

A Journey Through Sacred Hindu Scriptures

**Linga Raju, M. D.
Plainview, NY**

Second Edition

**Published by
Veerashaiva Samaja of North America
2013**

First Edition Published by
Sid-Asha Publishing Company
Edison, NJ 08817

2013

Books may be ordered from:

Sid-Asha Publishing Company
70 Rieder Road
Edison, NJ 08817

Or from:

Sid-Asha Publishing Company
208, 12th Main, 3rd Cross,
Saraswathipuram,
Mysore-570009, Karnataka State, India

Table of Contents

PREFACE	4
DEPICTION OF SANSKRIT AND KANNADA WORDS	5
SACRED HINDU SCRIPTURES	7
TIMING OF THE COMPOSITION OF VĒDIC SCRIPTURES	9
VĒDA	11
BRĀHMAṆA	13
VĒDA ŚĀKHĀ	14
CHANTING	16
VĒDĀṄGA	18
ṚGVĒDA	21
RUDRA	26
Pañĉarudram	28
YAJURVĒDA	30
RUDRA-ŚIVA	33
Śrī Rudram	34
SĀMAVĒDA	37
ATHARVAVĒDA	38
UPANIṢAD	40
Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad	42
Kēna Upaniṣad	44
Kaṭha Upaniṣad	46
Praśna Upaniṣad	50
Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad	53
Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad	56
Taittirīya Upaniṣad	59
Aitarēya Upaniṣad	63
Ĉhāndōgya Upaniṣad	65
Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad	72
Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad	80
VYĀSA	86
SANSKRIT SCRIPT	89
BIBLIOGRAPHY	91

PREFACE

After the publication of the two books in the recent past, my enthusiasm in continuing to study the available sacred religious literature and write about what I have read and what I have understood has been enhanced. As a retired person, acting upon my spiritual instinct, it seems that I have chosen this path for a spiritual journey. This journey, I believe, has resulted in a qualitative improvement in the inner self.

In many of the articles in this book, some texts have been taken verbatim from the original references cited in the articles. This may be because of my short-comings that I could not come up with my own explanation of this complex subject material. This, in a way, might have turned out to be more appealing to the readers.

As in the past, participation of my family members in this journey has enhanced my spiritual experience. My wife Uma Raju continued to review the articles and comment on them enthusiastically. Our daughter Bindu Raju, who has been extremely busy with her son Vikram Deshawn Raju and her work, was able to help me in this project. Our son Vinay Raju and our daughter-in-law Cecilia Chang Raju, who are also busy with the new baby Kyle Lohi Raju, have been supporting the endeavor with encouraging comments. More importantly, spending some time with our two grand sons has made me realize the importance of continuing my journey in this path of spirituality.

Scholar Guru Bale of Edison NJ, who is so busy in continuing to write and publish many of his books, has continued to support me in this project. My friend and Medical School class-mate Dr. Y. N. Jayaram of Hainesport NJ, and his younger brother Professor Dathatri of Farmingdale NY, reviewed some of the articles and gave me very valuable input that kept me true to what I was writing. I am grateful to everyone who helped me in this endeavor.

Linga Raju

Please note that some minor changes and correction of typographical errors have been made to the original book manuscript.

DEPICTION OF SANSKRIT AND KANNAḌA WORDS

Most of the articles written in English, and published in this book, have many Saṁskṛta (Sanskrit) and Kannaḍa words that are written using the English alphabet. Transliteration of these words for proper pronunciation is a challenge with only about half the number of letters in the English alphabet. Furthermore, in general, the sounds of the English letters f, q, w, x and z, are not usable in both Sanskrit and Kannaḍa, leaving even a lesser number of English letters for the depiction. Each letter/syllable of the Sanskrit and Kannaḍa alphabets has only one pronunciation, and the alphabet is arranged according to the functional structure of the mouth to produce these sounds. There are no capital letters; all the letters are in one case only. The following is the English representation of the letters of the Kannaḍa alphabet (and the corresponding Dēvanāgarī script of Sanskrit) that is in common use nowadays. The lines, dots and other marks used here are called 'diacritics' or 'diacritical marks'. The diacritics are combined with English letters to represent new sounds. This representation is slightly modified from the scheme of transliteration given in ŚŪNYASAMPĀDANE Volumes I through V, published by Karnatak University, Dharwar, India (1).

Vowels: The vowels are either of a short or a long duration. The short vowels are held for one count, and the long vowels are held for two counts. The complex vowels are held for two counts.

a, ā, ī, ī, u, ū, r, ṛ, e, ē, ai, o, ō, au

Anusvāra: **aṁ** (also **aṅ**) Visarga: **aḥ**

Consonants: Five sets of five each of the twenty-five consonants are arranged according to five points of articulation with the first vowel 'a' added for pronunciation.

Velars or gutturals - the sound is produced in the throat or back of the mouth:

Ka, kha, ga, gha, ṅa

Palatals – the sound is produced with the tongue touching the palate (roof of the mouth): **ḥa, ḥa, ja, jha, ṅa**

Retroflex or cerebrals – the sound is produced with the tongue bent backwards:

ṭa, ṭha, ḍa, ḍha, ṇa

Dentals – the sound is produced with the tongue touching the back of the upper teeth: **ta, tha, da, dha, na**

Labials – the sound is produced at the lips: **pa, pha, ba, bha, ma**

Semi-vowels: **ya, ra, la, va**

Palatal sibilant: **śa** Retroflex sibilant: **ṣa** Dental sibilant: **sa**

Aspirate: **ha** Lateral: **ḷa**

Conjunct (combination of two letters): **kṣa jñā**

If the diacritical marks cannot be used for some reason, then there are a few accepted ways of representing some of the sounds/letters: aa for ā, ee for ī, oo for ū, and sha for the

retroflex řa. In this version the palatal řa, as in řiva, seems to have been written both ways – sa and sha.

It is not too difficult to use this type of representation in the articles. Although it takes more effort to properly depict the Saṁskṛta and Kannaḁa words, it is worthwhile to use the diacritical marks so that the words are sounded properly.

SACRED HINDU SCRIPTURES

The word scripture generally means a handwritten sacred or religious document. Every religion has a scripture of its own, and every scripture claims divine origin. It is the scripture that spells out the spiritual goal and the path to reach it. A scripture is generally considered an authority in regulating human behavior, primarily for leading a religious life. The followers are expected to profess that religion (2). Hinduism is unique in the sense that, not only it is the most ancient continuously practiced religion, but also has the most amount of sacred material than any other religion. Although the Sanskrit word *śāstram* is considered equivalent to the word scriptures, it does not include all the Hindu sacred material. **These sacred materials are placed into two main categories – śruti and smṛti, and a subsidiary category.** All these are in the Sanskrit language.

Śruti means 'what is heard'. The divine vibrations/sounds were heard by the ancient ṛṣis (rishis/seers/sages) and these were verbally/orally transmitted over thousands of years without any written script. Śruti deals with eternal virtues that do not change with time or place. Because the śrutis are divine revelations, and not man made (*apauruṣeya*), they are considered to be never wrong. The four Vēdas - **Rgvēda, Yajurveda, Sāmaveda, and Atharvaveda** - and their appendages - **Brāhmaṇas** (comprising of ritual texts), **Āraṇyakas** (comprising of ritual and meditational texts for forest dwelling ascetics), and **Upaniṣads** (comprising of the esoteric texts) – are the śrutis (2). Śrutis are the most sacred of all the Hindu scriptures.

Smṛti texts contain 'remembered knowledge'. They are an elaboration of the 'truths' that are in the śruti. They use simplified and interpretative method for teaching the common masses. History, mythology, legends and other stories are employed to make the abstruse philosophy understandable by an average person of the society. There are a multitude of Smṛti texts. In general it is said that all sacred scriptures other than the Vēdas are included in the Smṛtis (2). However it is also said that the sacred Dharśanas and the Tantras are not usually included in the Smṛtis (3). The main scriptures that come under Smṛti are the Itihāsas, Purāṇas and Dharma Śāstras (3). **Itihāsa** means 'verily it happened thus' and means that it was composed as it happened. The two great epics, **Mahābhārata** which includes **Bhagavad-Gītā**, and **Rāmāyaṇa**, are the Itihāsas. **Purāṇa** means 'history having the origin in the distant past'. The original Purāṇa which is mentioned in the early Vēdic literature is not available now; eighteen post-Vēdic Purāṇas are available. **Dharma-śāstras** are the so-called Law-books (3, 4). There are eighteen Śāstras named after the ṛṣis who compiled them (4). The most famous Dharma-śāstra is the **Manu-smṛti**.

Dharśanas are the six philosophical systems that are based on the Vēdas, and are developed by six sages (3, 4) – The Sāṅkhya Philosophy by the sage Kapila; Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā by Jaimini; Uttara-Mīmāṃsā by Bādarāyaṇa; Yōga by Patañjali; Nyāya by Goutama; and Vaiśēṣika by Kanāda. The Dharśana scriptures are called **Dharma-Sūtras**. Sūtra is an aphorism with minimal use of the words to project a thought (4). The most famous of the sūtras is the **Brahma-sūtra** by Bādarāyaṇa (see 'Vyāsa' article).

Another set of scriptures, parallel to the Vēdic scriptures, is called **Tantra**, the scripture by which knowledge is spread. They fall under five categories – Śaiva, Śakta, Vaiṣṇava, Soura, and Gāṇapatya. In addition, there are Buddhist Tantras. From the outset, Tantra has straddled both Hinduism and Buddhism, and the tantric style teachings can be found even in Jainism (5).

An oldest form of **Śaivism** that was present in North India possessed a considerable amount of literature called **Āgamas**, a number of which are still preserved. The Āgamas were 18 in number according to one tradition, and 28 according to another. The two lists might be two different ways of computing the same literature. The religion of Āgamas developed through two channels. One was pure Śaivism with greater emphasis on the devotional aspect of worship with a view of attaining salvation. The other continued as Śaktism with greater emphasis on various Śakti cults. **The Śakti literature became the Tantra proper, where as the pure Śaivism literature ceased to be called Tantra** (5). These Śivāgamas (earlier version – pūrvāgama) are the basic scriptures of the Śaivas. The later modified version of the Śivāgamas (uttarāgama) is part of the philosophy of the Viraśaivas.

Siddhāntaśikhāmaṇi, also in Sanskrit, is considered to be the basic scripture, if not the main scripture, of the Viraśaivas. The source for this scripture has been stated to be the Vēdas (particularly the Upaniṣads), Śivāgamas (uttarāgamas) and Śivapurānas (6). **Vačana śāstra**, most of which is in Kannaḍa language, put together as '**Śūnya Saṃpādane**' forms the main scripture of the Viraśaivas. The Śūnyasaṃpādane is one of the most important documents of the Viraśaiva philosophy and faith, and it occupies a very high place in the whole range of Indian literature (1).

TIMING OF THE COMPOSITION OF VĒDIC SCRIPTURES

It is said that the Vēdas are without a beginning because they contain the ever present divine revelations. Ṛgvēda fashioned along with ancient Sanskrit, previously a purely oral literature, is the most ancient of all compositions of the revelations. Although it is extremely difficult to place the beginning of this Ṛgvēda period, it is generally considered by the Indian scholars to be around 10,000 Before Common Era (BCE) (2).

India has emerged as the oldest continuous civilization on earth. Ṛgvēda, a compilation of very ancient material, has astronomical references recalling events in the third to the fifth millennia BCE and earlier, indicating that the Ṛgvēda period had been well established during that period prior to 3,100 BCE (7). The ancient Indic civilization reached its maturity by 2,700 BCE. It was the golden age of the Vēdas when the Vēdic religious practice was in vogue. The practice was based on all the Vēdas; composition of the main parts of the four Vēdas being completed by then with some of the appendages added at a later date. The Ṛgvēda speaks of, and praises the mighty river Sarasvati (She who flows) the largest of the seven rivers forming the life support of the Vēdic civilization. Originally the Sarasvati flowed through Rajasthan and poured itself into the Gulf of Kutch near Kathiawar Peninsula. One of the main tributaries was the Yamuna River which now flows into Gaṅga (Ganges) River. Sutledge River was also a tributary of Sarasvati; it now flows into the Sindhu (Indus) River. Around 1,900 BCE, over a comparatively short period of time, major tectonic shifts occurred which drastically altered the flow of rivers and turned the Sarasvati region into inhospitable desert – the present day Thar Desert in India. Prior to the final demise, the Sarasvati River had shifted its course at least four times, gradually turning the region inhospitable. Some older Brāhmaṇas mention the Sarasvati River in them; this indicates that those were composed prior to the demise of the Sarasvati River. Śatapatha (Hundred Paths) Brāhmaṇa of the Śukla (white) Yajurvēda, the biggest of all the Brāhmaṇas, vividly describes the conquest of the swampy area east of the Gaṅga River, and does not mention the drying up of the Sarasvati River. This indicates that the eastward migration of the Vēdic people occurred over several hundred years prior to the catastrophe of 1,900 BCE and that the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa was composed during that time period (7). In general, the Brāhmaṇas and the Āraṇyakas originated around 2,700 BCE to 1,500 BCE.

Gaṅga River valley had been inhabited at least since 5,000 BCE. It was a thickly forested swampy area with heavy monsoon rains. Forest had to be cleared to make room for the new settlements. The center of vitality shifted from west to east, from the Sarasvati to the Gaṅga. Remembrance of the period of forest living in the Gaṅga River valley before this urbanization may be contained in the sacred Āraṇyakas (forest books) of the Vēdas. Exactly when the Upaniṣads were composed is not known; modern historians date some of the Upaniṣads to be from 7,000 to 5,000 BCE (2). In general the composition of the Upaniṣads of the Vēdas is said to belong to the second millennium BCE (7). Following the close of the Upaniṣadic period further development of the doctrines about reincarnation, karma, and spiritual liberation resulted in the development of the six philosophical systems, namely, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Sāṃkhya, Yōga, Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, and Uttara Mīmāṃsā or Vēdānta. This period ensued into the 'historical' times and eventually to the well established dates for Goutama the Buddha (563 BCE to 483 BCE), founder of Buddhism, and Mahāvira (540 BCE to 468 BCE) the founder of Jainism (7). It is unfortunate that the original Purāṇa which is mentioned in the early Vēdic literature is not available now. The Purāṇas composed in the post-Vēdic times have no reference to the Sarasvati River, but give praise to the Gaṅga.

The so called 'Aryan Invasion Theory' has been described as a scholarly myth (7, 8). There was no 'Aryan Invasion of India'; it never took place. The Theory had implied that this invasion had occurred between 1,500 BCE and 1,200 BCE. The theory had argued that the Vēdic Aryans entered India from the northwest through the mountain passes of Afghanistan; they were barbaric semi-nomadic tribes who came in search of new grazing land for their cattle; they came down on horsebacks and chariots, armed with swords, bows and arrows, and other weapons, and were ruthless in conquering and subduing the native population. In that process, they apparently destroyed the existing political, economic and religious order. There is no evidence that such an invasion ever took place. The Vēdic civilization had been well established in India prior to 1,900 BCE. The so called Vēdic Aryans were indigenous to India.

VĒDA

The word 'Vēda' means 'knowledge' or 'wisdom'. It is derived from the Sanskrit verb root 'vid' which means 'to know'. The Vēdas are the records of revealed wisdom that have been faithfully passed down orally/verbally over thousands of years. They are the largest body of sacred literature surviving from the ancient world, and are the most impressive literary achievement of antiquity. The ability to preserve this comprehensive literature against the ravages of time is an incredible achievement (7). The Hindu religious tradition has accorded the Vēda the highest place, and as such, it is revered as the basic scripture of Hinduism (2). The Vēda consists of collection of hymns (hymnodies) called Saṁhitā. Saṁhitā is the main part of the Vēda, and it means that which has been collected and arranged in the form of mantra (4). The word '**mantra**' is derived from the Sanskrit verb root 'man' which means 'to think' or 'ponder', and the suffix 'tra' indicates instrumentality or means to do it (7). Thus, mantra is that which cultivates deep thought, and that which develops the mind; mantras are sacred utterances which are repeated in various ways to direct the mental energies toward higher realities, especially to the 'ēka', the 'singular' (7). Mantra is a sacred syllable, word, phrase, poem or prose-text upon which one meditates by chanting repeatedly, either silently or aloud, so that the vibrations created again and again result in one's own well-being and the general well-being of others (4). The simplest and the most important mantra is 'Ōm'. Mantras are the expression of the envisioned Divine Truths.

The mantras were revealed to various Ṛṣis or sages at different periods of time. According to one calculation, the number of Ṛṣis exceeded 800 (2). Consequently the style of language, grammar, ideas, as well as the historic and cultural factors vary widely (2). The mantras were 'put-together' along with the Vēdic Saṁskṛta (Sanskrit) language which has a wide range for plays on words and double meanings (9) The ancient Ṛṣis painstakingly composed each hymn with rigorous standards of metric composition along with the 'perfected' Saṁskṛta language so that these poetic forms would be remembered, more so than the prose form, and transmitted, error-free, in posterity over thousands of years. There are about 19 or so distinct metres of composition, of which about 7 are frequently used. One of the common forms of these poems/verses has four lines/feet (pāda) with eight syllables in each pāda (see 'Āchandas' in the 'Vēdāṅga' article).

In course of time a need arose to compile and record the Vēdas. A sage by name Kṛiṣṇa Dvaipāyana, now revered as the **Vēda Vyāsa** (meaning Vēda compiler), collected them and arranged them into four Vēda formats. All the hymns used by the Hōṭṛ-priest to invite the various divinities to the sacrificial ceremony became the R̥gvēda. All the worship related parts of the Vēdas, useful to the Adhvaryu-priest, the chief executor of the sacrificial rites, formed the Yjurveda. Collection of all the musical chants, especially those associated with the Sōma group of sacrifices, and to be sung by the Udgātṛ-priest (the singer), was named the Sāmavēda. The rest, a sort of miscellaneous appendix and addenda, assigned to the Brahmā-priest who is considered as the supervisor over the whole sacrificial process, became the Atharvavēda (2). It is generally believed that Vyāsa compiled and classified the Vēdas as above, more than 5,000 years ago (4) (see 'Vyāsa' article). Furthermore, Vyāsa taught the Vēdas to his four chief disciples, and assigned one each of the Vēdas to them to be transmitted over the generations. Paila was assigned R̥gvēda, Vaiśampāyana the Yajurveda, Jaimini the Sāmavēda, and Samantu the Atharvavēda. The four Vēda Saṁhitās served as the foundation for the later additions to each in the form of Brāhmaṇas (ritual texts), Āraṇyakas (ritual and meditational texts for forest dwelling ascetics), and the Upaniṣads (the esoteric texts). R̥gvēda refers only to R̥gvēda saṁhitā; this is because the Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas and

Upaniṣads attached to the R̥gvēda have their own separate names. The four Saṁhitās, in course of time, branched off to form about 1180 śākhās or recensions (a recension is a critical revision with intent to establish a definitive text), each śākhā branch ment specialization by one group of scholars. The origin of these śākhās is probably because the four principal disciples of Vēda Vyāsa entrusted to preserve the Vēdas in posterity, had several disciples of their own, and they and their successors might have done some readjustment of the Vēdic mantras to suit the needs of the times (2). Very many of the śākhās have been lost (see 'Vēda Śākhā' article).

Vēdas, in all, are generally considered to have two portions. The first part is the portion dealing with action or rituals (karma kāṇḍa) with the belief that Mōkṣa (salvation/liberation) can be obtained through the right performance of rituals as enjoined by the Vēdas. And the second part comes at the end of the Vēdas, in the Upaniṣads, dealing with knowledge (jñāna kāṇḍa), that is said to be the quintessence of the Vēdas (4). These two parts are considered to be complementary rather than contradictory to one another.

Vēda, as the name implies, is informative – it supplies the information regarding the 'unknown'. It does not compel anyone to do anything; it simply prescribes means for attainment of desired results and avoidance of untoward effects (2). It has no barriers of race, creed or religion; it is universal and eternal (4). Vēda does not state 'this is the only way' or 'this is the only God'. It makes it clear that any good religious path with faith and loyalty, and worship of any Dēvata in whatever way, will lead to the true goal (4). Each of the Vēdas has many mahā-vākyas (great sayings). But four, one from each Vēda, are important, very thought provoking, and powerful. They are contained in the jñāna kāṇḍa part of the Vēdas in the four Upaniṣads. In Aitarēya Upaniṣad of R̥gvēda, it is said '**prajñānam Brahma' meaning that exalted actual experience alone is Brahman (Supreme knowledge is Brahman)**'. In Taittirīya Āraṇyaka of Kṛṣṇa Yajurvēda '**ahamasmi brahmahamasmi**', and a slightly different version '**aham brahmāsmi**' in Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad of Śukla Yajurvēda, mean '**I am Brahman**'. In Āndogya Upaniṣad of Sāmavēda '**tattvamasi (tat-tvam-asi)**' means '**that thou art**' or '**you are that (you are Ātman/Brahman)**'. In the Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad of Atharvavēda '**ayamātmā brahma**' means '**This Ātman is Brahman**' (4). These mahāvākyas clearly state the philosophy of non-dualism (Monism) – **the individual Self and the Universal Self are one and the same, and that there is only one Absolute Reality.**

BRĀHMAṆA

The Vēdas have two main components, namely, Samhītā and Brāhmaṇa. The name of a specific Vēda refers only to the Samhītā; for example Ṛgvēda refers only to the Ṛgvēda Samhītā. The Brāhmaṇas associated with the Vēdas are various explanatory or subsidiary scriptures which also are deemed to be revealed knowledge. The Brāhmaṇas in general include the specific named Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads.

Brāhmaṇa serves as a guidebook in the proper interpretation and use of the mantras supplied by the Samhītās. It is said that Samhītā has the mantras, and all that is not mantra is Brāhmaṇa. The Brāhmaṇa describes the minute details of sacrificial ceremonies, explaining their origin and hidden meaning, and illustrating their value and potency. Brāhmaṇa is considered as an attachment to the Samhītā of the Vēda. The two parts are clearly separated except in some prose part of the Yajurvedā where, at times, the Brāhmaṇa is conjoined with the Samhītā. Brāhmaṇa lists the Vēdic karmas or rituals to be performed, and explains how they are to be performed. As the Vēdic rituals grew more and more complex, the step by step home-based Vēdic religious practice was taken over by priests who made the sacrifices even more elaborate (7). It is said that the Brāhmaṇa scriptures are perhaps less understood and appreciated by modern scholars, than the Vēdas themselves (7).

Āraṇyaka is a sacred text similar to the Brāhmaṇa, but intended for the forest dwellers who having fulfilled their householder duties, live in solitude in the forest. The focus is on certain powerful rites that lead to ritual purity followed by awakening of mystical powers. The symbolic and spiritual aspects of sacrifices are meditated upon; the meditation taking the place of the performance of sacrifices. Āraṇyakas also contain a number of meditational and devotional teachings similar to the Upaniṣads, and they stand midway between Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads in form and spirit (7).

Upaniṣad: Upa-ni-ṣada means 'to sit beside'. It is what is taught to a seeker who sits by the side. **Upaniṣads are personalized instructions to those who are fit to receive them. The general thrust of the teachings is towards non-dualism – ultimately, all things are one, and that the innermost essence of the human being is the very same essence that underlies the universe at large** (7). Upaniṣads are the best known aspects of the Vēdic literature. They not only come at the end of the textual presentation of the Vēdas (Vēdānta), but also contain the ultimate goal of the realization of the end-product of the Vēdas. They are the end as well as the summit of the Vēdas (see 'Upaniṣad' article).

VĒDA ŚĀKHĀ

After Vēda Vyāsa's time, some individuals learned one Vēda, some learned two Vēdas, some learned three, and some others learned all four Vēdas. The individual who learned two Vēdas was known as Dvivēdi, the one who learned three was called Trivēdi, and the one who learned all four Vēdas was called Chaturvēdi. These family names are still in use by some of their descendants.

The Vēdas, previously being a purely oral literature, had to be faithfully passed down orally/verbally over thousands of years. Vēda Vyāsa had four chief disciples, one for each of the four Vēdas, and each one of them had more disciples. In course of time the number of successive disciples increased, and they formed separate groups or schools, giving rise to various branches called Śākhās. The Śākhā was named after the school to which it belonged. Each of these Śākhās had its own reduction or collection of the given Vēda for preserving in posterity. The Śākhās of a given Vēda differed only a little from each other.

A student of the Vēdas is expected to learn all aspects of the Vēdas in order to experience spiritual progress. First is the study and recitation of the Vēdas. Then, yajñas and rituals are to be performed along with recitation of the mantras related to these yajñas. Next an enquiry into the purpose of yajñas is to be conducted. And lastly, an enquiry into Paramātman (the Supreme Self) is performed and brought within the realm of actual experience.

For an ordinary student, it is not usually possible to master all that is in the Vēdas. What is adequate to enable the student to attain self-realization varies widely. Thus, the Vēdas have been conveniently branched off into recensions called Śākhās. A Śākhā is a miniature Vēda with all its components. Each Śākhā consists of, first the Saṁhitā, next the Brāhmaṇa, and then the Āraṇyaka at the end of which appears the Upaniṣad. Each Śākhā, then, would be a unit that a student could master.

From the ancient times, a total of 1,180 Śākhās were known to have existed: Ṛgvēda had 21 Śākhās; Yajurveda had a total of 109 with Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda 94 and Śukla Yajurveda 15 Śākhās; Sāmavēda had the most number with 1,000 Śākhās; and Atharvavēda had 50 Śākhās (4). Of the total of 1,180 Śākhās, only about eight complete and parts of another 18 or so Śākhās are available (4). By another count 1,132 Śākhās existed, of which only 16 are available: five of 21 in Ṛgvēda, four of 85 in Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda, two of 17 in Śukla Yajurveda, three of 1,000 in Sāmavēda, and 2 of 9 in Atharvavēda (2).

Ṛgvēda has one full Aitarēya Śākhā including the Aitarēya Upaniṣad which is one of the principal Upaniṣads. In addition, it has Kauṣītakī Brāhmaṇa and Kauṣītakī Āraṇyaka with its Upaniṣad.

Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda has one full Taittirīya Śākhā that is in much use in South India. Its Āraṇyaka not only has the Taittirīya Upaniṣad, one of the principal Upaniṣads, but also contains Mahānārāyaṇa Upaniṣad. Another Śākhā called Maitrāyaṇīya has barely survived with its Āraṇyaka and the Upaniṣad, and is in use in Maharashtra. Kathōpaniṣad, one of the principal Upaniṣads of the lost Kaṭha Śākhā is in existence. Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad also belongs to this Vēda.

Śukla Yajurveda has two surviving Śākhās – Kāva and Mādhyāndina. Only Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, the largest of all the Brāhmaṇas is available. With some differences, it is akin to

the above two Śākhās. Bṛhadāraṇyaka with its Upaniṣad, another principal Upaniṣad, is available. Īṣāvāsya Upaniṣad, one of the principal Upaniṣads, is in the Samhitā portion of the Śukla Yajurveda itself.

Of the one thousand Śākhās of Sāmaveda only three are available – Talavakāra, Rānāyaniya and Kauthuma. Talavakāra Āraṇyaka, also known as Talavakāra Brāhmaṇa, has Talavakāra Upaniṣad which is mainly known as Kēna Upaniṣad, a principal Upaniṣad. In addition seven Brāhmaṇas have survived. Āchāndōgya Upaniṣad, one of the principal Upaniṣads, belongs to the Āchāndōgya Brāhmaṇa.

In the Atharvaveda, Śaunaka Śākhā, Gōpatha Brāhmaṇa, Nrisimha Thāpini Upaniṣad, and three principal Upaniṣads – Praśna, Muṇḍaka and Māṇḍūkya – are available.

Although so many Śākhās have been lost, the available parts of the Vēdas have been preserved in a pure form. This is because the ancients had devised, in the early times, a unique error-free chanting system that consisted of lessons of chanting modes (see the 'Chanting' article). These lessons focused on the error-free chanting, and not on the understanding of the Vēdas. The ancients believed that proper chanting itself had some beneficial effects on the person chanting the mantras. Another more important set of safeguards called Vēdāṅgas (limbs of Vēdas) was devised not only for error-free chanting, but also to understand the wisdom of the Vēdas. Please see the 'Vēdāṅga' article.

CHANTING

Vēdas, in ancient Sanskrit which previously was purely an oral literature, have been faithfully passed down orally/verbally over thousands of years. The ability to preserve this comprehensive literature against the ravages of time is an incredible achievement (7). Vēdas consist of collection of hymns called mantras. A mantra is that upon which one meditates by chanting repeatedly, either silently or aloud, so that the vibrations created again and again result in one's own well-being and the general well-being of others (4). In order to preserve the purity of the Vēda mantras, in addition to verbally transmitting the Vēdic hymns, the methods of chanting and the rules of pronunciation had to be transmitted over generations. The Vēda mantras had to be chanted exactly, so as to produce the same perfect vibrations and sounds every time. Error-free chanting was of prime importance. It was believed that error-free chanting of the mantras, even chanting a single mantra correctly, was beneficial to the chanter whether the person understood the meaning of the mantra or not. Accordingly, in the early times, the ancient sages devised a unique chanting system that consisted of various chanting modes to help pronounce the mantras correctly. Each mantra, one at a time, had to be chanted in various patterns and combinations.

First is to recite one mantra at a time in full (*Sarṁhita Pāṭha* or *Vākyā Pāṭha*). Vākyā means a sentence. Mantra in a sentence has some words joined together to form compounded words. Some sounds of syllables and words change depending on their environment, particularly at the junction (sandhi) of the words. Rules of these changes are called sandhi rules, and these are in the Śikṣā part of the Vēdāngas (see 'Vēdānga' article). The main aim of reciting in this mode is to make no mistake in the original meaning and sound pattern of the mantra. This pāṭha is considered as a natural lesson (Prakṛti Pāṭha) because the words of the mantra occur in a natural normal sequence during recitation (4).

Next is reciting the same mantra, word by word (*Pada Pāṭha*), without conjoining the words, and not stringing the words as above. Pada means word. Here the pronunciations of individual words that had been conjoined before according to the sandhi rules revert back to their own individual sound pattern. For example, the only three positive descriptions of the Absolute One, Sat (eternal existence, being), Ćit (consciousness, pure knowledge), and Ānanda (infinite bliss), are pronounced as such individually in Pada Pāṭha. When these three words are put together, they become Saĉĉidānanda. Note the 'ṭ' in Sat changes to 'ĉ', and 'ṭ' in Ćit changes to 'd'. Pada Pāṭha is also considered as a natural lesson because the words of the mantra occur in a normal sequence despite the change in the pronunciation (4).

Then it gets more complicated. *Krama Pāṭha* is practiced after Pada Pāṭha. In this method of chanting, the first word is joined with the second, the second word with the third, and the third with the fourth and so on. This practice lesson helps understand not only the individual word sounds, but also the modification that occurs with combination of words. The word sequencing here is 1-2; 2-3; 3-4; and so on. It is not a natural sequence of words as 1-2-3-4 and on. The word sequence is considered not-natural or artificial (Vikṛti). There are more vikṛti pāṭhas (4).

Jaṭā Pāṭha is recited next. Here the sequence of two words is different. First and second words are recited together, then the two words are recited in a reverse order, and then they are recited again in the right order. This type of sequencing is continued onwards. Thus the order of words is 1-2-2-1-1-2; 2-3-3-2-2-3; and so on. In *Śikhā Pāṭha*, three word

combinations, instead of two, are recited. The other lessons, *Rēkha*, *Dhvaja*, *Daṇḍa*, *Ratha*, *Ghana*, etc. are even more complex chanting methods (4).

Although this system of chanting is so complex, the interested individuals were encouraged to learn more difficult methods of recitation, as the benefit of chanting more complex methods correctly, was said to be proportionately higher than that of the easier ones. It appears that this complex system of chanting methods was helpful in preserving the Vēda mantras in a pure form. These lessons focused mainly on the error-free chanting, and not on understanding the meaning of the Vēda mantras. More important safeguards called Vēdāṅgas (limbs of the Vēdas) were devised by the ancient seers, not only for error-free chanting, but also to understand the wisdom of the Vēdas. Please see the 'Vēdāṅga' article.

VĒDĀNGA

Vēdas have been composed in the old Saṁskṛta language and are rather difficult to understand because of the archaic terminology and language. Furthermore, the Vēdas stress the importance of error-free chanting in order to secure the fullest benefit from the Vēda mantras. Therefore, safeguards had to be included to prevent any change in the wording, and to prevent any drift in the pronunciation. Thus, the ancient sages, first devised an error-free system of chanting that consisted of various chanting modes (see the 'Chanting' article), and then came up with a set of six subsidiary sciences called Vēdāṅgas, the limbs of the Vēdas, that not only accomplish error-free chanting, but also help to better understand the wisdom of the Vēdas. These six subsidiary sciences are: Śikṣā, Vyākaraṇa, Chandas, Nirukta, Jyōtiṣa and Kalpa.

Śikṣā is the science of phonetics. It deals with the principles of correct articulation and pronunciation. The Taittirīya Upaniṣad (10) states that the meaning of the Vēda mantra can be understood well only if proper attention is given to *varṇaḥ* the speech sound, *svaraḥ* the accent of tone, *mātrā* the quantity, *balam* the power or force of articulation, *sāmaḥ* the modulation of sound, and *santānaḥ* the conjunction or close sequence of sounds. Śikṣā is considered as the most primary anga of the Vēdas, and is compared to the nose and lungs. Śikṣā elaborates in minute detail, how the breath is to be originated and how the breath is made to travel upwards twisting and rolling in many different ways and touching many points on its way before escaping out through the mouth. Position of oral structures for sounding different syllables is also specified (4).

Śikṣā Śāstra lays down the details of various aspects of pronunciation. *Varṇa* is the sound of a syllable (akṣara). An akṣara is a vowel itself, or a consonant or a group of consonants followed by a vowel. Each syllable has one and only one sound. Every syllable of the Vēda mantra must be enunciated correctly. *Svara* is the accent of tone or the pitch of the sound – high, middle or low pitch. Proper pitch of the sound is to be produced to attain svara purity. *Mātrā* is the duration of a sound. It deals with how long that particular sound of a syllable should last. Short sounds are held for one count (one prosodial instant), and the long sounds are held for two counts. The old Vēdic Sanskrit also has sounds that are held for three counts. *Balam* is the loudness of sound, and deals with how much power or force is to be exerted to produce the sound. *Sāma* is modulation of sound to produce a proper rhythm. *Santāna* is conjunction or compounding of sounds. It deals with how to pronounce compound words without splitting them into syllables or individual words, and how to produce a proper flow of various juxtaposed sounds. Mantra in a sentence has some words joined together to form compounded words. Some sounds change depending on their environment, particularly at the junction (sandhi) of the words, and in Sanskrit, these changes are actually 'written' (included) into the text. When two or more words are joined together to form compounded words, the sounding of the syllables at the junction of the words, often, is to be changed. This is because, the position of the oral structures for sounding the last syllable of the preceding word has to change to conform to the oral structural positioning for sounding the first syllable of the succeeding word. Rules of these changes are called sandhi rules. When Sat, Ćit and Ānanda are put together, it becomes Saĉĉidānanda; note't' in Sat changes to 'ĉ', and 't' in Ćit becomes 'd'. Another example is: ṣaṣ (six) + akṣara (syllable) = ṣaḍakṣara (ṣ changes to ḍ); ṣaṣ + mukha (face) = Ṣaṇmukha (ṣ changes to ṇ); ṣaṣ + sthala = ṣaṣsthala (ṣ changes to ṭ).

Śikṣā Śāstra in an elaborate fashion ensures the purity of the sounds. The pronunciation should be relaxed and natural without any straining. The sounds are to be produced with sweetness, clearness and patience. The words must be spoken lucidly and not blurted out. Śikṣā ensures that the sound produced is as perfect as possible, and that the same pronunciation of the Vēda mantras be preserved in posterity. Although Śikṣā Śāstra states that the Vēda sounds should not be changed, it does permit small changes in the pronunciation of the Śākhās in different regions of India.

Vyākaraṇa is the Vēdic grammar. While Saṁskṛta means to 'put together', Vyākaraṇa means 'undo' or to 'take apart' (11). The primary book for the study of Sanskrit grammar is Aṣṭādhyāyī (eight chapters) of sage Pāṇini. It is concise and complete with about 4,000 sūtras or aphorisms which are short sayings of truth (11). Because of the complex nature of Sanskrit grammar and the conciseness of Pāṇini's sūtras, two other texts - elaborate commentary (vārtika) by sage Vararuchi and a great commentary (mahā-bhāṣya) of sage Patañjali, are also referred to for further explanations. Vyākaraṇa is said to be the mouth of the Vēdas (4).

Āchandas refer to the details of the metres of Vēdic poetry. R̥gvēda, Śukla-Yajurvēda and Sāmavēda are wholly in verse form. Kṛṣṇa-Yajurvēda and Atharvavēda have mantras in prose form interspersed with verses. Chandas specifies the rules for this poetry. It defines the boundaries of metrical composition into metre, rhyme, etc. The primary text for this topic is Chandas Sūtra by sage Pingala (4). There are rules as to how many lines/feet (pāda) are to be in each stanza, and how many syllables are to be in each pāda or line. About nineteen or so distinct types of metres are employed. The most common metre that appears in the Vēdas has four pādas. Name of the metre depends on the number of syllables in each pāda of the quartets. Gāyatrī metre has 6 syllables; uṣṇik has 7, anuṣṭup has 8, br̥hatī has 9, paṅkti has 10, triṣṭup has 11, jagatī has 12, and so on. The anuṣṭup with four pādas and eight syllables is the most common metre. Although the gāyatrī metre has four pādas with six syllables in each to a total of 24 syllables, the more common gāyatrī metre has three pādas with eight syllables in each to the same total of 24 syllables, and it is called the tripāda gāyatrī. The famous Gāyatrī Mantra which is named after the gāyatrī metre itself has three pādas with eight syllables in each pāda. There are many other types of metrical compositions in the Vēdas. Chandas is said to be the feet of the Vēdas (4).

Sūkta 130 in Maṇḍala ten of R̥gvēda is titled 'Creation'; it has the creation of metrical compositions. The whole Sūkta 130 is as follows (12, 13):

The sacrifice drawn out with treads on every side, stretched by worshipping a hundred and one Divinities; the forefathers weave forth, weave back, and worship when woven.

The man extends it, unbinds it, and even spins it up in the heaven; these pegs are fastened to the seat of worship, they made the Sāmavēda hymns their weaving shuttle.

What was the authority, what was the limitation, what was the cause, what was the clarified butter, what was the enclosure, what was the metre of the hymn, what was the recitation, when to the God the Universal gods offered worship?

Gāyatrī metre was conjoined with Agni, Savitā became combined with Uṣṇik metre, Sōma radiant with sacred praise joined Anuṣṭup metre, Br̥haspati's voice was aided by Br̥hatī metre.

Virāt metre was of Mitra and Varuṇa, Triṣṭup metre by day was Indra's portion, Jagatī metre entered the Universal Dēvas, by this knowledge the men were raised to Ṛṣis.

So, by this knowledge men were raised to Ṛṣis, when ancient Sacrifice sprang up our forefathers; with the mind's eye I beheld them who first performed the sacrificial worship.

Those who were well versed in metre, in hymns and rules, were the seven God like Ṛṣis; viewing the path of those of old, the sages have taken the reins as the chariot drivers.

Nirukta gives origins, meanings and explanations of the Vēdic words. It is the Vēdic dictionary. Although there are many books on this subject, the Nirukta book that is commonly referred to is the one by Yāska. According to this book, all Sanskrit words are put into four categories – the nominals that include nouns pronouns and adjectives, the verbs, the prefixes, and the indeclinables. Both nominals and verbs are derived from verb roots (dhātu). There are about 2,000 dhātus (11). Nirukta is considered as the ears of the Vēdas (4).

Jyōtiṣa is the astronomical science used to determine specific auspicious time periods suitable for performing Vēdic rituals. It serves as the eyes of the Vēdas. Objects at a distance such as planets and stars can only be seen by eyes then. Jyōtiṣa Śāstra is useful in seeing the disposition of planets and stars in time. Based on the astronomical observations in conjunction with the observations on earth of the terrestrial events and behavioral patterns, over the millennia, and analyzing what had been observed, the ancient sages put forward the science of Jyōtiṣa. It has three main branches. As Jyōtiṣa involves calculations regarding the transit of planets and stars over time, mathematics became an integral part of it. *Siddhānta Skandha* covers subjects such as arithmetic, trigonometry, geometry and algebra (4). Jyōtiṣa also has information about the correlation between the planetary movements and their effects on earth and people. Application of this information to forecast possible outcomes of events undertaken on earth is the science of *Hōra Skandha*. The *Sarīhita Skandha* deals with how to determine, using signs seen on the ground, the presence of underground pools and streams of water. It also deals with how to design and build houses, and has information on the science of omens (4).

Kalpa is the science that induces one to take proper Vēdic action. It is considered as arms of the Vēdas. After learning the preceding five Vēdāngas, one must now act to achieve results. Kalpa Śāstra deals with when and how a particular ritual is to be performed, what ritual is to be performed at what different stage of one's life, which mantra is appropriate for that particular ritual, what materials are needed, etc. Kalpa Śāstra in the form of Sūtras or aphorisms (short sayings of truth) has been composed by many sages. It deals with all sorts of sacrificial rites including smaller religious rites performed at home. It gives details of 40 Vēdic rituals or Saṃskāras. Fourteen of these come under Śrouta Sūtra; these Havir-Sōma Yajñas are performed under a canopy erected on open ground. The remaining 26 come under Gr̥hya Sūtra; these Agnihōtras are done at home. These Vēdic rituals cover everything from the time of conception to the time of cremation of the body after death (4).

The above six subsidiary sciences of the Vēdas, not only help accomplish error-free recitation of the Vēda mantras, but also help understand the wisdom of the Vēdas. Furthermore, the Vēdāngas are involved in the development of the Sanskrit script (see 'Sanskrit Script' article). It is said that the Vēdas are meant to be studied with the help from the Vēdāngas. Although proper chanting itself of the Vēda mantra without understanding the meaning is said to be beneficial to the chanter, those who chant without understanding the significance of the mantras, are said to obtain lesser benefit. **It is necessary to know the meaning of the mantras in order to secure the fullest benefit.**

ṚGVĒDA

Ṛgvēda (Rk+Vēda) is the oldest and the largest of the four Vēdas. Ṛgvēda refers to Ṛgvēda Saṁhitā only. Rk in Ṛgvēda means a chant or hymn in praise of the Divine. The hymn is also a mantra which is a sacred saying. Ṛgvēda is wholly in the form of hymns. It has a total of 10,589 Rks which are grouped into 1,028 sūktas. These sūktas are distributed into 10 maṇḍalas, meaning circles or cycles, equivalent to books or chapters, but more commonly referred to as books. The Ṛgvēda is said to be the effort of 414 Ṛṣis; the list of the Ṛṣis is given in the Ṛgvēda Saṁhitā reference (13). It appears that the ancient Ṛṣis painstakingly composed each hymn with rigorous standards of metric composition along with the 'perfected' Saṁskṛta language so that these poetic forms would be remembered, more so than the prose form, and transmitted, error-free, in posterity over thousands of years. The hymns show considerable poetic sophistication and spiritual depth (7). Although about 19 distinct metres of composition are employed, only about 7 of them are frequently used (see 'Āchandas' in 'Vēdāṅga' article). The most common metre that appears in the Vēdas has four pādas. Name of the metre depends on the number of syllables in each pāda of the quartets. Although the mantras are named after the Dēvatas (Divinities) they refer to, the Gāyatrī Mantra (Ṛgvēda III.62.10) is named after the metre of its composition itself. It goes like this: '*tat savitur varēnyāmi; bhargō dēvasya dhīmahi; dhiyō yō naḥ praçōdayāt*' - 'Let us contemplate the beautiful splendor of Savitur, that he may inspire our visions'. The Dēva is Savitur – the Divine Light manifesting in the luminous orb of the sun (4, 7). The Gāyatrī Mantra is recited at sunrise and at sunset.

Ṛgvēda begins with a hymn in praise on Agni (Divinity of fire) – '*agnimiṇe purōhitam yajñasya dēvamṛtvijam; hōtāram ratnadhātamam*' - 'I Laud Agni, the chosen high Priest, the minister of sacrificial worship, the Divinity, the hōtṛ-priest, lavisher of wealth' (7, 12, 13). Hōtṛ-priest is the one who invokes the proper Divinity by reciting the hymns of the Ṛgvēda at the sacrificial ceremonies. The last sūkta of Ṛgvēda also pertains to Agni; but only first of the four Ṛks in it is devoted to Agni; the last three have universal appeal. Ṛgvēda Saṁhitā ends with this Ṛk: '*samāni va ākūtiḥ samānā hṛdayāni vah; samānamastu vō manō yathā vah susahāsati*' – '**Your intention be one and the same, your hearts be of one accord; your thoughts be united so that all may happily agree with a common purpose**' (4, 12, 13).

There are about 200 sūktas of hymns on Agni, the Divinity of fire; about 250 on Indra, the Divinity of lightning, thunder and rain; over 100 dedicated to Sōma, the Divinity of flowing waters who is commonly referred to as the ocean itself, and who is also the Moon which influences the ocean with winds and tides, and whose mystery is embodied in the nectar that is consumed by the illumined sages to stimulate their visionary experiences; and fewer Ṛks on many Divinities (7). Although these praises to multitude of Dēvatas may give a wrong impression of the advocacy of polytheism (belief in many Gods), **Ṛgvēda teaches 'ēka-dēvatā-vāda' (one-God-argument)**. It is a progression from naturalistic polytheism to monotheism to **monism**. Maṇḍala I, sūkta 164, verse 46 of Ṛgvēda goes like this – 'They call Him Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni, and He is heavenly nobly-winged Garutmān, **To what is One, sages give many a title**, they call **It** Agni, Yama, Mātariśvan' (12). All the Divinities are the facets of the same Supreme Being (4), or the aspects of the same Supreme Reality (7). All the Divinities are really the names of the same Divine Unity; they are not separate entities, but inter-related Universal Truth Principles. Any one of them can become all of them. Divinities often display human traits or become humans; and Ṛṣis often become Divinities. The Ṛgvēda recognizes the Divine as One, as Many, as the All, and as beyond all forms (9).

On the basis of the number of sūktas dedicated to the individual Divinities, Indra, Agni and Sōma appear to be the main Vēdic Divinities. But the importance of these Gods can not be judged on the basis of the number of references to them; they have to be judged by the functions they fulfill (9). In this regard, **Rudra is the most important father figure in the R̥gvēda**; He is the great father of all the Gods; thus all the Gods can be called as Rudras (9). Specifically the Vēdic storm Gods, the Maruts, are called Rudras; the rain-pouring Rudra is their father (R̥gvēda VI.66.3). Indra, the 'king' of the Gods, is the leader of Maruts. Furthermore **Indra is called Śiva in R̥gvēda** II.20.3; VI.45.17; VIII.93.3; VIII.96.10; here the term 'Śiva' is mainly used to describe Indra; it means 'auspicious, gracious, benign, kind, benevolent, propitious, giver of happiness and such'. Indra, like Śiva, represents the 'Self' in us. Indra-Śiva as the main God of the Āryas shows the spiritual orientation of the Vēdic religion, its truth of monism and Self-realization (9). Rudra is also another name for Agni, the second of the great Vēdic Gods (R̥gvēda IV.3.1). There are five sūktas of hymns of praise on Rudra in the R̥gvēda; and the term 'Pañčarudra' refers to these five sūktas (see 'Pañčarudra' article). One of the five sūktas (VI.74) of Pañčarudra is titled Sōma-Rudra, and another sūkta (I.43) of Pañčarudra also has hymns of praise for Sōma; thus the third of the great Vēdic Gods is addressed together with Rudra. Furthermore, Rudra is also called 'Śiva' in mantra X.92.9; here again the word Śiva is used as a descriptive word meaning propitious.

R̥gvēda also deals with two other groups of subject matter. One of these two is the philosophical speculation about the origin of the universe and the real nature of human beings. The other one deals with many secular subjects (2).

Most of the philosophical and esoteric material is in the tenth maṇḍala, and some of it is in the other maṇḍalas. The philosophical speculations include the origin and repository of the later ideas of Vēdānta (Upaniṣads), including Jñāna (knowledge), Bhakti (devotion), and creation and evolution (2). Three sūktas, 129, 130 and 190, in maṇḍala X are dedicated to the **Creation**. This is the description of the Creation of the universe from sūkta 129 of maṇḍala X (12, 13):

In the beginning there was not the non-existent, nor the existent; there was no realm of air, nor the sky beyond it. What covered in and where? What gave shelter? Was water there, the unfathomed depth of water?

Death was not then, nor was immortality; no sign was there of the day's and night's divider. **'That One' thing, breathless, breathed by its own nature (power); apart from it there was nothing whatsoever.**

Darkness was there, at first concealed in darkness; all this was in-discriminated chaos. All that existed then was **Void**; by the great power of tapas (austerity) was born **That One**.

Thereafter rose **Desire**, the primal seed; sages having meditated in their hearts, discovered the existent's kinship in the non-existent.

Across was their line extended; what was above it and what was below it? There were begetters, there were mighty forces, free action here and energy up yonder (creation of the universe was instantaneous).

Who really knows and who can here declare it? Whence was this creation and whence was it born? **Dēvas (Gods) were subsequent to the creation, so who knows when it arose.**

The One who first arose, whether formed it all, or did not form it, no one knows; whose eye controls this in the highest of the heaven verily knows it, or perhaps knows not.

Sūkta 130 in maṇḍala ten of R̥gvēda titled Creation has the creation of metrical compositions (see 'Chandas' in 'Vēdānga' article).

Sūkta 190 of maṇḍala ten of R̥gvēda is as follows.

Eternal Law and Truth were born of arduous penance; thence was the night produced, and thence the billowy flood of the sea (ocean) arose.

From the billowy flood of the sea, the year was produced, ordaining the days and nights, the ruler of every moment.

Dhātā, the great creator, then formed in due order, the Sun and Moon, the Heaven and Earth, and the regions of air and light.

Also in maṇḍala 10 there are four other sūktas, 81, 82, 90, and 121, which pertain to the creation. Sūktas 81 and 82 are entitled 'Viśvakarman' which means 'maker of the universe'. Here, the questions about creation are asked and answered. After the Praḷaya/dissolution of the universe, the creator makes all things anew. Having eyes everywhere, having face everywhere, having arms everywhere, and having feet everywhere, the sole God traverses heaven with his arms, earth with his swift-moving feet, and generates heaven and earth. Viśvakarman with his own might generates and discloses the universe, and is the material and instrumental cause. There was water alone from which the first seed emerged. Viśvakarman is described as omniscient and omnipotent.

Sūkta 90 is called 'Puruṣasūkta'. Puruṣa is the primordial/cosmic person. With a thousand (meaning infinite number of) heads, a thousand eyes and a thousand legs, pervading the earth from all sides, Puruṣa fills the space ten-fingers beyond. Puruṣa is verily all this, all that is, all that ever was and all that is to be. Such is the greatness of Puruṣa that all beings are only one-fourth of Puruṣa; these beings are born again and again, the other three-fourths of Puruṣa being immortal in heaven. From Puruṣa, Virāj was born; Virāj represents the sum-total of the gross-bodies of all beings; and from Virāj, Puruṣa is born again. As soon as Puruṣa was born, he spread eastward and westward over the earth. Then the creation is described as a great sacrifice; it is a mental sacrifice. The gods performed the sacrifice with Puruṣa as the offering. From the dripping fat (ghee/clarified-butter) of this sacrifice, birds, and both wild and tame animals were formed. From that great sacrifice R̥ças (hymns of Rgvēda) and Sāmans (singing-hymns of Sāmavēda) were born; there from, the metres, the metrical system of hymns, were produced; and then the Yajus (mantras of Yajurvēda) was born. From it were born, horses, cattle, goats, sheep and other animals. When they offered Puruṣa as the sacrifice, the mouth became the Brāhmaṇa, the arms Rājanya (Kṣatriya), the thighs Vaiśya, the feet Śūdra, the mind became the Moon, from the eyes the Sun, from the mouth Indra and Agni, and from the breath Vāyu the divinity of air was born. From the navel came Antarikṣa/mid-region between earth and heaven, from the head the heaven was produced, from the feet the earth was fashioned, and from the ear the quarters of space formed; thus they formed the worlds. Gods offering sacrifice, bound Puruṣa, their victim of sacrifice, and they worshipped the sacrifice; those were the first duties, the eternal holy dharmas (12, 13).

And sūkta 121 is titled 'Ka' which is an interrogative pronoun meaning 'who' or 'what'. It introduces and describes Hiranyagarbha which means 'golden egg' or 'golden embryo' or 'cosmic egg'. It is the first manifestation of Brahman, also known as Brahmā, Sūtrāman, Kāryabrahman and such; it is said that Māyā playing upon Brahman causes the first manifestation of Hiranyagarbha in the beginning of the cycle of creation-evolution-maintenance-dissolution, there being a new Hiranyagarbha in every cycle; Hiranyagarbha in turn creates the whole universe (14). The first nine of the ten verses in this sūkta describe Hiranyagarbha with each verse ending in 'What Dēva/Divinity shall we adore with oblations?' Then the tenth verse introduces Prajāpati who is said to be the Ka. 'Prajāpati' means 'Lord of the creatures', and it is the cosmic person. When it identifies with the sum total of all the subtle bodies in the universe, it is called 'Hiranyagarbha'. When Prajāpati identifies with the sum total of all the gross bodies in the universe, it is called 'Virāj' which is the first embodied being that appears in the cosmic-egg.

Many sūktas in Ṛgvēda include the secular side of life. Various topics are covered – marriage, eulogy of generosity, food, agriculture, animals, trade, floods and earthquakes, geography, cosmology and astronomical references, history of Vēdic kings, and so on. Spirituality permeated the social life. Women had equal status then. Ṛgvēda V.61.6 states 'many a woman is more firm and better than the man who turns away from Divinities, and offers not' (9, 12). Women could go to the assemblies, and choose their husbands. Worship of, or the high status of the mother is found in the Vēdic hymns (9).

Ṛgvēda portrays non-violence and humility, and surrender to the Gods and sages. It includes the kings as an important aspect of the greater teaching. Kings protect the sacrifice and guard the spiritual life of the Āryas. Their battles are portrayed as a struggle between good and evil, truth and falsehood. The kings follow the wisdom of their ruling priests. In this regard the kings protected the Āryas who followed the spiritual culture of the seers. Those among the same people, who did not follow the spiritual rules, were not considered as Āryas. They were the fallen Āryas or non-āryas. Many of these non-āryas were reinstated as Āryas once they purified themselves and started following the spiritual Vēdic rules. Some who did not were driven away by the kings (9).

The names of the kings also represented the dynasties they founded, their kingdoms, and the people of their kingdoms. The King Divōdāsa is mentioned prominently in the sixth maṇḍala, less so in the fourth, and to some extent in the rest of the Ṛgvēda. The seers of the Bharadvāja clan were his ruling priests. His kingdom was the main central region of the Sarasvatī River. The legend of Divōdāsa is defeating Śambara who apparently oppressed the Ārya people. Sudās is another great king mentioned in the seventh, third, and part of the fifth maṇḍalas. His was a later period than that of Divōdāsa. Sudās also ruled the main central region of the Āryas which was also called the land of the Bhāratas (III.53.12). His legend was his victory over ten kings, accomplished with the help of the great ruling priests Vasiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra. The ten kings were the fallen-āryas who had turned away from the spiritual teachings. Ṛgvēda also mentions five Ārya peoples a number of times – 'Indra-Agni, whether you are among the Yadus or Turvaṣas, whether among the Druhyus, Anus or Purus, come to us and drink of the Sōma (I.108.8)' (9). Yadus were traditionally located on the Arabian Sea, corresponding to the present day Gujarat, Maharashtra and Karnāṭaka States; Turvaṣas were in the south-east of India in the region of Bengal and Bihar; Druhyus were in the west in Gandhara (Afghanistan area); Anus were in the north in the Punjab area; and the Purus were in the central region. Both the Yadus and the Purus continued to be prominent, where as the lines of the other three changed, and they were among the kings defeated and driven away by the Sudās.

As indicated before, the Vēda is the effort of many Ṛsis, and that the ancient Vēdic Saṁskṛta was fashioned along with the Ṛgvēda. The Vēdic Sanskrit is somewhat archaic and difficult to interpret. Many ancient scholars have written commentaries (bhāṣyas) in Sanskrit. The only complete one of these older commentaries was authored in the latter part of the 14th century CE (AD) by Sāyaṇa, popularly known as **Sāyaṇācārya** who was a great scholar, mentor and prime minister of king Bukkarāya I of the **Vijayanagar Empire in Karnāṭaka, India** (7, 13). Sāyaṇācārya holds a unique place, not only because of the extensive volume of work, but also because of the quality of the work (2). However, Sāyaṇācārya's bhāṣya dealt with the ritualistic interpretation of the Vēda, and not on the inner meaning of it.

Ṛgvēda, being the oldest and the largest of the Vēdas, is the principal Vēda. From it, emerge the action which the Yajurvēda predicates and musical recitation which the Sāmavēda dictates (4).

The attachments/appendages of the Ṛgvēda are – Aitarēya and Kauṣītakī Brāhmaṇas; Aitarēya and Śāṅkhāyana Āraṇyakas; and Aitarēya and Kauṣītakī Upaniṣads (2).

RUDRA

Rudra is one of the Divinities adored in Ṛgvēda. The earliest phase of development of Rudra as the Supreme Being is in the hymns of Ṛgvēda (6). Rudra is glorified in these hymns. There are five sūktas of hymns of praise on Rudra in the Ṛgvēda; and the term 'Pañčarudra' refers to these five sūktas (see 'Pañčarudra' article). There are about 250 sūktas of hymns on Indra, the Divinity of lightening, thunder and rain; about 200 sūktas on Agni, the Divinity of fire; over 100 sūktas dedicated to Sōma, the Divinity of flowing waters who is commonly referred to as the ocean itself, and who is also the Moon which influences the ocean with winds and tides; and fewer Ṛks on many Divinities (7). Although these praises to multitude of Dēvatas may give a wrong impression of the advocacy of polytheism (belief in many Gods), Ṛgvēda teaches 'ēka-dēvatā-vāda' (one-God-argument). It is a progression from naturalistic polytheism to monotheism to monism. Maṇḍala I, sūkta 164, verse 46 of Ṛgvēda goes like this – 'They call Him Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa, Agni, and He is heavenly nobly-winged Garutmān, To what is One, sages give many a title, they call It Agni, Yama, Mātariśvan' (12). All the Divinities are the facets of the same Supreme Being (4), or the aspects of the same Supreme Reality (7). The Divinities are really the names of the same Divine Unity; they are not separate entities, but inter-related Universal Truth Principles. Any one of them can become all of them. Divinities often display human traits or become humans; and Ṛsis/sages often become Divinities. The Ṛgvēda recognizes the Divine as One, as Many, as the All, and as beyond all forms (9).

On the basis of the number of sūktas dedicated to the individual Divinities, Indra, Agni and Sōma appear to be the main Vēdic Divinities. But the importance of these Gods can not be judged on the basis of the number of references to them; they have to be judged by the functions they fulfill (9). In this regard, **Rudra is the most important father figure in the Ṛgvēda**; He is the great father of all the Gods; thus all the Gods can be called as Rudras (9). Specifically the Vēdic storm Gods, the Maruts, are called Rudras; the rain-pouring Rudra is their father (Ṛgvēda VI.66.3). The leader of Maruts is Indra, the 'king' of the Gods. Furthermore **Indra is called Śiva in Ṛgvēda** II.20.3; VI.45.17; VIII.93.3; VIII.96.10; here the term 'Śiva' is mainly used to describe Indra; it means 'auspicious, gracious, benign, kind, benevolent, propitious, giver of happiness and such. Indra, like Śiva, represents the 'Self' in us. Indra-Śiva as the main God of the Āryas shows the spiritual orientation of the Vēdic religion, its truth of monism and Self-realization (9). Rudra is also another name for Agni, the second of the great Vēdic Gods (Ṛgvēda IV.3.1). One of the five sūktas (VI.74) of Pañčarudra is titled Sōma-Rudra, and another sūkta (I.43) of Pañčarudra also has hymns of praise for Sōma; thus the third of the great Vēdic Gods is addressed together with Rudra. Furthermore, **Rudra is also called 'Śiva'** in mantra X.92.9; here again the word Śiva is used as a descriptive word meaning propitious.

The term 'Rudra' is said to have been derived from the root 'ru' which means 'to produce sound', the root 'rud' meaning 'to shed tears', and 'dru' meaning 'to flow, to run, and to melt'. From these meanings, the Divine Rudra is explained in at least ten different ways as follows (15) – The one who makes us speak; who makes people understand everything by words and language; who makes us conscious of our dharmas through the Vēdas; who leads us to self-knowledge through repetition of praṇava Ōm; who removes sins and melts in compassion; who makes people cry at the time of dissolution of the universe; who removes the miseries of samsāra (cycles of births and deaths) by his grace; who enters the hearts of people as 'Nāda Brahman'; who imparts spiritual knowledge to seekers of truth through the Upaniṣads; who

imparts to Brahma, the creator, the truth which is the knowledge of the Vēdas, at the time of creation; and such.

Rudra of Ṛgvēda who is regarded as the great father figure of all the Gods becomes Rudra-Śiva, the Supreme Being, of the Yajurvēda (see 'Rudra-Śiva' article).

Pañcharudram

The term 'pañca' means five, and Pañcharudram refers to the five sūktas in Ṛgvēda designated to the Divinity of Rudra. The earliest phase of development of Rudra as the Supreme Being is in the hymns of Ṛgvēda (6). Rudra is depicted as one who is the aggregate of all the powers/divinities that are worshipped, and is glorified in these hymns (12, 13).

Sūkta 43 of maṇḍala one has nine mantras/verses as follows. When shall we sing the most grateful hymn to the wise the most bountiful and the mighty Rudra who is cherished in our hearts? So that Aditi/earth may be induced to grant the grace of Rudra to our cattle, our people, our cows and our progeny. That Mitra and Varuṇa, and Rudra and all the divinities may remember us and show favor. From Rudra who is the Lord of the hymns, the Lord of the sacrifices and the possessor of medicaments that confer delight, we ask for joy and health and strength. He shines in splendor like the Sun, is refulgent as bright gold, is the best among the gods and is the provider of habitations. May He grant health and well being to our steeds, our rams, our ewes, our men, our women, and our cows. O Sōma (Moon), grant us prosperity sufficient for a hundred men, and much strength-engendering food. Let not the adversaries of Sōma, nor our antagonists, hinder us; Indu, give us a share of strength. Sōma, the immortal and abiding in an excellent dwelling, have regards for your subjects, as they serve you their head, in the hall of sacrifice. All these mantras glorify Rudra; there is no hint of any terrifying description.

Sūkta 114 of maṇḍala one has eleven verses. The descriptions of Rudra in these are as follows - Strong, Lord of the Heroes, has braided hair, bounteous one, ruler of valiant men, the wise, the wanderer, impetuous one, perfects sacrifices, wild-boar of the sky, the red, dazzling shaped, hand filled full of Sovran medicines, Maruts' father, immortal one, most favoring benevolence, and such. Again these are all glorifying descriptions of Rudra; there is no terrifying feature. Many requests are made of Rudra, and even most of these are for his benevolence - Rudra, be well with all our cattle and all our men, in the village all be healthy and well fed, be gracious unto us, bring us joy, under your guidance may we gain health and strength, come to our families bringing them bliss, repel the anger of Gods from us, grant us protection, shelter and a secure home, grant us the food which the mortals eat, be gracious unto me, my seed and progeny. Some requests may give the impression that Rudra can be terrifying when angry - harm not either great or small of us, harm not the growing boy, harm not the full grown man, slay not a sire among us, slay no mother here and do not harm our own dear bodies, slay not our heroes in the fury of your wrath, give us happiness, far away be the dart/arrow that may kill men or cattle, your bliss be with us, be gracious unto us, bless us and protect us.

Sūkta 33 of maṇḍala two is the longest with 15 mantras/verses. The adorations about Rudra are - Father of Maruts, has most saving medicines, chief of all born, armed with the thunder, mightiest of the mighty, best of all physicians, physician curing the disease of transmigration which is the cycle of births and deaths, has gracious hand, remover of the woe that Gods send, strong one, great, tawny, fair-complexioned, brilliant, has firm limbs, multiform, adorned with bright gold decorations, Sovran of this world, the mighty, carries bow and arrows, wears a necklace, no one else is mightier, the chariot-borne, the young, the famous, fierce, slaying like a dread beast of the forest, Bounteous Giver, Lord of Heroes, giver of medicines, Bounteous God and such.

Sūkta 74 of maṇḍala six is titled Sōma-Rudra; it has only four verses. O Sōma-Rudra let these our sacrifices quickly reach you; placing in every house your seven great treasures, bring blessing to our quadrupeds and bipeds. Sōma and Rudra, chase the sickness that has visited our dwelling; drive away misfortune/poverty into the distance, and give us excellent and happy glories. O Sōma-Rudra, provide for our bodies all needful medicines to heal and cure us; set free and draw away the sin committed which we have still inherent in our persons. Armed with sharp shafts and weapons, kind and loving, Sōma and Rudra, be gracious unto us; release us from the noose of Varuṇa; keep us from sorrow in your tender loving-kindness.

Sūkta 46 of maṇḍala seven titled Rudra also has only four verses. To Rudra who has a firm and strong bow and swift-flying arrows, bring these songs; the wise, the conqueror whom no one can overcome, armed with sharp pointed weapons, may He hear our call. He through his lordship thinks on beings of the earth, and through his high imperial way rules on the heavenly beings; Rudra, come willingly to our doors, we gladly welcome you, and heal all sickness in our families. May the bright arrow that you shot down from heaven, flying upon the earth, pass us by un-injuring us; you gracious God having thousand medicines, do not inflict evil on our sons and progeny. O Rudra, neither slay nor abandon us, and when you are angry, do not let your noose seize us; give us trimmed grass and fame among the living, and preserve us evermore with blessings.

YAJURVĒDA

The word yajus in Yajurveda (Yajus+Vēda) is derived from the Sanskrit verb root 'yaj' which means 'to sacrifice'. The word yajña is also derived from 'yaj', and means 'sacrificial worship'. Yajurveda is a collection of yajus that are in the form of sacrificial formulas. It has 1,975 mantras, one-third of which is taken from Ṛgvēda; the rest is original and most of it is in prose form. The hymns taken out of Ṛgvēda are arranged in Yajurveda to suit sacrificial necessities of the time. It is said that the freshness and simplicity of the hymns of Ṛgvēda give rise to coldness and artificiality of the mantras of Yajurveda, and that the priests become the lords (7). Although Yajurveda reflects the true principles of earlier Ṛgvēda, it shows some new developments. Certain Divinities, such as Prajāpati (Father of creatures) and Rudra-Śiva attain greater prominence (7). Yajurveda is supposed to have had 85 śākhās, but only 4 are available, of which the Taittirīya Saṁhitā is the important one (see 'Vēda Śākhā' article). In some parts of its text, the Yajurveda is not clearly divided into Saṁhitā and Brāhmaṇa; the Brāhmaṇa portions, which explain the sacrificial texts and formulas and teach their ritual application, are conjoined with the Saṁhitā (4). Brāhmaṇa, Āraṇyaka, and Upaniṣad of the same Taittirīya name and Kaṭha Upaniṣad are its appendices (2).

When Vēda Vyāsa compiled the four Vēdas, he entrusted one of his four chief disciples, sage Vaiśampāyana, to preserve the Yajurveda for posterity. This was the original version of the Yajurveda. Vaiśampāyana taught this Vēda to his disciples including his chief disciple Yājñavalkya who in turn was supposed to do the same. However, it appears that Yājñavalkya had his own revelations from Sūrya (the Sun Divinity) in the form of a new and different version of Yajurveda named Śukla (white) Yajurveda. Hence, the original version, in retrospect was named Kṛṣṇa (black/dark) Yajurveda. Śukla Yajurveda Saṁhitā is also called Vājasaneyī Saṁhitā; Vājasanī means the Divinity of Sun (4). The later Śukla version is completely in hymn form; 2,086 mantras, of which some are repeats and many are strophes (divisions of poems), are distributed into 328 sections (Anuvākas) which are in 40 chapters (Adhyāyas). Śukla version also deals mainly with the sacrifices. The order of rites and ceremonies is substantially identical with the Kṛṣṇa version. The Śukla Saṁhitā is systematic, clear and distinct from the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (16, 17), but the Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad is embedded in the last chapter of the Śukla Saṁhitā. The Īśāvāsyo Upaniṣad is the only Upaniṣad that is found as an integral part of a Saṁhitā, thus its other name Saṁhitō Upaniṣad (14). It is also considered as the oldest of the Upaniṣads, and is listed first. Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, the biggest of the Brāhmaṇas, Bṛhad Āraṇyaka, and Īśāvāsya and Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣads are its appendages (2).

Yajurveda includes formulas for all sacrifices, and gives the hymns of Ṛgvēda, a practical shape in the form of yajña (4). Ṛgvēda X.71.11 says 'One (Hotṛ priest) is diligent in the constant task of reciting Ṛcā verses; another (the Udgātṛ priest) sings the holy songs (Sāmans) in the Śakvarī metre; one more, the Brahma priest declares the knowledge of what is to be done; and another (the Adhvaryu priest) lays down the formulas of sacrificing'. Adhvaryu-priest is the Yajurvedic chief official who constructs the fire-altar, tends the fire, handles the utensils, and prepares the oblations pertaining to the yajñas.

Although the term yajña signifies a ritual or a sacrificial ceremony performed at the various junctures of life, the Vēdic scholars developed the system to explain and elucidate the various aspects of spiritual, astronomical and terrestrial sciences. The yajñas were performed in a time bound span from one day to thousand years in order to retain astronomical records of various movements of earth, moon, and various planets and stars (see 'Jyōtiṣa' in 'Vēdāṅga')

article). The terrestrial yajñas were performed in precise conformity with the cosmic yajñas going on in the celestial sphere, or the Brahma yajña going on at the spiritual level (16). The development of sacrificial ceremonies was for the purpose of self-purification and self-accomplishment; it appears that the ceremonies became mostly ritualistic.

Performance of Yajña involves pouring of certain substances such as milk, sōma juice, honey, ghee, and other material, into the open flame of the fire that is burning in a fire-altar, and, at the same time, chanting mantras specific for that rite. This type of offering is called 'Homa'. Although the offerings are consigned to Agni, only the ones specifically offered to Agni according to the mantra, go to Agni; the offerings to other divinities like Rudra, Indra, Sōma, and others, are dispatched to their destination by Agni according to the mantras chanted at the time (4). Coinciding with the pouring of the oblation on the fire, at the end of chanting of the mantra, the sacrificial exclamation on making an offering, 'Svāhā!' is chanted. It probably means 'may the oblation be properly made!' or 'All-hail the sacrifice!' Yajña is done under a canopy erected on open ground, and Agnihōtra is done at home (see 'Kalpa' in 'Vēdāng' article).

Agnihōtra refers to the first attempt at fire generation on earth by humans, and is considered as the first of all sacrifices. In Agnihōtra sacrifice, three types of fires are mainly used. Gārhapatya-fire is the householder's fire; it is kept constantly burning on an altar, and all other fires are taken from that fire. Āhavanīya-fire is usually placed on the eastern side, and used for offering the oblations to gods. Anavāhāryapaçana or Dakṣiṇāgni is placed on the southern side, and is used for offering oblation to the forefathers only.

Some of the sacrificial formulas described in the Yajurveda are as follows (16, 17, and 18). It is said that it is obligatory on the householder to perform the morning and evening oblations of milk into fire, and the three seasonal sacrifices at the beginning of spring, rainy and autumn seasons. Furthermore, the New-moon and Full-moon sacrifices are also said to be obligatory on the householder, both requiring two days to perform – a preparatory day and the sacrifice day.

Many types of Sōma sacrifices including the one to counteract the effects of excessive indulgence in Sōma-drinking are given.

Formulas and ceremonies for the construction of altars of hearth for various sacrificial fires are described.

Then there is this **Śatarudriya** which means hundred forms of Rudra. Five sūktas called 'Pañca Rudraṃ' are in Rgvēda, but the term 'Śri Rudraṃ' refers only to that which is contained in Yajurveda (4). Śri Rudraṃ is in the Taittirīya Samhitā rescension of Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda IV.5. **Rudra is addressed as the Supreme Being** who is omnipresent and manifests in a myriad forms for the sake of the spiritual aspirants. Also there is this pañcākṣari/five-syllable mantra '**Namḥ Śivāya**' in the IV.5.8.11 mantra. The Śatarudriya is also in the Śukla Yajurveda in its 16th of the 40 chapters. Yajurveda paves the way for the development of the Rudra-Śiva concept as the Brahman. For details see 'Śri Rudraṃ' article.

Āśvamedha or horse sacrifice, a very ancient and most important ceremony, only a King can perform, is described; it is said to be a process of nation building, an elaborate ceremony for the initiation of people in nationalism.

Puruṣamedha, a sort of training the individuals for various professions, is given; Yajurveda describes 184 professions under which individuals can be trained. It is meant for training of individuals into various professions required to run a highly advanced society in the beginning of human civilization.

Sarvamēdha or sacrifice for Universal Success and Prosperity, a ten day ceremony, after performing which, the sacrificer retires to the wilderness for life, is described.

Pitryajña or Sacrifice of the Ancient Fathers containing mainly the formulas to be used at funeral ceremonies is given.

A compilation of miscellaneous texts which may be used in the performance of the General Sacrifices are also given.

RUDRA-ŚIVA

Rudra of Ṛgvēda, who is regarded as the great father figure of all the Gods, becomes Rudra-Śiva, the Supreme Being, of Yajurvedā. The earliest phase of development of Rudra as the Supreme Being is in the hymns of Ṛgvēda. Then Yajurvedā paves the way for the development of the Rudra-Śiva concept into that Supreme Brahman (6). Five sūktas called 'Pañca Rudraṅ' are in Ṛgvēda, but the term 'Sri Rudraṅ' refers only to that which is contained in Yajurvedā (4).

Śrī Rudram is in the Taittirīya Samhitā rescension of Kṛṣṇa Yajurvedā in the fifth chapter of the fourth Kāṇḍa/book. Here Rudra is addressed as the Supreme Being who is omnipresent and manifests in a myriad forms for the sake of the spiritual aspirants. It is a Vēdic homage to Rudra. **Śatarudrīya** which means hundred forms of Rudra is the main part, and it is also in the Śukla Yajurvedā in its 16th of the 40 chapters. The main part is called '**namaka**' because most of the mantras in its eleven sub-chapters/anuvākas contain 'namaḥ' or 'namō-namaḥ' in them. 'Namaḥ' is obeisance; it means complete surrender, humility, homage, bow-down in respect and such (15).

These mantras praise and propitiate Rudra in many ways, pacifying His anger, and converting Him into **Śiva**. Thus Rudra becomes Śiva.

In these mantras, **dignity of labor** is emphasized by respecting all sorts of professions and vocations, and as such, all categories of persons, irrespective of their caste or creed, are addressed respectfully and honored with homage.

One of the names used to describe Rudra is '**Paśupati**' which means 'Lord of the animals/cattle/creatures (from Brahma down to the lowest creature)'. Here, Paśupati is explained to mean 'the Lord who protects the ignorant as they are bound like animals' (15).

And then there is this pañcākṣari/five-syllable mantra '**Namḥ Śivāya**' in the IV.5.8.11 mantra.

Śrī Rudram

Yajurvēda paves the way for the development of Rudra-Śiva concept as the Supreme Brahman (6). Śrī Rudram is all about Rudra that is in the Taittirīya Saṁhitā rescension of Kṛṣṇa Yajurvēda. It is a Vēdic homage to Rudra, and it is said to be remarkable not only for its phonetic grandeur but also for its universality of approach to the Divine Rudra (15). Here Rudra is addressed as the Supreme Being who is omnipresent and manifests in a myriad forms for the sake of the spiritual aspirants. Thus it is also known as **Śatarudriya** which means hundred forms of Rudra.

It is said that the Vēdas can be divided into three divisions - Karma-Kāṇḍa or the ritualistic portion, Upāsana-Kāṇḍa or the mental worship portion, and Jñāna-Kāṇḍa or the knowledge portion. Śrī Rudram is considered to appear in all the three divisions. It actually appears in the ritualistic portion of the Vēda, and is used in homa of the sacrificial ceremonies. But it transcends the performance of the rituals, and is a great help in mental adoration (upāsana). It has this great pañcākṣari (five-syllable) mantra '**namaśśivāya**' which is used by the devout in their daily recitations. This daily recitation is said to confer on the aspirant all material and spiritual blessings. Thus it can be said that it is also in the Upāsana or mental worship portion of the Vēda. Furthermore, these mantras are replete with deep spiritual significance, and provide us the knowledge of the Supreme Being, conferring immortality. Thus it is also in the Jñāna-Kāṇḍa or the knowledge portion of the Vēda; and because of this it is called **Rudra Upaniṣad**. This Rudrōpaniṣad is said to be the most important text in all the Vēdas (15). One reason for this is that, as described in Jābalōpaniṣad, once Yājñavalkya, the composer of Śukla Yajurvēda, was asked by brahmaçārins, what would be the means for attaining immortality, and that the answer was, it is repeating recitations of Śatarudriya. The Śatarudriya is also in the Śukla Yajurvēda in its 16th of the 40 chapters. Similar sentiments are also said to have been expressed in Mahābhārata and Kurma Purāṇa (15).

Śrī Rudram is in the fourth book of the Kṛṣṇa Yajurvēda. The fifth chapter in this book is the main part called '**namaka**'; it is called namaka because most of the mantras in its eleven sub-chapters/anuvākas contain 'namaḥ' or 'namō-namaḥ' in them. 'Namaḥ' is obeisance; it means complete surrender, humility, homage, bow-down in respect and such.

Namaka part has eleven anuvākas or sub-chapters. The first anuvāka has 15 mantras, and it starts with obeisance to Rudra's anger, and to the arrow, bow, and his strong arms; this is said to pacify Rudra's anger and bring out his benign '**Śiva**' form. The second mantra goes something like this – Your arrow has become benevolent (Śiva), similarly your bow and your weapon have become peaceful; with your peaceful weapon be kind to us. The word 'Śiva' comes three times in this mantra. The third mantra is like this – O Rudra in your Śiva form which does not harm us, you reside in the (Kailāsa) mountain; reveal that form conferring happiness to us. Similarly the other mantras in this anuvāka praise and propitiate Rudra in many ways, thus pacifying His anger and converting him into Śiva.

The next eight anuvākas, from the 2nd to the 9th, give obeisances to many forms of Rudra. All mantras in these anuvākas are the Yajus mantras. In three of these anuvākas, 'namaḥ' comes both at the beginning and at the end of the mantras; in the other five, it comes only at the beginning. Many important aspects of Śrī Rudram are brought out in these anuvākas:

Rudra is to be clearly understood as the **Paramātman**, and not merely as one of the Gods. Rudra is all pervasive, and Rudra is the Self of everything.

Rudra is present in everyone irrespective of one's caste or creed, therefore, persons of all categories is honored with homage; the obeisance is to Rudra within them. Actual names of the castes are not mentioned, but their descriptions clearly indicate that – to Him who wears the sacred thread as a sign of auspiciousness and to the Lord of those with excellent virtues, whose arms are adorned with golden ornaments and who leads the armies to war, the minister and the master of tradesmen, the leader of various classes of people, the great ones and the small ones, the riders of the chariot and the foot soldiers, the teachers who teach how to drive chariots and the drivers of the chariots, the carpenters and makers of the chariots, the potters and smiths, the hunters and fishermen, makers of bows and arrows, messengers, dog trainers, and many others. **Dignity of labor** is emphasized by respecting all sorts of professions and vocations, and as such, all categories of persons, irrespective of their caste or creed, are addressed respectfully and honored with homage.

Some epithets and descriptions of Rudra are notable – Bhava meaning beings come out of Rudra, and Rudra removes the misery caused by saṁsāra the cycle of births and deaths; Śarva the destroyer of sins; **Paśupati** which has a literal meaning as the Lord of the animals/cattle/creatures (from Brahma down to the lowest creature), is explained as the Lord who protects the ignorant because they are bound like animals; physician, and as physicians' physician; nīlagrīva-śītikanṭha means part of the neck is blue as a result of containing the poison in the throat, and the remaining portion of the neck continues to be white; nīlāhīta means the neck is blue but the body is red, and then vilōhita means not red but fair complexioned – it is stated that He is meditated as fair complexioned in the pañcākṣari mantra, and as deep red in the aṣṭākṣari mantra, the neck being blue in both; one with braided/matted hair, one with shaved head, one in the form of Indra, one who is established in the Vēdic mantras and in the Vēdānta, one in the form of sound produced by the drum, one who is Sōma which is interpreted here as one with Uma, one who is established by Praṇava (Ōm), and Śiva the auspicious one.

And then there is this pañcākṣari/five-syllable mantra '**Namḥ Śivāya**' in the IV.5.8.11 mantra.

The tenth anuvāka celebrates the generosity of Rudra, and praises Him for prosperity and for warding off of evil. One of the mantras, IV.5.10.4 is something like this – You have destroyed our sins, we shall serve you; make us happy in this world and also in the next world; our progenitor **Manu** got from you happiness and freedom from misery; whatever he got, may that be granted to us by your affection?

In the eleventh anuvāka there is thanksgiving to Rudra's attendants – Pramathās, Śailas and Gaṇas. It is like this - There are thousands of categories with thousands of forms of Rudra on earth; we keep their bows un-stringed at a distance of a thousand leagues. Similarly, in the vast space like the vast sea, meaning antarikṣa or mid-region between earth and heaven, whoever Rudras there are, and whoever Rudras are in the heaven as Lords, we keep their bows un-stringed one thousand leagues away. Then these three forms of Rudra are saluted. The three forms of Rudra refer to Vaiśvānara/Viśva, Taijasa and Prājña, and their respective cosmic counterparts Virāt, Hiraṇyagarbha and Īśvara. Viśva and Virāt are Āitanya with individual and aggregate gross-bodies as upādhis/adjuncts; they stay on earth as they are associated with gross-bodies. Taijasa and Hiraṇyagarbha are associated with subtle-bodies and not the gross-bodies; therefore they stay in the intermediate region between earth and heaven. Prājña and Īśvara are not associated with gross or subtle bodies; they stay in heaven. Prājña is enveloped in the causal-body, and because of this, it is ignorant, not being aware of the Reality. Owing to continued effort and God's grace, pure intellect results, and

there is no more causal-body or the world; Prājña then becomes the inner-self which is Paramātman in bliss. Obeisance is offered to all these forms of Rudra.

Śrī Rudram speaks of the glory of Rudra, and its study leads to the knowledge of Brahman. The seventh chapter in the fourth book of Taittirīya Saṁhitā of Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda is called '**ĉamaka**'. It is called ĉamaka because it has 'ĉa-me' in its mantras. 'ĉa' means 'and' or 'also'; 'me' means 'for me' or 'for us'; 'ĉa-me' means something like 'may it be granted to me also'. The namaka of Śrī Rudram, and ĉamaka, together go by the name **Rudrādhyāya**. It is the time-honored tradition that these two – namaka and ĉamaka – be chanted together daily (15).

Mantras of ĉamaka are associated with the ritual, and are used for doing homa at the end of the yajña. ĉamaka has a leading statement in its tenth anuvāka - '*yajñēna kalpatām*' which means 'may everything in this world be offered to God as worship'. This leading statement is to be repeated with each of the mantras in ĉamaka, not just in the tenth anuvāka. Thus it would be 'May everything in this world be offered to God as worship, and May it be granted to me also'.

ĉamaka is the recitation of the mantras for the fulfillment of desires; these desires are said to be auspicious and not against dharma. Innumerable desires are given which can be grouped as follows. With the human body as reference, there are these groups of desires relating to the inner entities such as prāṇa, sense organs, mind and intellect. Outside the body, in this physical world, the groups are related to earth, water, minerals, trees, and other things. Then there are desires relating to the other worlds such as the world of Hiranyagarbha. In these mantras, the word 'Agnāviṣṇū' is said to refer to the youngest of the gods Agni, the oldest of the gods Viṣṇu, and the gods in-between; thus referring to all the gods, and indicating that it is Rudra who is in the form of all the gods (15).

Then it is said that namakam and ĉamakam are to be chanted along with the Puruṣa Sūktam (15). The Puruṣa Sūkta is in all the Vēdas. It is in Rḡvēda Saṁhitā X.90; it appears in the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka of Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda, and also in the Śukla Yajurveda XXXI.1 to 16; five of the 16 Ṛks are in the Sāmavēda Part I Book 7 Chapter 4 Sāmans 3 to 7; and it is also in the Atharvavēda XIX.6. For details of Puruṣa Sūkta see 'Rḡvēda' article.

SĀMAVĒDA

Sāman means a song or melody. Sāman also means 'to bring peace to the minds'. Sāman is a mantra from Ṛgvēda that is set to melodious music in Sāmavēda (4). Mantras of Ṛgvēda, which are useful to the Udgātr-priest, have been brought together in Sāmavēda. Sāmavēda Saṁhitā has 1,875 mantras (1,821 from another count) of which 1,800 are from Ṛgvēda and two are from Yajurvēda; the remaining 73 seem to be original to Sāmavēda. The Sāmavēda Saṁhitā is divided into two parts. About 264 mantras from part one are repeated in part II and three of those are repeated twice (19). Part II is less disjointed than part I, and is generally arranged in triplets whose first verse is often a repetition of a verse that has occurred in part I (20). Conversion of ṛcas of Ṛgvēda into Sāmagānas/Sāmans of Sāmavēda has resulted in some textual variations and alteration of the mantras of Ṛgvēda (19). In Yajñas (sacrificial ceremonies) the Udgātr-priest sings appropriate Sāmans of Sāmavēda in order to ensure the grace of the Divinities (4). It is singing, not just chanting. There are several variations of singing the Sāmans. It is a difficult task to learn, and needs expert guidance (2). Sāmavēda itself does not contain any clues as to the melodies and how to sing the Sāmans; this has to be learnt directly through hearing of the songs from a teacher who knows how exactly to sing the Sāmans (7) (see 'Śikṣā' in 'Vēdāṅga' article). At a later date Song-books were created to explain the details of musical notation and singing (20). Mantras of Sāmavēda, simply known as Sāmans, have seven svaras or musical scales identical with the seven scales of Classical Music of India. Hence Indian Classical Music has its origin from Sāmavēda.

It appears that Sāmavēda had 1,000 Śākhās (recensions) (see 'Vēda Śākhā' article), but only three are available: Talavakāra or Jaiminiya is mainly used in Karnāṭaka State, India; Rānāyaniya is used in Maharashtra, and Kouthuma in Gujarat. Talavakāra Āraṇyaka, also known as Talavakāra Brāhmaṇa, has Talavakāra Upaniṣad; Talavakāra Upaniṣad is mainly known as Kēna Upaniṣad which is one of the principal Upaniṣads. In addition seven Brāhmaṇas have survived. Āchāndōgya Upaniṣad, one of the principal Upaniṣads, belongs to the Āchāndōgya Brāhmaṇa.

ATHARVAVĒDA

Mantras of Atharvavēda are said to have been brought to light by a Ṛṣi named Atharvan. However, many Ṛṣis have contributed to this Vēda, and a list of the Atharvavēdic Ṛṣis is given in the 'ATHARVAVEDA SAMHITĀ' reference (21). The Atharvavēda is also known as Brahmavēda, because it is assigned to the Brahmā-priest who is the chief supervising priest at the Yajñas (sacrificial ceremonies) (2). Although the Atharvavēda is assigned to the Brahmā-priest, it has very little to do with the priest or the Yajña itself (14). The term 'Atharva' is said to mean 'the attainment of the stability of mind with exercising modesty and non-violence' (21). Atharvavēda stands apart from the other three Vēdas and not revered as much because of its special features. It contains many spells and verbal charms or formulas of words spoken or sung as part of ritual, which are not used in the orthodox ritual ceremonies (7). Atharvavēda has in it the formulae for effacing the hurdles of a peaceful, successful and prosperous life. It is said that the people who understand the formulae for avoidance of the hurdles and suppression of the wicked, appreciate these as skillful and expert processes, and not magic (21). Although the Atharvavēda chiefly deals with occult matter, it has some beautiful philosophical verses (14).

The mantras are in prose as well as in verse form. About one fifth of the hymns are drawn from Ṛgvēda. There are 5,977 mantras in 759 sūktas spread over 20 Kāṇḍas or chapters (21) (6,077 mantras and 736 sūktas in 20 Kāṇḍas by another count). Atharvavēda is generally considered to have been composed in an era considerably more recent than the Ṛgvēda (7). The literary style is also more sophisticated, indicating that the work is chronologically of a later origin than the Ṛgvēda (2). Atharvavēda is mainly used for the accomplishment of all worldly acts, as it is fruitful for this material world. The hymns are meant to secure long life, to get good wishes of the dēvas/divinities in many household matters, to ward-off misfortune, to obtain kingship, and such things (21). Major part of this Vēda is concerned with diseases and their cure, rites for prolonging life and fulfilling one's desires, and also rites for building construction, trade and commerce, penance, black magic, and other subject matters (2, 4).

Atharvavēda starts with a hymn used in the ceremony for the retention of sacred learning. It is a call upon the Lord of Speech by a Vēdic student, to assign the powers to the student so that the student is united with 'Śrutam' 'what is heard', and not to be parted with it. 'What is heard' is Vēda. The hymn is used with various passages in the context of entrance upon the Vēdic study, for ceremonies for the welfare of Vēdic students, and for production of wisdom. The famous Gāyatrī Mantra belongs to the three main Vēdas - Ṛk, Yajus and Sāma Vēdas. After initiation, a student can study any or all of these three Vēdas, and the Gāyatrī mantras thereof, without undergoing separate initiations for each Vēda. Atharvavēda, however, has a separate Gāyatrī Mantra of its own, and it is said that a student, before undertaking the study of Atharvavēda, has to undergo a separate initiation process applicable only to Atharvavēda (4). There are very few people who are learned in the Atharvavēda.

Atharvavēda designates the Absolute not only as Brahman but also as Skambha, Uçīṣṭa and Vrātya which are peculiar only to this Vēda (2). As to the creation, it states that the universe has emerged out of Him due to His will, and is established in Him; Rōhita the 'Red-One' (Sun) is the symbol of His power; and He is the indwelling spirit of the human beings (2). Atharvavēda also mentions that qualities like truth (satya), discipline/initiation (dīkṣā) and austerity (tapas) help man to attain perfection (2).

The 14th Kāṇḍa/chapter has two sūktas about marriage ceremonies; most of it is from maṇḍala X of Ṛgvēda. Verse X.85.9 of Ṛgvēda and verse XIV.1.9 of Atharvavēda are as follows: Sōma (Moon) was desirous of a bride; the Aśvin twins (Lords of Light who proceed and herald the Dawn) were the groomsmen when Savitā (the Sun God) gave Sūryā who was ripe for a husband with intelligence (13, 21). The 15th chapter titled The Vrātya is entirely in the Brahminical prose, and is of doubtful quality and chronology. The Vrātya is said to be one among many forms in which Brahman is celebrated in Atharvavēda. The 16th chapter is almost entirely in the Brahminical prose, and the unity of the subject is not apparent. It fails to reveal any purpose of ritual application. The 17th chapter has only one sūkta with a title 'Prayer to the Sun identified with Indra and Viṣṇu'. It is said to be of inferior interest. The 18th chapter contains Funeral verses taken in large part from Ṛgvēda; it also appears in Taittirīya Āraṇyaka. The 19th chapter containing supplementary hymns is a later addition, and in general is very corrupt. The 20th chapter is also a later addition, and many verses have been borrowed from Ṛgvēda Saṁhīā, Aitarēya Brāhmaṇa and others. (21, 22)

Gopatha Brāhmaṇa is the only Brāhmaṇa of Atharvavēda, and there are no Āraṇyakas. Three well known Principal Upaniṣads – Praśna, Muṇḍaka and Māṇḍūkya – are considered to belong to Atharvavēda.

UPANIṢAD

Upaniṣads contain the esoteric spiritual knowledge meant for reflection and contemplation. The principles and teachings that originated from the seers' experience became the Upaniṣads. It is said that for scholars, the Upaniṣads provide ample material for intellectual discussions, and for the spiritual aspirant such discussions refine the mind and indirectly prepare one for the perception of the Truth (2). The ordinary knowledge which deals with the empirical truth such as biology, psychology, philosophy, and so on, is available through the senses and the mind. But the knowledge revealed in the Upaniṣads is unique; it is not available to the sense organs and the gross mind; it is the Truth of the truths, the Self, the essence of the Being, the Reality (2). The Upaniṣads mention that the nature of the **Reality** is that it is **Infinite** where one sees nothing hears nothing and understands nothing; and that the Reality is **transcendent** meaning that it is indefinable, attribute-less and free from all relationship. The knowledge of Reality is the knowledge pertaining to one's own **Self**. It is through the Self-knowledge that one knows anything and everything (2).

It is said that the traditionalists believe that there were 1,180 Upaniṣads, one with each Śākhā (see 'Vēda Śākhā' article). But only about 200 are available. Of these, it is said that only 108 are of any importance, and are worthy of study. Śāṅkarācārya of the Advaita Vēdānta School of Philosophy wrote bhāṣya (comments) on ten of these Upaniṣads which have since been considered as the most important. They are listed in the order in which he wrote the bhāṣyas. These ten Upaniṣads are: Īśāvāsya, Kēna, Kaṭha, Praśna, Muṇḍaka, Māṇḍūkya, Taittirīya, Aitarēya, Čhāndōgya and Bṛhadāraṇyaka. Furthermore in Śāṅkarācārya's bhāṣya on Brahmasūtra, the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad is frequently quoted, and the bhāṣya on this Upaniṣad may also have been written by Śāṅkarācārya. It is also said that, of the 108 Upaniṣads, the above eleven Upaniṣads are most popular, and include the Śvetāśvatara with the other ten principal Upaniṣads (3). Upaniṣads other than these are considered as 'minor' Upaniṣads.

Upaniṣads are the best known aspects of the Vēdic literature. They not only come at the end of the textual presentation of the Vēdas (Vēdānta), but also contain the ultimate goal of the realization of the end-product of the Vēdas. Vēdas, in all, are generally considered to have two portions. The first part is the portion dealing with action or rituals (karma kāṇḍa) with the belief that Mōkṣa (salvation/liberation) can be obtained through the right performance of rituals as enjoined by the Vēdas. And the second part comes at the end of the Vēdas, in the Upaniṣads, dealing with knowledge (jñāna kāṇḍa), that is said to be the quintessence of the Vēdas (4).

Some Upaniṣads are independent, not part of the Vēdas, but might have been parts of the extinct Samhitā or Brāhmaṇa of the Vēda Śākhās (see 'Vēda Śākhā' article). Although it appears as if the Vēdas are orderly with Samhitā first, Brāhmaṇa and Āraṇyaka next, and Upaniṣads last, it is not always the case. The Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad is embedded in the last chapter of the Samhitā itself of the Śukla Yajurveda. The Īśāvāsyaopaniṣad is the only Upaniṣad that is found as an integral part of a Samhitā, thus its other name Samhitōpaniṣad (14). It is also considered as the oldest of the Upaniṣads, and is listed first. The order in this list of principal Upaniṣads is the order in which Śāṅkarācārya wrote his bhāṣya on ten of the Upaniṣads.

All the Upaniṣads begin with a peace invocation before the main teachings, and also end with the same or a different peace invocation. For example, Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad has the following

peace invocation at the beginning as well as at the end; and the Bṛhadāraṇyaka and Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣads also use the same peace invocation. 'Ōm, that *invisible* is the Infinite, this *visible* too is the Infinite; from the Infinite the whole *universe* has arisen. Of the Infinite the whole *universe* having come, the Infinite alone remains the same. Ōm! Peace! Peace! Peace!' All the peace invocations close with the repetition of 'peace' three times. This is said to ward off three types of obstacles: *ādhyātmika*, pertaining to mental and/or physical bodily afflictions; *ādhibhoutika*, pertaining to sufferings from other terrestrial things; and *ādhidaivika*, pertaining to obstacles from celestial objects, dēvas and such.

The Upaniṣadic teachings generally start with dualistic ideas of worship, and then dwell into the non-dualistic oneness philosophy. Depicting God as the Creator, Preserver and Destroyer, as immanent in the nature, and as whatever is real is 'It', and then stating 'You are That'. The identity of the individual is the Supreme Self (Paramātman) (23, 24). **The Upaniṣadic teachers have declared that Truth is open for thorough inquiry, and that, being universal, it can be realized in anyone's life at anytime. It is not reserved for any one privileged person or a group, nor is it confined by time or space (2).**

Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad

Īśāvāsya Upaniṣad is an integral part of the last chapter of the Śukla Yajurveda Saṁhitā. It is the only Upaniṣad that is found as an integral part of a Saṁhitā, thus it is also called Vājasaneyi Saṁhitōpaniṣad (14, 23). It is a Mantrōpaniṣad, because it contains only the mantras in the verse form. It is considered as one of the oldest of the Upaniṣads, and is listed first. The order in this list of principal Upaniṣads is the order in which Śankarācārya of the Advaita Vēdānta Philosophical School, wrote his bhāṣya (commentary) on ten of the Upaniṣads. The Īśāvāsyoṣad has only eighteen mantras. It derives its name from the first two words of the first mantra 'Īśā vāsyam' which means 'should be enveloped by the Lord (Īśā)'.

The peace invocation at the beginning of the Upaniṣad is as follows.

Ōm! That invisible is the Infinite; this visible too is the Infinite. From the Infinite, the whole visible universe has come out. The whole universe of the infinite having come, the Infinite alone remains. Ōm! Peace! Peace! Peace!

The Upaniṣad describes what appears to be the guideline for different types of spiritual aspirants. The jñānins/sannyāsins adhere to the path of knowledge and do not perform sacrificial rites. They are attuned to the reflection and contemplation on the real nature of the inner Self/Ātman. Realization of the true nature of the Self/Ātman, Ātmajñāna, results in the liberation from the cycle of births-deaths, and thus immortality; this is the direct attainment of Oneness even when alive, the Jīvanmukti state. The jñānins are to renounce all the impermanent things - the worldly life and desires pertaining to it. They are to support themselves, and not to crave for any possessions or wealth. The Self is One, unmoving, beyond the reach of the senses, and by its mere presence, it enables the cosmic energy to sustain the activities of all living beings. It is within all 'this', and also outside all 'this'. **The wise one who perceives all beings as not distinct from one's own Self, and one's own Self as the Self of every being, that one, by virtue of that perception, does not hate anyone.** There is no delusion or sorrow for the wise one who sees the unity of existence and perceives all beings as one's own Self. The Self-existent is everywhere without a body, and without any taint of sin; is radiant, whole, pure, seeing all, knowing all, and encompassing all.

Those, who have not attained the necessary internal development needed to renounce desires, are bound to the world by the desire to enjoy it. The ignorant ones and the ones engaged in the ritualistic observations, enter into blinding darkness. Others who delight in the knowledge of gods and rituals only, enter into even greater darkness. As long as one is fond of human life and desirous to live a hundred years, the only way to be free from the taint of evil deeds is to perform the scripture-oriented works. Many worship God in order to secure worldly happiness and spiritual emancipation. For them, the advice is to perform sacrificial rites and duties ordained by the scriptures, and to engage in meritorious and altruistic works. At the same time, they are to acquire spiritual knowledge. By pursuing this discipline, one may attain, after death, the highest objective.

The last four verses of Īśāvāsyoṣad are also repeated in the Bṛhadhāraṇyakōpaniṣad. The verses narrate a dying devotee's appeal for the removal of any obstacles for the attainment of immortality. The devotee has zealously dedicated all his life to scripture-enjoined works and worship of what is manifesting in the Sun. He appeals to the Sun to remove the shining

golden orb that covers the entrance to the Truth in it. He wants to see it, as he indeed is that Being who dwells there. He wants his breath to be merged in the immortal Prāṇa, and his body to be reduced to ashes. He wants his mind to remember all the good deeds of his life, as the course of the departing soul depends on the predominant thoughts at the moment of death. As he has offered all his oblations through Agni, he appeals to Agni stating that Agni knows all the deeds; he wants Agni to destroy all crooked-going sins and reap the good ones, and to lead him by the Fair path after death. The Fair path refers to the path of light which is also called the path of the gods. He does not want to be taken through the path of the Fathers to Āndra-lōka, the region of the Moon; the ones, who go there, after enjoying the fruits of their deeds, are reborn on earth. The path of the gods leads through different spheres to Satya-lōka/Brahma-lōka where the soul merges with Hiranyagarbha/Brahmā, and does not return to this world in this cycle of creation-evolution-maintenance-dissolution. At dissolution, the whole entity is withdrawn into Brahman the Absolute. This is considered as the gradual or indirect liberation/emancipation, in contrast to the direct attainment even when alive, the Jīvanmukti state, which is attained only by the realization of the true nature of the Self/Ātman.

Ōm

Kēna Upaniṣad

Kēnōpaniṣad is said to be a part of the Talavakāra or Jaiminiya Brāhmaṇa of Sāmavēda, and thus it is also called Talavakāra Upaniṣad (25). Kēnōpaniṣad has thirty-five verses that are distributed into four parts. It derives its name from the first word of the first verse, 'Kēna' which means 'by whom'. It is mainly in the form of a dialog between the teacher and the disciple.

The teaching is that it is the **Ātman**, the Absolute Consciousness, by whose power the ear hears, the eye sees, the tongue speaks, the mind understands, and the life (prāṇa) functions. The wise one separates the Ātman from the above faculties. The Ātman can not be known as a thing of the world in an objective sense. It can not be explained by words like explaining other objects. It is different from the known, and it is beyond the unknown. The senses can not reveal it, but what reveals the senses is 'That (Ātman)' the Brahman, and not this the people worship here. That which can not be comprehended by the mind, but by which the mind is cognized, alone is Brahman, and not this people worship here. If one states "I have known Brahman well", that person knows very little, and needs to enquire further about Brahman. Any mental conception for Brahman is a sign of ignorance. The Absolute is beyond all conceptions of the mind. Only those with true illumination can understand its non-objective reality, and thus make no conception of it. Ātman is not experienced as an object. Ātman is the intelligence that gives self-awareness to thoughts or mental modifications. For every mental modification that results in relative experience of life, there is a simultaneous revelation of the Ātman. The awareness of these mental modifications disappears into the substratum that is Ātman. If one has realized here in this life, then the True life is here. The wise, realizing the Ātman in all beings, rises from sense-life, and attains the Jīvanmukti state of immortality in this very life.

An allegorical story is told where the Dēvas (Gods) are the senses and Brahman is Brahman (Ātman). In a dispute between gods and demons, Brahman won the victory for the gods. Gods/Dēvas were rejoicing the victory, but they did not comprehend that Brahman was the cause for the victory, and did not even know who or what that was when Brahman appeared. Dēvas sent Agni, the divinity of fire, to find out the identity of Brahman. Agni approached Brahman and stated that he is Agni and he has the power to burn everything on earth. Brahman placed a straw down and asked Agni to burn it. Agni could not burn the straw, and returned to the Dēvas without finding out the identity of Brahman. Dēvas then sent Vāyu, the divinity of wind. Vāyu approached Brahman and stated that he is the king of air and he can blow away anything on earth. Again Brahman put down a straw and asked Vāyu to blow it away. Vāyu could not do it, and returned without finding the identity of Brahman. Then the Dēvas requested the chief god Indra, the divinity of lightning thunder and rain, to go and find out. When Indra arrived, Brahman disappeared, and in that spot a wonderfully beautiful woman **Uma** appeared. Uma is Haimavatīm which means the daughter of Himavat. The meaning of Himavat is 'snow covered mountain'. Haimavatīm also has another meaning – well-adorned with golden ornaments. Uma is considered as the consort of Śiva; the connection here is not clear; however, it is considered, particularly by the Viraśaivas, that Śiva is Brahman. Indra asks Uma who or what that adorable Spirit was. Uma responds by saying that it was Brahman and that Brahman won the victory for them and made them attain greatness. It is only then that Indra and the Dēvas understood that it was Brahman and that only through the power of Brahman that they can carry out their functions.

Thus, the manifestation of Brahman as the cosmic power is the source of everything; Brahman is what illuminates lightening; Brahman is what makes one wink. Because of Brahman the mind knows the external world, and remembers and imagines things. Brahman is known as 'Tadvanam' meaning 'adorable as being the Ātman of all living beings', and thus, Brahman is to be meditated upon as Tadvana. Here, the Upaniṣad seems to mean that the best way of progress in spiritual life is to worship one Deity immanent in all, and discourage the worship of minor deities for gaining worldly blessings, as it did above by expressing 'and not this that they worship here'. One, who realizes and discerns that the Ātman is in every living being, rises from the sense-life and attains immortality. Austerities, restraint, dedicated work, are the foundations for gaining the knowledge of the Upaniṣads. Verily, one who knows the wisdom of the Upaniṣads destroys ignorance and becomes established in the Brahman.

Ōm

Kaṭha Upaniṣad

Kaṭhōpaniṣad is said to belong to the Kaṭha Śākhā of the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda, but neither the Saṁhitā nor the Brāhmaṇa of this Śākhā is available to confirm it. However, in the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa of the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda there is an Nāçikēta fire sacrifice with an explanation for the origin of its name using the same story that is in the Kaṭha Upaniṣad. Kaṭhōpaniṣad has a total of 119 verses distributed into six chapters in two parts. It is mainly about what happens to the soul after death. This information is given in the form of a story, the main part of which is a dialog between the Divinity Yama, the prime controller of human destiny, and a boy named Naçikēta (26). It is said that Kaṭhōpaniṣad is probably more widely known than any other Upaniṣad, and is considered by the European Scholars as one of the most perfect specimens of the mystic philosophy and poetry of the ancient Hindus (23).

Naçikēta, though a young boy, was filled with **Śraddha** which is a strong belief in the reality of the teachings of the scripture. Śraddha is a basic virtue that is necessary for the development of spiritual life; without it, spirituality is not attained. Naçikēta's father Vājaśravasa, desirous of heavenly rewards, gave away all his possessions at a sacrifice. As the final gifts were being distributed, Naçikēta observed and thought to himself 'Why father is giving away old useless cows that would calve no more and give no more milk; the giving of such cows is not a good thing.' Then he asked his father 'Father, to whom you will give me?' As his father did not answer, he asked again, and then a third time. The father angrily answered 'Unto Death I shall give you.' Naçikēta, bewildered, thought 'what work of Yama will be accomplished by father giving me unto Yama?' Anyway, the father, realizing the glory of truthfulness, sent his son to Yama.

Naçikēta arrived at the residence of Yama when Yama was not home, and waited there for three days without food. Yama, after returning home, realized that the guest was not properly received in his house and was not given food and water. In order to rectify this bad situation, Yama greeted the boy and said 'Obeisance to you and welfare to me; you have stayed in my house for three nights without food, therefore, ask for three boons.' Naçikēta responded 'For my first boon, I ask that my father be cheerful, pacified from anger, and that he welcome me when I shall be sent back by you.' Yama responded by saying that it will be done. For the second boon Naçikēta asked Yama to tell him about the fire sacrifice that would lead to heaven. Yama responded by explaining it in detail that included what kind and how many bricks were required for the fire altar, and how the fire was to be lit and such details. Yama also remarked that the sacrificial fire will be called the Nāçikēta sacrifice. Yama further stated that whoever performed the Nāçikēta sacrifice three times, received three religious instructions, and completed three kinds of duties (study of the Vēdas, performance of sacrifices, and giving alms), would overcome birth and death, and would attain supreme peace; this is not considered as the absolute immortality; it is the long life of the divinities enjoying till the end of that cycle of creation-evolution-maintenance-dissolution. Naçikēta then asked for his third boon. Stating that there was some doubt about what happens after death, because, some say this (soul) exists, and some say that this does not exist, and that he wanted to know what happens, and asked Yama to teach him. Yama, stating that even the gods had doubt and that that subtle subject was hard to comprehend, requested Naçikēta to choose a different boon. Naçikēta, acknowledging what Yama said, insisted that Yama teach him, because, there was no other teacher like Yama to teach him. Yama again requested him to choose something else, such as, wealth, long life for him and his family, a vast territory to rule upon, or all that could make him the enjoyer of all desires. Naçikēta replied that all those were most transient, and wear out the vigor of all the senses, that one never gets satisfied

with wealth, and that he wanted Yama to teach him about the supreme life after death regarding which there was doubt. With this impasse, Yama had no other option but to start the teaching. Most of that teaching is as follows.

There are two things: one is the good, the Supreme Truth, the Knowledge; the other is the pleasant, the sensual pleasures and desires. They both bind to man. Good comes to one who follows the good, but the one who chooses the pleasant, loses out on the goal of attaining emancipation/liberation from the bondage of life. The wise one discerns the difference between the two, and prefers the good. But the fool chooses the pleasant through avarice and attachment, and perishes by going through this path.

Wide apart are the differences between Ignorance and what is known as Knowledge. Fools in the midst of ignorance, fancy themselves to be wise and learned, and go round and round in the cycles of birth and death, not achieving the emancipation from bondage of life. For them the path of hereafter does not appear. For many the Knowledge is not available; for many even if available, it can not be comprehended. It requires a wonderful teacher and an intelligent student. It is wonderful when one comprehends what is taught by an able preceptor. The knowledge is not attained by mere argumentation; it is more to be felt by intuitional perception. It becomes easy to comprehend when taught by another.

The treasure is transient. The Eternal Ātman is never attained by the transient non-eternal things. The wise one, having realized, by means of meditation on the Self, that ancient effulgent One, difficult to be seen, subtle, immanent residing within the body, relinquishes both joy and sorrow. One who has comprehended well that subtle principle Ātman, and has properly discerned it to be different from the body and mind, verily attains it, and rejoices having attained it.

The 'padam', which means 'word' but is also interpreted here as 'goal', which all Vēdas proclaim, which all penances declare, and desiring of which self-controlled life devoted to austerity and knowledge is lead, is **Ōm**. The syllable Ōm alone is Brahman. Ōm is called 'Śabda-Brahman' as it is the only phonetic symbol of Brahman. This syllable is both the lower Saḡa-Brahman which is the manifested Brahman, and also the highest Nirḡa-Brahman which is the un-manifested Absolute Brahman. Having known this syllable whatever one wishes, one is that.

This Ātman is not born, nor does it die. It has not come out of anything, nor does anything come into being out of it. This unborn ancient One is not destroyed when the body is destroyed. It kills not, nor is it killed. The Ātman is smaller than the smallest, and is greater than the greatest. It is lodged in the cave of the heart of creatures. The desire-less one, free from grief, realizes the glory of Ātman through the purity of senses and mind. The wise one, knowing that the bodiless all-pervading supreme Ātman is in impermanent bodies, does not grieve. This Ātman is not attained by the study of the Vēdas or by intellect or even by much learning. It is attained by the Self of the aspirant who does not desire anything whatsoever other than the Self or Ātman; the aspirant's own Ātman reveals its true nature. Those who have not refrained from wickedness, those unrestrained, the un-meditative, and those with unspecified mind can not attain this Ātman even by knowledge.

Ātman is the master inside the body which is a chariot. Intelligence is the charioteer, and the mind is the reign. The senses are the horses, and their roads are the sense objects. When the pure Ātman is superimposed on the attributes of the body the senses and the mind, It is **Jiva** the doer of the deeds and enjoyer of their fruits. If one is of unrestrained mind and devoid of right understanding, that one's senses are uncontrollable like the wicked horses of the

charioteer. But one who is always of restrained mind and has the right understanding, that one's senses are controllable like the good horses of the charioteer. One who has no proper understanding, thoughtless, and always impure, never attains it and gets into the round of births and deaths. But one who is intelligent, always pure with controlled mind, attains it and is not re-born. The Ātman hidden in all beings does not reveal itself to all, but is seen by the seers with subtle and sharp intellect. The wise should merge the speech in the mind, then that in the intellect, that in the Great Self, and that again in the Self of Peace.

The Self-existent has made the senses going outwards. The ignorant sees the external and not the internal, and pursues the external pleasures that lead into the widespread snare of death. The wise ones turn the senses inwards and see the inner Ātman; having known the internal, they attain immortality. Whatever is here in the manifested world is there in the Absolute. What is there, the same is here. One who sees them as different meets with death after death. By mind alone is this to be realized that the difference does not exist. One who sees no difference attains immortality. As pure water poured into pure water becomes the same without any difference, so does the Self of the sage who knows the unity of the Ātman. Having meditated upon Ātman and being liberated from the bonds of ignorance, verily, one becomes free from the cycle of births and deaths.

Nothing remains of the Ātman when freed from the body after the death of the body. Some souls enter the womb to have a body; others go to the immovable according to their work and knowledge. The one Ātman that exists in all beings appears in forms according to the different objects, but it transcends and exists beyond them all. Being beyond the world, the Ātman that resides in all beings does not get attached to the miseries of the world.

The wise who perceive the Ātman of all beings, the one controller who makes one into manifold forms, as existing in their own Self, to them belongs the eternal bliss. They describe that incredible joy as 'this is that'. The sun does not shine there, nor does the moon and the stars, nor do these lightening and fire. But when 'that' shines everything shines; by its light all this is lighted. That is verily the pure, that is Brahman, and that is also called immortal. If one is able to realize that Brahman before the fall of the body, that one is immortal.

Brahman is in the Self as one sees oneself in the mirror, as one sees oneself in a dream, as one sees one's reflection in the water. Brahman can not be seen by one's own eyes, but can be visualized by the intuition of the intellect which resides in the heart and controls the mind. When the five senses of perception remain still with the mind, even when the intellect is not at work, that state is the supreme state. That firm control of the senses is known as **Yōga**, and the Yōgin becomes free from the vagaries of the mind.

The Upaniṣad also brings out the meditation on the manifested-Brahman. Hiranyagarbha, born of the Knowledge (the Tapas), born even before the elements, is the macrocosmic aspect of Brahman; Jīva, dwelling inside the body that is made of the five elements, is the microcosmic aspect of Brahman; one who knows Brahman through both of these aspects knows Brahman indeed. Aditi, the soul of the gods (meaning Hiranyagarbha), who manifests in the form of Prāṇa, and was created with the elements, dwells in the heart, and one who knows that verily knows Brahman. Omniscient Agni lodged in the fire-sticks is worshipped day after day by the jñānins as well as the householders. By mind one comes to perceive that this universe is only the manifestation of Brahman, and that there is no difference. Those who have not attained the Absolute Brahman, but have attained the Brahman with attributes, go after death by the central Suṣumnā nāḍī (central channel/conduit/pathway/current), going upwards, from the heart to the crown of the head, and then beyond through the solar plane and other planes to Satyalōka/Brahmalōka where they reside until the end of this cycle of

creation-evolution-maintenance-dissolution, and at dissolution are absorbed into the Brahman – this being the slow or delayed path to immortality. Those who have not attained either aspects of Brahman, depart in all directions from the heart to be reborn according to the accumulated deeds. The Upaniṣad here implies that essentially there is no difference between the two states of Brahman, the Absolute state and the manifested state; but Śaṅkarācārya of the Advaita Vēdānta Philosophy considers only the Absolute state to be true, and everything else to be an illusory transformation of Brahman.

The inner soul is visualized by the Yōgins as a flame of a burning oil lamp with its emanating light illuminating and pervading everything. This visualized flame of the size of a thumb resides in the heart of beings. Here it is to be noted that Ātman is meditated upon by the Yōgins as a flame of the size of a thumb in the cavity of the heart; Ātman is beyond all limitations of time and space; assigning the size of a thumb should not be taken literally. One should separate it from the body, and know it to be pure, the immortal. That Ātman can not be reached by speech or by eyes or even by the mind. When the ignorance and all the desires that dwell in the heart are destroyed, then the mortal becomes immortal, and attains Brahman even here in the body while still living. That surely is the injunction of the Vēdānta.

Ōm

Praśna Upaniṣad

Praśnōpaniṣad belongs to the Atharvavēda. It is interesting to note that two mantras from Ṛgvēda, I.89.8 and I.89.6, are used in the Peace Invocation of this Upaniṣad. 'Praśna' means 'question'. Six questions are asked and answered in this Upaniṣad; they form six chapters. Six disciples who are devoted to Brahman, seeking to know all about the Supreme Brahman, approach the venerable Ṛṣi Pippalāda, thinking that he would teach them all about that. The Ṛṣi suggests that they spend a year more in penance, abstinence and faith, and then ask the questions about what they want to know. While penance/tapas and abstinence/brahmaçarya are helpful in restraining the mind and the senses, development of firm faith *Śraddha* is needed to make the disciple's mind receptive to the sacred teachings. Accordingly the question and answer type of teaching takes place at a later date. It is notable that this Upaniṣad states the Creation to be originating from **Matter** and **Energy**. The teaching gradually progresses from the gross to the subtle principles of life, un-wrapping the folds of matter that envelop the Ātman. (27)

The first question is about the origin of the created beings. Ṛṣi Pippalāda's answer: 'The Creator' - the term '*Prajāpati*' is used here, and it means Lord of the creatures - desirous of progeny, performed austerity in the form of meditation, and created the pair, matter/food (*rayim*) and energy/*Prāṇa*, thinking that matter and energy together in manifold way would bring forth creatures. The Sun is energy and the Moon is matter. Matter is all these with form and also what is formless. All the manifestations of life and energy are influenced by the Sun. Sun, by its rays, holds all the Prāṇas. The Prāṇa of universal life and universal form is identified with the Sun and Agni the divinity of fire. The year is Prajāpati, meaning the Time is Prajāpati, and everything is in the control of Time. Prajāpati (Time) has set out two paths for the departing souls after the death of the body. Those who perform Vēdic sacrifices and charitable work go by the southern path, Matter being this path of the forefathers, to the world of the Moon (Āndralōka), and after enjoying fruits of their deeds/karma are re-born. Those who seek Ātman by austerity, abstinence, faith and knowledge attain Āditya (Sun), the source of all Energy, and go by the northern path to the supreme resort Brahmālōka, and at the end of this cycle of creation-evolution-maintenance-dissolution are absorbed into Brahman, this being the gradual liberation from the cycle of births and deaths. The Sun of thousand rays, the life of all creatures, rises, giving rise to the seasons, the twelve months, the fortnights, and the days and nights. From food/matter the seed is produced, and again from the seed all these creatures are born. Those who observe the rules of Prajāpati produce a son and a daughter; those who have penance and abstinence, and in whom the truth abides go to Brahmālōka.

The second question is about the Dēvas/Divinities/Gods, their manifestations and functions. The Ṛṣi's answer: The sky, air, fire, water, earth, speech, mind, eye and ear are the manifested Dēvas. But the Chief Prāṇa by dividing into five parts is the one that holds this body, and supports it. Prāṇa burns as fire, is the Sun, is the cloud, is Indra and is the wind. When Prāṇa pours down rain, the creatures are delighted, hoping that there will be food to satisfy their desire. Prāṇa is the ruling force of nature, is the universal lord of existence, and whatever exists in the worlds is all under its control.

The third question is about the nature and origin of Prāṇa. The Prāṇa is born of the Ātman. It is like the shadow of the Ātman, and has no separate existence. It comes into the body by the act of the mind. The Chief Prāṇa engages its five parts differently. The *Prāṇa* dwells as seven flames in the eyes, ears, nostrils and the mouth. *Apāna* is in the organs of excretion

and reproduction. *Samāna* is in the middle, and it distributes the offered food to all parts of the body. *Ātman* is in the heart; from here the branching *nāḍīs* emerge and go to all parts of the body. *Nāḍī* is a conduit visualized when the difference between the arteries and nerves was not known to the ancient Ṛṣis. In all these *nāḍīs* the *Vyāna* moves. And *Udāna*, the subtle aspect of *Prāṇa*, by way of one of the *nāḍīs* – the central *Suṣumnā nāḍī* - carries the soul upwards from the heart to the top of the head, and then to the virtuous world by virtuous deeds, to the sinful world by the sinful acts. The Sun is the external *Prāṇa*, and its rays make the *Prāṇa* in the eye see. The God which is in the earth controls the *Apāna*. The ether/sky which is in the intermediate space is the *Samāna*. The air is the *Vyāna*. And the fire is the *Udāna*. Whatever the thoughts are at the moment of death, with the senses absorbed in the mind, the *Jīvātman/soul* comes to the *Prāṇa*, and the *Prāṇa* united with the fire leads on with the *Jīvātman* unto the desired world according to those thoughts. Implication is that, the *Jīvātman* is encased in five sheaths that form three types of bodies - the outermost sheath is *Annamayakōśa* the physical sheath that forms the gross-body; the next three sheaths, *Prāṇamayakōśa* the sheath of vital energy, *Manōmayakōśa* the mental sheath, *Vijñānamayakōśa* the sheath of intellect, form the subtle-body; and the innermost sheath *Anandamayakōśa* the sheath of primal nescience forms the causal-body – and that, after the death of the gross-body which then is discarded, *Prāṇa* in the *Prāṇamayakōśa* of the subtle-body transports the *Jīvātman* according to the dying wish for the fitting reincarnation. The wise one, having known the origin of the *Prāṇa*, its all pervasiveness, its five-fold distribution, and its internal aspect, attains immortality.

The fourth question is about the states of deep sleep, dream sleep and the awakened state. During the awakened state, all the senses and the mind are active and the physical world is cognized. During the dreaming state of sleep, the senses are at rest but the mind is still active; it builds up the world of its own out of the impressions received in the awakened state. During the dreamless deep sleep, all the senses as well as the mind are dormant. All the gross and subtle elements, senses of perception, sensory and motor organs, the mind, the intellect, the ego and the object of egoism, rest in the superior *Ātman*. Only the fires of *Prāṇa* remain active. The *Apāna* is the *Gārhapatya* fire, the householder fire that is kept constantly burning in the altar, and from which all other fires are taken; *Vyāna* is the *Anvāhāryapaścana* fire that is placed on the southern side of the house, and used only for offering oblations to the forefathers; *Prāṇa* is the *Āhavanīya* fire into which all oblations to the Divinities are offered; *Samāna* carries the two oblations of inspiration and expiration equally into the system; and *Udāna* is the result of the sacrifice, as it takes the sacrificer close to Brahman. Here, the significance of comparing the *Prāṇas* to the fires is not clear. One who knows the Imperishable, in which the mind, the senses and the *Prāṇas* rest, verily becomes omniscient and enters into all.

The fifth question is about the benefit of meditating upon the *Ōmkāra* (*Ōm*). *Ōm* is both the higher and the lower Brahman. The higher Brahman is the Supreme Un-manifested Absolute Brahman. The lower Brahman is the manifested Brahman. The knower, by this, attains either of the two states of Brahman. The sound of *Ōm* is produced by the combination of the sounds of A, U and M. These three sounds are *mātrās* meaning 'components or parts'. If one meditates on only one *mātrā*, then that one returns to this world soon after death. If one meditates upon two *mātrās*, one is united with the mind after death, taken to the world of the Moon (*Sōmalōka/Āndralōka*) in the sky, and having enjoyed the grandeur there, is returned to this world. The one who meditates upon the syllable *Ōm* constituted of all the three, after death is taken to the world of *Brahmā* (*Brahmalōka*), and from that Macrocosmic-Self (*Hiraṇyagarbha*) one beholds the Supreme *Puruṣa* existing in the heart.

The sixth question is about Puruṣa. Here within this body exists Puruṣa from which arise the sixteen parts: *Prāṇa*, and then from Prāṇa come *Śraddha* (*faith*), *ether*, *air*, *fire*, *water*, *earth*, *the senses*, *the mind*, and *food*; from food come *vigor*, *penance*, *the Vēdas*, *the Yajñas*, and *the worlds*; and in the worlds the *Name*. By the practice of Yōga, similar to the flowing rivers merging into the ocean and losing their individual identity, all these sixteen *Kalās*, which are cognized in the ordinary ignorant state, merge into Puruṣa and the names and forms are destroyed. Then in the Samādhi state of the Yōga, devoid of the Kalās, where their existence is not perceived by the consciousness, the Conscious Principle Ātman alone remains. That is the Supreme Brahman; there is nothing higher than that.

Ōm

Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad

Muṇḍakōpaniṣad belongs to the Atharvavēda. As in the Prāśnōpaniṣad of the Atharvavēda, the same two mantras from Ṛgvēda are used for the Peace Invocation. Muṇḍakōpaniṣad has sixty-four mantras in three chapters with two sections each. Muṇḍaka means a shaven head denoting a person with shaven head, the sanyāsin or a monk, and implying that this Upaniṣad is intended for the sanyāsins. It also gives a sense that the wisdom taught in this Upaniṣad removes the superimposed veil of ignorance obscuring the Ātman just as a razor shaves off the hair covering the head (28).

Muṇḍakōpaniṣad starts with a statement that Brahmā, the creator and protector of the universe, who arose first among the gods, told the basis of all knowledge, the knowledge of Brahman, to his eldest son Atharvan. It is to be noted that Brahmā is not Brahman; Brahmā is a male Divinity, the creator in the Hindu Trinity of Gods consisting of Brahma, Viṣṇu and Śiva; but Brahman is neither male nor female, and is the Impersonal Absolute, the Ultimate Reality. What Brahmā imparted to Atharvan, the knowledge of Brahman, Atharvan imparted it to Aṅgiras of the older days. Aṅgiras passed it down to Bhāradvāja Satyavaha, who in turn told Aṅgiras of the younger generation. Then the great householder Śaunaka, in a proper manner according to the scriptures, approached this Aṅgiras, and asked what that is, by knowing which, everything becomes known. Aṅgiras replied with this teaching of the Muṇḍakōpaniṣad.

There are two kinds of knowledge that are to be acquired. The lower knowledge consists of the study of the Vēdas, Vēdāngas, and such; it is the knowledge acquired by the senses and the mind; it is the intellectual knowledge. The higher knowledge is that by which the Imperishable is attained. It is not knowing an object or a thing, but being and becoming one, becoming the Knowledge itself, the Knowledge of Brahman.

The Imperishable is what is invisible, ungraspable, un-originated, and attribute-less; it has neither eyes, nor ears, nor hands, nor feet; it is eternal, all pervading, immeasurably subtle, and limitless in manifestation. The wise perceive that Imperishable as the source of all beings. From the Imperishable the universe projects out. From that the food is born, and from food, the Prāṇa (energy), the mind, the true, the worlds and the entanglement of karmas/deeds. From the all-knowing, all-wise whose creative thought is the knowledge itself, from that, Brahmā, all beings and food came.

Whatever sacrificial works the sages have found in the mantras that have been elaborated in the Vēdas are true. The seekers of Truth perform those sacrificial Yajñas always; for them that is the path to the world of meritorious deeds. The sacrificial fire that carries the oblations, when well-ignited, the flame dances; and then the oblations are to be poured between the two portions of the fire. One who's Agnihotra sacrifice is not accompanied by the rites to be performed at the new-moon, the full-moon, the autumnal months and the harvest time, or not attended by guests, devoid of offerings, without Vaiśvadēva ceremony, or not according to the scriptural injunctions, that one's future in any of the seven upper worlds is destroyed. Here the Upaniṣad is referring to Bhūh, Bhuvah, Svah, Mahah, Janah, Tapas and Satyam; Bhūh is earth; after death, the soul is said to go to one of these worlds for good deeds performed during life; for bad deeds, the soul is said to go to one of the seven nether-worlds not mentioned here. If one offers oblations in proper time into the shining flames of the fire, then that would lead to where one lord of the gods resides; however, it is a mistake to claim that that is the highest good, because such sacrifices do not lead to complete

liberation from the cycles of births and deaths. The ignorant fools, thinking they are wise and learned, consider sacrifices and charitable works to be the highest, and continue the sacrifices without gaining the Knowledge; for them when the fruits of their good deeds in the heavens, the seat of sensual enjoyment, are exhausted they enter back into the cycle of worldly life.

A person of spiritual interest, having examined what is attainable by performing the sacrificial rituals, should become indifferent to such, because the deeds, which are originated, can not attain what is not originated, the Supreme. Therefore, to procure the Knowledge, one should, with proper attitude, go to the Guru who is well-versed in the Vēdas and is established in the Brahman. To such a seeker, whose mind is peaceful and controlled, the learned Guru imparts the knowledge of Brahman in its very essence, the knowledge by which one knows the true Imperishable.

The learned, of the peaceful mind, practicing penance and faith in the forest, purged of all impurities, by the path of the Sun they go where that immortal Imperishable is.

Manifold beings originate from the Imperishable, and they verily go back to It again. The self-resplendent, formless, un-originated and pure, that all-pervading Being, Puruṣa, is both within and outside; It is beyond the un-manifested causal state of the universe. From that Puruṣa are born, life, mind, senses, ether, air, fire, water, and the earth that supports all. It is the indwelling spirit within all. Head is the fire, eyes are the Sun and Moon, ears are the quarters of the sky, speech is the revelations of the Vēdas, breath is the wind, heart is the universe, and from the feet the earth has originated. Many beings are born from Puruṣa. From Puruṣa come the Vēdic verses, the sacred chants, the sacrificial formulae and such; the gods, the celestials, the humans, beasts, birds, in-breath, out-breath, grains, austerity, faith, truth and the law are born; so too are the senses, their powers of cognition, their objects and their knowledge, and the seven seats of sense-life energy centers in the body traversed by the life forces centered in the heart of all creation. The Omnipresent is all that and all the rest. One, who knows this Supreme Immortal Being as Brahman seated in the cavity of the heart, cuts the knot of ignorance even here in this life.

Manifesting very close, moving in the cavity of the heart is the Brahman; all that moving, breathing, and winking is established in it; know It as the highest of beings, the one above the understanding, and not an intellectual knowledge. The imperishable Brahman, alone is life, speech, mind, truth, and immortality. That is to be penetrated by mind. Taking Ōm as bow the mighty weapon furnished by the Upaniṣads, drawing Ātman the arrow rendered sharp by constant meditation, having withdrawn from the senses with the mind absorbed in its thought, and fixing on it, one should penetrate that target the imperishable Brahman. That mark should be hit with an undistracted mind, and the Ātman must become absorbed in the Brahman becoming one with It.

In whom the heaven, the earth, the interspace, and all the Prāṇas together with mind are centered, that one, the Ātman, only is to be known; that is the bridge to immortality. Where all the nāḍīs meet like the spokes in the hub of a chariot-wheel, there within the heart, this Ātman moves; one should meditate on that Ātman as Ōm.

The all-wise, all-knowing, Ātman is established in the city of Brahman in the heart, controlling the mind, Prāṇa and body, and its presence is felt all over the body. By perfect knowledge of that, the wise realize the state of blissful immortality. The knowers of Ātman realize that pure, indivisible Brahman, the light of all that shines; verily, everything shines reflecting the glory, and the whole world is illumined with the light. All this is the immortal Brahman who is everywhere; all this universe is indeed is the Supreme Brahman.

Closely united in friendship, two birds clasp close the self-same tree, one eating and relishing the fruit, the other looking on without eating. On the self-same tree, sunken in ignorance, Puruṣa, the individual soul, being deluded, grieves for its impotence. But when it sees the other, the worshipful Lord as its own glory, it becomes free from dejection. Here the two birds are Jīvātman and Paramātman, and self-same tree is the body. Jīvātman is the individual-Self called here as Puruṣa. Because of its attachment to the body and mind, it is limited by ignorance, and through the mind enjoys the fruits of good deeds (karma). The Paramātman is Pure Consciousness which is untainted by the phases of life. When the individual beholds the reality of one's own-Self untouched by the transient nature of life, the suffering and enjoyment disappear, and the one attains one's own eternal bliss. This two-bird self-same tree story is also given in the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad.

The sinless self-controlled sanyāsins visualize this resplendent pure Ātman within the body. The Self is attainable through constant devotion to truth, austerity, self-restraint and wisdom. Truthfulness alone wins; by truthfulness, the 'divine path' is laid out, by which the Ṛṣis ascend to that supreme abode of the True. That vast Divine beyond imagination, subtler than the subtle, and farther than the farthest, shines here in the body, and the seers visualize it in the heart in this life.

Ātman can not be perceived by the eyes or other senses, it can not be described by words, and rituals and penances do not reveal it. By refinement of the understanding, the mind becomes purified and calm; then through meditation the undivided Ātman is realized. The subtle Ātman within the body in which Prāṇa in five parts has entered should be realized by means of thought. The thought is interwoven with Prāṇa, the senses and the mind; when that thought is purified by withdrawing it from the senses and all, the Ātman appears.

Whatever world, object or desire, the one of purified nature wishes and fixes the heart upon it, the one gets; therefore, the knower of Ātman who is desirous of prosperity should worship on it. But those wise ones who know that the Supreme Brahman is the basis on which the universe rests, and who are devoid of all the worldly desires, go beyond all chances of rebirth.

The Ātman is not attained through discourses, intellectuality or learning; it is attained by longing for it with the whole heart. The Ātman is not attainable by weak spiritual state, carelessness or improper **Liṅga** (insignia); the wise who strive with vigor, attention and propriety attain the Ātman. Having attained the Ātman, the seers, satisfied with wisdom, are perfected in soul, unattached and tranquil. Having realized the all-pervading, they enter into the All. Through the Yōga of sanyāsa, with their nature purified, all those sanyāsins are absolved of all bondage at the time of emancipation, and they attain immortality in Brahman. Similar to the flowing rivers losing name and form upon entry into the ocean, the wise ones, free from name and form go into the highest of the high. **One who knows the Supreme Brahman, verily, becomes the Brahman.**

Ōm

Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad

Māṇḍūkyaōpaniṣad belongs to the Atharvavēda. It is probably named after its seer Maṇḍukha (29). Another reason for the name appears to be that, because Maṇḍuka means a frog, this Upaniṣad shows the way to leap like a frog from the first to the fourth stage of human consciousness by meditating upon Ōm̄ (4). Māṇḍūkyaōpaniṣad, like the other Atharvavēda Upaniṣads, uses Ṛgvēda verse I.89.8 for its Peace Invocation. It is the smallest of all the Principal Upaniṣads; it has only twelve mantras. Though it is short, it is noted for its efficacy in enunciating a method of approach to Truth, and is said to be the quintessence of the teachings of all the Upaniṣads. The philosophical implications of this Upaniṣad have been elaborated in the famous *Kārikā* which means a gloss, an explanatory note or a continuous commentary accompanying a text, written by Gouḍapāda, the grand-Guru of Śaṅkarācārya of the Advaita Vēdānta philosophical School. It is said that this Kārikā with 215 verses in Anuṣṭup metre, not only is one of the best philosophical works in Sanskrit, but also gives an insight into the unique system of thought that forms the background of this Upaniṣad (29). It asserts unequivocally that the Absolute Reality is *Advaita* meaning it is non-dual or just 'One' alone, and is *Nirguṇa* meaning attribute-less (23). The teaching of this Upaniṣad is as follows.

All this universe is the syllable **Ōm̄**. The past, the present, the future, everything is Ōm̄. Furthermore, whatever transcends beyond these three divisions of time, that too is Ōm̄.

All this, assuredly is Brahman. **This Ātman is Brahman**. Ātman has four quarters or conditions or states of consciousness. '*Ayamātmā Brahma*' meaning 'this Ātman is Brahman' is considered as one of the Mahāvākyas, the great sayings.

Wakeful state or the state of being awake: During this state, the consciousness is outwardly cognitive, and enjoys the perceived gross objects. The Upaniṣad describes this as the created '*Vaiśvānara*' meaning the 'universal man' or the 'commonality of all men'. It is the micro-cosmic aspect or the individual aspect of the soul in the gross form as compared to the macro-cosmic aspect of the universal soul in the gross form which is called *Vīrāt*, the cosmic manifestation.

Dream state: During the dream state of sleep, the consciousness is directed inwards, is inwardly cognitive, and enjoys the mental impressions only. These mental impressions, the subtle elements, are the impressions of waking life stored in the memory. This state is the '*Taijasa*' meaning the 'shining' or 'brilliant' mental condition. This created Taijasa is the micro-cosmic aspect of Ātman in a subtle form; the macro-cosmic aspect of Ātman in a subtle form is *Hiraṇyagarbha*, the universal mind.

Deep sleep state: During the deep sleep state there is no feeling of desires, and there are no dreams. Mind is withdrawn in sleep. All the experiences of the waking and the dream states are unified, and cognition is reduced to an indefinite mass. The experiences are not destroyed; they remain dormant without any specific detail. The consciousness is content-less and enjoys the bliss/peace. It becomes a gateway in the sense that, not only it serves as the succeeding state into which the states of definite cognition enter and dissolve in it, but also it serves as a preceding state from which the states of definite cognition, the waking and dream states, ensue. It is '*Prājña*' meaning 'one who knows properly', the micro-cosmic Intellectual condition equivalent to *Īśvara*, the macro-cosmic First Cause, the Creator, the Lord, the

source of all ensuing from it and the cause of dissolution where everything is absorbed back into it.

Turiya the Fourth: Although this state is listed in the order of the fourth, it is present in all the states, and it is the whole of reality. It is not to be compartmentalized like the other three states are. This state is explained mostly in the negative way: it is not outwardly cognitive; it is not inwardly cognitive; nor is it cognitive in the intermediary sense between the waking and the dream states; it is not an indefinite mass as the sleep state; nor is it a collective cognition identifiable with anything else including Īśvara; it is not mere non-cognition; it is unseen, unrelated, inconceivable, un-inferable, unimaginable, indescribable, the negation of all phenomenon; it is non-duality. It is the essence of the one self-cognition common to all states of consciousness. It is peace, it is bliss, and it is oneness. It is Ātman, the Self, and it is to be realized.

This Ātman is identical with Ōm only when Ōm is considered as a single syllable. When Ōm is considered to be composed of mātrās (components or parts), then, the quarters of Ātman are to be identified with the mātrās, and the mātrās are to be identified with the quarters. The mātrās of Ōm are A, U, and M.

Vaiśvānara whose field is the waking state, is 'A' the first mātrā of Ōm. On account of both being pervasive and having a beginning, one who knows this verily obtains all desirable objects and becomes the first.

Taijasa, whose field is the dream state, is 'U' the second mātrā of Ōm. On account of superiority and being in-between in the middle, one who knows this, gains increasing knowledge, becomes equal to all, and no one ignorant is born in the family.

Prājña, whose field is deep sleep, is 'M' the third mātrā of Ōm. On account of it being like a measure into which grain is put and then the grain is poured out to measure it, and it being the end, one who knows this, measures everything with the knowledge, and comprehends everything.

The Fourth is the syllable Ōm without mātrās. It is transcendental, devoid of all phenomenal existence, '**Śiva advaita**', the 'Supreme Bliss of non-duality'. Thus the syllable Ōm verily is Ātman. One who knows Ātman as one's own Self is Ātman.

The philosophical implications are said to be that the created-creator relationship exists in the three states, whereas this does not exist in the Turiya. The created subject which persists through the waking state is replaced with another subject in the dream state; the subject/ego of the waking state is not permanent, and therefore can not be the Reality; similarly the ego of the dream state is only a temporary ego. The subject or the object of the waking and dream states disappears during the dreamless deep sleep state, but still there is some subject experiencing happiness and absence of all worldly phenomena; remembrance of this deep sleep phenomenon upon waking up means that it was in a latent form in the deep sleep consciousness and is projected again. Therefore, this consciousness is the source from which the world has come, and into which the world dissolves. There is something that cognizes all the various states and all the experiences during these states, and persists throughout as a constant witness; this permanent witness does not undergo any change during these states, and it is the real Ātman or the Turiya; it is the True Reality behind all phenomenon. So long as the world of appearances is considered as real, then there exists a creator of the world; the creator is as much real as the world. From the standpoint of the highest realization, there is no relation between the world and the creator, for both being the same and nothing but

the real Ātman. So long as one is in the plane of the concept of creation and the created, then that one has not realized the Turīya, and is still ignorant; but when one realizes oneself as the Turīya, then that one is free from the cycle of birth-death, and is the Highest Reality.

It is said that Māṇḍūkyaōpaniṣad is famous for describing the Fourth (Turīya) as "**Śivam Advaitam**" 'the beautiful and without a second' (4).

Ōm

Taittirīya Upaniṣad

Taittirīyōpaniṣad belongs to the Taittirīya Śākhā of Yajurvēda. The seventh, the eighth and the ninth Prapāthakas/chapters of the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, known as Śikṣā-valli, Ānanda-valli and Bhṛgu-valli, constitute the Taittirīyōpaniṣad (10). There are a total of thirty-one lessons which are distributed into the three chapters. Each lesson made up of a few sentences with measure and rhythm is meant to be learnt and chanted as a unit. The Taittirīyōpaniṣad seems to be more popular than the rest of the Taittirīya-Yajurvēda, despite its lessons being somewhat disconnected and not being consistent with whatever else is in there (10). The mantras used in most of the rituals are taken from this Upaniṣad (4).

Śikṣā-valli, the first chapter, starts with a mantra, as a first lesson which also serves as the peace invocation to gain the favor of cosmic divinities to ward off all possible obstacles on the path of the seeker of Brahmovidyā. Then it gives the principles of Vēdic phonetics so that the student pronounces the sacred Vēdic texts properly, and avoids any incorrect recitation. It deals with vocalic sounds, accent or pitch, quantity, force required for articulation, modulation, and conjunction or close sequencing of sounds. The meaning of the Vēdic text can be understood only if proper attention is given to this Vēdic phonetics (see 'Śikṣā' in the 'Vēdānga' article).

With the extraordinary ability born out of the study and practice of Vēda, meditations become effective. The lessons formulate suitable meditations, including and particularly, the meditation upon Ōm̄. **It is to be noted here that all meditations except that on the Paramātman are symbolic.** Meditation on the Paramātman is for the purpose of Self-realization, and does not allow any shifting; one has to adhere to it, constantly repeating the same process, until the objective is reached. Self-realization is not the aim of all the symbolic meditations. In the symbolic meditations, one meditates on a visible or visualized object outside one's own innermost-Self, and exalts it as a great Deity or Brahman itself. The object of symbolic meditation may vary successively as in the Upāsanā; the spiritual effect generated by the first meditation is not cancelled by the second, but only enhanced; in such Upāsanās the results will accrue only if all the meditations are performed flawlessly and in order. During symbolic meditations, the symbol should be regarded as superior to what it actually represents; the meditation may be performed without an eye on the symbol (10).

Meditation lesson, to start with, declares that one should meditate upon the elements that constitute the universe, and mentions three sets of five elements – the earth, intermediate space between earth and heaven (*antarikṣam*), the heaven, the major points of compass and the minor points of compass; fire, air, sun, moon and the stars; and water, herbs, large trees, shining space or ether, and the corporeal personality or the body. Then the lesson states that, after that meditation, one should meditate upon oneself (*adhyātman*), and names another three sets of five - Prāṇa, Vyāna, Apāna, Udāna and Samāna; skin, flesh, muscle, bone and marrow; and organs of sight, hearing, thinking, speech and touch. Then it states that the ṛṣi/seer who revealed this by intuition declared that the whole universe is based on a five-fold principle, and that one set of five preserves the other set of five.

The next meditation lesson states that one should contemplate on Ōm̄; Ōm̄ is Brahman; the entire universe, perceived as well as imagined, is Ōm̄. Although it is laid down that one should meditate purely upon Ōm̄ without thinking of any supervising factor, in practice, it is

said that, one should repeat the syllable Ōm with the mind fixed on its meaning that is Brahman (10).

Having instructed in the Vēda, the preceptor advises the disciple and gives the commandments of the teaching; some of these are – speak the truth, follow the prescribed conduct (dharma), never abandon the study of Vēdas and following one's dharma, marry and beget children to pass on the torch of Dharma, express the virtues of charity and duty, and treat the mother, father, teacher, and guest as divinities. In addition it states that, should any uncertainty arise regarding one's acts, or doubts arise in respect of one's conduct in life, then one should rule oneself, exactly in the manner as the approved authorities who are able to judge impartially, who are experienced, independent, gentle and intent on the Law, and who happen to be present there, would act in respect to such matters. It also states that with regard to those who are falsely accused for some crime, one should not be quick to judge a person, and one should conduct oneself on the model of those approved authorities.

Ānanda-valli, the second chapter, after the peace invocation, starts with a memorable popular saying '*one who knows/realizes Brahman attains the Supreme*'. Here the knowing and attaining is the same, and Brahman is the Supreme. Muṇḍakōpaniṣad III.2.9 states it slightly differently as '*One who knows the Supreme Brahman, verily, becomes the Brahman*'. Then it declares that Brahman is Existence, Intelligence and Infinitude, and whoever realizes Brahman treasured in the cave of the heart in the highest ether, fulfils all wants together as Brahman the omniscient. The same Reality referred to as Brahman is then referred to as Ātman to convey the notion that 'It' is one and the same.

It then gives the evolutionary process, progressing from Ātman through the gradations of ether, air, fire, water, earth, vegetation and food, and from food the person (puruṣa). It is said that the five elements sum up the inorganic creation which in turn gives rise to the organic creation through vegetation and food. It is stated that all creatures on earth are born from food, by food alone they remain alive, and they return into it at the end; those who contemplate on the food as Brahman, obtain all food. Further, as the doctrine of five sheaths, five Selves are described, each forming a sheath concentrically with the true Self being inside the five sheaths. The outermost *Annamaya* (anna is food, and maya, not Māyā, means constituted of) is what is formed of existence of food, and it is the elemental-self; next is *Prāṇamaya* (prāṇa is vital-energy) which breathes inside the Annamaya, and it is the vital-self; *Manōmaya* (mana is mind) which creates thought, is inside that, and it is the thinking-self; *Vijñānamaya* (vijñāna refers to knowledge) which distinguishes right and wrong is next, and it is the knowledge-self; and the innermost sheath is the *Ānandamaya* (ānanda is bliss) which is the bliss-self. The outermost is the grossest, with the inner ones successively being subtler than the one just outside, and the most subtle one is the true Self which is inside the five sheaths; the true Self is the foundation of all, and is the Ātman-Brahman Reality. The significance of the five sheaths/selves is that the Ātman-Brahman Reality is to be realized in and through these five selves which may be rationally derived by introspection; this is further explained below in Bhṛgu-valli. It is to be noted that Ātman/Brahman is not confined inside the sheaths as a seed inside a fruit.

Before the evolution of the manifest universe, non-Being alone existed. From that non-Being the Being came about. It became everything, and everything is that Reality. This Ātman desiring to become many, projects all that is here, and having entered it, becomes both Being and Beyond, both defined and undefined, both supported and unsupported, both knowledge and non-knowledge, both real and unreal, and whatever else there is, this entire Reality. Both the ignorant and the wise have their share in Brahman. The ignorant one thinks that one's Self is separate from the essence of Reality, and therefore does not attain Brahman. One's

own existence indicates the existence of Brahman; one who denies the existence of Brahman, negates one's own existence.

This Ānandavalli chapter then gives the gradations of ānanda/joy/bliss. All joy experienced by beings of different grades is but a reflection of the Supreme Bliss which is Brahman. A noble youth, who is most swift and alert, very resolute, most vigorous, of good learning, and who is commanding the wealth of the world, experiences one human unit of bliss. From this level, the next higher unit is 100 times the basic human unit. Each succeeding higher unit is 100 times that of the preceding unit. There are ten gradations of these units: *manuṣya-gandharva*, translated as a human genie which is a supernatural spirit that often takes a human form, has a joy unit 100 times the human joy unit; next level is that of *dēva-gandharva*, the heavenly genie; then it is the joy of *pitr*, the manes inhabiting the long-enduring world; next is of *Ājānadēvas*, the gods by birth in the Ājāna heaven; then it is that of *Karmadēvas*, those who became gods by the force of their deeds; then it is the joy of the highest *Dēvas*/gods, also experienced by men who attain godhood by their own deeds; next is joy of *Indra* the chief god; that of *Bṛhaspati* the Lord of prayer and the preceptor for Dēvas and Indra; and then it is the joy of *Prajāpati* the Lord of the creatures; and the highest one is the unit of bliss experienced by the creator *Brahmā*. Even the joy of Brahmā the creator can not be the Bliss; **it is peculiar to the Upaniṣads that the Supreme Brahman is not a Being full of Bliss, but the Bliss itself.** One's own Self and the Self of the Sun are one and the same, and the one who renounces all the desires and realizes the truth, transcends all the five sheaths and attains the Supreme Bliss.

Bhṛgu-valli, the third chapter, re-tells the doctrine of five sheaths through a youth named Bhṛgu and his father-teacher Varuṇa. Bhṛgu approaches his father Varuṇa and respectfully requests him, as a student would of a teacher, to impart knowledge about Brahman. Varuṇa teaches him to first know food, vital-airs (prāṇa), sight, hearing, mind and speech as a means to the knowledge of Brahman, and further adds to seek to know 'that' from which all beings are born, by which alone they remain alive, and into which, upon departing, they enter; 'That' is Brahman. Accordingly, Bhṛgu, after performing austerity, understands that food is Brahman. He then goes back to his father, and requests him to further instruct him about Brahman. Varuṇa instructs him to seek to know Brahman through *tapas*/austerity; austerity is Brahman. Bhṛgu through austerity comes to know this time that Prāṇa is Brahman. This step-by-step type of instruction by Varuṇa, and repeating his instruction 'seek to know Brahman through tapas' at each step, encourages Bhṛgu to personally conduct deep enquiry within, and experience the results. In order to control the powers and energies of the mind and body, a determined and vigilant exercise of will becomes necessary. Austere devotion or tapas is the primary and most effective means of attaining realization of Brahman. Tapas consists of the mastery of will and thought by the habitual practice of exercising restraint over the bodily desires and afflictions so that the aspirant may advance in the spiritual life. Tapas is withdrawal of the mind from the hindrances and temptations of the world, and clarification of the vision for what is spiritual and true. Thus Bhṛgu first realizes Annamaya, and then through austerity and concentration of thought, progressively transcends through Annamaya, Prāṇamaya, Manōmaya and Vijñānamaya, and reaches Ānandamaya where he comes to know that Bliss is Brahman. Here the narration of Varuṇa-Bhṛgu teaching in the Upaniṣad abruptly stops.

Then, a meditation on Brahman as food is introduced. Body is the eater of food; body is set in life; life is set in body; life is food; therefore food is established in food; so one who knows and contemplates on food becomes firmly established in food, for the body built by food is the first gateway to further realization. One should not condemn food, one should not

reject/waste food, one should produce abundant food, and one should not turn away anyone at the residence, and so on.

Contemplations are formulated to help the aspirant to accustom oneself to meditations which purify the mind. Contemplations suitable for a person consist of meditation on Brahman as wellness in speech and the like, meditation on various attributes of Brahman such as support, greatness, mind, reverence, Vēda, and the Powers. Whatever attribute of Brahman one meditates upon, one becomes the possessor of that attribute. If the meditation has no special desire behind it, then the result is said to be spiritual elevation and mental purity.

The contemplation leads up to the grand mystic experience. 'This' one in the person, and 'that' one in the Sun are one and the same. The knower of this, upon departing from this world, transcends the Anna, Prāṇa, Manas, Vijñāna, and Ānanda mayas (the five sheaths), and while traversing through these worlds enjoying food at will and assuming forms at will, sings: Oh! I am food! I am the food-eater! I am the link! I am the first-born of the cosmic order, even prior to the gods! I am the center of Immortality! Who gives me away assuredly protects me! I have overcome the whole universe! I shine like the Sun! One, who knows this, verily has the sacred wisdom. Thus ends the Upaniṣad.

Ōm

Aitarēya Upaniṣad

Aitarēyōpaniṣad belongs to Ṛgvēda. Mahāvākya, the great saying, 'Prajñānam Brahma', meaning 'exalted actual experience alone is Brahman' or 'the thought itself is Brahman' or simply 'the Supreme Knowledge is Brahman', is in this Upaniṣad. Aitarēya Brāhmaṇa and Aitarēya Āraṇyaka which includes the Aitarēyōpaniṣad are attributed to the sage Mahidāsa Aitarēya who was the son of a woman called Itarā (30). Aitarēyōpaniṣad has three chapters; the first chapter has three sections and the other two chapters have one section each. The 'Ātman' taught in the first lesson of the Upaniṣad is equated with 'Prajñāna Brahma' taught at the conclusion of the Upaniṣad. The peace invocation which is common to all the Ṛgvēda Upaniṣads is at the beginning as well as at the end of the Upaniṣad. It goes like this: *May my speech be fixed on mind! May my mind rest on speech! O Self-manifest, reveal to me. May my mind and speech be efficient to realize the wisdom of the Vēda! May the Vēda that has been learned, not forsake me! By that learning, I shall behold the day and night. I shall proclaim the real. I shall proclaim the truth. May 'That' protect me! May 'That' protect the teacher! Om! Peace! Peace! Peace!*

The first chapter elaborates the creation of the world and the worldly life. Here, 'in the beginning' refers to the beginning of a new cycle of creation-evolution-maintenance-dissolution; the creation is beginning-less and endless with an infinite series of these cycles. In the beginning, verily, all this was Ātman alone, and nothing else existed. Desiring to create the worlds, Ātman created Ambhaḥ the super-celestial region of waters supported by, Marīcīḥ the heavens with celestial lights in the middle region, Maram the earth of mortals, and the Āpaḥ the region of waters below the earth. Then desiring to create the guardians for the worlds, Ātman raised Puruṣa the cosmic-Being out of these waters - supposedly meaning the five elements namely, sky, air, fire, water and earth. As Ātman brooded over Puruṣa, and similar to a chick pecking out of an egg, the mouth burst forth, from the mouth proceeded speech, and from the speech Agni/fire; the two nostrils burst forth, from the nostrils proceeded the power of smell, and from the power of smell Vāyu/air; the eyes burst forth, from the eyes proceeded sight, and from sight the Sun; ears burst forth, from the ears proceeded hearing, and from hearing the quarters/diśaḥ; skin burst forth, from the skin proceeded hairs, and from the hairs the divinities of herbs and trees; the heart burst forth, from the heart proceeded the mind, and from the mind the Moon; the navel burst forth, from the navel proceeded Apāna the down-breathing, and from Apāna the divinity of death; the generative organ burst forth, from the generative organ proceeded the seed, and from the seed the waters.

Thus created, these Dēvatās, the gods or guardians of the world, in this mighty ocean of existence, were subject to hunger and thirst. They needed a body in which they could eat food. As the cow's body or the horse's body was not sufficient, a human body similar to that of cosmic Puruṣa was fashioned. The Dēvatās took their respective places: Agni/fire having become speech entered the mouth; Vāyu/air having become scent entered the nostrils; Sun having become sight entered the eyes; the divinities of the quarters having become hearing entered the ears; divinities of plants and trees having become hairs entered the skin; Moon having become mind entered the heart; the god of death having become Apāna the down-breathing entered the navel; and the god of waters having become the seed entered the generative organ. Hunger and thirst were assigned to these gods so that they share whatever offerings are made to the gods. Food was then created. The first embodied enjoyer of food could not seize the food with speech by calling, could not be satisfied merely with the scent, sight, hearing about it, by touching it, by thinking about it or with the generative organ, but

was able to seize the food by Apāna the down-breathing. Thus Vāyu/air of the Apāna is the chief cause in supporting life by digesting the food.

To support this living body, Ātman, split open a suture at the top of the skull/head, and entered the body through this well known opening called *Nāndana*, the place of happiness. Being born as beings, the soul, had three places of dwelling - waking state, dream state and deep sleep state - comprehended what other things can be proclaimed, perceived the most pervasive Brahman, and having seen, named it Idandra, 'Idam-dra' meaning 'this-seeing'; the Idandra then being indirectly called Indra by the mystery-loving Dēvas the gods.

The second chapter deals with procreation and the cycle of births and deaths from which one has to attain liberation. The essence of man, referred to as the seed, deposited into the womb of woman, causes it to be born. The child nourished by the parents, hence, appointed to continue the world's progeny uninterrupted. This Self, having discharged all the duties satisfactorily, and as the body gets worn out of age, departs from the body, but soon to be born again to continue the cycle of births and deaths; the liberation from this cycle being possible only through the realization of the nature of Ātman. On that there is a R̥gvēdic verse IV.27.1 where sage Vāmadēva states 'as I lay within the womb, I thoroughly considered all generations of these gods in order; a hundred iron fortresses confined me, but I rent through and like a hawk quickly came forth'. Sage Vāmadēva emerged out of the body and rose to the Oneness, and having enjoyed all the delights in the abode of bliss, became immortal.

The third chapter elaborates the Mahāvākya 'Prajñānam Brahma'. We meditate upon the Self the Ātman, by which one sees form, hears sounds, smells a scent, articulates speech, and differentiates what is sweet and what is sour; that which is heart and mind is the same as 'That'. Perception, direction, understanding, intelligence, retentive power, insight, firmness, power of reflection, freedom of thinking, resolute fearlessness, memory, imagination, determination, vitality, desire, love, all these are only name of Prajñāna the Supreme Consciousness. This Brahmā (not Brahman), Indra, Prajāpati, all these Gods, the five great elements earth, air, ether, water and lights, these of various kinds from the smallest living organisms, the seeds, those born of eggs, from womb, of heat and of shoots, horses and cows, people, elephants and whatever that breathes, that walks, that flies, and what is immovable, all that is guided by Prajñāna the Consciousness. Prajñā is the support of all the worlds; 'Prajñānam Brahma' the Supreme Consciousness is Brahman. By this realization of Ātman, having transcended/risen above this world, and having attained the world of Bliss, one becomes immortal.

Ōm

Āhāndōgya Upaniṣad

Āhāndōgyōpaniṣad belongs to the Sāmavēda. The great saying 'that-thou-art' is in this Upaniṣad. Āhāndōgyōpaniṣad is deemed authoritative because it is part of the Āhāndōgya Brāhmaṇa of Sāmavēda; it constitutes the last eight of ten chapters of the Brāhmaṇa, not the Āraṇyaka. It is thought to be one of the oldest of the Upaniṣads, perhaps subsequent to Īsavāsyā and Aitarēya Upaniṣads, and prior to the others. It is one of the larger Upaniṣads, discussing about 130 topics many of which forming the foundation for the later development of philosophies and religion (31). The Sanskrit verb root 'āhānd' means 'to please'. The Sāmavēda itself is sometimes referred to as 'Āhāndas', because the melody of Sāmans, the musical hymns of Sāmavēda, is delightful to listen to. The Āhāndōgyōpaniṣad is considered to contain messages of many Ṛṣis (4).

After the peace invocation, the first chapter starts with a statement 'one should meditate on the syllable Ōm̐ the Udgītha (up-beat song/chant), for one sings Udgītha beginning with Ōm̐'; and then it gives the explanations. It is to be noted that the syllable Ōm̐ is identified here with the Udgītha. The Udgītha Ōm̐ is the Ōm̐ in that part of the Sāman which is sung by the Udgātṛ priest. Udgītha is an element of the Vēdic sacrifice, but here the word Udgītha which generally is applicable to the whole section, is limited to its part Ōm̐.

It is said that for a person who is habituated to the performance of Vēdic rites, it is difficult in the beginning to entirely give up the rites, and resort exclusively to meditation; therefore, it is indicated that meditation is to be performed as a part of the sacrifice. One who knows only the ritual aspect and not the true nature of the syllable Ōm̐, and another who knows both the ritual aspect and the true nature of Ōm̐, may perform actions with it, but only what is performed with knowledge, faith and meditation is effective. All meditations except that on the Paramātman are symbolic. In the symbolic meditations, one meditates on a visible or visualized object outside one's own innermost-Self, and exalts it as a great Deity or Brahman itself. During symbolic meditations, the symbol is regarded as superior to what it actually represents. Various forms of meditation are described.

For a meditation on the Udgītha referring to the body (*adhyātma*), a story is told about Dēvas and Asuras, both as descendents of Prajāpati. Here the term Dēvas stands for the functions of the senses purified by the performance of scriptural duties, the functions being the cause of righteousness; the term Asuras stands for the functions of the senses connected with the enjoyment of worldly objects, the functions being the cause of un-righteousness; and the term Prajāpati stands for the person entitled to both rituals and knowledge. The story uses a fight between the Dēvas and Asuras to explain the struggle between the two tendencies going on in everyday life in everyone. In this fight, the Dēvas, in order to defeat the Asuras, perform rites of the Udgātṛ priest, and meditate on the divinity Prāṇa (vital breath) connected with the nose and the sense of smell as Udgītha. But the Asuras somehow pierce it with evil so that, the nose, in addition to smelling the fragrant things, also smells the foul. Similar fights for speech resulting in truth and untruth, for ear resulting in hearing of both pleasant and unpleasant, for the mind resulting in both good and evil thoughts, are described. Similar fights for touch and taste are implied but are not mentioned. The Dēvas then meditate on the Prāṇa in the mouth as Udgītha, the Asuras come in clash with it, but they get destroyed; therefore the Prāṇa in the mouth is intact and is pure. With this Prāṇa in the mouth, one eats or drinks through the mouth, and maintains the other Prāṇas. At the time of death, the Prāṇa in the mouth and its dependents depart, and thus one opens the mouth at the time of death.

One who knows this and meditates on the Udgītha as the syllable Ōm̄, that one becomes the procurer of the desired objects. This is the meditation referring to the Prāṇa of the body.

Then the meditation on the Udgītha with reference to the dēvas/gods (*adhidaiva*) is described. One should meditate on the divinity of the sun as Udgītha; when the sun rises it sings aloud like the Udgātṛ priest for the sake of producing food for all creatures, and it dispels darkness and fear. The Prāṇa in the mouth and that sun are the same; this Prāṇa keeps the body warm and the sun keeps all the creatures warm. Therefore one should meditate on this Prāṇa and that sun as Udgītha. Many other symbolic meditations are described. Because the syllable Ōm̄ can be meditated upon in various ways, the Upaniṣad explains other methods of its meditation and introduces stories to explain some of the meditations.

In the second chapter, meditation on the whole of Sāman is given. Sāmans are the hymns of Sāmavēda, and they are sung melodiously. Each Sāman is divided into parts called Bhakti. The five-part one has Himkāra, Prastāva, Udgītha, Pratihāra and Nidhana divisions. Sāman is also divided into seven parts, and they are Himkāra, Prastāva, Ādi, Udgītha, Pratihāra, Upadrava and Nidhana. Himkāra is singing the syllable 'Him̄' as a preliminary vocalization. Ādi means 'the first' or 'the beginning', and refers to Ōm̄. Udgītha the loud chant is sung by the Udgātṛ priest. The Udgātṛ priest has other assistants; one is Prastātṛ who sings the Prastāva which is an introductory praise; the other Pratihartṛ who sings Pratihāra which is considered as the antiphony response. Upadrava is an approach to the end, and Nidhana is the conclusion. A number of ways of adoration are described. Meditations on the five-fold Sāman and the seven-fold Sāman with analogies are described. These meditations on the five-fold and seven-fold Sāman, at first, are not ascribed to any specific names; and then the meditations bearing on certain specified names are described, for they bring about certain specified results. One of the specific meditations, the first one described there, is as follows. The mind is Himkāra, speech is Prastāva, the eye is Udgītha, the ear is Pratihāra, and the Prāṇa is Nidhana; this is the Gāyatra Sāman woven in the Prāṇa and the senses; one who knows this Gāyatra Sāman as woven in the Prāṇa and the senses, becomes the possessor of perfect senses, reaches the full length of life which is said to be one hundred years, lives gloriously, becomes great with offspring and cattle, and great also with fame; the holy vow for that person is that the person should be high minded.

The meditations on Ōm̄ as part of the Udgītha and on the Sāmans are said to be for the purification of various objects which are used in the rites, or for obtaining various results, and are not the means for liberation to attain immortality. The term '**Ōmkāra**' is then introduced which means 'Ōm̄-form' or 'Ōm̄-symbol', the symbol that stands for Brahman. By meditating upon this symbol **Ōm̄**, as the all-pervading Brahman, one can attain immortality.

The third chapter starts by saying 'the Sun is honey to the Gods'. The sun embodies the result of all sacrifices; hence, after giving the explanations of the sacrifices, the meditation on their result in the form of the sun is described; and then a description of how that leads to the result of gradual liberation is given. Next the meditation on Brahman as Gāyatrī is narrated. Gāyatrī is the name of a Vēdic metre having six syllables in each of its four pādas/feet to a total of 24 syllables. Other metres have more syllables than the Gāyatrī, so Gāyatrī is considered as the root of all other metres. Various meditations are described.

After the above description of meditation on Brahman with the help of symbols, the description of meditation on Brahman with attributes is given. The Upaniṣad gives this famous saying '*All this, verily, is Brahman, from Brahman do all things originate, into Brahman they dissolve, and by Brahman they are sustained; on Brahman one should meditate in tranquility*

with the control of mind and senses’. The meditation on the attributes of Brahman brings out the worship and faith in the spiritual aspirant. The nature of faith is described and then Ātman is introduced. One who is permeating the mind, who has Prāṇa for its body, whose nature is consciousness, whose resolve is infallible, whose own form is like Akāśa the sky, whose creation is all that exists, whose are all the desires, who possesses all the odors, who possesses all the tastes, who exists pervading all these, who is without speech, who is free from agitation – this is Ātman residing inside in the heart, this is Brahman. Meditation on the attributes results in gradual liberation as per this statement ‘on departing hence I shall attain to His being’.

Meditation to bring about the longevity of a son, and meditation and recitation to live long for the full 116 years in order to live and enjoy the company of the son are given. Then there is this noteworthy narration. It starts with the initiatory rites of the Sōma sacrifice where one feels hunger, feels thirst and does not rejoice, all this because one ought not take any food or drink before the initiation; then during the Upasadas period that follows the initiation rites, one eats, drinks and rejoices; then as one approaches Stotra and Śastra of the Sōma sacrifice, one laughs, eats and behaves as one of a couple; then there is austerity, gifts, uprightness, non-violence and truthfulness of this sacrifice; therefore the sacrificer is considered as the sacrifice itself. Then it states that Ghora Āngirasa expounded this well-known doctrine to **Devaki’s son Kṛṣṇa** and said ‘such a knower should, at the time of death, repeat this triad – “*Thou (the divinity residing in the sun and identified with Prāṇa) art the imperishable, Thou art the unchangeable, and Thou art the subtle essence of Prāṇa*”’. And then it states that on hearing this Kṛṣṇa became thirst-less; and then it ends with two Rks from Ṛgvēda – part of VIII.6.30, and I.50.10 – The knowers of Brahman see everywhere the supreme light of the ancient One who is the seed of the universe. May we, too, having perceived the highest light that dispels darkness, reach it; having perceived the highest light in our own heart we have reached the highest light that is in all gods, yes we have reached that highest light. It is believed that the Devaki’s son Kṛṣṇa mentioned in this narration is the teacher of the Bhagavad-Gītā; if so, then it is said that it is the earliest reference to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

In chapter four many stories are used as a medium of instruction to make the teaching interesting. The seeker’s respect for the teacher, and the method of imparting sacred knowledge by the teacher to the disciple, are brought out. Previously, the teaching was to view Vāyu and Prāṇa as parts of Brahman, but in this chapter, direct meditation on Vāyu and Prāṇa as Brahman is being commanded. It also states that the person who is seen in the eye is Ātman the immortal and fearless, and this is Brahman. This Brahman is to be meditated upon as the center of all blessings. Brahman is the vehicle of light and shines in all regions; one who knows it, thus, shines in all regions. Such a person whether performs the rites or not goes to light, and through this northern path ultimately reaches Brahman (Hiraṇyagarbha) in Satyalōka/Brahmalōka and does not return to the human whirlpool in this cycle of creation-dissolution, but may return in the next cycle. It is noted that Brahman in Satyalōka is not the highest principle of the Upaniṣads; realization of the Upaniṣadic Parabrahman/Paramātman does not require traversing a path or reaching a goal outside one’s own Self.

Through the performance of the rites the soul is neither helped nor hindered in its progress to perfection. Those who perform the spiritual discipline such as the knowledge of the fire sacrifices or strict Brahmaçarya, go towards Brahmalōka, and after their fruits of good deeds get exhausted, return to the cycle of births and deaths. This path is not condemned; the way of getting the results of the sacrifices is described.

The sacrificer employs four types of priests to conduct the sacrificial ceremonies. The Hotṛ priest with three assistants recites the Rk-mantra from Ṛgvēda to invoke/summon the

respective Divinities. Adhvaryu priest with three assistants prepares the things needed for oblations and pours the oblations on the sacrificial fire reciting the Yajus-mantra from Yajurveda. The Udgātṛ priest with the help of three assistants sings the Sāma-songs from Sāmaveda. The Brahmā priest who also has three assistants supervises the whole sacrificial ceremony, and if any mistakes occur, rectifies them by performing corrective sacrifices. A total of 16 priests are involved in the ceremony.

Two components, mind and speech, are involved in the sacrifice. Both components must be performed properly for a successful sacrifice. Brahmā priest embellishes with the mind, and silently (without speaking) observes the performance of the sacrifice. The other priests embellish the speech, and perform their duties. If both mind and speech components are performed properly, and the sacrifice is completed without any mistake, the sacrifice is intact, and the sacrificer remains intact and becomes great by performing the sacrifice. If either component is defective, the sacrifice is defective, and the sacrificer suffers spiritual injury. Then it is the responsibility of the Brahmā priest to rectify the problem by performing appropriate corrective ceremonies which are also explained in this chapter.

The fifth chapter starts with a dispute among the divinities of sense organs about their personal superiority. Prāṇa, the vital-force is the eldest and the best, and whoever knows this becomes the eldest and the best. Speech is the richest, and whoever knows this becomes the richest. Eye is the stable basis, and whoever knows this becomes stabilized. The ear is prosperity, and whoever knows this becomes prosperous and attains all desires. Mind is the resort/abode, and whoever knows this becomes resort/abode of the relatives. To settle the dispute, the senses go to father Prajāpati who indicates that the one, whose departure would cause the body to appear its worst, would be the best. The speech, eye, ear and mind depart one at a time, but none of that makes the body to be its worst. As the Prāṇa is about to depart, the other senses realize that without Prāṇa the body would be dead, and hence Prāṇa is superior to them all. The organs are then said not to be separate from Prāṇa, indeed, Prāṇa is them all.

Description of Mantha rite is then given for the knower of Prāṇa who desires to attain greatness. Mantha is a mash of many herbs and grains, and curd and honey; it is offered as oblation into the sacred fire, with the saying of the mantra Svāhā.

The worship of Brahman with attributes/qualities having been explained, the chapter five then describes how a householder knowing the doctrine of five fires, and a celibate engaged in the practice of austerity could achieve similar results. Then it describes a path many take when they merely perform rites without meditation and without the knowledge of the underlying philosophy. Further it describes results of the way of many ordinary worldly people who do not go through either of the above two paths but are reborn right away as creatures on this world; this mainly to create in them, dispassion towards the world, which is required for spiritual growth.

A story is then given to prescribe meditation on the five fires, which may lead one to the northern path after death. Once Śvetakētu, grandson of Aruṇa, went to the assembly of King Pravāhaṇa, where the king asked him whether his father had instructed him about five topics: where the created beings go after death, how they return again, the place of parting of the two paths – the path of the gods and the path of the fathers - why the other world is not filled up despite of many dying here, and how at the fifth oblation, the liquid oblations come to be designated as possessed of a human. As Śvetakētu did not know the answer to any of the questions, he became distressed, returned to his father, and asked his father why he was not taught these things. His father remarked that if he had known himself the answer to

these questions, he would have taught him properly; then the father went to the king's place, and requested the king to teach him of what the king had asked the boy about. The king then teaches him starting with answer to the fifth question.

The king describes the five fires, the five oblations into the fires, and the results from these offerings. It is to be noted here that Agnihōtra is performed in the Āhavanīya fire which is used for offering oblations to the divinities, and hence the Āhavanīya fire is said to be present also in the heaven; this meditation is based on the similarities between the fire and the heaven. The heaven is visualized as the fire, the sun as the sacrificial fuel, the rays as the smoke, the day as the flame, as the day ends or the flame dies down, the moon as the embers, and the stars as the sparks. Into this fire the divinities offer the oblation of faith and out of this first offering of faith as oblation, King Sōma (moon) arises. Then the second fire is described. Parjanya, the divinity presiding over all aspects of rainfall is the fire, the air is the fuel, the cloud is the smoke, the lightening is the flame, thunderbolt is the embers and the rumblings of thunder are the sparks. Into this fire the divinities offer the oblation of King Sōma, and out of that oblation the rain arises. Third fire indeed is the earth, the year is the fuel, Ākāśa/sky is the smoke, night is the flame, the directions are the embers, and the intermediate directions are the sparks. Into this fire the divinities offer oblations of rain, and out of this offering, the food in the form of corn arises. In the fourth, the man is the fire, speech is the fuel, Prāṇa, the life-force is the smoke, the tongue is the flame, the eye is the embers, and the ear is the sparks. Into this fire the divinities offer oblation of food, and out of the offering of food as oblation, the seed arises. Then the woman is the fifth fire. Into this fire the divinities offer the oblation of the seed and out of the offering of the seed as oblation, the fetus arises. That fetus covered with membrane, lies within the mother's womb, more or less, for nine or ten months, and is then born. Thus at the fifth oblation, water comes to be designated as Puruṣa/man. Being born, the person lives whatever the length of life may be, and when dies, as ordained in accordance with past actions, is carried away for cremation going into the fire from which one arose.

Those who are endowed with the knowledge of meditation, and those who are not, both proceed in the spiritual path, but get separated from each other at the point of the cremation fire, and their paths diverge.

The householders who know the knowledge of the five fires, and the forest dwellers devoted to faith and austerity, after their death, go to the divinity of light, from light to the day, from the day to the bright fortnight, from bright fortnight to those six months during which the sun travels northward, from the months to the year, from the year to the sun, from the sun to the moon, and from the moon to the lightening. From there are caused to go to the region of Brahmālōka. This is the northern path, the path of the gods.

Those householders who merely practice the sacrifices, conduct works of public utility such as constructing wells, water-tanks and parks, and give gifts/donations to the deserving persons, without meditation and without the knowledge of the underlying philosophy, after their death, do not go in the northern path; they go to the divinity identified with smoke, from smoke to night, from night to the dark fortnight, from the dark fortnight to those months during which the sun travels southward, and from there they do not reach the year; from the months they go to the region of the fathers, from the region of the fathers to Ākāśa/sky, from Ākāśa to the moon which is the King Sōma, the food of the divinities. This is the southern path, the path of the fathers. From there, having enjoyed the results of their actions, those who have good residual results of action are born on earth as people, where as those with bad residual results are born on earth as dogs or hogs or some other animals.

Those who do not worship or meditate, and who do not perform sacrifices or beneficial acts, do not go in either of the above two paths; they right away are reborn as small creatures, and are subject to 'be born and die'. Hence, one should be disgusted with this state. The region of the moon is never filled up because those who go through the southern route return to this world, and many who do not go through either of the paths do not go there at all.

Then the meditation on the Vaiśvānara Ātman is described. Ātman is Brahman and Brahman is Ātman, it is one and the same. Sometimes the term Ātman is used to mean the limited individual-Self encased in the body. Vaiśvānara Ātman, the Universal-man or the essence of all men/people carries all men/people to their states in accordance with their merit and demerit. Again using a story, details of meditation on the whole Vaiśvānara Ātman, not on the individual parts of it, are explained. Then Agnihōtra in Prāṇa is introduced and details explained. Agnihōtra is pouring of oblations in sacrificial fire at home by the householder. A point is clearly made here that if the offerings are made without the knowledge of Vaiśvānara and Agnihōtra, it would be like removing the embers and pouring the oblation on the ashes – utterly useless. If Agnihōtra to Prāṇa is made with proper knowledge, then it is like pouring the oblations into all the worlds, all the beings, and all the Selves - everyone enjoys.

Chapter six uses a story to convey the great message '*tattvamasī*' meaning 'that thou art'. The teaching is that the Self is only One in all beings. Svetakētu, a twelve year old boy is sent by his father to live as Brahmācārin, the life of a Vēdic student. After living as Brahmācārin at the preceptor's residence for twelve years studying all the Vēdas, he returns at the age of twenty-four somewhat egotistic, arrogant, and thinking very highly of himself as a very learned person. His father noticing this arrogance asks him whether he had the teaching through the knowledge of which, what is unheard becomes heard, what is un-thought of becomes thought of, and what is unknown becomes known. Śvetakētu, as he did not know anything about it, becomes humbled by this inquiry, and requests his father to teach him the nature of that.

The teaching begins with a simple comparison example. From a single clod of clay, all that is made of clay, such as brick, clay pot, vase, jar and other items, would become known; all these modifications of clay take form and name; the clay pervades them all, and is, alone, real; the name and form are different in each case, and are unreal – just name and form. Ātman/Brahman is the Reality; everything else is name and form. In the beginning there was Being alone, one only, without a second. That Being willed to be many, and became many.

This teaching continues with many comparison examples and statements; arguments are built up step by step until the main message is taught – '**that the Pure Being, the subtle essence of all, is the Self/Ātman of the whole universe; that is the True Reality; that is the Ātman; That you are**'. This great message has been repeated nine times with different examples of explanations; this repetition indicates that those who cannot understand the doctrine by a single attempt must reflect over it repeatedly until it becomes direct experience. This realization of the Divine nature of the human soul is liberation (31).

Chapter seven is related to chapter six. It expands on the modification concept, because if further explanation is not given, one may misunderstand that there are objects other than the Being. The explanation given is that the modifications are gradations of the Reality with differing values, each level of reality possessing greater value and magnitude than that of the preceding one. By following the grades of reality from name, and ascending through gross categories and subtle categories to Prāṇa, one may reach the ultimate Truth which is beyond sense-knowledge, and which had been referred to as 'Sat' in the previous chapter, is here referred to as 'Bhūman' which means all space that is full of matter.

To explain this part of the philosophy, two of the greatest personalities in the field of religion are brought together as disciple and preceptor. Mahaṛṣi Nārada's extensive knowledge which included all the Vēdas, rules of worship, mathematics and various branches of science, do not bring him any peace. Therefore he approaches Sage Sanatkumāra, and after stating that he is only the knower of verbal text and not Ātman, requests that he be taught how to attain this highest Truth. Sage Sanatkumāra, saying that what Nārada knows is only a name, takes him through the above teaching, thus rendering him Pure. The chapter then ends with the statement 'people call Sanatkumāra as Skanda – yea, they call him Skanda'. 'Skanda' means 'learned person', and Skanda is another name for Kārtikēya, the son of Śiva.

The teaching in chapter eight is in the form of instructions by a preceptor to a disciple. It describes how Ātman is to be attained. Only aspirants of a higher caliber who can achieve purity, concentration and discipline, are capable of realizing the highest principle. For the lesser aspirants, the scripture describes how, through meditation, worship and such, it is possible to attain the highest truth. These aspects of spiritual endeavors are described in this chapter. The physical body of a person is the city of Brahman. The abode of Brahman is the lotus in the heart. In it, is the inner Ākāśa/space. One should seek what is within that, and one should desire to know it. The inner space in the heart is the same outer space that encompasses the whole universe. Indeed it contains both heaven and earth, fire and air, sun and moon, lightening and stars, whatever there is of Brahman in this world and whatever is not, all that is contained within it. It does not age with the aging of the body; it does not die when the body dies. It is free from evil, free from sorrow, free from hunger, free from thirst, whose desire is of the truth, whose resolve is of the truth; that is the Ātman/Self. If a seeker of liberation with the help of the preceptor and the scriptures comes to know the Ātman as characterized, such a one is ever free and finds complete fulfillment of all the desires.

Knowledge is the only direct means to the realization of Ātman, and Brahmaçārya is a subsidiary to the Knowledge. Brahmaçārya, in a larger sense, includes celibacy, sacrifice, *iṣṭa* which means worshipping and longing for the attainment of the Ātman, the vow of silence, course of fasting, life of a hermit, and such. For those who attain Brahman-world by means of Brahmaçārya, there is freedom to act as they wish in all the worlds and whatever they desire is available for them to enjoy. An individual soul moving in the region of Brahmaḷōka, and the objects of desire available there, are to be considered to belong to the mental order, and not the physical one. Of the one hundred and one *nāḍī*/channels/conduits that diverge in various directions from the heart, one courses upward to the crown of the head. When departing from the body, the knower, proceeds upwards in this *nāḍī*, meditating Ōm, and attains immortality, while the non-knower does not go upward, just departs through one of the other diverging *nāḍīs*.

One who has read the Vēda according to the prescribed rule in the time left over after performing the duties to the teacher, who after having come back from the teacher's house, settles down in one's own household, continues the study of the Vēda, and has virtuous sons and disciples, who withdraws all the senses into the Ātman, who practices non-injury to all beings, and who behaves thus throughout one's life, reaches the world of Brahman, and does not return again. The Upaniṣad ends with the same peace invocation that is at the beginning of it.

Ōm

Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad

Brhadāranyakōpaniṣad belongs to Śukla Yajurveda. It is the largest of the Upaniṣads. 'Brhat' means 'big' or 'great'. The whole Brhat Āryṇyaka itself is this Upaniṣad; it is in the final portion of the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. There are two versions, one each, belonging to Mādhyandina and Kāṇva Śākhās which are the two different Śākhās of the Sukla Yajurveda (see 'Vēda Śākhā' article). The Kāṇva version is more popular. It is in prose form and has six chapters (32).

After the peace invocation, the first chapter starts by describing the body of the sacrificial horse as the cosmic form of Prajāpati, the presiding divinity of the horse sacrifice. 'Prajāpati' means 'Lord of the creatures', and it is the cosmic person. When it identifies with the sum total of all the subtle bodies in the universe, it is called 'Hiraṇyagarbha' which means 'golden-egg' or 'cosmic-egg', and it is the cosmic vital-force Prāṇa, also called Sūtrātman. When Prajāpati identifies with the sum total of all the gross bodies in the universe, it is called 'Virāj' which is the first embodied being that appears in the cosmic-egg. The superimposition of the parts of the body of the sacrificial horse on to the body of Prajāpati is a meditation; it results in the same benefit as the sacrifice itself without actually performing it, to any person meditating on it. The horse sacrifice is one of the greatest Vēdic rites performed only by the kings; it could take the sacrificer, after death, to Brahmaḷōka.

Then it describes the origin and nature of Agni/fire used in the horse sacrifice, as the manifestation of the universe. Meditation on the sacrificial horse and the sacrificial fire as Prajāpati, and combining it with the performance of Vēdic rites, takes the performer, after death, to identity with Hiraṇyagarbha which is Brahmaḷōka. The Vēdic rites are of two kinds: one is wholly mechanical, and it results in the attainment of Pitruḷōka the world of the manes and so forth; the other is the rites and the meditation coupled together, resulting in the attainment of worlds ranging from Dēvalōka the world of gods to the Brahmaḷōka the world of Hiraṇyagarbha. But the result of all the Vēdic rites is not ever-lasting; it does not destroy ignorance; only the knowledge of Brahman can destroy ignorance and result in the attainment of liberation in this life while still living.

Then it brings in a story of the rivalry between dēvas and asuras who are all considered as the descendants of Prajāpati. Here it is more elaborate than the one in Āchāndōgyōpaniṣad I.2.1-10. Dēvas and asuras are the vocal and other sensory organs of Prajāpati. The term 'dēva' means 'the shining one'; they become dēvas when illumined by thoughts and actions recommended by the Scriptures. The term 'asura' means 'the self-indulgent one'; they become asuras when their thoughts and actions based on perception and inference, are directed merely to secular goals. This is a meditation referring to the Prāṇa of the body; it teaches that Prāṇa/vital-force is the essence of the body and the organs, its cosmic form is Hiraṇyagarbha, and that it is to be meditated upon. This meditation even without the performance of the rites gives the same result of identity with Hiraṇyagarbha.

Next it goes into one of the great sayings. During creation, the embryonic state of the universe is called the cosmic egg; and the first embodied being called Virāj appears within the embryonic universe. Before the manifestations, the universe was Ātman/Self/Virāj in the form of a person. People and different species of animals were then created, and the gods were projected out. All these were the manifestations of the Self in name and form. After manifesting the universe with diverse bodies, the Self entered into all of them. The individual Self is identical with the Supreme Self the Brahman. But in the state of ignorance, it forgets

its Supreme nature, and identifies with the individual. Eradication of this ignorance is the achievement of perfection. One should meditate upon the Supreme Self. Only the knowledge of Brahman can destroy ignorance and stop the cycle of re-births. The great saying in this Upaniṣad '*aham brahmāsmi*' meaning '**I am Brahman**' comes here. The knower of Brahman whether a god or a person becomes Brahman.

The projected gods are then classified into four categories: Fire projected out of the mouth is the Brāhmaṇa of the gods; Indra (chief god), Varuṇa (god of the aquatic animals), Moon, Rudra (chief of the beasts), Parjanya (god of lightning), Yama (god of the manes), Mṛtyu (god of diseases and death), and Īśāna (god of the luminaries), projected out of the arms become the Kṣatriya gods; groups of gods such as Vasus, Rudras, Ādityas, Viśvadēvas and the Maruts, projected out of the thighs become the Vaiśya gods; Pūṣan the nourishing god, the earth that nourishes all that exists, projected out of the feet becomes the Śūdra god. From these four categories of the divine castes, the four human castes come about. Still there was no prosperity; thus a noble form 'Dharma' the righteousness was created. It is said that there is nothing greater than the righteousness, and that what is righteousness is indeed the Truth; that 'Truth' is the theoretical knowledge, and when it is put into practice, it is called the righteousness.

Then seven kinds of food are explained. One is general food common to all eaters; it is the food that sustains the life of all beings; and the one, who eats for one's own benefit only, without sharing it with others, incurs sin. Two kinds of food are meant for the gods; one is the libations put on the sacrificial fire, and the other is all the other offerings to the gods. Another kind of food is for the animals, and it is milk. The other three foods are – the organ of speech, the mind, and Prāṇa the vital-force - these three are also described respectively as earth, sky and heaven, Ṛg, Yajur and Sāma Vēdas, gods, manes and men, father, mother and child, and what is known, what is to be known and what is unknown. These three pervade the whole universe; whoever meditates on these as limited conquers a limited world; but whoever meditates on these as unlimited, conquers an unlimited world. There are only three worlds: the world of man is attainable only through a son; the world of the manes is attainable through the sacrificial rites; and the world of the gods is attainable through meditation. Therefore the meditation is praised.

Prajāpati described as the year, is Time. The organs created by Prajāpati vowed never to stop doing their functions, but as fatigue overcame all of them except Prāṇa, they merged into Prāṇa and became immortal in the mortal body. The gods also took similar vows, but they all drooped except Vāyu/air which is the cosmic counterpart of Prāṇa. Therefore, one should only take up the vow of Prāṇa, and continue to function.

Then it states that the universe is made up of three things: name, form and action. Sound is the material of the name, as the names arise from sound. Form in general is the material of particular forms, as all forms arise from a common feature in them. General activity in the body is the source of particular actions. These three are one, and that is the body. Prāṇa the vital-force is the subtle body, and name and form constitute the gross body; hence, the Prāṇa is hidden by name and form.

Chapter two starts with a short story of discussion between an eloquent Bālāki and the king of Kāśī Ajātaśatru. Bālāki tries to teach about conditioned Brahman that is in the sun, the moon and such, which the king already knew. The king then describes to him the unconditioned Brahman into which the individual self merges during deep sleep. Prāṇa the vital-force is then described to have a special place in the head, the body being its abode, and that its vigor comes from food and drink. In this context, it gives the list of the '*sapta*

ṛṣayah’, the great seven sages. The head is compared to a bowl with its opening below and the bulging above; manifold knowledge representing *’Prāṇāḥi*’, the sense-organs is placed in the bowl; seven sages representing the organs sit by its side; and the organ of speech which utters words is the eighth. Two ears are Gotama and Bharadvāja; two eyes are Viśvāmitra and Jamadagni; two nostrils are Vasiṣṭha and Kaśyapa; tongue is Atri. One who knows this becomes the eater of food, and everything becomes that person’s food.

Then ‘not this, not this’ explanation comes. Two contrasting forms of Brahman are given – gross and subtle, mortal and immortal, limited and limit-less, perceptible and imperceptible. The gross form is made of earth, water and fire, and the essence of that is the shining orb of the sun. The subtle form is made of air and ether, and the essence of that is the principle; the word Puruṣa is used for this, and it supposedly stands for the subtle body Hiraṇyagarbha. The specification of Brahman is *’neti neti*’ meaning ‘not this, not this’, because there is no other specification. Its sacred name is ‘the Truth of truth’; Prāṇa is truth, and Brahman is the Truth of that. The gross and subtle forms of the body are considered as adjuncts of Brahman, and do not describe Brahman; Brahman has no distinguishing marks whatsoever. There is no other specification or distinguishing mark.

Next, another story is given to teach that the renunciation of the world is a means to Self Knowledge. Sage Yājñavalkya, the sage who composed the Śukla Yajurveda, intending to go into solitude as a sanyāsin, divides his wealth between his two wives Maitreyī and Kātyāyanī. Maitreyī asks him, if all the wealth in the world belonged to her, would that bring her immortality. The sage replies that it would not. She then refuses to accept the wealth, and indicates her desire to learn from him, instead, the means to attain immortality. In an elaborate way Yājñavalkya tells Maitreyī that the knowledge of the Self is the only means of immortality. Love and attachment to the loved ones, wealth, and such, brings satisfaction and happiness to oneself; it does not mean that the nature of Ātman is love and happiness. To understand the nature of Ātman, one has to renounce all these attachments, and then the real Self is to be heard of, reflected on, and meditated upon. Realization of the Self alone, through hearing, reflection and meditation, that all this is known. On account of the various attachments, separate consciousness stands out as an individual entity, but as soon as these are destroyed, the separate consciousness is also destroyed. After attaining this isolation, there is no particular consciousness. It is the consciousness/knowledge itself. When all has become the very Self, there is no another.

There is an account of the Self described as the ruler of all beings and the king of all beings, and that all beings, all gods, all worlds, all organs and all these individual selves are fixed in this Supreme Self. Then it tells a story of how the sage Dadhyaċ, versed in Atharvaveda, taught Self-knowledge to the two Aśvins through a temporary horse’s head; it includes three mantras from Ṛgveda I.116.12, I.117.22, and VI.47.18, to explain it. The gross bodies with two feet, that of humans and birds, the gross bodies with four feet, that of animals were created; the Supreme Being entered these gross bodies as the subtle body. The Supreme Self dwells in all bodies and is called Puruṣa. With this, the Supreme Self is perceived as manifold on account of the false notion **Māyā**; but that Brahman is without cause or effect, and this all-experiencing Self is Brahman.

Then there is a list of the line of teachers that form the *Vamśa*, like the sections of a bamboo. This succession of teachers is for the first four chapters of the last book of Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, the third and fourth chapters of that forming the first two chapters of this Upaniṣad. The line starts with Hiraṇyagarbha, there being no teacher before that, Absolute Brahman forming the Knowledge itself.

The third and fourth chapters narrate Yājñavalkya's philosophical discussions. Emperor Janaka of Vidēha performed a sacrifice in the company of many learned scholars. The emperor desiring to determine who among the attendees is the most learned, offered a thousand cows with gold attached to the horns, to the greatest Vēdic scholar among them. Yājñavalkya simply asked his pupil to drive home the cows, which the pupil did. This caused uproar among the scholars who then started asking many questions to test Yājñavalkya. The answers are the philosophical discussions.

The details of how the meditation is to be combined with the sacrificial rites so that death can be transcended are given. The nature of death is then given. Because of one's ignorance, one is attached to the sense organs and the objects they perceive; this attachment is like the food of death. Death is destructive, but the death itself can be destroyed. Fire can destroy everything, but water destroys fire; similarly, the realization of the Self destroys death. One has to overcome further death by realization of the identity of the Self and Brahman.

Then what happens to the one who dies without attaining the highest knowledge is discussed. The karma/work determines what happens to the disembodied soul. Because re-taking of the body is due to past karma, one becomes noble through righteous work, and ignoble through un-righteous work. The results of work are a range of existence; even if work is combined with meditation, it does not lead to liberation.

The Brahman that is immediate and direct is the inner Self. It is the seer, hearer, thinker and knower in everyone, but it cannot be directly seen, heard, thought or known. It exists within all, and is imperishable; everything besides this Self is perishable. The real nature of the Self that is within all is one's own Self which is beyond hunger and thirst, grief and delusion, decrepitude and death. Realizing this very Self, one gives up the desire for sons, for wealth and for worlds. Having mastered the Self-knowledge through the teacher and the scriptures, and having the strength to completely shut down all ideas of non-Self, one becomes meditative. This meditation is a state of mind in which there is only the thought of the Self, and nothing else. That is the realization of Brahman.

Next is the description of relative fineness of the elements and worlds. Each succeeding element or the region is subtler than the preceding one, and the Self is beyond them all. All earthly substances are pervaded by water; water is pervaded by air; air is pervaded by Antarikśalōka, the world of the sky; it is pervaded by Gandharvalōka, the world of celestial minstrels; that in turn is pervaded by the world of the Sun; that is pervaded by Āndralōka, the world of the moon; it is pervaded by Nakśatralōka, the world of stars; it is pervaded by Dēvalōka, the world of the gods; Dēvalōka is pervaded by Indralōka, the world of Indra the chief god; It is pervaded by Prajāpatilōka, the world of Prajāpati/Virāj; it is pervaded by Brahmalōka the world of Hiranyagarbha; what is beyond that is not to be known by inference, but only from the instruction of the teacher.

Then the descriptions of Sūtra and Antaryāmin are given. It is by Sūtra that this world, the next world and all beings are strung together like a thread that holds pearls together. Sūtra is the support of the elements and the essence of the subtle body. It is the cosmic vital force Hiranyagarbha. Vāyu/air is its external manifestation. Antaryāmin is the Inner Controller Īśvara. It dwells in earth, water, fire, sky, air, heaven, the sun, the directions, the moon and stars, ether, darkness, light, all beings, all the sense organs, the intellect, and the organ of generation. These things form its body, and do not know that it is within them and controls them. It is not a separate entity, it is one's own Self, and is immortal. The preceding is the description of conditioned Brahman; next, the unconditioned Brahman is described. Sūtra the un-manifested universe is pervaded in its origin, continuance and dissolution by the un-

manifested Ākāśa/ether. The un-manifested ether is pervaded by what the knowers of Brahman call as the Absolute. It is not a substance, it is not a quality, it is free from all the attributes, and it is only one without a second. This does not mean that the Absolute does not exist. It is under the rule of the Absolute that the sun and moon are held in their own courses, heaven and earth hold their own positions, moments, days and nights, month, seasons and year are maintained in their respective places, and people praise the charitable. Whoever without knowing this Absolute, makes fire offerings, performs sacrifices and practices penances, finds all that work only transitory because after enjoying the results of work, is reborn. But the one, who leaves this after knowing the Absolute, is the knower of Brahman and is immortal.

Next the discussion of the number of gods is described. It is said that *Nividā*, a set of mantras inserted among the laudatory hymns, mentions the number relating to the Viśvadēvas the universal gods to be in the thousands. They are the manifestations of the 33 gods: eight Vāsus consisting of fire, earth, air, the sky, the sun, heaven, the moon and the stars, eleven Rudras consisting of ten organs and the mind, twelve Ādityas consisting of the 12 months, and Indra and Prajāpati. These 33 gods contract to six – fire, earth, air, the sky, the sun, and heaven. These are included in the gods of the three worlds which in turn are in two gods – matter and cosmic vital force. Air that blows is considered as one and a half god because all beings flourish by its existence, and it contains these two gods. Cosmic vital force Hiranyagarbha is the one god that contains them all; it is one, and at the same time infinite. It expands into countless gods with different functions and attributes according to the varying capacities of persons to comprehend it. Through meditation, one attains identity with the god that is meditated upon. When one is identified with Hiranyagarbha, the heart extends to all directions. The body consisting of name, form and action rests on the heart, and the body and heart rest on Prāṇa the vital force. The five forms of vital force are interrelated and have specific functions. Prāṇa would exhaust itself if not held back by Apāna from the lower position; the two are checked by Vyāna from its central position. These three are fixed to Udāna which permeates the whole body; all four rest on the Samāna. The coordinated function of the body mind and vital force indicates the existence of a being whose sake all those exist; this is the individual Self. This Self is 'That' which has been described as 'not this' 'not this'. It is imperceptible, unattached, does not suffer or perish. This Being, which is to be known only from the Upaniṣads, projects these beings, withdraws them and again transcends them. It is both conditioned and unconditioned Brahman.

After answering all the questions put forward by the scholars as above, Yājñavalkya asks them a question. In many respects the tree is like a person, but if a tree is pulled out with its roots it does not grow back; from what root a person sprouts back after being cut down by death, was the question. None of the scholars there could answer it. The Upaniṣad answers it as the Brahman, the Absolute Intelligence and Bliss, from which a dead person is reborn.

Yājñavalkya's discussion with the Emperor Janaka of Videha is in the fourth chapter. Fire, the presiding deity of the organ of speech, air, the presiding deity of the vital force, sun the presiding deity of the eye, the presiding deities of the ear the directions, moon the presiding deity of mind, and heart/Hiranyagarbha the presiding deity of the intellect, are mere aspects of the Supreme Brahman; meditating upon them results, after death, in merging with the respective gods.

Where one goes, after one is dissociated from the body, is then discussed. Vaiśvānara, the universal person, pervades the universe as both the experiencing subject and the experienced objects. Vaiśvānara becomes Virāj in the individual during the waking state, Taijasa in the dream state, and Prāñī which corresponds to Hiranyagarbha on the cosmic scale, in the

state of dreamless deep sleep. The Self is identified with these three states corresponding to the gross, the subtle and the causal bodies.

As the intellect is transparent and is next to the Self, it reflects the consciousness of the Self. The intellect appears luminous by the light of the Self, similar to a glass jar placed in the sun shining the light of the sun. The Self alone is luminous; its light illuminates the sun, the moon and all the shining objects of the universe. It is the illuminator of all, and it is not illuminated by anything. It is different from all material lights, it does not belong to the body, and is absent in the dead body. The light is within a person, and it belongs to the Self.

The Self is reflected in the intellect. The intellect moves between the waking and the dream states. When the intellect is transformed into the dreams, the Self creates a dream-body akin to the body of the waking state; most often the dream is a memory of past experiences in the waking state; the objects that are seen in dream are created using the impressions of the waking world. After wandering in dream and merely witnessing the results of good and bad deeds, it hastens back to the previous waking or dreamless deep sleep state. It is not affected by whatever it sees, because it is disassociated from and unattached to the body and the dream. In deep sleep, the individual Self sees no dream and seeks no desire. It is free from all relative attributes, and enjoys the highest serenity. The bliss is the nearest approximation of the state of Brahman. The individual Self, fully embraced by the Supreme Self, is free from duality, knows nothing external or internal, and is beyond all afflictions of the heart. This is its highest goal, its highest glory, its highest world, its highest bliss, and it is the world that is Brahman.

The gradations of joy/bliss are then given. This measure is somewhat different from what is in the Taittirīyōpaniṣad (see 'Taittirīya Upaniṣad' article). The joy of one who is physically perfect, opulent, lord of others, and most endowed with all human enjoyments, represents one unit of joy. Then each succeeding level of joy is one hundred times the preceding joy unit. One hundred human joy unit equals one joy unit of the manes who have won their world; one hundred times that is the joy of the world of the celestial minstrels; one hundred units of that joy is equal to one measure of joy for the gods who have attained godhood through their action; one hundred of that is the joy of the gods by birth; one hundred measure of that joy is equal to the joy in the world of Prajāpati/Virāj; one hundred units of that equal the joy in the world of Hiranyagarbha, the Brahmālōka; thereafter it is the Supreme Bliss.

However, ignorance persists in an un-manifested form during deep sleep. This unawareness during deep sleep means the existence of intellect in its causal state. The same individual Self, after rejoicing and wandering, and merely seeing the results of the deeds in the dream state, hastens back to the waking state.

Transition of the Self from one body to another is compared to its passing from dream to the waking state. When the body is worn out by old age or disease, the Self separates from the gross body, and hastens back to another body that has been made ready according to the person's work, knowledge and previous impression. However, when going to another body, the vital force is not left behind to guard the previous body as in sleep; the vital force forms the subtle body to transport the individual Self. The presiding deities of all the organs and the mind and intellect are withdrawn into the heart; the Self then departs the gross body with these deities. In its travel to the next world it is surrounded by the five gross elements namely, earth, water, fire, air and ether; these gross elements serve as material for the next gross body when the individual Self is reborn in this world. As the Self is identified with desire, the desire dictates one's actions, good or bad; the doer of virtuous action becomes

virtuous, or vicious through vicious act; it attains the results of the work it does. After experiencing the results in another world, it comes back to this world and is reborn in a new gross body. That is what happens to the one with the desires.

But in the one, who has no desires other than the desire in the Self itself, there is no going or coming or taking another body; one realizes the Brahman in this very body even when alive. The Self no longer identifies with the body, and, in this disembodied state, it is immortal, the Supreme Self, the Brahman, the Light of Pure Intelligence. The illumined knower of Brahman, becoming emancipated in this very life, reaches the realm of liberation after release from the body.

Those who adore rites as a consequence of ignorance, and those that are attached to ritual meditation, enter into blinding darkness. People, who are ignorant and devoid of Self-knowledge, go to those worlds known as cheerless and covered with blinding darkness. The intelligent seeker of Brahman, after knowing about the Self from a teacher and the scriptures, should strive for realization by practicing renunciation, calmness, self-control, withdrawal of the senses, fortitude, and concentration. Brahman is to be known by the mind in accordance with the instructions of the teacher, and there should be no diversity in it. It is to be realized only as homogeneous Pure Intelligence. It is indescribable, unchangeable, and free from impurities. This Self is 'That' which has been described as 'not this, not this'. Knowing this, becoming self-controlled, serene, and free from desire, possessed of fortitude and concentration, and seeing the Supreme Self in one's own Self, one sees everything as the Self. That is Brahman.

Then the story of Yājñavalkya teaching his wife Maitreyī, how to attain immortality, is repeated again. It is followed by Varīśa, the line of teachers, for the third and fourth chapters of this Upaniṣad. As it is for the first and second chapters, Hiraṇyagarbha is the founder of this line also.

The last two chapters together constitute a supplementary book; it contains many messages that are scattered in various places. The fifth chapter, in its first lesson, gives the same Peace Invocation that is at the beginning of this Upaniṣad and the Īśāvāsyaōpaniṣad. It is followed by a meditation on Ōm.

Ōm. That (invisible Brahman) is infinite; this (visible universe) too is infinite. The infinite (universe) emanates from the infinite (Brahman). Having taken in the infinitude of the infinite (universe), the infinite (Brahman) alone remains.

Ōm is the ether-Brahman, the ether that is eternal, and the ether containing air. The seekers of Brahman have known that Ōm is the means of knowing; through it one knows 'That' which is to be known.

Next the chapter five explains three disciplines of self-control, charity and mercy in a short story format. Three kinds of Prajāpati's sons, namely, the gods, humans and demons, live with their father as students. After finishing the term, they ask Prajāpati for further instructions. Prajāpati gives the same instruction 'Da' to the three groups, and asks them what they understand from that instruction. The gods, who lack self-control, indicate that they understand it as 'dāmyata' meaning 'control yourselves'. Humans, who are very greedy, state that they understand it as 'datta' meaning 'be charitable'. Demons, who are aggressively cruel, say that they understand it as 'dayadhvam' meaning 'be merciful'. Prajāpati tells them that they have understood it. That very instruction is the heavenly voice of the thunder-cloud 'Da, Da, Da'; meaning 'control yourselves, be charitable and be merciful'. The terms, 'gods,

humans and demons', apply to different sections of people who lack self-control, who are very greedy, and who are cruel. Therefore, one should learn these three disciplines. Then it describes some auxiliary meditations which confer prosperity and lead one gradually to liberation. At the end of this chapter, last four verses of Íśāvāsyaõpaniṣad are repeated; a dying person who has practiced meditation and rites appeals to the Sun for the removal of obstacles to the northern way after the death.

The sixth chapter starts with a dispute among the sense organs about their personal superiority. It is as at the beginning of the fifth chapter of Ćhândõgyõpaniṣad, except here there is another organ, the organ of generation, the procreant, in addition to Prāṇa, organ of speech, eye, ear and the mind. It shows that Prāṇa, the vital force is the eldest and the best of all the organs (see 'Ćhândõgya Upaniṣad' article). Next, it gives the story of Śvetakētu where the King Pravāhaṇa asks five questions and then gives the answers as Śvetakētu and his father did not know the answers; this story is the same one as in the fifth chapter of Ćhândõgyõpaniṣad (see 'Ćhândõgya Upaniṣad' article). Then there is a detailed description of the Śrīmantha ceremony which is performed to attain greatness and wealth; it is more elaborate than the Mantha (mash) rite described in the fifth chapter of Ćhândõgyõpaniṣad. After that, somewhat indecent passages of ceremonies for the householder are given. It ends with the Varīṣa, the line of teachers for the whole Upaniṣad from Hiraṇyagarbha to the son of Pautimāṣi; most of the teachers are named after their mothers.

Õm

Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad

Śvetāśvataraōpaniṣad belongs to Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda. It is named after the sage Śvetāśvatara who taught it to his disciples. The term 'Śvetāśvatara' is said to be an honorific title meaning 'one who has controlled the senses – Śveta meaning pure, and Aśva referring to the senses' (33). The literal meaning of śvetāśvatara is white mule, and that of śvetāśva is white horse or pure horse (23). Śvetāśvatarōpaniṣad is said to be one of the most difficult, and at the same time one of the most interesting works of its kind (23). It is not one of the Upaniṣads that form the basis of enquiry in the Brahmasūtras, but it is comparatively of later origin, and is relatively more popular than the rest of the Upaniṣads, mainly because many of its mantras are referred to by the commentators in support of their opinions. Although it is Vēdic in language and conception, it is Purāṇic in expression and presentation in some passages reflecting the philosophical and religious views current at the time of its composition. It does not advocate any particular orthodox philosophical system, but has passages allied to Sāṅkhya, Yōga, Dvaita (dualism), Viśiṣṭādvaita (qualified non-dualism), Advaita (non-dualism/monism), and other Vēdantic philosophies. It gives equal emphasis on Jñāna, Bhakti and other paths of spiritual life. This Upaniṣad interposes both masculine and neuter pronouns to identify the Supreme Being, indicating that the Supreme Being is both personal and impersonal (33). When speaking of the Highest-Self or the Highest-Brahman, it applies such names as Hara, Rudra, Śiva, Bhagavat, Agni, Āditya, Vāyu, and such. Although the later developed Sāṅkhya philosophy considers the nature Prakṛti to be independent of Puruṣa, Śvetāśvatarōpaniṣad states distinctly that nature is not an independent power, but the Power forming the very Self (23). The theistic Parabrahman possesses Power/Śakti, by means of which it works the wonders of projecting, protecting and reabsorbing the universe (34). The Upaniṣad has 113 mantras in six chapters (33).

Chapter one starts with a discussion among some students of Vēda about philosophy and religion. The questions raised and discussed are: What is the cause? Is Brahman the cause? Whence or why are we born? Why do we live? Where is our final rest? By whom or what the knowers of Brahman are controlled and subjected to the law of happiness and misery?

The cause is something that immediately precedes the effect. Neither of the time, inherent nature, law, chance, matter, energy, intelligence, nor a combination of these can be considered as the cause, due to their own identity, and to the existence of the Self. Also the Self is not master of itself, being under the influence of happiness and misery. By practicing meditation and Yōga, the Vēdic students realize the Self-conscious power which had been concealed in them by Guṇas/qualities. This 'One' without a second, which had been incomprehensible because of the limitations of the intellect of the spiritual aspirants, presides over all these causes beginning with time and ending with the individual Self.

The universe as it appears to our intellect is explainable as an expression of the Supreme Self, and is compared to a wheel using the terminology of the later Sāṅkhya Philosophy. The rim of the wheel represents Nature which is variously referred to as un-manifested ether, Prakṛti, Māyā, Śakti, Ajñāna and such; it is the cause of the whole creation. Three tires on the rim of the wheel represent three Guṇas/qualities, namely, Sattva (purity and harmony), Rajas (passion and activity), and Tamas (dullness and inertia). The wheel has sixteen extremities which represent the sixteen products; they are eleven indriyas/organs, and five gross-elements/pañcabhūtas; creation becomes complete with their evolution. The wheel has fifty spokes which represent five Viparyayas/misconceptions, twenty-eight Aśaktis/disabilities, nine Tuṣṭis/satisfactions, and eight Siddhis/perfections. It has twenty counter-spokes or wedges

that strengthen the spokes, representing ten senses and their ten objects. It has six Aśtagas/sets each consisting of eight entities – eight-fold nature, eight ingredients of the body, eight psychic powers, eight mental states, eight superhuman beings, and eight virtues. It is driven along three different roads, Dharma, Adharma and Jñāna, by means of a belt Kāma/desire that is single yet manifold because of differences in the objects of desire, and with each revolution giving rise to two, meaning mōha/delusion giving rise to two opposites, merit and sin or happiness and misery.

The expressed universe is also compared to a river; this comparison signifies that the universe springs from, and goes back to God, just as the river water comes from the sea, and flows back to the sea, and that the life in it is full of danger as it is in the river.

In this infinite wheel of Brahman in which everything lives and rests, the soul is whirled about in the cycle of births and deaths; but knowing the soul not to be separate from Brahman, and itself the moving force of everything, one attains immortality. This Supreme Brahman, the firm support of all this, is imperishable; knowing the inner essence of this, the knowers of Vēda become devoted to Brahman, merge themselves in It, and are released from birth. Īśa the Lord supports the universe of the perishable and the imperishable, the manifest and the un-manifest. One not knowing the Lord because of being the enjoyer is bound and gets attached to worldly pleasures; but when one knows the Lord, the one is released from all fetters.

The conscious subject and the unconscious object, the master and the dependent, both are unborn; another one who is engaged in bringing about the relation of the enjoyer and the enjoyed is also unborn. When this triad, the subject, the object, and the relation between the two, is realized as Brahman, this Self becomes infinite and universal. Matter is perishable, but Hara/God is imperishable and immortal. The only God rules over the perishable and the individual souls. By meditating on, by uniting with, and by becoming one with God, there is cessation of all illusion. With the knowledge of God all fetters fall off, and with waning ignorance births and deaths cease. By continuous meditation and going beyond the consciousness of the body one reaches the universal lordship thus fulfilling all the desires and becoming one without a second. This eternally existing in one's own self is to be known only, and there is nothing to be known beyond that. The enjoyer, the enjoyed, and that which brings about the enjoyment as a result of meditation, all this are the three aspects of Brahman.

Fire is latent in a fire-stick, and it can be kindled by striking that piece of wood with another fire-stick; similarly, Ātman is there in a latent state in the body, and by meditating on the Praṇava/Ōm, the Ātman can be perceived. One, who by means of truthfulness, self-control and concentration, looks again and again for this Self which is all pervading and rooted in self-knowledge and meditation, that one becomes Supreme Brahman, the destroyer of ignorance.

The second chapter shows how the application of Yōga is helpful in the realization of the knowledge of Brahman. In order to realize the Truth, one has to attain purity of mind by a life of self-control in accordance with the rules of righteousness. Pure Consciousness is separate from the ordinary consciousness of the intellect, and it is referred to as the 'Light' of the fire, the fire being the ordinary consciousness. Once the mind is controlled, one will have the capacity to discriminate between truth and ignorance. Having attained this capacity, the evolving Ātman brings itself out of attachments to the pleasures of the world; this is renunciation. Constant and vigorous practice of the control of mind is required for the manifestation of the self-luminous and for the attainment of supreme bliss. With the help of

the mind and the intellect, controlling the senses which have a natural tendency to run after the worldly pleasures, is necessary for the immanent soul to manifest the self-luminous infinite Light. The wise ones undergo the necessary discipline and spiritual practice to control the activities of the mind and intellect, and only the knowing ones attain the great glory of the all-pervading, infinite, all-knowing, self-luminous Immanent Soul. Only by continued meditation, one will merge in the ancient Brahman; this is Nirvikalpa Samādhi.

Where fire the intellectual knowledge is churned out as a result of study, reflection and philosophical inquiry (as in Jñānayōga), where air the vital functions is controlled (as in Prāṇāyāma of Rājayōga), and where Sōma juice overflows when ritual gives place to self-sacrifice, and when work becomes unattached and is elevated to worship and service to God in oneself (as in Karmayōga), then the mind attains Perfection. Attaining whom one destroys the mind which is the source of the phenomenal world, and rids the troubled results of the past actions – to that ancient Brahman one should be devoted - towards the Immanent Soul conceived as the Prime Cause (as in Bhaktiyōga).

The body along with the chest, neck and head, held erect in a straight posture (as in the *Āsana* part of Yōga), and placing the senses and the mind in the heart, meaning withdrawal of all senses and stabilizing the mind (as in the *Pratyāhāra* part of Yōga), the one who knows the meaning of Ōm and practices meditation, crosses over the fearful currents of rebirth. Controlling the senses with an effort (as in the practice of *Yama* part of Yōga), and regulating the activities in the body (as in the practice of *Niyama* part), and then, when the vital activities become gentle, and only then, one should breathe through the nostrils (as in *Prāṇāyāma* part of Yōga). Then the knowing one, without being distracted, should keep the hold on the mind and continue the meditation (as in *Dhāraṇa* and *Dhyāna* parts of Yōga). One should perform these exercises in mind control and concentration, in a place where the ground is level without any pebbles, where there is no wind, dust, fire, dampness and disturbing noises, and where the scenery is pleasing to the eyes. During the Yōga meditation, visualization/appearance of forms like snow, smoke, sun, wind, fire, fire-fly, lightening, crystal and moon, as part of the various stages of mental modification, heralds the manifestation of Brahman.

When the Yōgin understands that the physical body is made up of five elements namely earth, water, light, air and ether, and that the real Self is separate from the body, the Yōgin becomes possessed of a body made of the fire of Yōga, and is not subject to diseases, old age and death. When the Yōgin realizes the truth of Brahman through the perception of the truth of Ātman resembling a light in the body, and knowing the Divinity as free of all modifications, the Yōgin is freed from all sins. This Divinity pervades all directions in their entirety, and it is the first born, meaning it is Hiranyagarbha. It alone is born and is to be born in the future, meaning that Hiranyagarbha is the first born of each cycle of creation-evolution-maintenance-dissolution. Obeisance is then given to the Divinity who is in the fire, in the water, in the plants and in the trees, and who has pervaded the whole universe.

The third chapter depicts God **Rudra as the one and only Brahman**, and also uses the term **Śiva** in the literal sense to mean calm, blissful, kind, auspicious, propitious, benevolent, and such.

The one and only who exists at the time of creation and dissolution of the universe, and who with inscrutable Power appears as the Divine Lord, He, having innumerable forces working therein, controls all the worlds. Those who know this become immortal. Rudra is the only One; there is no other standing to make Him the second. O people, He who controls and protects these worlds by His own powers is inside every being. He projects all the worlds out

of Himself, maintains them, and at the end of time, withdraws them into Himself. God, one and only, creating heaven and earth, is the owner of all the eyes, all faces, all hands, and all feet in this universe. As the indwelling Self, He inspires and guards them all to perform respective duties in accordance with the knowledge. Rudra, the creator and supporter of the gods (senses), and the Lord of them all, the great seer, who in the days of yore brought into being the cosmic soul Hiranyagarbha, endows us with good thoughts. O Rudra, by your Śiva-self (calm and blissful self), blessing all creatures through the Vēdas, and rooting out sin, are bound to make us happy. O revealer of the Vēdas, what arrow that You hold in your hand for throwing, o protector of the devotees, make that propitious (śiva), and do not injure the divine person Puruṣa who has manifested as the universe.

Higher than that personal Brahman is the infinite Supreme Brahman who is in all beings hidden in their bodies. Knowing that to be the Lord who envelops this whole universe, one becomes immortal. That Divine Lord, pervading everything, omnipresent, benevolent (Śiva), dwells in the hearts of all beings. The Self, the mighty Lord, the controller, the internal light, guides the intellect of all beings in the attainment of this extremely Pure State. It is implied that although the devotee would be satisfied with the personal God, the highest form of liberation is possible only by realizing the Absolute; it seems that it leads the aspirant from the personal God to the impersonal Brahman.

Two mantras from Puruṣa Sūkta of Ṛgvēda X.90.1-2 are interposed here:

The cosmic Puruṣa has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, and a thousand feet; having enveloped the earth on all sides, He extends ten-fingers beyond.

The cosmic Puruṣa is all that is, all that was, and all that is to be; also, even though He increases beyond His own nature in the form of the objective universe, He remains the Lord of immortality.

Then it continues with a slight variation of the Ṛgvēda X.81.3 mantra: With hands and feet everywhere, with eyes, heads and mouths everywhere, with ears everywhere, 'That' exists pervading everything in the universe. Subtler than the subtlest and greater than the greatest, the Ātman is hidden in the heart. The expounders of Brahman declare this primeval Immanent Self of all, who is omnipresent because of His all-pervasiveness, to be free from birth.

Chapter four first describes the one formless God that assumes many forms with the help of His own Śakti/Power. Then it gives two verses from Muṇḍakōpaniṣad 3.1.1-2 where two birds on the self-same tree are compared to Jīvātman and Paramātman in the body, and the Jīvātman realizing its own greatness as Paramātman (see 'Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad' article).

Then it continues. The Vēdas, sacrifices, spiritual practices, religious observances, past, future, and the whole world including ourselves, is projected by God the Lord of *Māyā*. Jīva/soul is bound by *Māyā*, and is entangled in the created world. Prakṛti is *Māyā*, and the Great-God Mahēśvara is the Lord of *Māyā*. Verse 3.4 is repeated again with very slight modification: Rudra, who *witnessed the birth of Hiranyagarbha*, endows us with good thoughts. This Divinity, who created the universe and who is the all-pervading soul, dwells in the hearts of creatures, being perceived through emotions, intellect, will and imagination, and not perceived through the senses; those who perceive this Divinity through the faculty of intuition as thus seated in their heart, become immortal. Then there is this obeisance. Some, being afraid of the cycle of births and deaths, approach You the unborn, O Rudra, protect me with that benevolent face of Yours. O Rudra, do not injure us in Your anger; we invoke You always with offerings.

Chapter five starts with a statement: Ignorance leads to the perishable, and wisdom leads to immortality; the Supreme Brahman is entirely different from ignorance and wisdom, because both are modifications of the mind; both ignorance and wisdom exist in, and are controlled by the Supreme Brahman. Then, it reiterates that the Supreme Brahman not only controls the whole evolution of the universe and its dissolution, but also is responsible for the endless and beginning-less cycles of creation-evolution-maintenance-dissolution. The Supreme Brahman is the witness to these cycles; each cycle starts with the first born Hiranyagarbha, and the cosmic process of birth and growth of individuals occurs in accordance to the law of Karma. One, who gets attached to the pleasurable qualities of things, works to the sake of its fruits, and enjoys the fruits of the deeds; despite being master of the senses, becomes bound by the three Guṇas, and assumes various forms, wanders about through the three paths – the path of the Gods, the path of the Fathers, and the path to the lowest birth – as a result of ones own deeds. This subtle (meaning incapable of being known by the gross mind and senses) individual soul, on account of limitation of the intellect, gets associated with egoism and Sankalpa (wanting something not deserved). But the subtle soul is potentially infinite, and is to be known. It is neither female, nor male, and not even neuter; whatever body it assumes, it becomes identified with it. Similar to the body growing nourished by food and drink, the embodied soul, by desire and delusion successively assumes various forms and places according to the deed of the body, mind and action. The cause of all this is God, and realizing this, one becomes free from all fetters. One, who realizes this Divinity which created both life and matter, which can be intuited by pure and devoted mind, and which is the blissful, the incorporeal, and the nameless, is freed from further embodiment.

Chapter six starts with a remark. Some 'deluded thinkers', referring to those not recognizing God, speak of Nature as the force that revolves the wheel of Brahman, and others think of time as this force; but really all this is the glory of God. Energy assumes various forms such as earth, water, light, air and ether at the command of the Pure Consciousness itself, which is the master of Guṇas and the maker of time, and by whom all this is ever enveloped. After setting the creation in motion, He unites the principle of Spirit with the principle of Matter - with one (Avidyā/ignorance), with two (Dharma and Adharma), with three (three bodies – gross, subtle and causal), and with eight (the five elements – earth, water, fire, air and ether – and mind, intellect and egoism) - through the mere instrumentality of time and their own inherent properties. The creation starts when there is disequilibrium of the three Guṇas – Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas; when the three Guṇas regain their equilibrium, they no longer are operative, and this absence results in Pralaya, the cosmic dissolution.

The adorable God who appears as the universe and who is the true source of all the creatures, can be perceived by meditating as seated in the heart, even though He is the primeval cause of the union as well as the part-less entity transcending the three divisions of time and form. It is the simultaneous realization of the Divinity, as the Immanent in the self, and transcending the cycle of births and deaths as well as time and form. To those wise ones, who feel in their own hearts the presence of Divinity, belongs eternal happiness. The implication, here, seems to be that, loving contemplation and worship is a necessary preliminary step in the realization of both the Personal God with attributes and the Impersonal Absolute. To the One, who at the beginning of creation projected Brahmā, who delivered the Vēdas unto him, who constitutes the supreme bridge of immortality, and who is without parts, free from actions, tranquil, faultless and taintless, the seeker of liberation goes for refuge to that Effulgent One whose light turns the understanding towards the Ātman.

Finally it is implied that a true spiritual instructor must be a knower of Brahman. It then states that this highest mysticism expounded in the Vēdānta should not be taught to one whose passions have not been subdued, neither to one who is not a worthy son, nor to an unworthy

disciple. These truths, when taught, shine forth only in the one with a great-soul who has supreme devotion to God, and an equal degree of devotion to the spiritual teacher. They shine forth in the one with a great-soul.

Om

VYĀSA

Vyāsa means 'compiler'. Vēda Vyāsa means 'compiler of the Vēdas'. The term Vyāsa itself has come to be known only as Vēda Vyāsa. Both these terms are titles conferred on a person named Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana. Kṛṣṇa is a proper name and it means dark or black. Dvaipāyana means a person born on an island. Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana is said to have been born on an island in the Yamuna River. His mother was a fisherman's daughter named Satyavati, and his father was a Ṛṣi by name Parāśara. The term Pārāśarya refers to Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana as the son of Parāśara.

The ever present vibrations/sounds were perceived/heard by the ancient Ṛṣis, and were transmitted orally/verbally, over thousands of years, in the form of Vēda (meaning knowledge or wisdom) in the ancient language of Vēdic Sanskrit. In course of time a need arose to compile and record the Vēda. Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana, now revered as the **Vēda Vyāsa**, collected the Vēda and arranged it into four-Vēda format. All the hymns used by the Hōṭr-priest to invite the various divinities to the sacrificial ceremony became the Rgvēda. All the liturgical parts of the Vēda, useful to the Adhvaryu-priest, the chief executor of the sacrificial rites, formed the Yajurvēda. Collection of all the musical chants, especially those associated with the Sōma group of sacrifices, and to be sung by the Udgāṭr-priest (the singer), was named the Sāmavēda. The rest, a sort of miscellaneous appendix and addenda, assigned to the Brahmā-priest who is considered as the supervisor over the whole sacrificial process, became the Atharvavēda (2). Furthermore, Vyāsa taught the Vēdas to his four chief disciples, and assigned one each of the Vēdas to them to be transmitted over the generations. Paila was assigned Rgvēda, Vaiśampāyana the Yajurvēda, Jaimini the Sāmavēda, and Samantu the Atharvavēda.

It is generally believed that Vyāsa compiled and classified the Vēdas more than 5,000 years ago (4). It is also believed that Vēda Vyāsa authored Mahābhārata which includes the well known Bhagavad-Gītā, the 18 Purāṇas, and the Brahma-sūtra. However there is considerable controversy not only about Vyāsa's time period, but also about the authorship of his works other than the compilation of the Vēdas. This controversy seems to be mainly due to confusion caused by now defunct theory of Aryan Invasion of India. This theory had implied that there was no Sanskrit or Vēdas in ancient India prior to the so called invasion which supposedly had occurred between 1,500 BCE and 1,200 BCE. Because of this false theory, everything had been dated since that false event. Once the theory was disproved, all these time periods had to be reevaluated and corrected.

Rgvēda period had been well established during the period prior to 3,100 BCE and the ancient Vēdic civilization reached its maturity by 2,700 BCE. Composition of the main parts of the Vēdas being completed by then with some of the appendages added at a later date. In general, the Brāhmaṇas and the Āraṇyakas originated around 2,700 BCE to 1,500 BCE. Some modern historians believe that some of the Upaniṣads were composed between 7,000 and 5,000 BCE (2); but in general the composition of the Upaniṣads is said to belong to the second millennium BCE (7). The original Purāṇa which is mentioned in the early Vēdic literature is not available now. The post-Vēdic Purāṇas were composed following the close of the Upaniṣadic period (see 'Timing of the Composition of Vēdic Scriptures' article). **Purāṇa** means 'history having the origin in the distant past', where as **Itihāsa** means 'verily, it happened thus' and means that it was composed as it happened. The two great epics, Mahābhārata and Rāmāyaṇa, are considered as Itihāsas, not Purāṇas. It is stated that some elements of the Mahābhārata can be traced back to the early Vēdic period.

Vēda Vyāsa is intimately connected with the story of the Mahābhārata itself. Vyāsa's mother Satyavati, later married the king of Hastinapura, which is located north-east of Delhi in the present day Uttar Pradesh State, and had two sons. But the sons died without having any children. Satyavati asked Vyāsa to bless the two wives of her dead son Vicitravirya with children; this resulted in two sons (one each). Dhritarāstra was born blind; he is the father of the Kauravas (said to be 100 sons). Pāṇḍu was born pale and anemic; he is the father of the Pāṇḍavas (five sons). The Kurukṣētra war was between these cousins. Kurukṣētra land roughly corresponds to the present day Haryana State in India.

The core of the Mahābhārata is called '**Jaya**' which means victory. Jaya with its 8,800 verses is attributed to Vēda Vyāsa. **Bhārata** with 24,000 verses, containing the Jaya in its entirety, is said to have been recited by Vaiśampāyana who was one of Vyāsa's chief disciples. **Mahābhārata** is more than 100,000 verses, and is the expanded version of Bhārata. It is said to have been recited by Ugrasrava Sauti, a professional story teller, to an assembly of Ṛṣis. Jaya is structured in the form of a dialog between Dhritarāstra and his advisor and chariot driver Sanjaya. Jaya deals with diverse subjects such as geography, history, warfare, religion and morality. Jaya includes the well known **Bhagavad-Gītā**. Bhagavad-Gītā is a dialog in a dialog. The inner dialog is between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna on the battle field of Kurukṣētra. Divine Kṛṣṇa is said to be an incarnation of God Viṣṇu, and not to be confused with Vyāsa whose name is Kṛṣṇa Dvaipāyana. Arjuna is one of the Pāṇḍavas, and Kṛṣṇa was his chariot driver. Thus, technically speaking, Vyāsa authored 'Jaya' including the 'Bhagavad-Gītā', and not Mahābhārata.

The traditionalists believe that the story of Mahābhārata took place in the Dvāpara Yuga, just before the beginning of the Kali Yuga which is said to have started after the disappearance of Kṛṣṇa the Divine and submersion of Dvārakā Island in the Arabian Sea in 3,102 BCE. Another calculation based on the same astronomical references in the passage itself, gives the date for the Bhārata to be 2,449 BCE, 653 years after the start of the Kali Yuga. Archeological findings from the excavations at the Dvārakā site which was a port city in Gujarat state in India, have revealed structures similar in style to the traditional city of the Divine Kṛṣṇa that has been described in Mahābhārata, and it has been dated to about 1,500 BCE (7). Vyāsa was a contemporary of Divine Kṛṣṇa, therefore it could be construed that Vyāsa lived around that date of 1,500 BCE. Some other archeological findings of the so called 'Painted Grey Ware Culture' have been dated to be between 1,100 BCE and 700 BCE, and one estimate, using this archeological evidence, gives the date for the Kurukṣētra war to be 836 BCE. However, the reference number 9 on pages 364-365 states that as reported in MLBD Newsletter, Delhi, India, Motilal Banarsidass, January 1988, the marine archeologists from the National Institute of Oceanography (India) have discovered a 'port wall' off the Bet-Dvārakā island in the Gulf of Kutch on December 11, 1987; this 250 meter long wall belonged to the now submerged city of Dvārakā; the wall is made of seven courses of specially designed prism shaped stones; numerous artifacts such as seals and pottery have been found and that the pottery found near the wall and elsewhere on the island have been confirmed by thermo-luminescent dating to be about 3,500 years old.

It is stated that Vyāsa's father Parāśara wrote the original text of Viṣṇu Purāṇa, and Vyāsa authored the rest, and edited and presented all the 18 Purāṇas (4). Furthermore, it is said that Vyāsa's son Śuka was the narrator of Vyāsa's major Purāṇa called Śrīmad Bhāgavata. There is some controversy about the authorship of the Purāṇas.

Most of the controversy is on the authorship of **Brahma Sūtra**. Sūtras are the main parts of the doctrines of the Hindu Philosophical Systems. Sūtra is an aphorism with minimal use of

words to project a thought (4). Brahma Sūtra systematizes the thought of the Upaniṣads, which are the later parts of the Vēdas; therefore, it forms part of the Uttara Mīmāṃsā Philosophy. Brahma Sūtra is the book of reference in all matters pertaining to the Vēdāntic doctrines. It was composed by the sage **Bādarāyaṇa**. Bādarāyaṇa lived under a Badari tree at the Badari Āśrama in the Himalayas. Traditionalists identify Bādarāyaṇa with Vyāsa, and believe that the two are one and the same. Śaṅkara of the Advaita Vēdāntic School of Philosophy identifies the two separately where as Rāmānuja of the Viśiṣṭādvaitism implies that they are one and the same. It is stated that in Bhagavad-Gītā there is a reference to Brahma Sūtra, and that there are references in the Sūtra of the Gītā; and that those cross references may mean that the author of the Gītā had a hand in the present recension of the Sūtra (35). The confusion might have been because that some form of Vēdānta-sūtras must have existed before Buddha and that Vēda Vyāsa must have had a hand in the present recensions of the Sūtra (35). Many modern historians think that Bādarāyaṇa and Vēda Vyāsa were two different persons. The controversy continues.

Om

SANSKRIT SCRIPT

Script is a written form of language. Ṛgvēda, the most ancient of all compositions, was fashioned along with the old Vēdic Sanskrit language which was purely an oral literature then. Beginning of this period is generally considered to be around 10,000 BCE (2). The Vēdic seers have stated that 'Saṃskṛtaṃ is the name of a scientifically standardized language evolved by the seers out of the primitive articulate speech by subjecting it to grammatical analysis' (page XV of reference 13). In this regard references in the Vēdas themselves are given: Ṛgvēda I.164.50 and X.90.16, Kṛṣṇa Yajurvēda III.5.11, Śukla Yajurvēda 31.16, and Atharvavēda VII.5.1 say 'the scholars (here it says dēvas) carried out the operation/yajña (said to mean composition of hymns); these were their first duties/dharma.

The Vēdas in ancient Sanskrit/Saṃskṛta have been faithfully passed down orally/verbally over thousands of years. The presence of this strong oral tradition does not preclude ancient written records. It seems that without a script, the Vēdic poets would have found it exceedingly difficult to meet rigorous standards of Sanskrit metric composition; the poets knew more than fifteen distinct metres of composition (7). Furthermore, Śukla Yajurvēda XVII.2 says 'O Agni, may these bricks be mine own kine; one, and ten, and ten tens, a hundred, and ten hundreds, a thousand, and ten thousand a myriad, and a hundred thousand, and a million, and a hundred million, and an ocean middle and end, and a hundred thousand millions, and a billion' (16, 17). It is stated that counting involving such large numbers without some form of written annotation is impossible (7). Also, it is to be noted that ancient people of India knew such notation of large numbers thousands of years ago; the concept of one million did not become common in the west until the nineteenth century CE (AD) (7). Furthermore, the geometric design of the Vēdic fire-altar involved mathematical calculation that could not possibly be done in the mind alone; there had to be some sort of writing involved (7). The ancient seers not only had the ability to write numbers, but also knew how to write literature.

Evidences of writing can be inferred from the Vēdas themselves: Ṛgvēda X.62.7 uses the term '*aṣṭa-karṇyah*' meaning 'eight-marked ears' and refers to cattle – cattle that had their ears marked with numeral eight. Atharvavēda XIX.72.1 says that 'Vēda is to be placed back in the chest from where it was taken', implying that there was a written form of the Vēda then (21). Writing might have been executed on perishable material such as palm leaves, and birch bark or some other form of wood. The earliest form of available writing has been traced as far back as 3,300 BCE. Archeological findings from Mohenjo-Daro, Harappa and other sites have revealed about 4,200 objects that have inscriptions on them. They are mainly carvings on seals, small pieces of soft-stone, and a few copper tablets. They reveal a surprisingly mature system of writing. There are about 400 different signs including numerals. The longest text is twenty-six signs long, with an average length of five signs (7).

Because of the false theory of 'Aryan Invasion of India' which had claimed that there was no Sanskrit or Vēda prior to the so called invasion around 1,500 BCE, it had been thought that the above Indus-Sarasvati script was probably related to old form of Tamil language, thus making deciphering of the script enigmatic. But now that the theory has been disproven and thus defunct, the script has been compared to Sanskrit language and the later Brahmi script. This comparison has revealed that the Indus-Sarasvati script evolved into the Brahmi script (7, 36).

Brāhmī stands for Goddess Sarasvatī the Goddess of learning. Brāhmī script was used by Emperor Ashoka to inscribe his edicts on stone pillars that are found all over India. Current evidence clearly shows that Brāhmī script is derived from the Indus-Sarasvatī script (7, 36). Scripts of all the modern languages of India have originated from the Brāhmī script. From Brāhmī, two prominent branches of scripts developed: The present-day Sanskrit script called the Dēvanāgarī, and the scripts of all the North Indian languages evolved from one branch; and the other branch 'Bhaṭṭiprolu Brāhmī' in South India, also known as 'Pallava Grantha' evolved into the languages of South India (4, 36). It is to be noted that all the South Indian and all the North Indian languages, including their scripts, evolved from Sanskrit.

Om

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. ŚŪNYASAMPĀDANE. Volumes I through V. Published by Karnatak University, Dharwar, India.
2. Holy Scriptures. A Symposium on the Great Scriptures of the World. Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras, India.
3. The Essentials of Hinduism. A Comprehensive Overview of the World's Oldest Religion. By Swami Bhaskarananda. The Vedanta Society of Western Washington, Viveka Press, Seattle, WA 98102, USA. 2002
4. The Vedas. Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswati, Bhavan's Book University, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Mumbai, India. Eighth Edition 2009.
5. Studies on the Tantras. The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Kolkata, India. Third reprint 2002.
6. Śrī Śivayogi Śivācārya's Śrī Siddhāntaśikhāmaṇi with Śrī Maritoṅṭadārya's Tattvapradīpika. Dr. M. Sivakumara Swamy. Shaiva Bharati Shodha Pratisthan, Jangamwadi Math, Varanasi-221 001, India. 2007
7. IN SEARCH OF THE CRADLE OF CIVILIZATION. New Light on Ancient India. Georg Feuerstein, Subhash Kak and David Frawley. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Delhi, India. This Edition reproduced from Quest Books 2001 Edition.
8. The Myth of The Aryan Invasion of India. David Frawley (Vamadeva Shastri). Voice of India, 2/18 Ansari Road, New Delhi-110 002, India. Third Enlarged Edition: June 2005
9. GODS, SAGES AND KINGS. Vedic Secrets of Ancient Civilization, by David Frawley. Passage Press, Morison Publishing, P. O. Box 21713, Salt Lake City, Utah 84121, USA. 1991
10. TAITTIRĪYOPANIṢAD by Swāmī Sarvānanda. Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai 4, India. 2008
11. Introduction to Sanskrit Part One by Thomas Egenes. Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, Private Limited, Delhi, India. Second Revised Edition 1996.
12. The Rig Veda. Complete. Translated by Ralph T. H. Griffith. Republished 2008 by Forgotten Books.
13. RĠVEDA SĀMHITĀ according to the translation of H. H. Wilson, and Bhāṣya of Sāyaṇācārya, volumes I through IV. Ravi Prakash Arya, K. L. Joshi. Primal Publications. Indica Books, D 40/18 Godowlia, Varanasi 221 001, India. 2002
14. ĪŚĀVĀSYOPANIṢAD by Swāmī Śarvānanda. Sri Ramakrishna Math, Madras 600 004, India. 2007
15. Sri Rudram and Purushasuktam. Translated by Swamī Amritananda. Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai 600 004, India. 2007.
16. YAJURVEDA SĀMHITĀ (ŚUKLA), Sanskrit Text with English Translation by R. T. H. Griffith, Edited and revised with an introduction and exegetical notes by Ravi Prakash Arya. Primal Publications India Books, D 40/18 Godowlia, Varanasi – 221 001 (UP), India. 2002
17. The Texts of the White Yajurveda Translated by Ralph T. H. Griffith. Republished 2008 by Forgotten Books.
18. The Yajur Veda Taittiriya Samhita Translated by Arthur Berriedale Keeith. Republished 2008 by Forgotten Books.
19. SĀMAVEDA SĀMHITĀ, Sanskrit Text with English Translation of R. T. H. Griffith, Edited and revised with an introduction and exegetical notes by Ravi Prakash Arya. Primal Publications, 27/28 Shakti Nagar, Delhi – 110007, India. Second Revised Edition 2003.
20. Hymns of Samaveda, Translated by Ralph T. H. Griffith. Republished 2008 by Forgotten Books.

21. ATHARVAVEDA SAMHITĀ, Sanskrit Text, English Translation, Notes & Index of Verses According to the Translation of W. D. Whitney and Bhāṣya of Śāyanācārya, Edited and revised by K. L. Joshi. Primal Publications, Delhi, India. First Edition 2000.
22. The Atharvaveda. Translated by Maurice Bloomfield. Republished 2008 by Forgotten Books.
23. The Upanishads, Parts I & II, Translated by Max Muller. Republished 2008 by Forgotten Books.
24. MINOR UPANISHADS by Swami Madhavananda. Advaita Ashrama, 5 Delhi Entally Road, Kolkata 700014, India. 2002
25. KENOPANIṢAD by Swāmī Śarvānanda. Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai 4, India. 2007
26. KATĪHOPANIṢAD by Swāmī Śarvānanda. Sri Ramakrishna Math, 16 Ramakrishna Math Road, Madras 600 004, India. 2007
27. PRAŚNOPANIṢAD by Swāmī Śarvānanda. Sri Ramakrishna Math, 16 Ramakrishna Math Road, Madras 600 004, India. 2005
28. MUNḌAKOPANIṢAD by Swami Sarvananda. Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Madras 600 004, India. 2001
29. MĀNḌŪKYOPANIṢAD by Swami Sarvananda. Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai 4, India. 2004
30. AITAREYOPANIṢAD by Swāmī Śarvānanda. Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai 4, India. 2005
31. CHĀNDOGYA UPANIṢAD by Swāmī Swāhānanda. Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai (Madras) 600 004, India. 2007
32. THE BRĪHADĀRAṆYAKA UPANIṢAD Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai 4, India. 2004
33. ŚVETĀŚVATAROPANIṢAD by Swāmī Tyāgīśānanda. Sri Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai 4, India. 2006
34. History and Philosophy of Lingāyat Religion. M. R. Sakhare. 1978 Karnatak University, Dharwad, Karnataka, India.
35. BRAHMA-SŪTRAS. According to Śrī Śaṅkara. Swami Vireswarananda. Advaita Ashrama, 5 Dehi Entally Road, Kolkata, India. Ninth Impression, April 2005
36. VĒDIC GLOSSARY ON INDUS SEALS by Dr. N. Jha, edited by B. K. Jha, Ganga Kaveri Publishing House, D. 35/77, Jangamawadimath, Varanasi 221 001 India. 1996

Books by Dr. Liᅅga Raju

A Journey Through Hindu and Viraśaiva Concepts, 2011.

Sohānta Śikhāmaᅇi, The one hundred one Sthala doctrine, A Concise composition, 2012.

Origin of the People of India and the Vēdic Culture, 2013.