known as *Neelan* before he turned into a saint.

As a young man he wanted to marry a lady named *Kumudavalli*. To do so, he took a vow that he will feed hundreds of *Vishnu Bhaktas* every day. Soon he lost all his wealth. He then turned into a dacoit and started using the money earned thereby to feed the *Bhaktas*. It is said that Lord *Vishnu* and His consort *Lakshmi* disguised as newlyweds and wearing glittering ornaments passed through the forest covered by these dacoits. *Neelan* ordered them to surrender all the jewels and ended up in personally pulling off the ornaments. As soon as he touched the feet of the Lord he was a changed man. He was not anymore the *Neelan* the dacoit. It is a tale of a sinner turning into a saint.

Starting with the famous stanza “ *Vaadinen; Vaadi Varundinen; Manathaar perunthuyar*” (withered in spirit and pained in mind), the *Alwar* has sung 1253 *Pasurams* or verses which go make up six *Prabandhas*. They are (1) *Periya Thriumozhi* (2) *Thirukkurunthandagam* (3) *Thirunedunthandagam* (4) *Thiru vezhukootirukkai* (5) *Siriya Thrumadal* (6) *Periya Thirumadal*.

Out of this the first one *Periya Thriumozhi* consists of 1084 verses and deals extensively with the enjoyment of worship of *Archa* (idol) forms of the Lord in several sacred places, from *Badri* in the north to *Tirukkurungudi* in the south. It is commonly believed that the worship of the idol at the temple is only a basic step, and helps the devotee to concentrate on the divine. One has to rise above this level in the process of the realization of God. However, *Tirumangai Alwar* argues that the idol is not just the body of God but is, in fact, God Himself. On this basis he argues that it is a waste of time to hanker for the bliss of *Paramapada* in time to come. A bird in hand is worth two in the bush. He further argues that from among the 4 *Purusharthas* (*Dharma, Artha, Kama* and *Moksha*) *Kama* as the most desirable *Purushaatha*! He urges all people to divert the rushing forces of *Kama* (desire) towards God. Fulfil your love, quench your passion by communion with the beautiful and merciful God who resides in temples. He calls out to his fellow beings not to starve their senses or go to the forest and do rigid *Tapas* amidst the five fires. He challenges the Lord “ why do you get into my heart and lurk there like a thief? Come out and let me see your beautiful body with my eyes which are longing for a vision of you”. This in a nutshell describes the outlook of this *Alwar*.

He was a very active saint. He visited almost all of the 108 *Divya Desas* – 86 out of a total of 108. He helped in raising the great walls around the *Ranganatha* temple at *Sri Rangam*. He arranged to bring the statue of *Nammalvar* from *Azhwar Thirunagari* to *Sri Rangam*.

Divya Deshams

Ritual is a demonstration of the religion in an external form. It provides a scope for us to observe religion outwardly. It is akin to the feet of the religion. It may not be the essence of the religion, yet it is not a non-essential part of the religion. It is, so to say, an outer form of the religion. When its spirit is missed, religion is seen to stagnate and not rise to higher levels. Every religion has its own rituals.

The joys and sorrows of the mind are demonstrated before the deity in an act of *Puja*. The mind comes out of its limitations and feels an expansion of its content and existence during the act of religious ritual.

Ritual has a social element as well. It unites the society and the nation into a composite whole in which the parts are cemented together with a bond of affinity of feeling and purpose. This introduces strength to the society. The aspect of pilgrimage (*Tirtha-Yatra*) brings the advantage of historical renovation and respect for ancient traditions of different places. It arouses in the minds of people a special relationship to distant places. Without such injunctions people will lose association with others and the force binding them into a single character, called culture will be missing.

The word *Theertha*” refers to sacred water. *Theertha sthala* or *Theertha kshetra*” is a sacred or a holy spot. It could be a river, a lake or even a mountain that is made sacred through association with a deity or a saint. It is said that *Theertha* possesses three elements that make it sacred – *suchi* (pure), it brings *punya* and it is *shubha* (auspicious). They are also referred to as *Punya Sthalas*.

Alwars of south India are mystics whose consciousness does not work in compartments. Evidently, deep mystics as all of them really are, they have revealed a new experience to the world consciousness – similar to the Vedic seers who saw all deities in one.

The *Alwars* composed approximately 4000 Tamil verses. In the 9th – 10th century, the philosopher saint *Nathamuni* took extraordinary steps to recover these verses. Saint *Nathamuni* arranged them as the *Divya Prabandham* (Divine collection), set many of them to music and rejuvenated the tradition of formally reciting them in temples

The verses of *Alwars* speak of the glory of *Sri Maha Vishnu*, of instances from *Puranas* and the glory of temples visited by the *Alwars*. The shrines visited by *Alwars* and sang their verses are hailed as *Divya Deshams*.

Geographic locations

Out of the 108 Divya Deshams, 2 are celestial abodes of Lord Narayana; The rest were located as follows-

40 of the shrines are located in Chola kingdom in Tamilnadu; 22 are located near Kanchipuram and Chennai; 2 are located in Nadu Naadu (Tiruvahindrapuram and Tiru kkovilur); 18 are located in Pandiya nadu; 11 are in Kerala, 2 near kanyakumari; 1 at Tirupathi; 1 at Ahobilam; 7 in Uttar Pradesh; 1 in Nepal and 1 in Gujarat

The shrines

Out of the 108 *Divya Deshams*, 47 have been addressed by *Sri Tirumangai alwar*; 18 by *Nammalwar*; 2 have been addressed by *Tirumazhisai alwar*; 1 by *Kulasekhara alwar*; 1 by *Perialwar*; the remaining 39 are addressed by hymns composed by more than one Alwar. 247 verses were addressed to Srirangam; 202 were addressed to Tirupathi; 128 were addressed to Azhagar Koil; 7 were addressed Kanchipuram

Nayanmars

Saivism is one of the very ancient and dominant schools of philosophies in India, dating back to a few thousand years. A large majority of *Shiva* temples are seen in the south of India, some of them dating back a few thousand years.

The *Nayanmars* are the leaders of *Bhakti* movement in the south. Sixty two saints lived during the period 7th through the 9th century AD. These saints lived expressing their devotion to Lord *Shiva*. A sixty third saint, *Sundaramoorthy Nayanar* honoured all these saints in his famous Tamil work *Tirutondattogai*. At a later date, in the 12th century AD, *Sekkizhar*, researched the lives of all these saints and produced his prodigious work known as *Periya Puranam*.

It is this group of sixty three saints who are referred to as *Nayanmars*. The *Tevaram* hymns of the *Nayanmar* saints speak of the existence of 275 odd shrines during that phase of history. The traditions in these shrines survived thousands of years later to the period origin of the famous hymns. These 275 shrines are referred to "*Paadal Petra Sthalams*." Following is a list of *Tirumurais*

Tirumurais

There are twelve “*Tirumurais*”. *Tirumurai* means a sacred book. The first three Tirumurais were composed by three great Saivite saints. They are considered as the musical compositions of their age.

- 1.Thevaram by Tirujnana Sambandhar
- 2.Thevaram by Tirujnana Sambandhar
- 3.Thevaram by Tirujnana Sambandhar
- 4.. Thevaram by Tirunavukkaracar
- 5.Thevaram by Tirunavukkaracar
- 6.Thevaram by Tirunavukkaracar
- 7.Thevaram by Tirunavukkaracar
- 8.Tiruvachakam Tirukkovaiyar by Manikkavachakar
- 9.Tiruvicaippa Tiruppallandu by Tirumalikaittever, Centanar,
- 10.Karuvurttevar, Nampikatava nampi, Kantaratittar, Venattatikal,
- 11.Tiruvaliyamutanar, Purutottama nampi, Cetirayar

Tirumantiram by Tirumullar

Forty on works by Karaikkal Ammaiyar, Ceraman Perumal Nayanar, Pattinattu -pillaiyar, Nakkiratevar Nayanar, Kapilateva Nayanar, Thiruvavaiyudaiyar, Nampiyantarnampi, IyyadigalkatavarkonNayanar, Kalladateva Nayanar, Paranateva Nayanar, Ellamperuman Adigal and Athiravadigal.

Periya Puranam by Sekkizhar

The first seven Tirumuraigal, authored by three of the foremost *Nayanmars*, are called “*Thevarams*”. The word *Thevaram* means a garland of songs in praise of the Divine.

Padal Petra Sthalam

Out of the 275 *Shivasthalams*, the one at *Tiruvidaivaai* was discovered in the year 1917 and it has a “*Patikam*”, by *Sri Sambandar*, engraved on its wall. However, this *Patikam* is not considered part of the works of the saint traditionally associated with Tamil Tirumurais. The *Shivasthalams* that have atleast one *Patikam* composed in their honour are referred to, commonly, as *Padal Petra Sthalam*. Hence we have 274 *Padal Petra Sthalam*s. In addition, though there are 249 other Shiva shrines referred to in the *Tevarams*, they do not bear a *Patikam*. These are referred to as “*Tevara Vaippu Sthalam*s”.

These *Patikams* have been handed over from generation to generation. Even today, we hear these hymns rendered by highly trained people in the art of singing these hymns. These people are called “*Oduvars*”.

Shiva temples in Kerala created by Lord Parasurama

According to legend Lord *Parasurama* created the land between *Gokarna* and *Kanyakumari*. He then donated this land to *Brahmins* and got them settled in 64 villages. Further, he consecrated 216 temples in this region - 108 Shiva temples and 108 *Durga* temples. These are very old temples and the tradition of singing hymns in praise of Lord Shiva is being continued.

Chapter XV - In Pursuit of Supreme Reality

Introduction

Followers of *Nyaya* School of philosophical speculation (logic) believed that obtaining valid knowledge is a way to obtaining release from suffering. They took great pains to identify valid sources of knowledge and to distinguish these from false opinions.

The Indian school of logic is not a recent arrival on the Indian scene. *Gautama* (6th Century BCE) founded the *anviksiki* school of logic. The Indian logic is the oldest and it was followed much later by the Greek and Chinese traditions. More about these will be discussed under “*Shad-Darsanas*” (Six schools of philosophies) in this publication.

In Pursuit of Supreme Reality

In the search of Supreme Reality, one must remember that He cannot be grasped by ordinary perception or inference. That is the challenge.

Philosophy, like most other systems of thought in India, is based on religious experience, metaphysics and ethics, rather than on epistemology. That logic should legislate for our experience is an important thing and cannot be denied. However, it is equally important to see that logic should find its feet on the ground and not allowed to soar in the sky without any let or control of facts. At the end of the day *Yadaartha Jnana* is the main aim of all philosophizing. Experience is manifold, and the truth about experience must embrace all facts falling within that experience. If segments of experience alone are accepted, denying the rest, it will only result in a logical collapse.

All metaphysical searches are after the Supreme Reality. Knowledge of the Real is possible. The question for us is – how do you apprehend the Supreme Reality. There are several theories of knowledge. Science takes its start from perceptual experience.- undoubtedly the only type of experience of Reality. Yet, the existence of God transcends the conditions of space and time. (*desk – Kaala*). He cannot be known through ordinary perception or inference. The Supreme Being is beyond the pale of *Pramaanaas* of perception and *anumaana* - “*Yam evaisa vrnute tena labhyah*” – *Kathopanishad*. He who is chosen by Him will perceive Him. “Not by austerities nor yet by mere *Jnana* nor yet by works. It is only by the grace of Divine can the Highest be known, understood and entered. Only then that the Perfect Being becomes a Real being for the individual. Till then we should be content to believe in it and strive to get to Him. That there is a higher demand on us, the *parama-purushaartha* (which means the demand to conceive, perceive and even experience the actual existence of the Supreme Reality), even here and now, has been well

documented. The moral demand and religious imperative compel our cognition to struggle forward beyond the immediate sensory towards the vision that can only come from the grace of the Supreme Being. The struggle is never finished till this ultimate goal is reached.

Sri Ramanujacharya accepts that the essence that supports the whole Reality is Spiritual and not material. An inference from the nature of experience to the existence of God is said to be sufficient proof for the existence of God. *Sri Ramanujacharya* differs. He contends that all arguments based on cosmology are based on comparisons and analogies available on fragmentary creative activities of finite beings. This cannot lead to the proof of the omnipotent, omni-pervasive Being at all. Further, these arguments prove a substance and not a personality and spirit.

The *Nyaya* argument is that God could be inferred from the conception of the most perfect intelligence required for the sake of explaining the order, design and the intricate motions and arrangements involved. At the back of all this intelligence, there is a super intelligence. Therefore God must be postulated as an existing being and a super cause of creation.

However, *Sri Ramanujacharya* maintains that these proofs are insufficient to prove the Divine. They may prove a capable creator but not an all-creator. The cosmological argument cannot prove the *existence* of God. It may prove that it is necessary for the existence of the world as we experience it now. It cannot affirm its existence though it may necessitate a presumption. And presumption is not proof. That is why it is said that the existence of God can only be proved by a vision of Him – *saakshatkaara*. God cannot be proved by inference. Inference cannot involve existence. Existence depends on the conditions of space- time – *Desa kaala akaara*. The existence of God transcends the conditions of space and time.

Where does that take us in the pursuit of true knowledge? It is not based on some kind of blind belief. Nor is it based on some holy person asserting, “I say so”. Whilst reason or understanding infers correctly about other things, it can never infer correctly about the Whole and the Supreme Transcendent.

Whatever means we adopt to gain valid knowledge, some clear rules must be established for analysis and synthesis. Importantly efficient methods of weaning out sources of error must also be laid out. For example, metaphysically speaking, almost all the theories of Indian Philosophy hold that the sense organs are products of karma, action, and as such are imperfect veiling agents. For this reason, the sense organs make things appear different from what they truly are. Facts or experiences derived from faulty sources vitiate the findings. Provided the instruments of our cognition are all in healthy condition, un-diseased, sane and unemotional the results are acceptable.

In the following pages is given a chart giving a broad classification of the objects of valid knowledge and the means pursued to obtain them. Typically, the means for valid knowledge fall into three categories – *Pratyaksha* (direct perception), *Anumaana* (inference) and *Shabda* (sound – rather, based on hearing – *Shrutis* in this case). *Sri Ramanujacharya* holds that God cannot be proved by perception or inference. And that brings us to *Shabda* to be examined as a means for valid knowledge. Both *Sri Shankaracharya* and *Sri Ramanujacharya* accept *Shabda* as a valid testimony.

Shabda

Why Shabda should be accepted as an absolute authority

The *Purva Mimamsa* is a kind of *Tarka* - reasoning. It assists the *Shabda Pramana*. Its main topic is the discovery of the correct apparatus by which we could arrive at the *Vedic Truth*. It is more interested in the truth that we have known through *Shruti* than through other channels like *Pratyaksha*, *Anumaana* or *Upamaana*. *Yoga* and *Buddhistic* schools did not seriously consider the nature of the *Shabda Pramana*, the authoritative utterances received by seers from a transcendent source. However, it was the intention of the *Vedanta Sutras* to undertake a comprehensive unification of the entire body of the Scriptural teaching so as to enable us know the Divine. However, for the diehard rationalists, *Vedas* and *Upanishads* mean nothing. For them, they are more than one of the many interpretations of life's problems.

We now run straightaway into the question - why should we consider that *Shabda Pramana* is not affected by the same faults inherent in other *Pramanaas*. In other words, an analysis is needed of conditions of error, which vitiate other *Pramanaas* and not this. *Mimaamsakas* are rationalists. It is exactly for this reason; they have formulated theories of error. After the study, *Shabda* is claimed to have avoided the sources of errors that afflicted the others. Both the source and the means are considered perfect. Such *Shabda* is pure and perfect. *Vedas* stand out to be such a source. By the grace of the Divine granted to the *Rishis*, their visions are super-sensory, untainted by the sense organs and karma. According to *Sri Ramanujacharya*, the *Shrutis* are not man-made. They are *apaurusheya*. Thus the objects if the *Shabda* are untainted, true and pure. Further to know them it is necessary to be in that receptive mood of mind wherein there is no confusion, no obsession, no in-attention and no defect. The minds of the great *Rishis* were in a high stage of *Yoga* due to *Tapas*. The truths themselves and the rituals taught were not products of intensified consciousness. They were seen to be the truths of eternal existence and not man-made. They form a perfect document. Such, in brief, is the view held by the *Mimaamsakas* regarding the validity of the *Shabda Pramana*.

Attached is a chart which gives brief details classifying the objects of valid knowledge and the means adopted to gain the knowledge. We will examine some of the issues involved. The chart is based on the *Vishishtadvaita* system.

1. *The process of gaining knowledge basically involves*

- (a) Prameya: *The object regarding which you wish to gain knowledge.*
- (b) Pramana: *The means adopted to gain this knowledge.*

2. *According to Vishishtadvaita, Pramaa (valid knowledge) should satisfy two conditions.*

- (i) *Pramaa should reveal the existence of a real object or agree with external reality :*
- (ii) *Pramaa should serve some practical need. The distinctive cause for a particular Pramaa is Pramana.*

Prameya

We will first study the categories involved in the objects for valid knowledge – objects regarding which we intend to gain knowledge. These objects are classified into two main categories. - Dravya and Adravya

(1) *Dravya: Basically, it is of two kinds – Jada and Ajada.*

(a) *Jada. Refers to those without conscience – insentient. It is also called Achit.*

(b) *Ajada. Also called Chit. Refers to those with conscience – sentient*

Dravya

Jada: Jada or Achit is further classified into Prakruti and Kaala (Time). According to Vedanta cosmology, Achit differentiates itself into successive forms of twenty-four categories. They are Prakruti, Mahat, Ahankaara, the eleven Indriyas (Five Karmendriyas, Five Jnanendriyas and Manas), five Tanmaatras and five gross elements. Manas is called Buddhi when it is engaged in deciding; Ahankaara or Abhimaana when it conceives wrongly (Atma is identified with the body): It is referred to as Chitta when it thinks. Time is classified into three categories – Past, Present and Future.

At this stage, it may be appropriate to have a brief discussion on **Prakruti**. The Vishishtadvaita system recognises Prakruti as one of the three realities, the other two being Jiva and Ishvara. It is referred to as Moolaprakruti since it is the primordial cause of the cosmos. During Pralaya, it is in a latent state without distinction of name or form. At the beginning of evolution, Mahat appears from Prakruti with the three states of Satva, Rajas and Tamas. Mahat evolves into Ahankaara with the same three states called – Saatvika Ahamkara,

Raajasika Ahankaara and Taamasika Ahankaara. From a combination of these Ahamkaaras arise the eleven senses (five Jnanendriyas, five Karmendriyas and Manas).

Similarly, the five gross elements (Ether, air, Fire, water, Earth) also arise through the media of five Tanmaatras of sound, touch, colour, savour and odour. Hence, the evolution process is essentially a change of state.

Kaala or Time:

This is the other element in the Jada category. Kaala essentially falls into three categories – past, present and future. Time is eternal and all-pervasive. Unlike Prakruti, Kaala is devoid of the three gunas - Satva, Rajas and Tamas. It is changing and non-eternal. Months, years, Yugas and the timing of Pralaya are all based on time. Essentially, it serves as an instrument in the cosmic function of Ishvara. While it is entirely independent of any thing in the Prakruti (lila-vibhuti - play manifestation) it has no sway in the Nitya-Vibhuti (eternal manifestation. Vaikuntha, the city of Lord Narayana, is within the realm of Nitya-Vibhuti) and is solely dependent on the will of Ishvara.

Ajada:

We will now briefly discuss, Ajada (Chit). This is classified into two categories. (1) Paraak (the external) (2) Pratyak (internal).

Paraak:

This Ajada is further classified into Nitya-Vibhuti (eternal manifestation) and Dharmabhuta-Jnana. Both Dharmabhuta-Jnana and Nitya-Vibhuti are self-luminous and appear to others only and never to themselves (it is like a physical light which can illuminate and show other objects but it cannot know itself). For this reason they are referred to as Paraak (external)

Nitya-vibhuti

It is a non-material stuff. It has an infinite domain beyond Prakruti and the associated three gunas. It is self-luminous and is characterised by what is known as Suddhasattva- which is a kind of spiritual matter in the highest Heaven. Nitya-Vibhuti is known by different names – Paramapada, Ananda-loka. Vaikuntha, the abode of Sriman Narayana, is within the realm of Nitya-Vibhuti. It is also the stuff out of which

the bodies of Sriman Narayana, the Nityasuris (Eternally free *Garuda*, *Vishvaksena* and others) and the liberated *Jivas* are made from.

Dharmabhuta-Jnana:

Jnana means consciousness or awareness. It is neither material nor spiritual. Yet it has an important part to play in perception. At this stage it is, perhaps, best to clarify our thoughts on substance and attribute. As an example - Mango is a substance (*dravya*); the golden yellow colour is one of its attributes (*Guna*); the distinctive smell is another attribute. The attributes depend on the substance (*Guna* depends on *dravya*).

Dharmabhuta-Jnana is a special kind of consciousness. It is eternal and all pervasive in respect of *Ishvara*, *Nityasuris* and *Jiva*. In fact, it is an attribute for all of them. For this reason, it is called attributive consciousness. As a special case *Dharmabhuta-Jnana* is considered both as a *dravya* and *Guna*. Terms such as *mati*, *Prajna*, and *samvit* are all synonyms of *Dharmabhuta-Jnana*. Since all mental states are reduced to consciousness our instincts, desires, passions, arrogance, compassion etc are but various phases of *Dharmabhuta-Jnana*. It embraces all phases of *karma*, *Jnana*, and *Bhakti* and constitutes the root of religious experience. Finally, when religious experience develops into firm meditation it becomes the means for realizing Lord *Narayana* Himself. Hence, religious consummation is absolutely dependent on the perfect manifestation of *Dharmabhuta-Jnana*.

In the act of perception, the consciousness issues out from the *Aatman*. Then through the sense channels it contacts the object, illuminates and reveals it. *Dharmabhuta-Jnana* is all pervasive and infinite. However, in mundane life, under the load of karma it gets contracted. The obscuring, resulting from contraction, endures in all the three states of – waking, dream and deep sleep. In the highest state of God-realisation the consciousness is in its expanded state and if it is then directed upon God, the individual self becomes aware of the Supreme Reality. It is to be noted that the self does not merge with God but only becomes aware of Him. It is due to this process of expansion and contraction that *Dharmabhuta-Jnana* exhibits; it comes under the category of substance (*dravya*) also.

Pratyak:

Having dealt with *Paraak*, we will examine *Pratyak*. *Jiva* & *Ishvara* fall into this category.

Jiva

Like *Ishvara*, *Jiva* is of the nature of consciousness and possesses *Dharmabhuta-Jnana* as an inseparable attribute. *Jiva* is real, self-luminous, eternal and unborn. It is different from the body, sense organs, mind and vital breath. Though the *Jiva*, as a mode of Brahman, is essentially of the same nature, it is distinctly different from Him.

It is monadic in size and resides in a separate body. It is the embodied Self with regard to its physical body. However, it is the body with regard to Ishvara. It is sentient and is the essence of Ananda. Due to the load of karma accumulated by the Jiva in its previous births, Jnana and Ananda are obscured. However, they are fully manifest in a state of liberation. In spite of its monadic size, the Jiva can contact the ends of space through its attributive knowledge. The Jivas, which are innumerable, fall into three categories.

Nityas: Refers to those who have never been caught in *Samsara*. They have been serving Lord *Narayana* in His supreme abode and enjoying *Ananda*. *Garuda*, *Vishvakshena*, *Adi Seshha* and others fall into this category.

Muktas: They are the liberated souls who have attained liberation through *Bhakti* and *Prapatti*.

Badhaas: Refers to those who are not yet liberated from the transmigratory existence due to pending *karma*. The *Badhaas*, once again are classified into two categories – *Bubhuksus* and *Mumukshu*.

Bubhuksus: They are basically, pleasure seekers. They are intent on three kinds of human goals – *Dharma*, *Artha* and *Kama*. *Bubhuksus* are further classified into two categories. *Artha-kaamapara* and *Dharma- Kaamapara*.

Artha-Kaamapara: These materialists think that body is the self. *Dharma-Kaamapara:* These are devotees of Dharma. They are intent on sacrifice, charity, austerity, pilgrimage etc. They are endowed with the knowledge that there is a future existence for the self, different from the body. They are further classified into two categories – those that are devotees of other deities and those that are devotees of *Bhagavan*.

Mumuksus: They are the liberation seekers. Once again they are classified into two categories – (a) staunch devotee of *Kaivalya* (b) Staunch devotee of *Moksha*.

(a) Staunch devotee of *Kaivalya:* Is of the nature of self-realization.
b) Staunch devotee of *Moksha.* The devotee is interested in liberation from *Samsara*. These devotees are further classified into two categories.

(1) *Bhaktas:* They are lovers of God. They have a firm knowledge of the scriptures and have received appropriate instructions from a competent Guru.

(2) *Prapannas:* Those devotees who are helpless and devoid of other refuge. They take *Sharanagati* (self-surrender) at the lotus feet of Lord *Narayana*. Everyone, irrespective of caste or profession is qualified for self-surrender. There are two kinds

of *Prapannas* – *Ekaantin* (single pointed) and *Parama-Ekaantin* (extremely one-pointed).

Ekaantin is a firm devotee of Lord *Narayana* alone and seeks liberation along with other (worldly) fruits.

The *Parama-Ekaantin* is he who does not desire any other fruits even from the *Bhagavan* Himself except devotion and knowledge. *Parama-Ekaantin*, once again is classified into two categories as *Drpta* and *Aarta*.

Drpta is a patient aspirant and desires liberation at the time of casting off of the body. However, *Aarta* is an impatient aspirant. For him the state of transmigratory existence is unbearable. He longs for immediate liberation after the act of self-surrender.

Ishvara: He is the *Niyanta* (controller), the principal (*s'esin*) of all, the worshipped in every religious act, the bestower of all fruits, the sustainer of all and the supreme cause of all effects. The making of an object involves three causes. As an example, let us take the case of the pottery. Three factors are called for – the clay, the potter's wheel and the potter himself

i. *Upaadaana Kaarana* in this case it is the clay.

ii. *Nimitta Kaarana*: In this case, it is the potter.

iii. *Sahakaarana*: It is the potter's wheel in this case

For the organisation of the Universe, *Ishvara* Himself constitutes all the three causes.

Vishishtadvaita while allowing for the ultimate unity of the Absolute, yet allows for the differentiation through its modes (*Prakaaraas*). The system accepts as ultimate the three entities – matter or *Prakruti* (*Achit*), *Jiva* (*cit*) and *Ishvara*.. *Prakruti* and *Jiva* while entirely independent of each other, are absolutely dependent on *Ishvara* for their existence. *Prakruti* and *Jiva* form the body of *Ishvara* and are entirely supported and controlled by Him. *Ishvara* is the substance and *Prakruti* and *Jiva* form His inseparable attributes. This unique view of relationship by *Sri Ramanujacharya* is called *Aprthaksiddhi* (inseparability). *Sri Ramanuja's* system is called *Vishishtadvaita*, because the attributive elements (*Prakruti* and *Jiva*) and the substantive element (*Ishvara*) form a synthetic unity. *Ishvara* abides in five forms (a) *Para* (b) *Vyuha* (c) *Vibhava* (d) *Antaryamin* (e) *Archa*.

(a) **Para:** The self- transcendent absolute is single and complete. He resides at *Vaikunta*. He is *Vasudeva*.

(b) **Vyuha:** *Vyuha* forms a part and parcel of the *Vishishtadvaita* conception of the Deity. Theory of *Vyuha* is a fundamental doctrine of the *Pancharatra*. *Sankarshana*

emanates from *Vasudeva*, *Pradyumna* from *Sankarshana*, and *Aniruddha* from *Pradyumna*. In the language of *Pancharatra*, it is like one flame proceeding from another flame. *Sankarshana*, *Pradyumna* and *Aniruddha* are ruling over the individual selves, internal organs and organs of egoity. For this reason *Sankarshana* is denoted by *Jiva*, *Pradyumna* by *Manas* and *Aniruddha* by *Ahankaara*. The *Vyuh*s have sub-*Vyuh*s. They are called *Vyuhantar*s. They are given below - *Vasudeva*: *Keshava*, *Narayana*, *Madhava*, *Sankarshana*, *Govinda*, *Vishnu*, *Madhusudhana*, *Pradyumna*, *Trivikrama*, *Vamana*, *Sridhara*, *Aniruddha* *Hrishikesa*, *Padmanabha* and *Damodara* The twelve *Vyuhantar*s are the presiding deities of the Sun in the twelve months of the year.

(c) **Vibhava**: This refers to the incarnations of Lord *Narayana*. The *Mukhya avatars* (principal ones) are ten in number. Including *Avesha* (secondary) avatars, thirty-six are reported. The cause of the *Avatara* is due to the will of God and not due to *karma* (as is the case with the *Jivas*). The reason for an *Avatara*, is protection of the good and destruction of the wicked.

(d) **Antaryamin**: It is that form of *Ishvara*, which stays with the individual self (*Jiva*). He abides in the region of the heart. Refer to *Narayana Sookta*.

(e) **Archa**: This refers to consecrated images in temples and holy places.

Vibhava and *Antaryamin* aspects of the Lord provide an opportunity for the easy access of the Supreme Being – *Saulabhya*.

This completes a brief examination of the *Dravya* class of objects.

Adravya:

We will now pass on to the *Adravya* class of objects regarding which some valid means of knowledge will need to be obtained. This refers to a class of objects, which are termed “non-substance”. They are attributes to a substance, and not the substance itself. They are ten in number.

1. ***Sattva***: It is that non-substance which is the cause of happiness, lightness etc. It is not perceptible by *Indriyas*. It is categorised into two kinds - Pure *Sattva* which has no *Rajas* or *Tamas* in it. The *Suddhasattva*, which exists in *Nityavibhuti*, is of this variety. The other kind is the impure one and is mixed with *Rajas* and *Tamas*. *Sattva Guna* is the cause of true knowledge and leads to liberation
2. ***Rajas***: Is the cause of avarice, activity etc. It is the cause to attachment work, sorrow etc.

3. *Tamas*: It is the cause of infatuation, inertia etc. It is the cause of ignorance, idleness. It leads to hell.

4. *Shabda* (Sound): It is grasped by our sense of hearing. There are two kinds of sound

(a) *Varna*: Among the divine and human beings it manifests through the palate etc.

(b) *Avarna*: Sound which is produced by a drum etc.

5. *Sparsha* (Touch): It is perceived by our tactual sense organ.

6. *Roopa* (Colour): Perceived by the sense organ of vision.

7. *Rasa* (Taste): It is sensed by the sense organ of taste.

8. *Gandha* (Smell): It is sensed by the sense organ of smell.

9. *Samyoga* (conjunction)

10. *Shakti* (potency)

There are a number of sub-classifications for the above objects. But for brevity we shall skip them for the time being. With this we have covered a majority of objects of valid knowledge.

We will now focus our attention on what are the valid means available for gaining knowledge regarding the *Prameya*. They are called *Pramaanas*.

Pramana:

The *Vishishtadvaita* system accepts only three *Pramanas* – *Pratyaksha* (perception), *Anumaana* (inference) and *Shabda* (verbal testimony). Other systems accept a few other *Pramanas*. An example is given below.

<i>Pram Svst</i>	<i>Perception</i>	<i>Inference</i>	<i>Verbal Testimony</i>	<i>Comparison</i>	<i>Postulation</i>	<i>Non- cognition</i>	<i>Sambhava & Aitthya</i>
Charvakas	●						
Bauddhas & Vaisesikas	●	●					
Sankyas	●	●	●				
Naiyaayikaas	●	●	●	●			
Praabhaakaras	●	●	●	●	●		
Bhattas & Advaitins	●	●	●	●	●	●	
Pauraanikaas	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Vishishtadvaitins	●	●	●				

Systems of Philosophy and the Pramanas they accept

The main function of consciousness is to reveal the reality of an object. Science basically accepts perceptual experience. (they are the *Charvakas*) - undoubtedly the only type of experience of Reality. Yet, the existence of God transcends the conditions of space and time. (*Desa – Kaala*). He cannot be known through ordinary perception or inference. What are the other *Pramaanas* that could give us valid knowledge of the Reality?

Pratyaksha:

The first one is perception. Before we go farther, we have to understand how perception happens. The act of perception involves three distinctly different factors.

(a) The subject – is he who is trying to perceive the object

(b) The object – that which is being perceived. Note that the subject and object are two distinctly different entities.

(c) The consciousness. This issues from the subject and illuminates the object. In the act of perception, consciousness issues from the Atman through the mind, the sense

channels (eyes, ears etc) then comes in contact with the object and reveals it. This is how one becomes aware of the object. Perception is of two kinds. Basically, it is based on how frequently the object has been viewed – (a) Nirvikalpaka (Indeterminate): Indeterminate perception does not mean the apprehension of an object lacking all distinctions. Vishishtadvaita recognises the need for conceptual factors in any experience and defines indeterminate perception as the cognition of an object that happens when it is seen for the first time. (b) Savikalpaka (Determinate): When the object of the same class is perceived for a second or even a third time the perception is called determinate.

There are other kind of acts that have been examined (e.g.) Smriti (recollection), Pratyabhijna (recognition), Uha (Conjecture), Pratibha (Mental powers of holy personages).

Smriti (recollection): What has been well experienced before becomes an object of recollection. Since perception is the original cause of any recollection, it (Smriti) is brought under the category of Pratyaksha itself. Hence, there is no need to consider it as a separate Pramana.

Pratyabhijna (recognition): Just as recollection is included in the category of Pratyaksha, the act of recognition is also included under Pratyaksha.

Uha (Conjecture): It is not considered as a separate category of Pramana. It is brought under Pratyaksha..

Pratibha: This refers to the special powers of holy personages. It is considered as a Pratyaksha Pramana.

The Vishishtadvaita system thus accepts only three Pramaanas – Pratyaksha, Anumaana and Shabda,

Going back to Indeterminate and indeterminate perceptions, further classifications have been made.

Nirvikalpaka and Savikalpaka perceptions are classified into two kinds. The arvaacina refers to a recent perception and anarvaachina refers to an ancient perception.

Arvaacina is once again two fold – one dependent on sense and the other independent of sense. The independent of sense type is further classified into two categories. The first is achieved as a result of self-accomplishment such as Yoga. The second type refers to that achieved due to Divine grace.

Anarvaachina does not require aid of senses like eyes or ears. It is the knowledge of liberated selves, Eternals (Garuda etc) and Ishvara.

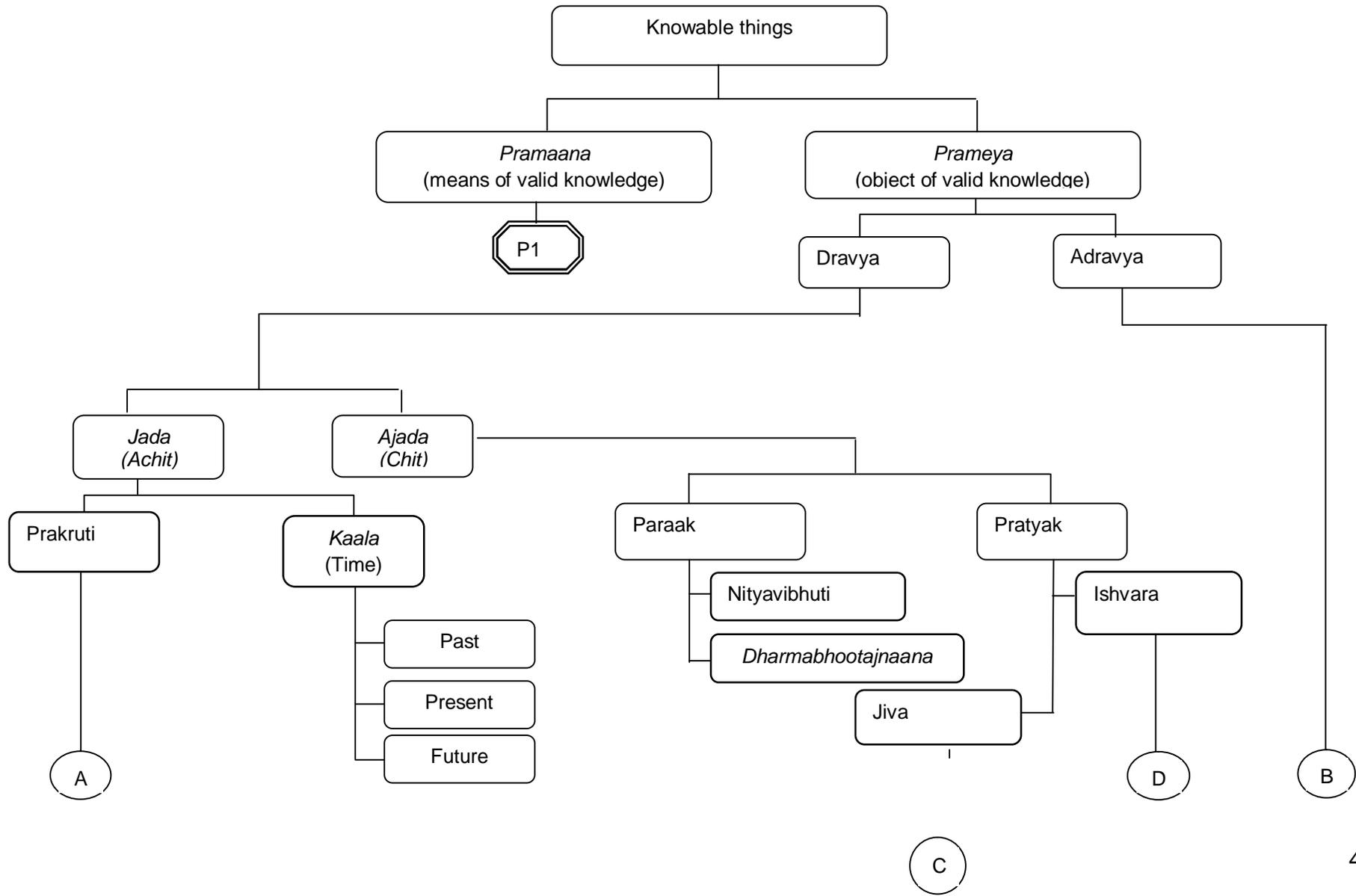
Anumaana:

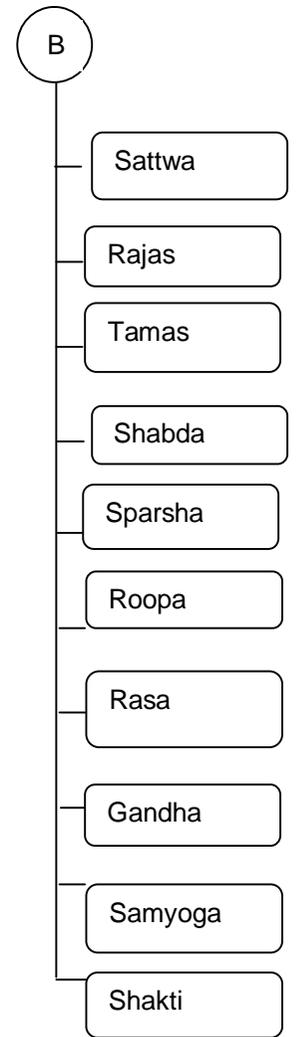
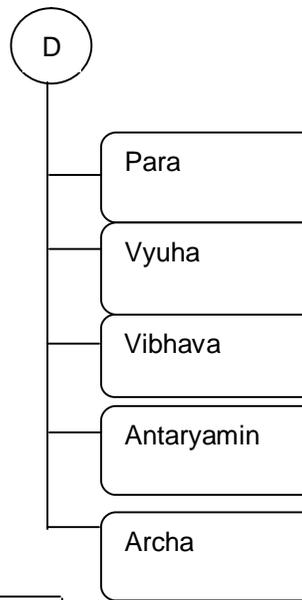
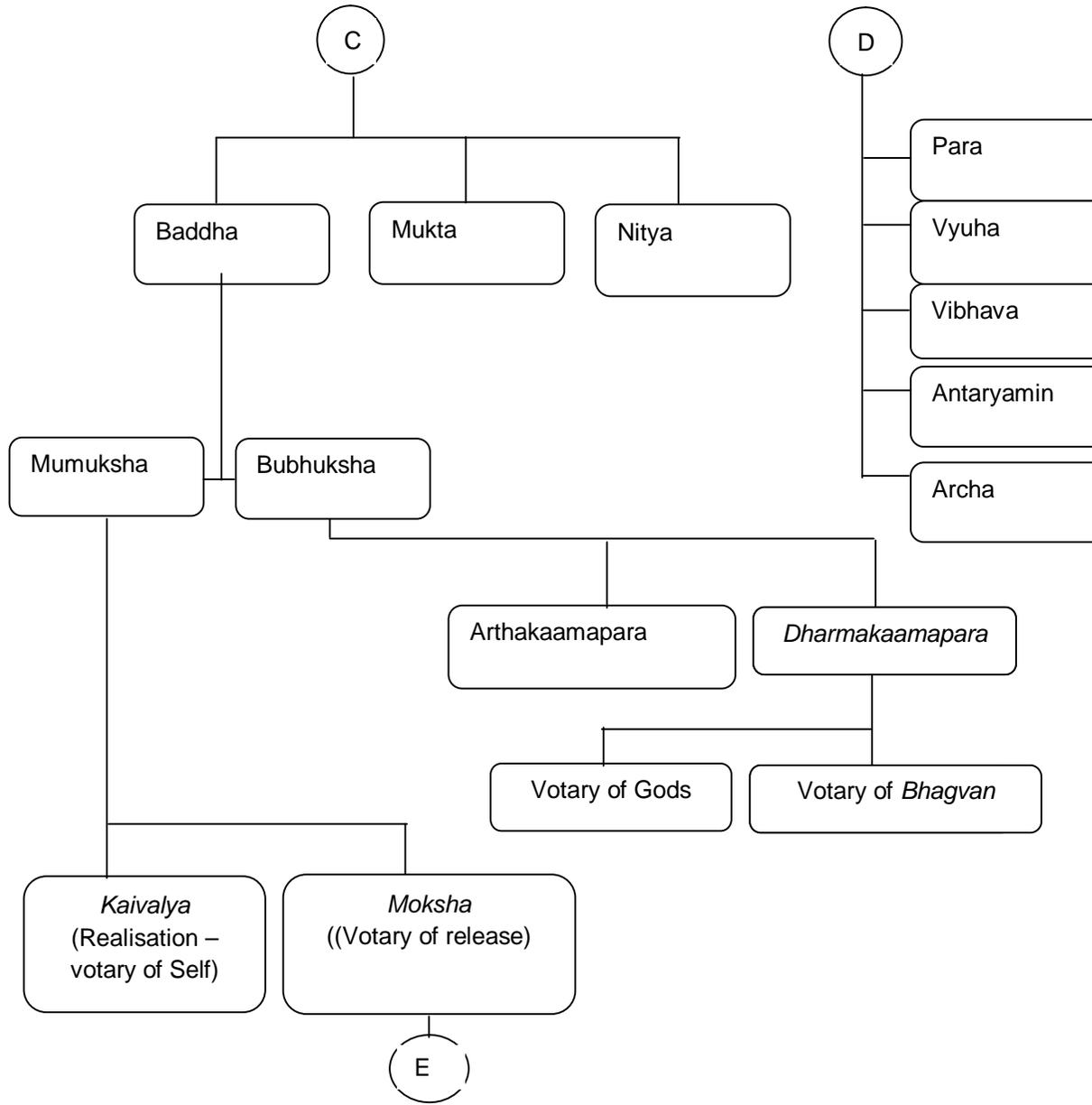
While *Pratyaksha* refers to direct perception, *Anumaana* refers to inferential cognition. This means you arrive at a conclusion based on the evidence of some related items. As an example, you observe smoke and conclude that there is fire in the vicinity. *Shabda* or *Shruti Pramana* occupies the highest position in matters which cannot be settled by *Pratyakṣa* or *Anumaana*

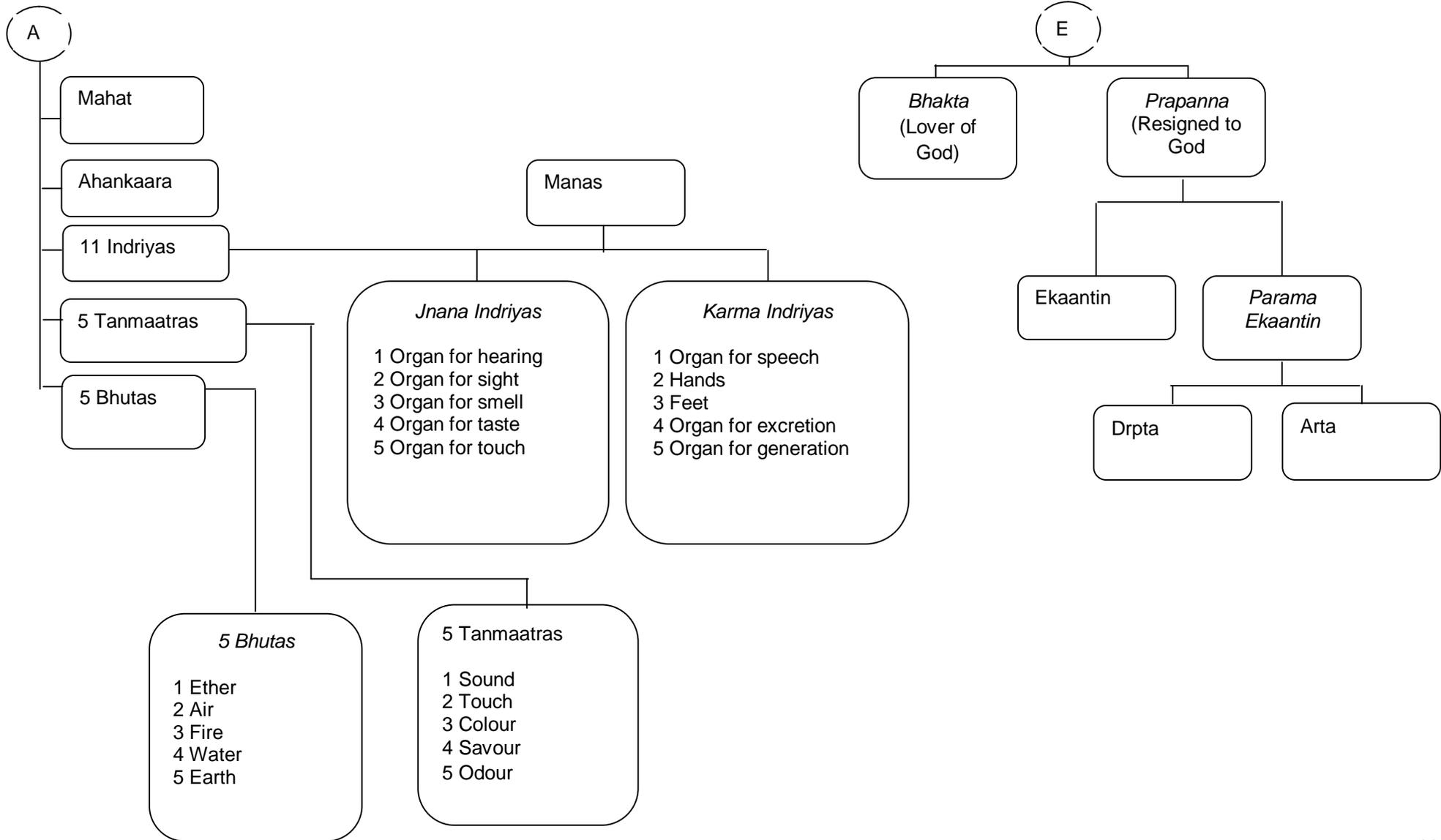
Rules of Epistemology

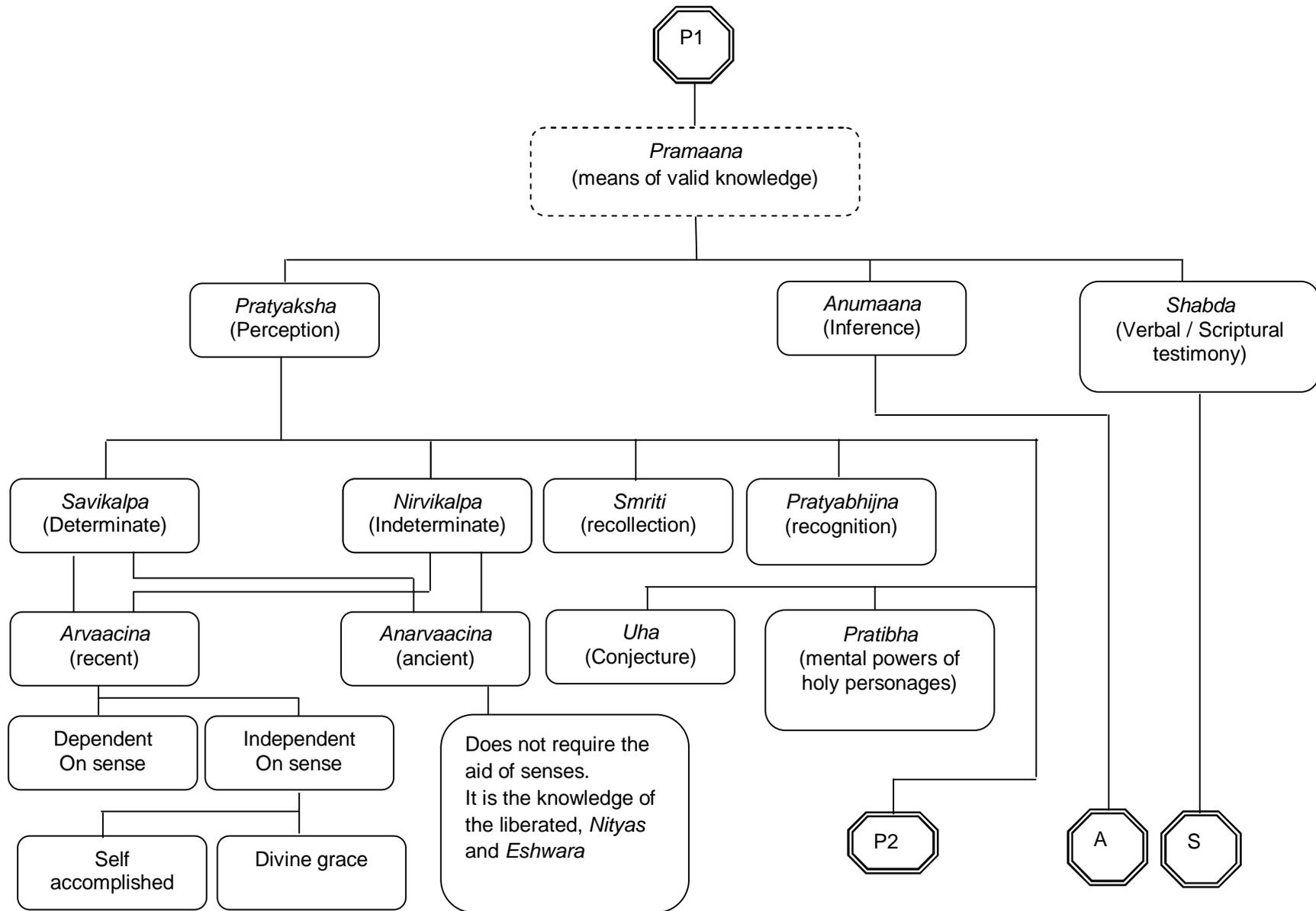
The following rules of hierarchy apply to issues when there is apparent conflict between the 3 modes of acquiring knowledge:

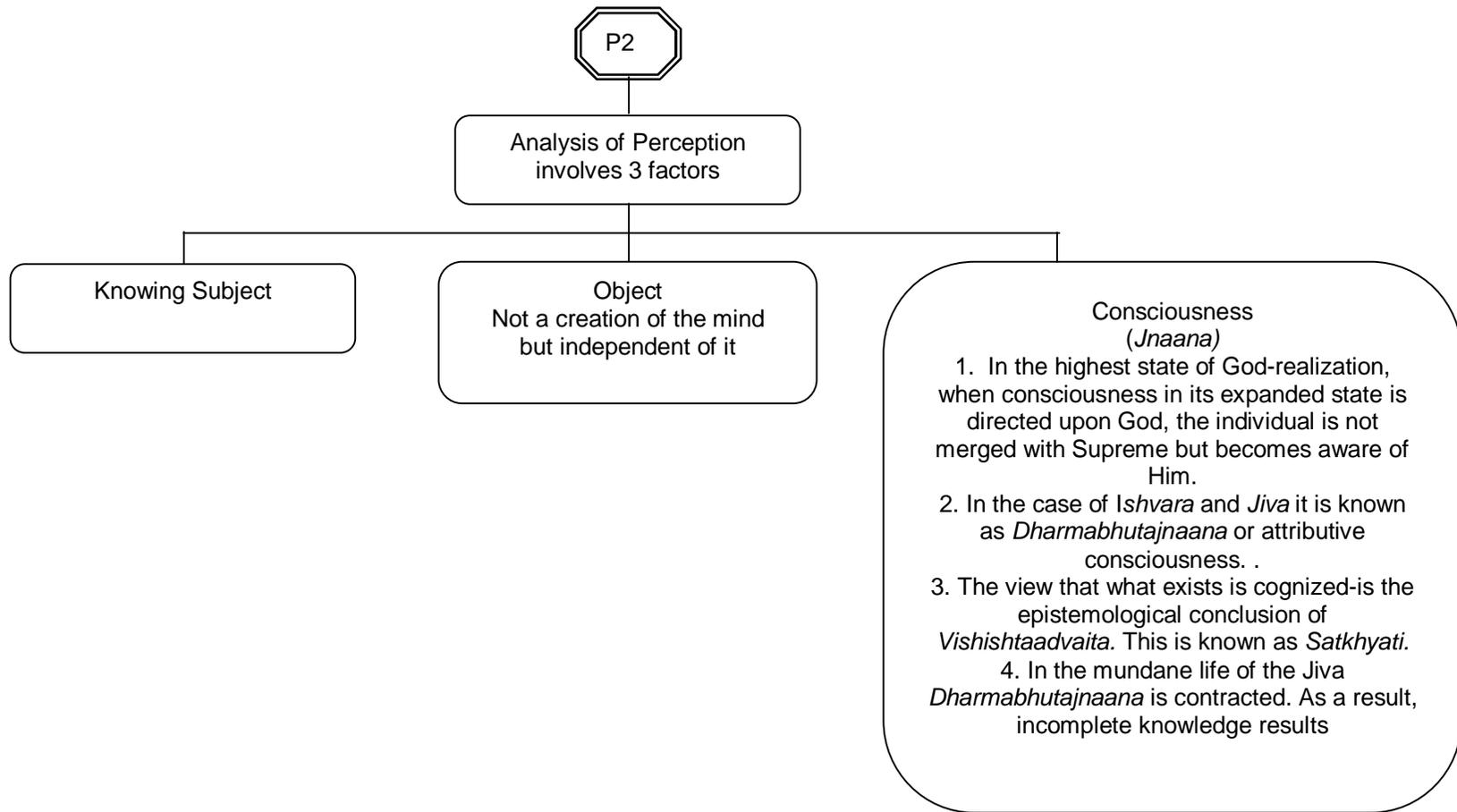
1. *Shabda* or *Shruti Pramana* occupies the highest position in matters which cannot be settled or resolved by *Pratyaksha* or *Anumaana*.
2. *Anumaana* occupies the next position. When an issue cannot be settled through sensory perception alone, it is settled based on *Anumaana* i.e. whichever argument is more logical.
3. When *Pratyaksha* yields a definitive position on a particular issue, such a perception cannot be ignored to interpret *Shabda* in a way which violates that perception.

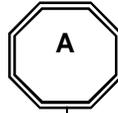






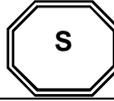






*Anumaana
(Inference)*

While Pratyaksha refers to direct perception, Anumaana refers to inferential cognition. This means you arrive at a conclusion based on the evidence of some related items. As an example, you observe smoke and conclude that there is fire in the vicinity.



Shabda
Verbal testimony
Recognized as a special source of
knowledge

A statement is authoritative when it is (a) uttered by a trustworthy person (b) it is free from errors (to be discussed at a later part of this chapter) (c) is not contradicted by any other cognition.

The *poorva-Mimaasa* is a variety of *Tarka*, reasoning. It assists the *Shabda Pramaana*. Its main topic is the discovery of the correct apparatus by which we could arrive at the *Vedic* truth. The *Mimaamsakas*, being rationalists, were at pains to discover the principles of analysis and synthesis and in doing so to discover the sources of error. The point to note is that *Shabda* is claimed to avoid the triple sources of error (*Kaarana-dosaah*).

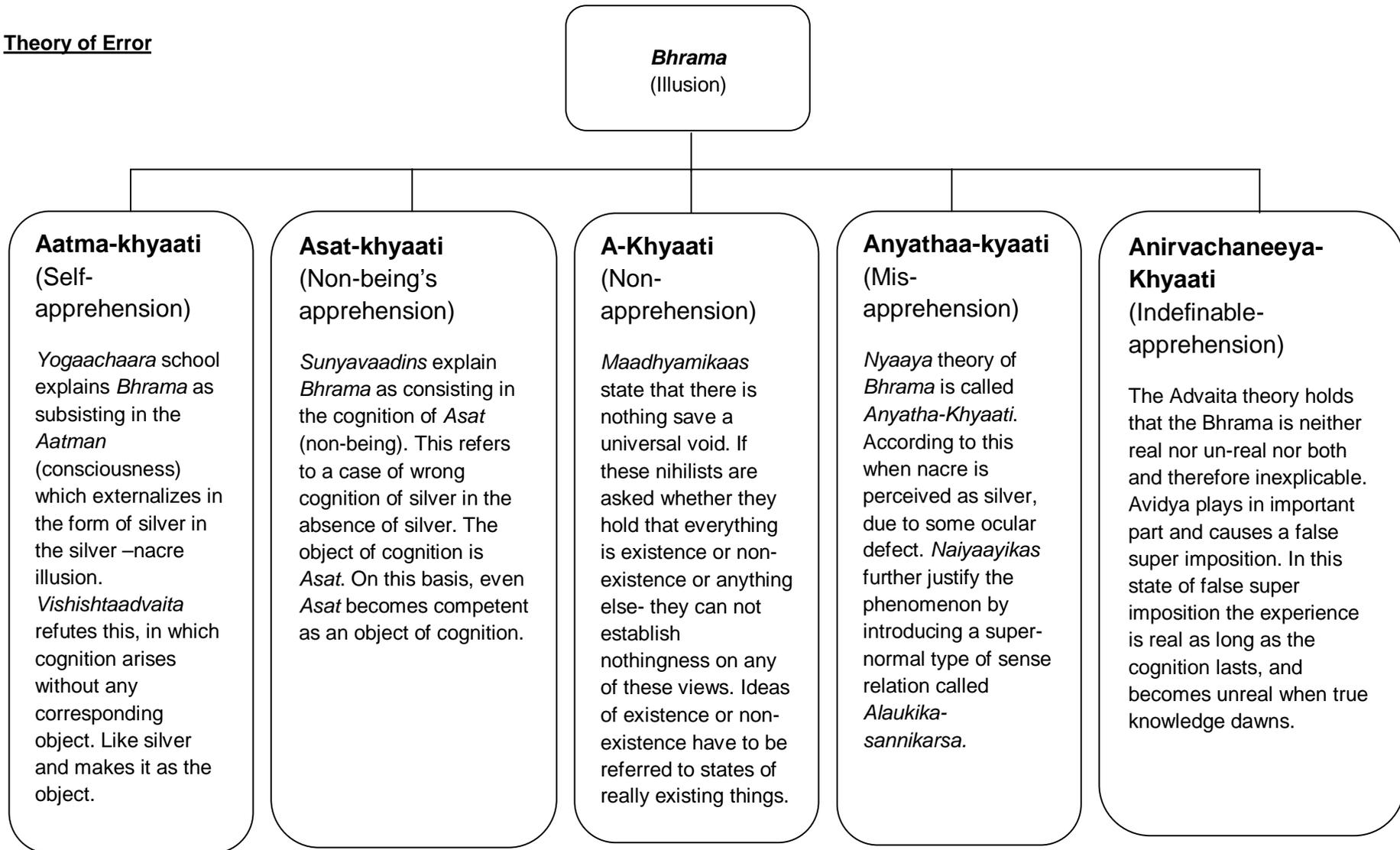
To accept Shabda Pramaana as valid, the source must be pure and perfect; so also the means must be pure and perfect. Such is the Veda. By the grace of the Divine granted to the Rishis, their visions are super-sensory, untainted by the sense organs and karma. The objects of the Shabda are untainted, true and pure. Further to know them, it is necessary to be in that receptive mood of the mind wherein there is no confusion, no obsession, no inattention and no defect. The Rishis mind were in a high stage of Yoga due to Tapas. The truths themselves and the rituals taught were all not creations by an intensified consciousness, but were seen to be truths of eternal existence, and not man made.

Along with Vedas, Smrtis are considered valid documents (since Smrtis do not contradict Vedas). Itihasas and Puranas, being supplementary to Veda, are considered valid. Pancaraatra Agama and Vaikhaannasa Agama are considered authoritative in toto.

Sri Shankaracharya accepts Shabda as a valid testimony. Sri Ramanujacharya also accepts the supremacy of the Shabda.

Upanishads (part of the Vedas), Brahma sutras and Bhagavad Gita together are referred to as Prasthan-traya. This forms the basis for the Bhashyas written by all the Acharyas.

Theory of Error



Chapter – XVI - Branches of Knowledge and Universities

Introduction

***Om Poornamadah Poornamidam Poornat Poornamudachyate
Poornasya Poornamadaya Poornamevavasishyate
Om Shantih, Shantih, Shantih***

That is whole; this is whole;
From that whole this whole came
From that whole, if this whole is removed
What remains is a whole.

Brihadaranyaka and Isavasya Upanishad.

Whole is infinite. If you remove infinity from infinity what remains is infinity.

History of the remotest civilization is always shrouded in mystery and invariably surrounded by controversy. Conclusions of historians can always be challenged on grounds of insufficient data and knowledge. One must also recognise that civilization is spread over distant lands and languages. No one can give a guarantee that he had access to all the literature in the different languages, that he has in fact studied all of them, mastered their content before coming to his conclusions. To add to this, prejudices and national affections always tended to interfere with the establishment of facts. As a result the final conclusion on ancient civilization will, perhaps, be never reached.

Vedas, Puranas and Itihasas give us ample indication of ancient Indian civilization. How old are these ancient literature? What information can we get from them?

According to Hindu scriptures, time is reckoned in terms of four *Yugas*. We are currently in *Kali Yuga* and its duration is said to be 432,000 human years. This was preceded by *Dvapara Yuga* and Lord *Krishna* lived in that *Yuga*. The duration of that *Yuga* was 864,000 human years. Before that we had *Treta Yuga* which had a duration of 1,728,000 human years. Lord *Rama* lived in that *Yuga*. Before *Treta Yuga*, we had *Krita Yuga* with a duration of 4,320,000 years. *Vedas* existed and were studied during *Treta Yuga* also. However, the modern historians indicate the age of the *Vedas* to be much later – may be 6000 – 3000 BC. Interestingly, these large numbers and units of time were indicated in the *Vedas*.

In *Yajurveda Samhita and Taittiriya Samhita* the following list of numeral denominations are given.

Eka, Dasa, Shata, Sahasra, Ayuta, Niyuta, Prayuta, Arbuda, Samudra, Madhya, Anta, Paraardha. *Arbuda* indicates ten *crores* i.e. 10^8 . The following enumeration is available in the *Itihasas*.

100 *lakhs* = 1 *Koti* (Crore) = 10^7 . 10^5 = 1 *Sankha* and so on.

In the *Ramayana*, a spy narrates the strength of *Sri Rama's* army to his king *Ravana* in terms of these numbers. It is quite evident that the decimal system of numeration was in place by the *Treta Yuga* itself. In addition, in *Ramayana* numerous references are made to astronomy, public administration, engineering, textiles and music. All this reinforces the fact that the nations had by then an advanced civilisation. It is only common sense to assume that nations with such an advanced numeral system also will have adequate knowledge to handle the mathematics.

Sulba sutras

Religious practices fuelled development of mathematics and astronomy in India. Celebration of marriages, performance of festivals and certain sacrifices required accurate knowledge times, information on Sun rise and settings, occurrence of solar and lunar eclipses. These required accurate knowledge of astronomy, arithmetic, plane and spherical geometry and trigonometry.

In ancient times every household had to maintain three types of *Agnis* (fires) sheltered in specially and accurately constructed alters. These alters had to conform to certain specific shapes and areas. Apart from this, where elaborate sacrifices are called for, sacrificial alters with more complicated shapes and sizes (rectangles, triangles, trapezia) were required to be constructed. This required a detailed knowledge of the properties of geometric shapes. Details on the sacrifices were mentioned in *Rig-Veda Samhita*. *Taittiriya Brahmana* gives more specific details on the science of construction. Refer to a figure of a typical altar given below. The practice of hereditary handing down of instructions from father to son and the preceptor to the disciple slowed down the setting down of instructions in written form. In this way were written several *Sulba sutras*. These are treated as appendices to the corresponding scriptural texts known as *Srauta Sutras*. Only seven of the *Sulba sutras* are known at present – *Bodhayana, Apasthamba, Katyayana, Manava, Maitrayana, Varaha* and *Vadhula*. Their dates have been estimated between 800 B.C and 500 B.C. Some of the theorems indicated in these *Sulvas* are as follows-

- a) The diagonal of a rectangle divides it into two equal parts
- b) The diagonal of a rectangle bisect each other and the opposite areas are equal.
- c) The perpendicular of an isosceles triangle on the base divides the triangle into two equal parts.

- d) The rectangle and a parallelogram on the same base and between the same parallels are equal in area.
- e) The diagonals of a rhombus bisect each other at right angles.
- f) The famous theorem known after Pythagoras now, is available
- g) Properties of similar rectilinear figures.

These cover the first two books and the sixth book of Euclid. Euclid lived around 300 B.C. And *Sulvas* were there, at the latest, from 800 B.C. The proofs given by Pythagoras or Euclid may be their own. But it is clear that the theorem was well known for hundreds of years before them in India, China and Egypt.

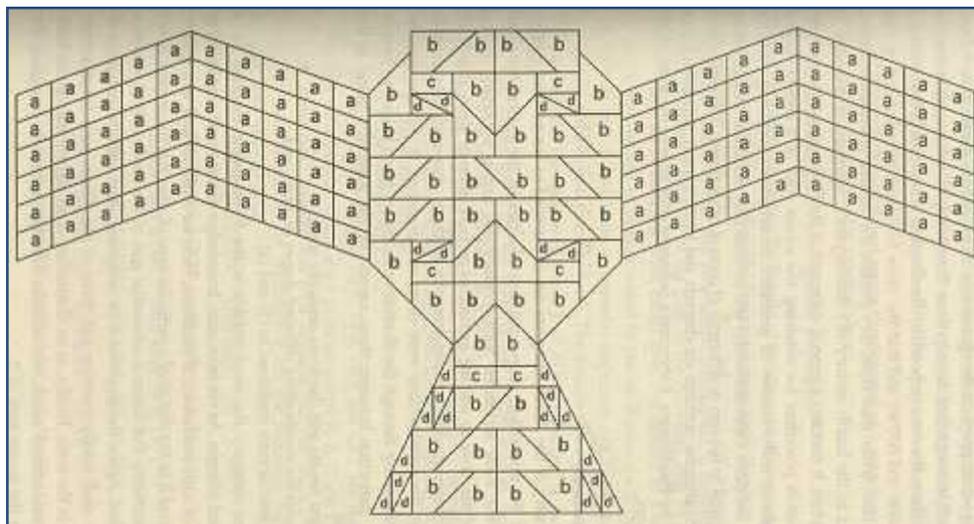
Another interesting information is available from the *Sulvas*. The shape of the *Ahwamedhiki Vedika* is an isosceles trapezium whose head = $24\sqrt{2}$; Foot = $30\sqrt{2}$; altitude = $36\sqrt{2}$. Its area is stated to be *prakarams*.
 Area = $36\sqrt{2} * (1/2) * (24\sqrt{2} + 34\sqrt{2}) = 1944$.

This clearly indicates a knowledge of the method of finding the area of a trapezium and simple operation on surds.

Another remarkable approximation of $\sqrt{2}$ in the *Sulvas*.

$$\sqrt{2} = 1 + (1/3) + [(1/ (3 \times 4))] + [1/ (3 \times 4 \times 34)]$$

This gives $\sqrt{2} = 1.4142156$ whereas the true is equal to 1.414213.



A typical picture of a Vedic sacrificial altar

Another important milestone by the Indian mathematicians is the use of irrational numbers in their work.

Vedic Mathematics

A few salient points are given below.

- a)The *Sutras* (aphorisms) apply to and cover nearly every branch of mathematics (arithmetic, algebra, geometry, -plane and solid, trigonometry- plane and spherical, conics – geometrical and analytical, astronomy, calculus – differential and integral etc)
- b)The *Sutras* are easy to understand, remember and apply. *Swami Bharati Krsna Tirthaji (1884-1960)* has written a magnificent book titled “*Vedic Mathematics*”, based on his study of the *Vedas*. It is published by *Motilal Banarsidass*. From the book, it emerges that 16 *Sutras* together with their corollaries are adequate to carry out all mathematical calculations.
- c)We will give a few examples to indicate how the methods work. For a detailed understanding the reader is referred to text books that are available.

Division operation

Example: **1/19**. Find the answer in decimal equivalent

According to the current method the answer is “0.052631578947368421”. It will be obtained after 18 steps.

If we now go to the Vedic mathematics method, it utilises the *Sutra* – “***Ekaadika Purva***”. This means – the number which is just one more than the penultimate digit

Step-1	The product of the last digit of the denominator and the last digit of the decimal equivalent of the fraction must invariably end in 9. Here the last digit of the denominator is 9. Therefore, the last digit of the decimal equivalent must be 1. So we put down 1 as the right hand most number of our answer..	1
Step-2	Calculate one more than the penultimate digit in the denominator. The penultimate number in the denominator is 1 in this case. Add 1 to this	

	penultimate number and we get 2 (“ <i>Ekaadika Purva</i> ”). . Note that from now on-wards this 2 will be the multiplier for all subsequent calculations	
Step-3	Multiply, the last digit obtained in Step-1 (1), by the 2 we got in Step-2 and place it to the left of 1	21
Step-4	Multiply the 2, (second from left) we got in Step-3, by 2 again and place it to the right of 2 in Step-3	421
Step-5	Multiply the 4 obtained in Step-4 by 2 and place the result to the left of 4	8421
Step-6	Multiply the 8 obtained in Step-5 by 2 and place the result to the left of 8. Since we got 16 we put 6 to the left of 8 and keep 1 as a carry over	68421 100000
Step-7	Multiply 6 by 2 and we get 12. Add to this, the 1 we got from the previous carry over and we get 13. Write 3 to the left of 6 and 1 as carry over	368421 1100000
Step-8	Multiply 3 by 2 and add to it the carryover of 1	7368421 1100000
Step-9	Follow this procedure till we reach the 18 th digit.	0.052631578947368421 101001111101100000

Multiplication operation

We will apply the Sutra “*Nikhilam Navatascaramam Dasatah*”. Literally translated it means – “all from 9 and the last from 10”

Example: Multiply **9 by 7**

Step-1	Chose a base – 10,100 or 200 nearest to the numbers to be multiplied. In this case we chose 10	(10)
Step-2	Write down the numbers to be multiplied one above the other on the left hand side. Subtract each one from the base 10 and write down the remainders on the right	(10) 9 – 1 7 - 3

	hand side – with a minus sign connecting them (to show that both these remainders are less the base 10	
Step-3	We are now about to get the final answer for the problem. The left hand side of the answer could be arrived at in a number of ways. We will pick one of them. Subtract the base (10) from the sum of the given numbers (i.e.) $(9+7) - 10 = 6$. Write this down on the left hand side for the answer.	(10) 9 – 1 7 – 3 ----- 6
Step-4	Vertically multiply the two deficit numbers (1 and 3 in this case). The product is 3. This the right hand portion of the answer	(10) 9 – 1 7 – 3 ----- 6 3

The above examples have been given just to illustrate the procedures involved. It does not mean that the *Sutras* are applicable to solve simple applications only. They are suitable for application on a variety of problems – simple as well as very complex. In all cases, answers may be written down in a single line – and with a bit of practice a mental calculation would be adequate. Given below are examples of some of the problems that have been solved by applying Vedic mathematics.

1 Solved by the application of “*Urdhva – Tiryak*” *Sutra*

a) $(3X^2 + 5X + 7)$ multiply by $(4X^2 + 7X + 6) = (12X^4 + 41X^3 + 81X^2 + 79X + 42)$

b) $(X^5 + 3X^4 + 5X^3 + 3X^2 + X + 1)$ multiply by $(7x^5 + 5x^4 + 3x^3 + x^2 + 3x + 5)$
 $= (7X^{10} + 26X^9 + 53X^8 + 56X^7 + 43X^6 + 40X^5 + 41X^4 + 38X^3 + 19X^2 + 8X + 5)$

2 Solved by the application of “*Paraavartya Sutra*”

a) Divide $(7X^2 + 5X + 3)$ by $(X-1) = (7X + 2)$ and remainder 15

3 Integrate $\int (7X-1)/(6X^2-5X+1)$

Applying “*Paraavartya Sutra*” we get the answer $[\log (2X - 1)^{5/2}] / (3x-1)^{4/3}$

The reader can visualise the power of these *Sutras*. I have just cited a few examples with a view to present the wide scope of their application. Interested readers may read the book written by H.H. *Sri Bharati Krsna Tirthaji Maharaj* to get a better understanding on the application of *Vedic Mathematics*.

Vedic Numerical Code

In the mathematical writings, the ancient Sanskrit writers do not use figures (when big numbers are involved) in their numerical notations. Instead they preferred to use the letters of the *Sanskrit (Devnagari)* alphabets to represent various numbers! This is done to help the pupil to memorise the material studied. As a rule, even the most technical and abstruse text books have been written in *Sutras* or in verse with the object of making it easy for students to memorise. That is why we find that not only theological, philosophical, medical, astronomical treatises but also very large dictionaries have also been written in *Sanskrit verses*.

Now to give some examples on alphabetical codes –

- a) *ka, ta, pa* and *ya* all denote 1
- b) *kha, tha, pha* and *ra* all denote 2
- c) *ga, da, ba* and *la* all stand for 3
- d) *gha, dha, bha* and *va* all stand for 4
- e) *gna, na, ma* and *sa* all represent 5
- f) *ca, ta, and saa* all denote 6
- g) *cha, tha, and sa* all denote 7
- h) *ja, da, and ha* all represent 8
- i) *jha* and *dha* stand for 9
- j) *ksa* (or *ksudra*) means zero

Thus *pa pa* is 11; *ma ma* is 55; *ta ta* is 11; *ma ra* is 52. For example, *kappa, tapa, papa and yapa* all mean 11. It is left to the author to choose the combination that he finds suitable. These methods are all used for writing them in verse form with the final object of (a) teaching purposes (b) making it easier to memorise.

Western historians referred to the Vedic period as “*Iron Age*”. But during the Vedic period India had a fairly advanced learning in subjects such as mathematics, astronomy, medicine etc.

DOES IT ALL LOOK AS IRON AGE stuff - Some Iron some age!!

Jaina mathematics:

The *Jaina* religion became a prominent religion in the sub-continent between 500 BC and 100 BC. They gave rise to *Jaina* mathematics. The *Jaina* mathematics played an important role in bridging the gap between ancient Indian mathematics and the so called classical period heralded by the work of *Aryabhatta-I*.

Among the important developments of the *Jainas* are

(a) Theory of numbers (b) Great fascination with large numbers. For example – time period mentioned include $756 * 1011 * 8400000028$ days, called *shirsa prahelika* (c) Five different types of infinity are recognised – infinite in one and two directions, infinite in area, infinite everywhere and infinite perpetually. This was not realised in Europe till late 19th century. (d) Knowledge of fundamental laws of indices (e) Arithmetical operations (f) Geometry (g) Operations in fractions (h) Simple, cubic and quadratic equations (i) Operations in logarithms (j) Sequences and progressions (k) Early work on permutations and combinations – which resulted of an early Pascal triangle which was called by the name *Meru Prastara*. This happened many centuries before Pascal himself “invented” it.

Golden Period

The years from 320 AD to about 700 AD were critical in the development of Indian civilization. In the north, under the Gupta dynasty, Sanskrit culture thrived, great universities were founded, and the arts and sciences flourished. During the Gupta period, the observatory at Ujjain in central India was the heart of mathematical scholarship, and many mathematical techniques were developed to meet the needs of astronomers. The astronomical text the *Surya Siddhanta*, written by an unknown author sometime around A.D. 400, contains the first known tabulation of the sine function. Indian mathematicians also developed the concept of zero, the base-10 decimal numeration system, and the number symbols, or *numerals*, we use today.

The great mathematician *Aryabhatta* (476-550) wrote a collection of verses called *Aryabhattiya* in 449 AD. The book describes both mathematics and astronomy, covering spherical trigonometry, arithmetic, algebra and plane trigonometry. *Aryabhatta* calculated π to four decimal places, computed the length of the year almost exactly, and recognized that the Earth was a rotating sphere.

The famous astronomer *Brahmagupta* (598-670) wrote important works on mathematics and astronomy, including *Brahma-sphuta-siddhanta* (The opening of the universe) and *Khandakhadyaka*. He studied solar and lunar eclipses, as well as the motions and positions of the planets. Unlike *Aryabhatta*, *Brahmagupta* believed that the Earth was stationary, but he, too, calculated the length of the year with remarkable precision.

Impact

The numeration system developed in India facilitated further advances in mathematics. Earlier ways of writing numbers, such as Roman numerals, used symbols to represent individual quantities, and these were added to determine the value. For example, X was the symbol for 10, and XXX was the symbol for 30, and 50 was L. Numbers expressed this way can be lengthy: 1,988 is MCMLXXXVIII. More to the point, there is no convenient way to do computations with them. People who used Roman numerals and other similar systems did their calculations with counting aids such as the *abacus*.

In contrast, Hindu arithmetic used number symbols that went only from 1 to 9, and instead of using more symbols for higher numbers, they introduced a place-value system for multipliers of 10. Each place had an individual name: *dasa* meant the tens place, *sata* meant the hundreds place, and so on. To express the number 235, the Hindus would write "2 *sata*, 3 *dasan*, 5". Seven hundred and eight would be "7 *sata*, 8".

Toward the end of the Gupta period, Indian mathematicians found a way to eliminate the place names while keeping the advantages of the place-value system. They used a symbol called *sunya*, or "empty" to designate a place with no value in it. This is equivalent to the symbol we call zero. With this they could write 708 for "7 *sata*, 8," and easily distinguish it from "7 *dasan*, 8," or 78. The physical alignment of tens, hundreds, etc. in columns resulted in the development of new arithmetic techniques for working with numbers.

About 800AD, the Hindu mathematician *Mahavira* demonstrated that zero was not simply a placeholder, but had an actual numerical value. His tenth-century successor *Sridhara* further recognized that the zero was as meaningful a number as any of the others. Without the zero, modern mathematics, and therefore most of modern science, would have been impossible.

The twelfth century mathematician *Bhaskara* (often called *Bhaskara* the Learned) was, like many of his predecessors (such as *Brahmagupta*), head of the Ujjain observatory and a gifted astronomer. His two mathematical works, *Lilivati* (The graceful) and *Bijaganita* (Seed counting) from the series *Siddhantasiromani* were the first to expound systematically the use of the decimal system, based on powers of

10. He compiled many problems with which earlier mathematicians had struggled, and presented solutions.

Bhaskara was starting to understand the special nature of dividing by zero, as he specifically noted that $3/0$ is infinite. He was, however, unable to generalize this to any number divided by zero. He enumerated the convention of *signs* in multiplication and division: two positives or two negatives divided or multiplied yields a positive result and a positive and a negative divided or multiplied gives a negative result.

In algebra, *Bhaskara* built on the work of *Aryabhatta* and *Brahmagupta*. He used letters to represent unknowns, as we do in algebra today. *Bhaskara* developed new methods for solving *quadratic equations*, that is, equations containing at least one variable raised to the second power (x^2). He studied regular polygons with up to 384 sides, in order to calculate increasingly precise approximations of π .

One of the first Muslim mathematicians to write about Indian techniques was *Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi*, a teacher in the mathematical school at Baghdad. His book *Al-Khwarizmi* "Concerning the Hindu Art of Reckoning" was translated into Latin as *Algoritmi, de numero Indorum*. The Latinization of his name from "al-Khwarizmi" to "Algoritmi" eventually became our word for a mathematical procedure, *algorithm*. When his book on elementary mathematics *Kitab al-jabr wa al-muqabalah* (The book of integration and equation) was translated into Latin in the twelfth century, the term *al-jabr* became *algebra*.

Eurocentricism

For many years now, Indian contributions to mathematics have not been given due acknowledgement in modern history. Many discoveries and inventions by Indian mathematicians were known to their western counterparts, copied by them, and presented as their own original work; and further, that this mass plagiarism has gone on unrecognized. The basic chronology adopted of history of mathematics was very simple; it had primarily been the invention of the ancient Greeks – up until the middle of first millennium AD. It was later followed up by the European renaissance. Occasionally, some marginal concessions have been for contributions from "non-Europeans". Some of the historians have gone to the extent suggesting severely inaccurate dates for the Indian work with a view to show Greek or Arabic influence. This is incredible because several Indian works have, in fact, had significant impact on early Arab works – not the other way round.

According to G. G. Joseph:

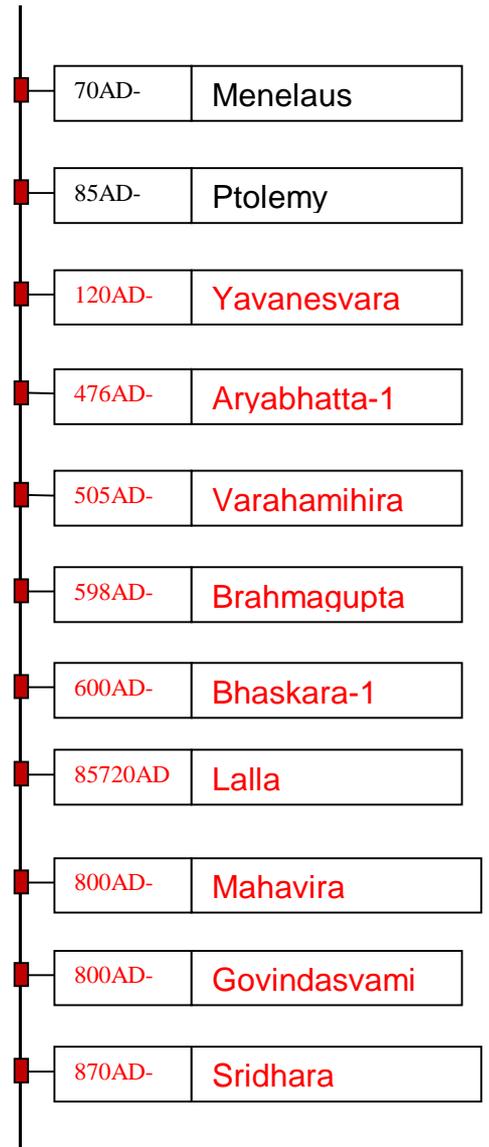
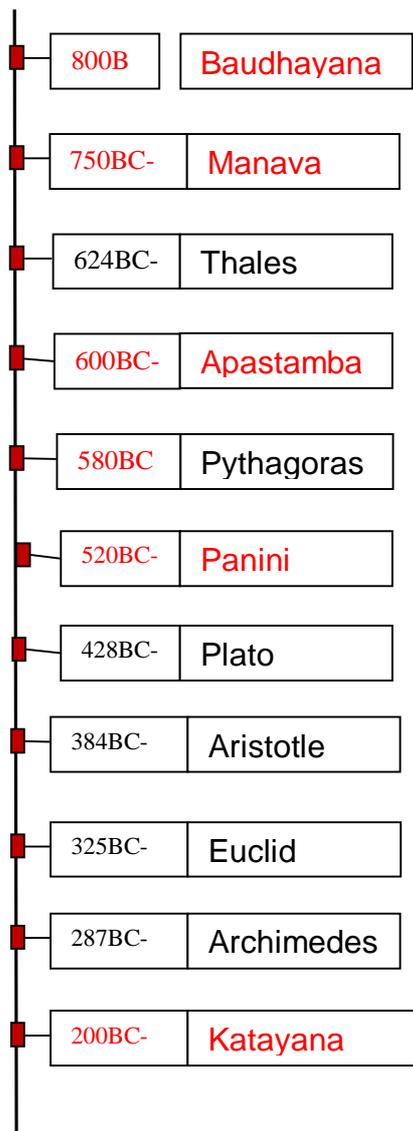
“The contributions from other civilizations - most notably China and India, are perceived either as borrowers from Greek sources or having made only minor contributions to mainstream mathematical development. Openness to more recent research findings, especially in the case of Indian and Chinese mathematics, is sadly missing”

The historian of mathematics, Florian Cajori, suggested that he "suspect[s] that Diophantus got his first glimpse of algebraic knowledge from India.

More recently, the infinite series of calculus, trigonometric functions (rediscovered by Gregory, Taylor, and Maclaurin in the late 17th century) were described (with proofs) in India, by mathematicians of the Kerala school, remarkably some two centuries earlier. Some scholars have recently suggested that knowledge of these results might have been transmitted to Europe through the trade route from Kerala by traders and Jesuit missionaries. Kerala was in continuous contact with China and Arabia, and, from around 1500, with Europe itself. The existence of communication routes and a suitable chronology certainly make such a transmission a possibility.

Some Prominent Mathematicians

In the following pages I have given a time line of some of the giants in the field of mathematics. Unfortunately, in a number of cases specific documentation is not available regarding the place of their birth and even the period during which they did their work.



920AD –1000AD	Aryabhatta-2
940AD –1010AD	Vijayanandi
973AD –1048AD	al-Baruni
1070AD –1130AD	Brahmadeva
1114AD –1185AD	Bhaskara-2
1340AD –1410AD	Mahendra Suri
1340AD –1400AD	Narayana
1350AD –1425AD	Madhava
1370AD –1460AD	Paramesvara
1444AD –1544AD	Nilakanha
1500AD –1575AD	Jyesthadeva

Baudhayana (800 BC)

No records are available regarding the work on mathematics that was done in India between the early Vedic periods till about 800 BC. Then we hear about *Boudhayana*

We know nothing about this great mathematician to indicate where he was born and the period during which he lived. The period of 800 BC is a guess. However, some sections of the *Sulbasutras* he has written are available.

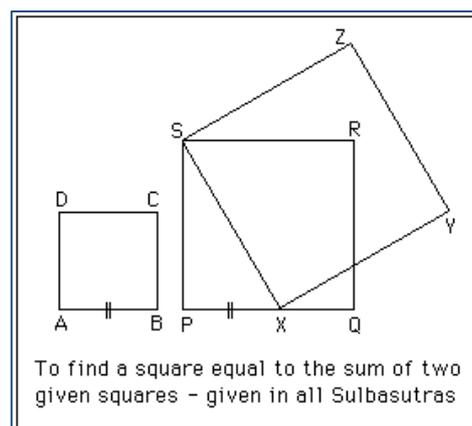
His *Sulbasutras* contain some geometric solutions of a linear equation with a single unknown. Quadratic equations of the form $ax^2 + bx = c$ appear. We also find frequent usage of the term that we now know as π .

Let us now have a look at a couple of his *Sulbasutras*.

This example calls for making a square equal in area to given unequal squares. Consider the diagram given above –

$ABCD$ and $PQRS$ are two given squares. Mark a point X on PQ such that $PX = AB$. Then the square on SX has an area equal to sum of the areas of the squares $ABCD$ and $PQRS$.

This follows from the now known “*Pythagoras theorem*” that $SX^2 = PX^2 + PS^2$. We have constructed $PX=AB$



Let us consider another case.

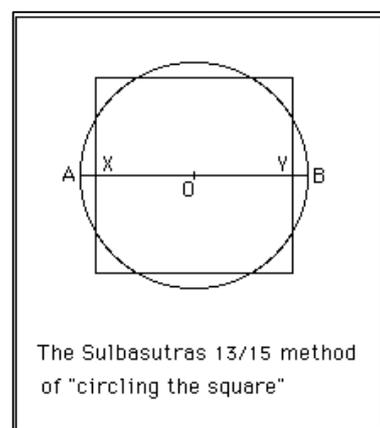
All the Sutras contain a method to square a circle. It is an approximate method based on constructing a square of side $13/15$ times the diameter of the given circle.

Let the diameter of the circle be = D . Each side of the square is equal to $[13/15] \times D$.

The area of a square = $[13/15] \times D \times [13/15] \times D$.

The area of the circle = $[\pi \times D^2] / 4$

Equating these two, we get $\pi = 12 \times [13/15]^2 = 676/225 = 3.00444$



This is a rough value suitable for the construction work

Apasthamba (600BC-540BC)

A number of Indians would recognise the name. Yet, not much detail regarding the place of his birth or his period is known

He has written a number of *Sulbasutras* and they are available now.

His work gives an approximation for $\sqrt{2}$. The rule is given below.

Increase a unit length by its third and this third by its own fourth less the thirty-fourth part of that fourth

Now this gives

$$\sqrt{2} = 1 + 1/3 + 1/(3 \times 4) - 1/(3 \times 4 \times 34) = 577/408 = 1.414215686.$$

The correct value is 1.414213562. The Apasthamba Sutra is correct to 5 decimal places!

Arya Bhatta-1 (476 AD – 550 AD)

He is known as *Arya Bhatta-1*, to distinguish him from another mathematician of the same name who lived about 400 years later.

Arya Bhatta is the first in the line of great astronomers / mathematicians born during the golden age of Indian astronomy and mathematics. These men were first foremost astronomers, but the mathematical requirements of astronomy led them to developing many areas of mathematics.

Aryabhata born in 476 AD and he was 23 years old by the time he wrote his first major work "*Aryabhattiya*". He wrote this major work of his while living at *Kusumapura*, a place near the *Pataliputra* (modern day Patna). *Kusumapura* and *Ujjain* were the major mathematical centres of India during that period. He lived there during the last years of Gupta empire.

The mathematical part of *Aryabhattiya* covers arithmetic, algebra, plane trigonometry and spherical trigonometry. It also contains – continued fractions, quadratic equations, sum of power series and a table of sines. In this work Arya Bhatta has assigned numerical values to the 33 consonants of the Indian alphabet. The system allows numbers up to 10^{18} to be represented with an alphabetical notation. It was clear that *Aryabhattiya* knew of the numeral symbols and the place value system

His works

He was the author of several treatises on mathematics and astronomy some of which are lost. *Aryabhattachiya*, a treatise on mathematics and astronomy has survived to modern times.

Arya Siddhanta

Arya Siddhanta, a work in astronomical computations is lost. It is known through the writings of later mathematicians and commentators like *Varahamihira* and *Brahmagupta*. The book contained descriptions of several astronomical instruments of that age like - the gnomon (*shanku-yantra*), a shadow instrument (*chhaayaa-yantra*), possibly angle-measuring devices, semi-circle and circle shaped (*dhanur-yantra / chakra-yantra*), a cylindrical stick (*yasti-yantra*), an umbrella-shaped device called *chhatra-yantra*.

A third text that may have survived in Arabic translation is the *Al ntf* or *Al-nanf*, which claims to be a translation of Aryabhata, but the Sanskrit name of this work is not known.

Aryabhattachiya

The entire text consists of 108 verses, plus an introductory 13, the whole being divided into four *Padas* or chapters. They are indicated below -

Gitikaapaada: (13 verses) deals with large units of time - *Kalpa*, *manvantra*, *yuga*, which present a cosmology that differs from earlier texts

Ganitapaada: (33 verses), covering mensuration (*kshetra vyaavahaara*), arithmetic and geometric progressions, simple, quadratic, simultaneous, and indeterminate equations (*kuttaka*)

Kaalakriyaapaada (25 verses): different units of time and method of determination of positions of planets for a given day. Calculations concerning the intercalary month (*adhikmas*). Presents a seven-day week, with names for days of week.

Golapaada: (50 verses): Geometric/trigonometric aspects of celestial spheres, features of the ecliptic, celestial equator, node, shape of the earth, cause of day and night, rising of zodiacal signs on horizon etc.

Mathematics

Place Value system and zero

The number place-value system, first seen in the 3rd century Bakhshali Manuscript was clearly in place in his work; he certainly did not use the symbol, but the French mathematician Georges Ifrah argues that knowledge of zero was implicit in

Aryabhata's place-value system as a place holder for the powers of ten with null coefficients

π as Irrational

Aryabhata worked on the approximation for Pi (π), and may have realized that π is irrational. In the second part of the *Aryabhattiya*, he writes

**“*chaturadhikam śatamaśaguam dvāśāśistathā sahasrām
Ayutadvayaviśkambhasyāsanno vr̥ttapariāha.*”**

"Add four to 100, multiply by eight and then add 62,000. By this rule the circumference of a circle of diameter 20,000 can be approached." In other words, $\pi = \sim 62832/20000 = 3.1416$, correct to five digits. The commentator *Nilakantha Somayaji*, (Kerala School, 15th c.) interprets the word *asana* (approaching), appearing just before the last word, as saying that not only it is an approximation, but that the value is incommensurable (or irrational). If this is correct, it is quite a sophisticated insight, for the irrationality of π was proved in Europe only in 1761 by Lambert). After *Aryabhattiya* was translated into Arabic (ca. 820 AD) this approximation was mentioned in *Al-Khwarizmi's* book on algebra.

Mensuration

In *Ganitapada*, Aryabhata gives the area of a triangle as “tribhujasya phalashariram samadalakoti bhujardhasamvargah” that translates to: for a triangle, the result of a perpendicular with the half-side is the area.

Indeterminate Equations

A problem of great interest to Indian mathematicians since ancient times has been to find integer solutions to equations that have the form $ax + b = cy$, a topic that has come to be known as “Diophantine” equations. Here is an example from *Bhaskara's* commentary on *Aryabhattiya*.

Find the number which gives 5 as the remainder when divided by 8; 4 as the remainder when divided by 9; and 1 as the remainder when divided by 7. i.e. find $N = 8x+5 = 9y+4 = 7z+1$. It turns out that the smallest value for N is 85. In general, “Diophantine” equations can be notoriously difficult. Such equations were considered extensively in the ancient Vedic text *Sulbasutras*, the more ancient parts of which may date back to 800 BCE. *Aryabhata's* method of solving such problems, is called the “*Kuttaka*” method. *Kuttaka* means pulverizing, that is breaking into small pieces, and the method involved a recursive algorithm for writing the original factors in terms of smaller numbers. Today this algorithm, as elaborated by *Bhaskara* in AD 621, is the standard method for solving first order Diophantine equations, and it is often referred to as the *Aryabhata* algorithm.

The Diophantine equations are of interest in cryptology.

Astronomy

Aryabhata's system of astronomy was called the "Audaayaka" system (days are reckoned from "Udai", or dawn at Lanka, equator). Some of his later writings on astronomy, which apparently proposed a second model ("ardha-raatrikaa", midnight), are lost, but can be partly reconstructed from the discussion in Brahmagupta's "khandakhaadyaka". In some texts he seems to ascribe the apparent motions of the heavens to the earth's rotation.

Motions in the Solar system

Aryabhata appears to have believed that the earth rotates about its axis. This is made clear in the statement, referring to Lanka, which describes the movement of the stars as a relative motion caused by the rotation of the earth:

Lanka (Sri Lanka) is here a reference point on the equator, which was taken as the equivalent to the reference meridian for astronomical calculations. Aryabhata described a geocentric model of the solar system, in which the Sun and Moon are each carried by epicycles which in turn revolve around the Earth. In this model, which is also found in the Pitāmahasiddhānta (ca. AD 425), the motions of the planets are each governed by two epicycles, a smaller manda (slow) epicycle and a larger śīghra (fast) epicycle. The order of the planets in terms of distance from earth is taken as: the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, and the asterisms.

Eclipses

Aryabhata states that the Moon and planets shine by reflected sunlight. Instead of the prevailing cosmogony where eclipses were caused by *Rahu* and *Ketu*, he explains eclipses in terms of shadows cast by and falling on earth. Thus the lunar eclipse occurs when the moon enters into the earth-shadow (verse gola.37), and discusses at length the size and extent of this earth-shadow (verses gola.38-48), and then the computation, and the size of the eclipsed part during eclipses. Subsequent Indian astronomers improved on these calculations, but his methods provided the core. This computational paradigm was so accurate that the 18th century scientist Guillaume le Gentil, during a visit to Pondicherry, found the Indian computations of the duration of the lunar eclipse of 1765-08-30 to be short by 41 seconds, whereas his charts (by Tobias Mayer, 1752) were long by 68 seconds.

Aryabhata's computation of Earth's circumference was 24,835 miles, it is only 0.2% smaller than the actual value of 24,902 miles. This approximation might have improved on the computation by the Greek mathematician Eratosthenes (c.200 BC).

Sidereal periods

Referenced to modern English units of time, *Aryabhata* calculated the sidereal rotation as 23 hours 56 minutes and 4.1 seconds; the modern value is 23:56:4.091. Similarly, his value for the length of the sidereal year at 365 days 6 hours 12 minutes 30 seconds is an error of 3 minutes 20 seconds over the length of a year. The notion of sidereal time was known in most other astronomical systems of the time, but this computation was likely the most accurate at that period.

Trigonometry

His definitions of sine, as well as cosine (*kojya*), versine (*ukramajya*), and inverse sine (*otkram jya*), influenced the birth of trigonometry. He was also the first to specify sine and versine ($1 - \cos x$) tables, in 3.75° intervals from 0° to 90° , to an accuracy of 4 decimal places.

His influence

Aryabhata's work was of great influence in the Indian astronomical tradition, and influenced several neighbouring cultures through translations. The Arabic translation during the Islamic Golden Age (ca. 820), was particularly influential. Some of his results are cited by *Al-Khwarizmi*, and he is referred to by the 10th century Arabic scholar *Al-Biruni*, who states that Aryabhata's followers believed the Earth to rotate on its axis. Aryabhata's astronomical calculation methods were also very influential. Along with the trigonometric tables, they came to be widely used in the Islamic world, and were used to compute many Arabic astronomical tables (*zijes*). In particular, the astronomical tables in the work of the Arabic Spain scientist *Al-Zarqali* (11th c.), were translated into Latin as the Tables of Toledo (12th c.), and remained the most accurate Ephemeris used in Europe for centuries.

Panchanga

Work done by *Aryabhata* and his followers have been in continuous use in India for the practical purposes of fixing the Panchanga, or Hindu calendar.

These were also transmitted to the Islamic world, and formed the basis for the *Jalali* calendar introduced 1073 by a group of astronomers including Omar Khayyam, versions of which (modified in 1925) are the national calendars in use in Iran and Afghanistan today. The *Jalali* calendar determines its dates based on actual solar transit, as in *Aryabhata* (and earlier *Siddhanta* calendars).

Varahamihira (505AD-587AD)

Once again, no firm details are available regarding his place of birth. According to one of his works, he was educated in *Kapitthaka*. He worked at Ujjain and his presence there increased its importance as a great centre of learning for mathematics.

His works

- a) He wrote three important books: *Panchasiddhantika*, *Brihat Samhita*, and *Brihat Jataka*. *Brihat Samhita* is a compilation of an assortment of topics that provides interesting details of prevailing beliefs. *Brihat Jataka* is a book on astrology..
- b) However, the most famous work by *Varahamihira* is the treatise on mathematical astronomy called the *Panchasiddhantika* ("Five Astronomical Treatises") and dated 575 AD. It is a summary of five earlier astronomical systems, namely the *Surya*, *Romaka*, *Paulisa*, *Vasistha* and *Paitamaha siddhantas*.

Sūrya-siddhanta, i.e. the *Siddhanta* of the Sun, composed by *Laṭa*,

Romaka-siddhanta, so called from the *Rūm*, i.e. the subjects of the Roman Empire, composed by *Śrīsheṇa*.

Pulisa-siddhanta, so called from *Paulisa*, the Greek, from the city of *Saintra*, which is supposed to be Alexandria, composed by *Pulisa*.

Vasishṭa-siddhanta, so called from one of the stars of the Great Bear, composed by *Vishnucandra*,

Brahma-siddhānta, so called from Brahman, composed by Brahmagupta, the son of Jishṇu, from the town of Bhillamāla between Multān and Anhilwāra, 16 yojanas from the latter place.

Thus, the *Romaka-Siddhanta* was Roman in essence. The *Pulisa-Siddhanta* was, as noted by *Al-Beruni* above, of Egyptian origin. The *Paitamaha Siddhanta* appears to be the ancient *Vedanga Jyotisha* of *Lagadha*. However, the *Surya Siddhanta* or *Saura-Siddhanta* was the most accurate and is the system most widely used today. The modern system differs but in minor details from *Varahamihira's* classical system. Of these five siddhantas, only *Surya siddhanta* has survived the onslaught of time.

Varāhamihira's knowledge of Western astronomy was thorough. In five sections, his monumental work progresses through native Indian astronomy and culminates in two treatises on Western astronomy, showing calculations based on Greek and Alexandrian reckoning and even giving complete Ptolemaic mathematical charts and tables.

Although *Varāhamihira's* writings give a comprehensive picture of 6th-century India, his real interest lay in astronomy and astrology. He repeatedly emphasized the importance of astrology and wrote many treatises on śakuna (augury) as well as the *Brihat Jataka* and the *Laghu-Jataka*, two well-known works on the casting of horoscopes."

- c) *Horashastra*, one of the works of *Varahamihira*, is an anthology of earlier masters such as *Vishnugupta*, *Devaswami*, *Siddhasena* and *Jivasharma*.
- d) His other works include – *Yogayatra*, *Vivahapatala*, *Saama samhita* and *Vaatakanika*.
- e) *Varahamihira* made some important mathematical discoveries also. Some of his formulae in trigonometry, translated to present day notations, correspond to –

$$\sin x = \cos (\pi/2 - x); \quad \sin^2x + \cos^2x = 1; \quad \sin^2x = (1-\cos^2x)/2$$

He also computed a Sine tables, improving on the values produced by *Aryabhatta-1*

Towering like a colossus on the Indian science scene, it is only natural that Indian Union should honour both *Arya Bhatta-1* and *Varahamihira* with a mural inside the Parliament house at New Delhi.

Brahmagupta (598-670)

Brahmagupta was born in *Bhinmala* (Rajasthan) in the year 598 AD. He lived there most of his life during the reign of King *Vyagramikha*. He was the head of the astronomical observatory at Ujjain.

His works

He wrote four texts in mathematics and astronomy – *Cadamekala* in 628, the *Brahmasphuta-siddhanta* in 628, *khandakhadyaka* in 665, *Durkeamynarda* in 672.

Among these the *Brahmasphutasiddhanta* is the most famous one. This book was translated in *Arabic*. In it he invented many formulas and mathematical properties.

Algebra

- a) He gave solutions of the general linear equations A common form of a linear equation in the two variables x and y is $y = mx + b$; where m and b denote constants.
- b) He further gave solutions to general quadratic equations of the general form $ax^2 + bx + c$

Arithmetic

- a) He gave details in the operation of fractions
- b) He explains how to find, square, square root, cube and cube root
- c) He identifies five different combinations of fractions. They are – (1) $(a/c) + (b/c)$ (2) $(a/c) \times (b/d)$ (3) $(a/1) + (b/d)$ (4) $(a/c) + [(b/d) \times (a/c)] = [a \times (d+b)] / (cxd)$ and (5) $(a/c) - [(b/d) \times (a/c)] = [ax(d-b)] / (cxd)$. He then goes on to give rules for dealing with these 5 different types of fractions.

Series

He gives sum of squares of the first “ n ” natural numbers as $n(n+1)(2n+1) / 6$
He gives sum of cubes of the first “ n ” natural numbers as $(n(n+1)/2)^2$

Zero

Brahmagupta was probably, the first mathematician to prescribe to treat zero as number. He also stated rules of using zero with other numbers. He does this in chapter eighteen of his *Brahma sputa- siddhanta*. He also describes operations on negative numbers.

Sum

- (a) The sum of two positives is positive : (b) The sum of two negatives is negative
- (c) The sum of a positive and negative is their difference (d) The difference of two equal numbers is zero (e) The sum of a negative and zero is negative. (f) The sum of a positive and zero is positive (g) The sum of a zero and zero is zero.

Minus

(a) Negative minus zero is zero (b) Positive minus zero is positive (c) Zero minus zero is zero (d) when a positive is to be subtracted from a negative, or a negative from a positive, then it is to be added.

Multiplication

(a) A product of negative and positive is negative (b) Of two negatives is positive (c) Of two positives is positive (d) A product of zero with, positive, negative or zero is zero

Division

(a) A positive divided by a positive or a negative divided by a negative is positive. (b) A positive divided by a negative is negative and a negative divided by a positive is negative (c) Zero divided by zero is zero

Brahmagupta states $0/0 = 0$. As far as $a/0$ where a is not equal to zero, he did not commit himself

Pythagorean triple

In *Brahma sputa- siddhanta* he finds Pythagorean triples. To the equation $x^n + y^n = z^n$ find the positive integer solutions for x, y and z . For the special case of $n=2$, it is called Pythagorean Triple.

Pell's Equation

Find the integer solutions (x, y) to $x^2 - Ny^2 = 1$ where N is an integer ≥ 1
This is called Pell's equation.

Though this goes by the name of Pell's equation, the problem has, in fact been, studied in much greater depth by *Brahmagupta* almost a 1000 years before Pell. By *Brahmagupta's* method, we can generate, not just one, but a sequence of solutions.

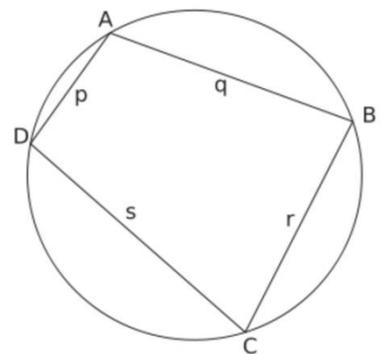
Geometry

His most famous work in geometry is related Cyclic quadrilaterals.

The cyclic quadrilateral has its vertices located on a circle. Given the lengths p, q, r and s of a cyclic quadrilateral –

- The approximate area is given as $[(p+r)/2] \times [(q+s)/2]$
- The exact area is $\sqrt{[(t-p)(t-q)(t-r)(t-s)]}$

Where $t = (p+q+r+s)/2$



- c) The well-known Heron's formula is a special case of the formula in (b) from Brahmagupta when you set one of the sides as equal to zero.

Interpolation formula

In the year 665, Brahmagupta devised and used a special interpolation formula for new values of the sine function from other already tabulated values. This formula works out as a special case of Newton-Stirling interpolation formula.

Astronomy

It was through the *Brahmasphutasiddhanta* that the Arabs learnt of Indian astronomy. The famous Abbasid caliph Al-Mansur (712–775) founded Baghdad which is situated on the banks of the River Tigris, and made it a centre of learning. The caliph invited a scholar of Ujjain by the name of *Kankah* in 770 A.D. Kankah used the *Brahmasphutasiddhanta* to explain the Hindu system of arithmetic and astronomy. *Muhammad al-Fazari* translated *Brahmugupta's* work into Arabic upon the request of the caliph.

Brahmagupta argued that moon is closer to earth than the Sun. He did this by explaining the illumination of the Moon by the Sun.

Some of the important contributions of Brahmagupta in astronomy are :

- (a) Methods for calculating the position of heavenly bodies overtime
- (b) their rising and setting
- (c) Calculation of lunar and solar eclipses
- (d) He argued that earth and heavenly bodies are spherical in shape and that earth is moving.

Bhaskaracharya (1114-1185)

Bhaskaracharya (also known as *Bhaskara II*) is regarded as one of the greatest Indian mathematician. He made significant contributions in mathematics and astronomy.

He was born *Bijjada Bida* (in present day *Bijapur district, Karnataka state*). He was the head of the prestigious astronomical observatory at Ujjain. His predecessors in this post were *Brahmagupta* and *Varahamihira*.

His works

He wrote *Siddhanta Shiromani* in the year 1150 AD. It contained four sections -

- (a) *Lilavati* – dealing with arithmetic (b) *Bijaganita* – deals with algebra and
 (c) *Goladhyaya* (Sphere) and (d) *Grahaganita* (mathematics of planets)

A number of his contributions were later taken to the middle east and Europe.

Arithmetic

- a) Interest computation
- b) Arithmetical and geometrical progressions
- c) Plane geometry
- d) Solid Geometry
- e) The shadow of the gnomon (part of the Sun dial that gives the shadow)
- f) Solutions of Permutations and Combinations
- g) A rough conception of infinity, that any number when divided by zero, gives infinity, first occurs in *Bhaskaracharya's* work. He treats zero and infinity in the first chapter of *Bijaganita*. The statement that $(\infty \pm k) = \infty$ is described in graphic detail.

Algebra

- a) The recognition of a positive number having two square roots
- b) Surds Operations with products of several unknowns.
- c) The solutions of:

Quadratic equations.

Cubic equations.

Quartic equations.

Equations with more than one unknown.

Quadratic equations with more than one unknown.

The general form of Pell's Equation using the *Chakravala* method

The general indeterminate quadratic equation using the *Chakravala* method.

Indeterminate cubic equations.

Indeterminate quartic equations.

Indeterminate higher-order polynomial equations.

Geometry:

Gave a proof of the *Pythagorean* Theorem

Calculus:

Conceived of differential calculus

Discovered the derivative

Discovered the derivative coefficient.

Developed differentiation

Stated Rolle's Theorem - a special case of the mean value theorem - one of the most important theorems of calculus and analysis).

Derived the differential of the sine function.

Computed π correct to 5 decimal places.

Astronomy

Calculated the length of the Earth's revolution around the Sun to 9 decimal places.

Trigonometry:

Developments of Spherical Trigonometry

Developed the trigonometric formulae

$$\sin(a + b) = \sin(a) \cos(b) + \sin(b) \cos(a)$$

$$\sin(a - b) = \sin(a) \cos(b) - \sin(b) \cos(a)$$

Medieval Period and the Kerala School

It appeared, for a time, that original work in mathematics dwindled in much of Northern India after the Islamic conquests. Kerala escaped the political upheaval that occurred in the north and for this reason scientific development was able to continue uninterrupted. Then an important school of mathematics blossomed in Kerala – the famous Kerala school of Astronomy and Mathematics founded by *Madhava* of *Sangamagrama* in *Malabar*. The school flourished between 14th and 16th century. It

had some very prominent members in *Parameshvara, Neelakanta Somayaji, Jyeshthadeva, Achyuta Pisharati and Melapathur Narayana Bhattarani*.

Several findings have already been made that show that a number of major concepts in renaissance of European mathematics were first developed in Kerala. There is also interest in the claims that European scholars may have had firsthand knowledge of some Kerala mathematics, as Kerala was a focal point for trading with many parts of the world, including Europe. There is also some evidence of a transfer of technology between Europe and Kerala.

Madhava of Sangamagrama (1340 A.D – 1425 A.D)

Little is known about Madhava, who lived in *irinjalakuda* (known at that time as *iringattikudal*) in *Thrissur* district. Sanskrit scholars called the town as *Sangamagrama*

He is regarded by many as the greatest mathematician- astronomer of medieval India. Sadly, all his mathematical work is lost. All we know about him, to this date, comes from works of later scholars. His most important contribution was in moving on from the finite procedures of ancient mathematics to “treat their limit passage to infinity” – which is considered to be the essence modern classical analysis.

His works

He was the author of the following works

- a) Golavada
- b) Madhyamanayanaprakara
- c) Lagnaprakarana
- d) Venvaroha
- e) Sphutacandrapti
- f) Aganita- grahacara
- g) Candravakyani

Mathematics

- a) He discovered infinite series for the trigonometric functions of sine, cosine, tangent and arctangent and many methods for calculating the

circumference of a circle.

$\theta = \tan \theta - (\tan^3 \theta)/3 + (\tan^5 \theta)/5 - \dots$ This series was traditionally known as Gregory series, who re-discovered it after three centuries. The following infinite series expansion is now known as **Madhava- Leibniz series**

$$\frac{\pi}{4} = 1 - \frac{1}{3} + \frac{1}{5} - \frac{1}{7} + \dots + \frac{(-1)^n}{2n+1} + \dots$$

- b) From the above, Madhava discovered a more rapidly converging series of π . The value he obtained was correct to 11 decimal places and that was = 3.14159265359. He also obtained a more accurate value correct to 13 decimal places!! These were the most accurate approximations of π given in the 5th century.
- c) One of the Historians J. Joseph states- "...We may consider *Madhava* to have been the founder of mathematical analysis. Some of his discoveries in this field show him to have possessed extraordinary intuition.
- d) Proof for the expansion of the Sine and Cosine functions
- e) The earliest statement of Wallis product and Taylor series.
- f) Geometric derivation of the series
- g) Tests of convergence (often attributed to Cauchy)
- h) Fundamentals of calculus, differentiation, term by term integration, iterative methods for solutions of non-linear equations.
- i) The theory that the area under the curve is its integral

Astronomy

The book *Yuktibhasa* indicates work done by *Madhava* in astronomy, viz. planetary object, Celestial sphere, ascension, declination, directions and shadows, ellipses and parallax correction. The planetary theory described in the book is similar to that later adopted by Danish astronomer *Tycho Brahe*.

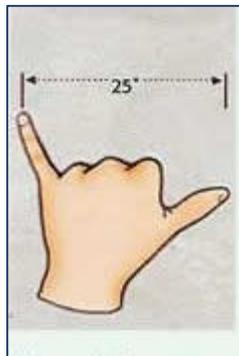
The Indian astronomical system proved to be the oldest, largest, and by far the most sophisticated of the great ancient cultures, far ahead in terms of chronological and astronomical acumen. It is noted that a special class of professional astronomers, called *nakshatra-darshaks* or 'star-gazers', meticulously observed and recorded the phases of the moon in reference to fixed stars - called nakshatras, or asterisms.

These methods of calculation, and its precision, sharply distinguish Indian astronomy from the astronomy of all other countries.

Indian Calendar system

The Indian calendar plays an important role in the lives of people. They have had, from very ancient times, the system of lunisolar cycles, made from a combination of solar years, regulated by the course of the Sun, and lunar years, regulated by the course of Moon. However, it has been treated in such a manner as to keep the lunar year near the beginning of the solar year.

So the Hindu calendar is determined by years of two kinds, solar and lunar. Some states use the solar years and the majority of others use the lunar. However, the lunar years regulate everywhere the general religious functions, festivals, auspicious



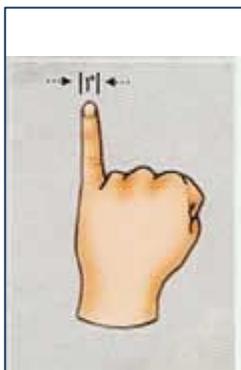
dates etc.

References from Vedic literature show that Indian chronology in its primary stages existed thousands of years before the Christian Era. The earliest traces of Indian chronology (science of Time) and chronometry (scientific measurement of Time) belong to the Vedic period. Knowledge of planetary motions, constellations, eclipses, solstices, seasons, etc. has existed since the beginning of the Vedic age. Sage *Vashishta's* treatise "*Vashishta Siddhanta*" on astronomy is well known. A method of distributing time into various periods such as days, fortnights, months and years was adopted for the purposes of civic life, these divisions being intimately connected with the affairs of the people. For this reason the Indian calendar was devised to serve the affairs of day-to-day living, as such it was allowed the freedom of being both lunar and solar.

In the Hindu calendar, the day starts with the local sun rise. The name for the Hindu calendar is a *Panchanga*. Along with other information, the *Panchanga* essentially records the movements of the Sun and the Moon. *Pancha* means five and *anga* means parts. Hence, the *Panchanga* is made up of five parts – (a) *Tithi* (b) *Vara* (c) *Nakshatra* (d) *Yoga* (e) *Karana*.

In order to understand these terms, it is important to know how astronomers, in ancient days, measured the sky. The apparent distance between the celestial objects is measured in degrees. Keeping in mind that there are 360 degrees in a circle, it is easy to measure approximate degrees in the sky. Just raise your hand to the sky, and at arm's length, use the hand to measure the distance.. Refer to the illustrations.

The width of the little finger is almost 1 degree across. The second picture shows 25 degrees separation.



In the Indian calendar system

- a) Seasons follow the Sun
The 12 lunar months of a solar year are divided into six "*Rutus*" (seasons), each comprising of approximately two months. Since the seasons are solar based, each of the six seasons are two months long - *Sharad* (late monsoon), *Hemant* (early winter), *Shishir* (winter), *Vasant* (spring), *Grishma* (summer) and *Varsha* (monsoon)
- b) Months follow the Moon
Each month is divided into two parts, called "*pakshas*": the *shukla paksha* and the *Krishna paksha*. They refer to the bright and the dark half of one lunation.
- c) Days follow both the Sun and the Moon

Lunar calendar system

The lunar day is called *Tithi* or lunar phase.

Tithi

The first element in the Panchanga is Tithi. It is the building block for the lunar month.. Tithi is a measurement 12 degrees of longitudinal separation between the Sun and the Moon. For example, on a new moon day (Amaavaasya) the Sun and the Moon are separated by zero degrees. As they separate, the first Tithi begins when the Sun and the Moon have separated by 12 degrees. The second Tithi starts when they are separated by 24 degrees. This goes on till they are separated by 180 degrees. This Tithi is called Full moon – Purnima (Note- there is no 15th Tithi). These 15 Tithis or phases of the Moon make up the waxing phases of the Moon. It is called Shukla-Paksha. After the Full moon, the Tithi begins counting again from one – as the separation between Sun and Moon decreases back to zero. This is called Krishna- Paksha. The cycle goes on repeating. In this way 30 Tithis make up a lunar month – Chaandra-masa. This works out as below-

1 Tithi = Time equivalent to a distance of 12 degrees between

Surya (sun) and *Chandra* (moon).

15 *Tithis* = 1 Lunar fortnight.

30 *Tithis* = 2 Lunar fortnights = 1 Lunar month

12 *Chaandra* (Lunar) months = One *Chaandra Varsha* (lunar year)

Tithis begin at varying times of day and vary in duration from approximately 19 to approximately 26hours. The *tithis* in each lunar month are named as follows:

No	<i>Krishna Paksha</i>	No	<i>Shukla Paksha</i>
1	<i>Pratipada</i>	16	<i>Pratipada</i>
2	<i>Dvitiya</i>	17	<i>Dvitiya</i>
3	<i>Tritiya</i>	18	<i>Tritiya</i>
4	<i>Chaturthi</i>	19	<i>Chaturthi</i>
5	<i>Panchami</i>	20	<i>Panchami</i>
6	<i>Shashti</i>	21	<i>Shashti</i>
7	<i>Saptami</i>	22	<i>Saptami</i>
8	<i>Ashtami</i>	23	<i>Ashtami</i>
9	<i>Navami</i>	24	<i>Navami</i>
10	<i>Dashami</i>	25	<i>Dashami</i>
11	<i>Ekadashi</i>	26	<i>Ekadashi</i>
12	<i>Dvadashi</i>	27	<i>Dvadashi</i>
13	<i>Trayodashi</i>	28	<i>Trayodashi</i>
14	<i>Chaturdashi</i>	29	<i>Chaturdashi</i>
15	<i>Amavasya</i> (New Moon)	30	<i>Poornima</i> (Full Moon)

Vaasara

The second element of the *Hindu Panchanga* is the day, *Vaasara*. In Sanskrit, days of the week are named after the seven major astrological influences used in Hindu astrology – the *Nava Grahas*.

No	Sanskrit Name	English Name	Celestial Object
1	<i>Ravi Vaasara</i>	Sunday	Sun
2	<i>Soma Vaasara</i>	Monday	Moon
3	<i>Mangala Vaasara</i>	Tuesday	Mars
4	<i>Budha Vaasara</i>	Wednesday	Mercury
5	<i>Bruhaspathi Vaasara</i>	Thursday	Jupiter
6	<i>Shukra Vaasara</i>	Friday	Venus
7	<i>Shani Vaasara</i>	Saturday	Saturn

Nakshatra

The third element in the *Hindu Panchanga* is the *Nakshatra*. They are also called lunar houses or asterisms.

If you observe the position of the Moon in relation to the background of stars on two successive days at the same time, you will notice the moon to have moved 13 degrees and 20 minutes. The region of sky that has been swept by the moon's eastward movement is the *Nakshatra*. There are, then, 27 such *Nakshatras* in the 360 degrees that the moon travels in one lunar month. ($13.3 \times 27 = \text{approx } 360^0$). In the *Panchanga*, these *Nakshatras* are named after constellations on the horizon, since those times have remained unchanged. The names are given below.

No	Name of Nakshatra	No	Name of Nakshatra
1	<i>Ashwini</i>	15	<i>Swati</i>
2	<i>Bharani</i>	16	<i>Vishaka</i>
3	<i>Krittika</i>	17	<i>Anuradha</i>
4	<i>Rohini</i>	18	<i>Jyeshtha</i>

5	<i>Mrigashira</i>	19	<i>Mula</i>
6	<i>Aardra</i>	20	<i>Purva Aashaada</i>
7	<i>Punarvasu</i>	21	<i>Uttara Aashaada</i>
8	<i>Pushya</i>	22	<i>Shravana</i>
9	<i>Ashlesha</i>	23	<i>Dhanishta</i>
10	<i>Magha</i>	24	<i>Shatabhisha</i>
11	<i>Purva Phalguni</i>	25	<i>Purva Bhaadrapada</i>
12	<i>Uttara Pahlguni</i>	26	<i>Uttara Bhaadrapada</i>
13	<i>Hasta</i>	27	<i>Revati</i>
14	<i>Chitta</i>		

Yoga

This refers to the angular relationship between the Sun and the Moon. One *Yoga* is equal to 13 degrees and 20 minutes. There are 27 *Yogas* in 360 degrees

Karana

One *Karana* is half of a *Tithi*. One *Karana* equals 6 degree difference between Moon and the Sun. In other words, it is the time required for the angular distance between the sun and the moon to increase in steps of 6 degrees starting from zero. Since the *Tithis* are 30 in number, one would expect 60 *Karanas*. However, there are only eleven. There are four "fixed" *Karanas* and seven "repeating" *Karanas*. The *Karana* active during the Sun rise of the day is the *Karana* for the day.

The Months

Masa (Lunar Month)

What is a lunar month? And what is a Synodic month

This is the average period of the Moon's revolution with respect to the sun. The synodic month is responsible for the moon's phases, because the Moon's appearance depends on the position of the Moon with respect to the Sun as seen from the Earth. While the moon is orbiting the earth, the Earth is also progressing in its orbit around the Sun. This means that after completing a sidereal month the Moon must move a little farther to reach the new position of the Earth with respect to the Sun. This longer period is called the *synodic* month. Because of perturbations in the orbits of the Earth and Moon, the actual time between lunations may range from about 29.27 to about 29.83 days. The long-term average duration is 29.530589 days (29 d 12 h 44 min 3 s).

A lunar month is precisely 29 days, 12 hours, 44 minutes and 3secs long. Twelve such months constitute a lunar year of 354 days, 8 hours, 48 minutes and 36 seconds. The lunar month may be regarded as ending with either the new-moon (*Amavasya*) or with the full-moon. The former is called “*amanta*” or “*shukladi*”. The later is called “*poornimanta*” or “*krishnadi*”. The Hindu year contains twelve Lunar months. They are named after the *Nakshatra* in which the Moon is full. Their names are given below.

No	Month		No	Month	
1	<i>Chaitra</i>	Mar-Apr	7	<i>Ashwina</i>	Sept-Oct
2	<i>Vaishakha</i>	Apr-May	8	<i>Kartika</i>	Oct-Nov
3	<i>Jyaishtha</i>	May-June	9	<i>Margashirsha</i>	Nov-Dec
4	<i>Aashada</i>	June-July	10	<i>Pausha</i>	Dec-Jan
5	<i>Shraavana</i>	July-Aug	11	<i>Magha</i>	Jan-Feb
6	<i>Bhaadrapada</i>	Aug-Sept	12	<i>Phalguna</i>	Feb-Mar

Adhika Masa (Extra month)

From Vedic times, the months were lunar, but the years were luni-solar. This requires that a constant correlation be established between solar year and the monthly lunar divisions.

The lunar month (or synodic month since it is also relative to the sun) is 29 days, 12 hours, 44 minutes and 3 seconds long. Twelve such months constitute a lunar year of 354 days, 8 hours, 48 minutes, 34 seconds. According to *Aria Bhatt* the Hindu solar year measures 365 days, 6 hours, 12 mins, and 30 secs. Consequently, the beginning of the lunar year would be always travelling backwards through the solar year – by about 11 days on each occasion. This would in course of time recede entirely from the solar year! To help the lunar months coincide with the solar year, the practice arose of inserting intercalary (extra) months. In general, 60 solar months is equal to 62 lunar months. So an extra month, called *Adhika masa*, is inserted approximately once every two and half years. Such adjustments assure that the seasons, festivals, etc. retain their general position to the solar year.

This need was recognised even during the *Vedic* times. *Vashishta Siddhanta*, a treatise by sage *Vashishta* (he was the guru for Lord *Rama*), says that the *Adhika masa* occurs after every 32 months, 16 days and 8 *ghadis* (a *ghadi* is 24 mins).

In the lunar *panchangas* we come across not only *adhika masa* but also what are called and *kshaya masa* (the months which are eliminated from the count). The *kshaya masa* repeats itself in a cycle of every 141 years followed by another *kshaya masa* after 19 years. Thus, generally speaking not every generation of mankind witnesses *kshaya masa*.

Samvatsara

The names of the cycle 60 lunar years are given below.

1	Prabhava	33	Vikāri
2	Vibhava	34	Shārvari
3	Shukla	35	Plava
4	Pramoda	36	Shubhakruti
5	Prajāpati	37	Sobhakruthi
6	Āngirasa	38	Krodhi
7	Shrīmukha	39	Vishvāvasu
8	Bhāva	40	Parābhava
9	Yuva	41	Plavanga
10	Dhātri	42	Kīlaka
11	Īshvara	43	Saumya
12	Bahudhānya	44	Sādhārana
13	Pramādhi	45	Virodhikruthi
14	Vikrama	46	Paridhāvi
15	Vrisha	47	Pramādicha
16	Chitrabhānu	48	Ānanda
17	Svabhānu	49	Rākshasa
18	Tārana	50	Anala
19	Pārthiva	51	Pingala
20	Vyaya	52	Kālayukthi
21	Sarvajeeth	53	Siddhārthi
22	Sarvadhāri	54	Raudra
23	Virodhi	55	Durmathi
24	Vikruti (2010)	56	Dundubhi
25	Khara	57	Rudhirodgāri
26	Nandana	58	Raktākshi
27	Vijaya	59	Krodhana
28	Jaya	60	Akshaya
29	Manmadha		
30	Durmukhi		

Solar Calender system

Solar year

The calculation of the sidereal solar year is more complicated. It takes into account the total number of years in one *Kalpa* (the sum total of number years in the four *Yugas*) and the number of revolutions of earth etc. According to the ancient *Surya Siddhanta* the year has been calculated to be 365 days, 6 hours, 12 minutes, 36.56 seconds. According to modern science, the true mean sidereal solar year measures 365 days, 6 hours, 9 mins, 9.6 secs.

Solar months

The solar year been divided into twelve months. Their names are given below-

No	Lunar month	Solar month
1	Chitta	Chaitra
2	Visaka	Vyshaka
3	Jyeshtha	jyeshata
4	Poorvashada	Ashada
5	Sravana	Shravana
6	Poorvabhadra	Bhadrapadha
7	Aswini	Aswija
8	Kartika	Kartika
9	Mrigashira	Margashira
10	Pushyami	Pushya
11	Makha	Magha
12	Uttaraphalgun	Phalguna

Solstice division of the year

The solar year is divided into two parts called *Uttarayana*, the period during which the sun is moving to the north, and *Dakshinayana* the period during which it is moving to the south. The *Uttarayana* begins at the winter solstice, as marked by *Makara Samkranti*. The *Dakshinayana* begins at the summer solstice, as marked by *Karka Samkranti*

Solar days

The days of the solar month start at sun rise. The days of the month are numbered 1,2,3 etc till the end of the month. They are named – *Adivara*, *Somavara*, *Mangalavara*, *Budhavara*, *Brihaspativara*, *Shukravara*, and *Shanivara*.

Sub-divisions of the Solar day

The solar days are divided. They are given below.

60 *vipalas* = 1 *pala* = 24 seconds;

60 *palas* = 1 *ghatika* = 24 minutes;

60 *ghatikas* = 24 *hours* = 1 day.

There is also the

Muhurta = 2 *Ghatikas* = 48 minutes.

Year Numbering System

All other calendar systems in the world use the current ordinal number of the year as the year label. However, the Hindu calendar measures the number of years elapsed since the birth of the reference point. Just as a person's true age is measured by the number of years that have elapsed starting from the date of the person's birth, the year numbering is done on the same manner.

Vikrama and the Shalivahana calendars

Two calendar systems are prominent – *The Vikrama* and the *Shalivahana*. They are both lunisolar calendars. The difference is that the zero for the two calendars is different. In the Vikrama calendar the zero corresponds to 58 BCE, with the New year falling on *Baishak* (April).. In the Shalivahana, the zero corresponds to 78 BCE, with the New year falling on *Chaitra*(March and *Ugadi/ Gudi padwa* festivals marking the New Year).

Western mathematicians and astronomers, in more recent years, have started recognising work done by Indian astronomers.

“ The motion of stars calculated by the Hindus before some 4500 years vary by not even a single minute from the tables of Cassine and Meyer (used in the 19th century) The Hindu system of astrology is by far the oldest and that from which the Egyptians, Greeks, Romans and even the Jews derived from the Hindus their knowledge.

Jean Sylvian Bailly; French Astronomer – (1763 – 1793)”

The Hindus in ancient times developed, perfected different branches of knowledge including different branches of science. In healthcare and medicinal systems the Hindus developed a holistic approach involving physical, mental and spiritual aspects of personality.

Medical Science and Surgery

Introduction

Ayurveda in India—the science of life, the origin of most forms of natural and alternative medicine—has its mention in *Rig Veda*, the oldest of the *Vedas*. *Ayurveda* is an *Upaveda* of *Atharva Veda*. The *Sutrasthana* of *Charaka Samhita*, a much referred *Ayurvedic* text, says; "The three—body, mind and soul—are like a tripod, the world stands by their combination; in them everything abides.

In its broader scope, Ayurveda in India has always sought to prepare mankind for the realization of the full potential of its self through a psychosomatic integration. This science or knowledge of healing, as mentioned in the *Rig Veda*, was revealed to *Rishi Bharadvaja*. The knowledge consists of three aspects known as the *Tri-Sutras* of *Ayurveda*, which are—aetiology or the science of the causes of disease, symptomatology or the study and interpretation of symptoms and medication and herbal remedies.

Two distinct schools were developed: *Atreya*—The School of Physicians, and *Dhanvantari*—The School of Surgeons. This made *Ayurveda* a more systematically classified medical science, hereafter. *Dhanvantari*, who is considered to be a reincarnation of Lord *Vishnu*, was the guiding sage of *Ayurveda*. He made this science of health and longevity popular and widely acceptable. In fact, these two schools of thought led to the writing of two major books on *Ayurveda*—*Charaka Samhita* and *Sushruta Samhita*.

The great sage- physician *Charaka* authored *Charaka Samhita* revising and supplementing the text written by Sage *Atreya*, which has remained the most referred *Ayurvedic* text on internal medicine till date.

Sushruta, following the *Dhanvantari* School of thought, wrote *Sushruta Samhita*, comprising the knowledge about prosthetic surgery to replace limbs, cosmetic surgery, caesarean operations and even brain surgery. He is famed for his innovation of cosmetic surgery on nose or rhinoplasty. Around 500 AD, *Vagbhatt* compiled the third major treatise on *Ayurveda*, *Ashtanga Hridaya*. It contained knowledge comprising the two schools of *Ayurveda*.

Basics of the knowledge of medicine are traceable from *Rig Veda* onwards i.e. 10,000 years back. However, it is available as an *Upa Veda* of *Atharva Veda*. The science of medicine is called *Ayurveda*. Its approach is unique. The attempt is not just to cure the illness! It is more than that. The science requires knowledge of the span of living, its good maintenance, all round excellence and possible extension beyond the usual limits.

There are two major traditions in this knowledge

- a) *Kaya Chikitsa*: Deals with medicinal treatment. Sage *Atri* is considered as the progenitor
- b) *Shalya Chikitsa*: Deals with Surgery. *Dhanvantari*, an incarnation of Lord *Vishnu*, is considered as the progenitor

Ashtanga Ayurveda

In course of time, the expanding knowledge got standardised into eight branches resulting in an *Ashtanga Ayurveda*. These branches are given below.

No	Branch	Details
1	<i>Shalyatantra</i>	Surgery
2	<i>Shalakya</i>	Ophthalmology and Otorhinolaryngology
3	<i>Kaya Chikitsa</i>	Internal medicine
4	<i>Bhoota Vidya</i>	Psychology
5	<i>Kaumarya Bhryta</i>	Paediatrics
6	<i>Agada Tantra</i>	Deals with toxins and poisons
7	<i>Rasayana</i>	Science of Rejuvenation
8	<i>Vajikarana</i>	Science of Aphrodisiacs

These eight branches of Ayurveda overlap and are connected in various ways. So we should not view them as separate but as integral parts of the same approach.

Shalya tantra

Surgery is not just an invention of modern medicine but was already highly advanced in several ancient cultures, including India, Greece and Egypt. Ayurveda still contains some forms of surgery but this component of it has been declining. It was taken over more by allopathic medicine in India.

Ayurveda

Ayurveda holds that surgery should be integrated with the other aspects of medicine in order to create a truly complete system of medicine. Surgery is not the only method of treatment, and not always the best option, but it does have its importance and may have no alternative, particularly in dealing with traumatic injuries or large tumours where it is most appropriate.

Shalakya

This is the Ayurvedic branch of Ophthalmology, the branch of medicine dealing with the diseases of the eyes, head and throat. Sushruta described seventy-two eye diseases along with surgical operations for such conditions as cataract and pterygium. Special techniques are described for many diseases of the ear, nose and throat that can be treated locally with various instruments and herbal applications.

Internal medicine is the main branch of Ayurveda that treats our entire nature. Ayurveda considers the human being as a whole, comprising body, mind, and soul. Mind and body affect each other and together form the seat of disease. The approach of Ayurveda from the very beginning is psychosomatic. Ayurveda groups all human beings into seven different types of Kaya Chikitsa psychophysical constitutions (Prakriti) according to the predominance of the three biological humors (doshas of Vata, Pitta and Kapha). It similarly groups them into seven psychological constitutions according to the predominance of the three mental qualities (gunas of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas). All these factors are taken into account during the treatment of disease. Diseases are caused by imbalances of the doshas or gunas, which in turn damage various tissues and systems.

Internal medicine mainly deals with diseases that have an internal or organic cause, as apart from injuries or poisons. A number of infectious diseases are described in Ayurveda but great importance is not given to pathogens as their cause. Ayurveda emphasizes internal factors, the condition of the individual behind all diseases, even those appearing to come from the outside. If the soil remains sterile, the seed will not

grow. In the same way, if the internal energies are balanced, disease has no field in which to act.

Bhoota Vidya

Ayurveda is equally concerned with mental diseases and their treatment as it is with physical disorders. Ayurvedic treatment methods include not only physical methods like diet and herbs, but also yogic methods for improving the condition of the mind like Pranayama, mantra and meditation. Generally, Ayurvedic doctors prescribe both types of approaches and stress their inter-relationship. Bhuta literally means the influence of the past, and shows how previous karmas and mental patterns weigh down the mind and heart. So clearing of negative conditioning from the past is part of this branch of Ayurveda. There is ample material for further research on this branch in the Vedas, Tantras, and the Ayurveda Samhitas.

Kaumarya Bhrtya

This branch deals with prenatal and postnatal baby care and with the care of the mother both before conception and during pregnancy. Ayurveda describes special methods for conceiving a child of the desired sex, intelligence, and constitution. Various diseases of children and their treatment come under this branch. According to Ayurveda, the health of children is the key to the health of society. Right diet and exercise for children falls under this branch as preventive methods for diseases likely to occur later on in life.

Agada Tantra

This branch deals with the toxins and poisons of the vegetable, mineral and animal kingdoms and how they can adversely affect our health. Most interesting to note is that the concept of the pollution of air and water has been given due consideration. Such pollution is said to be the cause of various epidemics and the collapse of civilizations. Certain poisons, particularly in small doses, also have benefits as medicines.

Rasayana

Ayurveda addresses all the needs of life, which include how to prolong life and how to renew our vitality after disease or during the aging process. Rejuvenation therapy is used to prevent diseases and for promotion and extension of a healthy life. However, proper detoxification is an essential prerequisite for rejuvenation. A code of right conduct in life also has to be observed as part of the rejuvenation process, including meditation. Details of rejuvenation regimen in terms of diet and herbs have been described in detail in Ayurvedic texts.

Vajikarana

Sexual energy is the root of bodily health and disease. This' branch of Ayurveda deals with increasing the sexual vitality and efficiency necessary for a happy sex life, health and for procreation. For achieving good progeny, the therapy of Rasayana and Vajikarana are closely interrelated. Vajikarana medicines also act as rejuvenatives because the sexual energy can function internally to revitalize our tissues and organs.

Sage Charaka and the Maharshi Atreya School

Ayurveda or the science of life, could be regarded as a universal approach to global health, and is an approach to live in harmony with nature. It is a science of life in totality. It guides you to adjust and re-adjust yourself, rationally, to maintain your internal harmony of mind and body in the midst of continuously changing environment.

Diseases are of two categories – mental and somatic.

Triguna:

The *Gunas* are three in number – *Sattva*, *Rajas* and *Tamas*. They exist in all beings, including the human beings – in varying degrees of concentration and combination. Depending upon their relative strengths and combinations, they determine the nature of beings, their actions and behaviour. *Sattva* is pure, illuminating and free from sickness. *Rajas* is full of passion. *Tamas* is darkness and crudeness. Both *Rajas* and *Tamas* lead to disease. The best way to promote *Sattva* is to follow *dharma* and its dictates.

Diseases and their causes:

Ayurveda refutes the position that diseases are the result of fate. It clearly asserts that nothing happens without a cause- because cause and effect are two time-varied states of the same thing. Fate today is merely the result of actions performed earlier. *Ayurveda* teaches that suffering is caused, and health can be caused as well. Both disease and cure are inherent in the embodied self.

Tridosha

The body is made up of three doshas (from the root *Dush* meaning dys-function).

They are (a) *Vata* (b) *Pita* (c) *Kapha*.

The *doshas* when abnormal destroy the body and they sustain it when normal. A *dosha* is any fault or error. Any transgression by them against the rhythm of life promotes chaos. Though three *doshas* are indicated above, some commentators include a fourth one – Blood. The three doshas are active hard to control condensations of the five great elements – *Pancha Mahabhutas* (air, ether (space), fire, water, earth) created by nature to satisfy some of the peculiar requirements of a living matter.

No	<i>Dosha</i>	Arises from	In charge of
1	<i>Vata</i>	air and space	All motion in the body and mind; everything that moves, from a molecule to a thought, moves because of <i>Vata</i> . Every motion of any kind influences every other motion
2	<i>Pita</i>	fire and water	All transformation in the organism; it is responsible for digestion; light in the eyes and sensory data in the brain
3	<i>Kapha</i>	water and earth	Stabilizing influence in the living being; it lubricates, maintains and contains.

Regions of domination

Though they pervade the body – *Vata* is concentrated in the brain and nervous system, heart, colon, bones, lungs, bladder, pelvis, thighs, ears and skin.

Pita is concentrated in the brain, liver, spleen, small intestine, endocrine glands, skin, eyes, blood and sweat.

Kapha is concentrated in the brain, joints, mouth, head, neck, stomach, lymph, thorax and fat.

Life is inconceivable without these three *doshas*. The activities of movement (kinetic energy – by *Vata*), metabolism (potential energy - by *Pita*) and regulatory energy – by *Kapha* are the keys to life itself. No one of these forces can singly sustain life. All three must work together, each in its own way, for health to result. When balanced, all the body's elements work in harmony and a healthy body is the result. However, when thrown out of balance they prevent cohesion, disturb functions and create a chaos – disease is inevitable.

Individual constitution

Everything that enters a human being must be processed and transformed into a form which the human organism can utilise. Those that enter the body from the outer world include – food, water, air, sunlight, touch, odours, tastes and sounds. They enter the inner world and alter it, forcing it to adapt. How well this is done is a measure of its innate equilibrium and its immunity to imbalance. Whenever an experience remains undigested it leads to a disease. If the balance or the lack of balance of *doshas* is the cause for health or disease the degree of imbalance is indicative of the individual's digestive ability. *Ayurveda* calls it the “digestive fire” (*Agni*).

The *doshas*, like all other substances, possess qualities. These qualities increase or decrease depending upon the quality of food being taken. So all substances and all activities increase and decrease the three *doshas* according to their qualities. As a result the individual will experience in body, mind or both an increase in qualities that characterise the *dosha*

The land in which a person lives may be arid, humid or balanced. These also have an effect on the *doshas*. For example an arid atmosphere will aggravate the *Vata* in the bodies; humidity will aggravate the *Kapha* in the body; torrid climate will increase the *Pita*. So it is best for a person not to live in a habitat that will increase the primary *dosha* in his constitution.

Following tables give an indication of health problems that may result due to out of balance doshas.

The three doshas are associated with the three *Gunas*. *Vata*, *Pita* and *Kapha* are associated with *Rajas*, *Sattva* and *Tamas* respectively, when they are in harmony. Such a state leads to psycho-somatic equilibrium. Daily practice of *Yoga* enhances *Sattva Guna* and corrects psycho-somatic disorders. Thus *Yoga* enriches the quality of life

Imbalanced Pita	
Increased <i>Pita</i>	Decreased <i>Pita</i>
Acidity or burning sensations	Irregular bowel movements
Insomnia	Indigestion
Excessive Thirst	Loss of skin lustre
Frustration, hate and jealousy	Sore throat
Pride and anger	Conjunctivitis
Speech problems	
Imbalanced Kapha	
Increased <i>Kapha</i>	Decreased <i>Kapha</i>
Obesity	Body aches
Nausea	Dryness of mouth
Excessive sleep	Depression
Greed and unkindness	Digestion problems
Lethargy and lack of interest	
Improper digestive function	
Boredom and carelessness	
Lack of Compassion	
Mouth secretions	

Imbalanced Vata	
Increased <i>Vata</i>	Decreased <i>Vata</i>
Constipation	Nausea
Insomnia	Lethargy
Dry and rough skin	Depression
Nervousness and sadness	Digestion problems
Fear, anxiety and grief	
Low vitality	
Impairment of sensory functions	
Lack of communication	

Body types

According to *Ayurveda*'s basic concept there are seven body types and they are:

Mono types

Wind dominated individuals (*Vata*)

Bile dominated individuals (*Pita*)

Mucus dominated individuals (*Kapha*)

Dual types

Wind and Bile dominated individuals (*Vata and Pita*)

Wind and mucus dominated individuals (*Vata and Kapha*)

Bile and mucus dominated individuals (*Pita and Kapha*)

Equal types

Vata, Pita and Kapha in equal proportions

Sapta Dhatus

According to *Ayurveda* there are seven bodily tissues known as *Sapta Dhatus*. These seven *dhatu*s form the pillars of the body that are responsible for providing nourishment, growth and support to the body and mind. Each *dhatu* is governed by one of the three doshas. The following table gives a list of these *dhatu*s.

The following points may be noted:

Heaviness and density of the *dhatu*s: They are heavier in progressive order from *Rasa* to *Shukra*

Process of nourishment from *dhatu* to *dhatu*: *Dhatu*s continue their normalcy by receiving nutrients from the preceding *dhatu*. So *mamsa* nourished by *rakta*, *meda* by *mamsa* etc

Process of nourishment from Food to *Dhatu*: From “*Ahaara Rasa*” (essence of food) are nourished *Ras*, *Rakta*, *Mamsa*, *Asthi*, *Majja*, *Shukra*, parts like ligaments, lubricating substance in joints etc.

The body is a product of the food – eaten or drunk

Similarly, diseases are also produced by the food – eaten or drunk

Dhatu	In English	Activity
Rasa	Rasa dhatu coexists with the Rakta dhatu. So Rasa dhatu includes plasma, lymph and white blood corpuscles.	It is the preliminary Dhatu. It is derived from food digestion. Each and every part of the body is nourished by rasa. This done by circulation of nutrients. Loss of appetite and other problems are possible if Ras is not on the increase. Deficiency of Rasa leads to loss of weight, retarded perception of senses, fatigue etc
Rakta	Red blood corpuscles. Rakta dhatu along with white blood corpuscles and the Ojas (immunological factor) are present in the	A fluid connective tissue. It is the basis for life. It provides the glow and vigour to the body. It nourishes intellect and muscles. Disorder related to Rakta can cause tumours, tiredness, boils, high blood pressure and anaemia.

	liquid medium. Liver along with spleen, red bone marrow and stomach are sites for Rakta dhatu production. The complex fluid is referred to as Rudhiram	
Mamsa	Muscle	Strengthens and supports the fat or Meda dhatu. It is a derivative of blood. It is responsible for providing stamina and strength to the body. Disorders in mamsa are expressed as tumours around the neck, face, thigh, abdomen and genitalia
Meda	Adipose tissue	It acts as a storehouse of fat. It lubricates the body and provides the energy. It insulates the body
Asthi	Bone	Refers to bone tissues. It forms the skeleton and supports the muscular issue. Among the connective tissues this is the hardest.
Majja	Marrow and nerve tissue	Refers to the yellow and red bone marrow tissues. It is present within the cavities of the bones. It produces blood cells. It nourishes semen. Its deficiency may result in sunken eyes and osteoporosis
Shukra	Shukra – male reproductive tissue. Artava- Female reproductive tissue.	Is associated with female and male reproductive system. The source for Shukra is Majja.

Mala

This refers to those materials which are to be excreted. They represent a wide variety of substances produced by the body during the process of gastrointestinal digestion and metabolism. Vitiated *doshas* and disrupted *Sapta dhatus* are also included in this category.

Three *malas* commonly mentioned in *Ayurvedic* classics are : - (a) *Pureesha* (faeces) (b) *Mootra* (urine) (c) *Sweda* (sweat). There are others as well such as – gases, bile, Kha- malas (excretions from various openings in the body (from the ear, eyes, the skin, nasal discharge etc).

Malas are essential components and support body functions. Regular and normal excretions keep up the health of the body.

Srotas.

They are regarded as an integral internal transport system. It facilitates material flow through. There is a large variety in the structure of the *Srotas*. *Ayurveda* identifies thirteen functions carried out by these *Srotas*.

No	Srota	Function
1	<i>Pranavaha Srota</i>	Carries vital breath
2	<i>Udakavaha Srota</i>	Carries water
3	<i>Annavaha Srota</i>	Carries food
4	<i>Rasavaha Srota</i>	Circulates plasma
5	<i>Raktavaha Srota</i>	Circulates blood
6	<i>Mamsavaha Srota</i>	Conveys components for muscle tissues
7	<i>Medovaha Srota</i>	Conveys components for adipose tissue
8	<i>Asthivaha Srota</i>	Conveys components for osseous tissue
9	<i>Majjavaha Srota</i>	Conveys components for bone-marrow
10	<i>Shukravaha Srota</i>	Conveys components for sperm and ovum
11	<i>Mootravaha Srota</i>	Carries urine
12	<i>Pureeshavaha Srota</i>	Conveys faecal matter
13	<i>Swedavaha Srota</i>	Conveys sweat

Body anatomy

The anatomy as indicated in *Ayurveda* is given below.

The body anatomy is the same for all persons – except for those with abnormal constitutions.

1.	Skin	There are 6 layers of skin
2.	Bones	360 including teeth socket and nails
3.	Sense organs	5 Jnana Indriyas
4.	Motor organs	5. Karma Indriyas
5.	Seat of consciousness	Heart
6.	Seats of vital breath	10. (head, throat, heart, navel, anus, bladder, Ojas, semen, blood, flesh)
7.	Visceral organs	15. (navel, heart, koman [pancreas], liver, spleen, kidneys, urinary bladder, 'caecum', stomach, jejunum, rectum, antu, small intestines, large intestines, omentum.
8.	Sub body parts	56. (such as calves, thighs, buttocks etc)
9.	Major orifices	9. (7 in the head + 2 below)
10.	Ligaments*	900
11.	Veins*	700
12.	Arteries*	200
13.	Muscles*	400
14.	Vital organs*	107
15.	Joints*	200
16.	Capillaries*	29,956
17.	Skin hairs*	29,956
	Note: * These are conjectured	

Diagnosis Process

The dosha imbalance causing various diseases and the path followed by the doshas to cause the disease is known as pathogenesis or *Samprapti*. The development of the diseases takes place in different stages and a thorough knowledge of the stages helps in diagnosing the disease in early stages. Ayurveda recognises six stages of diagnosis process. They are given below.

Stage-1: *Sanchaya* (Accumulation)

Excess dosha and a weak digestive power is often responsible for such a condition. Due to improper digestion the toxins get accumulated in the gastro-intestinal track. Toxins resulting from a *Kapha* imbalance accumulate in the stomach, those associated with a *Pita* imbalance collects in the small intestine, and that related to *Vata* imbalance accumulates in the colon.

Stage-2: *Prokapa* (Aggravation)

The diet, lifestyle and seasons excite the accumulated and stagnant doshas. The toxins get accumulated and provoke the site of production in the gastrointestinal tract.

Stage-3: *Prasara* (Spread)

In the third stage the accumulated toxins in the gastro intestinal tract starts overflowing. Up to this stage the use of proper measures can help in achieving the restoration of *dosha* balance. There may be spontaneous remission influenced by seasonal changes. Thus there is accumulation of *Pita* in rainy season, aggravation in fall and spread in early winter.

Stage-4: *Sthana Samshraya* (Augmentation)

The overflowing toxins from the gastrointestinal tract make their way to the weak and defective tissues or dhatus resulting in malfunctioning and the structural damage. This stage leads to specific degenerating disease and susceptibilities to serious infections are more.

Stage-5: *Vyakti* (Symptom manifestation)

The affected location starts showing different symptoms and these symptoms are used for classification and diagnosis of the various diseases.

Stage-6: *Bheda* (Complications / Differentiation)

The disease becomes chronic and it takes long time to reach at this final stage. This stage provides a complete knowledge of the symptoms making the physicians clear of the nature of the disease. Besides the stages of disease the physicians should also know the complete history of patient. Ayurveda has evolved a unique simultaneous approach to diagnosis and pathology. This method is known as *Rogi-Roga pariksha*.

Ayurveda is the only medical system that describes an elaborate strategy for assessing both the patient (*rogi*) and the disease (*roga*). For the complete interrogation and physical examination, Ayurveda uses a two-part approach:

Rogi-pareeksha – diagnosis of the patient

Roga-pareeksha – diagnosis of the disease

Charaka Samhita

Charaka Samhita is an early *Ayurvedic* text on internal medicine. The information we have is that it was written about 300 BCE. The treatise was based on older works of *Agnivesa*, a *shishya* of *Maharshi Atreya*. The text has eight sections and 120 chapters.

These 8 sections are *Sutra sthana*, *Nidana sthana*, *Vimana sthana* *Sarira sthana*, *Indriya sthana*), *Chikitsa sthana*, *Kalpa sthana* and *Siddhi sthana*. 17 chapters of *Cikitsa sthana* and complete *Kalpa sthana* and *Siddhi sthana* were added later by *Dridhabala* (9th century). The text starts with *Sutra sthana* which deals with the fundamentals and basic principles of *Ayurveda* practice.

The text includes duties of nursing.

People from numerous countries came to Indian *Ayurvedic* schools to learn about this world medicine and the religious scriptures it sprang from. Learned men from China, Tibet, the Greeks, Romans, Egyptians, Persians, and more travelled to India to learn the complete wisdom and take it back to their own countries. *Ayurvedic* texts were translated in Arabic. *Avicenna* and *Razi Sempion* quoted Indian *Ayurvedic* texts and established Islamic medicine. This style became popular in Europe, and helped to form the foundation of the European tradition in medicine. In 16th Century Europe, *Paracelsus*, who is known as the father of modern Western medicine, practiced and propagated a system of medicine which borrowed heavily from *Ayurveda*.

Sage Sushruta and Bhagavan Dhanvantari School

Introduction

Sushruta is one of the earliest surgeons in recorded history (600 to 1000 BC). He lived in *Kashi*. He is regarded as the greatest surgeon of his times. With his powers of observation, attention to detail, thoroughness, innovation and mastery over his subject he commands a great respect even today from all professionals.

Sushruta regarded as the father in the fields of Plastic and cataract surgery. *Ackernecht* has aptly observed -"There is little doubt that plastic surgery in Europe which flourished in medieval Italy is a direct descendant of classical Indian surgery".

The followers of *Sushruta* were called as *Saushrutas*. The new student was expected to study for at least 6 years. He taught the surgical skills to his students on various experimental modules, for instance, incision on vegetables (like watermelon, gourd, cucumber etc.), probing on worm eaten wood. He stressed the importance of observation and practical experience in surgery.

Sushruta Samhita

Sage *Sushruta* authored the world famous *Sushruta Samhita*. Earlier on, we have spoken about the eight limbs of *Ayurveda*. *Sushruta Samhita* is a complete work on medicine with special attention to *Shalya* and *Shalakya Tantras*. However, the whole *Samhita* is one comprehensive treatise on the entire medical discipline. As a text book, it is unrivalled in respect of composite teaching of the subject of surgery with reference to all allied branches of medical learning required by a surgeon. The treatise contains 184 chapters. It gives descriptions of 1120 diseases, 700 medical plants, a detailed study in anatomy, 64 preparations from mineral sources and 57 preparations based on animal sources. It also describes over 120 surgical instruments, 300 surgical procedures and classifies human surgery into eight categories. He prescribed and insisted on a code of ethics for teachers as well as students.

Surgery

He has introduced for the first time a plan for training the surgeons to achieve dexterity in performing basic surgical procedures on experimental models named *Yogya*.

Methods of diagnosis

He gave explicit instructions regarding history taking and physical examination of patients. Physical examination included the use of all five senses. Inspection, palpation, auscultation, use of taste and smell were all included.

Primary healing of wounds

Sushruta gave a great importance to management of wounds. Wounds were treated by cleansing and closing by suture. He has described 60 procedures for the treatment of wounds – from the earliest stage of inflammation to complete cure.

Surgical procedure

There are 3 stages for the surgical procedure. (a) *Purva Karma* (pre-operative measures) (b) *Pradhana Karma* (operative measures) (c) *Paschaat Karma* (post-operative measures)

s.No	Pre-operative	Operative	Post-operative
1	Preparation of patient	Surgery	Bandaging & Redressing
2	Preparation of theatre	Eight surgical procedures	Cleansing procedures
3	Preparation of instruments		Healing procedures Cosmetic preparation

Purva Karma (Pre-operative) Procedures

Pre-operative measures were similar to those employed today. Of the 60 procedures mentioned earlier, the first 12 were intended to bring the body to a state ready for definitive therapy. Starvation or mild dieting was advised on the day of the surgery. Administration of intoxicating beverages was advised to take off the sensation of pain of surgery. List of articles to be collected and kept ready have been given in detail along with a suitable day, time, lighting were indicated. He has described 101 types of blunt instruments and 20 types of sharp instruments.

Pradhaana Karma (Operative Measures)

Detailed descriptions have been given of the main surgical procedure. Eight basic surgical procedures have been described which covered any type of surgical manoeuvres.

Suturing

Suturing methods were given in detail. Three types of needles were described used for suturing. Suturing materials were also described Examples are – cotton, linen, silk, horse hair etc. Types of stitching to be used were described.

Paschaat Karma (Post operative care)

Careful, minute and detailed instructions regarding, sleep, diet, redressing are given systematically in post-operative care.

Bandages

Details of 14 different types of bandages to suit the wounds at different locations of the body have been given. 15 different types of materials were used for bandaging.

Infection

Details on infection and preventive methods have been described. One cannot but admire his penetrating observations and the accuracy of conclusions made centuries before Louis Pasteur and Lister in the 19th century established the contagious nature of diseases.

Plastic Surgery

Sushruta's contribution to plastic surgery is nothing short of outstanding. It is well known now that Indian plastic surgery provided the basic platform for western efforts in the field.

A report from India was published in “Gentleman’s magazine” in 1794. It described how a new nose was reconstructed on a bullock cart driver by a local surgeon. This was quickly followed up by a noted surgeon from London, Joseph Constantine Carpue who published his results in 1816. This was considered as a greatest landmark in reconstructive surgery.

The details of surgical procedure have already been described by Sushruta. Sushruta has described how a similar operation for severed lips can be performed. He has also described 15 methods for repairing earlobes.

Haemostatic Methods

Haemorrhage is a primary problem in any surgical procedure. Sushruta described 4 methods for arresting Haemorrhage.

Thermal injuries

His contribution to the concept of thermal injuries is of a hallmark category.

Only recently, all thermogenic injuries, whether hot or cold, have been included in the classification of burns. It has been confirmed now that their pathology is similar. Thousands of years back Sushruta had included lesions caused by excessive cold and lightning under burns.

Chapter XVII - Ancient Learning

According to Hinduism, in the sequence of respecting your elders, mother takes the first place, followed by the father then the *Guru* and lastly the God. You cannot see the God or talk to Him. It is through the mother, father and the teacher that He makes your physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual capabilities grow.

The important relationship between the teacher (*Guru*) and the pupil (*Shishya*) starts during the *Upanayana* ceremony. It is a spiritual initiation into a new life, for the pupil is now twice-born (*dvija*), in as much as the teacher impregnates him with his spirit.

The pupil then leaves his home and starts living at the modest hermitage of the teacher. These hermitages were located far away from the cities. We have descriptions of forest hermitage schools such as that of *Sage Valmiki's* at *Chitrakoota*, *Bharadwaja's* at the confluence of *Ganges* and *Yamuna* and many others. The word *Upanishad* itself suggests that it is learning got by sitting at the feet of the master. The knowledge was to be got by obeisance, by questioning and serving the teacher.

The knowledge of Vedas, their auxiliary branches and subjects of material interest were called *Apara-Vidya*. The knowledge of supreme Reality, the ultimate quest of *Upanishads*, is called *Para-Vidya*. In all the total number of subjects to be studied as part of *Veda* and its auxiliaries are eighteen. There are fourteen branches of learning or *Vidyas* - four *Vedas*, Six *Vedangas*, *Mimamsa*, *Nyaya*, *Puranas* and other religious scriptures. These fourteen along with *Ayurveda*, *Dhanurveda*, *Gandharvaveda* and *Arthashastra* becomes eighteen. All the learning was done in Sanskrit language.

The education did not remain confined to priestly class only. In view of this secular character, education came to be regarded quite early in its history as a source of illumination, an agency for improvement and for giving the correct lead in life.

Organised efforts in religious and educational matters were quite well known during *Vedic* times. The words *sangha*, *parishad* and *caaraka* were frequently used in *Samhitas*, *Brahmanas* and *Upanishads*. They referred to a body of learned men who assembled from time to time for a specific intellectual or religious purpose. They had similar assemblies in the time of the *Rig Veda* for giving direction to the philosophy and the language of *Veda*.

The ancient private-teacher system and the Buddhist monastic organisation combined to encourage 3 distinct type of educational institutions – (a) *Gurukula* School (b) Temple colleges (c) *Agrahara* village colleges.

Gurukula System

This took its inspiration from the private-teacher of the ancient times. However, unlike the hermitage system, the *Gurukula* schools were established in villages and cities on its outskirts like *Banaras*.

Temple Colleges

It was very popular in South India. These were supported by land grants and other forms of endowments.

Agrahara Institutions

These were bigger institutes. They had their own sources of revenue, generally from land grants and empowered to administer their villages. It is reported that, the *Agrahara* centre for learning at *Belgame* owned about 144 villages.

Chapter XVIII - Ancient Universities

University at Takshasila

The University at *Takshasila* was the oldest university in the world. It had a great reputation as a centre for learning. It is located in the north-west corner of the sub-continent (now near Rawalpindi, Pakistan). It was a major town in the state of *Gandhar*. According to references in *Ramayana*, it was founded by King *Bharata* (brother of *Sri Rama*) in the name of his son, *Taksha*. Records show that by 800 BC the university was functioning well. By the time Alexander's army came to Punjab, *Takshasila* has already developed a reputation as a great centre of learning. Alexander took many scholars with him to Greece.

Takshasila was a university in the sense that it provided education in a wide variety of subjects, including arts, literature, music, philosophy, religion (both Hindu and Buddhist), law, chemistry, biology, medicine, astronomy, architecture, sculpture, history and geography. It provided instruction in vocational subjects like archery, elephant riding, agriculture, accounting and astrology. There were courses even on sorcery and witchcraft, handling snakes and dealing with omens. Because of its international reputation, Takshasila used to host conferences in medicine and other fields that attracted scholars from Babylon, Syria, Arabia, Phoenicia, China and Persia.

However, being near the north-west frontier of India, Takshasila had to face the brunt of attacks and invasions from the north and the west. Thus the Persians, Greeks, Parthians, Shakas and Kushanas laid their destructive marks on this institution. The final blow, however, came from the Huns who, A.D. c.450, razed the institution. When the Chinese traveller Huen T'sang (A.D. 603-64) visited Takshasila, the town had lost all its former grandeur and international character.

Rise of Buddhism and the Universities

Buddhist monks could opt for a life of meditation, or a life of teaching. As a result a number of centres of learning arose. These seats of monastic learning (Pirivenas) gradually developed and some of them became full fledged learning. As a result Buddhist India came to have 5 major Universities which achieved wide fame. They were (1) *Nalanda* (2) *Vickramasila* (3) *Odantapuri* (4) *Jagaddala* (5) *Somapura*.

Nalanda University

Nalanda was a great centre of learning from 427 to 1197 CE. King Kumara Gupta established the centre.

Nalanda is the best known of ancient India Universities. Situated 40 miles south of *Patna* and 7 miles north of *Rajgir* in *Bihar*, *Nalanda* was originally a seat of *Brahmanic* learning till the beginning of 5th century AD. Under the patronage of *Gupta* emperors a number of high rise *viharas* changed the skyline of the place, and this building activity continued well into the eleventh century. According to archaeological excavations, the University covered of one mile long and half a mile broad. The central college was provided with 7 large halls and 300 rooms. The gates were rose to a height of 36 feet. Outside the great hall of the temple there was a large *stupa*. A water clock kept the time.

In Hieun Tsang's time the monastery's population of monks and students stood at 10,000. According to *Hieun Tsang*, there were 1000 teachers who could explain 20 collections of *Sutras* and *Shastras*. The University maintained an excellent library located in three buildings called *Ratna-sagara*, *Ratnodadhi* and *Ratnaranjaka*. Although *Nalanda* specialised in the Mahayana school, it also taught *Heenayana* works and many secular subjects such as *Vedas*, *Heturvedya*, *Sabdavidya* and *Ayurveda*. Some scholars worked in other countries such as *Nepal* and *China*. *Nalanda* was graced by the presence of India's most brilliant luminaries. Some of them were *Nagarjuna*, *Aryadeva*, *Dharmapala* and *Silabhadra* among others.

As was the case with many other institutions of that period, *Nalanda* was razed to the ground by the Muslim invaders. The story goes that the invader *Bhaktiar Khilji* enquired whether they had a copy of *Quran* in the library. On hearing that they did not have one, he ordered his army to set fire to the University. At that time some of the monks were about to have their meal. The Persian historian *Minhaj-i-Siraj*, in his chronicle the *Tabaquat-I-Nasiri*, reported that thousands of monks were burnt alive and thousands beheaded as *Khilji* tried his best to uproot Buddhism and plant Islam by the sword; the burning of the library continued for several months and the "smoke from the burning manuscripts hung for days like a dark pall over the low hills."

Vickramasila University

Vickramasila was located at *Antichak* village, *Kahalagoan*, *Bhagalpur* district. It was founded by a monk *Kamalapala*, under the patronage of King *Dharmapala* (770-810 AD). At its peak it rivalled *Nalanda*. There were 6 entrances and near each entrance was a monastery for resident monks. About 150 monks were accommodated in each monastery. 108 Professors were engaged in teaching and administrative duties. The curriculum was similar to that at *Nalanda*.

In the end it was demolished by the Muslim invaders

Odantapuri University

It is considered as the second oldest of Indian Universities. There were about 12,000 students at this university. It too perished at the hands of the Muslim invaders and many of the monks were killed.

Jagaddala University

King *Ramapala* (1077 – 1129) was the founder of this university. This was a centre for the study and dissemination of *Tantric Buddhism*. It followed the methods, practices, and traditions of *Nalanda*. In the year 1027 AD Muslim invaders destroyed the university.

Somapura University

It was situated in what is today the Bangladesh. King *Devapala* (810-815) is said to have erected the *Dharmapala- Vihara* at *Somapura*. The ruins of this buildings cover an area about 1square mile. The university flourished for about 750 years before it was razed by the Muslim invaders.

Vallabhi University

As a Buddhist university, *Vallabhi*, near *Wala* in Kathiawar in western India played the same important role that *Nalanda* did in the east. Its development was due to the munificent grant of the *Maitraka* Kings. It had about 6000 monks. It specialised in the study of the Heenayana school. In flourished from 475 to 1200 AD.

Technical education and Apprentice System

Eighteen *Silaps* or industrial and technical arts and crafts are mentioned with regard to the schools at *Takshasila*. The following 18 are reported to be subjects – (1) Vocal music (2) Instrumental music (3) Dancing (4) Painting (5) Mathematics (6) Accountancy (7) Engineering (8) Sculpture (9) Cattle breeding (10) Commerce (11) Medicine (12) Agriculture (13) Conveyancing and law (14) Administrative training (15) Archery and military art (16) Magic (17) Snake charming (18) Art of finding hidden treasures.

For technical education in the above mentioned arts and crafts an apprentice system was developed. It is reported that essential details are given in the *Naradasmrti*.

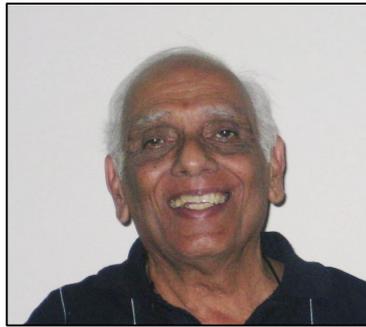
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