

VEDIC EDUCATION

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Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>vii</i>
Chapter 1 Vedic Thought	1
Chapter 2 Gurukul Education in Ancient India	11
Chapter 3 Rigvedic Education	24
Chapter 4 Philosophy of Vedas	40
Chapter 5 Freedom to Practice Diverse Beliefs and Customs	52
Chapter 6 Supremacy of Vedas	61
Chapter 7 The Vedic Literature	86
Chapter 8 Religious Scriptures	108
Chapter 9 Vedic Math	133

Preface

Vedic education, deeply rooted in ancient Indian tradition, offers a comprehensive system of learning that transcends mere academics. It encompasses a profound understanding of the universe, human existence, and the interconnectedness of all life. At the heart of Vedic education lies the pursuit of spiritual enlightenment, with knowledge viewed as a means to attain higher consciousness and inner peace.

The Gurukula system, a hallmark of Vedic education, emphasizes the intimate relationship between student and teacher. In this ancient model, students reside with their guru, imbibing not only knowledge but also values, ethics, and life skills through direct mentorship and experiential learning. The Gurukula fosters a sense of community and belonging, nurturing a holistic approach to education that addresses the intellectual, emotional, and spiritual dimensions of human development.

The curriculum of Vedic education is vast and multifaceted, covering a wide array of subjects ranging from the recitation of sacred texts to mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, and ethics. Students are encouraged to engage in critical thinking, questioning, and debate, fostering a deep understanding of the material rather than mere memorization. Through rigorous study and reflection, they explore profound philosophical concepts such as dharma (duty), karma (action), and moksha (liberation).

Physical fitness and mental well-being are integral components of Vedic education, with practices such as yoga, meditation, and Ayurveda incorporated into daily life. These disciplines promote holistic health and balance, enhancing students' ability to concentrate, learn, and navigate life's challenges with equanimity. By

cultivating self-awareness and mindfulness, Vedic education empowers individuals to lead fulfilling and purposeful lives, grounded in inner harmony and outer service.

Vedic education is not limited to a particular caste, gender, or socioeconomic background; it is open to all who seek knowledge and truth. This inclusive approach reflects the universality of Vedic teachings, which emphasize the unity and interconnectedness of all beings. In an age of rapid change and uncertainty, the timeless wisdom of Vedic education continues to inspire seekers of wisdom, offering profound insights into the nature of reality and the human experience.

The comprehensive guide to Vedic Education, blending ancient wisdom with modern pedagogy for holistic learning and personal transformation.

—Author

1

Vedic Thought

THE WONDER OF REINCARNATION

As a river nears the ocean it looks back at its life. The virgin snows on mountain-tops that gave birth to it. The lake down below which was its nursery. The travel through mountain passes where it met its tributaries and gained adulthood. The solitude and tranquility of the forests, the singing of the birds, the lush green valleys laden with wheat, corn and rice. The adventurous ride through cities, gladly accepting their refuse and sometimes flooding them as if in a fit of anger. Thousands of experiences and hundreds of memories. And now its imminent merger into a bigger entity. Its losing of the shores which defined it and gave it its uniqueness.

Merging into the ocean however is just a brief stopover. The water evaporates leaving behind all its impurities in the ocean, the clouds drop snow on a different mountain-top, the snow melts and water feeds into a different river and keeps the never ending cycle going.

Might nature have fashioned the human life and for that matter every type of life in the same manner? A life force appearing in its mortal form, going through its journey, disappearing into a bigger entity and after being cleansed and rejuvenated, reappearing at a different time and at a different place in a new mortal garb.

Does that somehow show us that we should revere the life force within and not indulge in worshipping the external attributes provided to it by Providence? Should this shared life force provide for a common bond between all living beings or should we let ourselves be consumed by our petty differences? And if we choose the latter, would that not be an affront to the very essence of nature?

Self Observation-I: The discovery of self is a must for experiencing depth. It comes by self-observation. The Upanishads describe a simple technique for accomplishing this. They say: deliberately divide your attention at all times so as to direct a portion of it back on yourself. Divide you, the ‘person’ into an ‘observing I’ and an ‘acting or thinking I’. Within the vast array of selves of your personality, establish an awareness that only watches all the rest. By observing yourself you will realize that not YOU but IT speaks within you, moves, feels, laughs, and cries in you. This concept is enumerated in the following Upanishadic sutra:

Two birds, inseparable companions, perch on the same tree.

One eats the fruit, the other looks on.

The first bird is our individual self,

feeding on the pains and pleasures of this world;

The other is the universal Self, silently witnessing all.

*The individual self, immersed in the world of change,
deluded, laments its lack of freedom.*

*But when it discovers God, full of dignity and power,
it is freed from all its suffering.*

Our Rishis admonished; ‘Be present at every breath. Do not let your attention wander for the duration of a single breath.’

Thiourea, a transcendentalist, had this to say about the concept of self-observation: ‘I am conscious of the presence of a part of me, which, (as it were,) is not a part of me, but a spectator, sharing no experience, but taking note of it..... When the play, (it may be the tragedy,) of life is over, the spectator goes his way. It was a kind of fiction, a work of the imagination only, so far as he was concerned.

The hallmark of Socrates philosophy was ‘Know thyself’.

Discover and nurture the ‘observing I’, and you will find yourself to be more in command of your life!

Self Observation-II: The art of self observation is practiced by deliberately dividing your attention at all times so as to direct a portion of it back on yourself. Establishing an awareness which does nothing but observe the different selves of your personality, is by no means an easy task. In the beginning, a person forgets to keep the ‘observing I’ separate from the ‘acting or thinking I’. The ‘self observing’ entity keeps merging into whichever ‘I’ has control over the person at a given moment. But with persistence, different identities that a person assumes become apparent to him. Through observing them, these selves lose their hold on the person. The ‘self-observing’ part of ‘I’ becomes dominant and the person detaches himself from his other identities. This process culminates in his reaching a ‘partially awakened’ state.

In this ‘partially awakened’ state, a person does everything with a feeling of awareness and with a certain degree of control. His actions are not mere automatic responses to different stimuli. A person can see himself with complete

objectivity. This results in his being able to make more meaningful choices. With continued practice of 'self observation' a person ultimately reaches the highest state-the 'fully awakened' state. In this state a person sees, not only himself but everything around him with full objectivity. The base and meaningless concepts of 'I', 'mine', 'yours', *etc.*, disappear. The constant clamor of the mind is replaced by a sense of serenity. An inner peace prevails and the person becomes 'liberated'.

George I. Gurdjieff, a noted Russian philosopher, who was also a student of Hinduism, found the practice of 'self-observation' to be the starting point of all conscious raising efforts. The concept of 'self-observation' and how to practice it, is the single most revealing gift of the Upanishads.

Self Observation-III: A lot has been written about higher consciousness. It simply means being able to see the things around you, the way they really are, and not have your perception be coloured by your personal biases and prejudices. The Upanishadic way to accomplish this is by separating the 'observing I' from the 'acting or thinking I'. A good way to start practicing this technique is to just observe for a few days, your one hand do all it does during your waking hours. Then you can stretch this 'self-observation' to include different parts of your body, ultimately to include your mind. It is a long drawn out process but worth the results it produces.

There are many practical benefits that come from moving your consciousness to a higher level. Extracting and enhancing the 'observing you' from the 'rest of your personality' enables you to 'merely observe your anxieties' rather than be 'part of them'. That is a great way to reduce stress. Self-observation reveals to you how small a portion of your most valuable possession your emotional energy is expended wisely. People normally squander it on a host of utterly futile activities such as anxiety, purely imaginary fears, agitation and anger, and also on maintenance of an exhausting degree of muscle tension. Having discovered how wasteful you are in the use of your nervous energy, you can improve your daily life by using it wisely.

By moving to a higher level of consciousness, you can see things from other people's viewpoint. This gives you an edge in resolving minor disputes before they flare up into full-scale egotistical wars. By conserving your reservoir of emotional energies, by separating your 'self' from 'the crises in your life' and by having your perceptions devoid of any biases, your life becomes a lot simpler. The choices you make in life are more thought out. The mental equilibrium you attain calms you down. It has been said that 'awakening is the evolutionary destiny of mankind'. Why not embark on this journey now?

Man—The Ultimate God: Sadhna connotes the successful achieving of a desired end. It is the instrument for the attainment of Siddhi (perfection). The first step in sadhna is the desire for liberation (mumukshutva). Man alone possesses the desire to attain perfection. The gods are already divine and the animal kingdom does not have the desire for perfection. Only man has the conscious urge to expand without limits, to reach out and touch the stars.

Based on his study of the Hindu scriptures done in India, Troy Organ, a professor of Philosophy at Ohio University, wrote, “Man is a real living, growing entity while god is an ideal being. Man and god are identical in essence, but different in form.

Man is real potentiality; god is ideal fulfillment. Man is to be fulfilled as god is fulfilled, but not like god’s fulfillment, for god’s fulfillment is a static fulfillment — there are no possibilities in gods. Man is to be perfected beyond god, for he is to be perfected in dynamic reality. The attainment of god-realization is not the ideal goal of human life.

The Upanishads claim that the Self, the Atman, not god is to be realized. Various gods demythologized are merely the symbols of the full realization of human potentialities.”

Self observation leads to awakening. An Awakened man, a man who has pushed himself to the limits of possibilities, one who has achieved perfection in dynamic reality under the constraints of time and space, represents the highest value. That is why the Puranas say that the life of man is desired even by gods of heaven, since it is only through a human incarnation that final liberation can be achieved.

Our purpose on this planet is not just to populate the place and in the words of Gibran, ‘to fulfil life’s longing for itself’, but to awaken and actualize the potentialities present only in man. And when a man attains Siddhi through Sadhna in dynamic reality, he becomes one with Brahman. He becomes the ultimate god.

Human Neurosis: Our desire to understand and rationalize the infinite with a primitive intellect is the most amazing thing about us humans. Science enables us to analyze and validate events happening in the material realm; it lets us observe activities and processes in a controlled environment in a lab, but to extend its application to the spiritual plane is sheer madness. How could one measure the size of something infinite with a finite length of tape? How could eye see the invisible spirit? How could an analytical intellect mired in reasoning, comprehend the divine? It is simply ego driven neurosis that makes a spiritually unhinged person to expect to observe, study and validate spiritual phenomenon with his limited intellect.

Bhakti: When the intellectual curiosity has been satiated, when there are no more questions to be asked, when all the spiritual knowledge catalogued and presented in flowery prose by the learned people has been scanned, dissected and assimilated; without the person being able to still the tidal waves of his psyche, it is then that the mental speculation gives way to the practice of ‘Bhakti’. It is then that the intellect surrenders to the divine in a spirit of devotion. It is then that the man’s ascent to a spiritual life begins.

A person introduces an element of ‘Bhakti’ in his life with his very first visit to a temple. When he gets there, the person does not have to recite any prayers, he does not even have to utter a single word, for the Lord can see the devotion in his heart. Just showing up with folded hands and devotion in his heart for a *Darshan*-Darshan, which requires neither prayer nor commitment but rather is

an act of being in His presence, an act that submerges the self in a striving for the infinite-stills the troubled waves of ones mind. About a visit to the temple, the poet says,

*“kahne kee zaroorat nahin, aana hee bahut hai,
is dar pe tera sis jhukana hee bahut hai”*

The practice of spirituality through devotion provides the necessary filter which takes the sting out of the harsh realities of human existence and makes life bearable.

Rhythms of Life: Human nature dictates that we find an anchor to build our lives around. In our desperate search we go from door to door, we bounce from person to person and we jump from coattail to coattail to find somethin stable, someone we could depend on, in times of crisis. At times we feel that we have found that person and we latch on to him. When bad times do come around, as they must, we are in a state of disbelief when we find ourselves bereft of the one person we focused our lives on, one person we centered our pride on, one person who was supposed to be our anchor. Suddenly the framework of our existence seems to be receding from us. We are left only with shattered dreams.

A person who lacks a stable anchor cannot maintain equilibrium in the face of adversity. And as we well know, human relations are all transitory. We have to find something more stable, someone who would not disappoint us in times of need. That is why we have to cultivate a consciousness in which the omnipotent Lord is the anchor. The fortieth chapter of the Yajur Ved states that we should build our lives around Him, as He is the only one who is eternal and would stand by us in every adversity. To start with, one could simply visualize the deity of Lord Krishan and chant the Hare Krishan Mahamantar any time he is not mentally occupied with doing something. Over time this could extend to keeping that image of the Lord in the subconscious at all times. When He rules the subconscious mind, the person is surrendered and the rhythms of life are keyed to performing His service. In the Bhagavad Gita (12.8), Lord Krishan says, “Just fix your mind upon Me, and engage all your intelligence in me. Thus you will live in Me always, without a doubt”.

Continued practice in surrendering himself enables a person to develop the consciousness capable of remembering the Lord at the time of final exit. In the Bhagavad Gita (8.5), Lord Krishan says, “Whoever at the end of his life quits his body remembering Me, attains My nature. Of this there is no doubt”. Mahatma Gandhi did not suddenly think of invoking the Lord’s name by saying *Hey Ram* at the time of his death. He spent his whole life with Him as his anchor. He constantly practiced keeping Him in his subconscious. And so must we....so that our faith becomes a living experience.

Arjun’s Paralysis: Many scholars have studied the Bhagavad Gita and tried to provide us with an insight into the teaching of Lord Krishan. Although every chapter of Gita alludes to some aspect of our moral code, the most powerful teaching arises from Arjun’s paralysis on the battlefield. Arjun’s perplexity arises over the question of dharam, which as a warrior, bids him to fight in order to

protect the goodness, and as a person, forbids him to kill the members of his own family, his revered teachers and dear friends. Faced with Arjun's renunciation and his inability to wage war, Lord Krishan resolves his dilemma in two parts. He reminds Arjun that: (1) he must observe his dharam and, (2) the soul survives the body. In the first instance He tells Arjun that he must perform his duty, which for a warrior is to fight the evil forces to the very end and preserve goodness. Secondly, one should not worry about death, as the soul can never be slain. Rather it sheds one body at death and takes on a new one, in birth after birth.

Further Lord Krishan says that successive rebirths may be avoided by observing your dharam with complete disregard to the fruits of your action. He exhorts Arjun to hold alike happiness and unhappiness, gain and loss, victory and defeat in pursuit of his dharam. A person need not become an ascetic to achieve liberation, but only renounce the fruits of his action, and perform his duty without caring about the results. Lord Krishan says that your entitlement is only to the action, and not to the fruit it bears.

These are the answers to Arjun's dilemma. But there is another teaching which is of the greatest importance. This is the teaching of devotion to God. Lord Krishan says that he who along with his struggle for survival, also remembers Him and adores Him, is the greatest ascetic. Steeped in this Hindu philosophy, one overcomes all obstacles in life and leads a peaceful and happy life.

THE YOGA OF DEVOTION

In the twelfth chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, Arjun enquires from Lord Krishan about the relative merits of reaching Him through devotional service versus through worshipping the impersonal Brahman, the unmanifested.

Lord Krishan answers, "Those whose minds are fixed on me in steadfast love, worshipping me with absolute faith, I consider them to be most perfect." He further adds, "As for others who worship the unmanifest, indefinable and changeless, that which is omnipresent, constant, eternal and lies beyond the perception of the senses, and they do so by holding all the senses in check, are tranquil minded and devoted to the welfare of humanity, and see the Atman in every creature; they will also come to me."

"But the devotees of the unmanifest have a harder task, because the unmanifest is very difficult for embodied souls to realize."

Bhakti yoga, or the process of reaching Him by being in direct devotional service to the Lord is easier and natural for us humans. The individual soul is embodied since time immemorial, and it is very difficult for a common man to visualize that he is not the body and that the Lord does not have any physical attributes either. In Bhakti yoga, as described in Bhagavad Gita, a person accepts the Deity of Krishan as Brahman with body features and engages himself in devotional service to the Lord. So it becomes a very easy and natural process for him to reach the Supreme Being.

Janana yoga, or the process of reaching Him through understanding the unmanifested Supreme Being is very difficult. By his very nature, a common man has trouble identifying with the formless Supreme. However, if he is persistent in his quest, he might realize the eternal and attain spiritual realization through the guidance of a highly learned devotee.

But the unguided intellectualization of the unmanifest may lead a person to become an atheist. Unfortunately a large percentage of today's intelligentsia falls squarely into this category.

Bhakti Yoga, according to the Bhagavad Gita, is the shortest path to spiritual realization.

Modes of Material Nature: The last few chapters of the Bhagavad Gita enumerate the modes of material nature and the characteristics of people living under their influence.

The three modes of material nature are 'sattvaguna' or the mode of goodness, 'rajasguna' or the mode of passion, and 'tamasguna' or the mode of ignorance. Lord Krishan says, "Sattva rules a person who offers sacrifices in accordance with scriptural instructions and does not covet their fruits. Sattoguni, or a person inspired by sattva is impelled by an inner sense of duty. The performance of sacrifices by a Rajoguni is for the outward show, in the hope of a divine reward and is inspired by rajas. The Tamoguni on the other hand, totally disregard the scriptural instructions and make no offering, no prayer of dedication, no gift to the priest and are devoid of faith."

The Lord further adds, "The austerity of the body comprises of reverence for the gods, brahmins and gurus; uprightness, physical cleanliness and sexual purity and nonviolence. Austerity of speech comprises of speech that does not hurt anyone, is truthful, kind and beneficial, as well as daily recitation of scriptures. The austerity of mind comprises serenity of mind, gentleness, self control and inner purity. The triple austerities practiced with the highest faith and with nary a thought of reward crossing ones mind is the nature of sattva. The austerity undertaken out of self-pride, and in order to gain the reputation and homage attendant on pious acts is of the rajas type. Austerity practiced under some foolish misconceptions, by means of self torture or to hurt another person is of the tamas type."

Clearly a sattoguni will do everything as an offering to God. Any work done in this mode shall be the result of doer's best effort and will be performed with great willpower and determination. The motive for the effort will be something higher than the next paycheck or the next promotion. Internally a person will be all fired up to perform but outwardly he would appear to be calm and unstressed as there is no passion involved in the effort. The non-attachment to rewards of ones actions is sometimes considered to suggest coldness and lack of enthusiasm. But in reality, one is freed from the fear of failure and the desire of rewards, and offers everything he does as a sacrament of devotion to his duty. Leading ones life as a sattoguni therefore, is the most spiritual and stressfree mode that one should strive to achieve.

Householder: In the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishan says that he who along with his struggle for survival remembers Him and chants His name is the biggest ascetic. He clearly puts a spiritually devoted householder ahead of any other group of people. This is very well illustrated by the following incident.

It is said that once Sage Narad and a common householder entered the court of Lord Krishan almost at the same time. Lord Krishan chose to see the householder first. Now Sage Narad considered himself to be the foremost devotee of the Lord. So being passed up in favour of a common householder really hurt him. So much so that when he had an audience with the Lord, he complained about this incident. The Lord decided to teach the Sage a lesson. He handed him a pot full of 'ghee' and asked him to put it on his head and to go around the world without spilling a drop of it. This, the Sage was able to accomplish without any problem.

So when he came back to the Lord after going around the world, the Lord commended him on his feat and asked him as to how many times did he chant His name during the trip. The Sage said that the Lord must be really joking for he was so busy balancing the pot of ghee that he could not afford to be distracted even for a single instant. Lord Krishan told him that the house holder had to juggle a thousand responsibilities that go with being a father, a husband, a son, a brother, a breadwinner and still found time to chant His name. Sage Narad on the other hand, had only the task of balancing a pot of ghee, and could not find time to chant His name. Therefore the householder was leading a more spiritual life than the Sage. The Sage felt humbled and recognized the greatness of a householder.

Householders are the backbone of the human race. They are the ones who grow the food we eat, design and manufacture consumer goods and appliances needed to make life livable, and provide health care to get us back on our feet when we get sick. They are the ones who contribute most to the material development of society since they have a vested interest in seeing that their children inherit a better world than the one in which they were raised. In short a householder is the most important element of the human race and spiritual householders are the beings most loved by God.

jag to andhakaar hai, is se tu nikal...

gyan kaa prakash kar, mod tu samabhal...

Radha Krishan ke charan main nitya kar naman...

Man to mandir hai.....haridaya hai vrindavan....

Temple Rituals-A Psychological Analysis: A person's quest for spirituality starts simply with his visiting a temple. To facilitate the process of his spiritual growth, some temples require their devotees to adhere to a dress code. The temple walls are decorated with religious symbols and images. The 'puja' itself consists of singing of hymns, bhajans, etc., followed by a 'parvachan' or a class on religion/spirituality; with 'Aarti' being the final offering to the gods. There is a psychological reasoning behind all this. The dress code, all the temple decorations, the aroma of incense, the fresh flowers, the nicely dressed deities

on the altar; are all meant to create an atmosphere conducive to a spiritual experience. They are the first step of a process meant to alter the state of one's mind, to bring it to a state where the internal turmoil subsides for a duration. The spiritual vibrations of the temple atmosphere lift the soul to a level where it becomes capable of connecting with the divinity. It essentially prepares the person for what he has come there for.

In our everyday existence, we hide our innermost feelings and wear a shield against any intruding thoughts. Every bit of information is thoroughly screened by our rational mind before it is accepted or rejected. But if we are to learn anything from a spiritual master, the sieve has to be temporarily put away. Subliminal thoughts have to penetrate the mind in their entirety, without being filtered or diluted in any way.

The second step in creating the proper state of mind is to remove the filter separating the ears from the brain, to give our defense mechanism a rest. This is done by singing bhajans and hymns. The mind, through this exercise gets into a voluntary receptive mode. It is then, that the brain can be programmed with the noble thoughts-be they to sing the glory of the Lord or ways to deal with our everyday problems in a conscientious manner. A spiritual master can be most successful in the healing process of a mind beset by the badgering of the trivialities of life; he can convey the scriptural philosophy on virtuous living, only to a receptive mind. And the mind is made most receptive when its guards are taken down, when it stops fighting the sensory signals coming in, when there are no obstructions between the sensory perceptions and memory cells.

The decoration of the temple with divine symbols and images, the incense, the flowers, enforcing a proper dress code, singing of the hymns and bhajans are all a prelude to the ultimate goal-to submit oneself to the reprogramming of ones brain with the doctrines of noble living.

Renew Thyself: The Vedas say, 'All intelligences awake with the morning.' "Being awake is not just being physically up and around but being men tally vigorous to celebrate another day of living "observed Thiourea, "The millions are awake enough for physical labour; but only one in a million is awake enough for effective intellectual exertion, only one in a hundred million to the poetic or divine life. To be awake is to be alive. I have never yet met a man who was quite awake. How could I have looked him in the face?"

As we grow older, some of us get lost in the monotony of life. We tend to lose our zest for living. As Thiourea observed, "the morning ceases to be the most enjoyable season of the day". We are awakened not by our newly acquired force and aspirations from within but by some electronic gadgets. It is not the undulations of celestial music that wake us up but the prolonged chatter of a radio. And that is very sad; because it signals the decline of our excitement for life.

To quote Henry David again, "A person who is physically, mentally and spiritually awake in the morning and who keeps pace with the sun; for him the whole day is a perpetual morning. It does not matter what the clock says or

what the people around him say, morning is when he is awake and there is dawn in him. And if he can keep the spirit of early morning with him throughout the day, then he has lived through, not a day but a long morning". One must be drunk with living and not ever let himself be resigned to life. If one finds oneself at a dead end, he should develop some new avenues for the release of his creative energies. It does not have to be a money making endeavor. One has to develop a state of mind in which he is alert and buoyant throughout the day and the whole day becomes one long morning.

"Renew thyself completely each day; do it again, and again, and forever again". Keep the spirit of Goddess USHA alive in you.

Be A Light Into Yourself: Hindu religion is based not on believing a certain doctrine or dogma, but in realizing the Divine. It is based not merely on being loyal to a faith but on striving to become one with the infinite. And there is a definite progression that a seeker goes through. A beginner might need symbols or pictures to focus his attention, and to stop his mind from wandering while in prayers. But if he is earnest about his spiritual development, he would soon progress to a stage where he would not need any props for performing his sadhna to reach the infinite. In his quest for the eternal, he would advance from material worship to mental worship and then on to the highest stage where he can realize the divine.

One must not be content with accumulating scriptural knowledge. That is just the beginning of a long journey. The discovery of inwardness is the essential basis of spiritual life. The scriptures could point out the road but each man must travel it for himself. Reading about a past buddha's communion with God is not going to result in your communion. It can excite you and inspire you to have the same experience. But in the end you must travel alone. You must find your own salvation. "For thousands who talk, one can think; for thousands who think, perhaps one sees and understands". Use the talking and thinking stages as stepping stones to rise to the ultimate level of experiencing the Divine.

Those of us who lead outward lives without being touched to our inner depths, do not understand life itself. We believe that we do our duty to religion by accepting the letter of faith and making a token cash donation to the temple of our choice. This results in our spiritual dependence and forces us to accept what others say about the religious truth. But once the individual in his freedom of spirit pursues truth and builds up a center in himself, he has enough strength and stability to deal with all that happens to him. He has the ability to fight back and retain his peace even when he is faced with adverse conditions. Liberation comes by experiencing the truth on your own. It comes not from accumulation of information, but from inner transformation.

Gautama Buddha said to his disciples, "Be a light unto yourself." Find the truth, build your own light and let it shine your path. Remember, the goal is not to find out how others attained bliss but to use that knowledge to attain it for yourself.

2

Gurukul Education in Ancient India

DIFFERENT TYPES OF GURUKULS IN ANCIENT INDIA

Initially, the gurukul system had the advantage of being egalitarian and fair. The teacher there observed the children's attitude, aptitude and ability, and educated them accordingly. As this was done without the interference from any external source (parents can be very pushy !), the educators were able to match the individual's temperament with the trade they learned. Later, however, this was corrupted and educators were no longer independent-rather, they were paid to teach a particular skill to a particular group of students. (Sound familiar?) I am not just making this up either-there is written evidence for this-namely in the MahaBharata.

At the time when Drona and Drupada were students, the system was still fair and open. Princes and paupers went to the same Gurukul to learn life skills. There, different children learned different skills and the gurukul was able to develop the skills of a particular child to its max potential. As a result, a brahmin, was taught Danurveda and became highly skilled in the martial arts. Impressed by his skills, a prince sought his friendship, as he knew he would need such men in his army. Sadly, he forgot his friendship and an animosity took root which culminated in the great Bharat war.

In the same generation, from an open system that Drona attended, he came to run a gurukul that was elitist and exclusive. He was paid to teach the Kuru princes and hence refused to teach any other student, no matter how talented. The fact that Akalaya sought Drona's tutelage, shows the system was changing

so fast, most people could not comprehend that education could be restricted in this way ! Education was supposed to be open to all and this was a rare, new experiment in education whereby a teacher was “paid” to teach a specified group of students only !!!

Parashurama’s gurukul was also elitist and hence flawed. By being totally closed, and yet so well reputed, it encouraged sincere seekers to twist the truth or, lie, in order to get in. Karna’s entry was surely not the first, and I am sure not the last into this them. From an egalitarian Gurukul of Sandipani, came Lord Krishna and Sudama. Theirs was a friendship that lasted the test of time. Krishna’s knowledge culminated in the great Bhagvad Gita. This great scripture still continues to inspire, so many centuries after its first recitation.

From the Gurukul of Parshuram, came Karna, who sacrificed everything, including ethics, at the alter of his misplaced idea of “friendship”. He was unable to save himself with the knowledge gained at his Gurukul, as it was gained with deceit. It cost him his life !

From the Gurukul of Drona, came the great war, annihilating an empire as old as time ! Harvest of hate is bitter indeed, all those connected with this Gurukul, died a painful, acrimonious death.

The Six Buddhist Universities of Ancient India

It is well-known that with the rise of Buddhism in India there dawned the golden age of India’s culture and civilization. There was progress in all aspects of Indian civilization under the impact of Buddhism. This is very much in contrast to what happened in the Roman empire in Europe with the rise of Christianity. With the coming of Christianity into power the Dark Ages dawned upon Europe. During this era whatever progress that was achieved by the Greeks and the Romans received a set-back and came to a stand-still. Schools and centres of philosophy were closed down.

The famed library at Alexandria was burnt down by a Christian mob led by a prelate. Hypatia the learned philosopher and teacher was dragged into a Church and her flesh was torn off her body. As a result of these barbarities Europe was plunged into the darkness of ignorance and poverty for a thousand years. The Dark Ages of European history was really the golden age of the Christian Church, because it did the conversion of the barbarians to Christianity during this time. The great philosophers and intellectuals of Europe who left their mark on human civilization were all pre-Christian pagans who lived prior to the rise of Christianity, *e.g.*, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Seneca, Pliny, *etc.* The Christian era was masked by an absence of such men. Illiteracy and religious intolerance prevailed during the Dark Ages.

At the end of this period the Muslims had conquered parts of the Roman empire and established their rule in Spain, Portugal and parts of France. They introduced the learning of the Greeks and Romans as well as knowledge gathered from their contacts with India. This set the pace for Martin Luther’s reformation which broke the power of the Catholic Church. The ensuing liberal policies

persuaded by the Protestants brought about the Renaissance, after this the Europeans pushed back the power of the Churches and began to make progress in civilization.

In contrast to this with the rise of Buddhism in India, there arose many centres of learning which did not exist before. Buddhist monks could opt for a life of meditation in the forests, or a life of teaching, preaching, propagating the Dharma as a result of the activities of the teaching monks, seats of learning arose. These seats of monastic learning (Pirivenas) gradually developed and some of them became full-fledged universities. As a result Buddhist India came to have five major universities which achieved wide fame. These five were 1. Nalanda, 2. Vikramasila, 3. Odantapuri, 4. Jagadalala and 5. Somapura.

Nalanda University

Nalanda is the best known of ancient India's universities. Its site has been discovered and its ruins have been preserved by India's Department of Archeology. It is situated in Bihar State, the ancient Magadha country. Magadha is well known as the cradle of Buddhism. Bihar is so called because it had a large number of Viharas or Buddhist monasteries. Nalanda was a prosperous city during the days of the Buddha. He visited it during his preaching itineraries. When in Nalanda, the Buddha sojourned at Ambavana the mango-park with his disciples. Nalanda was also the home town of Ven. Sariputra, King Asoka had erected a Stupa at the spot where he was cremated. We get a comprehensive account of Nalanda university from Hieun Tsang the brilliant Chinese scholar who came there for his studies during the reign of King Harsha-Siladitya. Back in China he wrote this famed "Ta-Tang-Si-Yu-Ki" Buddhist Travels in the western world. This has been translated into English by Samuel Beal a British scholar who was once the ambassador to Peking, China.

It has been called the treasure house of accurate information by European Archeologists. They found the information given there invaluable for them to locate the sacred shrines of the Buddhist in India. Indians and their scholars were hopelessly ignorant of these places and could do nothing to help the archeologists. I-Tsing (675-685) was another Chinese monk who came to India and studied at Nalanda. He too like Hiuen Tsang has left an account of his travels. In this he gives an account of Nalanda and his stay there. At the time of Fa-Hion's visit it was an ordinary Buddhist monastery. Lama Taranata the Tibetan historian also gives an account of Nalanda in his works.

It appears that King Kumara Gupta (AC 415-455) built the first monastery at Nalanda. It was a seminary for training Buddhist monks. Its site was not too far nor too close to the city. Hence it was selected as an ideal centre for the pursuit of Buddhist studies by monks. Nalanda University was an expansion and extension of this seminary. King Buddha Gupta (AC 455-467) Jatagatha Gupta (AC 467-500) Baladitya (500-525) and Vijra (525) made additions and expansions to the buildings. King Baladitya made a shrine-room a house of worship which was 300 feet high. His son Vijra built the fifth monastery. King

Harsha Siladitya built the sixth monastery and surrounded the university buildings with 9' high wall. In the 10th century when Hieun Tsang entered the university, there were 10,000 resident students. They came from all parts of India and foreign lands. It was India's leading University. Its chancellorship was reserved for India's foremost Buddhist scholar when Hieun-Tsang visited Nalanda Silabhadra Maha Thera held the post. At that time there were 10,000 students, 1510 teachers, and about 1,500 workers at Nalanda. Students from foreign lands such as Tibet, China, Japan, Korea, Sumatra, Java and Sri Lanka were found there. Admission to Nalanda was by oral examination.

This was done by a professor at the entrance hall. He was called Dvara Pandita. Proficiency in Sanskrit was necessary, as it was the medium of instruction. All Chinese monks going to India for higher studies in Buddhism had to go to Java and brush up their Sanskrit. Hieum Tsang reports that of the foreign students only 20% managed to pass the stiff examinations. Of the Indian students only 30% managed to pass and gain admission. Therefore the standard required were high. Casts, creed and nationality were no barriers in keeping with the Buddhist spirit. There were no external students at the university. Nalanda was maintained by the revenue from seven villages which were granted by the king.

The study of Mahayana was compulsory for Buddhists. One could also study the doctrines of 18 other Buddhist sects. One could also study secular subjects like science, medicine, astrology, fine-arts, literature, *etc.* The six systems of Hindu philosophy were also taught. One could study Hinayana forms of Buddhism. This included the Theravada commerce, administration and astronomy were also taught. The observatory of the university was situated in a very tall building. Lectures, debates and discussions were part of the educational curriculum. Hieun Tsang states that 100 lectures were delivered there every day. The discipline was exemplary.

Nalanda university occupied an area of 30 acres. There were three large libraries bearing the names Ratna-Sagara, Ratna-Nidi and Ratna-Ranjana. One of these was nine storeys high. Nalanda was graced by the presence of India's most brilliant Buddhist luminaries. Some of them were Nagarjuna, Aryadeva, Dharmapala, Silabhadra, Santarakshita, Kamalaseela, Bhaviveka, Dignaga, Dharmakeerty, *etc.* The works they left behind are mostly available 14 Tibetan and Chinese translations.

The originals perished when Muslim invaders under Bhaktiar Khilji set fire to Nalanda and beheaded the monks. (AD 1037), Prior to that Nalanda flourished for a thousand years, a lighthouse of wisdom and learning, the first of its kind in the world. Bhaktiar Khilji the invader of Magadha set fire to Nalanda. When the monks were about to have their meals. This is revealed in the archeological remains which show food abandoned in a great hurry. Charred rice from the granaries also tell this sorry tale. Nalanda's ruins and excavations are preserved in a Museum by the Indian government. On 19.11.58 the President of India, Rajendra Prasad inaugurated the Nava Nalanda Viharaya at a site close to the

ancient university. Master of the Tripitaka Ven. Jagadish Kashyap was appointed head of the institution on 12. 01. 1957 the Dalai Lama handed over the ashes of Nalanda's famed alumni-Hieun Tsang to the Indian government, headed by Pandit Nehru. The Chinese government donated five lakhs of rupees for a mausoleum which enshrines these relics. The Muslims carried the university idea to the West, and after that universities came up in the western-world.

Vickramasila

Vickramasila is said to have been situated on the banks of the Ganges near the northern part of Magadha. Although its site was undiscovered, the Indian newspaper 'Searchlight' of 25.4.80 carried an account of the discovery of the ruins of Vickramsila by Dr. B. S. Varma, Superintending Archeologist in charge of the discovery of the ruins of the Vickramsila Excavation Project.

According to this Vickramasila was situated at Antichak Village, Kahalagon, Bagalpur District Vickramasila was said to be a sister institution of Nalanda and was said to have been founded by a monk called Kamapala, under the patronage of King Dharmapala. (AC 770-810). The King granted land-endowments for its upkeep later King Yasapala also patronised the institutions by liberal land endowments. Under the Pala Kings Vickramasila rose to 9 positions when it rivalled Nalanda and bade well to outshine it. In the centre of the university was the main lecture-hall. It was called 'Vidyagriha'. There were six entrances to this building and near each entrance was a monastery for resident monks about 150 teachers were accommodated in each monastery. Like Nalanda Vickramasila was also surrounded by a high-wall. There were six 'Dvara Panditas' i.e., Professors who examined candidates seeking admission. Here too high standards were maintained. 108 Professors were engaged in teaching and administrative duties. The curriculum of studies was similar to that of Nalanda. Here preference was given to the Tantric form of Buddhism.

Dipankara Sri Gnana who is also known as Atisha (AC 960-1055) was the more-famous of the scholars of Vickramasila. His fame spread far and wide as the propagator of Buddhism in Tibet Tibetans hold his name in the highest veneration. When he was at Vickramasila he was invited to teach and propagate Buddhism in Tibet. He postponed it for some time till he completed his work at Vickramasila and then undertook the task. Vickramasila achieved its high water mark of prosperity and fame under him. Sri Gnana's period was the golden era of Vickramasila. In 1038 Sri Gnana left Vickramsila for Tibet to organise Buddhist studies in that country. Vickramasila was managed by a staff of Professors. They constituted the Board of Education, Board of Administration, Board of Discipline and the Board in charge of entrance examinations. Inaugurated in about 800 A.C. it graced the land until it was demolished by the Muslim invaders.

Odantapuri

Odantapuri was considered the second oldest of India's universities. This was situated in Maghada, about 6 miles away from Nalanda. Acharya Sri Ganga

of Vickramasila had been a student here. Later he joined Odantapuri King Gopala (660-705) was the patron who helped to found this university. According to the Tibetan records there were about 12,000 students at Odantapuri. Our knowledge of this seat of learning is obscure, and we are not in a position to give more details. This too perished at the hands of the Muslim invaders. It is said they mistook the universities with their high walls for fortresses. They thought the Buddhist monks were “Shaven headed Brahmins” who were idolaters.

Somapura

Somapura was situated in East Pakistan. King Devapala (AC 810-850) is said to have erected the Dharmapala-Vihara at Somapura. The ruins of these buildings cover an area of about 1 square mile. There was a large gate and the buildings were surrounded by a high-wall. There were about 177 cells for monks in additions to the shrines and image houses. A common refectory and a kitchen are among the ruins, Remains of three-strayed buildings are to be seen. This university flourished for about 750 years before it was abandoned after the Muslim invasion.

Jagaddala

King Ramapala (1077-1129) is said to be the founder of this University. Jagaddala University was the largest construction works undertaken by the Pala Kings. This was a centre for the study and dissemination of Tantric Buddhism. It followed the methods, practices, and traditions of Nalanda. According to Tibetan works many books were translated to the Tibetan language at Jagaddala. The Buddhist teacher Sakya Sri Bhadra, seeing that Nalanda, Vickramsila, and Odantapuri were in ruins after the Muslim invasion, entered Jagaddala for his studies. It is said that his pupil Danaseela translated ten books to Tibetan Sakya Sri Bhadra was responsible for the propagation of Tantric Buddhism in Tibet. He lived for seven years at Jagaddala. In 1027 the Muslim invaders sack and destroyed Jagaddala.

Vallabhi

Vallabhi University achieved as much fame as Nalanda. The Maitraka kings who ruled Western India constructed a monastery at Vallabhi their capital. While Nalanda was the centre for Mahayana Buddhism, Vallabhi achieved fame as the centre for Hinayana Buddhism. The Maitraka kings spent lavishly to maintain their university. They gave every encouragement and assistance to Buddhist studies at this institution. In the 7th century Vallabhi was as prosperous and famous as Nalanda. Hiuen Tsang visited Vallabhi, and reported in his “Ta-Tang-Si-Yu-Ki” as follows:

“The population of Vallabhi is very large. The country is rich and prosperous. There are over a hundred millionaire families there. Imported luxury goods are seen in this city. There are about 100 monasteries with about 6,000 Buddhist monks. Most of them belong to

the Sammitiya Sect. There are also many Hindu temples and a large Hindu population in this part of the country. The Buddha had visited this land during his ministry. There are stupas erected by King Asoka to mark the spots hallowed by the Buddha's visit."

There are about 100 shrines and about 6,000 resident monks studying at Vallabhi. They do not believe that Abhidharma was the teaching of the Buddha. They believed in the Antarabhava doctrine and were exponents of Puggalavada a traditions that disregards Abhidharma teachings that are inconsistent with the Sutra-Teachings.

I-Tsing's Record

I-Tsing records that foreign students were found at Vallabhi. They come from many lands far and near from these facts we know that like Nalanda-Vallabhi was internationally recognised. There was a large library. This was maintained by a fund established by the King. An inscription put up by King Guhasena confirms this. Precedence was given to Sammitiya doctrines at this University. The course of studies included Comparative Religion. The Six systems of Hindu Philosophy and various other schools of Buddhism, Politics, Law, Agriculture, Economics also formed a part of the curriculum.

I-Tsing records that the graduates of Vallabhi, displayed their skill in the presence of the royalty, nobbles, and other eminent people. The Elders Gunamoti and Sthiramatic were Nalanda's alumni and were teaching there for a time. They are said to be the founders of Vallabhi. As the founders came from Nalanda, Vallabhi followed the Nalanda pattern in most of its activities. It flourished from 475 to 1200 A.C. It met the same fate as other Universities at the hands of the Muslim invaders.

Thus it would be seen that as long as Buddhism was a power to reckon with in India, it rendered yeomen service in the field of learning and culture. This is how it should be in a religion that teaches that ignorance is the worst enemy of Man and the cause of all his sufferings while knowledge (Pragnya) is his highest asset. Pragnya wins all that is good in this world, and finally brings him the highest happiness, mundane as well as supra-mundane.

When the Portuguese conquered the Kotte Kingdom there were flourishing Buddhist Seminaries (Pirivenas) at Totagama, Keragala, and Wattala. The Sandesa poems of the period give glowing descriptions of them and their rectors. They were all raised to the ground "leaving not one stone upon another" according to Portuguese writers of the period. Quyroz mentions the demolition of the Wattala Vijayabahu Pirivena and the erection of the R. C. Church on its land. Then followed an age of ignorance, decay and corruption for some 200 years. Finally during the reign of King Kirti Sri Rajasinha, Ven. Weliwita Saranankara started his Buddhist revival opening his Seminary at Niyamakanda, Udunuwara. His papillary successors opened the Vidyoda and Vidyalankara Pirivenas in Colombo. These Seminaries were upgraded and converted to secular Universities by the S.L.F.P. Government.

EDUCATION IN ANCIENT INDIA

Secondary Education coincides with education of grades 6 through 12 or the second stage of education that commences after primary education and continues up to beginning of higher education. *Ancient period* in the early *Vedic* period (2000-1000 BC) education was a family responsibility, being given by the father to the son. In the later Vedic age (1000-500 BC), the age of UPANISADS, education was institutionalised and it took a definite shape. In this period Brahmanic education entered Bengal.

With the formal ceremony of Upanayan the *guru* or the teacher accepted his pupil. The normal age of upanayan was 8 for a Brahman, 11 for a Kshatriya and 12 for a Vaishya. The guru's home was the school where the pupils lived for the whole period of education as a member of the family. Thus a residential feature was seen in the education imparted in ancient India. No tuition fees were charged but pupils used to render personal manual services. In the early Vedic schools, education was confined to young Brahmans. In the later Vedic period before 500 BC, the education of the Ksatriyas and Vaisyas came under Brahman control.

The purpose of instruction was to inculcate in the minds of the pupils the necessary direction for all their future life according to their position in the caste. The guru's school usually received state support in the form of allotment of rent-free lands. But guru had full autonomy to decide what to teach and how to teach. Generally in guru's school the pupils studied the three main VEDAS: the *Rigveda*, the *Yajurveda*, the *Samaveda* and some times the *Atharvaveda* and also metaphysics and preliminary course on grammar, logic, ethics, biology, arithmetic, doctrine of prayer, astronomy and also all branches of culture and knowledge as were known then.

For Brahman and Ksatriya pupils the courses of studies were similar at the elementary stage. In the advanced stage the curricula differed. The former studied Vedas and other higher subjects relating to their vocation as priests and the latter learnt military tactics, archery and politics. The curricula showed that guru's school provided both general and occupation oriented courses. The period of study usually lasted till the age of 16 and sometimes, till the age of 24. The relationship between the guru and the pupil was cordial and personal. The guru was highly respected in ancient India.

For others education was craft oriented. Traders ie, the Vaisyas studied grammar and trade crafts. Their education was organised according to apprentice system. The SUDRAS were involved in agricultural and related economic activities and numerous arts and crafts. Their education was also production and craft centred. In later Vedic period the rigidity of caste system made access to education restricted.

Towards the end of ancient period two types of schools were developed: The *tol* or *pathsala* and network of indigenous elementary schools. The *tol*s were seats of higher learning including secondary education. They imparted instruction through sanskrit and provided traditional classical learning. In early Vedic period, boys and girls at the age of eight after upanayan enjoyed equal educational

facilities. Girls started their studentship at guru's home. Young maidens completing their education were married to learned persons. In Vedic society a wife was a regular partner in the sacrificial offering of the husband.

So she had to acquire Vedic knowledge which was essential for performing religious rites and ceremonies. But as a result of social changes in later period, women lost their liberal social status as well as opportunity for education. In later period, Brahmanic education flourished along with Buddhist education. It also continued throughout Muslim and British periods. In Bangladesh, tols are the secondary level institutions of Brahmanic education. Buddhist education centred around monasteries or *viharas*. The primary idea of Buddhism was to provide for proper instruction of the novice in the doctrines of the Buddhist faith and to secure supervision over his conduct while he was becoming habituated to the monastic life.

The first step of admission or initiation in Buddhism is called *prabbajja* and after admission, the candidate becomes a novice and is placed under a discipline of a preceptor. After completion of the novitiating period he becomes a *bhikshu* (monk), a full-fledged member of the order. From this provision for the instruction of novices arose the Buddhist education system. In Buddhist system, the pupil does all the menial work and renders the services the preceptor requires. In turn, the teacher gives the pupil all possible intellectual and spiritual help and guidance by teaching and instruction. A competent *bhikshu* generally accepts 2 novices. The group of young *bhikshus* lived in the *vihara*. Such residential *viharas* were developed in various parts of India including the present territory of Bangladesh.

Viharas were seats of higher learning and were supported by a system of elementary education. No secondary level institution was developed as such at that time. But elementary level courses prepared the students for advanced specialised studies at the *viharas*. So it is presumable that elementary education covered both primary and secondary level of education.

Huen Tsang who stayed in India from 629 to 645 AD found that primary course started at the age of 8 and continued up to the age of 15 and subjects like grammar, arts and crafts, medicine, reasoning and inner science were taught. I Tsing who stayed in India from 673 to 687 AD observed that at elementary level pupils studied five major *vidyas* such as grammar and lexicography, arts, medicine, logic and science of universal soul or philosophy. After completion of this stage, the period of specialised higher studies began. Buddhist monastery primarily prepared the students to teach sacred literature. But I Tsing found that some monasteries also had secular sections where the students were given instruction in subjects related to their practical life.

Buddha with great reluctance consented to admit women as disciples on their renouncing the household stage. Rules were developed for regulating the life of the nuns under complete subjugation of monks. Gradually, an order of nuns was created for education and training of the nuns. But there is lack of evidence of details of actual training they had in nunneries. One of the

contributions of Buddhist education was that through offering the secular curricula along with religious ones in viharas and admission of laymen and non-Buddhists to attend those institutions, Buddhism stimulated the demand for education among common people.

Muslim Period: Since the establishment of Muslim rule in India (around 1204-1206), Bengal was ruled as a province of Delhi empire and sometimes it was an independent state. The *subahdars*, the independent rulers and Nawabs established *maktabs* and Madrasahs as educational institutions. Maktabs provided primary education and madrasahs were seats of secondary education and higher learning. The madrasahs of Bengal were in a flourishing condition during Muslim rule. These were run with state funds.

The nobility and the private individuals were also found to set up and run madrasahs at their own initiative. Many illustrious scholars, administrators and officials were graduates of madrasahs in Muslim Bengal. In the school of Shah Mubarak his sons Faizi and Abul Fazl, historian Badauni and other scholars studied. In the madrasah run by Sharafuddin Abu Taoama in Sonargaon students studied both secular and religious subjects. During the rule of emperor Shahjahan the madrasahs of Jahangirnagar specialised in teaching science, theology, philosophy and mathematics.

Madrasah education was free. The teacher enjoyed high status in the society. The courses of madrasah generally included religious subjects like the Quran, the Hadith, theology and other Islamic studies. Secular subjects such as history, logic, geography, algebra, astronomy, medical science, chemistry and other technical, vocational, professional subjects were more cultivated in some centres. The medium of instruction was Persian but Arabic was compulsory for Muslims students. Teaching of history was one special feature of madrasah education during Muslim period. As a result, these learning centres could produce some illustrious historians in the subcontinent. Generally Muslim students studied in madrasah. Akbar adopted a policy so that Hindu youths can study at madrasah.

Women during Muslim rule did not have opportunity for education due to Purda system. But there are evidences that in HAREMS of kings, nawabs and nobles some ladies, daughters, sisters of kings and nobility received education and some of them attained great distinction. But great mass of Muslim women received no education at all except some domestic training in performance of household duties.

The tradition of madrasah education continued during the British period but its nature and character of flourishing period changed to a great extent. In early 19th century as reported by Adam (1835-1838) there were various types of madrasahs and wide range of courses such as Grammatical works, Rhetoric, Logic, Law, Doctrines of Islam, Ptolemy and Astronomy; courses of Natural Philosophy, Science, History and Literature were also taught. Role learning was given a large place and the main aim of a teacher was to pass on the pupil the learned tradition, which he himself had received. During the decadence of Muslim power due to lack of state patronage, financial support from the landed

aristocracy and nobility and change of official language from Persian to English madrasah education lost its past glory. Rather it assumed conservative character and used classical language as medium of instruction. Madrasah education with some modifications is continuing in Bangladesh.

British Period: European trading companies began their commercial activities in India from 1600 AD. Gradually, the Portuguese, the French, the Dutch and the English settled in some important parts and commercial centres. Among them the English East India Company was ultimately able to establish their rule in India. Till the early 19th century, they did not evolve any definite educational policy.

It was only in the Charter Act of 1813 that education of the Indian people was included within the duties of the East India Company and an annual sum of 10,000 pounds was provided for their educational activities. However, the company mainly spent the money for oriental learning. The progressive reformers of Bengal such as Rammohan ROY protested against this and demanded western education for the people of this country. But the company did not pay any attention to this. However, as per the Charter, missionaries were allowed to work in the country. This had great impact upon the development of modern type of English schools at primary and secondary levels.

One of the important events of this period was the endorsement of Macaulay's Minute in Lord BENTINCK's Despatch of 7 March 1835, which provided that western learning should be spread through the medium of English language. Use of English as medium of instruction in public education was announced as a formal policy. As a result, a good network of English high schools and colleges were established in Bengal, mostly due to government initiative and support. The new high schools demonstrated fairly high standard of instruction in language and literature, but their standard was low in practical subjects. The syllabus was mainly bookish.

Secondary education received a new orientation in Wood's Education Despatch of 1854. It provided that the provincial government would give grant-in-aid to high schools on fulfillment of some conditions. Specifically, schools should provide secular education. This policy ultimately enabled the government to withdraw from the field of educational activities and shoulder the responsibility upon the Indians. However, grant-in-aid system, scholarship scheme for students of all levels and creation of department of Public Instruction resulted in appreciable expansion of secondary education in Bengal.

The Indian Education Commission of 1882 addressed the issue of secondary education at a great length. The government accepted its recommendations to transfer all government secondary schools to private bodies and to establish a model government high school in each district headquarters. By the beginning of the 20th century the province of Bengal experienced a spectacular growth of secondary education. There were 3,097 English high schools in India in 1901-1902 and nearly a half of them were in Bengal. At the district level, Bengal had more schools than any other presidency. There was an English secondary school

for every 104.3 square miles. It also had the largest number of unaided schools. With low fees and easy admission these schools came up to cater to the demand for western education.

Secondary education experienced a setback as a result of Lord Curzon's regressive education policy adopted on the basis of Simla conference (1901) for strict control over high schools by the universities and the Education Department. However during Curzon's period, the Partition of Bengal in 1905 offered a better opportunity for the development of education in East Bengal. Henry Sharp, the first Director of Public Instruction of East Bengal, initiated educational improvement programme. He arranged a special aid programme for Muslim students such as scholarships at every level of education and provision of free places in government aided schools for eight percent of Muslim students. For greater participation a Muslim hostel was established in every government school. As a result, there was a substantial increase in the number of Muslim students in primary and secondary schools. The increase was about 35% from 425,800 in 1906-1907 to 575,700 in 1911-1912. The policy of promoting education in eastern Bengal was continued under unified government of Bengal throughout the rest of British period.

Under diarchical rule in 1921-1937, there was an increase in the number of secondary schools in rural areas, large expansion in secondary education of girls, adoption of mother tongue as a medium of instruction, some improvement in training and service conditions of teachers. During the World War II the development of secondary education was slackened. In the post war period, some efforts were made to introduce vocational courses in high schools and establish technical, commercial and agricultural high schools.

On the eve of the Partition of Bengal in 1947, two types of schools, middle school and high schools provided secondary education. Middle schools offered education of grades one through six and high schools grades seven through ten. There were nearly 20,000 middle schools and 2,000 high schools. More than a half of them were supported from tuition fees and donations contributed by the people. Less than 40% of the high schools received grant-in-aid from the state. Forty schools were directly supported by the state. For teachers' training of middle school there were five normal schools. Two training colleges, one in Calcutta and the other in Dhaka were set up to train high school teachers.

It was J.E.D. Bethune who first established a regular secular girls' high school in 1849 in Calcutta with six pupils. Bethune's experiment was so successful that it became a model of girls' school in other provinces of India. But progress of girls' secondary education was very humble. By the end of the century (1896-1897), there were only two girls' English high schools, one was Bethune School in Calcutta and the other Eden School in Dhaka.

The impetus of girls' education came from the Indian Education Commission of 1882. According to the several recommendations of the commission the government of Bengal started to give higher grants to girls' schools. Special subjects suited to the girls were included in the curricula. Enrolment of girls in

mixed schools was started. The District and Municipal Boards also started to contribute a fare share of funds for girls' education. Education of Muslim girls entered into the scene particularly with the efforts of Nawab Faizunnesa Choudhurani and Roquiah Sakhawat Hossain. Gradually, the opening of female training schools, starting of fee concession, prize and scholarship schemes greatly helped promote girls' education in Bengal.

3

Rigvedic Education

THE RIG VEDA AS THE SOURCE OF HINDU CIVILIZATION

The Rig Veda is established as the earliest work not merely of the Hindus, but of all Indo-European languages and humanity. It lays the foundation upon which Hindu Civilization has been building up through the ages. Broadly speaking, it is on a foundation of plain living and high thinking. Life was simple but though high and of farthest reach, wandering through eternity. Some of the prayers of the Rig Veda, like the widely known Gayatri mantram also found in Samaveda and Yajur veda touch the highest point of knowledge and sustain human souls to this day.

The Rig Veda itself exhibits an evolution and the history of the Rigveda is a history of the culture of the age. The Rig veda, in the form in which we have it now, is a compilation out of old material, a collection and selection of 1,017 hymns out of the vast literature of hymns which have been accumulating for a long period.

When the Rigvedic texts was thus fixed and appropriated for purposes of the Samhita, its editors had to think out the principles on which the hymns could be best arranged. These show considerable literary skill, originality of design, and insight into religious needs. First, it represents Rishis were chosen and their works were utilized to constitute six different Mandalas. These Rishis are Gritsamada, Visvamitra, Vamadeva, Atril, Kanva, Bharadvaja, and Vasistha. When the highest knowledge was thus built up by these Seers and revealed and stored up in the hymns, there were necessarily evolved the methods by which

such knowledge could be acquired, conserved, and transmitted to posterity. Thus every Rishi was a teacher who would start by imparting to his son the texts of the knowledge he had personally acquired and such texts would be the special property of his family. Each such family of Rishis was thus functioning like a Vedic school admitting pupils for instruction in the literature or texts in its possession. The relations between teacher and taught was well established in the Rig Veda. The methods of education naturally varied with the capacity of pupils. Self-realization by means of tapas would be for the few.

The Rig Veda shows a lively sense of the immutable laws governing Creation. Its best expression is iii. 56, I, a hymn of Visvamitra. It means that the Vratas or Cosmic Laws which are at the root of creation, operate for all time and regularly, which can never be violated by anyone however clever or wise. There is no one in earth or heaven who by his power or supreme knowledge can set them at naught. "They cannot bend like mountains."

"Then at the beginning, before creation, there was neither Being nor non-Being. There was neither the atmosphere nor the heavens beyond. What did it contain? Where? And under whose direction? Were there waters, and the bottomless deep?" Commenting on these Vedic hymns Count Maurice Maseterlinck in his book *The Great Secret* (Citadel Pub ASIN: 0806511559) says:

"Is it possible to find, in our human annals, words more majestic, more full of solemn anguish, more august in tone, more devout, more terrible? Where, from the depths of an agnosticism, which thousands of years have augmented, can we point to a wider horizon? At the very outset, it surpasses all that has been said, and goes farther than we shall even dare to go. No spectacle could be more absorbing than this struggle of our forefathers of five to ten thousand years ago with the Unknowable, the unknowable nature of the causeless Cause of all Causes. But of this cause, or this God, we should never have known anything, had He remained self-absorbed, had He never manifested Himself." Thus it is, say the Laws of Manu, "that, by an alternation of awakening and repose, the immutable Being causes all this assemblage of creatures, mobile and immobile, eternally to return to life and to die." He exhales Himself, or expels His breath, throughout the Universe, innumerable worlds are born, multiply and evolve. He Himself inhales, drawing His breath, and Matter enters into Spirit, which is but an invisible form of Matter: and the worlds disappear, without perishing, to reintegrate the Eternal cause, and emerge once more upon the awakening of Brahma-that is, thousands of millions of years later; to enter into Him so it has been and ever shall be, through all eternity, without beginning, without cessation, without end."

"When the world had emerged from the darkness," says the Bhagavata Puranam, "the subtle elementary principle produced the vegetable seed which first of all gave life to the plants. From the plants, life passed into the fantastic

creatures which were born of the slime in the waters; then, through a series of different shapes and animals, it came to Man.” They passed in succession by way of the plants, the worms, the insects, the serpents, the tortoises, cattle, and the wild animals-such is the lower stage,” says Manu again, who adds, “Creatures acquired the qualities of those that preceded them, so that the farther down its position in the series, the greater its qualities.

“Have we not here the whole of Darwinian evolution confirmed by geology and foreseen at least 6,000 years ago? On the other hand, is this not the theory of Akasa which we more clumsily call the ether, the sole source of all substances, to which our science is returning? Is it true that the recent theories of Einstein deny ether, supposing that radiant energy-visible light, for example-is propagated independently through a space that is an absolute void. But the scientific ether is not precisely the Hindu Akasa which is much more subtle and immaterial being a sort of spiritual element or divine energy, space uncreated, imperishable, and infinite.”

WOMEN AS RISHIS

The history of the most of the known civilizations show that the further back we go into antiquity, the more unsatisfactory is found to be the general position of women. Hindu civilization is unique in this respect, for here we find a surprising exception to the general rule. The further back we go, the more satisfactory is found to be the position of women in more spheres than one; and the field of education is most noteworthy among them. There is ample and convincing evidence to show that women were regarded as perfectly eligible for the privilege of studying the Vedic literature and performing the sacrifices enjoined in it down to about 200 B.C. This need not surprise us, for some of the hymns of the Rig Veda are the composition of twenty sage-poetesses.

Women were then admitted to fulfill religious rites and consequently to complete educational facilities. Women-sages were called Rishikas and Brahnavadinis. The Rig Veda knows of the following Rishikas 1. Romasa 2. Lopamudra 3. Apala 4. Kadru 5. Visvavara 6. Ghosha 7. Juhu 8. Vagambhrini 9. Paulomi 10. Jarita 11. Sraddha-Kamayani 12. Urvashi 13. Sarnga 14. Yami 15. Indrani 16. Savitri 17. Devajami 18. Nodha 19. Akrishtabhasha 20. Sikatanivavari 21. Gaupayana.

The Brahnavadinis were the products of the educational discipline of brahmacharaya for which women also were eligible. Rig Veda refers to young maidens completing their education as brahmacharinis and then gaining husbands in whom they are merged like rivers in oceans. Yajurveda similarly states that a daughter, who has completed her brahmacharya, should be married to one who is learned like her. A most catholic passage occurs in Yajurveda (xxvi, 2) which enjoins the imparting of Vedic knowledge to all classes, Brahmins and Rajanyas, Sudras, Anaryas, and charanas (Vaisyas) and women. No one can recite Vedic prayers or offer Vedic sacrifices without having undergone the Vedic initiation (Upanayana).

It is, therefore, but natural that in the early period the Upanayana of girls should have been as common as that of boys. The Arthava Veda (xi. 5.8) expressly refers to maidens undergoing the Brahmacharya discipline and the Sutra works of the 5th century B.C. supply interesting details in its connection. Even Manu includes Upanayana among the sanskaras (rituals) obligatory for girls (II.66). Music and dancing was also taught to them. Brahmavadins used to marry after their education was over, some of them like Vedavati, a daughter of sage Kusadhvaja, would not marry at all.

WOMEN IN EDUCATION

Radha Kumud Mookerji (1884-1964) Indian historian, has noted: “An important feature of this educational system should not be missed. The part taken in intellectual life by women like Gargi who could address a Congress of philosophers on learned topics, or like Maitreyi, who had achieved the highest knowledge, that of Brahma. The Rigveda shows us some women as authors of hymns, such as Visvavara, Ghosha, and Apala.”

The Vedic women received a fair share of masculine attention in physical culture and military training. The Rigveda tells us that many women joined the army in those days. A form of chariot race was one of the games most popular during the Vedic period. People were fond of swinging. Ball games were in vogue in those days by both men and women. Apart from this, a number of courtyard games like “Hide and seek” and “Run and catch” were also played by the girls. Playing with dice became a popular activity. The dices were apparently made of Vibhidaka nuts. From the Rigveda, it appears that the Vedic Aryans knew the art of boxing.

EDUCATION IN THE EPICS

Takshashila was a noted center of learning. The story is told of one of its teachers named Dhaumya who, had three disciples named Upamanyu, Aruni, and Veda.

HERMITAGES

The Mahabharata tells of numerous hermitages where pupils from distant parts gathered for instruction round some far-famed teachers. A full-fledged Asrama is described as consisting of several Departments which are enumerated as following:

1. Agnisthana, the place for fire-worship and prayers
2. Brahma-sthana, the Department of Veda
3. Vishnusthana, the Department for teaching Raja-Niti, Arthaniti, and Vartta
4. Mahendrasthana, Military Section
5. Vivasvata-sthana, Department of Astronomy
6. Somasthana, Department of Botany

7. Garuda-sthana, Section dealing with Transport and Conveyances
8. Kartikeya-sthana, Section teaching military organization, how to form patrols, battalions, and army.

The most important of such hermitage was that of the Naimisha, a forest which was like a university. the presiding personality of the place was Saunaka, to whom was applied the designation of Kulapati, sometimes defined as the preceptor of 10,000 disciples.

The hermitage of Kanva was another famous center of learning, of which a full description is given. It is situated on the banks of the Malini, a tributary of the Sarayu River. It was not a solitary hermitage, but an assemblage of numerous hermitages round the central hermitage of Rishi Kanva, the presiding spirit of the settlement. There were specialists in every branch of learning cultivated in that age; specialists in each of the four Vedas; in sacrificial literature and art; Kalpa-Sutras; in the Chhanda (Metrics), Sabda (Vyakarana), and Nirukta. There were also Logicians, knowing the principles of Nyaya, and of Dialectics (the art of establishing propositions, solving doubts, and ascertaining conclusions). There were also specialists in the physical sciences and art. There were, for example, experts in the art of constructing sacrificial altars of various dimensions and shapes (on the basis of a knowledge of Solid Geometry); those who had knowledge of the properties of matter (dravyaguna); of physical processes and their results of causes and their effect; and zoologists having a special knowledge of monkeys and birds. It was thus a forest University where the study of every available branch of learning was cultivated.

The hermitage of Vyasa was another seat of learning. There Vyasa taught the Vedas to his disciples. Those disciples were highly blessed Sumantra, vaisampayana, Jamini of great wisdom, and Paila of great ascetic merit.” They were afterwards joined by Suka, the famous son of Vyasa.

Among the other hermitages noticed by the Mahabharata may be mentioned those of Vasishtha and Visvamitra and that in the forest of Kamyaka on the banks of the Saraswati. But a hermitage near Kurkshetra deserves special notice for the interesting fact recorded that it produced two noted women hermits. There “leading from youth the vow of brahmacharya, a Brahmin maiden was crowned with ascetic success and ultimately acquiring yogic powers, she became a tapassiddha”, while another lady, the daughter not of a Brahmin but a Kshatriya, a child not of poverty but affluence, the daughter of a king, Sandilya by name, came to live there the life of celibacy and attained spiritual pre-eminence.

PERIOD OF PANINI

When we study how these institutions grew we find that students approached the learned souls for the acquisition of knowledge. Parents, too encouraged it and sent their boys to the institutions. When their number began to increase the institutions formed with these students began to grow gradually. With the lapse of time these institutions turned into Universities and were maintained with the munificent gift of the public and the state. In this way many institutions were

formed of which Taxila, Ujjain, Nalanda, Benares, Ballavi, Ajanta, Madura and Vikramsila were very famous. Taxila was famous for medicine and Ujjain for Astronomy. Both were pre-Buddhist. Jibaka the well known medical expert and the state physician of the King of Magadha of the 6th century B.C. and Panini the famous grammarian of the 7th century B.C. and Kautilya, the authority on Arthashastra, of the 4th century B.C. were students of Taxila.

Education as revealed in the grammatical Sutras of Panini, together with the works of Katyayana and Patanjali. The account of education in the Sutra period will not be complete without the consideration of the evidence of the grammatical literature as represented in the works of Panini and his two famous commentators, Katyayana and Patanjali. Panini throws light on the literature of his times. Four classes of literature are distinguished.

There is evidence that girls have been admitted in Vedic schools or Charanas. Panini refers to this specially. A Kathi is a female student of Katha school. There are hostels for female students and they are known as Chhatrisala. Each Charana or school has an inner circle of teachers known as Parisad. Their decisions on doubts about the reading and the meaning of Vedic culture are binding. Pratisakyas are said to be the product of such Parisad.

The academic year has several terms. Each term is inaugurated by a ceremony called Upakarnmana and ends by the Utsarga ceremony. Holidays (Anadhyayas) are regularly observed on two Astamis (eight day of the moon) two Chaturdasis (fourteenth day of the moon), Amavasya, Purnima and on the last day of each of the four seasons, called Chaturmasi. Besides these Nitya (regular) holidays there are Naimittika (occasional) holidays due to accidental circumstances, eg. storms, thunder, rain, fog, fire, eclipses, etc.

BUDDHIST EDUCATION

Buddhism as a Phase of Hinduism

Buddhist education can be rightly regarded as a phase of the ancient Hindu system of education. Buddhism, itself, especially in its original and ancient form, is, as has been admitted on all hands, rooted deeply in the pre-existing Hindu systems of thought and life.

Max Muller in Chips from a German Workshop (i 434), "To my mind, having approached Buddhism after a study of the ancient religion of India, the religion of the Veda, Buddhism has always seemed to be, to a new religion, but a natural development of the Indian mind in its various manifestations, religious, philosophical, social, and political."

Auguste Barth (1834-1916) in The Religions of India, p. 101 calls Buddhism: "a Hindu phenomenon, a natural product, so to speak, of the age and social circle that witnessed its birth", and "when we attempt to reconstruct its primitive doctrine and early history we come upon something so akin to what we meet in the most ancient Upanishads and in the legends of Hinduism that it is not always easy to determine what features belong peculiarly to it."

T. W. Rhys Davids (1843-1922) in *Buddhism* p. 34 calls Gautama Buddha “the creature of his times”, of whose philosophy it must not be supposed that “it was entirely of his own creation.” He wrote: “The fact we should never forget is that Gautama was born and brought up and lived and died a Hindu. On the whole, he was regarded by the Hindus of that time a Hindu. Without the intellectual work of his predecessors, his work, however, original, would have been impossible. He was the greatest and wisest and best of the Hindus and, throughout his career, a characteristic India.”

Edward Washburn Hopkins (1857-1932) goes so far as to assert (*The Religions of India* p. 298) that “the founder of Buddhism did not strike out a new system of morals; he was not a democrat; he did not originate a plot to overthrow the Brahminic priesthood; he did not invent the order of monks.”

Hermann Oldenberg (1854-1920): “For hundreds of years before Buddha’s time, movements were in progress in Indian thought which prepared the way for Buddhism.”

The Buddha was a Product of the Hindu System

The thesis also receives a most conclusive confirmation from the details of the Buddha’s own career as preserved in the traditional texts. The details show how largely Buddha was himself the product of the then prevailing Hindu educational systems.

We see how in the very first step that he takes towards the Buddhahood, the renunciation of the home and the world, the world of riches to which he is born, he was not at all singular but following the path trodden by all seekers after truth in all ages and ranks of society.

Our ancient literature is full of examples of the spirit of acute, *utkata*, *vairagya* under which the rich, the fortunate, and the noble not less than the poor, the destitute and the lowly, the young with a distaste for life before tasting it as much as the old who have had enough of it, even women and maidens, as eagerly leave their homes and adopt the ascetic life as a positive good as their dear ones entreat them to desist such a step. The Buddha’s next step was to place himself under the guidance of two successive gurus.

The first was the Brahmin, Alara Kalama, at Vesali, having a following of 300 disciples who taught him the successive stages of meditation and the doctrine of the Atman, from which the Buddha turns back dissatisfied on the ground that it “does not lead to aversion, absence of passion, cessation, quiescence, knowledge, supreme wisdom and Nirvana, but only as far as the realm of nothingness”.

Next he attaches himself to the sage of Rajagaha with 700 pupils, Uddaka, the disciple of Rama but “he gained no clear understanding from his treatment of the soul.” As Rhys David points out “Gotama, either during this period or before must have gone through a very systematic and continued course of study in all the deepest philosophy of the time.”

In the Lalitavistara Sastra, the education of Buddha as a child, aged eight by the Sage Vishvamitra, who says:

*Let us turn to Numbers. Count after me
Until you reach lakh (= one hundred thousand):
One, two, three, four, up to ten
Then in tens, up to hundreds and thousands,
After which, the child named the numbers,
Then the decades and the centuries, without stopping.
And once he reached lakh, which he whispered in silence,
Then came koti, nahut, ninnahut, khamba,
viskhamba, abab, attata,
Up to kumud, gundhika, and utpala
Ending with pundarika (leading)
Towards paduma, making it possible to count
Up to the last grain of the finest sand
Heaped up in mountainous heights.*

Takshasila/Taxila-The Most Ancient University

Takkasila was the most famous seat of learning of ancient India. Takkasila was also the capital of Gandhara and its history goes back into hoary antiquity. It was founded by Bharata and named after his son Taksha, who was established there as its ruler. Janamejaya's serpent sacrifice was performed at this very place.

As a center for learning the fame of the city was unrivalled in the 6th century B.C. Its site carries out the idea held by the ancient Hindus of the value of natural beauty in the surroundings of a University. The valley is "a singularly pleasant one, well-watered by a girdle of hills." The Jatakas tell us of how teachers and students lived in the university and the discipline imposed on the latter, sons of Kings and themselves future rulers though they might be! The Jatakas (No. 252) thinks that this discipline was likely "to quell their pride and haughtiness".

It attracted scholars from different and distant parts of India. Numerous references in the Jatakas show how thither flocked students from far off Benares, Rajagaha, Mithila, Ujjain, from the Central region, Kosala, and Kuru kingdoms in the North country. The fame of Takkasila as a seat of learning was of course due to that of its teachers. They are always spoken of as being "world renowned" being "authorities", specialists, and experts in the subject they professed. Of one such teacher we read: "Youths of the warrior and brahmin castes came from all India to be taught the art by him" Sending their sons a thousand miles away from home bespeaks the great concern felt by their parents in their proper education.

As shown in the case of the medical student, Jivaka, the course of study at Takila extended to as many as seven years. Jataka No. 252 records how parents felt if they could see their sons return home after graduation at Taxila. One of

the archery schools at Taxila had on its roll call, 103 princes from different parts of the country. King Prasenajit of Kosala, a contemporary of the Buddha, was educated in the Gandhara capital. Prince Jivaka, an illegitimate son of Bimbisara, spent seven years at Taxila in learning medicine and surgery.

Takshasila a Center for Higher Education: The students are always spoken of as going to Takshasila to “complete their education and not to begin it.” They are invariably sent at the age of sixteen or when they “come of age”.

Different Courses of Study

The Jatakas contain 105 references to Takshasila. “The fame of Takshasila as a seat of learning was, of course, due to that of its teachers. They are always spoken of as being ‘world-renowned,’ being authorities, specialists and experts in the subjects they professed. It was the presence of scholars of such acknowledged excellence and widespread reputation that caused a steady movement of qualified students from all classes and ranks of society towards Takshasila from different and distant parts of the Indian continent, making it the intellectual capital of India of those days.

Thus various centers of learning in the different parts of the country became affiliated, as it were, to the educational center or to the central University of Takshasila, which exercised a kind of intellectual suzerainty over the world of letters in India.” Takshasila was destroyed by the Huns in 455 A.D.

The Jatakas constantly refer to students coming to Takshasila to complete their education in the three Vedas and the eighteen Sippas or Arts. Sometimes the students are referred to as selecting the study of the Vedas alone or the Arts alone. The Boddhisatta (Buddha) is frequently referred to as having learned the three Vedas by heart. Takshila was famous for military training, wrestling, archery and mountain-climbing.

Science, Arts and Crafts: The Jatakas mention of subjects under scientific and technical education. Medicine included a first hand study of the plants to find out the medicinal ones. Takshasila was also famous for some of its special schools. One of such schools was the Medical Schools which must have been the best of its kind in India. It was also noted for its School of Law which attracted student from distant Ujjeni. Its Military School were not less famous, which offered training in Archery. Thus the teachers of Takshasila were as famous for their knowledge of the arts of peace as for that of war. Much attention was paid to the development of social and cultural activities in all possible ways. Dancing and dramatic groups, singers and musicians and other artists were given encouragement and offered employment. During the Sangam epoch in South India, the three principal arts, Music, Dance and Drama were practiced intensively and extensively throughout the country, and the epic of Silappadikaram contains many references to the practice of these arts.

Next, to Takshasila ranks Benares as a seat of learning. It was, however, largely the creation of the ex-students of Takshasila who set up as teachers at Benares, and carried thither the culture of that cosmopolitan educational center which

was molding the intellectual life of the whole of India. There were again certain subjects in the teaching of which Benares seems to have specialized. There is an expert who was “the chief of his kind in all India.”

Hermitages as Centers of Highest Learning

Lastly, it is to be noted that the educational system of the times produced men of affairs as well as men who renounced the world in the pursuit of Truth. The life of renunciation indeed claimed many an ex-student of both Takksila and Benares. In the sylvan and solitary retreats away from the haunts of men, the hermitages served as schools of higher philosophical speculation and religious training where the culture previously acquired would attain its fruitage.

There are accounts of education written by eye witness who were foreigners, like the pilgrims from China who regarded India, as its Holy Land. The very fact of the pilgrimage of Chinese scholars like Fa-Hien or Hiuen Tsang to India testifies to the tribute paid by China to the sovereignty of Indian thought and culture which made its influence felt beyond the bounds of India itself in distant countries which might well be regarded as then constituting a sort of a Greater India.

The duration of Fa-Hien’s travel in India was for fifteen years. “After Fa-Hien set out from Ch’ang-gan it took him six years to reach Central India; and on his return took him three years to reach Ts’ing-chow. A profound and abiding regard for the learning and culture of India was needed to feed and sustain such a long continued movement. Indeed, the enthusiasm for Indian wisdom was so intense, the passion for a direct contact with its seats was so strong, that it defied the physical dangers and difficulties which lay so amply in the way of its realization. Besides, Chinese scholars, I-tsing refers to “the Mongolians of the North” sending students to India.

The teachers themselves were most exemplary. Hiuen Tsang says of the Brahmins: “The teachers (of the Vedas) must themselves have closely studied the deep and secret principles they contain, and penetrated to their remotest meaning. They then explain their general sense, and guide their pupils in understanding the words which are difficult.

They urge them on and skillfully conduct them. They add luster to their poor knowledge and stimulate the desponding.” Studies were pursued unremittingly, and Hiuen Tsang says: “The day is not sufficient for asking and answering profound questions. From morning till night they engage in discussion; the old and the young mutually help one another.”

Attached to the university was a kind of post-graduate department, a group of learned Brahmins known collectively as a parishad. A parishad seems usually to have consisted of ten men; four ‘walking encyclopedias’ each of whom had learnt all the four Vedas by heart, three who had specialized in one of the Sutras, and representative of the three orders of brahmachari grihastha and vanaprastha-student, householder and hermit.

The parishad gave decisions on disputed points of religion of learning. I-Tsing reports that at the end of their course of studies, ‘to try the sharpness of

their wit' some men 'proceed to the king's court to lay down before it the sharp weapon of their abilities: there they present their schemes and show their talent, seeking to be appointed in the practical government..."

It is interesting to note that the study of Sanskrit was continued in Buddhist monasteries. At the Pataliputra monastery Fa-Hien stayed for three years "learning Sanskrit books and the Sanskrit speech and writing out the Vinaya rules." Archery is found mentioned in the Jataka stories. The Bhimsena Jataka tells that Boddhisatva learnt archery at Takshila. Wrestling was popular and descriptions of such breath-holding bouts in wrestling are available in the Jataka stories.

Two kinds of games called Udyana Krida or garden games and Salila Krida or water sports are also mentioned. Archery was also popular among the women during this period, as can be seen from the Ahicchatra images. Hunting, elephant fighting, Ram fighting, and Partridge fighting were the other important games of this period.

Takshashila, the most ancient Hindu University, was destroyed by the barbarian White Huns in 455 A.D. Sir John Marshall, Director General of Archaeology in India, has given a most interesting account, but he says regretfully,

"The monuments of Taxila were wantonly and ruthlessly devastated in the course of the same (fifth) century. This work of destruction is almost certainly to be attributed to the hordes of barbarian white Huns, who after the year 455 A.D. swept down into India in ever increasing numbers carrying sword and fire wherever they went, and not only possessed themselves of the kingdom of the Kinshans, but eventually overthrew the great empire of the Guptas. From this calamity Taxila never again recovered."

Universities of Ancient India

1. *Takkasila*: Takkasila also known as Taxila-for information on this university, please refer to the above passages.
2. *Mithila*: Mithila, was a stronghold of Brahminical culture at its best in the time of the Upanishads, under its famous Philosopher-king Janaka who used to send out periodical invitations to learned Brahmins of the Kuru-Panchala country to gather to his court for purpose of philosophical discussions. Under him Eastern India was vying with North-Western India in holding the palm of learning. In those days, the name of the country was not Mithila but Videha. In the time of the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, and Buddhist literature, Mithila retained the renown of its Vedic days.

Its subsequent political history is somewhat chequered. When Vijaya Sen was King of Bengal, Nanyadeva of the Karnataka dynasty was King of Mithila in A.D. 1097. King Vijaya defeated him but was defeated by his son Gangadeva who recovered Mithila from him. This Karnataka Dynasty ruled Mithila for the period c. A.D. 115-1395, followed by the Kamesvara Dynasty which ruled between c. A.D. 1350-

1515. It was again followed by another dynasty of rulers founded by Mahesvara Thakkura in the time of Akbar, and this dynasty has continued up to the present time.

Mithila as a seat of learning flourished remarkably under these later kings. The Kamesvara period was made famous in the literary world by the erudite and versatile scholar, Jagaddhara, who wrote commentaries on a variety of texts, the Gita, Devi-mahatmya, Meghaduta, Gita-Govinda, Malati-Madhava, and the like, and original treatises on Erotics, such as Rasika-Sarvasva-Sangita-Sarvasva. The next scholar who shed luster on Mithila was the poet Vidyapati, the author of Maithili songs or Padavali generally. He has inspired for generations the later Vaishava writers of Bengal.

Mithila made conspicuous contributions in the realm of severe and scientific subjects. It developed a famous School of Nyaya which flourished from the twelfth to the fifteenth century A.D. under the great masters of Logic, Gangesa, Vardhamana, Pakshadhara, and others. This School of New Logic (Navya Nyaya) was founded by Gangesa Upadhyaya and his epoch-making work named "Tattva Chinatmani", a work of about 300 pages whose commentaries make up over 1,000,000 pages in three centuries of its study. Gangesa is supposed to have lived after A.D. 1093-1150, the time of Ananada Suri and Amarachandra Suri, whose opinions he has quoted.

By its scholastic activities Mithila in those days, like Nalanda, used to draw students from different parts of India for advanced and specialized studies in Nyaya or Logic, of which it was then the chief center.

3. *Nalanda*: Nalanda was the name of the ancient village identified with modern Baragaon, 7 miles north of Rajgir in Bihar. The earliest mention of the place is that in the Buddhist scriptures which refer to a Nalanda village near Rajagriha with a Pavarika Mango Park in Buddha's time. The Jain texts carry the history earlier than the Buddhist. It was the place where Mahavira had met Gosala and was counted as a bahira or suburb of Rajagriha where Mahavira had spent as many as fourteen rainy seasons. Nalanda, when Fa-hien visited it, was called Nala and was known as the place "where Sariputta was born, and to which also he returned, and attained here his pari-nirvana. Nalanda was not a sectarian or a religious university in the narrow sense of the term, imparting only Buddhist thought. Subjects other than Buddhism were taught as fervently. Almost all sciences, including the science of medicine were taught. So were the Upanishads and the Vedas. Panini's grammar, the science of pronunciation (Phonetics), etymology, Indology and Yoga were all included in the curricula. Surprisingly, even archery was taught at Nalanda. Hiuen Tsang himself learnt Yogasastra from Jayasena.

Knowledge of Sanskrit was essential for all entrants in spite of the fact that Sakyamuni delivered his sermons in Pali. Knowledge of Sanskrit meant

complete mastery of Sanskrit grammar, literature and correct pronunciation, and was compulsory to enter the portals of the university. On the authority of Hiuen Tsang, we can safely say that the entrants to Nalanda were supposed to be well-versed in “Beda” *i.e.*, Veda, Vedanta, Samakhya, Nyaya and Vaisesika. I-Tsing also confirms this in his accounts.

Nalanda was an example of the Guru-Shishya parampara, a great Indian tradition. The authority of the Guru (teacher) over the shishya (student) was absolute, and yet, dissent was permitted in academic matters. Free education: Out of the income of the estate. In Nalanda, swimming, breathing exercises and yoga formed an integral part of the curriculum. Harshavardhana, of the Gupta dynasty was a great sportsman and he encouraged his subjects as well. Another great contemporary of Harsha, Narasimhan or Mamallah was also a great wrestler. He belonged to the Pallava dynasty.

Yuan Chawang, a Chinese student at Nalanda, wrote: “In the establishment were some thousand brethren, all men of great learning and ability, several hundreds being highly esteemed and famous; the brethren were very strict in observing the precepts and regulations of their order; learning and discussing, they found the day too short. Day and night they admonished each other, juniors and seniors mutually helping to perfection....Hence foreign students came to the institution to put an end to their rounds and then become celebrated and those who shared the name of Nalanda, were all treated with respect, wherever they went.”

Though Buddhism and Hinduism became arrayed in opposite philosophical camps, they were both given their places in the university curriculum. There was no intellectual isolationism of the type that characterizes modern sectarian institutions of the Christian world. According to eminent Indian historian, R C Dutt, “Buddhism never assumed a hostile attitude towards the parent religion of India; and the fact that the two religions existed side by side for long centuries increased their tolerance of each other. Hindus went to Buddhist monasteries and universities, and Buddhist learnt from Brahmin sages.”

According to Alain Danielou (1907-1994) son of French aristocracy, author of numerous books on philosophy, religion, history and arts of India: “Hiuen Tsang, the Chinese traveler, stayed five years at Nalanda University, where more than seven thousand monks lived. He mentions a very considerable literature in Sanskrit and other works on history, statistics and geography, none of which have survived. He also writes of officials whose job it was to write records of all important events. At Nalanda, studies included the Vedas, the Upanishads, cosmology (Sankhya), realist or scientific philosophy (Vaisheshika), logic (Nyaya), to which great importance was attached, and Jain and Buddhist philosophy. Studies also included grammar, mechanics, medicine, and

physics. Medicine was highly effective, and surgery was quite developed. The pharmacopoeia was enormous, and astronomy was very advanced. The earth's diameter had been calculated very precisely. In physics, Brahmagupta had discovered the law of gravity."

4. *Vallabi*: Valabhi in Kathiawad was also a great seat of Hindu and Buddhist learning. It was the capital of an important kingdom and a port of international trade with numerous warehouses full of rarest merchandise. During the 7th century, however, it was more famous as a seat of learning. I-tsing informs us that its fame rivaled with that of Nalanda in eastern India.
5. *Vikramasila*: Like Nalanda and Vallabhi, the University of Vikramasila was also the result of royal benefactions. Vikramasila, found by king Dharmapala in the 8th century, was a famous center of international learning for more than four centuries. King Dharmapala (c. 775-800 A. D) was its founder, he built temples and monasteries at the place and liberally endowed them. He had the Vihara constructed after a good design. He also erected several halls for the lecturing work. His successors continued to patronize the University down to the 13th century. The teaching was controlled by a Board of eminent teachers and it is stated that this Board of Vikramasila also administered the affairs at Nalanda. The University had six colleges, each with a staff of the standard strength of 108 teachers, and a Central Hall called the House of Science with its six gates opening on to the six Colleges. It is also stated that the outer walls surrounding the whole University was decorated with artistic works, a portrait in painting of Nagarjuna adorning the right of the principal entrance and that of Atisa on the left. On the walls of the University were also the painted portraits of Pandits eminent for their learning and character.

Grammar, logic, metaphysics, ritualism were the main subjects specialized at the institution. Destruction of Vikramasila by Moslems: In 1203, the University of Vikramasila was destroyed by the Mahomadens under Bakhtyar Khilji. As related by the author of Tabakat-i-Nasari:

"the greater number of the inhabitants of that place were Brahmins and the whole of these Brahmins had their heads shaven; and they were all slain. There were a great number of books on religion of the Hindus (Buddhists) there; and when all these books came under the observation of the Musalmans, they summoned a number of Hindus that they might give them information respecting the import of these books; but the whole of the Hindus had been killed. On becoming acquainted (with the contents of those books), it was found that the whole of that fortress and city was a college, and, in the Hindu tongue, they call a college a Bihar (Vihara)."

After the destruction of the Vikramasila University, Sri Bhadra repaired to the University of Jagadala whence he proceeded to Tibet, accompanied by many other monks who settled down there as preachers of Buddhism.

6. *Jagaddala*: Its foundation by King Rama Pala. According to the historical Epic Ramacharita, King Ram Pala, of Bengal and Magadha, who reigned between A.D. 108-1130, founded a new city which he called Ramavati on the banks of the rivers Ganga and Karatoya in Varendra and equipped the city with a Vihara called Jagadala. The University could barely work for a hundred years, till the time of Moslem invasion sweeping it away in A.D. 1203. But in its short life it has made substantial contributions to learning through its scholars who made it famous by their writings.
7. *Odantapuri*: Very little is known of this University, although at the time of Abhayakaragupta there were 1,000 monks in residence here. Odanatapuri is now known for the famous scholar named Prabhakara who hailed from Chatarpur in Bengal. It appears that this University had existed long before the Pala kings came into power in Magadha. These kings expanded the University by endowing it with a good Library of Brahmanical and Buddhist works. This Monastery was taken as the model on which the first Tibetan Buddhist Monastery was built in 749 A.D. under King Khri-sron-deu-tsan on the advice of his guru, Santarakshita.
8. *Nadia*: Nadia is the popular name of Navadvipa on the Bhagirathi at its confluence with Jalangi. Once it was a center of trade borne by the Bhagirathi between Saptagrama (on the river Sarasvati near Hoogly) and the United Provinces, and in the other direction by the Jalangi between Saptagrama and Eastern Bengal.
9. *Madura Sangham*: Madura Sangham was another seat of learning. The Sangham was known for its learning and academic prestige. Writing about the Tamil institutions, Dr. Krishnaswami Aiyangar (1871-1947) remarks: "There are two features with regard to these assemblies that call for special remark. The first, the academics were standing bodies of the most eminent men among the learned men of the time in all branches of knowledge. The next, it was the approval of this learned body that set the seal of authority on the works preserved to it." Scholars were honored irrespective of sex. Aiyangar continues: "A Ruler of Tanjore, poet, musician, warrior, and administrator, did extraordinary honour to a lady of Court, by name Ramachandram, who composed an epic on the achievements of her patron, Raghunatha Nayaka of Tanjore. It appears that she was accorded honour of Kanaka-Ratna Abhisheka (bath in gold and gems). She was, by assent of the Court, made to occupy the position of "Emperor of Learning."
10. *Benares*: Benares has always been a culture center of all India fame and even in the Buddha's day it was already old. Though not a formal university, it is a place unique in India, which has throughout the ages provided the most suitable atmosphere for the pursuit of higher studies. The method of instruction as also the curriculum followed there in

early times was adopted from Taxila. Benares University was famous for Hindu culture. Sankaracharya as a student was acquainted with this university. Benares is the only city in India which has its schools representing every branch of Hindu thought. And there is no spiritual path which has not its center in Benares with resident adherents. Every religious sect of the Hindus has its pilgrimage there. In ancient days, Sarnath figured as a recognized seat of Buddhist learning. Rightly, therefore, it is this holy city the very heart of spiritual India. Alberuni, the noted Arabian historian, mentioned Benares as a great seat of learning and Bernier, who visited India, described it “as a kind of university, but it resembled rather the school of ancients, the masters being spread over different parts of the town in private houses.”

11. Kachipuram was another such institution of learning in South India. It came to be known as Dakshina Kasi, Southern Kashi. Huien Tsang visited it about 642. A.D. and found Vaishnavite and Shaivite Hindus, Digambara Jain and Mahayan Buddhists studying together.
12. Navadvip belonged to comparatively recent times and was founded by Sena Kings of Bengal in about 1063 A.D. and soon rose to be a great center of learning. It imparted instruction in Vedas, Vedangas, Six Systems especially Nyaya. Chaitanya was a product of Navadvipa. It had 500-600 students, when A. H Wilson visited it in 1821, drawn from Bengal, Assam, Nepal and South India.

In 1867, Edward B Cowell (1826-1903) professor of Sanskrit in Cambridge and author of *The aphorisms of Sandilya or The Hindu doctrine of faith*, recorded his opinion in these words: “I could not help looking at these unpretending lecture-halls with a deep interest, as I thought of the pundits lecturing there to generation after generation of eager, inquisitive minds. Seated on the floor with his ‘corona’ of listening pupils round him, the teacher expiates on those refinements of infinitesimal logic which makes a European’s brain dizzy to think of, but whose labyrinth a trained Nadia student will thread with unfaltering precision.”

4

Philosophy of Vedas

The *Vedas* are the main scriptural texts of Hinduism, also known as the Sanatana Dharma, and are a large corpus of texts originating in Ancient India. The Vedas, regarded as *Aaruti* (“that which is heard”), form part of an oral tradition in the form of an ancient teacher-disciple tradition.

As per Hindu tradition the Vedas were ‘revealed’ to the Rishis referred to in the texts, not composed or written by them. Even though many historians have tried to affix dates to the Vedas there is as yet no common consensus as there is for the scriptures of other religions.

The Vedas are arguably the oldest surviving scriptures in the world. The Vedanta and Mimamsa schools of Hindu philosophy assert that the Vedas are *apaurusheya* (“unauthored”), that is, they have neither human nor divine origin, and are eternal in nature. As per Hindu tradition, the sage Vedavyasa divided the Vedas into Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda at the beginning of the Kali Yuga.

Overview: The sacred books of ancient India. The Sanskrit word veda means “knowledge”, more particularly “sacred book”. In its widest sense the term designates not only the sacred texts, but also the voluminous theological and philosophical literature attached thereto, the Brahmanas, Aranyakas, Upanishads, and Sutras.

But usually the term veda applies only to the four collections (Samhitas) of hymns and prayers composed for different ritualistic purposes: the Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, and Atharvaveda. Of these only the first three were—originally regarded as canonical; the fourth attained to this position after a long struggle. Though differences exist in the language of the four Vedas, still there

is such agreement on cardinal points as against later Sanskrit that the term Vedic, which is in common use for the oldest form of the language of India, is amply justified.

The Rigveda: The Rigveda (“Veda of verses”; from *ric*, or before sonants *rig*, “laudatory stanza”) is the oldest and most important of these collections. In its present form it contains 1028 hymns (including eleven supplementary ones in the eighth book), arranged in ten mandalas (cycles), or books, which vary in extent, only the first and tenth being approximately equal. The poems themselves are of different authorship and date from widely different periods.

The actual date of these ancient scriptures is a nebulous topic. Yet, the description of an extremely cold climate leads some to believe that the Vedas are close to 20,000 years old, but there are some modern scholars who think that the number is exaggerated and should be about 5000. No matter what the age, it is the belief by many these texts were and are the oldest in the world. They express philosophies, realities and truths about life. The texts themselves show that the collection is the result of the work of generations of poets, extending over many centuries. Books II to VII inclusive are each the work of a single poet, or *rishi* (seer), and his descendants; hence they are aptly called “family books”. Book III is attributed to the family of Vishvamitra, IV to that of Vamadeva, V to that of Vasishtha. The hymns in books I and X are all composed by different families. The ninth consists exclusively of hymns addressed to Soma, the deified plant, the juice of which was used for the Soma sacrifice. Books II to VII are the oldest, and book X the most recent, in point of origin.

Hymns to the same deity are usually grouped together. Thus, approximately 500 hymns are addressed to two gods alone: Indra, the god of lightning and storms, and Agni, the god of fire. The term god is actually false, the “gods” (*devas*) being only highly, elevated prophets, angels, or phenomenons. The Vedas clearly state that there is only one God, the same as Jews, Muslims, Christians belief alike. One Vedic missionary is the Arya Samaj, its churches are located all over the world, especially in India, the USA, and can teach those who search the Vedas.

The element of nature-worship is a marked feature in most of the hymns, which are invocations of different deities. The value of the great collection as presenting the earliest record of the mythology of an Indo-European people is apparent. Several of the gods go back to the time of Indo-Iranian unity, *e.g.*, Yama (the Avestan Yima), Soma (haoma), Mitra (the later Persian Mithra). Some of the divinities, especially the higher ones, still exhibit the attributes which enable us to trace their origin to the personification of natural phenomena.

Thus Indra personified thunder, Agni fire, Varuna the sea, Surya the sun, Ushas the dawn, the Maruts the storm, and others were of a somewhat similar character. Indra was the favourite god of the Vedic Aryans; almost one fourth of all the hymns in the Rigveda are addressed to him and they are among the best in the collection. Next to Indra stands Agni. Many hymns are in honour of Soma.

Other gods invoked are the two Ashins, somewhat resembling the Diocsuri of ancient Greece, the terrible Rudra, Parjanya the rain-god, Vayu the wind-god, Surya the sun-god, Pushan the protector of roads and stray kine. Prayers are also addressed to groups of divinities like the Adityas and the Vishve Devas (all the gods). Only a few hymns sing the praise of Vishnu and of Shiva in his earlier form as Rudra, though these two deities became later the chief gods of the Hindu pantheon. Goddesses play a small part, only Ushas, the goddess of dawn, has some twenty hymns in her honour; these poems are of exceptional literary merit.

The number of secular hymns are small, but many of them are of particular interest. They are of various content. In one (book X, 34) a gambler laments his ill luck at dice and deplores the evil passion that holds him in his grasp. In the same book (X, 18) there occurs a funeral hymn, from which important information may be gained concerning the funeral rites of the Vedic age. Evidently cremation was most in vogue, though burial was also resorted to. There are also some riddles and incantations or prayers exactly like those in the Atharvaveda. Historical references are occasionally found in the so-called *danastutis* (praises of gifts), which in most cases are not independent poems, but laudatory stanzas appended to some ordinary hymn, and in which the poet gives thanks for generosity shown to him by some prince. Some six or seven hymns deal with cosmogonic speculations.

It is significant that some of the hymns, chiefly in book X, are cast in the form of a dialogue. Here we may possibly discern the beginnings of the Sanskrit drama. The poetry of the Rigveda is neither popular nor primitive, as it has been erroneously considered, but is the production of a refined sacerdotal class and the result of a long period of cultural development. It was intended primarily for use in connection with the Soma sacrifice, and to accompany a ritual, which, though not so complicated as at the time of the Brahmanas, was far from simple.

The Rigveda has come down to us in only one recension, that of the Shakala school. Originally there were several schools: The “Mahabhashya” (great commentary), about the second century B.C., knows of twenty-one, while some later writings know of two only. In these schools the transmission of the hymns was most carefully attended to; a most elaborate mnemonic system was devised to guard against any changes in the sacred text, which has thus come down to us practically without variants.

Editions of the Rigveda were published by Max Muller, “Rigveda-Samhita with the Commentary of Sayancharya” (6 vols., London, 1849-74; 2nd ed., 4 vols., 1890-95); “The Hymns of the Rigveda in the Samhita and Pada Texts” (2nd ed., 2 vols., London, 1877); Aufrecht, “Samhita Text”, in Roman characters (2nd ed., Bonn, 1877); selections in Lanman’s “Sanskrit Reader” (Boston, 1884); Bothlingk, “Sanskrit-Chrestomathie” (3rd ed., Leipzig, 1897); Windisch, “Zwölf Hymnen des Rigveda”, with Sayana’s commentary (Leipzig, 1883). Translations were made into: English verse by Griffith (2 vols., Benares, 1896-97); selections in prose by Max Muller in “Sacred Books of the East”, XXXII (Oxford, 1891);

continued by Oldenburg, *ibidem*, XLVI (1897); German verse by Grassmann (2 vols., Leipzig, 1876-77); German prose by Ludwig (6 vols., Prague, 1876-88). On the Rigveda in general see: Kaegi, "The Rigveda", tr. Arrowsmith (Boston, 1886); Odenberg, "Rigveda", books I-Vi in "Göttinger Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften", new series, XI (Berlin, 1909).

Righteousness (Dharma) in the Rigveda: The Vedic sages created the institution of sacrificial fires (yadnya) as the point of union of God and man, on the earth. Later that very institution became the central focus of the spread of Vedic culture (sanskriti). A sacrificial fire is the very core of social life and the formation of social organisations. According to the Vedic sages The Supreme God exists in the form of a sacrificial fire. Performing sacrificial fires was Their sole code of Righteousness. Somyag is a sacrifice which is accorded the central focus in the Rigveda. Som represents vision and fire symbolises light. It is because of the sun and the rain that all living beings survive. Food too is generated from them. This being the attitude of Vedic sages towards sacrificial fires They linked every important action of life to them.'

The Samaveda: The Samaveda ("Veda of chants") consists of 1549 stanzas, taken entirely (except 75) from the Rigveda, chiefly from books VIII and IX. Its purpose was purely practical, to serve as a textbook for the udgatar or priest who attended the Soma sacrifice. The arrangement of the verses is determined solely by their relation to the rites attending this function.

The hymns were to be sung according to certain fixed melodies; hence the name of the collection. Though only two recensions are known, the number of schools for the veda is known to have been very large. The Samaveda was edited: (with German tr.) by Benfey (Leipzig, 1848); by Satyavrata Samashrami in Bibl. Ind. (Calcutta, 1873); Engl. tr. by Griffith (Benares, 1893).

The Yajurveda: The Yajurveda ("Veda of sacrificial prayers") consists also largely of verses borrowed from the Rigveda. Its purpose was also practical, but, unlike the Samaveda, it was compiled to apply to the entire sacrificial rite, not merely the Soma offering. There are two recensions of this Veda known as the "Black" and "White" Yajurveda. The origin and meaning of these designations are not clear.

The White Yajurveda contains only the verses and sayings necessary for the sacrifice, while explanations exist in a separate work; the Black incorporates explanations and directions in the work itself, often immediately following the verses. Of the black there are again four recensions, all showing the same arrangement, but differing in many other respects, notably in matters of phonology and accent. By the Hindus the Yajurveda was regarded as the most important of all the Vedas for the practice of the sacrificial rites.

The four recensions of the Yajurveda have been separately edited: (1) "Vajasaneyi Samhita" by Weber (London and Berlin, 1852), tr. Griffith (Benares, 1899); (2) "Taittiriya S." by Weber in "Indische Studien", XI, XII (Berlin, 1871-72); (3) "Maitrayani S." by von Schroeder (Leipzig, 1881-86); (4) "Kathaka S." by von Schroeder (Leipzig, 1900-09).

The Artharvana-Veda: The Artharva-Veda (“Veda of the atharvans or fire priests”) differs widely from the other Vedas in that it is not essentially religious in character and not connected with the ritual of the Soma sacrifice. It consists chiefly of a variety of spells and incantations, intended to curse as well as to bless. There are charms against enemies, demons, wizards, harmful animals like snakes, against sickness of man or beast, against the oppressors of Brahmans. But there are also charms of a positive character to obtain benefits, to insure love, happy family-life, health and longevity, protection on journeys, even luck in gambling. Superstitions from primitive ages were evidently current among the masses. To some of the spells remarkably close parallels can be adduced from Germanic and Slavic antiquity.

The Atharvana-Veda is preserved in two recensions, which, though differing in content and arrangement, are of equal extent, comprising 730 hymns and about 6000 stanzas, distributed in twenty books. Many of the verses are taken from the Rigveda without change; a considerable part of the sayings is in prose. The books are of different age; the first thirteen are the oldest, the last two are late additions. Book XX, consisting entirely of hymns in praise of Indra, all taken from the Rigveda, was undoubtedly added to give the Atharvana’s connection with the sacrificial ceremonial and thus to insure its recognition as a canonical book. But this recognition was attained only after a considerable lapse of time, and after the period of the Rigveda.

In the “Mahabharata” the canonical character of the Atharvana is distinctly recognized, references to the four Vedas being frequent. Though as a whole this collection must have come into existence later than the Rigveda, much of its material is fully as old and perhaps older.

For the history of religion and civilization it is a document of priceless value. The Atharvana-Veda has been edited by Roth and Whitney (Berlin, 1856); Engl. tr. in verse by Griffith (2 vols., Benares, 1897); prose by Bloomfield in “Sacred Books of the East”, XLII; by Whitney, revised by Lanman (2 vols., Cambridge, Mass, 1905). Consult Bloomfield, “The Atharaveda” in “Grundriss der Indoarischen Philologie”, II (Strasburg, 1899).

VEDAS AND PHILOSOPHY

The Vedas are the most ancient books in the World, and they are the Foundation of Hinduism. Veda means knowledge. Any form of Knowledge acquired is considered as a Veda whereby it has no beginning or end. While it might surprise people how a book can have no beginning or end, the ancient Rishis who wrote these accepted that the complete knowledge of the Universe could never fit in any book, so there would always be new things to discover. This philosophy makes Hinduism a very tolerant religion, always ready to accept new ideas from other cultures.

The Vedas were compiled by the great sage Krishna Dwipayana during the Dwapara Yuga with the goal to come up with a de-facto standard of education. Upon gathering all the teachings passed on from the Acharyas (Teachers) to

their Sishyas (Students) from Kingdom to Kingdom, he compiled them into 4 standard structures; the Rigveda, Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda. Upon completion of this great feat he was given the title “Veda Vyasa” which means “Compiler of the Vedas”.

The Vedas are considered Shruti (or Sruti), or revealed texts. They were not given by a prophet, but heard by many different Rishis (or very advanced Yogis) during deep meditation. These verses were combined and written in the Vedas in poetic form.

The Vedas are not Polytheistic. Dr. David Frawley, in his book “Wisdom of the Ancient Seers” mentions “The Gods, though they have a human facet, are not anthropomorphic. The Gods represent not the Divine in the image of Man, but rather man in the image of Divine, in the image of all creation.”

Regarding the charge of Pantheism, he says in the same book “The natural imagery of the ancients reflects not the Divine reduced to natural world but the natural world as a reflection of the inner truth”.

So Agni, the God of Fire, is not normal fire, but the fire of transformation. He burns our inner demons, and lights the way to Enlightenment. Soma, the God of Wine, is the Divine bliss we feel when reach the Divine, and feel him in all creation. Saraswati is not a river or Goddess of a River, but rather the River of Divine knowledge that continuously flows from heaven. When the Demons block this river and the Gods fight them, it is not a literal battle, but a figurative one when the Divine qualities inherent in Man fight the Demons of ignorance.

Organization: The Mantras are collected into anthologies called Samhitas. There are four Samhitas: the *Rk* (poetry), *Sman* (song), *Yajus* (prayer), and *Atharvan* (a kind of priest). They are commonly referred to as the Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, and Atharvaveda respectively. Each Samhita is preserved in a number of versions or recensions (shakhas), the differences among them being minor, except in the case of the Yajur Veda, where two “White” (*shukla*) recensions contain the Mantras only, while four “Black” (*krishna*) recensions interspersed the Brahmana parts among the Mantras.

The Rigveda contains the oldest part of the corpus, and consists of 1028 hymns. The Samaveda is mostly a rearrangement of the Rigveda for musical rendering. The Yajurveda gives sacrificial prayers and the Atharvaveda gives charms, incantations and magical formulae. In addition to these there are some stray secular material, such as legends.

The next category of texts are the Brahmanas. These are ritual texts that describe in detail the sacrifices in which the Mantras were to be used, as well as comment on the meaning of the sacrificial ritual. Each of the Brahmanas is associated with one of the Samhitas. The Brahmanas may either form separate texts, or in the case of the Black Yajur Veda, can be partly integrated into the text of the Samhita. The most important of the Brahmanas is the Shatapatha Brahmana of the White Yajur Veda.

The Aranyakas and Upanishads are theological and philosophical works. They are mystic or spiritual interpretations of the Vedas, and are considered

their putative end and essence, and thus known as Vedanta (“the end of the Vedas”). They often form part of the Brahmanas (e.g., the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad). They are the basis of the Vedanta school of Darsana.

Position and Compilation: Hindu tradition regards the Vedas as uncreated, eternal and being revealed to sages (Rishis). The rishi Krishna Dwaipayana, better known as Veda Vyasa – “Vyasa” meaning “editor” or “compiler” – reputedly distributed this mass of hymns into the four books of the Vedas, each book being supervised by one of his disciples.

Paila arranged the hymns of the *Rig Veda*. Those that were chanted during religious and social ceremonies were compiled by Vaishampayana under the title *Yajus mantra Samhita* (see Yajur-Veda). Jaimini is said to have collected hymns that were set to music and melody— “Saman” (see Sama-Veda). The fourth collection of hymns and chants known as the *Atharva Samhita* was collated by Sumanta.

Philosophies and sects that developed in the Indian subcontinent have taken differing positions on the Vedas. In Buddhism and Jainism, the authority of the Veda is repudiated, and both evolved into separate religions. The sects which did not explicitly reject the Vedas remained followers of the Sanatana Dharma, which is known in modern times as Hinduism.

Study: Elaborate methods for preserving the text (memorizing by heart instead of writing), subsidiary disciplines (Vedanga), exegetical literature, etc., were developed in the Vedic schools. Sayana, from the 14th century, is known for his elaborate commentaries on the Vedic texts. While much evidence suggests that everyone was equally allowed to study the Vedas and many Vedic “authors” were women, the later dharmashastras, from the Sutra age, dictate that women and Shudras were neither required nor allowed to study the Veda. These dharmashastras regard the study of the Vedas a religious duty of the three upper varnas (Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas). In modern times, Vedic studies are crucial in the understanding of Indo-European linguistics, as well as ancient Indian history.

Many forms of Hinduism encourage the Vedic mantras to be interpreted as liberally and as philosophically as possible, unlike the texts of the three Abrahamic religions. In fact, over-literal interpretation of the mantras is actually discouraged, and even the three layers of commentaries (Brahmanas, Aranyakas, and Upanishads), which form an integral part of the Sruti literature, interpret the seemingly polytheistic, ritualistic, and highly complex Samhitas in a philosophical and metaphorical way to explain the “hidden” concepts of God (Ishwara), the Supreme Being (Brahman) and the soul or the self (Atman). Many Hindus believe that the very sound of the Vedic mantras is purifying for the environment and the human mind.

Cosmogony: The Vedic view of the world and cosmogony sees one true divine principle self-projecting as the divine word, *Vaak*, ‘birthing’ the cosmos that we know from ‘Hiranyagarbha’ or Golden Womb, a primordial sun figure that is equivalent to Surya. The varied gods like Vayu, Indra, Rudra (the

Destroyer), Agni (Fire, the sacrificial medium) and the goddess Saraswati (the Divine Word, aka Vaak) are just some examples of the myriad aspects of the one underlying nature of the universe.

Dating: Many historians regard the Vedas as one of the oldest surviving texts (see the ancient Egyptian texts “The Story of Sinuhe” and the “Ipuwer Papyrus”, both dated 1800 BCE). The newest parts of the Vedas are estimated to date to around 500 BCE; the oldest text (Rig Veda) is found to have been completed by 1500 BCE after being composed over hundreds of years, but most Indologists agree that a long oral tradition possibly existed before it was written down.

They represent the oldest stratum of Indian literature and according to modern scholars are written in forms of a language which evolved into Sanskrit. They consider the use of Vedic Sanskrit for the language of the texts an anachronism, although it is generally accepted. Some writers have used astronomical references in the Rigveda to date it to as early as the 4th millennium BC.

The Hindus fundamental belief is that the Vedas are sanatana-eternal-and apaurusheya not composed by human entity. At the beginning of every cosmic cycle of brahma, Paramatma utters the divine words. Later, at various periods great rishis perceive these divine words and imparted this knowledge orally through generations. It is believed that this Vedic knowledge totally disappeared at the end of Brahmas cosmic cycle and reappeared again in Brahma’s next cycle of creation. Later a part of vedic knowledge was written. Maha Rishi Veda Vyas simplified this one Veda by dividing it into four: Rig, Sam, Yajur, Atharva. In Bharatvarsha’s true tradition the vedas are eternal.

Etymology: The word “veda” means “knowledge”, and is derived from the root “vid”, Sanskrit for “know”, reconstructed as being derived from the Proto-Indo-European root “weid-”, meaning “see” or “know”. “Weid-” is also the source of the English word “wit”, as well as “vision” through Latin. The Czech and Slovak words for “science” are “vda” resp. “veda”, derived from western Slavic “vdet” resp. “vediee” for “know”.

DERIVATION FROM THE VEDAS-UPAVEDAS

The Upavedas are derived from the Vedas and are specific applications of the teachings of the Vedas. The main Upavedas are:

1. *Ayurveda:* India’s healing system, it lays more stress on living with nature instead of fighting it, hence preventive instead of corrective medicine.
2. *Dhanur Veda:* Martial arts. Ayurveda and Dhanurveda have points in common. They both work with Marma, or natural Pran (Life Energy) that flows in the body.
Ayurveda heals the body, while Dhanurveda is used for killing. This concept is also known to Chinese as Acupuncture and related Chinese Martial Arts.

3. *Stahapatya Veda*: Architecture, sculpture and geomancy. Used especially for Temple design.
4. *Gandharv Veda*: Music, poetry and dance.

Some other fields like Jyotish (Indian Astrology), Tantra (based on the Puranas, which are in turn based on Vedas), Shiksha and Vyakara (Grammar and pronunciation) are also based on the Vedas.

The six schools of Vedic Philosophy:

1. *Nyaya*: The Logical School, founded by Gautama
2. *Vaishesika*: Atomic school, founded by Kannada
3. *Samkhya*: Cosmic Principle School, founded by Kapila
4. *Yoga*: Yoga school (includes Raj, Hatha and Tantra Yoga), founded by Hiranyagarbha, although Patanjalis Sutras are the most popular book that has survived.
5. *Purva Mimamsa*: Ritualistic School, founded by Jamini
6. *Uttara Mimamsa/Vedant*: Theological School, founded by Badarayana.

Vedanta was made popular by Adi Shankara also called Shankaracharya, who founded the Swami Order of Monks, and established 4 schools (or Maths) in 4 parts of India to carry on teachings of the Vedas in the 7th century.

The Hidden Meaning of the Vedas: The Vedas were written in poetic language. By literally translating them, Western translators lost some of the poetic beauty. Their interpretations of the shastras are often shallow. Plus, they had to force meanings where there were none. Words like Pantheism, Polytheism are used to describe Hinduism, but this shows the translators ignorance or bias. One of the best commentaries to Vedas is written by Sri Aurobindo. Rig Veda is considered by many to be a book written by barbaric culture worshipping violent Gods. Aurobindo realized that this was due to the biased view of Westerners who had some preconceived views on Hindu culture.

So Aurobindo decided to look for hidden meanings in the Vedas. He looked at the Rig Veda as a psychological book, inspiring the people to move towards God, but in a hidden language. So Indra is the God of Indriya, or the senses (sight, touch, hear, taste, etc.). Varun means air, but in esoteric terms means Pran, or the Life force. So when the Rig Vedas says “Call Indra and Varun to drink Soma Rasa” they mean use the Mind senses and Pran to receive divine bliss (Soma means wine of Gods, but in several texts also means Divine Bliss, as in Right handed Tantra).

Agni, or God of Fire, is the hidden Divine Spark in us, which we have to fan, so it grows and engulfs our whole body. So the sacrifice of the Vedas actually means sacrificing ones ego to the internal Agni, or Divine spark. These essays originally appeared in the Arya, but have been condensed as a book form as “The Secret of the Vedas” by Sri Aurobindo.

Westerners and Vedas: The Vedas are hidden in mystic language. The Rishis hid 3-4 esoteric meanings within each verse, and it required a good Guru to explain them.

One of the few Westerners to study the Vedas with an Indian Guru is Dr. David Frawley. In his excellent book “Wisdom of the Ancient Seers” he explores

ideas similar to one by Sri Aurobindo. He describes Indra as a brave soul, willing to fight evil and darkness. He is the inner Spirit, wanting to break free from the fake shackles of ego.

Frawley, who also studied Ayurveda and Tantra, says Agni also refers to Kundalini, and Soma Rasa to the Sahasra Chakra and the bliss that flows from it. Savitur is the Sun that shines in the darkness of ignorance, and guides us towards the Truth.

SAMHITA

The Samhita (Sanskrit: “joined” or “collected”) is the basic text of each of the Vedas, comprising collections of hymns and ritual texts. This term was originally used in reference to the style of recitation used during hymns and chants. In the Vedas the Samhitas are supplemented by later explanatory commentaries, notably the Brahmanas and Upanishads.

The term is also sometimes spelled ‘Sanhita’.

Other Samhitas: In later times, the term Samhita also came to be applied to the names of texts belonging to various fields of knowledge, not directly connected to the Vedas, *e.g.*

- Gherand Samhita
- Charak Samhita
- Ashtavakra Samhita

Gherand Samhita: Gheranda Samhita (Sanskrit for “Gheranda’s Collection”) is one of the three classic texts of Hatha Yoga (the other two being the Hatha Yoga Pradapika and the Shiva Samhita). It is a late 17th Century text and is considered to be the most encyclopedic of the three classic texts on Hatha Yoga.

Gheranda Samhita is a manual of Yoga taught by Gheranda to Chanda. Unlike other Hatha Yoga texts, the Gheranda Samhita focuses upon the *Shat Kriyas* or internal body cleansing, *i.e.*, *Ghatastha Yoga*. The closing stanzas of the Gheranda Samhita deal with Samadhi, but the methods taught are different from Patanjali’s methods.

Charaka: Charaka, sometimes spelled Caraka, (300 BC) is one of the founders of Ayurveda. According to Charaka, health and disease are not predetermined and life may be prolonged by human effort.

Contributions: According to the Charaka tradition, there existed six schools of medicine, founded by the disciples of the sage Punarvasutreya. Each of his disciples, Agnivesha, Bhela, Jatkkarna, Parshara, Hrita, and Kshrapni, composed a Samhit. Of these, the one composed by Agnivesha was supposed to be the best. The Agnivesha Samhit was later revised by Charaka and it came to be known as Charaka Samhit. The Charaka Samhit was revised by Dridhbala.

Yurveda is traditionally divided into eight branches which, in Charaka’s scheme, are:

1. Sktra-sthna, general principles
2. Nidna-sthna, pathology
3. vimna-sthna, diagnostics

4. shamrasthna, physiology and anatomy
5. indriya-sthna, prognosis
6. chikits-sthna, therapeutics
7. kalpa-sthna, pharmacy
8. siddhi-sthna, successful treatment

Form of Charak Samhita: Charak Samhita contains 120 adhyayas (chapters) in all. These are divided in 8 parts:

1. Sutra sthana 30
2. Nidan sthana 08
3. Viman sthana 08
4. Sharir sthana 08
5. Indriya sthana 12
6. Chikitsa sthana 30
7. Kalpa sthana 12
8. Siddhi sthana 12

ASHTAVAKRA GITA

The Ashtavakra Gita (Song of Ashtavakra), also known by the name Ashtavakra Samhita is an influential non-dualist Vedic scripture traditionally said to have been spoken by the Sage Ashtavakra, though its authorship is not known with certainty. There is little doubt though that it is very old, probably dating back to the days of the classic Vedanta period. The Sanskrit style and the doctrine expressed would seem to warrant this assessment. The work was known, appreciated and quoted by Ramakrishna and his disciple Vivekananda, as well as by Ramana Maharshi. Radhakrishnan refers to it with great respect, while even Sri Ravi Shankar has given a commentary on the scripture. Apart from that, the work speaks for itself. It presents the traditional teachings of Advaita Vedanta with a clarity and power very rarely matched.

The *Ashtavakra Gita* does not date itself or brand itself to any region, culture, or peoples, although it does contain Hindu-specific references, especially in the final chapter entitled ‘I am Shiva’ where it is proclaimed in the final verse that the author is in truth one with God. The essence of the *Ashtavakra Gita* is that there is no such thing as existence or non existence, right or wrong, or moral or immoral. In the eyes of the sage Ashtavakra who is the ostensible author of this text, one’s true identity can be found by simply recognizing oneself as Pure Existence and that as individuals we are the Awareness of all things.

The Ashtavakra Gita teaches that one is already free once one realises they are free. It advocates non-action (similar to the Daoist concept of Wu Wei), the loss of desire and severing of worldly attachments. To free oneself from the cycle of life and death one should withdraw from all Earthly desires, worries and cares. To continue including in Earthly things even after one has realized their true nature is said to be foolish and time wasting. Instead it paints a picture of The Master as someone who continues to keep up their responsibilities in the world, not because they believe they have to or due to any worldly attachments,

but simply that it is in their nature to do so. It is important to avoid misinterpretation in this regard, and to that end teachers traditionally recommend that Ashtavakra Gita be pursued by only those who have already advanced on the spiritual path. Ashtavakra teaches that emotion, thought and even meditation can lead to further bondage and that religious practice itself is of no meaning to the enlightened.

5

Freedom to Practice Diverse Beliefs and Customs

Hindutva stands for the freedom to practice diverse beliefs and customs. It is implied that secular democracy implies equal laws for all religions, and want a Uniform Civil Code passed for the same reason. One must also differentiate between the word “secularism” as used in the Western and Indian contexts. Secularism in the West implies “separation of church & state” whereas secularism in India means “equal respect for all religions”.

Reclaim Disputed Temples and Historical Monuments

Among the goals of the Hindutva organization in modern India includes winning the struggles to reclaim Hindu architectures. The struggles have started since usurpation of their structures during the invasions by conquerors. These include demands to recover temples that have become disputed historical monuments. The usurpation of Hindu architecture is still being continued by both the Muslims and Christians and encouraged by their leaders. When Pope John Paul II came to India, he called for an entire conversion of Asia in the lines of that carried out in Europe and Africa in the earlier millennia. The destruction of the Mylapore Kapalishwar temple in Chennai and Vedhapurishvarar Temple in the city of Puducherry are some of the temples usurped by the then Christian rulers.

Decolonization of National Ethos

Denunciation of British colonialism and Communism alike for a perceived weakening of Hindus. Correction of Colonial-Marxist Historiography that

undermines the national ethos. Emphasizing historical oppression of Hindus by invading forces like the Muslims and the Christians and the call to “reverse” the influence resulting from these intrusions.

Denunciation of Perverse Secularism

In India Perverse Secularism is contrived to mean the active involvement of the State in supporting certain religions (Islam, Christianity and Marxism) and oppressing others (Hinduism, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism). Religion has become the primary consideration in all sorts of civil affairs: in anything from the reporting of news to running educational institutions.

Perverse secularism has been the bane of India in the last five decades. In his foreword to R. N. P. Singh’s book on ‘Islam and Religious Riots, K. P. Gill states bluntly: “Much of the ‘secular’ discourse in India has been based on a ‘politically correct’ refusal to confront the nature of religious communities and institutions, and their past and present activities, and on the fiction that ‘all religions are equal’... but it cannot even begin to address the sources of historical conflagrations. The truth is, unless communities acknowledge reality warts and all and recognise the transgressions of their own history within a constructive context, no real solution to the issues of communal polarisation and violence in India can be brought about”.

Denunciation of the Indian government as too passive with regard to the ethnic cleansing of Kashmiri Hindus by Kashmiri Muslim separatists and advocates of Hindutva wish a harder stance in Jammu and Kashmir. Discriminatory ‘secularism’ has become the State dogma in Congress-run India. Secularism in the Indian context is very similar to what Bat Ye’or calls, compellingly, dhimmitude. This is the state of mind in which non-Muslims, although not under Muslim rule, accept at face value Islam’s claims about its superiority and its right to traumatize non-Muslims. In other words, they are bullied into accepting second-class citizenship or dhimmi status, just as though Muslims were in fact in power.

Dhimmitude is behind the apparent inability of Indian State to manage aggressive Muslim groups and not only in respect to Islam, but it has been extended to its Semitic cousins Christianity and Marxism as well.

Resurgent Hindutva

Hindutva represents the resistance movement against the cultural, religious and economic domination of India by Western powers. To understand why such a resistance movement is necessary, it is important to understand what Hinduism is. Hinduism is the culture, religion and civilization not only of India and Asia but of the whole World. In the same way as fraudulent political parties come to power by telling lies about their opponents, modern religions have come to power by telling lies about earlier faiths. Thus most people outside India have been conditioned by the official propaganda of the ruling classes to think that Hinduism is some kind of strange and alien faith.

However, if we carefully examine the historical and archaeological evidence, we will see that all ancient religions, for example, the Pagan tradition of Europe, the religion of Ancient Egypt, Israel, Arabia, Africa, America and Australia were different forms of Hinduism. Even modern Western religions such as Judaism, Christianity and Islam, are mere modifications of the Original World Faith which in the Indian tradition is known as Sanatana Dharma, the Supreme Eternal Law of the Universe.

In the same way as children are different from their parents yet at the same time are born of and share many characteristics with them, so also all religious traditions on Earth are born of and share many characteristics with the Original World Faith. However, while some children show recognition and respect towards their parents, others distance themselves from them and in extreme cases even turn against them. Similarly, while the great religions of Asia such as Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism acknowledge their descent from the Original Faith (Dharma), Western religions have chosen not only to deny any links with their Parent Faith but have actively sought to destroy it.

The Original World Faith was systematically wiped out by the Establishment religions in Europe and large parts of Africa, Asia, America and the rest of the World. India is the only country on Earth where the Original Faith is still recognised and followed by millions of people. While much of the World has fallen into the clutches of the expansionist and predatory Western Imperialist forces which seek to impose their political, religious and cultural supremacy on the human race, India has remained a glimmer of hope, an island of refuge and a beacon of light in the darkness of Westernism which has engulfed the World.

The Globalist Conspiracy

India is one of the World's most ancient, advanced and successful civilizations. Millennia ago, when Europe was largely dominated by nomadic tribes, India was already a flowering civilization of great sophistication. Natural resources like gold, diamonds, pearls, ivory, timber, spices and cotton enabled Indian traders to exchange goods with far-away places from Egypt and Rome to China and Japan. Combined with the industriousness of her artisans and farmers and the wisdom of her military and religious leaders, this enabled India to achieve World fame as one of the wealthiest and most prosperous nations on Earth.

Unfortunately, India's unparalleled success gave rise to resentment, jealousy, envy and hatred in the leaders of foreign powers. This resulted in a long string of invasions, occupation and subjugation of her people by alien forces. The intention of these invading forces, from Persians and Greeks to Mongols, Arabs and Europeans, has always been to colonize and enslave the people of India.

However, while in the past such anti-Indian actions remained isolated, the rise of Globalism has generated a concerted effort by the World powers to bring India under their ruthless control. Mutually incompatible ideologies such as Capitalism, Communism, Christianity and Islam, have discovered a common enemy in the Spirituality of India.

Thus the leaders of Europe, America, the Arab World and China have conspired to form a Globalist Coalition the main goal of which is to dominate the World. Spiritual knowledge, reason, wisdom and common sense have been identified as the main obstacle that has to be eliminated in order for the Globalist Entity to accomplish its evil designs of World domination. In this process, India which is the Bastion of Spiritual Knowledge and Wisdom on Earth has been targeted as the main enemy to be isolated and destroyed.

The Globalist Methods

The three main factors in the Globalist method of Conquest have been military occupation, economic domination and cultural colonization. Direct military occupation is currently seen as controversial. It would be difficult for the Globalist Coalition which is operating under the pretence of “Freedom”, “Democracy”, “Racial Equality” and “Peace” to directly attack India. Nor is such direct action necessary. About half of the original territory of India, including Pakistan, Bangladesh, Kashmir, Nepal and Tibet is already under the occupation of foreign powers which are given military support by Europe, America, the Arab World and China.

This encroachment of foreign powers on Indian territory is happening in more subtle ways such as the domination of large areas of North-East India by a coalition of Chinese-inspired Communist militants and Western-supported (US-and UK-backed) Christian fundamentalists. Any potential resistance against such stealth invasion and occupation is prevented through economic and cultural domination. If the Indian people are even partly converted to the beliefs of Globalist Westernism, they will have no inclination to resist Westernist designs on India and even if they did wish to resist they would be in no position to do so as they will be economically completely dependent on the Globalist Coalition.

The Internal Enemy

The Globalist Entity would, of course, be incapable of realising its diabolic designs without the help of Westernist elements within India herself. We shall therefore identify the internal enemy and his methods of operation within India without which the Globalist Conspiracy would have no hold on the great Indian Nation. The leaders of the Muslim, Christian and other Western-implemented minorities of India have always sought to destroy Indian religion and culture without much success. Their dream only began to come true thanks to the anti-Indian actions of the British Colonial forces which held India under their brutal occupation until the 1940s.

India had always been a tolerant society where inter-religious tension and conflict was virtually unknown previous to the Western colonization of India. Different faiths such as Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism coexisted peacefully for many centuries. All this changed, however, with the importation of Islam into India by Arab traders and armed invaders. When the British Colonialists took over from the Arabs, they proceeded to divide Indian society by religious

denomination and play one religious group against the others in a classical example of divide-and-rule tactics. Any Indian attempt to form an opposition to this Western domination was brutally repressed by the British occupiers. We only need to mention the anti-Indian massacres committed by the British during the 1857 Uprising. Other forms of anti-Indian repression were more subtle but equally devastating.

The pro-independence movement headed by Mahatma Gandhi and other pacifists was given undeserved precedence over more militant patriotic organisations in order to divide and confuse the Indian people. As a result, upon the British withdrawal from India in 1947, the left-wing Indian National Congress (Congress Party) which had long been collaborating with the anti-Hindu Muslim League, came to be the new dominant force in India.

To get an idea of the Congress Party's true intentions it will suffice to mention its support for the radical Islamic "Khilafat movement" which from 1919 was agitating for the recreation of the Turkish Ottoman Empire, one of India's most deadly enemies. This leftist-Muslim Alliance engineered the division of India into Muslim-dominated Pakistan and secularist-dominated India; abolished the Monarchy and made India into a Communist-orientated republic; and finally opened the country to unrestricted influence and domination by the neo-colonialist forces of International Materialism and Globalism. The dominating Congress Party is able to win influence and power with promises of progress, equality and prosperity. Such promises, however, really serve the purpose of concealing the politicians' true intention which is to use minority votes to reinforce their own otherwise weak position vis-a-vis the electorate.

Thus if the Congress Party cannot muster sufficient votes on its own, all it needs to do is to ally itself with the Muslims, Communists and other anti-Hindu minorities in order to keep the Hindu majority down and out of power. Were the Congress party truly interested in the Unity of India, it would logically ally itself with the pro-Hindu parties and obtain an absolute majority as a legitimate representative of the Indian Nation the majority of which is Hindu.

This, however, would give too much power to the Hindu majority which is unthinkable for Congress purposes. As a result, India continues to be ruled by a coalition of minorities whose sole common interest is to keep the Hindu majority down and accelerate the decline of Indian culture and civilization so that it can be finally replaced by Westernism.

Thus the final solution aimed at by the West and its Western-indoctrinated, left-wing Indian helpers, is the complete extermination of Indian culture and religion.

As part of this strategy, Hindu temples have been placed under the direct control of the secular (atheist and anti-Hindu) Congress Government in a chilling reminder of Stalinist Russia where Christian churches were under the direct control of the atheist Communist Government, and Nazi Germany where Jewish temples were at the mercy of the anti-Jewish Government!

The temple revenue derived from temple-owned lands, donations by the faithful, *etc.*, which was traditionally employed for maintenance and repair work,

religious education, helping the poor and other welfare activities, is now going straight into the pockets of the Congress Government and its anti-Hindu leaders.

As a result, Hindu temples are rapidly decaying, the priests can no longer support themselves and their families, religious education is practically non-existent and the poor are turning to Congress and foreign “charities” for help which is given them on condition that they renounce their Hindu faith.

The Ayodhya Scandal

No analysis of the religious situation in India would be complete without an account of the infamous Ayodhya case. The Ayodhya dispute which has become a cause celebre revolves around a Hindu temple in Ayodhya (Uttar Pradesh, North India) built in commemoration of the birth of Lord Rama, a popular Hindu deity. The temple was destroyed in 1528 during the anti-Hindu campaign carried out by Babur, a descendant of Genghis Khan and founder of the Mongol Empire in India, and its location has been illegally occupied by Muslim forces ever since. Although officially authorised investigations by the Archaeological Survey of India found the evidence at the disputed site to be consistent with the “distinctive features of North Indian temples”, the Congress-controlled, Globalist-inspired High Court has denied the Hindu community their right to rebuild their temple.

Apart from this blatant conspiracy against Indian religion and culture there are deeper aspects to the general problem. These become evident if we consider that although the reconstruction of the Rama Temple would constitute a clear victory for religious freedom, it can do little to stop the ongoing disintegration of Hindu religion as a whole.

Thus even legitimate initiatives aiming to advance Indian religion and culture may inadvertently play into the hands of anti-Indian Congress Party and their Western masters with whom they have conspired to destroy the cultural and Spiritual heritage of India. This Globalist Conspiracy becomes clear from the way in which the international media have chosen to ignore the Archaeological Survey of India’s findings on Ayodhya and unanimously declared that no evidence was found!

Nor must we think of Ayodhya as an isolated case. This disturbing situation is being systematically replicated in the unchallenged destruction of thousands of ancient Hindu temples by organised criminal gangs who make a fortune from selling stolen statues of deities and other priceless religious artifacts to Western tourists and “art-collectors”. We may observe that you will never hear of Hindus commissioning criminals to rob Western churches and cathedrals! This demonstrates that, firstly, despite its technological advances, Western “Civilization” is far more primitive and destructive than its Indian counterpart. Secondly, as no attempts whatever are made by the authorities to stop or prevent this scandalous traffic in stolen religious art, it demonstrates that such criminal activities represent an inherent part in the Western plan to destroy Indian religion and culture by any means.

INDIA'S UNITY IS OF UNTOLD ANTIQUITY

After a long and dark period in its history, Hinduism is again on the rise. This is true in the national as well as the spiritual sense, for India cannot exist without its spiritual foundation. There are many Western scholars as well as Western educated Indians who hold that India was never a nation but only a collection of clans and groups in a geographical 'subcontinent'. They further claim that Indians were united as a people for first time by the British. This has two fallacies. First, the British did not rule over a united India.

Their authority extended over roughly two-thirds of India while the remaining portion was ruled by hereditary rulers — like the Maharajas and Nawabs — who acknowledged the British monarch as their chief but ruled according to their own laws and tradition. *This means it is not India per se, but British India that was not a nation, but a patchwork of states.* Second, although often politically divided, the goal was always to unite all of India under a single rule.

In spite of this history, it was claimed by the British, and faithfully repeated by the Leftist intellectuals, that the British unified India. This is completely false. *The unity of India, rooted in her ancient culture, is of untold antiquity.* It may have been divided at various times into smaller kingdoms, but the goal was always to be united under a 'Chakravartin' or a 'Samrat'. There was always a cultural unity even when it was politically divided. This cultural unity was seriously damaged during the Medieval period, when India was engaged in a struggle for survival — like what is happening in Kashmir today. Going back thousands of years, India had been united under a single ruler many times. The earliest recorded emperor of India was Bharata, the son of Shakuntala and Dushyanta, but there were several others. Some examples from the *Aitareya Brahmana*.

"With this great anointing of Indra, Dirghatamas Mamateya anointed Bharata Daushanti. Therefore, Bharata Daushanti went round the earth completely, conquering on every side and offered the horse in sacrifice.

"With this great anointing of Indra, Tura Kavasheya anointed Janamejaya Parikshita. Therefore Janamejaya Parikshita went round the earth completely, conquering on every side and offered the horse in sacrifice."

There are similar statements about Sudasa Paijavana anointed by Vasistha, Anga anointed by Udamaya Atreya, Durmukha Pancala anointed by Brihadukta and Atyarati Janampati anointed by Vasistha Satyahavya. Atyarati, though not born a king, became an emperor and went on to conquer even the Uttara Kuru or the modern Sinkiang and Turkestan that lie north of Kashmir. There are others also mentioned in the *Shatapatha Brahmana* and also the *Mahabharata*. This shows that the unity of India is an ancient concept.

As previously noted, the British did not rule over a unified India. Far from it, for their goal was *divide and rule*. They had treaties with the rulers of hereditary kingdoms like Mysore, Kashmir, Hyderabad and others that were more or less independent. The person who united all these was Sardar Patel, not the British. But this unification was possible only because India is culturally one. Pakistan, with no such identity or cultural unity, is falling apart.

The spiritual tradition of Sanatana Dharma, which we call Hinduism, includes the code of *Raja Dharma* and *Kshatra Dharma* needed to defend the nation.

This is also part of Hindutva. This is needed to defend society against hostile forces seeking to destroy society, especially its spiritual foundation.

This is what happened during the medieval period when Islamic warriors tried to uproot Hinduism from its soil. But thanks to the heroism of both rulers and the common people, Hindutva defeated these forces and saved Sanatana Dharma. It is now being called upon to defend again in the face of cries of Jihad by fanatics across the border and intellectuals and politicians hostile to the concept of nationalism. It is therefore of paramount importance to understand what the role of Hindutva is in defending the country. This is what we need to look at next.

KSHATRA DHARMA IS EVERYONE'S DUTY

While Hinduism (or Sanatana Dharma) provides and nourishes spiritual freedom, there are always hostile forces at work that want to destroy this freedom and turn humans into intellectual and spiritual slaves. So it is always necessary to have the tools — both physical and intellectual — to protect this freedom. This part of Sanatana Dharma is called *kshatra dharma*. Those engaged in the defence of Sanatana Dharma are called *kshatriyas*. Politics, like warfare calls for the *kshatriya* spirit— to protect the weak and uphold values like freedom.

A *kshatriya* does not always fight with weapons. The intellect is as important as the sword and the gun. As Sri Aurobindo put it: “We should be absolutely unsparing in our attack on whatever obstructs the growth of the nation, and never be afraid to call a spade a spade. Excessive good nature will never do... in serious politics. Respect of persons must give way to truth and conscience... What India needs especially at this moment is aggressive virtues, the spirit of soaring idealism, bold creation, fearless resistance, courageous attack; of the passive *tamasic* inertia we already have too much.” His words still hold today. It was this ‘*tamasic inertia*’ as Sri Aurobindo called it that gave rise to endless appeasement of evil in the name of *ahimsa*— or nonviolence. (In Sanskrit, ‘*tamas*’ means darkness or ignorance.) *Evil must always be resisted, not appeased*. Intellectually, this calls for taking and defending unpopular positions. A *kshatriya* must do it.

Without this *kshatriya* spirit, a noble ideal like Sanatana Dharma becomes an orphan. This is what happened in India a thousand years ago. Excessive wealth and attachment to pleasure sapped its strength. Soldiers were willing to lay down their lives in defending the land, but intellectuals failed to analyse the new destructive ideology that came in the guise of religion. As Allaudin Khalji’s general Malik Kafur ravaged South India, our *acharyas* sat in the seclusion of their monasteries and wrote commentaries upon abstruse commentaries. There were noble exceptions. Sayana, the greatest Vedic scholar of the age, and his brother the great Vidyaranya helped Harihara and Bukka found the empire of Vijayangara. They too were *Kshatriyas* but fighting without weapons. They used their mind as weapons— like Krishna in the Mahabharata War.

Physical and intellectual weapons are both necessary. As Sri Aurobindo wrote: “The sword of the warrior is as necessary to the fulfilment of justice and righteousness as the holiness of the saint. Ramdas is not complete without Shivaji. To maintain justice and to prevent the strong from despoiling, and the weak from being oppressed is the function for which the Kshatriya was created. Therefore, says Krishna in the *Mahabharata*, God created battle and armour, the sword, the bow and the dagger.”

Resisting evil does not simply mean fighting invaders and other foreign enemies. There are internal evils also — lack of education, discrimination on the basis of caste, untouchability, rampant corruption — that should also be seen as enemies to freedom that must be destroyed. This is the case in India today. At the same time, in a time of national crisis, everyone has to become a *kshatriya* of one kind or another. Scientists have to work on new weapons to defeat the enemy. Similarly, businesses and workers must create whatever is necessary to defend the nation. Everyone must contribute to the defence of society, and not just depend on the ruling class and the professional soldier.

This is what people had to do during the medieval period when Hindu society was struggling for survival against the onslaught of Islam. In fact, many of what we call backward and scheduled castes and tribes were created out of the fighting classes when they were dispossessed by the invading armies. As the renowned medieval historian K.S. Lal has written: “The Scheduled Castes, the Scheduled Tribes, Dalits and Other Backward Castes are there in large numbers in present-day India. Many backward classes were there from pre-historic or very ancient times, but many more were added in the medieval period spanning over a thousand years... As we put the record straight, we find that the small and scattered class of trained and traditional warriors, mostly Rajputs, stood exhausted by the time of the Mughal invasion, having fought the earlier invaders at every step for well nigh eight centuries — from the middle of the seventh to the end of the fifteenth. The leadership of Hindu resistance to Muslim rule thereafter was provided by what are termed the Backwards Castes and the Dalits in present-day India. These classes had fought earlier under the leadership of Rajput Rajas and Zamindars. Now onwards they took up the leadership on themselves, and battled with the Moghul regime till the latter stood shattered by the middle of the eighteenth century. It is a different story that in the process the Backward Castes and the Dalits suffered grievously and found themselves in bad shape by the time the Islamic nightmare was over.” This shows that the people we call Dalits— the Scheduled castes and tribes have made a major contribution to defending India and Sanatana Dharma. It is no accident that many such tribal clans still carry names like ‘Nayaka’, ‘Raja’ and ‘Dorai’ that bear testimony to their previous station as warriors and defenders of the land. This was so even in ancient times. In times of crisis and oppression, it was the duty of everyone, regardless of position to fight to uproot evil and defend society. This is the reason that the sage Parashurama became a warrior to end the tyranny of the Haihaya king Kartaviryarjuna.

6

Supremacy of Vedas

First part in the understanding of Varna Dharma is to accept supremacy of Vedas in all the Hindu scriptures. As Swami Vivekananda said "The Vedas are our only authority, thus says the Shukla Yajur Veda (XXVI, 2).

The Smritis, Puranas, Tantras-all these are acceptable as far as they agree the Vedas; and wherever they are contradictory, they are to be rejected as unreliable".

Even Manu Smriti declares that the Vedas are the supreme authority. The knowledge of the sacred law is prescribed for those who are not given to the acquisition of wealth and to the gratification of their desires; to those who seek the knowledge of the sacred law the supreme authority the revelation (Sruti).

WHAT CONSTITUTES VEDIC KNOWLEDGE

The second part in the understanding of Varna Dharma is what constitutes Vedic knowledge.

Nirukta says on this topic; "He, who reads the Vedas even with proper accents, but does not know their meanings, is like a tree weighed down by its fruit, branches, leaves and flowers, or like a beast of burden carrying on its back grain which it can not eat. But he, who understands their meanings and acts up to their teachings by avoiding sin and leading a virtuous life, enjoys perfect happiness in this world, and eternal bliss hereafter in consequence thereof", Nirukta 1, 18.

Once supremacy of Vedas and the meanings of Vedic education are understood, all the doubts about Varna Dharma will evaporate. There is no division in Vedic knowledge. The division is in our ignorance.

Origin of Varnas

The first reference to the origin of Varna Dharma comes from the Rig Veda and subsequently explained in the Gita and Smritis (e.g., Manu, Prashar, etc.).

Rig Veda: The Purusa Sukta has the first reference to the origin of four groups.

The Brahmana (spiritual wisdom and splendour) was His Mouth; the Kshatriya (administrative and military prowess) His Arms became. His Thighs the Vaishya (commercial and business enterprise) was; of His Feet the Sudra (productive and sustaining force) was born. (by Swami Krishnananda The Divine Life Society Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh, India)

Gita: The Gita elaborates on the origin of Varnas. "The fourfold order was created by Me according to the divisions of quality (Guna) and work (karma); though I am its creator, know Me to be incapable of action or change." (from The Bhagavad Gita by S. Radhakrishnan)

Definition and Duties of Varnas

Brahman (the Supreme Reality) is not known to those who are possessed of avarice, delusion, fear, egotism, lust, anger, and sin or possessed of (unable to bear) heat and cold, hunger and thirst, or mental resolve and indecision, or pride of birth in a Brahmin (priest) family, or vanity in having read a mass of books on Mukti (liberation or salvation).

Gita: "There is no being on earth, or again in heaven among the gods, that is liberated from the three qualities (Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas) born of Nature." "Of Brahmans, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas, as also the Sudras, O Arjuna, the duties are distributed according to the qualities born of their own nature."

"Serenity, self-restraint, austerity, purity, forgiveness and also uprightness, knowledge, realization and belief in God are the duties of the Brahmans, born of their own nature."

"Prowess, splendour, firmness, dexterity and also not fleeing from battle, generosity and lordliness are the duties of Kshatriyas, born of their own nature."

"Agriculture, cattle-rearing and trade are the duties of the Vaishya merchant class), born of their own nature; and action consisting of service is the duty of the Sudras, born of their own nature." (All meanings from Srimad Bhagavad Gita by Swami Chinmayananda)

Varna by Birth: The next issue in the Varna system is to understand the order and how to belong to one Varna. Is it by birth or by 'guna'.

Channdogaya Upanishad: The following story (Channdogaya Upanishad, 4.1.4) reveals that Brahminhood does not depend on birth but on character and Gunas.

"Satyakama, the son of Jabala, addressed his mother and said "I wish to become a brahmacharin, mother. Of what family am I?" She said to him: I do not know, my child, of what family thou art. In my youth,

when I had to move about much as a servant, I conceived thee. So I do not know of what family thou art. I am Jabala by name. Thou art Satyakama. Say that thou art Satyakama Jabala."

He going to Gautama, the son of Haridrumat, said to him: I wish to become a brahmacharin with thee, Sire. May I come to you?

He said to him, "Of what family art thou, my friend?"

He replied: "I do not know, Sire, of what family I am. I asked my mother, and she answered: "In my youth, when I had to move about much as a servant, I conceived thee. So I do not know of what family thou art. I am Jabala by name. Thou art Satyakama.' I am therefore Satyakama Jabala, Sire."

He said to him "No one but a true Brahmin would speak out. Go and fetch fuel, I shall initiate thee. Thou has not swerved from the truth."

Vajra Suchikopanishad: I now proceed to declare the vajrasuuchi-the weapon that is the destroyer of ignorance-which condemns the ignorant and praises the man of divine vision.

There are four castes-the Brahman, the Kshatriya, the vaishya, and the shudra. Even the smritis declare in accordance with the words of the Vedas that the Brahman alone is the most important of them.

Then this needs to be examined. What is meant by the Brahman? Is it a jiva ? Is it a body ? Is it a class? It is Gyana? Is it karma? Or is it a doer of Dharma?

To begin with: is jiva the Brahman? No. Since the jiva is the same in the many past and future bodies (of all persons), and since the jiva is the same in all of the many bodies obtained through the force of karma, there jiva is not the Brahman. Then is the body the Brahman ? No. Since the body, as it is made up of the five elements, is the same for all people down to chandalas, *etc.*, since old age and death, dharma and adharma are found to be common to them all, since there is no absolute distinction that the Brahmins are white-coloured, the Kshatriyas red, the vaishyas yellow, and the shudras dark, and since in burning the corpse of his father, *etc.*, the stain of the murder of a Brahman, *etc.*, will accrue to the son, *etc.*, therefore the body is not the Brahman.

Then is a class the Brahman ? No. Since many rishis have sprung from other castes and orders of creation-Rishyashringa was born of deer; kaushika, of kusha grass; jaambuka of a jackal; Valmiki of valmika (an ant-hill); Vyasa of a fisherman's daughter; Gautama, of the posteriors of a hare; Vashishtha of Urvasi (a celestial nymph in the court of Indra); and agastya of a water-pot; thus have we heard. Of these, many rishis outside the caste have stood first among the teachers of divine wisdom; therefore a class is not the Brahman.

Is Gyana the Brahman ? No. Since there were many Kshatriyas and others well versed in the cognition of divine Truth, therefore Gyana is not the Brahman. Then is karma the Brahman ? No. Since the prarabdha, sanchita, aagami karmas are the same for all beings, and since all people perform their actions impelled by karma, therefore karma is not the Brahman. Then is the doer of dharma (virtuous actions) the Brahman? No. Since there are many Kshatriyas, *etc.*, who are givers of gold, therefore a doer of virtuous actions is not the Brahman.

Who indeed then is Brahman ? Whoever he may be, he who has directly realised his *aatmaa* and who is directly cognizant, like the myrobalan in his palm, of his *aatmaa*, that is without a second, that is devoid of class and actions, that is free from the faults of the six stains (hunger, thirst, grief, confusion, old age, and death) and the six changes (birth, existence, *etc.*), that is of the nature of truth, knowledge, bliss and eternity, that is without any change in itself, that is the substratum of all the kalpas, that exists penetrating all things that pervades everything within and without as *aakaash*, that is of nature of undivided bliss, that cannot be reasoned about and that is known only by direct cognition. He who by the reason of having obtained his wishes is devoid of the faults of thirst after worldly objects and passions, who is the possessor of the qualifications beginning with *saama* (*dama*, *uparati*, *itikshaa*, *samadhana*, *sraddha*), who is free from emotion, malice, thirst after worldly objects, desire, delusion, *etc.*, whose mind is untouched by pride, egoism, *etc.*, who possesses all these qualities and means-he only is the Brahman. Such is the opinion of the *veda*, the *smritis*, the *itihasa*, and the *puranas*. Otherwise one cannot obtain the status of a Brahman. One should meditate on his *aatma* as *sachchidananda*, and the non-dual Brahman. Yea, one should meditate on his *aatma* as the *sachchidananda* Brahman. Such is the *Upanishad*.

VEDIC VOCATIONS

Rather coincidentally, at the dawn of civilization, as the people gathered and lived in clans or tribes (*Visha*), they collectively-irrespective of their undertakings within *Visha* (such as in agriculture, woodworking, trade and other vocations)-came to be known as the *Vaishya* (meaning-belonging to *Visha*).

To meet the liturgical needs of the society, the *Vaishya*-from among themselves-would select, on the basis of skills in elocution, the Brahmins (students or orators of the *Vedas*-compiled knowledge). Similarly, for administrative purposes, *Vaishya* with qualities of leadership would be selected as *Kshatriya* (sovereign, tribal chieftain, administrator of *Kshatar*-dominion or tribal area/town). Furthermore, a *Visha* (tribe)-in addition to having the *Vaishyas* (including Brahmins, *Kshatriya*, cowherders and woodworkers, *etc.*)-also embodied people known as *Shudra* (meaning-not of tribe) representing all the newcomers (immigrants) to that particular tribe. They included persons from other tribes (such as the vanquished foes and the migrants) and the children born out of inter-tribal unions. Being somewhat new into that tribe and encountering unfamiliar rules, regulations and customs, a *Shudra* was limited in his vocational options and was generally relegated to providing service and assistance to members of the host tribe. But over time, like a modern day immigrant, he would surpass the tribal or social barriers so as to fully assimilate in that society and pursue other professions. Thus, all the responsibilities related to a *Visha* could be grouped into four sub-categories: Brahmin, *Kshatriya*, *Vaishya* and *Shudra*; the duties and skills involved with each of them are indicated in the following Sections.

Note also that, in old times, there was no concept of money or cash. People produced things and bartered (traded) them for other goods and services. A producer or trader belonging to Vaishya would include people such as farmer producing grains and milk, *etc.*, blacksmith (Lohar) making iron implements, leather-worker (Charmar or Chamar, charm meaning leather) manufacturing shoes, and so on. Thus, for subsistence, a Brahmin would do worship (puja) in a 'Vaishya' farmer's house and get grains and milk in return. Similarly, a Chamar would exchange shoes for food items from a farmer, iron implements from a Lohar, and so on. Similarly, a 'Shudra' servant might work or help in a farmer's field for food in return. If he were to help a Lohar, then Lohar would provide him with food items. Moreover, all these people would give a share of their goods (produce) and services to the Kshatriya (tribal chief) for administration of Visha (tribe or society). Society was basically managed through bartering system.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

Various Social and Cultural Issues: The ancient society recognized the importance of all. Irrespective of one's skill or background, there was a place for him/her to participate actively and make useful contribution. The ceremonial rites, though conducted by the learned priest, were open to all. People used prayers for atonement and benediction for all. Everyone sent their "heroes" (sons) to the battles for Visha or to protect and assist the Sovereign. A number of important aspects of the ancient society can be further clarified by considering the following passages (with references to one God or BRAHMAN+, and manifesting as Agni, Indra or Savitar) from Vedas& (ancient Hindu texts).

From the RIGVEDA:

"What God shall we adore with our oblation?...He is the God of gods and none beside Him...O Father, thou Creator of Heaven and Earth, by eternal Law ruling-protect us...O Almighty, the Lord of beings, you alone pervade all the created beings..." (Book 10, Hymn: 121.8-10)/p. 98

"We all possess various thoughts and plans and diverse are the callings of men. The carpenter seeks out that which is cracked, the physician the ailing, the priest the worshipper....." (Book 9, Hymn 112.1)/p. 84
"I am a bard, my father is a physician, my mother's job is to grind the corn....." (Book 9, Hymn 112.3)/p. 84

"The man who has awakened to the knowledge, becomes perfect. Let him speak for us to the gods..." (Book 5, Hymn 65.1)/p. 49

"May they, our Fathers who in their skill belong to the lowest order, attain higher one, those of midmost may attain the highest. May they who have attained a life of spirit, the knower of sacrifice, the guileless, help us when called upon...." (Book 10, Hymn 15.1-2)/p. 87

"Let gods lead us, let there be a stable union of the wife and husband... May authority be ever yours (i.e., wife's) in speech. Happy be you and

prosper with your children, and be ever watchful to rule the household. Unite yourself with this man your husband. So authority will be yours in speech.. May the kinsman of the bride thrive well.." (Book 10, Hymn 85.26-28)/p. 94

"May the gods grant riches to the men more liberal than the terrifying..." (Book 1, Hymn 185.9)/p. 26

From the YAJURVEDA:

"May gods anoint this man to be without rival, for mighty rule, for mighty dominion and for great splendour. This man, son of such a person, such a woman, of such a clan, is anointed king, O you subjects... He is your lord...He is also sovereign of our learned Brahmins...Let all men protect him." (Kanda 1, Prapathaka 8, Hymn i.8.10.c)/p. 54

"O Agni, may all mortals seek your friendship, the guide of all. May all solicit you for glory, riches and fame. May all of us prosper as you do." (Kanda 1, Prapathaka 3, Hymn i.4.46.a-c)/p. 64

"O Agni, grant glory to our Brahmins, set luster in our Kshatriyas, luster in our Vaishyas, luster in our Shudras.." (Kanda 5, Prapathaka 7, Hymn v.7.6.d)/p. 102

"O god Savitar.. strengthen the life of subjects, strengthen the subjects..." (Kanda 1, Prapathaka 3, Hymn i.3.6.m-n)/p. 34

"O Agni...each fault done in a village or in forest, in society or mind, each sinful act that we have committed to Shudra or Vaishya or by preventing a religious act, even of that sin, you are the expiation..." (Kanda 1, Prapathaka 8, Hymn i.8.3.d)/p. 111

"He who knows well both knowledge and Nescience simultaneously, overcoming death by knowledge attains life immortal." (Isa Upanishad-verse 11)/p. 159

From the SAMVEDA:

"May our subjects be rich and strong with the favour of Indra. May we be wealthy in food, rejoice with them..." (Part Second, Book 4, Ch. 1, Hymn 14)/p. 74

From the Bhagawad GITA:

As a part of God's creation (work), the four vocations are subgrouped according to people's guna (skills) and karma (assignments). Know that all work is for Him, even though He is beyond work, in Eternity. (Ch. 4-verse 13)

Ignorant men, but not the wise, say that Sankhya (variously as: Jnana Yoga, Sanyasa or Surrender, Path of Vision or Wisdom) and Yoga (variously as: Karma Yoga, Tyaga or Renunciation, Path of Action, Bhakti or devotional service, Japaa or Silence, Dhayana or Contemplation/Meditation, Brahamcharya or Austerity, Vaanprastha or Hermitlike) are different paths; but he who gives his self (soul) to one reaches the end of two. (Ch. 5-verse 4)

Even if the greatest sinner worships God with all his soul, he must be considered righteous because of his righteous will. (Ch. 9-verse 30)

And he shall soon become pure and reach everlasting peace. For this is His covenant that he who adores Him is not lost. (Ch. 9-verse 31)

God is one in all, but it seems as if he were many; He (as Vishnu/preserver) supports all beings: from Him (as Rudra/destroyer) ensues end, and from Him (as Brahma/creator) ensues beginning. (Ch. 13-verse 16)

The duties involving Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra are grouped according to people's abilities and skills. (Ch. 18-verse 41)

The skills for a Brahmin involve serenity, self-harmony, austerity and purity, loving-forgiveness and righteousness; vision, wisdom and faith. (Ch. 18-verse 42)

The qualities needed according to Kshatriya are: a heroic mind, splendor or inner fire, constancy, resourcefulness, courage in battle, generosity and noble leadership. (Ch. 18-verse 43)

Trade, agriculture and rearing of cattle may be tackled by Vaishya; and the background (tenure) of a Shudra is also suited to providing support. (Ch. 18-verse 44)

People attain perfection when they find joy in their work. Hear how a person attains perfection and finds joy in his work. (Ch. 18-verse 45)

A person achieves perfection when his work is-performed with pure feeling of-worship of God, from whom all things come and who is in all. (Ch. 18-verse 46)

The words of vision and wisdom have been conveyed. Ponder them in the silence of your soul, and then in freedom do your will. (Ch. 18-verse 63)

Hindu Dharma (Hinduism): Hinduism is religion based on the Vedas, and also known as the Sanatan Dharma (eternal religion) or Vedic Dharma. In the Vedas, god Bhaga was the bestower of auspicious blessings. It soon became the power of goodness, and he who possessed this power was called Bhagvan. The religion associated with Bhagvan (or Bhagvat) was called Bhagvata Dharma.

Likewise, Indu (Soma-juice or nectar) used to be offered to God as libation in Vedic yajnas (worships), and consumed afterwards by people (Hindu) for health, life, prosperity and progeny. Hindu means as someone propitiated by Indu (the Vedic libation). Note, H--in Hindu, and pronounced as in hut--implies auspiciousness or delight.

Religion belonging to Hindu is called Hindu Dharma.

In response to the misconception that the word Hindu originated as some foreigners stepped into India, note that no one from outside could have come to India and started calling the locals Hindu suddenly if such a word (in Sanskrit--not those foreigners' language) had not already existed there. 'Hindu' also is not related to 'Sindhu'--a word with similar ending and meaning ocean or river, especially in the west of India.

The words Sindhu (ocean or river) and Hindu (expiated by Indu) are linguistically and phonetically different, and Hindu is not derived from Sindhu. Note that Vedic Sanskrit did use the letters (sounds) 's' and 'dh' and therefore would not replace them with 'h' and 'd', respectively, transforming Sindhu into Hindu. In addition, the ancient Greeks reaching India (circa Alexander the great) could have easily pronounced Sindhu without changing it to Hindu by dropping

S in favour of H since they were used to pronounce Sigma (an alphabet in Greek, their mother-tongue) which is syllabically somewhat similar to Sindhu. Furthermore, Muslims entering India for the first time and speaking Arabic or Persian--languages having alphabets Sad and Sin, *etc.*, for 's' sounds--would not have to substitute H for S in Sindhu (and thus make it Hindu) to pronounce or use it in their own languages. The word Hindu--not specific to any particular region or area--was already in use when these foreigners arrived in India, and they did not invent it from Sindhu accidentally or due to necessity.

Women's Issues: It seems from the above that the ancient society was quite considerate and respectful to those (both men and women) engaged in various vocations, and people were free to make choices or changes in their careers or skills if the opportunity existed. Vedic prayers also indicate that the women had considerable say in selecting their marriage partners, and were espoused to live in monogamous relationships while enjoying same rights as their husbands. Furthermore, in the Vedas there is little evidence of child marriages, dowry system and the practice of suttee or sati (self-immolation of a woman upon her husband's death). Similarly, there is no indication of any stigma relating to widowhood or the remarriage of a widow. Note also that the well-educated, scholarly and charismatic women of yore, who also participated in many philosophical debates with men, included Gargi (the daughter of Vachaknu--from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad) and Vidyottama (wife of the famed poet and writer, Kaalidasa, who started his life as a humble and menial worker in the woods). It is clear that the women or the lowly and humble in the society were neither ignored nor abandoned.

Listed below are a few examples of multi-vocational families and people changing their occupations and life styles.

- (a) As indicated in the above, from the Rigveda, the mother of a bard (probably of the scriptures) was working in corn-grinding (an activity usually for a Shudra).
- (b) Majority of the Rishis (sages) were both Brahmin and Kshatriya so as to manage their Aashramas (hermitages) effectively.
- (c) In the Chandogya Upanishad, Satyakama (the illegitimate, varnasankra, son of a Shudra woman who did not even remember who her son's father was) went on to be accepted and educated for Brahmin work (the Gita: Ch. 18-verse 42). This shows that the people (including the Shudra and of unknown lineage) had the choice of pursuing any occupation (even that of a Brahmin).
- (d) Valmiki (given to chanda--meaning impetuosity--in his early days) started life as a robber. But later in life, after performing penance, he studied to become a Brahmin. He went on to become a great Rishi (sage) and wrote the Ramayana in Sanskrit. Thus, going from being a chandaal (meaning-cruel and brutal person) to a great human being not only demonstrates his personal endeavour, but also that the society was quite accepting of such a process and its outcome. In general, as indicated

here and in the Vedic passages, the concept of untouchability (with respect to the Shudra or any one else as a dalit/untouchable) did not exist. Any shunning or condemnation of a person was due mainly to his/her engaging in an activity not useful or acceptable to the society. Above all, it is also clear that any type of socially stigmatic situation could be easily improved through penance and by changing one's behaviour. Incidentally, this type of humane rehabilitation of criminals and sinners is a sign of civilized people long ago; and this humane practice exists even today in various countries claiming to be modern and civilized.

- (e) In one of the stories from the Ramayana, Rishi Vishvamitra is said to have conducted Yajna (worship) at which the officiating priest was a once Kshatriya and the Yajamaan (worshipper) a Chandaal.
- (f) In the Mahabharata, Satyawati (a Shudra-girl whose father was a fisherman), when presented with a marriage proposal from king Shantanu, married him only after he accepted her pre-nuptial agreement. Her own children, in stead of another older heir to the throne, went on to inherit the Kshatriya kingdom as was demanded in the pre-nuptial agreement. This indicates that the intercaste marriages and exchanges were quite prevalent; and that the women and Shudras could make free choices even when there was royalty involved.
- (g) *Matrimonial and Vocational Choices:* The evolution of society and customs was mainly due to the individual and collective needs and choices (as indicated also in some of the above Vedic quotes on marriage, vocational activities, *etc.*). In addition, the role and influence of various espoused or suggested proclamations such as involving the varnashrama dharma (casteo-monastic orders), *etc.*-based on non-scriptural (non-Vedic) writings (such as Manusmriti, *etc.*, accredited to Manu et al.)-on the development and progress of society at large (across-the-board) was rather insignificant.

The ancient society (generally modest and homogeneous economically) did not restrict the cross-caste matrimonial and occupational choices. In spite of the socially liberal conditions, though, the change in vocation did not always lead to significant economic gains. In addition, some vocations (*e.g.*, Vaishya and Shudra) were inherently conducive for their young to quickly and easily engage in the family business/profession and settle down (socially and economically) early in life. Consequently, the children from these families found the other vocations (such as the Brahmins and, to some extent, the Kshatriya) to be less rewarding and not worth the preparatory effort, which included living and training (and paying the teacher through labour) for decades in hermitages in harsh and forest-like conditions where the knowledge exchange between the guru and the pupils was usually in the oral tradition since the written manuscripts (on papyrus, *etc.*) were scarce. On the other hand, the children from the Brahmins and the Kshatriyas families were predisposed (through the natural and continuous

exposure to the family business) and were readily inducted by their parents into their traditional professions. Over time, this type of selecting the professions inadvertently gave rise to the tradition of vocation based families all around even though the society had not sought such an outcome. Note that the society in this respect remained flexible and allowed people (including the Shudra, who also engaged in menial and ignoble pursuits) the freedom of choice in their undertakings.

In a similar and related context, it was deemed vocationally advantageous and convenient for a couple to marry if they both had the same background, because they would then be able to get involved in their family occupation quickly and easily without facing any uncertainty or requiring any additional apprenticeship. Moreover, the bride or the groom in this type of wedding arrangement would be less likely to encounter any unexpected, unfamiliar, inhospitable and unwanted post-marital social situations. Note also that, in addition to the weddings involving same type of families, the marriages among people from vastly different backgrounds also frequently took place (as in the case of Satyavati and Shantanu) and the society posed no restrictions.

Thus it was basically an arbitrary social custom which arose over time as a matter of convenience whereby the people stuck to their family professions and also married within same type of families (vocations). Note, the lack of relevant information available in print, *etc.* probably also led to the guru-pupil based disciplic tradition for knowledge/spirituality which would otherwise be not as crucial. In any case, people (of any caste) desiring to not follow these customs or to break away from them simply should go on their own-without any fear of repercussions from the state, society or religion-to learn and pursue new vocations; and in the process they would also be able to find compatible and willing marriage partners for themselves within the society at large. Moreover (as regards to the Gita: Ch. 5-V. 18, Ch. 6-V. 9, Ch. 9-V. 32), the priests and temples that serve (cater to) and admit all (Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra including the disadvantaged or Dalit) should be accorded the greatest respect and support.

Illustration of the Rise of Sub-castes within Castes: As humans continued to create and adopt new occupations, move to new places and territories, or encounter unfamiliar surroundings and situations, the four primary vocations (castes: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra) developed or transformed into several secondary sub-castes characterized by peoples' tasks, *etc.* For example, vocationally speaking, if a person-while trying to become a Brahmin-learned two Vedas, he would be called a Dwivedi, whereas the learner of three Vedas would be known as a Trivedi. It shows that titles (or sub-castes) as Dwivedi and Trivedi basically correspond to certain specific Brahminic pursuits.

Similarly, a Vaishya engaged in forming objects from loha (iron) would be called the Lohar, whereas, the maker of articles from sona (gold) would be called the Sonar. Moreover, if a Sonar's son pursued his father's occupation (business) and was followed by his son, and so on, it would give rise to a sub-

caste (lineage) called Sonars within the Vaishya caste. Note that such preference or tradition for family business would occur for several reasons. First, the parents generally found it easy and safe to guide their young towards a familiar and time assured vocation. Second, the familiarity with parents' job made it easy for children to learn and practice that occupation. Third, it might probably help in attaining the familial stability and lead to an easy transfer of accumulated knowledge and expertise between generations.

The influence of migration on sub-castes can be similarly explored. Consider the following example. At some point in history, a certain inhabited area was to be inundated under a new dam and the people had to move and live elsewhere. As they settled in a new area, the locals there would address them as the Damiya (meaning-from the dam). Some of the newcomers might even prefer this new title to that they had before moving to the new place. Moreover, when, for example, a newcomer (migrant or Shudra) started working as Mistree (mason), he would be called a Damiya-Mistree (a Vaishya-usually a person in non-priestly or non-administrative occupation). Similarly, if the person worked as a priest, he would be known as the Damiya-Brahmin. This indicates that the title 'Damiya' had suddenly acquired the status as a sub-caste. More importantly, note that two principal castes (Brahmin and Vaishya) had gained sub-castes with the same name (Damiya) with reference to totally different tasks (as priests and masons).

The above examples illustrate the manner in which the sub-castes are created and the way they relate to the principal castes. Note also that, depending on the circumstances, the newly created sub-castes may either co-exist with the original sub-castes, or replace some or all of the latter. This surely can lead to drastic fluctuations in their numbers. As this process of creating and retaining of sub-castes occurs time and again over vast places and cultures, their numbers remain uncertain and alter frequently making it difficult to keep track of them. Nonetheless, the sub-castes are functional in character and subject to easy transformations.

Vedic/Hindu Tenets: The ancients were in favour of progressive ideas (*e.g.*, about the environment, philosophy/religion and life style) and appear to have conducted their affairs reasonably and democratically. They either shunned or actively opposed the stagnant, blind and baseless practices (rituals) and the intolerant/autocratic persons and beliefs (faiths). The rituals for invocations of the physical, imagery (tales/myths) and the mundane were deemed less rewarding than the meditation of the spiritual, the source (truth/logic) and the divine; (meditation is explained in Ch. 6 of the Gita). Note that the reality expressed in terms of various physical (artistic) forms or through poetry can have different interpretations. For example, in some of the ancient texts, a viman may just be a cart or chariot and not necessarily an airplane or sky-craft.

While considering chatur as four (and bhuj meaning arm, and mukh meaning face or mouth), chatur-bhuj and chatur-mukh are shown as four-armed and four-faced idols. In stead, consider for example, chatur as the skilled one: chatur-

bhuj and chatur-mukh will then represent, anthropomorphically (like a human with a face and two arms), a god (deva: friendly and blissful, superior being) who is skilled-armed (or ambidextrous: probably in all the occupations) and skilled-orator (*i.e.*, a fine instructor). Thus, chatur-bhuj and chatur-mukh are, respectively, symbols of the omnipotence and the omniscience of One God, or reflect His excellence in enterprise (as Vishnu) and instruction (as Brahma). God is One: Braham or Brahman (not the Brahmin caste). When He (as Atman) enters the body (or as spirit unites with nature), life begins, and He is called Brahma. As long as He stays in the body, the life continues, and He is seen as preserving it and is called Vishnu. Once He leaves the body, life ends (or body expires); and His departure is seen as if He has worked as Rudra in bringing an end to life. But, throughout, He remains One: Brahma, Vishnu and Rudra are only His aspects of creation, preservation and termination.

Thus, in regard to man-made symbols for displaying various Divine attributes for the purposes of worship and meditation, *etc.*, there should be some correspondence between the attribute and the symbol. For example, if omnipotent God is to be represented 'as meaning Vishnu' in human form, it is sufficient and logical to interpret chatur (in chatur-bhuj) as skilled (even as ambidextrous) in all the tasks. Similarly, if omniscient God is to be represented 'as meaning Brahma' in human form, it is sufficient and logical to interpret chatur (in chatur-mukh) as skilled in oratory and knowledge. Thus, there is no need to interpret chatur as four in chatur-bhuj or chatur-mukh; and hence it is unnecessary to assume or create various four-headed and four-armed religious symbols for representing God anthropomorphically. Incidentally, note also in Ch. 11 of the Gita, Arjun-after having realized vision of the Omnipresent encompassing all Creation-wishes (verse 46) to see the lord (mentor) in chatur-bhuj form (holding scepter and circle), which seems to refer only to latter's dexterity. And Arjun's wish is soon fulfilled (Ch. 11-V. 50) as he is able to see Krishan as a regular (normal looking) person, and there is no suggestion anywhere that the former had an encounter with anyone bearing four arms.

Metaphorically speaking, Shiv-Linga (or Shiv-Lingam) refers only to Shiva-the remover of destruction, *i.e.*, same as the preserver (Vishnu or God), and it necessarily is not a certain special symbol (*e.g.*, shown often in pollex or index form); because in Linga (or Lingam), the word Li (which in second or Object case singular form becomes Lim or Lin with nasal sound ending) means loss or destruction, and ga (or gam) implies removing or going away. Thus, Shiv-Linga (or Shiv-Lingam) symbolizes God's power (attribute) to extricate from destruction or loss.

Note also that the symbol (such as, the pollex, ling or phallus looking), portrayed in various religious rituals (Hindu and elsewhere), has probably the origins in the ancient fire (Agni) sacrifice or worship to God. It appears to be a solid image of jwala (flame) from a yajna (sacrificial fire) and was perhaps introduced long ago as a duplicate for the sacrificial fire. Because creating and lighting of a yajna used to be a very difficult and time-consuming process (as

indicated in some of the Vedic hymns also), this image made the worship possible anywhere anytime (*i.e.*, by using it in place of live fire and pouring oblations upon it). Note that the smearing of the solid symbol with ash also points to a close association with fire worship. Similarly, when this fire (Agni) solid (symbol) is placed under a pitcher from which the libation slowly and continuously flows over it, it appears to give the impression of an unending and uninterrupted active worship even during the absence of worshippers. There, the solid symbol represents the live fire in a yajna and the pitcher (with dripping libation) symbolizes the worshipper pouring oblations into the fire. In addition, it is worth noting that some of the practices in present-day worships appear to relate closely to the original fire sacrifice: the lighting of lamps or candles represents the actual or original fire (flame), and the burning of incense recreates the aroma that would be given off by the oblations (*soma, etc.*) into the live fire.

In this regard, the symbols dedicated to Agni (or Shiv, God) should also correspond to logic and not just to myth or fiction. The identification of Agni symbol (*i.e.*, jwala, or Agni-ling: ling meaning symbol) as a phallus is perhaps due to the confusion that their shapes are similar. Note that the early humans were praying and worshipping for everything. They also prayed to God for children (heroes, sons). In this regard, religiously and psychologically, the Agni symbol 'looking like phallus' became the favourite idol. Unfortunately, over time, people forgot about its association with Agni, and identified it only in terms of biology and procreation. (Note: Since Shiva refers also to the auspicious flame or Agni-jwala, Agni-ling or a similar looking object probably was referred to as Shiv-ling.)

Note, Agni is a manifestation of BRAHMAN or Iswara. Agni in the male aspect is Shiva, and as female is Shakti. The Agni-jwala (flame) is called Shiva. The common symbols (*e.g.*, long or stubby ling or symbol) for Shiva and Shakti are just solid images of Agni (Yajna fire). Incidentally, Shiva and Shakti always appear together--perhaps due to their common association with Agni. Moreover, Agni is also probably the biggest destroyer. Thus the connection between Agni and Shiva as the destroyers can be seen. On the other hand, Shankra is the greatest among Rudras; and Rudras are destroyers. Thus Shiva (through a connection with Agni as the greatest destroyer) probably, in His destructive aspect at least, is also identified with Shankra (the greatest Rudra destroyer). Note, Agni probably also is the origin of a number of other dark coloured gods (idols), where their colour corresponds to dark (black) coloured ash (associated with fire or yajna).

In references to Hanumat or Hanuman, the name appears simply to imply a strong-jawed (or a very strong) person and not necessarily a monkey or monkey-chief. Similarly, Ganesha or Ganapati may simply mean Lord (Isha, Pati) of the people (Gana) and not just an elephant-headed figure (*ganika* meaning a female elephant).

Thus, it seems that there is a tendency to express and endorse a certain specific divine trait as a whole (entire) phenomenon through recognizable art (shapes

and forms) and stories (fictional accounts) to make it more appealing and understandable to the masses. Unfortunately, if such a message is not communicated properly or is lost over time, it will mislead and confuse people and may even wrongly imply that there is more than one real source of divinity. Note, as indicated also in Rigveda (Book 1: Hymn 164 # 46) and the Gita (Ch. 13: Verse 16), the Source basically is, locally and universally, the same and complete in essence and attributes.

Similarly, in the Rigveda, the division of Purusha (Being or Spirit) is indicated to have taken place at the beginning; the implication of which really is the transcendence of the (chaotic) old into the (stable) new in terms of evolution of the society. There, the emergence of Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Shudra from the body of Purusha symbolically corresponds, respectively, to their occupations giving the society its voice (arising as if from Purusha's mouth), order (as if through Purusha's arms), form (as if on Purusha's thighs), and change or migration (as if via Purusha's feet).

Furthermore, in the three original (basic to Hinduism) Vedas (Rig, Yajur and Sam) referred to above, little mention or support is shown for astrology; and sorcery, witchcraft, magic and worthless worships are condemned (RV: Book 7, Hymn 104.20, 23-25; Book 10, Hymn 37.4). Similarly (RV: Book 7, Hymn 104.5,7, 13-16), civic or religious (for god or faith) deception (corruption, cheating and wickedness) and exploitation (including coercion, bondage, aggression and plundering) are forbidden and not to be tolerated. Note, the Gita (Ch. 16) reiterates these precepts; and (Ch. 3-V. 26) favours advancing of religion/spirituality peacefully and by example.

Salvation, Karma, Reincarnation and Metamorphosis: It was realized long ago that, irrespective of one's background, attaining the immortality or overcoming the death (or the fear of it) is in understanding oneself (individual life or being)-the union between soul (spirit-real, sat or eternal) and body (matter-unreal, asat or transient)-as part of the Supreme (stated also in Ch. 2, 6, 7 & 9 of the Bhagawad Gita). Symbolically, therefore (as stated in Ch. 8 of the Gita), following the path (or going in the time) of clarity (as in the light of day or the sun) about the self is liberating (Ch. 6); whereas, following the path (or going in the time) of confusion (as in the darkness of night or the moon) about the self brings nothing but fear (morbidity). It is worth noting (the Gita: Ch. 6-verse 45) that, whatever a person's social status or civic duty, the spiritual gains derived from all efforts for achieving the union of one with the One are imminent and cumulative.

In this context, the Karmic principle (*i.e.*, a good or bad action leads to a good or bad outcome) is assumed to influence the course of events taking place during this life and, supposedly, afterwards. Accordingly, each experience or action by a person affects him in body* and soul in the next situation or future. Each experience itself is a life/Janma: its beginning and end symbolically being birth and death. Moreover, according to the Karmic principle, even when the body dies, the soul continues to live and may feel the residual effect of the

preceding existence. The reincarnation therefore symbolically represents the extension of this principle during the hereafter. It is, in other words, a new opportunity or promise to accrue spiritual gains on the basis of actions during previous life. Note also that reincarnation merely presents to a person a new possibility (opportunity) arising out of countless influences, and, depending upon the new surroundings (people, environment, *etc.*) and the future actions by the individual himself, it may or may not fully materialize (the Gita: Ch. 18-verse 14). For example, as indicated above, even though Satyakama started as a Shudra (in a non-Brahmin vocation), he went on, through his own initiative and effort and with the help of his guru, to acquire new skills to become a Brahmin (the profession of choice for him). Thus, reincarnation-being associated with the soul-appears to be unimportant with regards to the worldly pursuits such as involving vocations (castes), *etc.* Similarly, salvation (Moksha)-which also relates to the soul-is achievable by all (irrespective of their background), and can be easily attained by uniting (elevating) one's soul with God by practicing good deeds and penance, *etc.* The Gita, to this end, states (in Ch. 2)-in response to a query in Ch. 1 (verse 42) regarding the rituals to ancestors-that God's grace and the good deeds by a person during his own lifetime are important to seek salvation.

The supposed metamorphoses of God as Ram and Krishan, *etc.*, heroes of the early civilizations (in epics Ramayana and Mahabharata, *etc.*), should be taken in spiritual/moralistic/philosophical context. The reverence (mainly ritualistic or for a reward) to them-dedicated according to their physical eminence and existence, and based primarily on the stories which appear to be skewed over time into myths/tales (Pauranic, *etc.*)-thus needs to reduce. Note that God alone is deemed worthy of all worships (the Gita: Ch. 9-V. 24, Chs. 10 & 4) since all the eminence and creation--including even all the gods and goddesses associated with various places, times or events--are ultimately due to Him. Incidentally, when Krishna speaks in the Gita, he is not only speaking as a friend (well-wisher) and charioteer (worker and assistant) of Arjuna, but he is also advising Arjuna in the capacity of a guru. Above all, in essence, Krishna also is both BRAHMAN (Iswara) and Atman in the Gita.

Note also in this regard that the notion of a personal God sometimes results in a very informal devotee-deity relationship. The devotee often uses various preferred salutations, representations and rituals (worships and offerings) to express his unique love and reverence towards the 'kind and caring' deity. But, when many people engaging in this manner-in their own special ways of worships, *etc.*, are viewed collectively, their society is seen to be overly ritualistic and following many gods, even though, in reality the ultimate object of reverence remains One. (Note, the Gita: Ch. 9-V. 26).

Conclusion: The vocational choice long ago was mainly need-based (personal and tribal) and circumstantial (in terms of the availability of labour at a place or time, natural disasters and battles among tribes). It inspired that the societal tasks and responsibilities be dispensed solely in terms of a person's nature or

qualification (Guna) and his active undertaking or assignment (Karma). It was a great vision at work that is referred to also in the Bhagawad Gita (as in the original Sanskrit verse 13 of Ch. 4, where the reference is made only to Guna-nature/qualification, and it does not mean born nature). Incidentally, the original vocations seem to have been similar to the present jobs that also require compatibility between the worker's qualifications and the potential assignment.

Inherently, the above system satisfied one and the all. The Gita (Ch. 18-verse 41) further elaborates that all occupations are important and correspond to various needs or segments of the society and are dispensed according to ability (svabhava) on the basis (prabhva) of qualification (guna; which does not mean born nature). The duties relating to each adopted vocation (as explained in the above Introduction: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra) are also listed in the Gita (Ch. 18-verses 42, 43 & 44). It is also indicated in the Gita (Ch. 5-verse 4) that all spiritual paths are applicable and bring same results to people with different vocations. The Gita (Ch. 16 & 18) stresses that, while it is of utmost importance to recognize and adhere to one's own responsibility or the task at hand, there is no other special advantage or basis (in terms of ritualism or one's heredity) for pursuing a particular undertaking. A socially necessary and useful activity for the physical well-being of person is as important as any worship/puja for his/her salvation (The Gita: Ch. 3-verse 8). The Gita (Ch. 3-verse 35) further notes that taking care of one's own responsibility (purpose/dharma) merits higher than venturing needlessly elsewhere, since keeping one's own obligation (even in a miniscule way) leads to satisfaction that outweighs the trappings, uncertainty and formidableness associated with another's task. It is also stated in the Gita (Ch. 12, Ch. 18-verses 45 & 46) that, no matter what a person's duty or task (whether shubh-appealing, or ashubh-unappealing), he attains perfection or heavenly bliss if he is fully dedicated to it and performs it with pleasure and interest as if it were a service to the Lord (Transcendent or the Manifest). Lord, God or Hari (Saviour) is expressed (Ch. 17) divinely (in accordance with tattva**) as OM TAT SAT (Creator, Master and the Righteous). (Creation seems to arise from OM during contemplation as the omniscient, TAT is what maintains it through omnipotence, and it has the noble and righteous end according to SAT.) Note also that God is one, yet He can manifest in more ways than one (Ch. 4 & 9); and He dwells in the heart of all (Ch. 18). He is One in all (stated above; the Gita: Ch. 13-verse 16). In addition, one need not be preoccupied about the hereafter (or the heaven and the hell) as long as he understands the good from the bad (Ch. 16 of the Gita) and the redemption (spiritual) through penance (monetarily free and as stated in the Gita: Ch. 9-verses 30 & 31).

Thus, the Vedic religion (Hinduism) is universal and progressive: the Hindu way of life is open to all, and without any discrimination on the basis of gender, race, heredity, beliefs, occupation, social status or background, and the place of origin. It is very logical (promotes knowledge and science/vigyan-the Gita: Ch. 6-verse 8), encourages reasoning (the Gita: Ch. 18-verses 63, 71 & 72), and is

quite easy to understand and practice (as indicated in Ch. 3, 9 & 16 of the Gita). It is based on the fundamental principle of 'one to One relationship' or unity between a person and the universal God. In other words (*e.g.*, the Gita: Ch. 9-v. 10 & 29), everyone abides identically to the supreme, is significant to the creation, and has the same right to seek and realize the divine. In conclusion and at the personal level, one easily attains perfection and heavenly bliss in any activity (duty) if he/she keeps anger, lust and greed in check (the Gita: Ch. 16); stays mindful of the Lord (the Gita: Ch. 8), such as in the sense of the mantra (sacred words) 'Hari OM TAT SAT' (the universal God is the means of salvation); and through that undertaking (activity) adores/serves Him and His creation (the Gita: Ch. 11 & 18).

Thus it is also clear from the above that one (of any caste or background) need not feel disadvantaged, discriminated, dispossessed or deprived of spirituality as a Hindu if he/she pursues God by own free will in a manner convenient or appropriate to him/her. Remember that everyone is entitled to the same inspiration (guidance) and bliss (love) from God, who (as the source of vision and benediction) is the ultimate (greatest) guru/prophet (the Gita: Ch. 11) and friend/benefactor (the Gita: Ch. 5).

Closing Comment: It is okay for a person-having no one to extend to him objective or satisfactory help and guidance in the matters relating to spiritual fulfilment, prayer and the place to pray-to choose a mode of worship suited to his needs and resources. Incidentally, worthless worships, myths/tales, hate-mongering and evil/corrupt deeds are detrimental to spirituality/faith. It is also worth noting that all-men, women, believers, nonbelievers and others-have the same rights and freedoms and they all deserve equal protection and consideration under a law that is constantly evolving with time and according to the need of the society.

Thus, a contemporary civil legal code-progressive and reflective of the peoples and times-seems preferable to a law that may be perceived as antiquated, dictatorial, discriminatory, cultist or religious. The notion that a group/nation run by decree will be foremost in freedoms and human rights is misguided. A diverse, pluralistic and progressive society subjected to an autocratic or religious law/rule can quickly drift into a puritanical, singular and regressive system as the dissenting people either run away from it or totally succumb to the ruling dogma to ensure their own safety. Thus, the sectarian territorialization or vision of the world must cease, and any regime adverse to progressiveness should be shunned.

In addition, the practices of casteism (social stratification in terms of vocation or caste), animal abuse, child labour, gender discrimination, dowry, veil (*e.g.*, the body and face covering apparel), *etc.*, must stop. It is also in the interest of humanity to rise above various tenets and practices and, while not ignoring the local issues, tackle serious global problems: rapidly deteriorating environment, depleting natural resources, disappearing flora and fauna, and overpopulation-already indicating a population exceeding the reasonable limit of about five billion people worldwide.

RIGHT TO STUDY VEDAS

Contrary to existing view everyone irrespective of caste or sex, has right to read the Veda or hear it read.

Yajur Veda: "As I have given this Word (*i.e.*, the four Vedas) which is the word of salvation for all making-Brahmans, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas, Sudras, women, servants, aye, even the lowest of the low, so shoul you all do, *i.e.*, teach and preach Veda. Let all men therefore read and recite, teach, and preach the Veda and thereby acquire true knowledge, practice virtue, shun vice, and consequently being freed from all sorrow and pain, enjoy true happiness." 26,2 (translated from Sayarth Prakash, Ch 3, page 78).

Atharva Veda: "Just as boys acquire sound knowledge and culture by the practice of Brahmacharya and then marry girls of their own choice, who are young, well educated, loving and of like temperament, so should a girl practice Brahmacharya, study the Veda and other sciences and there by perfect her knowledge, refine her character, give her hand to a man of her own choice, who is young, learned and loving." (XI, xvi, 3, 18.)

Brahma-Sutras: "Apasudradhikaranam: Topic 9 (Sutras 34-38) The right of the Sudras to the study of Vedas discussed Sugasya tadanadarasravanat tadadravanat suchyate hi I.3.34 (97) Suk: grief; Asya: his; Tat: that, namely that grief; Anadarasravanat: from hearing his (the Rishi's) disrespectful speech; Tada: then; Adravanat: because of going to him i.e, to Raikva; Suchyate: is referred to; Hi: because. (King Janasruti) was in grief on hearing some contemptuous words used about him by the sage in the form of a swan; owing to his approaching Raikva, overwhelming with that grief, Raikva called him Sudra; for it (the grief) is pointed at by Raikva.

The Purvapakshin says: The Sudras also have got bodies and desires. Hence they are also entitled. Raikva refers to Janasruti who wishes to learn from him by the name of Sudra. "Fie, necklace and carriage be thine, O Sudra, together with the cows" Chh. Up. IV-2 & 3. But when he appears a second time, Raikva accepts his presents and teaches him. Smriti speaks of Vidura and others who were born from Sudra mothers as possessing highest knowledge. Therefore the Sudra has a claim to Brahma Vidya or knowledge of Brahman. This Sutra refutes the view and denies the right to the study of the Vedas for Sudra. The word 'Sudra' does not denote a Sudra by birth which is its conventional meaning, because Janasruti was a Kshatriya king. Here we will have to take the etymological meaning of the word which is, "He rushed into grief (Sukam abhi dudrava) or as "grief rushed on him" or as "he in his grief rushed to Raikva". The following Sutra also intimates that he was a Kshatriya.

Kshatriyatva: the state of his being a Kshatriya; Avagateh: on account of being known or understood; Cha: and; Uttaratra: latter on in a subsequent part of the text; Chaitrarathena: with Chaitraratha; Lingat: because of the indicatory sign or the inferential mark. And because the Kshatriyahood (of Janasruti) is known from the inferential mark (supplied by his being mentioned) later on with Chaitraratha (who was a Kshatriya himself).

An argument in support of Sutra 34 is given. Janasruti is mentioned with the Kshatriya Chaitraratha Abhipratatin in connection with the same Vidya. Hence we can infer that Janasruti also was a Kshatriya because, as a rule, equals are mentioned together with equals. Hence the Sudras are not qualified for the knowledge of Brahman.

Samskaraparamarsat tadabhavabhilapacca (I.3.36) (99) Samskara: the purificatory ceremonies, the investiture with sacred thread; Paramarsat: because of the reference; Tat: that ceremony; Abhava: absence; Abhilapat: because of the declaration; Cha: and. Because purificatory ceremonies are mentioned (in the case of the twice-born) and their absence is declared (in the case of the Sudra).

The discussion on the privilege of Brahma Vidya on the part of Sudras is continued. In different places of the Vidyas the Upanayana ceremony is referred to. The Upanayana ceremony is declared by the scriptures to be a necessary condition for the study of all kinds of knowledge or Vidya. We read in Prasna Up. I-1 "Devoted to Brahman, firm in Brahman, seeking for the highest Brahman they, carrying fuel in their hands, approached the venerable Pippalada, thinking that he would teach them all that." Upanayana ceremony is meant for the higher castes. With reference to the Sudras on the other hand, the absence of ceremonies is frequently mentioned in the scriptures. "In the Sudra there is not any sin by eating prohibited food, and he is not fit for any ceremony" Manu X-12-6. A Sudra by birth cannot have Upanayana and other Samskaras without which the Vedas cannot be studied. Hence the Sudras are not entitled to the study of the Vedas. The next Sutra further strengthens the view that a Sudra can have no Samskara.

And on account of the prohibition in Smriti of (the Sudras) hearing, studying and understanding (the Veda) and performing Vedic rites (they are not entitled to the knowledge of Brahman).

Note: Sutras 34-38 of Brahma-Sutras disqualify the Sudras for the Knowledge of Brahman (Supreme Reality) through the study of the Vedas. But it is possible for them to attain that Knowledge through the Puranas and the epics (Ramayana and the Mahabharata). "Wherever it is declared (in the books of Rishis) that the Sudras are debarred from the study of the Veda, the prohibition simply amounts to this that he, that does not learn anything even after a good deal of teaching, being ignorant and destitute of understanding, is called a Sudra. It is useless for him to learn and for others to teach him any longer." Satyarth Prakash, chapter 3, 78.

Inter Movement in Varna

Can people by their actions move from one Varna to another? The answer is YES, which is another argument in favour of Varna not based on birth.

Gita: "By following his qualities of work, every man can become perfect. Now please hear from Me how this can be done. (By A. C Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada)." From Whom is the evolution of all beings, by Whom all this is

pervaded, worshipping Him with one's own duty, man attains Perfection. (by Swami Chinmayananda) Better is one's own duty (though) destitute of merits, than the duty of another wellperformed. He who does the duty ordained by his own nature incurs no sin. (by Swami Chinmayananda)

One should not give up the work suited to one's nature, O Son of Kunti (Arjuna), though it may be defective, for all enterprises are clouded by defects as fire by smoke. (The Bhagavadgita by S. Radhakrishnan).

Apastamba Sutrās: "A low Class man may, by leading a virtuous life, rise to the level of a higher Class man and should be ranked as such. In like manner a high Class man can by leading a sinful life, sink down to the level of a Class lower than his, and should be considered as such." (Translation from Stayarth Prakash, chapter 4, page 100)

MANU SMRITI

The scriptures are quoted out of context as if they are stand alone political statements. Manu Smriti is not very entertaining for Sudras is true, only when not understood properly. People take pride in quoting from Manu Smriti to show their knowledge and understanding, and also to put down Varna Dharma. A careful reading will give a different picture. Manu Smriti is very infamous for treatment of Sudras by popular belief. There are shlokas in Manu Smriti that debars a Sudra from learning any Vedic knowledge when read in isolation and not as one part of a scripture. The maximum damage to Varna Dharma was caused by piece meal acquisition and application of knowledge. Manu Smriti deals with all the four Varnas and not only Sudras. The first issue with Manu Smriti is what Vedic knowledge is and what different Varnas are.

Definitions and Duties of Varna: "The study of true sciences, the practice of Brahmacharya, the performance of Homa, the acceptance of truth and rejection of untruth, the dissemination of true knowledge, leading a virtuous life as enjoined by the Veda, the performance of seasonal Homa, the reproduction of good children, faithful discharge of the Five Great Daily Duties, and doing such other good works as are productive of beneficial results to the community, such as developing technical arts, association with the good and the learned, truthfulness in word, deed and thought, and devotion to public good and like, all these things go to make a Brahma.

To Brahmans he assigned teaching and studying (the Veda), sacrificing for their own benefit and for others, giving and accepting (of alms).

Inter Movement of Varnas: "As the son of a Sudra may attain the rank of a Brahmin if he were to possess his qualifications, character and accomplishments, and as the son of a Brahmin may become a Sudra, if he sinks to his level in his character, inclinations and manners, even so must it be with him who springs from a Kshatriya; even so with him who is born of a Vaishya. In other words, a person should be ranked with the Class whose qualifications, accomplishments, and character he possesses.

"A Dwija as well his children who, instead of studying the Veda, wastes his time in doing other things soon goes down to the level of a Shudra." Manu Smriti 2, 168

"A twice-born man who, not having studied the Veda, applies himself to other (and worldly study), soon falls, even while living, to the condition of a Sudra and his descendants (after him)." Manu Smriti 2, 168.

Special Treatment for Brahmins!: It is true that not very complementary and rude things were said about Sudras in Manu Smriti. But as shown in Manu Smriti (discussed in the definition section) that the position of Brahmin's was full of responsibility and not privileges. In (a case of) theft the guilt of a Sudra shall be eightfold, that of a Vaishya sixteen fold, that of a Kshatriya two-and-thirty fold, 8,337

That of a Brahmana sixty-fourfold, or quite a hundredfold, or (even) twice four-and-sixtyfold; (each of them) knowing the nature of the offence. 8,338
Guna or Birth-The Deciding Factor.

"A Brahmana who departs from the rule of conduct, does not reap the fruit of the Veda, but he who duly follows it, will obtain the full reward. (Manu Smriti 1,109)."

"Declares out Manu: Take the jewel of a woman for your wife, though she be of inferior descent. Learn supreme knowledge with service even from the man of low birth; and even from the Chandala, learn by serving him the way to salvation."

Is Breakdown in Varna Unexpected?

Prashar Smriti: Smriti created by sage Parashar and known by his name as 'Parashar Smriti, is the most benevolent for the modern Kali Yuga. Parashar has himself said:

Krite Tu Manavo Dharmastretayaam Gautamo Smritah ||

Dwapare Shankhalikhita Kalau Parasharah Smritah ||

Meaning-Manu Smriti was most relevant in Satya Yuga. In Treta, Smriti created by Gautam had most relevance whereas in Dwapar, Shankh's Smriti was mostly recognized. But in Kali Yuga, it is Parashar Smriti that by and large shows the way to the ignorant people.

Sri Ramacharitamansa: Sri Ramacharitamansa, Uttar-kanda, verses 97-98, explains very clearly that what happened and happening to Varna Dharma.

"No one follows the duties of one's own caste, and the four Dharmas or stages of life also disappear. Every man and woman takes delight in revolting against the Vedas. The Brahmins sell the Vedas; the kings bleed their subjects; no one respects the injunction of the Vedas. The right course for every individual is that which one takes a fancy to; a man of erudition is he who plays the braggart. Whoever launches spurious undertakings and is given over to hypocrisy, him does everyone call a saint. He alone is clever, who robs another of his

wealth; he who puts up false appearances is an ardent follower of established usage. He who is given to lying and is clever at joking is spoken of as a man of parts in the Kali age. He alone who is a reprobate and has abandoned the path of the Vedas is a man of wisdom and dispassion in the Kali age. He alone who has grown big nails and long locks of matted hair is a renowned ascetic in the Kali age. (1-4)"

What went Wrong?: Swami Dayanand Saraswati (founder of Arya Samaj) has discussed this issue (downfall of Varna Dharma) very nicely in Satyarth Prakash and it states as:

"When the Brahmans became destitute of knowledge, there could be no talk of the ignorance of the Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. Even the ancient practice of the study of the Vedas and other Shastras with their meanings died away. The Brahmans only learnt the Vedas by rote-just enough to enable them to earn their livelihood. Even that much they did teach to the Kshatriyas, and others.

As the ignorant became the teachers of the people, deceitfulness, fraud, hypocrisy, and irreligion began to increase among them. The Brahmans thought that they should make some arrangement for their livelihood. They held a council among themselves and agreed to preach to the Kshatriyas and others: "We alone are the object of worship to you. You could never enter Heaven or obtain salvation except by serving us. Should you not serve us, you shall fall into an awful Hell."

The Vedas, and the Shastras written by the Vedic sages and seers have declared men of learning and as Brahmans and worthy of respect; but here they, who were ignorant, lascivious, deceitful, licentious, lazy and irreligious, declared themselves as Brahmans and worthy of homage. But how could the sterling virtues of the righteous, learned and truth-loving Brahmans be found in them. When the Kshatriyas and others became absolutely destitute of Sanskrit learning, whatever cock and bull stories the Brahmans concocted, the simpletons believed. They ensnared all in their net of hypocrisy, brought them under thorough control and began to teach:-"Whatever a Brahman declares is as infallible as words falling from Divine lips."

Conclusions: The most important issue in the understanding of Varna Dharma is to understand the definitions of the various Varnas as explained in Hindu scriptures. The rules of the groups prescribe the duties to society. The duties for various Varnas were based on the 'guna' of an individual and were dependent on the capacities of individuals. Therefore the division of labour, which broadly falls into 'the four orders of human beings' is based upon "guna and karma" of each individual.

"The complete definition of the Varna not only removes our present misunderstanding but also provides us with some data to understand its true significance. Not by mere birth is man a Brahmana (Brahmin); by cultivating good intentions and noble thoughts alone can we ever aspire to Brahmana-hood; nor can we pose as Brahmana merely because of our external physical marks, or bodily actions in the outer world. The definition insists that he alone is a Brahmana, whose

thoughts are as much Sattvik, as his actions are. A Kshatriya is one who is Rajasik in his thoughts and actions. A Sudra is not only one whose thoughts are Tamasik, but he who lives a life of low endeavours, for satisfying his base animal passions and flesh-appetites. The scientific attitude in which this definition has been declared, is clear from the exhaustive implications of the statement: "According to the differentiation of 'guna' and 'karma'."

As discussed earlier, there was no exclusion of any Varna to read Vedic Knowledge in the Veda. Later on restriction were put on people because of with Tamsic Guna. There was a structured and step-wise approach to learning which everyone was supposed to follow.

All Dwij's were following that system of learning. No Vedic knowledge was given even to Dwij's who do not follow the process of learning. With time this (not learning Vedas) became a rule in the society which led to consolidation of Vedic knowledge in very few peoples hand. If a tumbler is full of dirt, grease and other impurities, then it is an unfit receptacle for holding pure water. The mind is the container and if it is filled with Tamasic qualities, then it is an unfit receptacle for receiving pure spiritual knowledge.

"It is written in Chhandogya Upanishad that Gragee and other women of yore have read the Veda, and even Janshruti, a Sudra by birth, has studied the Veda under Raikyamuni" Satyarth Prakash, chapter 11.

Brahma Sutras and Manu Smriti discuss that Sudras can not study Veda. But the important issue is to know who Sudra is. Why he can not study the Vedas. As explained in the section on "Inter-movement in Varna Dharma" section, when Sudra can become a Brahman then he has all the right to study the Veda. The restriction placed on the study of Vedas is because of absence of the process (character, capability, and/or prerequisite) to study the Vedas.

The issue is not whether Varna Dharma is based on birth or not, nor whether Brahmans are higher Varna than any other. These may be important but not sufficient. If Sudras are not Sudra by birth then Brahmans are not Brahmans by birth alone too. This must be an important aspect in the equation in any meaningful discussion about Varna Dharma.

There was no pecking order (higher or lower) in the society according to scriptures. Individuals were identified by their knowledge. The reverence given to a person in society (based on his knowledge) was a responsibility and not a privilege. All men are not equally wise or equally intelligent. Each one is trying to grapple with problems of life with whatever degree of wisdom each possesses. Hinduism provides for the highly evolved as well as those not so evolved or least evolved and even those not at all evolved in distinct categories of Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra with distinct Svadharma (assigned duties) suited to their individual state of evolution. Realisation is not dependent on birth or book-learning as has been repeatedly demonstrated in the lives of saints, from the very earliest times to our own day (Comments by Swami Madhavananda, Advaita Ashrama).

"Who are Rishis? Vatsyayana says, He who has attained through proper means the direct realization of Dharma, he alone can be a Rishi even if he is a Mlechcha by birth"

Many great Rishis were born in lower castes (e.g.) Vashishtha was the son of a prostitute; VYASA was born of a fisher woman; PARASARA's mother was a chandala; Nammalwar was a Sudra. Similarly Valmiki, Vishvamitra, Agastya were Brahmins inspite of their non-Brahmin origin. Swami Vivekananda is one of the most revered Hindu worldwide and was a non Brahmin. All these Hindus prove that birth was not a major player in attaining Brahminhood. It is the intellectual and spiritual level that differentiates people.

Swami Sivananda (The Divine Life Society, Rishikesh), in his commentary on Gita, Ch.18, verses 41, and 45 says: "Mankind is organised into the four castes and each man's life is divided into four stages, according to the nature of the Gunas and the degree of growth or evolution. This is the division of labour for which each caste is fitted according to its own nature. The duty prescribed is your sole support, each devoted to his own duty in accordance with his own nature or caste, and the highest service you can render to the Supreme is to carry it out wholeheartedly, without expectation of fruits, with the attitude of dedication to the Lord. The caste system is, indeed, a splendid thing. It is quite flawless. But the defect came in from somewhere else. The classes gradually neglected their duties. The test of ability and character slowly vanished. Birth became the chief consideration in determining castes. All castes fell from their ideals and forgot all about their duties."

Scriptures treated all the Varnas as same and none was higher than the other. And nobody belongs to any Varna by birth. Vajra Suchikopanishad clearly states that one cannot be a Brahmin either by its being, birth, physical equipment of body and colour or by wisdom and knowledge or by religious action even The basis of Varna was guna and not birth. Vajra suchikopanishad of Sama Veda defines the word Brahmin in most unambiguous terms thus: One is a Brahmin not because of his birth or caste or heredity or colour or profession or acquisition of worldly knowledge or mere observation of social and moral codes, but because of his spiritual knowledge, his abidance in the Supreme Reality, his state of self-realization.

This is the conclusion of all Veda, Srutis, Puranas, Itihasas and of all great men of India.

According to 'Guru Bala Prabodhika' a commentary on Amara Kosa, the ancient Sanskrit lexicon, a Brahmin is one who knows Brahman (Supreme God), not one who is borne into a caste. (Brahmin Parabrahmani nishtatwat Brahmana).

One of the main reasons for confusion about Varnas is that there is a vast amount of scriptures in the Hindu Dharma. People do not always know the order of the scriptures. Even when the order is known, the scriptures are not easily interpreted since all scriptures are written in Sanskrit.

Even the people who can interpret the scriptures not necessarily understand them. The confusion is not what is written originally in Sanskrit but in the

misunderstanding of the Sanskrit translations. The first issue in understanding of Varna Dharma is to understand the order of the scriptures. The Vedas are the ultimate authority in Hindu Dharma. The second issue is to understand that Varna Ashram is evolutionary in nature.

A key issue in understanding of Varna lies in knowledge of Sanskrit. There was and is no misunderstanding about Varnas as written in Sanskrit. The Varna Ashram started falling apart when the original Sanskrit work is translated in to English, especially by the people who do not have command over both languages (Sanskrit and English) and with limited knowledge about the scriptures.

There are many words and terms in Sanskrit which have no equivalent in English language-Dharma and Varna are two examples. The closest meaning in English is a force fit and not necessarily the right choice. The right approach in understanding Vedic concepts starts with learning of Sanskrit. As Swami Sivananda said "Varnasrama pertains to body alone, but not to the pure, allpervading, immortal soul or Atman. Attain Knowledge of the Self and become an Ativarnasrami like Lord Dattatreya. Hear what he says:-

Mahadadi jagat sarvam

Na kinchit pratibhati me

Brahmaiva kevalam sarvam

Katham varnasramasthitih

"The whole world, from Mahat downwards, does not shine in Me.

Everything is Brahman only. Where then is Varnasrama?"

7

The Vedic Literature

RIGVEDA

The *Rigveda* is a collection of Vedic Sanskrit hymns dedicated to the gods. It is counted as the holiest among the series of four Hindu canonical texts known as the Vedas.

Geographical and ethnological passages in the Rigveda provide evidence that the Rigveda was composed between 1700–1100 BCE (the early Vedic period) in the Punjab (Sapta Sindhu) region of the Indian subcontinent. The Rigveda is the oldest of all known religious books, and the oldest book in Vedic Sanskrit or any Indo-European language. The composition of the Rigveda is conventionally dated to before 1500 BC. Some writers have traced astronomical references in the *Rigveda* dating it to as early as 4000 BC, a date well within the late Mehrgarh culture.

Today, this text is revered by Hindus around the world, primarily in India and Nepal. Its verses are recited at prayers, religious functions and other auspicious occasions.

Text: The Rigveda consists of 1,028 hymns (or 1,017 discounting the apocryphal *valakhilya* hymns 8.49–8.59) composed in Vedic Sanskrit, many of which are intended for various sacrificial rituals. This long collection of short hymns is mostly devoted to the praise of the gods. It is organized in 10 books, known as Mandalas. Each Mandala consists of hymns, called *sukta*, which in turn consist individual verses called, plural. The Mandalas are by no means of equal length or age: The “family books”, mandalas 2-7, are considered the oldest part of the Rigveda, being the shortest books, arranged by length, accounting

for 38% of the text. RV 8 and RV 9, likely comprising hymns of mixed age, account for 15% and 9%, respectively. RV 1 and RV 10, finally, are both the latest and the longest books, accounting for 37% of the text.

Preservation: The *Rigveda* is preserved by two major shakhas (“branches”, i.e., schools or recensions), *Uakala* and *Backala*. Considering its great age, the text is spectacularly well-preserved and uncorrupted, the two recensions being practically identical, so that scholarly editions can mostly do without a critical apparatus. Associated to *Uakala* is the Aitareya-Brahmana. The *Backala* includes the Khilani and has the Kausitaki-Brahmana associated to it.

This compilation or redaction included the arrangement in books as well as orthoepic changes, such as regularization of sandhi (called by Oldenberg *orthoepische Diaskeunase*). It took place centuries after the composition of the earliest hymns, about coeval to the redaction of the other Vedas.

From the time of its redaction, the text has been handed down in two versions: The *Samhitapatha* has all Sanskrit rules of sandhi applied and is the text used for recitation.

The *Padapatha* has each word isolated in its pausa form and is used for memorization. The *Padapatha* is, as it were, a commentary to the *Samhitapatha*, but the two seem to be about coeval. The original text as reconstructed on metrical grounds (*viz.* “original” in the sense that it aims to recover the hymns as composed by the Rishis) lies somewhere between the two, but closer to the *Samhitapatha*.

Organization: The most common numbering scheme is by book, hymn and verse (and *pada* (foot) *a, b, c...*, if required). *e.g.*, the first *pada* is

- “Agni I laud, the high priest” and the final *pada* is
- “for your being in good company”

Hermann Grassmann had numbered the hymns 1 through to 1028, putting the *valakhilya* at the end. The entire 1028 hymns of the *Rigveda*, in the 1877 edition of Aufrecht, contain a total of 10,552 verses, or 39,831 padas. The Shatapatha Brahmana gives the number of syllables to be 432,000, while the metrical text of van Nooten and Holland (1994) has a total of 395,563 syllables (or an average of 9.93 syllables per pada); counting the number of syllables is not straightforward because of issues with sandhi. Most verses are jagati (padas of 12 syllables), trishtubh (padas of 11 syllables), viraj (padas of 10 syllables) or gayatri or anushtubh (padas of 8 syllables).

Contents: The chief gods of the *Rigveda* are Agni, the sacrificial fire, Indra, a heroic god who is praised for having slain his enemy Vrtra, and Soma, the sacred potion, or the plant it is made from. Other prominent gods are Mitra-Varuna and Ushas (the dawn). Also invoked are Savitar, Vishnu, Rudra, Pushan, Brihaspati, Brahmanaspati, as well as deified natural phenomena such as Dyaus Pita (the sky), Prithivi (the earth), Surya (the sun), Vayu (the wind), Apas (the waters), Parjanya (the rain), Vac (the word), many rivers (notably the Sapta Sindhu, and the Saraswati River). Groups of deities are the Ashvins, the Maruts, the Adityas, the Rbhus, the Vishvadevas (the all-gods).

It contains various further minor gods, persons, concepts, phenomena and items, and fragmentary references to possible historical events, notably the struggle between the early Vedic people (known as Vedic Aryans, a subgroup of the Indo-Aryans) and their enemies, the Dasa.

Rigveda manuscript in Devanagari, early 19th century:

- Mandala 1 comprises 191 hymns. Hymn 1.1 is addressed to Agni, and his name is the first word of the *Rigveda*. The remaining hymns are mainly addressed to Agni and Indra. Hymns 1.154 to 1.156 are addressed to Vishnu.
- Mandala 2 comprises 43 hymns, mainly to Agni and Indra. It is chiefly attributed to the Rishi *gatsamda aunohotra*.
- Mandala 3 comprises 62 hymns, mainly to Agni and Indra. The verse 3.62.10 has great importance in Hinduism as the Gayatri Mantra. Most hymns in this book are attributed to *viuvamitra gathina*.
- Mandala 4 consists of 58 hymns, mainly to Agni and Indra. Most hymns in this book are attributed to *Vamadeva Gautama*.
- Mandala 5 comprises 87 hymns, mainly to Agni and Indra, the Visvadevas (gods of the world), the Maruts, the twin-deity Mitra-Varuna and the Asvins. Two hymns each are dedicated to Ushas (the dawn) and to Savitar. Most hymns in this book are attributed to the *atri* family.
- Mandala 6 comprises 75 hymns, mainly to Agni and Indra. Most hymns in this book are attributed to the *barhaspatya* family of Angirases.
- Mandala 7 comprises 104 hymns, to Agni, Indra, the Visvadevas, the Maruts, Mitra-Varuna, the Asvins, Ushas, Indra-Varuna, Varuna, Vayu (the wind), two each to Saraswati (ancient river/goddess of learning) and Vishnu, and to others. Most hymns in this book are attributed to *vasicmha maitravaurgi*.
- Mandala 8 comprises 103 hymns to different gods. Hymns 8.49 to 8.59 are the apocryphal *valakhilya*. Most hymns in this book are attributed to the *kagva* family.
- Mandala 9 comprises 114 hymns, entirely devoted to *Soma Pavamana*, the plant of the sacred potion of the Vedic religion.
- Mandala 10 comprises 191 hymns, to Agni and other gods. It contains the Nadistuti sukta which is in praise of rivers and is important for the reconstruction of the geography of the Vedic civilization and the Purusha sukta which has significance in Hindu tradition. It also contains the Nasadiya sukta (10.129), probably the most celebrated hymns in the west, which deals with creation.

Rishis: Each hymn of the Rigveda is traditionally attributed to a specific rishi, and the “family books” (2-7) are said to have been composed by one family of rishis each. The main families, listed by the number of verses ascribed to them are:

- Angirases: 3619 (especially Mandala 6)
- Kanvas: 1315 (especially Mandala 8)

- Vasishthas: 1267 (Mandala 7)
- Vaishvamitras: 983 (Mandala 3)
- Atris: 885 (Mandala 5)
- Bhrgus: 473
- Kashyapas: 415 (part of Mandala 9)
- Grtsamadas: 401 (Mandala 2)
- Agastyas: 316
- Bharatas: 170

Translations: The *Rigveda* was translated into English by Ralph T.H. Griffith in 1896. Partial English translations by Maurice Bloomfield and William Dwight Whitney exist. Griffith's translation is good, considering its age, but it is no replacement for Geldner's 1951 translation (in German), the only independent scholarly translation so far. The later translations by Elizarenkova depends heavily on Geldner, but Elizarenkova's translation (in Russian) is valuable in taking into account scholarly literature up to 1990. Partial translations exists in many other languages.

Hindu Tradition: According to Indian tradition, the Rigvedic hymns were collected by Paila under the guidance of Vyasa, who formed the Rigveda Samhita as we know it. According to the Uatapatha Brahmana, the number of syllables in the *Rigveda* is 432,000, equalling the number of muhurtas (1 day = 30 muhurtas) in forty years. This statement stresses the underlying philosophy of the Vedic books that there is a connection (bandhu) between the astronomical, the physiological, and the spiritual. The authors of the Brahmana literature described and interpreted the Rigvedic ritual. Yaska was an early commentator of the *Rigveda*. In the 14th century, Sayana wrote an exhaustive commentary on it. Other *Bhacyas* (commentaries) that have been preserved up to present times are those by Madhava, Skacdasvamin and Veckatamadhava.

Dating and Historical Reconstruction: Geography of the Rigveda, with river names; the extent of the Swat and Cemetery cultures are also indicated.

The *Rigveda* is far more archaic than any other Indo-Aryan text. For this reason, it was in the centre of attention of western scholarship from the times of Max Muller. The *Rigveda* records an early stage of Vedic religion, still closely tied to the pre-Zoroastrian Persian religion. It is thought that Zoroastrianism and Vedic Hinduism evolved from an earlier common religious—Indo-Iranian—culture.

The Rigveda's core is accepted to date to the late Bronze Age, making it the only example of Bronze Age literature with an unbroken tradition. Its composition is usually dated to roughly between 1700–1100 BC. The text in the following centuries underwent pronunciation revisions and standardization (samhitapatha, padapatha). This redaction would have been completed around the 7th century BC.

Writing appears in India around the 5th century BC in the form of the Brahmi script, but texts of the length of the Rigveda were likely not written down until much later, the oldest surviving manuscript dating to the 11th century. While

written manuscripts were used for teaching in medieval times, they were written on bark or palm leaves, which decomposed quicker in the tropical climate, until the advent of the printing press from the 16th century. The hymns were thus preserved by oral tradition for up to a millennium from the time of their composition until the redaction of the Rigveda, and the entire Rigveda was preserved in shakhas for another 2,500 years from the time of its redaction until the *editio princeps* by Muller, a collective feat of preservation unparalleled in any other known society.

Puranic literature names Vidagdha as the author of the Pada-text. Other scholars argue that Sthavira Sak of the Aitareya Aranyaka is the padakara of the RV. After their composition, the texts were preserved and codified by a vast body of Vedic priesthood as the central philosophy of the Iron Age Vedic civilization.

The *Rigveda* describes a mobile, nomadic culture, with horse-drawn chariots and metal (bronze) weapons. According to some scholars the geography described is consistent with that of the Punjab (Gandhara): Rivers flow north to south, the mountains are relatively remote but still reachable (Soma is a plant found in the mountains, and it has to be purchased, imported by merchants). Nevertheless, the hymns were certainly composed over a long period, with the oldest elements possibly reaching back before the split of Proto-Indo-Iranian (around 2000 BC). Thus there is some debate over whether the boasts of the destruction of stone forts by the Vedic Aryans and particularly by Indra refer to cities of the Indus Valley civilization or whether they hark back to clashes between the early Indo-Aryans with the BMAC in what is now northern Afghanistan and southern Turkmenistan (separated from the upper Indus by the Hindu Kush mountain range, and some 400 km distant).

In any case, while it is highly likely that the bulk of the *Rigveda* was composed in the Punjab, even if based on earlier poetic traditions, there is no mention of either tigers or rice in the *Rigveda* (as opposed to the later Vedas), suggesting that Vedic culture only penetrated into the plains of India after its completion. Similarly, it is assumed that there is no mention of iron although the term *ayas* (metal) occurs in the *Rigveda*. The Iron Age in northern India begins in the 12th century BC with the *Black and Red Ware* (BRW) culture. This is a widely-accepted timeframe for the beginning codification of the *Rigveda* (*i.e.*, the arrangement of the individual hymns in books, and the fixing of the *samhitapatha* (by applying *Sandhi*) and the *padapatha* (by dissolving *Sandhi*) out of the earlier metrical text), and the composition of the younger Vedas. This time probably coincides with the early Kuru kingdom, shifting the centre of Vedic culture east from the Punjab into what is now Uttar Pradesh.

Some of the names of gods and goddesses found in the *Rigveda* are found amongst other belief systems based on Proto-Indo-European religion as well: Dyaus-Pita is cognate with Greek Zeus, Latin Jupiter (from *deus-pater*), and Germanic Tyr; while Mitra is cognate with Persian *Mithra*; also, Ushas with Greek Eos and Latin Aurora; and, less certainly, Varuna with Greek Uranos. Finally, Agni is cognate with Latin *ignis* and Russian *ogon*, both meaning “fire”. Some writers have traced astronomical references in the *Rigveda* dating it to as

early as 4000 BC, a date well within the Indian Neolithic. Claims of such evidence remain controversial, but are a key factor in the development of the Proto-Vedic Continuity theory. N. Kazanas in a polemic against the “Aryan Invasion Theory” suggests a date as early as 3100 BC, based on an identification of the early Rigvedic Saraswati River as the Ghaggar-Hakra and on glottochronological arguments. Being a polemic against mainstream scholarship, this is in diametral opposition to views in mainstream historical linguistics, and supports the controversial Out of India theory, which assumes a date as late as 3000 BC for the age of late Proto-Indo-European itself.

Flora and Fauna in the Rigveda: The horse (Ashva) and cattle play an important role in the Rigveda. There are also references to the elephant (Hastin, Varana), Camel (Ustra, especially in Mandala 8), Buffalo (Mahisa), lion (Simha) and to the Gaur in the Rigveda. The peafowl (Mayura) and the Chakravaka (*Anas casarca*) are birds mentioned in the Rigveda.

ARANYAKA

The *Aranyakas* are part of the Hindu Kruti; these religious scriptures are sometimes argued to be part of either the Brahmanas or Upanishads. The name translates to “the forest books”, meaning, treatises for hermits or sadhus living in the wilderness. This contrasts with the grhyasutras, treatises intended for domestic life. Their language is early Classical Sanskrit, and together with the bulk of the Upanishads, the Aranyakas form the basis of Vedanta, roughly dating to a few centuries before the Common Era.

Books: The Aranyakas discuss philosophy and sacrifice. They are believed to have originated with the various mystical ascetic groups that developed in post-Vedic India. The Aranyakas constitute a more philosophical and mystical interpretation of the themes presented in the Vedas, as opposed to the Brahmanas, which were primarily concerned with the proper performance of ritual. Like the Upanishads, the Aranyakas may have initially constituted a secret or hidden teaching, not in the sense of being forbidden or restricted, but rather being both a non-obvious expansion on the themes of the Vedas and a teaching that was primarily conveyed individually from teacher to student.

The Aranyakas are associated with and named after individual Vedic shakhas.

- Aitareya Aranyaka belongs to the Shakala Shakha of Rigveda
- Taittiriya Aranyaka belongs to the Taittiriya Shakha of Krishna-Yajurveda
- Katha Aranyaka belongs to the Katha-Charaka Shakha of the Krishna-Yajurveda
- Kaushitaki Aranyaka belongs to the Kaushitaki and Shankhayana Shakhas of Rigveda
- Maitrayaniya Aranyaka belongs to the Maitrayaniya Shakha of Krishna-Yajurveda
- Talavakara Aranyaka belongs to the Talavakara or Jaiminiya Shakha of Samaveda

The Atharvaveda has no surviving Aranyaka, although indications are that there did exist Aranyaka works attached to this Veda in the past.

The Secret of the Brahmanas: There is also a certain continuity of the Aranyakas from the Brahmanas in the sense that the Aranyakas go into the subtle esoteric meanings of the ritualistic tilt that the rites detailed in the Brahmanas give to the mantras of the Vedas. It is this leap into subtlety that provides the reason for Durgacharya in his commentary on the Niruktas to say that the Aranyakas are ‘Rahasya Brahmana’, that is, the Secret of the Brahmanas. In short, the undercurrent of emphasis of the Aranyakas is to point out that through all the different multiplicities that one has to contend with, there is a single thread of continuity, namely, the One Absolute Reality. The language of the Aranyakas is, unlike Vedic Sanskrit, nearer to the ordinary Sanskrit of the layman.

A glimpse into the contents of some of the Aranyakas

Aitareya Aranyaka: There are five chapters each of which is even considered as a full Aranyaka. The first one deals with the regimen known as ‘Mahaa-vrata’. The explanations are both ritualistic as well as absolutistic. The second one has six chapters of which the first three are about ‘Praana-vidyaa’ – meaning, Prana, the Vital Air that constitutes the life-breath of a living body is also the life-breath of all mantras, all vedas and all vedic declarations (cf. 2.2.2 of aitareya Aranyaka). It is in this portion of the Aranyaka that one finds specific statements about how one who follows the vedic injunctions and performs the sacrifices goes to become the God of Fire, or the Sun or Air and how one who transgresses the vedic prescriptions is born into lower levels of being, namely, as birds and reptiles.

It is in Aitareya Aranyaka Praana is recommended to be worshipped in the form of Rishis. Praana is Vishvamitra, because all the universe (‘vishwa’) is the object of experience of this praana deity. Praana is Vamadeva, because the word “Vaama” indicates respectability and deservingness to be worshipped and served. It is also Atri Maharishi because, the word ‘traayate’ in Atri indicates the Praana that protects from sins. The Praana enters this body and supports it, therefore it is Bharadvaja – where the ‘bhara’ word denotes supporting and the ‘Vaaja’ indicates the mortal body that is made mobile by the residence of praana. Vashishhta is also Praana because the word ‘vas’ indicates the dwelling in this body of the senses made possible by praana.

The 4th, 5th and 6th chapters of this second Aranyaka constitute what is known as Aitareya Upanishad.

The third Aranyaka in this chain of Aranyakas is also known as ‘Samhitopanishad’. This elaborates on the various ways – like pada-paatha, krama-paatha, etc.—of reciting the Vedas and the nuances of the ‘svaras’.

The fourth and the fifth Aranyakas are technical and dwell respectively on the mantras known as ‘Mahaanaamni’ and the yajna known as ‘Madhyandina’.

Shankhayana Aranyaka: There are fifteen chapters here. From the third to the sixth it constitutes the Kaushitaki Upanishad. The seventh and eighth are known as a Samhitopanishad.

The first two chapters deal with the Mahavrata. The ninth talks about the greatness of Prana. The tenth chapter deals with the esoteric implications of the agnihotra ritual. All divine personalities are inherent in the Purusha, just as Agni in speech, Vayu in Prana, the Sun in the eyes, the Moon in the mind, the directions in the ears and water in the potency. The one who knows this, says the Aranyaka, and in the strength of that conviction goes about eating, walking, taking and giving, satisfies all the gods and what he offers in the fire reaches those gods in heaven. (cf.10-1).

The eleventh chapter prescribes several antidotes in the form of rituals for warding off death and sickness. It also details the effects of dreams. The 12th chapter elaborates the fruits of prayer. The 13th gets into more philosophical matters and says one must first attitudinally discard one's bodily attachment and then carry on the 'shravana', manana and nidhidhyasana and practise all the disciplines of penance, faith, self-control, *etc.*

The 14th gives just two mantras. One extols the "I am Brahman" mantra and says it is the apex of all Vedic mantras. The second mantra declares that one who does not get the meaning of mantras but only recites vedic chants is like an animal which does not know the value of the weight it carries. The final chapter gives a long list of genealogy of spiritual teachers from Brahma downwards upto Guna-Sankhayana.

Brihad-Aranyaka: This is the famous Upanishad of that name. The Self is the subject of discussion here from all aspects. For a complete discussion see Brihad-Aranyaka Upanishad.

Taittiriya-Aranyaka: There are ten chapters here. The 7th, 8th and 9th constitute the well-known Taittiriya Upanishad. The tenth is a long Upanishad known as Maha-Narayana-Upanishad; it contains several important mantras culled from the three vedas. Chapters one to six form the Aranyaka proper.

The first one is the famous Surya namaskara chapter. The second one is a description of the five maha-yajnas that every Brahmin has to do daily. Naturally the sacred thread, the yajnopavita, of the Brahmin is extolled and elaborated here. The sandhya worship, the worship of the manes, worship of the brahman through the brahma-yajna, the cleansing homa-sacrifice called the kushmanda-homa are all dealt with in detail. In this chapter the word 'shramana' is used (2-7-1) in the meaning of a doer of penance (tapasvii); this word came to mean in later times, a recluse of the Buddhist and Jain religions.

The third and fourth chapters go into further technicalities of several other homas and yajnas. The fourth chapter has also sections on mantras that may be used for averting (or causing !) havoc. The fifth is an academic treatise on yajnas. The sixth one is a collection of 'pitr-medha' mantras, that is, the mantras recited on the occasion of, and used for, the rituals for the disposal of the dead body.

SAMAVEDA

The *Samaveda* is third in the usual order of enumeration of the four Vedas, the ancient core Hindu scriptures. The Samaveda ranks next in sanctity and

liturgical importance to the Rigveda or Veda of Recited praise. Its Sanhita, or metrical portion, consists chiefly of hymns to be chanted by the Udgatar priests at the performance of those important sacrifices in which the juice of the Soma plant, clarified and mixed with milk and other ingredients, was offered in libation to various deities. The Collection is made up of hymns, portions of hymns, and detached verses, taken mainly from the Rigveda, transposed and rearranged, without reference to their original order, to suit the religious ceremonies in which they were to be employed.

The verses are not intended to be chanted, but to be sung in specifically indicated melodies using the seven *svaras* or notes. Such songs are called *Samagana* and in this sense the Samaveda is really a book of hymns.

In these compiled hymns there are frequent variations, of more or less importance, from the text of the Rigveda as we now possess it which variations, although in some cases they are apparently explanatory, seem in others to be older and more original than the readings of the Rigveda. In singing, the verses are still further altered by prolongation, repetition and insertion of syllables, and various modulations, rests, and other modifications prescribed, for the guidance of the officiating priests, in the Ganas or Song-books.

Two of these manuals, the Gramageyagana, or Congregational, and the Aranyagana or Forest Song-Book, follow the order of the verses of part I, of the Sanhita, and two others, the Uhagana, the Uhyagana, of Part II. This part is less disjointed than part I, and is generally arranged in triplets whose first verse is often the repetition of a verse that has occurred in part I.

The Samaveda survives in a single shakha or recession, the Kauthuma shakha, with a second shakha, Jaiminiya (or Talavakara), surviving fragmentarily, the Jaiminiya Samhita. From the Jaiminiya shakha, we also have the Jaiminiya Brahmana, the Jaiminiya Upanishad Brahmana and the Kena Upanishad.

Since the Samaveda is written in verse it can be sung. This decade has seen a poetic translation of Samveda in Hindi. This translation was done by Dr. Mridul Kirti and is called “Samveda Ka Hindi Padyanuvad”

Samaveda had originally 1000 shakhas. Here are the names of some of them:

- Ranayana
- Shatyamukhya
- Vyasa
- Bhaguri
- Oulundi
- Goulgulvi
- Bhanuman-oupamayava
- Karati
- Mashaka Gargya
- Varsgagavya
- Kuthuma
- Sgakugitra
- Jaimini

One of the leading exponents of Samaveda was Pandit Rewashankar Shastri of Padadhari, Gujarat India. He was awarded with the title of ‘Samaveda Martanda’ by His Holiness Paramacharya Sankaracharya of Kanchi Kamakoti Peetam. This honour was conferred on Pt. Rewashankar Shastri in Madras, India in late 1960s.

ATHARVAVEDA

The *Atharvaveda* (Sanskrit, *Atharvaveda*, a tatpurusha compound of *atharvan*, a type of priest, and *veda* meaning “knowledge”) is a sacred text of Hinduism, and one of the four Vedas, often called the “fourth Veda”. According to tradition, the Atharvaveda was mainly composed by two groups of rishis known as the Bhrigus and the Angirasas. Additionally, tradition ascribes parts to other rishis, such as Kauuika, Vauicmha and Kashyapa. There are two surviving recensions (uakhas), known as *aunakiya* (AVS) and *Paippalada* (AVP).

Status: The Atharvaveda, while undoubtedly belonging to the core Vedic corpus, in some ways represents an independent parallel tradition to that of the Rigveda and Yajurveda.

The Jaina and Buddha texts are considerably more hostile to the AV (they call it Aggvana or Ahavana Veda) than they are to the other Hindu texts. The Atharva Veda is less predominant than other Vedas, also the Gayatri mantra used in Atharva Veda is different from other 3 Vedas a special initiation of Gayatri is required to learn the Atharva Veda. The Hindus believe the mantras are highly powerful, the Atharvan Pariihthas (appendices) themselves state that specific priests of the Mauda and Jalada schools should be avoided or strict discipline should be followed as per the rules and regulations laid by the Atharva Veda. It is even stated that women associated with Atharvan may suffer from abortions if pregnant women remain while the chants for warfare are pronounced.

Recensions: The *Caraavyuha* (attributed to Shaunaka) lists nine shakhas or Schools of the Atharvaveda:

1. Paippalada
2. Stauda
3. Mauda
4. Aunakiya
5. Jajala
6. Jalada
7. Brahnavada
8. Devadarea
9. Charaavidya

Of these, only the Ceaunakiya (AVS) and the Paippalada (AVP) recensions have survived. The core Paippalada text is considered earlier than the Ceaunakiya, but both also contain later additions and corruptions. In places where the Ceaunakiya and the Paippalada agree, it is likely the original version. Often, the two recensions in corresponding hymns have a different verse order, or either has additional verses missing from the other.

Additionally, from the Viṣṇu and Vāyu Purāṇas (older Hindu texts on the gods, goddesses and their histories) it may be possible to glean a few more ancient schools that were not listed in the *Caragavyuha*.

These are:

- Sumantu
- Kabandha
- Kumuda
- Uaulkayana
- Babhravya
- Munjakeṇa
- Saindhavayana
- Nakṣatrakalpa
- Uantikalpa
- Sahitavidhi

At least some of these may have evolved into the other schools mentioned in the *Caragavyuha* list. Sahitavidhi, Uantikalpa and Nakṣatrakalpa are the five *kalpa* texts adduced to the Ceaunakiya tradition and not separate schools of their own.

There are two main circum-vedic texts associated with the AV, the *vaitana* sutra and the *Kauuika* sutra. These serve the same purpose as the *vidhana* of the *Rigveda* and are of greater value in studying the Puranic-Vedic link than the AV text itself. There are several Upanishads that are associated with the AV, but appear to be relatively late additions to the tradition. The most important amongst these are the *munaka* and the *pracna* Upanishads.

Issues of Note

- The AV is the first Indic text dealing with medicine. It identifies the causes of disease as living causative agents such as the *yatudhanya*, the *kimidi*, the *krimi* and the *durgama*. The *atharvans* seek to kill them with a variety of drugs in order to counter the disease (see XIX.34.9). This approach to disease is surprisingly advanced compared to the trihumoral theory developed in the purāgic era. Remnants of the original *atharvanic* thought did persist in the purāgic era as can be seen in *suruta*'s medical. Here following the *atharvan* theory the purāgic text suggests germs as a cause for leprosy. In the same chapter *suṣruta* also expands on the role of helminths in disease. These two can be directly traced back to the AV *sachita*. The hymn AV I.23-24 describes the disease leprosy and recommends the *rajani aucadhi* for its treatment. From the description of the *aucadhi* as black branching entity with dusky patches, it is very likely that is a lichen with antibiotic properties. Thus the AV can stake a claim to being one of the earliest texts to record uses of the antibiotic agents.
- The AV also informs us about warfare. A variety of devices such as an arrow with a duct for poison (*apaskambha*) and castor bean poison,

poisoned net and hook traps, use of disease spreading bugs and smoke screens find a place in the AV sachita (eg. hymns IX.9, IX.10, the trioeacdi and nyarbudi hymns). These references to military practices and associated koeatriya rites were what gave the AV its formidable reputation. In the Mahabharata era that shortly followed after the end of the atharvan period there is a frequent comparison between weapons and the mantras of the heroes. Probably, this comparison was initially supposed to mean the application of deadly weapons as mentioned in the atharvan tradition.

- Several regular and special rituals of the Aryans are a major concern of the AV, just as in the three other vedas. The major rituals covered by the AV are marriage in kaC a-XIV and the funeral in kaC a-XVIII. There are also hymns that are specific to rituals of the bhigu-agnirasas, vatyas and khatriyas. One of the most important of these rites is the Viuhasahi Vrata, performed to invoke the icdra and Vicgu with the mantras of the XVIIth kaC a. The Vatya rituals were performed by individuals who took on a nomadic ascetic way of living and were generally sent into neighbouring states by the ruler of a particular state. They appear to have served a role in reconnaissance and negotiations with neighbouring states (compare with Arjuna's Vatya-like journey into the Yadu principality to woo Subhadra). Finally, there are some rituals aimed at the destruction of the enemies (Abhicharika hymns and rites) particularly using the closing mantras of the XVIth kaC a. While these support traditional negative views on the AV, in content they are mirrored by several other hymns from the Rig as well as the Yajures. Moreover, Abhicharika rites were an integral part of the vedic as amply attested in the brahmaga literature (see the tale of Yavakrd a in the Jaiminiya brahmaga). Thus the AV as such began fully within the classic Vedic fold, though it was more specific to certain clans of fire priests. The development of the Abhicharika rites to their more 'modern' form was seen only in the vidhana literature and in fact began within the Rigvedic tradition in the form of the Vigvidhana. The author of the (igvidhana provides passing reference to the development of similar rites in the AV tradition (the references to the Agnirasa Krityas). These rites reached their culmination in the Kauhika and Vaitana Sutra and in some of the Pariihthas (appendices) of the atharvan literature. However, these are far removed from the actual hymns themselves suggesting that they represent an encrustation on the atharvanic practice rather than its original form. While in its most extreme form Atharvanic Abhicharika faded away, it did seed the mainstream Hindu culture resulting in the origin of the Puranic form of the fire ritual (yaga-s). It also provided the launching pad for the worship of late evolving popular deities like Kumara and Ganapati to capture the mainstream Hindu ritual.

- *Philosophical Excursions:* The AV made the most important contributions to Aryan philosophical thought of all the Sachitas. One of the most spectacular expressions of this is seen in the hymn XII.1, the Hymn to goddess Earth or the Prithvi Suktam used in the Aghrayana rite. The foundations of Vaiceuika, the highest of the Hindu Darśanas is expressed in the mantra XII.1.26 in which the atoms (Pamsu) are described forming the stone, the stones agglutinating to form the rocks and the rocks held together to form the Earth. An early pantheistic thought (somewhat convergent to the latter day Vicīthadvaitins) is seen in the hymn X.7 that describes the common thread running through all manifest and un-manifest existence as the skaCbha. This skaCbha is described as what poured out of the Hiranya Garbha, that was the precursor of the complex world in a very simple form (X.7.28). (*Hiranya Garba* = “The radiant or golden egg or womb. Esoterically the luminous ‘fire mist’ or ethereal stuff from which the Universe was formed.”)

This Skambha is Indra and Indra is the Skambha which describes all existence. The hymn also describes a pantheistic nature of the Vedic gods (X.7.38): skaCbha is the heat (tapa) that spreads through the universe (Bhuvana) as waves of water; the units of this spreading entity are the gods even as branches of one tree. This one theme that repeatedly presents itself in various interpretations that abounded in later Hindu philosophies and can be considered one of the most fundamental expression of Vedic thought.

Dating: From alleged internal astronomical references (AVS XI.7), it has been surmised that the Atharvanic period included the time when the Pleiades occupied the spring equinox (roughly 2200 BC). Further, tradition suggests that paippalada, one of the early collators, and Vaidharbhi, one of the late contributors associated with the Atharvanic text, lived during the reign of prince Hiranyanabha of the Ikshvaku dynasty, interpreted to mean that the core AV composition was at least complete by 1500 BC.

While these approaches are not widely accepted as valid, it is clear that the core text of the AV is not particularly recent in the Vedic Sachita tradition, and falls within the classical *Mantra period* of Vedic Sanskrit in the late 2nd millennium BC—roughly contemporary with the Yajurveda mantras, the Rigvedic Khilani, and the redaction of the Samaveda.

The Atharvaveda is also the first Indic text to mention Iron (as uyama ayas, literally “black metal”), so that scholarly consensus dates the bulk of the Atharvaveda hymns to the early Indian Iron Age, corresponding to the 12th to 10th centuries BC or the early Kuru kingdom.

During its oral tradition, however, the text has been corrupted by later additions considerably more than the other Vedas, and it is only from comparative philology of the two surviving recensions that we may hope to arrive at an approximation of the original reading.

Editions: The Shaunakiya text was edited 1960–62 by Vishva Bandhu, Hoshiarpur.

The bulk of the paippalada text was edited by Leray Carr Barret from 1905 to 1940 (book 6 by Edgerton, 1915) from a single Kashmirian uarada manuscript

(now in Tübingen). This edition is outdated, since various other manuscripts were discovered in Bihar, Bengal and Orissa since. Some manuscripts are in the Orissa State Museum, but many manuscripts are in private possession, and are kept hidden by their owners. Many manuscripts were collected by Prof. Durgamohan Bhattacharya of Bengal by deceiving their owners, as told by his son Dipak Bhattacharya in 1968 (below), who describes the theft as valiant daredevilry:

“The knowledge of the villagers, in whose possession many important manuscripts remain, about their possession is often very hazy [...] Prof. Bhattacharya secured a manuscript from an illiterate Brahmin on promise of return...” (see: Zehnder (1999), p.19)

Books 1–15 were edited by Durgamohan Bhattacharya (1997). There is a provisional edition of book 20 by Dipak Bhattacharya. Book 2 and 5 were edited and translated by Thomas Zehnder (1999) and Alexander Lubotsky (2002), respectively.

SAMHITA

The *Samhita* (Sanskrit: “joined” or “collected”) is the basic text of each of the *Vedas*, comprising collections of hymns and ritual texts. This term was originally used in reference to the style of recitation used during hymns and chants. In the *Vedas* the *Samhitas* are supplemented by later explanatory commentaries, notably the *Brahmanas* and *Upanishads*. The term is also sometimes spelled ‘*Sanhita*’.

Other Samhitas: In later times, the term *Samhita* also came to be applied to the names of texts belonging to various fields of knowledge, not directly connected to the *Vedas*. *e.g.*

- Gherand Samhita
- Charak Samhita
- Ashtavakra Samhita
- Yogayajnavalkya samhita
- Brahma Samhita

GHERAND SAMHITA

Gheranda Samhita is one of the three classic texts of Hatha Yoga (the other two being the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* and the *Shiva Samhita*). It is a late 17th Century text and is considered to be the most encyclopedic of the three classic texts on Hatha Yoga. *Gheranda Samhita* is a manual of Yoga taught by Gheranda to Chanda. Unlike other Hatha Yoga texts, the *Gheranda Samhita* focuses upon the *Shat Kriyas* or internal body cleansing, *i.e.*, *Ghatastha Yoga*. The closing stanzas of the *Gheranda Samhita* deal with *Samadhi*, but the methods taught are different from Patanjali’s methods.

CHARAKA

Charaka, sometimes spelled *Caraka*, (300 BC) is one of the founders of *Ayurveda*. According to *Charaka*, health and disease are not predetermined and life may be prolonged by human effort.

Contributions: According to the Charaka tradition, there existed six schools of medicine, founded by the disciples of the sage Punarvasu Atreya. Each of his disciples, *Agnivesha*, *Bhela*, *Jatukarna*, *Parashara*, *Harita*, and *Ksharapani*, composed a Samhita. Of these, the one composed by Agnivesha was considered the best.

The Agnivesha Samhita was later revised by Charaka and it came to be known as Charaka Samhita. The Charaka Samhita was revised by Dridhbala. Charaka was from India. Ayurveda is traditionally divided into eight branches which, in Charaka's scheme, are:

1. Sutra-Sthana, general principles
2. Nidana-Sthana, pathology
3. Vimana-Sthana, diagnostics
4. Sharira-Sthana, physiology and anatomy
5. Indriya-Sthana, prognosis
6. Chikitsa-Sthana, therapeutics
7. Kalpa-Sthana, pharmacy
8. Siddhi-Sthana, successful treatment

Charak Samhita: The Charak Samhita contains 120 adhyayas (chapters), divided into 8 parts.

1. Sutra Sthana (30 chapters)
2. Nidan Sthana (8 chapters)
3. Viman Sthana (8 chapters)
4. Sharir Sthana (8 chapters)
5. Indriya Sthana (12 chapters)
6. Chikitsa Sthana (30 chapters)
7. Kalpa Sthana (12 chapters)
8. Siddhi Sthana (12 chapters)

BRAHMANA

The *Brahmaas* are part of the Hindu *Shruti*; They are composed in Vedic Sanskrit, and the period of their composition is sometimes referred to as the *Brahmanic period* or *age* (approximately between 900 BC and 500 BC).

They are essentially commentaries of the Vedas, explaining Vedic ritual. The earliest Brahmanas may have been written several centuries earlier, contemporary to the Black Yajurveda commentary prose, but they have only survived in fragments.

Each Brahmana is associated with one of the four Vedas, and within the tradition of that Veda with a particular shakha or school:

- Rigveda
 - *Shakala shakha*: Aitareya Brahmana (AB)
 - *Bashkala shakha*: Kaushitaki Brahmana (KS)
- Samaveda
 - *Kauthuma*: PB, SadvB
 - *Jayminiya*: Jayminiya Brahmana (JB)

- Yajurveda
 - *Krishna*: The Brahmanas are integrated into the samhitas:
 - Maitrayani (MS)
 - Carakakatha (CS)
 - Kapisthalakatha (KS)
 - Taittiriya (TS). The Taittiriya school has an additional Taittiriya Brahmana (TB)
 - Shukla
 - *Vajasaneyi Madhyandina*: Shatapatha Brahmana, Madhyandina recession (ShB)
 - *Kanva*: Shatapatha Brahmana, Kanva recession (ShBK)
- Atharvaveda
 - *Paippalada*: Gopatha Brahmana

Aitareya Brahmana

Aitareya Brahmana, also known as the *Ashvalayana Brahmana* is associated to Rigveda, first among the four Vedas. It is believed to have been composed around 600 BC and is perhaps the oldest Brahmana. It deals principally with Soma sacrifices.

Jaiminiya Upanishad Brahmana

The *Jaiminiya Upanishad Brahmana* (JUB) is a Vedic text associated with the Jaiminiya shakha of the Samaveda. It may be considered a very early Upanishad, together with the Brhadaragya and Chandogya Upanishads dating to the Brahmana period of Vedic Sanskrit, likely predating the 6th century BC.

It is not to be confused with the Jaiminiya Brahmana (JB), the actual Brahmana commentary of the Jaiminiya school.

Kaushitaki Brahmana

The *Kaushitaki Brahmana* is the Brahmana associated with the Rigveda in the Bashkala shakha.

Panchavimsha Brahmana

The *Tandhya-maha-(or Praudha-) brahmana*, or “great” Brahmana — usually called *Panchavimsha-brahmana* from its consisting of twenty-five *adhyayas* is a Brahmana of the Samaveda, treating of the duties of the udgatars generally, and especially of the various kinds of chants.

Shatapatha Brahmana

Shatapatha Brahmana is one of the prose texts describing the Vedic ritual, associated with the White Yajurveda. It survives in two recensions, *Madhyandina* (CEBM, of the *vajasaneyi madhyandina* shakha) and *Kanva* (CEBK, of the *kagva* shakha), with the former having the eponymous 100 brahmanas in 14 books, and the latter 104 brahmanas in 17 books.

The CEB is notable as one of the oldest prose (non-metrical) Sanskrit texts altogether. Linguistically, it belongs to the Brahmana period of Vedic Sanskrit, dated to the first half of the 1st millennium BC (roughly 800 BC).

Among the points of interest are the mythological sections embedded in it, including myths of creation and the Deluge of Manu. The text describes in great detail the preparation of altars, ceremonial objects, ritual recitations, and the Soma libation, along with the symbolic attributes of every aspect of the rituals.

Some Hindu scholars have dated it to around 1800 BC, based on the reference in it of migration from the Saraswati river area to east India, because the river is said to have dried up around 1900 BC. Archaeoastronomers have dated it to around 2000 BC based on a reference to the Pleiades (Krttikas) “rising in the east” at autumnal equinox (CEBM 2.1.2.1). Such dating interpretations are controversial. (see Hindu astronomy)

The 14 books of the Madhyandina recession can be divided into two major parts. The first 9 books have close textual commentaries, often line by line, of the first 18 books of the corresponding samhita of the Yajurveda. The following 5 books cover supplementary and ritualistically newer material, besides including the celebrated Brhadaranyaka Upanishad as most of the 14th and last book.

Taittiriya Brahmana

The *Taittiriya Brahmana* (TB) is the Brahmana associated with the Taittiriya shakha of the Black Yajurveda. The Taittiriya school is the only school of the Black Yajurveda to have a Brahmana additional to the commentary already interspersed in the Samhita.

INDIAN VIEWS OF RECENT PAST

The Hindu perception of the *Rigveda* has moved away from the original ritualistic content to a more symbolic or mystical interpretation. For example, instances of animal sacrifice are not seen as literal slaughtering but as transcendental processes. The Rigvedic view is seen to consider the universe to be infinite in size, dividing knowledge into two categories: *lower* (related to objects, beset with paradoxes) and *higher* (related to the perceiving subject, free of paradoxes). Swami Dayananda, who started the Arya Samaj and Sri Aurobindo have emphasized a spiritual (adhyatmic) interpretation of the book.

The Saraswati river, lauded in RV 7.95 as the greatest river flowing from the mountain to the sea is sometimes equated with the Ghaggar-Hakra river, which went dry perhaps before 2600 BC or certainly before 1900 BC. Others argue that the Saraswati was originally the Helmand in Afghanistan. These questions are tied to the debate about the Indo-Aryan migration (termed “Aryan Invasion Theory”) vs. the claim that Vedic culture together with Vedic Sanskrit originated in the Indus Valley Civilization (termed “Out of India theory”), a topic of great significance in Hindu nationalism, addressed for example by Amal Kiran and Shrikant G. Talageri. Subhash Kak has claimed that there is an astronomical code

in the organization of the hymns. Bal Gangadhar Tilak, also based on astronomical alignments in the Rigveda, in his “The Orion” (1893) claimed presence of the Rigvedic culture in India in the 4th millennium BC, and in his “Arctic Home in the Vedas” (1903) even argued that the Aryans originated near the North Pole and came south during the Ice Age

Rigvedic Deities: There are 1028 hymns in the *Rigveda*, most of them dedicated to specific deities.

Indra, the heroic god and slayer of Vrtra and Vala, liberator of the cows and the rivers, *Agni*, the sacrificial fire and messenger of the gods, and *Soma*, the ritual drink dedicated to Indra are the most prominent deities by far. Invoked in groups are the *Vishvedevas* (the “all-gods”), the *Maruts*, violent storm gods in Indra’s train and the *Ashvins*, the twin horsemen.

There are two major families of gods, the *Devas* and the *Asuras*. Unlike in later Hinduism, the Asuras are not yet demonized, *Mitra* and *Varuna* being their most prominent members. Aditi is the mother both of Agni and of the *Adityas*, a group of Asuras, led by Mitra and Varuna, with Aryaman, Bhaga, Daksha, Ansa and Savitar.

Surya is the personification of the Sun, but Savitar, the Ashvins and the Rohus, semi-divine craftsmen, also have aspects of solar deities. Other natural phenomena deified include Vayu, (the wind), Dyaus and Prithivi (Heaven and Earth), Dyaus continuing Dyeus, the chief god of the Proto-Indo-European religion, and Ushas (the dawn), the most prominent goddess of the Rigveda, and Apas (the waters).

Rivers play an important role, deified as goddesses, most prominently the Sapta Sindhu and the Saraswati River.

Yama is the mythical first ancestor, also worshipped as a deity, and the god of the underworld and death.

Vishnu and Rudra, the prominent deities of later Hinduism (Rudra being an early form of Shiva) are already present as marginal gods.

The names of Indra, Mitra, Varuna and the Nasatyaas are also attested in a Mitanni treaty, suggesting that the religion of the Indo-Aryan Mitanni ruling class was very close to that of the Rigveda.

Deities by Prominence: List of Rigvedic deities by number of dedicated hymns, after Griffith (1888). Some dedications are to twin-deities, such as Indra-Agni, Mitra-Varuna, Soma-Rudra, here counted doubly.

- Indra 289
- Agni 218
- Soma 123 (most of them in the Soma Mandala)
- Vishvadevas 70
- The Asvins 56
- Varuna 46
- the Maruts 38
- Mitra 28
- Ushas 21

- Vayu (Wind) 12
- Savitar 11
- The Rohus 11
- Pushan 10
- The Apris 9
- Brhaspati 8
- Surya (Sun) 8
- Dyaus and Prithivi (Heaven and Earth) 6, plus 5.84 dedicated to Earth alone
- Apas (Waters) 6
- Adityas 6
- Vishnu 6
- Brahmanaspati 6
- Rudra 5
- Dadhikras 4
- The Saraswati River/Saraswati 3
- Yama
- Parjanya (Rain) 3
- Vac (Speech) 2 (mentioned 130 times, deified *e.g.*, in 10.125)
- Vastospati 2
- Vishvakarman 2
- Manyu 2
- Kapinjala (the Heathcock, a form of Indra) 2

Minor deities (one single or no dedicated hymn):

- Manas (Thought), prominent concept, deified in 10.58
- Dakshina (Reward), prominent concept, deified in 10.107
- Jnanam (Knowledge), prominent concept, deified in 10.71
- Purusha (“Cosmic Man” of the Purusha sukta 10.90)
- Aditi
- Bhaga
- Vasukra
- Atri
- Apam Napat
- Ksetrapati
- Ghrta
- Nirrti
- Asamati
- Urvasi
- Pururavas
- Vena
- Aranyani
- Mayabheda
- Tarksya
- Tvastar
- Saranyu

ANUKRAMANI

An *Anukramani* is an index of Vedic hymns, recording poetic meter, content, and traditions of authorship.

The most important Anukramani is Katyayana's *Sarvanukramani* of the Rigveda (ca. 2nd century BC), recording the first word, the number of verses, name and family of poets (Rishis), names of deities and metres for each of the 1,028 hymns of the Rigveda.

Mayrhofer (2003) discusses the personal names contained in the Rigveda Anukramani, counting 543 items. Academic opinion regarding the age and authenticity of the tradition of these names is not unanimous. Mayrhofer suggests that Hermann Oldenberg (1888) was essentially correct in assuming that "the editors of the lists of authors [...] [possessed] a correct notion of the families associated with these Mandalas [the Rigvedic "family books" 2–7], possibly rooted in tradition. Beyond this, they do not betray as much as the slightest sign of any genuine tradition on the hymn authors" (p. 229).

YAJURVEDA

The *Yajurveda* is one of the four Hindu Vedas. It contains religious texts focusing on liturgy, rituals and sacrifices, and how to perform the same.

Collections: There are two primary collections or *samhitas* of the Yajurveda: Shukla (white) and Krishna (black). Both contain the verses necessary for rituals, but the Krishna Yajurveda has additional prose commentary and detailed instructions within the work itself.

Shukla Yajurveda: There are two (nearly identical) *shakhas* or recensions of the Shukla (White) Yajurveda, both known as Vajasaneyi-Samhita (VS):

- *Vajasaneyi Madhyandiniya* (VSM)
- *Vajasaneyi Kanva* of Kosala (VSK)

The former is popular in North India, Gujarat, parts of Maharashtra (north of Nasik) and northern parts of Orissa, and thus commands a numerous following. The Kanva Shakha is popular in Maharashtra (south of Nasik), most of Orissa, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. Sureshvara-charya, one of the four main disciples of Jagadguru Adi Shankara, is said to have followed the Kanva *shakha*. The Guru himself followed the Taittiriya Shakha with the Apastamba Kalpasutra.

The Vedic rituals of the Ranganatha-swamy Temple at Srirangam, the second biggest temple in India, are performed according to the Kanva *shakha*. The White Yajurveda has two Upanishads associated with it: the Isa Vasya and the Brihadaranyaka upanishads. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is the most voluminous of all Upanishads.

The VS has forty chapters or adhyayas, containing the formulas used with the following rituals:

- 1-2: New and Full Moon sacrifices
- 3: Agnihotra
- 4-8: Somayajna

- 9-10: Vajapeya and Rajasuya, two modifications of the Soma sacrifice
- 11-18: Construction of altars and hearths, especially the Agnicayana
- 19-21: Sautramani, a ritual originally counteracting the effects of excessive Soma-drinking
- 22-25: Ashvamedha
- 26-29: Supplementary formulas for various rituals
- 30-31: Purushamedha
- 32-34: Sarvamedha
- 35: Pitriyajna
- 36-39: Pravargya
- 40: The final adhyaya is the famous Isha Upanishad

Krishna Yajurveda

There are four recensions of the Krishna ("black" or "dark") Yajurveda:

- *Taittiriya sachita* (TS) of Panchala
- *Maitrayani sachita* (MS)
- *Caraka-katha sachita* (KS) of Madra
- *Kapicmhala-katha sachita* (KapS) of Bahika

Each of the recensions has a *Brahmana* associated with it, and some of them also have associated Shrautasutras, Grhyasutras, Aranyakas, Upanishads and Pratishakhyas.

The Taittiriya Shakha: The best known of these recensions is the TS, named after Tittiri, a pupil of Yaska. It consists of 8 books or *kandas*, subdivided in chapters or *prapathakas*, further subdivided into individual hymns. Some individual hymns in this Samhita have gained particular importance in Hinduism; e.g., TS 4.5 and TS 4.7 constitute the Shri Rudram Chamakam, while 1.8.6.i is the Shaivaite Tryambakam mantra. The formula *bhur bhuva, suva*, prefixed to the (rigvedic) Gayatri mantra is also from the Yajurveda, appearing four times. The Taittiriya recession of the Black Yajurveda *shakha* most prevalent in southern India. Among the followers of this Shakha, the Apastamba Sutras is the common Shrautasutra associated with the Shakha.

The Taittiriya Shakha consists of Taittiriya Samhita (having seven kaandas), Taittiriya Braahmana (having three kaandas), Taittiriya Aaranyaka (having seven prashnas), Taittiriya Upanishad (having three *prashnas* or *vallis*-Sheeksha valli, Ananda valli and Bhrigu valli) and the Mahanarayana Upanishad. The Taittiriya Upanishad and Mahaanaarayana Upanishad are considered to be the seventh, eighth, ninth and tenth prashnas of the Aaranyaka. The words *prapaathaka* and *kaanda* (meaning sections) are interchangeably used in the Vedic literature. *Prashna* and *valli* refer to sections of the Aaranyaka.

Legend: Legend has it that the vedic seer Yajnavalkya studied the Yajurveda collection under the tutelage of sage Vaishampayana maternal uncle of Yajnavalkya. Yajnavalkya's birth was with a purpose as purported by Gods. He was an 'Ekasandhigraahi', meaning he learnt anything with just once teaching. The two came to have serious differences in interpretation. On one occasion,

Vaishampayana was so enraged that he demanded the return of all the knowledge he has imparted to Yajnavalkya. Yajnavalkya regurgitated all the knowledge he had learnt in the form of flesh.

The other disciples of Vaishampayana, eager to receive this knowledge, assumed the form of *tittiriya* birds and ate that flesh. Thus, that knowledge came to be called the Taittiriya Samhita (from the word *tittiriya*). There is a secret meaning in this. As we know, it is impossible to regurgiate knowledge or learning, but the words are used in 'srimad bhaagavata'.

It is also of interest to know why the Guru himself did not take the vedaas he taught Yajnyavalkya, but instead asked his deciples to eat the flesh. Any way, after having regurgitated out the knowledge acquired from his teacher, Yajnavalkya worshipped Surya (the Sun God) and acquired new knowledge directly from God Narayana (suryantargata narayana) who preached Shukla yajurveda by taking vaaji rupa, (god with horse face) which was compiled to become the *Shukla Yajurveda*. This is recorded in srimad bhaagavata.

Large Numbers: The Yajurveda documents the earliest known use of numbers up to a trillion (*parardha*). It even discusses the concept of numeric infinity (*purna* "fullness"), stating that if you subtract *purna* from *purna*, you are still left with *purna*.

8

Religious Scriptures

FOUR VEDAS

In Hindu religion there are four Vedas, the Rig Veda, Sama Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharva Veda. The Vedas are the primary texts of Hinduism. They also had a vast influence on Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. Customally the text of the Vedas was coetaneous with the universe. Scholars have determined that the Rig Veda, the oldest of the four Vedas, was composed about 1500 BC., and codified about 600 BC. It is unknown when it was at last committed to writing, but this probably was at some point after 300 BC. The Vedas contain hymns, conjurations, and rituals from ancient India. They are between the most ancient religious texts still in existence. Besides their spiritual value, they also give a unique view of everyday life in India four thousand years ago. The Vedas are also the most ancient wide texts in an Indo-European language, and as such are invaluable in the study of relative linguistics. Vedas in original are a large corpus of texts originating in Ancient India. They form the oldest layer of Sanskrit literature and the oldest sacred texts of Hinduism.

As per the Hindu custom, the Vedas are not of human agency, being supposed to have been directly revealed, and thus are said to be the shruti (what is heard). At all the Hindu prayers, religious functions and other auspicious occasions these Vedic mantras are recited.

The class of Vedic texts is combined around the four canonical Samhitas or Vedas proper, of which three (trayi) are related to the carrying into action of yajna (sacrifice) in historical (Iron Age) Vedic religion:

- The Rigveda, containing hymns to be recited by the hotr or reciting priest;
- The Yajurveda, containing formulas to be recited by the adhvaryu or officiating priest;
- The Samaveda, containing formulas to be sung by the udgatr or chanting priest.
- The fourth is the Atharvaveda, a collection of magical spells and healing or apotropaic charms and some speculative hymns used by the Brahmin priest.

The Hindu Philosophies and sects that arose in the Indian subcontinent have taken differing positions on the Vedas. Schools of Indian philosophy which cite the Vedas as their scriptural authority are classified as orthodox (astika). Other customs, notably Buddhism and Jainism, though they are (vedanta) likewise concerned with liberation did not regard the Vedas as divine ordinances but rather human expositions of the sphere of higher spiritual knowledge, hence not sacrosanct. These groups are referred to by customal Hindu texts as “heterodox” or “non-orthodox” (nastika) schools. In addition to Buddhism and Jainism, Sikhism also does not accept the authority of the Vedas. The Yajurveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda are independent aggregations of mantras and hymns intended as manuals for the Adhvaryu, Udgatr and Brahman priests respectively.

The fourth Veda is Atharvaveda. Its status has occasionally been ambiguous, probably due to its use in sorcery and healing. However, it comprises very old materials in early Vedic language. Manusmṛti, which often speaks of the three Vedas, calling them trayam-brahma-sanatanam, “the triple eternal Veda”. The Atharvaveda like the Rigveda, is a collection of original incantations, and other materials adopting relatively little from the Rigveda. It has no direct relation to the solemn Shrauta sacrifices, except for the fact that the for the most part silent Brahman priest observes the procedures and uses Atharvaveda mantras to ‘heal’ it when mistakes have been made. Its recitation also produces long life, cures diseases, or effects the ruin of enemies.

All the the four Vedas comprises the metrical Mantra or Samhita and the prose Brahmana part, giving discussions and directions for the detail of the ceremonies at which the Mantras were to be used and explanations of the legends connected with the Mantras and rituals. Both these portions are termed shruti (which custom says to have been heard but not composed or written down by men). Each of the four Vedas seems to have passed to numerous Shakhas or schools, giving rise to various recensions of the text. They each have an Index or Anukramanika, the main work of this kind being the general Index or Sarvanukramanika.

RIGVEDA

Some historians believe that the Rig Veda must have been composed more or less in the period 1450-1350 BC., in the Greater Punjab, before the onset of the Iron Age. The Rigveda Samhita is the oldest significant existent Indian text.

It is a collection of 1,028 Vedic Sanskrit hymns and 10,600 verses in all, organized into ten books (Sanskrit: mandalas). The hymns are dedicated to Rigvedic deities.

The books of Vedas were composed by poets from various priestly groups over a period of some 500 years, which Avari dates as 1400 BC. to 900 BC., if not earlier. As per the Max Müller, based on internal evidence, the Rigveda was composed roughly between 1700–1100 BC. (early Vedic period) in the Punjab (Sapta Sindhu) region of the Indian subcontinent.

There are strong lingual and cultural laws of similarity between the Rigveda and the early Iranian Avesta, deriving from the Proto-Indo-Iranian times, often associated with the Andronovo culture; the earliest horse-drawn chariots were found at Andronovo sites in the Sintashta-Petrovka cultural area near the Ural mountains and date back to 2000 BC. Till this day these Vedas are similarly valuable and authentic as they were at the time of their writing.

YAJURVEDA

The next veda is Yajur-Veda which comprises archaic prose mantras and also in part of verses borrowed and adapted from the Rig-Veda. Its motive was practical, in that each mantra must accompany an action in sacrifice but, unlike the Sama-Veda, it was compiled to apply to all sacrificial rites, not merely the Soma offering. There are two major recensions of this Veda known as the “Black” and “White” Yajur-Veda. The origin and meaning of these designations are not very clear. The White Yajur-Veda comprises only the verses and formulas (yajus) necessary for the sacrifice, while their discussion exist in a different work, the Shatapatha Brahmana. It differs widely from the Black Yajurveda, which incorporates such discussions in the work itself, often immediately following the verses. Of the Black Yajurveda four major recensions survive (Maitrayani, Katha, Kapisthala-Katha, Taittiriya), all showing by and large the same arrangement, but differing in a number of other respects, notably in the individual discussion of the rituals but also in matters of syntax and choice of words phonology, accent and grammatical forms.

SAMAVEDA

The next to Yajur Veda is the Sama-Veda (Sanskrit samaveda) is the Veda of melodies or Knowledge of melodies. The name of this Veda is from the Sanskrit word saman which means a melody applied to metrical hymn or song of praise. It consists of 1549 stanzas, taken entirely from the Rig-Veda. Like the Rigvedic stanzas in the Yajurveda, the Samans have been changed and adapted for use in singing. Some of the Rig-Veda verses are repeated more than once. Including repetitions, there are a total of 1875 verses numbered in the Sama-Veda recension translated by Griffith. The Kauthuma/Ranayaniya and the Jaiminiya are the two major recensions which exist even today.

To serve as a songbook for the “singer” priests who took part in the liturgy, its motive was liturgical and practical. A priest who sings hymns from the Sama-Veda during a ritual is called an udgatr, a word derived from the Sanskrit root

ud-gai (to chant). A similar word in English might be cantor. The hymns were to be sung As per the certain fixed melodies; hence the name of the collection. The styles of chanting are significant to the liturgical use of the verses.

ATHARVAVEDA

The last of these vedas is Artharva-Veda and it is the Knowledge of the atharvans and angirasa. The Artharva-Veda or Atharvangirasa is the text belonging to the Atharvan and Angirasa poets. Apte defined an atharvan as a priest who worshipped fire and Soma. However, the etymology of Atharvan is unclear, but it is related to Avesta athravan; he denies any connection with fire priests. Atharvan was an ancient term for a certain Rishi even in the Rigveda. The Atharva-Veda Samhita has 760 hymns, and about 160 of the hymns are in common with the Rig-Veda. Most of the verses are metrical, but some sections are in prose. It was compiled around 900 BC., although some of its material may go back to the time of the Rig Veda, and though not in linguistic form some parts of the Atharva-Veda are older than the Rig-Veda. Atharva-Veda has been preserved in two recensions, the Paippalada and Shaunaka. As per the Apte it had nine schools (shakhas). The Paippalada text, which exists in a Kashmir and an Orissa version, is longer than the Saunaka one; it is only partially printed in its two versions and remains largely in its original form.

The Atharvana-Veda has less connection with sacrifice unlike the other three Vedas. Its first part comprises chiefly of spells and incantations, concerned with protection against demons and disaster, spells for the healing of diseases, for long life and for various desires or objectives in life. Gavin Flood discusses the relatively late acceptance of the Atharva-Veda as follows:

“There were originally only three priests associated with the first three SaChitas, for the Brahman as overseer of the rites does not seem in the Rig Veda and is only incorporated later, thereby showing the acceptance of the Atharva Veda, which had been somewhat distinct from the other Samhitas and identified with the lower social strata, as being of equal standing with the other texts.”

The second part of the text comprises speculative and philosophical hymns. In its third section, the Atharvaveda comprises Mantras used in marriage and death rituals, as well as those for kingship, female rivals and the Vratya (in Brahmana style prose).

UPANISHADS

After the Vedas the Upanishads were written. The Upanishads are a continuation of the Vedic philosophy, and were written between 800 and 400 B.C. They elaborate on how the soul (Atman) can be united with the ultimate truth (Brahman) through contemplation and mediation, as well as the doctrine of Karma—the cumulative effects of person’s actions. The Upanishads are looked upon as part of the Vedas and as such form part of the Hindu scriptures. They form the core spiritual thought of Vedanta. The Upanishads are known as Vedânta (“the end/culmination of the

Vedas”). The Upanishads do not belong to a particular period of Sanskrit literature. The oldest, such as the Brhadaranyaka, Chandogya Upanishads and Jaiminiya Upanisadbrahmana, date to the late Brahmana period (roughly around the mid first millennium BC., that is well before the Gita was composed), while the youngest were composed in the medieval or even the early modern period.

The scholars and researchers of the Vedic books consider the four Vedas as poetic liturgy, collectively called mantra or samhita, that is as adoration and supplication to the deities of Vedic religion, in parts melded with henotheist notions, and an overarching order (Rta) that transcended even the gods. The Brâhmanas are a collection of ritual discussions, detailing the meaning of the mantras, ritual actions, priestly functions as well as that of complete rituals. They are later than the Mantras. Vedanta, is chiefly composed of Âranyakas and Upanishads. The Aranyakas (“of the wilderness”) are composed in Brahmana style and deal with the more secret Vedic Shrauta rituals. The Upanishads realized monist ideas, some of which are hinted at in earlier texts, and have maintained an significant influence on the rest of Hindu and Indian philosophy.

Shankra, the philosopher and commentator is thought to have composed commentaries on eleven Upanishads. These mukhya Upanishads are in general regarded as the oldest ones, spanning the late Vedic and the Mauryan periods. By the 17th century, there were a large number of Upanishads: The Muktika Upanishad (predates 1656) lists 108 Upanishads. The number of Upanishads translated into Persian by Dara Shikoh (d. 1659) is 50. There are also counts that give a total number of Upanishads in excess of 108: Max Müller (1879) is aware of 170, and there are other counts in excess of 200 or even 300. The category of Upanishads has remained somewhat permeable, with the later additions being highly sectarian, perhaps representing “one of the strategies used by sectarian movements to legitimate their own texts through granting them the nominal status of Uṛuti.” The Upanishads hold information on basic Hindu beliefs, including belief in a world soul, a universal spirit, Brahman, and an individual soul, Atman (Smith 10).

In Sanskrit, the word Brahman has two genders (masculine, Brahman, the creator-god or Brahma, neuter, the Absolute). Custom sees a form of lesser gods as aspects of this one divine ground, Brahman (altogether different from Brahma). Brahman is the ultimate, both transcendent and immanent, the absolute infinite existence, the sum total of all that ever is, was, or ever shall be. Shankara’s exegesis of the Upanishads describes Brahman not as God in the monotheistic sense; he ascribes to it no limiting characteristics, not even those of being and non-being. Thus, Shankara’s philosophy is named advaita, “not two.” Dvaita philosophy is a distinct interpretation. Founded by Madhvacharya, this school holds that Brahman is ultimately a personal God, Vishnu, or Krishna (*brahmano hi pratisthaham*, I am the Foundation of Brahman Bhagavad Gita 14.27). Vishishtadvaita, founded by Ramanujacharya is the third major school of Vedanta, and it has some aspects in common with the other two. The sages of the Upanishad try to solve these mysteries and seek knowledge of a Reality beyond ordinary knowing.

PHILOSOPHY OF UPANISHADS

Because of their mystical nature and intense philosophical bent that does away with all ritual and completely embraces principals of One Brahman and the inner Atman (Self), the Upanishads have a universal feel that has led to their explication in numerous manners, giving birth to the three schools of Vedanta. The Upanishads are summed up in one phrase “Tat Tvam Asi” (That thou art) by the Advaita Vedanta. However, Vedic interpretation of this phrase varies. Vedantins believe that in the end, the ultimate, formless, inconceivable Brahman is the same as our soul, Atman. We only have to realize it through discrimination. The Upanishads also contain the first and most definitive explanations of Aum (om) as the divine word, the cosmic vibration that underlies all existence and comprises multiple trinities of being and principles colligated into its One Self.

LIST OF UPANISHADS

The eleven principal (mukhya) Upanishads that were commented upon by Shankara, and that are accepted as shruti by most Hindus are as follows.

1. Ishavasyopanishad
2. Kenopanishad
3. Kathopanishad
4. Mandukyopanishad
5. Mundakopanishad
6. Prashnopanishad
7. Taittiriyaopanishad
8. Aitereyaopanishad
9. Brihadaranyopanishad
10. Chhandogyopanishad
11. Shwetashvataropanishad.

The Jaiminiya Upanishad brahmana that comprises the Kena Upanishad is as old as the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad. All these 15 Upanishads are the oldest ones, all of them dating to before the Common Era. From linguistic evidence, the oldest among them are the B[hadâraGyaka, Chândogya Upanishads and the Jaiminîya UpanisadbrâhmaGa, belonging to the late Vedic Sanskrit period; of nearly the same age are the Aitareya, Kausîtaki and Taittirîya Upanisads, while the remaining ones date to the transition from Vedic to Classical Sanskrit.

CANON BY VEDIC SHAKHA

The older Upanishads are related with Vedic Charanas (Shakhas or schools). The Aitareya Upanishad and the Kauûitâki Upanishad with the Shakala shakha; the Chândogya Upanishad with the Kauthuma shakha, the Kena Upanishad, and the Jaiminiya Upanishad Brahmana, with the Jaiminiya shakha; the Kamha Upanishad with the Charaka-Katha shakha, the Taittirîya and Úvetâûvatara with the Taittiriya shakha; the MaitrâyaGi Upanishad with the Maitrayani shakha;

the B[hadâraGyaka and Îsa Upanishads with the Vajasaneyi Madhyandina shakha, and the Mânûkya and Munaka Upanishads with the Shaunaka shakha. Alongwith it, parts of earlier texts, of Brahmanas or passages of the Vedas themselves, are sometimes regarded as Upanishads.

CONTEMPORARY SPIRITUALITY

The term “spiritual” has frequently become used in contexts in which the term “religious” was formerly employed. Contemporary spirituality is also called “post-traditional spirituality” and “New Age spirituality”. Hanegraaf makes a distinction between two “New Age” movements: New Age in a restricted sense, which originated primarily in mid-twentieth century England and had its roots in Theosophy and Anthroposophy, and “New Age” in a general sense, which emerged in the later 1970s when increasing numbers of people ... began to perceive a broad similarity between a wide variety of “alternative ideas” and pursuits, and started to think of them as part of one “movement”.

Those who speak of spirituality outside of religion often define themselves as *spiritual but not religious* and generally believe in the existence of different “spiritual paths”, emphasizing the importance of finding one’s own individual path to spirituality. According to one 2005 poll, about 24% of the United States population identifies itself as “spiritual but not religious”.

Lockwood draws attention to the variety of spiritual experience in the contemporary West:

The new Western spiritual landscape, characterised by consumerism and choice abundance, is scattered with novel religious manifestations based in psychology and the Human Potential Movement, each offering participants a pathway to the Self.

Characteristics

Modern spirituality centers on the “deepest values and meanings by which people live”. It often embraces the idea of an ultimate or an alleged immaterial reality. It envisions an inner path enabling a person to discover the essence of his/her being.

Not all modern notions of spirituality embrace transcendental ideas. Secular spirituality emphasizes humanistic ideas on moral character (qualities such as love, compassion, patience, tolerance, forgiveness, contentment, responsibility, harmony, and a concern for others). These are aspects of life and human experience which go beyond a purely materialist view of the world without necessarily accepting belief in a supernatural reality or any divine being. Nevertheless, many humanists (*e.g.*, Bertrand Russell, Jean-Paul Sartre) who clearly value the non-material, communal and virtuous aspects of life reject this usage of the term “spirituality” as being overly-broad (*i.e.*, it effectively amounts to saying “everything and anything that is good and virtuous is *necessarily* spiritual”). In 1930 Russell, a self-described agnostic renowned as an atheist, wrote “... one’s ego is no very large part of the world. The man [sic]

who can centre his thoughts and hopes upon something transcending self can find a certain peace in the ordinary troubles of life which is impossible to the pure egoist.” Similarly, Aristotle – one of the first known Western thinkers to demonstrate that morality, virtue and goodness can be derived without appealing to supernatural forces – argued that “men create Gods in their own image” (not the other way around). Moreover, theistic and atheistic critics alike dismiss the need for the “secular spirituality” label on the basis that it appears to be nothing more than obscurantism in that:

- The term “spirit” is commonly taken as denoting the existence of unseen/otherworldly/life-giving forces; and
- Words such as “morality”, “philanthropy” and “humanism” already efficiently and succinctly describe the prosocial-orientation and civility that the phrase “secular spirituality” is meant to convey but without risk of potential confusion that one is referring to something supernatural.

Although personal well-being, both physical and psychological, is said to be an important aspect of modern spirituality, this does not imply spirituality is *essential* to achieving happiness. Free-thinkers who reject notions that the numinous/non-material is important to living well can be just as happy as more spiritually-oriented individuals

Contemporary spirituality-theorists may suggest that spirituality develops inner peace and forms a foundation for happiness. For example, meditation and similar practices are suggested to help the practitioner cultivate her/his inner life and character. Ellison and Fan (2008) assert that spirituality *causes* a wide array of positive health outcomes, including “morale, happiness, and life satisfaction.”. However, Schuurmans-Stekhoven (2013) actively attempted to replicate this research and found more “mixed” results. Nevertheless, spirituality has played a central role in some self-help movements such as Alcoholics Anonymous:

if an alcoholic failed to perfect and enlarge his spiritual life through work and self-sacrifice for others, he could not survive the certain trials and low spots ahead

Such spiritually-informed treatment approaches have been challenged as pseudoscience, are far from uniformly curative and may for non-believers cause harm.

Spiritual Experience

“Spiritual experience” plays a central role in modern spirituality. Both western and Asian authors have popularised this notion. Important early-20th century western writers who studied the phenomenon of spirituality, and their works, include:

- William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902)
- Rudolph Otto, especially *The Idea of the Holy* (1917)

James’ notions of “spiritual experience” had a further influence on the modernist streams in Asian traditions, making them even further recognisable for a western audience.

William James popularized the use of the term “religious experience” in his *The Varieties of Religious Experience*. He has also influenced the understanding of mysticism as a distinctive experience which allegedly grants knowledge.

Wayne Proudfoot traces the roots of the notion of “religious experience” further back to the German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768–1834), who argued that religion is based on a *feeling* of the infinite. Schleiermacher used the idea of “religious experience” to defend religion against the growing scientific and secular critique. Many scholars of religion, of whom William James was the most influential, adopted the concept.

Major Asian influences on contemporary spirituality have included Vivekananda (1863-1902) and D.T. Suzuki (1870-1966). Swami Vivekananda popularised a modern syncretistic Hinduism, in which an emphasis on personal experience replaced the authority of scriptures. D.T. Suzuki had a major influence on the popularisation of Zen in the west and popularized the idea of enlightenment as insight into a timeless, transcendent reality. Other influences came through Paul Brunton’s *A Search in Secret India* (1934), which introduced Ramana Maharshi (1879-1950) and Meher Baba (1894-1969) to a western audience.

Spiritual experiences can include being connected to a larger reality, yielding a more comprehensive self; joining with other individuals or the human community; with nature or the cosmos; or with the divine realm.

BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

As noted by Barker, NRMs cannot all be “lumped together” and differ from one another on many issues. Virtually no generalisation can be made about NRMs that applies to every single group, with Barrett noting that “generalizations tend not to be very helpful” when studying NRMs. Melton expressed the view that there is “no single characteristic or set of characteristics” that all new religions share, “not even their newness.”

Bryan Wilson wrote, “Chief among the miss-directed assertions has been the tendency to speak of new religious movements as if they differed very little, if at all, one from another. The tendency has been to lump them altogether and indiscriminately to attribute to all of them characteristics which are, in fact, valid for only one or two.” NRMs themselves often claim that they exist at a crucial place in time and space.

Scriptures

Some NRMs have their own unique scriptures, while others reinterpret existing texts, utilizing a range of older elements. They frequently claim that these are not new, but rather had been forgotten truths that are only now being revived. NRM scriptures often incorporate modern scientific knowledge, sometimes with the claim that they are bringing unity to science and religion. Some NRMs believe that their scriptures are received through the process of mediumship. *The Urantia Book*, the core scripture of the Urantia Movement, was published in 1955 and is

said to be the product of a continuous process of revelation from “celestial beings” which began in 1911. Some NRMs, particularly those that are forms of occultism, have a prescribed system of courses and grades through which members can progress.

Celibacy

Certain NRMs promote celibacy, the state of voluntarily being unmarried, sexually abstinent, or both. Some, including the Shakers and more recent NRMs inspired by Hindu traditions, see it as a lifelong commitment. Others, including the Unification Church, as a stage in spiritual development. In some Buddhist NRMs celibacy is practiced mostly by older women who become nuns. Some people join NRMs and practice celibacy as a rite of passage in order to move beyond previous sexual problems or bad experiences. Groups that promote celibacy require a strong recruitment drive to survive; the Shakers established orphanages to bring new individuals into their community.

Violence

Violent incidents involving NRMs are extremely rare and unusual. In those cases where large number of casualties resulted, the new religion in question was led by a charismatic leader. Beginning in 1978 with the deaths of 913 members of the Peoples Temple in Jonestown, Guyana by both murder and suicide an image of “killer cults” came to public attention. A number of subsequent events contributed to this. In 1994, a members of the Order of the Solar Temple committed suicide in Canada and Switzerland. In 1995 members of the Japanese new religion Aum Shinrikyo murdered a number of people, including through a sarin attack on the Tokyo subway. In 1997, 39 members of the Heaven’s Gate group committed suicide in the belief that their spirits would leave the Earth and join a passing comet. There have also been cases where members of NRMs have been killed because they engaged in dangerous actions while believing themselves to be invincible; in Uganda several hundred members of the Holy Spirit Movement were killed as they approached gunfire because its leader, Alice Lakwena, told them that they would be protected from bullets by the oil of the shea tree.

Leadership and Succession

Many NRMs are founded and led by a charismatic leader. The death of any religion’s founder represents a significant moment in its history. Over the months and years following its leader’s death, the movement can die out, fragment into multiple groups, consolidate its position, or change its nature to become something quite different than what its founder intended. In some cases a NRM moves closer to the religious mainstream after the death of its founder.

A number of founders of new religions established plans for succession to prevent confusion after their deaths. Mary Baker Eddy, the American founder of Christian Science, spent fifteen years working on her book *The Manual of*

the Mother Church, which laid out how the group should be run by her successors. The leadership of the Bahá'í Faith passed through a succession of individuals until 1963 when it was assumed by the Universal House of Justice, members of which are elected by the worldwide congregation. A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, appointed 11 “Western Gurus” to act as initiating gurus and to continue to direct the organisation. However, according to British scholar of religion Gavin Flood, “many problems followed from their appointment and the movement has since veered away from investing absolute authority in a few, fallible, human teachers.”

Demographics

NRMs typically consist largely of first-generation believers, and thus often have a younger average membership than mainstream religious congregations. Some NRMs have been formed by groups who have split from a pre-existing religious group. As these members grow older, many have children who are then brought up within the NRM. In the Third World, NRMs most often appeal to the poor and oppressed sectors of society. Within Western countries, they are more likely to appeal to members of the middle and upper-middle classes, with Barrett stating that new religions in the UK and US largely attract “white, middle-class late teens and twenties.” There are exceptions, such as the Rastafari movement and the Nation of Islam, which have primarily attracted disadvantaged black youth in Western countries.

A popular conception, unsupported by evidence, holds that those who convert to new religions are either mentally ill or become so through their involvement with them. Dick Anthony, a forensic psychologist noted for his writings on the brainwashing controversy, has defended NRMs, and in 1988 argued that involvement in such movements may often be beneficial: “There’s a large research literature published in mainstream journals on the mental health effects of new religions. For the most part the effects seem to be positive in any way that’s measurable.”

Joining

Those who convert to a NRM typically believe that in doing so they are gaining some benefit in their life. This can come in many forms, from an increasing sense of freedom, to a release from drug dependency, and a feeling of self-respect and direction. Many of those who have left NRMs report that they have gained from their experience. There are various reasons as to why an individual would join and then remain part of an NRM, including both push and pull factors. According to Marc Galanter, Professor of Psychiatry at NYU, typical reasons why people join NRMs include a search for community and a spiritual quest. Sociologists Stark and Bainbridge, in discussing the process by which people join new religious groups, have questioned the utility of the concept of *conversion*, suggesting that *affiliation* is a more useful concept.

A popular explanation for why people join new religious movements is that they have been “brainwashed” or subject to “mind control” by the NRM itself. This explanation provides a rationale for “deprogramming”, a process in which members of NRMs are illegally kidnapped by individuals who then attempt to convince them to reject their beliefs. Professional deprogrammers therefore have a financial interest in promoting the “brainwashing” explanation. Academic research however has demonstrated that these brainwashing techniques “simply do not exist”.

Leaving

Many members of NRMs leave these groups of their own free will. Some of those who do so retain friends within the movement. Some of those who leave a religious community are unhappy with the time that they spent as part of it. Leaving a NRM can pose a number of difficulties. It may result in their having to abandon a daily framework that they had previously adhered to. It may also generate mixed emotions as ex-members lose the feelings of absolute certainty that they had held while in the group.

RELIGIOUS PRACTICES AND BELIEFS

More than nine-in-ten Hispanics identify with a specific religion. That, along with several other measures of belief and behaviour, means that Hispanics as a group are highly religious. How does this affinity for spirituality vary among Latinos with different demographic characteristics or religious affiliations? And how precisely do the religious beliefs of Latinos set them apart from the rest of the population?

For the great majority of Latinos, regardless of their religious tradition, God is an active force in daily life. Most Latinos pray every day, most have a crucifix or other religious object in their home and most attend a religious service at least once a month. By significant majorities, Latinos who identify with a religion believe that miracles are performed today just as they were in ancient times and that true believers are rewarded with health and wealth.

In some ways, Hispanics as a group are no different than the rest of the U.S., population, which by and large is also fairly religious. But in other ways, Latinos appear to be different, both in the intensity of their beliefs and in how they practice those beliefs. Sometimes it is a question of degree: Latinos are somewhat more likely than non-Hispanics to say that religion is very important in their lives. Sometimes the difference is within religious traditions: Almost half of Latino Catholics — more than twice the rate of white Catholics — say the Bible is the literal word of God. And sometimes the difference centers on a core belief: More than the public as a whole, Latinos who are religious largely subscribe to the belief that Jesus will return to Earth in their lifetime. That teaching is common among Protestant proponents of rapture theology, which posits that the faithful will be rescued and taken to heaven before the world comes to an end.

Religious beliefs and practices vary among Latinos, and especially between Catholics and evangelicals. Evangelicals pray more, they attend religious services more frequently, they are more avid readers of the Bible and they evangelize — or share their faith with nonbelievers — more than do other Latinos. These differences at times extend to core beliefs.

For example, Latino Catholics are very devoted to the Virgin Mary, while Latino evangelicals are far less so. Most evangelicals hold that the Bible is literally true, word for word; while many Catholics agree, they are not nearly as likely to believe this.

There are also differences in how religion is practiced in everyday life. Latinos who are evangelicals take part in prayer groups and read the Bible far more regularly than do those who are Catholics, for instance. For their part, Latino Catholics are more likely than are Latino evangelicals to display religious objects in their home and to pray directly to the saints or to the Virgin Mary. These differences are not in and of themselves measures of religious commitment; they may instead reflect different traditions of spirituality.

This chapter examines Hispanic religious practices and beliefs across different religious traditions, with comparisons to non-Hispanics. It looks at the frequency of attendance at religious services, which is an important indicator of overall religious commitment, as well as how religious beliefs and practices vary among different demographic segments of the Latino population. Finally, there is a separate discussion of how Hispanics view different religious groups.

Religious Practices

Among Latinos, significant majorities of Catholics (68%) and mainline Protestants (65%) say religion is very important to them. The percentages are higher still among evangelical Protestants (85%) and other Christians (88%). These figures are somewhat higher than among non-Hispanics. More than four-in-ten (44%) Hispanics say they attend religious services at least once a week, and 63% attend at least monthly. Non-Hispanics report church attendance at similar levels.

Here again, however, there are substantial differences across religious traditions. While 70% of Latino evangelicals say they attend church at least once a week, attendance rates are much lower among Latino Catholics (42%) and mainline Protestants (36%). Conversely, 28% of Latino Catholics say they attend church “a few times a year or seldom,” compared with 14% of evangelicals. In this regard, however, Latinos are not substantially different from non-Hispanics of the same religious tradition.

There is a similar pattern when it comes to private prayer. Nearly seven-in-ten (69%) Hispanics say they pray every day. But daily prayer tends to be even more common among Latino evangelicals (87%) than it is among mainline Protestants (76%) and Catholics (64%). Again, the same patterns are evident among non-Hispanics of different religious traditions.

Tradition-specific Practices

While several religious practices are common to all Hispanics regardless of religious tradition, other behaviours are more tradition-specific. For instance, participation in prayer groups, Bible study groups and other small religious meetings are quite common among Latino evangelicals (75% participate in such groups at least once a month). By contrast, such practices are much less common among Latino Catholics and mainline Protestants; among these groups, fewer than half (31% and 47%, respectively) participate in such activities at least once a month.

The same generally holds true for two other religious activities: Bible reading and evangelism. More than three-quarters of Latino evangelicals (78%) read the Scriptures at least once a week, while only 38% of Latinos who are mainline Protestants and 27% of Latino Catholics do so. And about eight-in-ten Latino evangelicals (79%) evangelize at least once a month. Latinos who are mainline Protestants and Catholics, on the other hand, are much more reticent when it comes to spreading their faith.

Overall, Hispanics participate in these activities at rates roughly comparable to those seen among members of the same religious traditions in the general population. Hispanic evangelicals, however, participate in prayer groups and share their faith with others at somewhat higher rates than do their non-Hispanic counterparts.

Some religious practices are more common among Catholics than among other religious groups, reflecting both the distinctive natures of Protestant and Catholic spirituality and theological differences between the two traditions. For instance, Latino Catholics are far more likely (86%) than any other group to display a crucifix or other religious object in their home; only three-in-ten Latino evangelicals (30%) do so. Nearly eight-in-ten Catholics (79%) say that they pray to saints or to the Virgin Mary during difficult moments in their lives. By contrast, only 9% of Latino evangelicals and 23% of mainline Protestants acknowledge praying to saints in times of trouble.

SCRIPTURES AND THEOLOGY

Hinduism is based on “the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws discovered by different persons in different times.” The scriptures were transmitted orally, in verse form to aid memorization, for many centuries before they were written down. Over many centuries, sages refined the teachings and expanded the canon. The majority of the sacred texts are in the Sanskrit language. The texts are collectively referred to as *Shastras* and are classified into two classes: *Shruti* and *Smriti*.

SHRUTI

The *Rig Veda* is one of the oldest religious texts. This is a Rig Veda manuscript in Devanagari.

Shruti (lit: that which has been heard) refers to the *Vedas* which form the earliest record of the Hindu scriptures. While they have not been dated with

much certainty, the most conservative estimates date their origin to 1200 BC or earlier. Hindus revere the Vedas as eternal truths revealed to ancient sages (*Rishis*) through meditation. Many of these sages were women, called *Rishikas*. Many devotees do not associate the creation of the Vedas with a God or person. They are thought of as the laws of the spiritual world, which would still exist even if they were not revealed to the sages.

There are four Vedas (called *Rig-*, *Sama-Yajur*-and *Atharva*). The *Rigveda* is the first and most important Veda. Each Veda is divided into four parts: the primary one, the *Veda proper*, being the *Samhita*, which contains sacred *mantras*. The other three parts form a three-tier ensemble of commentaries, usually in prose and are believed to be slightly later in age than the *Samhita*. These are: the *Brahmanas*, *Aranyakas*, and the Upanishads. The first two parts were subsequently called the *Karmakanda* (the ritualistic portion), while the last two form the *Jnanakanda* (the knowledge portion).

While the Vedas focus on rituals, the Upanishads focus on spiritual insight and philosophical teachings. They constitute a major portion of the Jnana Kanda. The Upanishads discuss Brahman and reincarnation. While the *Vedas* are not read by most lay Hindus, they are revered as the eternal knowledge whose sacred sounds help bring spiritual and material benefits. Theologically, they take precedence over the *Smriti*, and local custom.

SMRITI

The *Naradeya Purana* describes the mechanics of the cosmos. Depicted here are Vishnu with his consort Lakshmi resting on Shesha Nag. The sage Narada and Brahma are also pictured.

Hindu texts other than the *Shrutis* are collectively called the *Smritis* (memory). The most notable of the *smritis* are the *Itihasa* (epics), which consist of the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*. *Bhagavad Gita* is an integral part of the *Mahabharata* and one of the most popular sacred texts of Hinduism. It contains philosophical teachings from *Krishna*, an incarnation of *Vishnu*, told to the prince Arjuna on the eve of a great war. The *Bhagavad Gita* is described as the essence of the *Vedas*.

The *Smritis* also include the *Purans*, which illustrate Hindu ideas through vivid mythological narratives. There are texts with a sectarian nature such as *Devi Mahatmya*, the *Tantras* as well as the *Mahanirvana Tantra*, *Tirumantiram*, *Shiva Sutras* and the *Hindu Agamas*. A more controversial text, the *Manusmriti*, is a prescriptive lawbook which epitomizes the societal codes of the caste system.

Most Hindu scriptures are not typically interpreted literally. More importance is attached to the ethics and metaphorical meanings derived from them. Hindu exegesis leans towards figurative interpretations of scriptures rather than the literal.

MANY SCRIPTURES, MANY PATHS

In contrast to the scriptural canons of some religions, the Hindu scriptural canon is not closed. Hindus believe that because the spiritual truths of the Vedas

are eternal, they continue to be expressed in new ways. Some Hindus even venerate the scriptures of other religions. One much-quoted verse from the *Rigveda* that emphasizes the diversity of paths to the one goal is:

ekam sad vipra bahudha vadanty

Truth is one, the wise call it in many different ways.

—*Rig Veda 1.164.46*

This openness means that there is little theological quarrel between Hindu denominations although these denominations may view God and their notions in a different form or sense.

SCHOOLS OF PHILOSOPHY

The six *Astika* or orthodox schools of Hindu philosophy, which accept the authority of the Vedas, are *Nyaya*, *Vaisheshika*, *Samhya*, *Yoga*, *Purva Mimama* (also called *Mimama*), and *Uttara Mimama* (also called *Vedanta*). Although scholars mainly study these philosophies, they influence the beliefs of average Hindus.

PRACTICES

Hindu practices generally involve seeking awareness of God and sometimes also seeking blessings from Devas. Therefore, Hinduism has developed numerous practices meant to help one think of divinity in the midst of everyday life.

According to Swami Vivekananda: “The ideal of man is to see God in everything. But if you cannot see Him in everything, see Him in one thing, in that thing you like best, and then see Him in another. So on you go... Take your time and you will achieve your end.”

PUJA

Hindus can engage in formal worship (Sanskrit: *puja*, worship or veneration) either at home or at a temple. At home, Hindus often create a shrine with icons dedicated to the individual’s chosen form(s) of God. Veneration may involve offering food, water, or flowers and may be expressed through the burning of incense, lighting of candles or oil-lamps, ringing a bell, waving a fan, or sounding a conch-shell.

Other practices of *Puja* include meditation, chanting mantras, and reciting scriptures. Icons of *devas* and *devis* are an integral part of most Hindu temples. Shown here are icons of Ganesha and Lakshmi, heavily laden with garlands, taken during a Hindu prayer ceremony.

DEVOTIONAL SINGING

Devotional singing is an important part of *bhakti*. Devotional singing occurs in temples, ashrams, on the banks of holy rivers, at home and elsewhere. Hymns are in Sanskrit or in modern Indian languages. Musical instruments accompanying devotional singing include the *manjeera*, *tanpura*, harmonium, and *tabla*. Another form of community worship is *Satsang*, the practice of gathering for study or discussion of scriptures and religious topics as well as chanting *mantras*.

YAJNA

Vedic rites of fire-oblation (yajna) are now only occasional practices although they are highly revered in theory. In a Hindu wedding ceremony however, the presence of sacred fire as the divine witness, the *yajna* and chanting of Vedic mantras is still the norm. The same applies to death rituals.

Worship of God Through Icons: Hindus may perform their worship through icons (murti), such as statues or paintings symbolic of God's power and glory. The icon serves as a tangible link between the worshipper and God. Another view is that the image is a manifestation of God, since God is immanent. The Padma Purana states that the *murti* is not to be thought of as mere stone or wood but as a manifest form of the Divinity. A few Hindu sects, such as the Arya Samaj, do not believe in worshipping God through icons.

TEMPLES

Hindu temples are a place of worship for Hindus. They are usually dedicated to a primary deity along with associated subordinate deities though some commemorate multiple deities. Most temples are constructed as per the *agama shastras* and many are pilgrimage sites.

Visiting temples is not obligatory. Many Hindus only go during religious festivals but others visit more regularly. Temples are not used for funerals, or as social hubs but are sometimes used for weddings. Some view the four Shankaracharyas (the abbots of the monasteries in Joshimath, Puri, Shringeri and Dwarka) as the Patriarchs of Hinduism.

HINDU ICONOGRAPHY

Swastika: Hinduism has a developed system of symbolism and iconography to represent the sacred in art, architecture, literature and worship. These symbols gain their meaning from the scriptures, mythology, or cultural traditions. The symbols Om (which represents the *Parabrahman*), Swastika (which symbolizes auspiciousness) have grown to represent Hinduism itself, while other markings such as tilaka identify a follower of the faith.

Hinduism associates many symbols, which include the lotus, chakra and veena, with particular deities. These associations distinguish their physical representations in sculptures and pictures and are based on allegorical references in Hindu mythology. While most representations of deities are largely anthropomorphic there are exceptions. For instance the deity Shiva can be worshipped in the form of a pillar-like stone called a *lingam*.

THE GURU-DISCIPLE TRADITION

In many Hindu sects, spiritual aspirants adopt a personal spiritual teacher, called a guru. Traditionally, during brahmacharya a Guru taught a disciple all things necessary to lead a dharmic life. The student is expected to follow the instructions of the guru and to have a spiritual life.

JAPA AND MANTRA

Mantras are prayers that through their meaning, sound, and chanting style help a person focus their mind on holy thoughts or to express devotion to God. Mantras are meant to give courage in exigent times and invoke one's inner spiritual strength.

After the pranava or “fundamental” mantra of “Aum”, one of the most revered mantras is the Gayatri Mantra. Hindus are initiated into this most sacred mantra at the time of their Upanayanam (thread ceremony). Many Hindus perform morning ablutions at the bank of a sacred river while chanting the Gayatri or Mahamrityunjaya mantras.

Japa (ritualistic chanting) is extolled as the greatest duty for the Kali Yuga (what Hindus believe to be the current age) in the epic Mahabharata. Many Hindu traditions adopt Japa as their primary spiritual practice. The Gaudiya Vaishnava tradition chanting the Hare Krishna mantra is one such example.

PILGRIMAGE

Pilgrimage is not mandatory in Hinduism though many adherents undertake them. There are many Hindu holy places in India.

One of the most famous is the ancient city of Varanasi. Other holy places in India include Kedarnath and Badrinath in the Himalayas, the Jagannath temple at Puri, Rishikesh and Haridwar in the foothills of the Himalayas, Prayag, Rameshwaram in the South and Gaya in the east.

The largest single gathering of pilgrims is during the annual Kumbh Mela fair held in one of four different cities on a rotating basis. Another important “set” of pilgrimages are the 51 “Shakti Peethas,” where the Mother Goddess is worshipped, the two principal ones being Kalighat and Kamakhya. Vaishno Devi, the Shakti temple near Katra, Jammu and Kashmir is the second most visited religious shrine in India, after Tirupati Balaji Mandir.

HINDU FESTIVALS

Hinduism has many festivals throughout the year. Their dates are usually prescribed by the Hindu calendar and typically celebrate events from Hindu mythology, often coinciding with seasonal changes and occasions of importance in an agrarian society. There are festivals which are primarily celebrated by specific sects or in certain regions of the Indian subcontinent.

Some widely observed Hindu festivals are:

- Dusshera, or Durga Puja, celebrates events from Hindu mythology symbolizing the triumph of good over evil;
- Diwali, the festival of lights;
- Ganesha Chaturthi, the festival celebrating Ganesha;
- Maha Shivaratri, the festival dedicated to Shiva;
- Ram Navami, celebrates the birth of Rama, the seventh incarnation of Vishnu;

- Krishna Janmashtami, celebrates the birth of Krishna, the eighth incarnation of Vishnu;
- Holi, a spring festival of colours and light;
- Sankranti, a harvest festival of India

CREMATION

On death, cremation is considered obligatory for all except *sanyasis*, *hijra*, and children under five. Cremation is typically performed by wrapping the corpse in cloth and burning it on a pyre. Manikarnika Ghat, in Varanasi, is a famous site where bodies are cremated by the side of the river, in full view of the public. Those not cremated may be simply wrapped in cloth, weighted with stones and cast into a river.

Hinduism obliges the closest male relative (son, father, husband, *etc.*) of the deceased to immerse the cremated remains in the holy river Ganga (Ganges), preferably at the holy city of Haridwar, India. The cremated remains may also be entombed, in case the deceased was a well-known person.

SOCIETY

Hinduism has no central doctrinal authority and many practising Hindus do not claim to belong to any particular denomination at all. However, academics categorize contemporary Hinduism into four major denominations: Vaishnavism, Shaivism, Shaktism and Smartism. The denominations differ primarily in the God worshipped as the Supreme One and in the traditions that accompany worship of that God.

Vaishnavas worship *Vishnu*; Shaivites worship *Shiva*; Shaktas worship *Shakti* (power) personified through a female divinity or Mother Goddess, *Devi*; while Smartists believe in the essential sameness of all deities.

There are also many movements that are not easily placed in any of the above categories, such as Swami Dayananda Saraswati's *Arya Samaj*, which rejects image worship and veneration of multiple deities. It focuses on the *Vedas* and the Vedic fire sacrifices (*yajna*). The Tantric traditions in Hinduism have various sects, as Banerji writes in "*Tantra in Bengal*":

Tantras are also divided as astika or Vedic and nastika or non-Vedic. In accordance with the predominance of the deity the astika works are again divided as Shakta, Shaiva, Saura, Ganapatya and Vaishna.

As in every religion, some view their own denomination as superior to others. However, many Hindus consider other denominations to be legitimate alternatives to their own. Heresy is therefore generally not an issue for Hindus.

ASHRAMAS

Traditionally the life of a Hindu was divided into four *Ashramas* ("phases" or "stages"; unrelated meanings include "monastery").

The first part of one's life, *Brahmacharya*, the stage as a student, is spent in celibate, controlled, sober and pure contemplation under the guidance of a Guru,

building up the mind for spiritual knowledge. *Grihastha* is the householder's stage, in which one marries and satisfies *kama* and *artha* within one's married and professional life respectively.

The moral obligations of a Hindu householder include supporting one's parents, children, guests and holy figures. *Vanaprastha*, the retirement stage, is gradual detachment from the material world. This may involve giving over duties to one's children, spending more time in religious practices and embarking on holy pilgrimages. Finally, in *Sanyasa*, the stage of asceticism, one renounces all worldly attachments to secludedly find the Divine through detachment from worldly life and peacefully shed the body for Moksha.

MONASTICISM

In their quest to attain the spiritual goal of life, some Hindus choose the path of monasticism (*sanyasa*). Monastics commit themselves to a life of simplicity, celibacy, detachment from worldly pursuits, and the contemplation of God. A Hindu monk is called a *sanyasi*, *sadhu*, or *swami*. A female renunciate is called a *sanyasini*. Renunciates receive high respect in Hindu society because their outward renunciation of selfishness and worldliness serves as an inspiration to householders who strive for *mental* renunciation. Some monastics live in monasteries, while others wander from place to place, trusting in God alone to provide for their needs. It is considered a highly meritorious act for a householder to provide *sadhus* with food or other necessities. *Sadhus* strive to treat all with respect and compassion, whether a person may be poor or rich, good or wicked, and to be indifferent to praise, blame, pleasure, and pain.

VARNAS AND THE CASTE SYSTEM

Hindu society has traditionally been categorized into four classes, called Varnas (Sanskrit: "colour, form, appearance"):

- The *Brahmins*: teachers and priests;
- The *Kshatriyas*: warriors, nobles, and kings;
- The *Vaishyas*: farmers, merchants, and businessmen; and
- The *Shudras*: servants and labourers.

Hindus and scholars debate whether the caste system is an integral part of Hinduism sanctioned by the scriptures or an outdated social custom. Although the scriptures contain passages that clearly sanction the *Varna* system, they contain indications that the caste system is not an essential part of the religion, and both sides in the debate can find scriptural support for their views.

The oldest scriptures, the *Vedas*, strongly sustain the division of society into four classes (*varna*) but place little emphasis on the caste system, mentioning it rarely and in a cursory manner. A verse from the Rig Veda indicates that a person's caste was not necessarily determined by that of his family:

"I am a bard, my father is a physician, my mother's job is to grind the corn." (Rig Veda 9.112.3)

In the Vedic Era, there was no prohibition against the *Shudras* listening to the *Vedas* or participating in any religious rite, as was the case in the later

times. Mobility and flexibility within the varnas challenge allegations of social discrimination in the caste system, as has been pointed out by several sociologists.

Many social reformers, including Mahatma Gandhi and B.R. Ambedkar, criticized caste discrimination. The religious teacher Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886) taught that.

“Lovers of God do not belong to any caste... A Brahmin without this love is no longer a Brahmin. And a pariah with the love of God is no longer a pariah. Through bhakti (devotion to God) an untouchable becomes pure and elevated.”

AHIMSA AND VEGETARIANISM

Hindus advocate the practice of *ahimsa* (non-violence) and respect for all life because divinity is believed to permeate all beings, including plants and non-human animals. The term *ahimsa* first appears in the Upanishads, and is the first of the five *Yamas* (eternal vows/restraints) in Raja Yoga.

In accordance with *ahimsa*, many Hindus embrace vegetarianism to respect higher forms of life. While vegetarianism is not a requirement of Hinduism, it is recommended for a *satvic* (purifying) lifestyle. Estimates of the number of lacto vegetarians in India (includes inhabitants of all religions) vary between 20% and 42%. The food habits usually vary with the community and region, with some castes having fewer vegetarians and coastal populations relying on seafood. Some Hindus avoid even onion and garlic, which are regarded as *rajasic* foods. Some avoid meat on specific holy days.

Observant Hindus who do eat meat almost always abstain from beef. The largely pastoral Vedic people and subsequent generations relied heavily on the cow for protein-rich milk and dairy products, tilling of fields and as a provider of fuel and fertilizer. Thus, it was identified as a caretaker and a maternal figure. Hindu society honours the cow as a symbol of unselfish giving. Cow-slaughter is legally banned in almost all states of India.

CONVERSION

Since the Hindu scriptures are essentially silent on the issue of religious conversion, the question of whether Hindus should evangelize is open to interpretation. Those who see Hinduism mainly as a philosophy, a set of beliefs, or a way of life generally believe that one can convert to Hinduism by incorporating Hindu beliefs into one's life and considering oneself a Hindu.

Some view Hinduism as more of an ethnicity than a religion and believe being born a Hindu makes one a Hindu for life. These people tend to believe that there is an assumption that one is Hindu when they come from India. The Supreme Court of India has taken the former view, holding that the question of whether a person is a Hindu should be determined by the person's belief system, not by their ethnic or racial heritage.

There is no formal process for conversion to Hinduism, although in many traditions a ritual called *diksha* (“initiation”) marks the beginning of spiritual life. Most Hindu sects do not actively recruit converts because they believe that

the goals of spiritual life can be attained through any religion, as long as it is practiced sincerely. Nevertheless, Hindu “missionary” groups operate in various countries to provide spiritual guidance to persons of any religion. Examples include the Vedanta Society, Parisada Hindu Dharma, International Society for Krishna Consciousness, Arya Samaj and the Self-Realization Fellowship.

The History of Hinduism spans more than 9000 years. Hinduism is the world’s oldest existing major religion. Worldwide religious tradition based on the Vedas and the beliefs and traditions of the various groups in India, Hinduism’s origins include cultural elements of the Indus valley civilization (c.3300 BC), and the Vedic religion of the Indo-Aryans, and other Indian civilizations. Being highly localised within India, Hinduism has seen many changes throughout the history of the Indian subcontinent. Over time, Hindu philosophy evolved into six schools: Samkhya, Yoga, Nyaya, Vaisheshika, Purva Mimamsa and Vedanta.

EARLIEST RECORDS

The dates of Hinduism’s origins are approximate, based on archaeological evidence and scriptural references:

- Archaeological evidence unearthed at Indus Valley Civilization sites has been dated to circa 3000 BC, suggesting that the Varnashrama system of four classes was adhered to no earlier than that. Seals depicting the deity Shiva in a Yogic posture of meditation also support that approximation. Philological evidence suggests that the earliest Hindu scripture, the Rig Veda, was composed around 1500-1300 BC.
- Astronomical interpretation of Hindu scriptures suggest a date of approximately 3102 BC. This date results from close examination of the Mahabharata, where the positions of the stars were noted at Sri Krishna’s birth. Hindus believe Krishna was born 5000 years ago, and using the star locations in the Mahabharata, the exact year was 3228 BC. Sri Rama, according to the Ramayana, lived around 9000-5000 BC.

ANALYSIS OF HISTORIC SOURCES

Early Hinduism is a term used to designate the religious development of India before written history. Two kinds of evidence are available: literature and archeology.

LITERATURE

The earliest literature of Hinduism is made up of the four Vedas, namely the Rig-Veda, Sama-Veda, Yajur-Veda and the Atharva-Veda. Out of these, the Rig-Veda is considered to be the oldest surviving work of literature. Many Hindus believe that the Vedas were transmitted, via an oral tradition, for perhaps 8000 years (*Fisher*). {Hindus believe that Vedas were orally transmitted or revealed to the Saptha Rishis by the lord himself. We have to go by the Puranas written by the rishis and that is the oldest reference that is available. Puranas talk about various Kalpas and Manvantharas and Yugas as subdivision of each.

The total number of years that has elapsed since the creation of Earth will be in excess of a trillion billion years. Puranas talk about the creation and destruction (Pralaya) of many civilizations. Puranas also talk about life in other galaxies or planets and ability of some life forms to travel from one to the other. They talk about the ability of some Rishis to communicate or establish links between these different worlds or life forms. These cannot be thrown out as pure imagination. The oldest known civilization so far discovered through excavations in Indus valley, exhibits well planned cities with water supply and drainage.

The script used in the inscriptions has not been deciphered yet. This civilization is dating back to 2000 BC. Some bronze statues of Vedic/Hindu Gods (Rudra or Pasupathy) have been excavated from these sites. This indicates that Vedas precede this civilization. Maha Bhagavatham, which was written by Vyasa after completing all other Puranas is supposedly written soon after Swargarohana of Lord Krishna) Western commentators see this as an exaggeration, dating the earliest parts of the Veda, the Rig-Veda Samhita, to oral traditions reaching back to around 1800-1500 BC.

The earliest stage of the Vedas is the Rig-Veda, a collection of poetic hymns used in the sacrificial rites of the Aryan priests. (Rigveda does not prescribe any sacrificial rites. It prescribes worship) Most of the Rig-Veda concerns the offering of Soma-which is both an intoxicant and a god itself-to the gods. The gods in the Rig-Veda are mostly personified concepts, who fall into two categories: the devas, who were gods of nature, such as the weather deity Indra, Agni ("fire"), and Ushas ("dawn") and the asuras, gods of moral concepts, such as Mitra ("contract" or "friend"), Bhaga (guardian of marriage) and Varuna ("the rain god").

The Rigveda is verse narrated by over 12 main rishis. It has 10 Mandalas and there is significant variation in the language and style in the first 8 and the last two namely 9th, 10th mandalas. It is not correct to say that Indra or Varuna are the principal Gods. Rigveda talks about One God (Ekam Sathyam Vipra bahuda Vadanthi. Rigveda talks about the management organization as could be existing.

It assigns functions or roles to each Deva. There are verses in praise of Indra. But the puranas explain that Indra is the name of the post and many persons have occupied that post. Each Manvanthara has a different person as Indra. It is even said that in the next Manvanthara, the Indra will be the same person who was Asura King Mahabali. Hence it is a post with fixed tenure. Same case with other posts. (Veda says that God or Easwara or paramapurusha remains same and constant and has no beginning or end). Indra is head of Devas. Varuna has control over Water and its sources. Vayu has control over Air. There are also others like Agni, Mitra, Yama, *etc.*, with assigned roles.

For small or earthly requirements or satisfaction of senses, it is sufficient to pray to these Devas and appease them. Rigveda also talks about origin of sound and also Language. Veda itself says that it was revealed to the rishis by the lord. Rigveda also talks about Vishnu and also Rudra. Purushasooktham is totally in praise of Lord Vishnu and the supreme lord. The Rigveda does not talk about any rivalry between Devas or between Devas and Asuras.)

A rivalry between these two families was already apparent. *Asura* came to mean something like “demon” in later Hinduism, and it is already associated with mischief if not actual malice in the Rig-Veda. Compare this with Iranian Aryan religion, where *ahura* (*asura*) came to mean “god” and *daava* (cognate to *deva*) came to mean “evil demon”. This theme can be found in other Indo-European religions outside of the Indo-Aryan branch, such as in Norse mythology in the war between the Aesir and the Vanir. The emerging deprecation of the asuras led to the creation of new categories of gods, such as the *adityas*. Indra is the king of the gods in the Rig-Veda, although some of the hymns (perhaps representing an older stage) have Varuna as the chief. (However there are no verses in Rig Veda to support this presumption.)

ARCHAEOLOGY

Early Hinduism comprises a period that is hazy in the eyes of archaeologists. The Vedic Aryans, although they left a rich body of hymns, left little material culture behind. The excavations of the pre-Vedic Indus Valley Civilization, has also not yielded much evidence of religious activity, for example communal temples.

However, there is sufficient evidence that the civilization was certainly not purely secular. Only one Indus civilization graveyard has been found and excavated, and has yielded no elaborate royal burials, but the personal possessions buried with the bodies may indicate that these people believed in an afterlife in which they would need these things.

Many figurines of female deities have been discovered. These most probably signified creativity and the origin and continuity of life, and they may have been worshipped as symbolic embodiments of the female principle of creative Energy and Power. In modern Hinduism, the counterpart of these symbols is called Shakti. These “mother Goddess” figurines may have been worshipped in the home rather than in any major state cult, but scholars have seen ancient Dravidian feminine divinity sculptures in groups of seven that date back to the Harappan era which mirror the Hindu belief in a Mother Goddess (Devi) being represented in seven modes.

An Indus Valley seal with the seated figure termed *Pasupathy*.

Figures of a male deity with elaborate horns (or horned headgear) have also been uncovered. He is typically seen surrounded by cattle and is called Pasupathy, (the Protector of Animals), and is seen by some to be the prototype of Hinduism’s ascetic God of Destruction, Shiva. Indeed, in modern-day Shaivism, Shiva has absorbed the names, stories and attributes of not only Pasupathy, by which name he is still commonly known, but also the Vedic ‘Rudra.’ Pasupathy is seen sitting in the meditative posture of yogis, suggesting that yoga or inner contemplation was one of their modes of discovering the secrets of life and creation.

To this day, the Tantric schools of Hinduism know Shiva to be Yogeshwara, Lord of Yoga, and he is said to be the master of Self-knowledge, meditating for centuries at a time. Others see Pasupathy as a form of Brahma.

It is noted by many that the Pasupathy figure is similar to sculptures, paintings and bas-reliefs of horned gods in Europe, stretching as far back as the Paleolithic painting of the “sorcerer” in the cave of Les Trois Frares in France. There exist, in addition, three-headed Pasupathy-statues that seem to resemble the Trimurti (Triple Form) of Brahma-Vishnu-Shiva (Creator-Sustainer-Destroyer) in contemporary Hinduism, and if nothing else, intimate the continuity of religious traditions that have morphed into Hinduism as we know it today from periods as far back as five thousand years ago.

HINDU MYTHOLOGY

Apart from religious philosophy, mysticism and spiritualism and tales of superhuman heroes and events, Hindu mythology has a strong historical nature and character. It is perhaps the most extensive, although controversial and largely un-confirmable source for the history of ancient India and its peoples.

9

Vedic Math

What does mathematics have to do with Hinduism? Well, just as the basic principles of Hinduism lie in the Vedas, so do the roots of mathematics. The Vedas, written around 1500-900 BCE, are ancient Indian texts containing a record of human experience and knowledge. Thousands of years ago, Vedic mathematicians authored various theses and dissertations on mathematics. It is now commonly believed and widely accepted that these treatises laid down the foundations of algebra, algorithm, square roots, cube roots, various methods of calculation, and the concept of zero.

VEDIC MATHEMATICS

"Vedic Mathematics" is the name given to the ancient system of mathematics, or, to be precise, a unique technique of calculations based on simple rules and principles, with which any mathematical problem - be it arithmetic, algebra, geometry or trigonometry - can be solved, hold your breath, orally!

SCHOOL OF MATHEMATICS

We in India have good reasons to be proud of a rich heritage in science, philosophy and culture in general, coming to us down the ages. In mathematics, which is my own area of specialisation, the ancient Indians not only took great strides long before the Greek advent, which is a standard reference point in the Western historical perspective, but also enriched it for a long period making in particular some very fundamental contributions such as the place-value system for writing numbers as we have today, introduction of zero and so on.

Further, the sustained development of mathematics in India in the post-Greek period was indirectly instrumental in the revival in Europe after "its dark ages".

Notwithstanding the enviable background, lack of adequate attention to academic pursuits over a prolonged period, occasioned by several factors, together with about two centuries of Macaulayan educational system, has unfortunately resulted, on the one hand, in a lack of awareness of our historical role in actual terms and, on the other, an empty sense of pride which is more of an emotional reaction to the colonial domination rather than an intellectual challenge. Together they provide a convenient ground for extremist and misguided elements in society to "reconstruct history" from nonexistent or concocted source material to whip up popular euphoria.

That this anti-intellectual endeavour is counter-productive in the long run and, more important, harmful to our image as a mature society, is either not recognised or ignored in favour of short-term considerations. Along with the obvious need to accelerate the process of creating an awareness of our past achievements, on the strength of authentic information, a more urgent need has also arisen to confront and expose such baseless constructs before it is too late. This is not merely a question of setting the record straight. The motivated versions have a way of corrupting the intellectual processes in society and weakening their very foundations in the long run, which needs to be prevented at all costs.

The so-called "Vedic mathematics" is a case in point. A book by that name written by Jagadguru Swami Shri Bharati Krishna Tirthaji Maharaja (Tirthaji, 1965) is at the centre of this pursuit, which has now acquired wide following; Tirthaji was the Shankaracharya of Govardhan Math, Puri, from 1925 until he passed away in 1960. The book was published posthumously, but he had been carrying out a campaign on the theme for a long time, apparently for several decades, by means of lectures, blackboard demonstrations, classes and so on. It has been known from the beginning that there is no evidence of the contents of the book being of Vedic origin; the Foreword to the book by the General Editor, Dr. A. S. Agrawala, and an account of the genesis of the work written by Manjula Trivedi, a disciple of the swamiji, make this clear even before one gets to the text of the book. No one has come up with any positive evidence subsequently either.

There has, however, been a persistent propaganda that the material is from the Vedas. In the face of a false sense of national pride associated with it and the neglect, on the part of the knowledgeable, in countering the propaganda, even educated and well meaning people have tended to accept it uncritically. The vested interests have also involved politicians in the propaganda process to gain state support. Several leaders have lent support to the "Vedic mathematics" over the years, evidently in the belief of its being from ancient scriptures. In the current environment, when a label as ancient seems to carry considerable premium irrespective of its authenticity or merit, the purveyors would have it going easy.

Large sums have been spent both by the Government and several private agencies to support this "Vedic mathematics", while authentic Vedic studies

continue to be neglected. People, especially children, are encouraged to learn and spread the contents of the book, largely on the baseless premise of their being from the Vedas. With missionary zeal several "devotees" of this cause have striven to take the "message" around the world; not surprisingly, they have even met with some success in the West, not unlike some of the gurus and yogis peddling their own versions of "Indian philosophy". Several people are also engaged in "research" in the new "Vedic mathematics."

To top it all, when in the early nineties the Uttar Pradesh Government introduced "Vedic mathematics" in school text books, the contents of the swamiji's book were treated as if they were genuinely from the Vedas; this also naturally seems to have led them to include a list of the swamiji's sutras on one of the opening pages (presumably for the students to learn them by heart and recite!) and to accord the swamiji a place of honour in the "brief history of Indian mathematics" described in the beginning of the textbook, together with a chart, which curiously has Srinivasa Ramanujan's as the only other name from the twentieth century!

For all their concern to inculcate a sense of national pride in children, those responsible for this have not cared for the simple fact that modern India has also produced several notable mathematicians and built a worthwhile edifice in mathematics (as also in many other areas). Harish Chandra's work is held in great esteem all over the world and several leading seats of learning of our times pride themselves in having members pursuing his ideas.

The mindset revealed in this can hardly be said to be suitable in scientific and objective inquiry or pursuit of knowledge, but perhaps one should not grudge it in someone from a totally different milieu, if the outcome is positive. One would have thought that with all the commitment and grit the author would have come up with at least a few new things which can be attributed to the Vedas, with solid evidence.

This would have made a worthwhile contribution to our understanding of our heritage. Instead, all said and done there is only the author's certificate that "we were agreeably astonished and intensely gratified to find that exceedingly though mathematical problems can be easily and readily solved with the help of these ultra-easy Vedic sutras (or mathematical aphorisms) contained in the Parishishta (the appendix portion) of the Atharva Veda in a few simple steps and by methods which can be conscientiously described as mere 'mental arithmetic' (paragraph 9 in the preface). That passing reference to the Atharva Veda is all that is ever said by way of source material for the contents. The sutras, incidentally, which appeared later scattered in the book, are short phrases of just about two to four words in Sanskrit, such as Ekadhikena Purvena or Anurupye Shunyam Anyat. (There are 16 of them and in addition there are 13 of what are called sub-sutras, similar in nature to the sutras).

The first key question, which would occur to anyone, is where are these sutras to be found in the Atharva Veda. One does not mean this as a rhetorical question. Considering that at the outset the author seemed set to send all doubting

Thomases packing, the least one would expect is that he would point out where the sutras are, say in which part, stanza, page and so on, especially since it is not a small article that is being referred to. Not only has the author not cared to do so, but when Prof. K. S. Shukla, a renowned scholar of ancient Indian mathematics, met him in 1950, when the swamiji visited Lucknow to give a blackboard demonstration of his "Vedic mathematics", and requested him to point out the sutras in question in the Parishishta of the Atharva Veda, of which he even carried a copy (the standard version edited by G. M. Bolling and J. Von Negelein), the swamiji is said to have told him that the 16 sutra demonstrated by him were not in those Parishishtas and that "they occurred in his own Parishishta and not any other" (Shukla, 1980, or Shukla, 1991).

What justification the swamiji thought he had for introducing an appendix in the Atharva Veda, the contents of which are nevertheless to be viewed as from the Veda, is anybody's guess. In any case, even such a Parishishta, written by the swamiji, does not exist in the form of a Sanskrit text.

Let us suppose for a moment that the author indeed found the sutras in some manuscript of the Atharva Veda, which he came across. Would he not then have preserved the manuscript? Would he not have shown at least to some people where the sutras are in the manuscript? Would he not have revealed to some cherished students how to look for sutras with such profound mathematical implications as he attributes to the sutras in question, in that or other manuscripts that may be found?

While there is a specific mention in the write-up of Manjula Trivedi, in the beginning of the book, about some 16-volume manuscript written by the swamiji having been lost in 1956, there is no mention whatever (let alone any lamentation that would be due in such an event) either in her write-up nor in the swamiji's preface about any original manuscript having been lost. No one certainly has come forward with any information received from the swamiji with regard to the other questions above. It is to be noted that want of time could not be a factor in any of this, since the swamiji kindly informs us in the preface that "

Ever since (*i.e.*, since several decades ago), we have been carrying on an incessant and strenuous campaign for the India-wide diffusion of all this scientific knowledge".

The only natural explanation is that there was no such manuscript. It has in fact been mentioned by Agrawala in his general editor's foreword to the book, and also by Manjula Trivedi in the short account of the genesis of the work, included in the book together with a biographical sketch of the swamiji, that the sutras do not appear in hitherto known Parishishtas. The general editor also notes that the style of language of the sutras "point to their discovery by Shri Swamiji himself" (emphasis added); the language style being contemporary can be confirmed independently from other Sanskrit scholars as well. The question why then the contents should be considered "Vedic" apparently did not bother the general editor, as he agreed with the author that "by definition" the Vedas should contain all knowledge (never mind whether found in the 20th

century, or perhaps even later)! Manjula Trivedi, the disciple has of course no problem with the sutras not being found in the Vedas as she in fact says that they were actually reconstructed by her beloved " Gurudeva," on the basis of intuitive revelation from material scattered here and there in the Atharva Veda, after " assiduous research and 'Tapas' for about eight years in the forests surrounding Shringeri."

Isn't that adequate to consider them to be "Vedic"? Well, one can hardly argue with the devout! There is a little problem as to why the Gurudeva himself did not say so (that the sutras were reconstructed) rather than referring to them as sutras contained in the Parishishta of the Atharva Veda, but we will have to let it pass. Anyway the fact remains that she was aware that they could not actually be located in what we lesser mortals consider to be the Atharva Veda.

The question of the source of the sutras is merely the first that would come to mind, and already on that there is such a muddle. Actually, even if the sutras were to be found, say in the Atharva Veda or some other ancient text, that still leaves open another fundamental question as to whether they mean or yield, in some cognisable way, what the author claims; in other words, we would still need to know whether such a source really contains the mathematics the swamiji deals with or merely the phrases, may be in some quite different context. It is interesting to consider the swamiji's sutras in this light. One of them, for instance, is Ekadhikena Purvena which literally just means " by one more than the previous one." In chapter I, the swamiji tells us that it is a sutra for finding the digits in the decimal expansion of numbers such as $1/19$, and $1/29$, where the denominator is a number with 9 in the unit's place; he goes on to give a page-long description of the procedure to be followed, whose only connection with the sutra is that it involves, in particular, repeatedly multiplying by one more than the previous one, namely 2, 3 and so on, respectively, the "previous one" being the number before the unit's place; the full procedure involves a lot more by way of arranging the digits which can in no way be read off from the phrase.

In Chapter II, we are told that the same sutra also means that to find the square of a number like 25 and 35, (with five in unit's place) multiply the number of tens by one more than itself and write 25 ahead of that; like 625, 1,225 and so on. The phrase Ekanyunena Purvena which means " by one less than the previous one" is however given to mean something which has neither to do with decimal expansions nor with squaring of numbers but concerns multiplying together two numbers, one of which has 9 in all places (like 99,999, so on.)! Allowing oneself such unlimited freedom of interpretation, one can also interpret the same three-word phrase to mean also many other things not only in mathematics but also in many other subjects such as physics, chemistry, biology, economics, sociology and politics. Consider, for instance, the following " meaning": the family size may be allowed to grow, at most, by one more than the previous one. In this we have the family-planning message of the 1960s; the "previous one" being the couple, the prescription is that they should have no more than three children.

Thus the *lal trikon* (red triangle) formula may be seen to be "from the *Atharva Veda*," thanks to the swamiji's novel technique (with just a bit of credit to yours faithfully). If you think the three children norm now outdated, there is no need to despair. One can get the two-children or even the one-child formula also from the same sutra; count only the man as the "previous one" (the woman is an outsider joining in marriage, isn't she) and in the growth of the family either count only the children or include also the wife, depending on what suits the desired formula! Another sutra is *Yavadunam*, which means "as much less;" a lifetime may not suffice to write down all the things such a phrase could "mean," in the spirit as above. There is even a sub-sutra, *Vilokanam* (observation) and that is supposed to mean various mathematical steps involving observation! In the same vein one can actually suggest a single sutra adequate not only for all of mathematics but many subjects:

It may be argued that there are, after all, ciphers which convey more information than meets the eye. But the meaning in those cases is either arrived at from the knowledge of the deciphering code or deduced in one or other way using various kinds of contextual information. Neither applies in the present case. The sutras in the swamiji's book are in reality mere names for various steps to be followed in various contexts; the steps themselves had to be known independently. In other words, the mathematical step is not arrived at by understanding or interpreting what are given as sutras; rather, sutras somewhat suggestive of the meaning of the steps are attached to them like names. It is like associating the 'sutra' *VIBGYOR* to the sequence of colours in rainbow (which make up the white light). Usage of words in Sanskrit, a language which the popular mind unquestioningly associates with the distant past(!), lend the contents a bit of antique finish!

An analysis of the mathematical contents of Tirthaji's book also shows that they cannot be from the Vedas. Though unfortunately there is considerable ignorance about the subject, mathematics from the Vedas is far from being an unexplored area. Painstaking efforts have been made for well over a century to study the original ancient texts from the point of view of understanding the extent of mathematical knowledge in ancient times. For instance, from the study of *Vedic Samhitas* and *Brahmanas* it has been noted that they had the system of counting progressing in multiples of 10 as we have today and that they considered remarkably large numbers, even up to 14 digits, unlike other civilizations of those times. From the *Vedanga* period there is in fact available a significant body of mathematical literature in the form of *Shulvasutras*, from the period between 800 BC and 500 BC, or perhaps even earlier, some of which contain expositions of various mathematical principles involved in construction of sacrificial 'vedi's needed in performing 'yajna's.

Baudhyana Shulvasutra, the earliest of the extant *Shulvasutras*, already contains, for instance, what is currently known as Pythagoras' Theorem. It is the earliest known explicit statement of the theorem in the general form (anywhere in the world) and precedes Pythagoras by at least a few hundred

years. The texts also show a remarkable familiarity with many other facts from the so-called Euclidean Geometry and it is clear that considerable use was made of these, long before the Greeks formulated them. The work of George Thibaut in the last century and that of A. Burk around the turn of the century brought to the attention of the world the significance of the mathematics of the Shulvasutras.

The contents of the swamiji's book have practically nothing in common with what is known of the mathematics from the Vedic period or even with the subsequent rich tradition of mathematics in India until the advent of the modern era; incidentally, the descriptions of mathematical principles or procedures in ancient mathematical texts are quite explicit and not in terms of cryptic sutras. The very first chapter of the book (as also chapters XXVI to XXVIII) involves the notion of decimal fractions in an essential way. If the contents are to be Vedic, there would have had to be a good deal of familiarity with decimal fractions, even involving several digits, at that time. It turns out that while the Shulvasutras make extensive use of fractions in the usual form, nowhere is there any indication of fractions in decimal form. It is inconceivable that such an important notion would be left out, had it been known, from what are really like users manuals of those times, produced at different times over a prolonged period.

Not only the Shulvasutras and the earlier Vedic works, but even the works of mathematicians such as Aryabhatta, Brahmagupta and Bhaskara, are not found to contain any decimal fractions. Is it possible that none of them had access to some Vedic source that the swamiji could lay his hands on (and still not describe it specifically)? How far do we have to stretch our credulity? The fact is that the use of decimal fractions started only in the 16th century, propagated to a large extent by Francois Viete; the use of the decimal point (separating the integer and the fractional parts) itself, as a notation for the decimal representation, began only towards the end of the century and acquired popularity in the 17th century following their use in John Napier's logarithm tables.

Similarly, in chapter XXII the swamiji claims to give " sutras relevant to successive differentiation, covering the theorems of Leibnitz, Maclaurin, Taylor, *etc.*, and a lot of other material which is yet to be studied and decided on by the great mathematicians of the present-day Western world;" it should perhaps be mentioned before we proceed that the chapter does not really deal with anything of the sort that would even remotely justify such a grandiloquent announcement, but rather deals with differentiation as an operation on polynomials, which is a very special case reducing it all to elementary algebra devoid of the very soul of calculus, as taught even at the college level.

Given the context, we shall leave Leibnitz and company alone, but consider the notions of derivative and successive differentiation. Did the notions exist in the Vedic times? While certain elements preliminary to calculus have been found in the works of Bhaskara II from the 12th century and later Indian mathematicians in the pre-calculus era in international mathematics, such crystallised notions as the derivative or the integral were not known. Though a case may be made

that the developments here would have led to the discovery of calculus in India, no historians of Indian mathematics would dream of proposing that they actually had such a notion as the derivative, let alone successive differentiation; the question here is not about performing the operation on polynomials, but of the concept. A similar comment applies with regard to integration, in chapter XXIV. It should also be borne in mind that if calculus were to be known in India in the early times, it would have been acquired by foreigners as well, long before it actually came to be discovered, as there was enough interaction between India and the outside world.

If this is not enough, in Chapter XXXIX we learn that analytic conics has an "important and predominating place for itself in the Vedic system of mathematics," and in Chapter XL we find a whole list of subjects such as dynamics, statics, hydrostatics, pneumatics and applied mathematics listed alongside such elementary things as subtractions, ratios, proportions and such money matters as interest and annuities (!), discounts (!) to which we are assured, without going into details, that the Vedic sutras can be applied. Need we comment any further on this?

The remaining chapters are mostly elementary in content, on account of which one does not see such marked incongruities in their respect. It has, however, been pointed out by Shukla that many of the topics considered in the book are alien to the pursuits of ancient Indian mathematicians, not only from the Vedic period but until much later (Shukla, 1989 or Shukla, 1991).

These include many such topics as factorisation of algebraic expressions, HCF (highest common factor) of algebraic expressions and various types of simultaneous equations.

The contents of the book are akin to much later mathematics, mostly of the kind that appeared in school books of our times or those of the swamiji's youth, and it is unthinkable, in the absence of any pressing evidence, that they go back to the Vedic lore. The book really consists of a compilation of tricks in elementary arithmetic and algebra, to be applied in computations with numbers and polynomials. By a "trick" I do not mean a sleight of hand or something like that; in a general sense a trick is a method or procedure which involves observing and exploring some special features of a situation, which generally tend to be overlooked; for example, the trick described for finding the square of numbers like 15 and 25 with 5 in the unit's place makes crucial use of the fact of 5 being half of 10, the latter being the base in which the numbers are written. Some of the tricks given in the book are quite interesting and admittedly yield quicker solutions than by standard methods (though the comparison made in the book are facetious and misleading). They are of the kind that an intelligent hobbyist experimenting with numbers might be expected to come up with. The tricks are, however, based on well-understood mathematical principles and there is no mystery about them.

Of course to produce such a body of tricks, even using the well-known is still a non-trivial task and there is a serious question of how this came to be accomplished. It is sometimes suggested that Tirthaji himself might have

invented the tricks. The fact that he had a M.A. degree in mathematics is notable in this context. It is also possible that he might have learnt some of the tricks from some elders during an early period in his life and developed on them during those "eight years of concentrated contemplation in forest solitude:" this would mean that they do involve a certain element of tradition, though not to the absurd extent that is claimed. These can, however, be viewed only as possibilities and it would not be easy to settle these details. But it is quite clear that the choice is only between alternatives involving only the recent times.

It may be recalled here that there have also been other instances of exposition and propagation of such faster methods of computation applicable in various special situations (without claims of their coming from ancient sources). Trachtenberg's Speed System are some well-known examples of this. Trachtenberg had even set up an Institute in Germany to provide training in high-speed mathematics. While the swamiji's methods are independent of these, for the most part they are similar in spirit. One may wonder why such methods are not commonly adopted for practical purposes. One main point is that they turn out to be quicker only for certain special classes of examples. For a general example the amount of effort involved (for instance, the count of the individual operations needed to be performed with digits, in arriving at the final answer) is about the same as required by the standard methods; in the swamiji's book, this is often concealed by not writing some of the steps involved, viewing it as "mental arithmetic." Using such methods of fast arithmetic involves the ability or practice to recognise various patterns which would simplify the calculations. Without that, one would actually spend more time, in first trying to recognise patterns and then working by rote anyway, since in most cases it is not easy to find useful patterns.

People who in the course of their work have to do computations as they arise, rather than choose the figures suitably as in the demonstrations, would hardly find it convenient to carry them out by employing umpteen different ways depending on the particular case, as the methods of fast arithmetic involve. It is more convenient to follow the standard method, in which one has only to follow a set procedure to find the answer, even though in some cases this might take more time.

Besides, equipment such as calculators and computers have made it unnecessary to tax one's mind with arithmetical computations. Incidentally, the suggestion that this "Vedic mathematics" of the Shankaracharya could lead to improvement in computers is totally fallacious, since the underlying mathematical principles involved in it were by no means unfamiliar in professional circles. One of the factors causing people not to pay due attention to the obvious questions about "Vedic mathematics" seems to be that they are overwhelmed by a sense of wonderment by the tricks.

The swamiji tells us in the preface how "the educationists, the cream of the English educated section of the people including highest officials (*e.g.*, the high court judges, the ministers, *etc.*) and the general public as such were all highly

impressed; nay thrilled, wonder-struck and flabbergasted!" at his demonstrations of the "Vedic mathematics." Sometimes one comes across reports about similar thrilling demonstrations by some of the present-day expositors of the subject.

Though inevitably they have to be taken with a pinch of salt, I do not entirely doubt the truth of such reports. Since most people have had a difficult time with their arithmetic at school and even those who might have been fairly good would have lost touch, the very fact of someone doing some computations rather fast can make an impressive sight. This effect may be enhanced with well-chosen examples, where some quicker methods are applicable. Even in the case of general examples where the method employed is not really more efficient than the standard one, the computations might appear to be fast, since the demonstrator would have a lot more practice than the people in the audience. An objective assessment of the methods from the point of view of overall use can only be made by comparing how many individual calculations are involved in working out various general examples, on an average, and in this respect the methods of fast arithmetic do not show any marked advantage which would offset the inconvenience indicated earlier.

In any case, it would be irrational to let the element of surprise interfere in judging the issue of origin of "Vedic mathematics" or create a dreamy and false picture of its providing solutions to all kinds of problems. It should also be borne in mind that the book really deals only with some middle and high school level mathematics; this is true despite what appear to be chapters dealing with some notions in calculus and coordinate geometry and the mention of a few, little more advanced topics, in the book. The swamiji's claim that "there is no part of mathematics, pure or applied, which is beyond their jurisdiction" is ludicrous. Mathematics actually means a lot more than arithmetic of numbers and algebra of polynomials; in fact multiplying big numbers together, which a lot of people take for mathematics, is hardly something a mathematician of today needs to engage himself in.

The mathematics of today concerns a great variety of objects beyond the high school level, involving various kinds of abstract objects generalising numbers, shapes, geometries, measures and so on and several combinations of such structures, various kinds of operations, often involving infinitely many entities; this is not the case only about the frontiers of mathematics but a whole lot of it, including many topics applied in physics, engineering, medicine, finance and various other subjects.

Despite all its pretentious verbiage page after page, the swamiji's book offers nothing worthwhile in advanced mathematics whether concretely or by way of insight. Modern mathematics with its multitude of disciplines (group theory, topology, algebraic geometry, harmonic analysis, ergodic theory, combinatorial mathematics-to name just a few) would be a long way from the level of the swamiji's book. There are occasionally reports of some "re-searchers" applying the swamiji's "Vedic mathematics" to advanced problems such as Kepler's problem, but such work involves nothing more than tinkering superficially with

the topic, in the manner of the swamiji's treatment of calculus, and offers nothing of interest to professionals in the area. Even at the school level "Vedic mathematics" deals only with a small part and, more importantly, there too it concerns itself with only one particular aspect, that of faster computation.

One of the main aims of mathematics education even at the elementary level consists of developing familiarity with a variety of concepts and their significance. Not only does the approach of " Vedic mathematics" not contribute anything towards this crucial objective, but in fact might work to its detriment, because of the undue emphasis laid on faster computation.

The swamiji's assertion "8 months (or 12 months) at an average rate of 2 or 3 hours per day should suffice for completing the whole course of mathematical studies on these Vedic lines instead of 15 or 20 years required according to the existing systems of the Indian and also foreign universities," is patently absurd and hopefully nobody takes it seriously, even among the activists in the area. It would work as a cruel joke if some people choose to make such a substitution in respect of their children. It is often claimed that " Vedic mathematics" is well-appreciated in other countries, and even taught in some schools in UK, *etc.* In the normal course one would not have the means to examine such claims, especially since few details are generally supplied while making the claims.

Thanks to certain special circumstances I came to know a few things about the St. James Independent School, London which I had seen quoted in this context. The School is run by the 'School of Economic Science' which is, according to a letter to me from Mr. James Glover, the Head of Mathematics at the School, "engaged in the practical study of Advaita philosophy". The people who run it have had substantial involvement with religious groups in India over a long period. Thus in essence their adopting " Vedic mathematics" is much like a school in India run by a religious group adopting it; that school being in London is beside the point. (It may be noted here that while privately run schools in India have limited freedom in choosing their curricula, it is not the case in England). It would be interesting to look into the background and motivation of other institutions about which similar claims are made. At any rate, adoption by institutions abroad is another propaganda feature, like being from ancient source, and should not sway us.

It is not the contention here that the contents of the book are not of any value. Indeed, some of the observations could be used in teaching in schools. They are entertaining and could to some extent enable children to enjoy mathematics. It would, however, be more appropriate to use them as aids in teaching the related concepts, rather than like a series of tricks of magic. Ultimately, it is the understanding that is more important than the transient excitement. By and large, however, such pedagogical application has limited scope and needs to be made with adequate caution, without being carried away by motivated propaganda.

It is shocking to see the extent to which vested interests and persons driven by misguided notions are able to exploit the urge for cultural self-assertion felt

by the Indian psyche. One would hardly have imagined that a book which is transparently not from any ancient source or of any great mathematical significance would one day be passed off as a store-house of some ancient mathematical treasure. It is high time saner elements joined hands to educate people on the truth of this so-called Vedic mathematics and prevent the use of public money and energy on its propagation, beyond the limited extent that may be deserved, lest the intellectual and educational life in the country should get vitiated further and result in wrong attitudes to both history and mathematics, especially in the coming generation.

VEDIC MATHEMATICAL FORMULAE

What we call Vedic Mathematics is a mathematical elaboration of 'Sixteen Simple Mathematical formulae from the Vedas' as brought out by Sri Bharati Krishna Tirthaji. In the text authored by the Swamiji, nowhere has the list of the Mathematical formulae (Sutras) been given. But the Editor of the text has compiled the list of the formulae from stray references in the text. The list so compiled contains Sixteen Sutras and Thirteen Sub - Sutras as stated hereunder.

SIXTEEN SUTRAS

1. Ekddhikena Purena (also a corollary)
2. Nikhilam Navatascaramam Dasatah
3. Urdhva-tiryagbhyam
4. Paravarya Yojayet
5. Sunyam Samyasamuccaye
6. (Anurupy) Sunyamanyat
7. Sankalana-vyavakalana-bhyam (also a corollary)
8. Puranapurabhyam
9. Calana-Kalanabhyam
10. Yavadunam
11. Vyastisamastih
12. Sesanyakena Caramena
13. Sopantyadvayamantyam
14. Ekanyunena Purvena
15. Gunitasamuccayah
16. Gunakasamuccayah.

THIRTEEN SUB-SUTRAS

1. Anurupyena
2. sisyate Sesasamjnah
3. Adyamadyenantya-mantyena
4. Kevalaih Saptakam Gunyat
5. Vestanam
6. Yavadunam Tavadunam
7. Yavadunam Tavadunikrtya Varganca Yojayet

8. Antyayordasakepi
9. Antyayoreva
10. Samuccayagunitah
11. Lopanasthapanabhyam
12. Vilokanam
13. Gunitasamuccayah Samuccayagunitah.

In the text, the words Sutra, aphorism, formula are used synonymously. So are also the words Upa-sutra, Sub-sutra, Sub-formula, corollary used.

Now we shall have the literal meaning, contextual meaning, process, different methods of application along with examples for the Sutras. Explanation, methods, further short-cuts, algebraic proof, *etc.*, follow. What follows relates to a single formula or a group of formulae related to the methods of Vedic Mathematics.

UNIVERSAL FORMULA MATHEMATICS

Find out what you didn't learn at school.

Ancient Knowledge that has been held secret... or hidden for thousands of years.

JAIN

About Jain: Jain is his only name... he was born in Sydney to Lebanese parents. His father, a wealthy and successful businessman, migrated to Australia with his family in 1956. A long time meditator, Jain has always been drawn to the spiritual and mystical, he is fascinated by numbers and shapes. He has enjoyed a lifetime involvement with the Fibonacci Sequence and the 5 Platonic Solids which taps into the highly visual hemisphere of the Right Brain.

His work with Vedic Mathematics, a 2,500 year old Indian system of Mental, One-Line Arithmetic... is to empower the student so that they can perform mental calculations, in many cases... quicker than a calculator. Jain expands and demonstrates the real ability of your mind by showing you how to complete complex mathematics ... in your head! Jain reveals ancient yet simple Math formulas which allow ordinary people to perform complex equations.

At the same time he shows you how the world as we know it is more than we think... his teachings can for some people, bring about major shifts in the way we think about the world! Over the years, Jain has been devoted to the collection and theatrical education of Magic Squares, Magic Cubes and the Golden Ratio (PHI). In 1995, Jain taught Magic Square Art-forms to a conference of 100 maths teachers at the Australian Southern Cross University.

He has been guest speaker at school Math Camps throughout Australia. Also many Public Schools, Catholic Schools, Rudolf Steiner and Montessori Schools have employed him to rekindle the beauty of mathematics. He has recently completed filming for a DVD/TV documentary about Vedic Mathematics and Ancient Knowledge. Jain runs seminars on various forms of Ancient Knowledge, teaches children and adults (individuals and groups), records his discoveries

having authored 8 books and produced several videos... and he continues his research into Sacred Geometry, Magic Squares, Platonic Solids, Fibonacci Sequences and their relationship with various atomic structures.

His passionate and ongoing commitment to share this incredible knowledge is furthered with an initial 6 month Australian Tour followed by 2 months USA Tour. The US Tour includes a special guest appearance at the Global Conference on Sacred Geometry in California (August 2004), where he has been invited to teach Vedic Mathematics, Golden Mean and Magic Squares. His travels continue with 3 x 1 month tours of Sweden, England, Nepal and India. He is compiling a database of people all over the world who have expressed interest to study with him and is developing internet also regional programmes. If you feel like some enlightenment; want to experience Maths as Art, Maths as Science, Maths as History or develop your mental muscle with rapid mental calculations... come and experience these subjects which will expand your consciousness.

UNIVERSAL FORMULA MATHEMATICS

Due to an immense response from people all over the world, there is a great demand to know more about the Magic of Vedic Mathematics. Jain wrote an article: VEDIC MATHEMATICS REDISCOVERED for the Nexus Magazine, Oct/Nov issue 2003, and it has awakened many people to start questioning all the missing gaps and insufficiencies in the current mathematics curriculum. It also has motivated Jain to begin his Australia Tour until August before he travels to America then Europe and India. Do your children really understand the fragmented and confusing mathematical data taught to them?

Would you be interested in another method that boosted their confidence, increased their memory skills and is presented in a fun and exciting manner? After this course of study, you will never multiply, divide or add in the same manner again. And no more Times Tables! An understanding of the 16 basic Sutras or "Word Formulae" solves all known mathematical problems by using an advanced and highly intelligent system of MENTAL, ONE LINE ARITHMETIC used by the Hindus 2,000 years.

This system was reconstructed by Bharati Krsna Tirthaji (1884-1960, aka Shankarcharya of Puri) who was invited by Paramahansa Yogananda to take this knowledge, for the first time, to the western world, in 1958. The Beatle's guru: Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, who introduced Transcendental Meditation to the west, was also a student of this master and currently teaches this system in India in the spiritual Maharishi schools, whose teenage students are highly distinguished mathematical geniuses. Learn also how the Hindu Invention of Zero (and the decimal system) led to modern technological advancements. In this one day workshop you will know how to accomplish rapid calculations, mentally.

No more Calculators which make the brain lazy. The brain is a mental muscle and needs to be exercised. Jain predicts that if we continue to teach children with an over-emphasis of using calculators in the class-room, over a 20 year

period, the Global Brain will deteriorate. Most children are visual, and the ability to tap into 'Pattern Recognition' is the key to rapid mental calculation. There is another similar system known as the Trachtenberg method, but this Vedic System successfully harnesses the mental "Path of Least Resistance" and is distinctly the superior system.

THE DIVINE PROPORTION

Learn why the shape of the Pine Cone is optically similar to the Human Heart, why we are awe-struck when we view sacred architecture like the Parthenon, why we are attracted to the proportions of the famous Mona Lisa. Essentially, the human body is in resonance with the Living Mathematics of Nature.

A day for exploring the hidden mysteries within the 5 Platonic Solids and the 13 Archimedean Solids. What is the importance of the Star Tetrahedron (the 3-Dimensional version of the Star of David) having 24 faces and 24 edges? How does this link to the 24 edges of the Cuboctahedron, the compressible and alchemical shape that was revered by Buckminster Fuller (who designed the first geodesic domes).

A lesson in x-raying the Fibonacci Sequence: 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34, 55, 89, 144, etc., to discover where the infinite phi expression has its underlying rhythm, a distinct periodicity of 24 recurring digits that can not be seen by the Western Mathematical Eye but only by the Truth of Vortex Mathematics expressed as Vedic Mathematics! (Really this Knowledge predates the Vedas and Atlantis and is better referred to as Galactic Mathematics).

Bringing Physics to Metaphysics by understanding the work of Charles Leadbeater and Annie Besant who, 100 years ago, drew all known atomic structures of the elements of the periodic table. In fact some recently discovered isotopes have been drawn 100 years ago! Having associated with yogis, this Pair of Clairvoyant Chemists were also able to successfully describe the moons of Jupiter, confirmed now by NASA!

This material actually validates Jain's life's work: that when the numbers of certain Magic Squares, like the Magic Square of $3 \times 3^*$, which is the centre of the Tibetan Calendar, when tiled or tessellated into a larger matrix actually shows the shadow form of the 3-Dimensional view of the Atomic Structure of Diamond-Lattice! This material shakes the whole foundations of the current Western mathematics curriculum, will rewrite our current world view on Mathematics and will require a new definition of the Golden Mean: that its decimal does carry on infinitely but within its infinity there is recursive or self-similar beauty.

Scientists like Marco Rodin wind toroidal coils in sync with this recursion or rhythm or pulse or pattern of 24 digits to get more output than their input! The sum of these 24 digits is 108 (108 degrees being the external angles of the pentagram and the number of beads in a rosary) which is sonically disguised as the GAYATRI MANTRA, the most famous Eastern prayer for Enlightenment.

Magic Square

4	9	2
3	5	7
8	1	6

A fascinating day that will help you to remember this Lost Knowledge of the PHI CODE that is already morphologically and geometrically encoded in your bio-magnetic and bio-electrical fields. Ultimately, this Pythagorean Knowledge is not an intellectual process, but rather that these essential geometries are invisibly constructed and nested within the Heart as the Centre of a greater Galactic Grid connecting us to all Memory of all Universes and Atomic Levels. Magic Squares, Vedic Mathematics and the Phi Ratio (1:1.618): Why have they not been taught in your maths classes ? ... because they are keys to your ascension process..

MAGIC SQUARES

Translating Numbers Into Art 6 1 8 7 5 3 2 9 4 Imagine in front of you some playing cards and the ancient puzzle was to create a 3x3 square such that all columns, rows and diagonals that have the same sum. As shown above, the Magic Sum, aka the Magic Square Constant = 15. There is a treasure house of knowledge encoded within this harmonic matrix that the ancients knew and hid. Magic Squares for thousands of years have fascinated many cultures and many great minds like Benjamin Franklin and Albrecht Durer. Why was it at the centre of the Tibetan Calendar/Cosmolgy (Time Code/Applications in Time Travel)? Why did Ambaji, of the Hindu pantheon, the ancient goddesses of Creation (the universe flows through her breast), have as her tantric symbol, this Magic Square of 3x3, which has 8 possible permutations? and which Buddha, in his enlightenment, described in detail the 8 sided nature of sub-atomic molecules: the "Acta-Kalapos". Durga and Kali and Shakti, *etc.*, have variations of the same.

Why is it that when you translate NUMBERS INTO ART, by drawing a long connecting line, from 1 to 2 to 3, *etc.*, to the last number, that elegant and phi-ratioed patterns appear? that when tiled or tessellated, produce the atomic structure of Diamond (which is verified by the clairvoyant drawings of the Occult Chemists: Charles Leadbeater and Annie Besant.

Why is it that the pattern for the Magic Square of 11x11 is almost identical to the Ley Line Grid developed by Bruce Cathy, a New Zealand pilot, which was originally the jig-saw-puzzle-map of UFO sightings in his area? Why did Professor Searl, of the UK, have his work on levity discs and over-unity generators banned?

The metals of his generators for the space-craft he built were intimately related, by proportion, to the atomic table of elements and to the opposing pairs of the above Magic Square of 3x3, eg: notice that all pairs around the central cell have a sum of 10, thus 2 parts gold was alloyed with 8 parts silver, or 3 parts titanium to 7 parts nickel.

Why did King Solomon the Rabbi, design his Seal based on the 3 rows of the above Magic Square being translated into a Natural Square of 3 (that has its numbers in Counting Order)? In this day lesson, you will superimpose a Magic Square of 7x7, by rotation of 90 degrees upon itself, to reveal ancient symbols at its centre: the Hindu Peace Symbol of the Swastika nesting within the Christian Cross!

The ancient Essenes adored the richness of symbolism within these Mystic Squares and gave accounts or Parables of Jesus (Isa or Iesu) that related to our sense of community symbolized by the magic square, that each person, so positioned, has a divine role to play, that if one number was taken away or moved, it would no longer be magical, to realise 'Order amidst the Chaos', and the ancient axiom: 'As Above.. so below'.

Some questions to ponder upon:

- How could the Aryan civilization, near the Hunza Valley, 3,000 years ago, mentally compute mathematical operations that today only a calculator could achieve?
- And if the maths could not be done mentally, how could they do everything we know today, IN ONE-LINE? eg: converting the fraction $1/19$ into a decimal is an 18 digit answer that requires 35 lines of exhausting long division, how could they do it in a one simple line solution?
- Why is NASA secretly using this MENTAL ONE-LINE SYSTEM OF ARITHMETIC in the field of Advanced Artificial Intelligence? and not incorporating it into our current mathematics curriculum?
- Why are many of Bill Gate's Mathematicians Indians?
- Is the decimal form of Pi a sonic code for dedications to Krishna?
- What does the Bhagavad Gita have to say about this lost science of Clairvoyant Calculation that the ancient Temple Builders employed?
- How can you become a Human Bio-Calculator?
- Is the current Western Maths Curriculum keeping our Children in a state of limited intelligence? The answer to all these questions are found by understanding the ancient system of Vedic Mathematics as rediscovered by Bharati Krsna Tirthaji (1884- 1960), of Puri Govardhan Math, dux of India in Mathematics and a Sanskrit Philosopher who wrote and spoke perfect English, he reached the position of a Shankacharya (the spiritual head of India 100 years ago, like a Dalai Lama or Vatican Pope), renunciated several high official positions in society to retreat into a forest for 7 years as a yogi, between 1911 and 1918 in which time he collected all the lost mathematical knowledge (Ganita Sutras), improved and reconstructed them to 16 basic Sutras or word formulae that solve every known mathematical problem.

These 16 Volumes relating to the 16 Sutras was our legacy from the ancient past. This highly intelligent and sophisticated system of Mental, One-Line Arithmetic was taught by The Master to his main student, who today is the

leading exponent in the world: Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the long white-haired and bearded yogi that many of the 60s generation know of as the Beatles' guru. He is considered as the greatest human bio-calculator on the planet today, holding the vision of raising the collective consciousness of all nations by re-introducing the lost Vedic Mathematics Sutras early in a child's spiritual and educational development. Imagine a maths class in India today, like in the times of old when knowledge was passed on as an oral tradition, and the teacher quickly calls or drills out certain numbers to multiply or divide and the children instantly reply with the correct intuitive answers!

Today, in schools where Maharishi's Transcendental Meditation technique are used students perform remarkably well academically, viewing Mathematics as a Universal Language and therefore often winning the highest competitive prizes in mathematics. Maharishi organised the scattered Vedic Literature into a complete science of consciousness for both its theoretical and practical value, describing the 16 Sutras as fundamental impulses of intelligence that structure all the Laws of Nature and those that govern the Universe. Maharishi, the Founder of TM, once said: "Vedic Mathematics is that one field of knowledge which fulfils the purpose of education by developing the total creative genius of the individual, giving him/her the ability to be always spontaneously right and automatically precise so that his/her action, supported by Natural Law, is always effortlessly fulfilling."

Unfortunately, in 1958 after Bharati Krsna Tirthaji returned from the USA tour, sponsored by Paramahansa Yogananda (who introduced Yoga to the West and created the Self-Realisation Foundation) all of Bharati Krsna's 16 Volumes for the 16 Sutras were confirmed lost. Disciples observed that people in the streets of India were imitating Tirthaji's lecture's and dazzling audiences with mathematically mis-used psychic powers, and begged the Master to write a book just before his death in 1960. This single volume, called VEDIC MATHEMATICS, has become the bible on this subject and spawned a thousand web-sites worldwide. Maharishi schools disseminated the teachings to England where certain schools have adopted the Vedic curriculum but the irony is that today India is struggling to release the British curriculum and NASA have adopted it fully in the realms of advanced robotics.

Calculations that can be solved as quick as lightning are a great tool to adopt, but you would not want to teach it worldwide in the fear that you may churn out a generation of child geniuses that may threaten the intellectual status quo.

The gift that the Hindus gave to world, thousands of years ago, and that which is currently responsible for a global silicon chip technology, was none other than the invention of ZERO and the use of the decimal point.

We call our common numbers "Arabic Numerals" but really they extend back to the Hindu concept of creation and void known as "Bindu" or The Zero Point. In Maths, it makes the magic work eg: if you wish to multiply 98×98 we need to understand Zero and Unity.

All Vedic Maths is based on the understanding of Unity Consciousness which means they utilise processes or Number Bases that correspond to: 0, 10, 100,

1000, 10000, *etc.*, all of which add to 1. Let us look at some practical examples, in light of the fact that the Vedas, literally "the illimitable storehouse of All Knowledge" came under 4 headings or categories like Ayurveda (Healing), and Vedas for Music and Astronomy, *etc.*, and one relevant sub-Veda that related to Temple Building and Engineering and therefore Mathematics called SthapathyVeda.

Thus a Vedic Mathematician was also an astronomer, healer and poet. It was a total system. As a temple builder, there was no pen and paper, you simply calculated in your head. You are out in the field and you need to tile a floor that is, say 98 units square. How do you do it with mental ease? The Squaring of Numbers near a Base To solve 98 Squared (98×98) we must first determine what Base we are in. It is close to 100, therefore we say Base 100.

We must now choose one of the 16 Sutras to effectively solve the problem. It is called: "By The Deficiency": "By whatever the deficiency, lessen it further by that much and set up the square thereof" says one of the 16 Sutras. Sounds cryptic and meaningless yet it quickly solves the problem.

Observe similar examples:

$$97 \text{ Squared} = 97 - 3/3 \times 3 = 94/09$$

$$96 \text{ Squared} = 96 - 4/4 \times 4 = 92/16.$$

When the number being squared is above the base, of 100 here, we add the Excess and Square the Excess:

$$104 \text{ Squared} = 104 + 4/4 \times 4 = 108/16 = 10, 816$$

$$104 \times 105 = 104 + 5/4 \times 5 = 109/20 = 10, 920$$

What if we enlarged our numbers to 998 Squared?

It is close to 1,000 so we say Base 1,000 and know to have 3 zeroes on the right hand side of the (/).

$$998 \text{ Squared} = 998 - 2/2 \times 2 = 996/_ _ 4 = 996/004.$$

$$= 996,004$$

Understanding this, you can be calculating digits in the millions: 9998 Squared = $9998 - 2/2 \times 2 = 9996/_ _ _ 4$

(Since we are in Base 10,000 the 4 Zeroes determine the need for 4 digits after the (/). = $9996/0004 = 99,960,004$.)

There is a world-wide debate currently raging about the efficacy of Vedic Mathematics versus the crumbling foundations of Western Mathematics. Generally speaking, the theorems we all learned at school are not wrong but clumsy.

Some of the Western geometrical formulae are certainly wrong or inadequate: for example, the formulae for sphere packing in the higher dimensions increase up to the 6th Dimension then suddenly decrease for higher dimensions, which is simply absurd.

Unfortunately, some die-hard senior mathematicians in an attempt to protect the crumbling foundations that they now stand on feel threatened by the lightning quick mental calculations of the Vedic seers, and go to great lengths to deride Vedic maths as a "bag of tricks". Here is another example illustrating its utter simplicity: "the Path of Least Resistance".

VEDIC EDUCATION

Vedic education, rooted in ancient Indian scriptures known as the Vedas, encompasses a profound system of learning that has persisted for millennia. Central to Vedic education is the pursuit of knowledge for both spiritual and worldly enrichment. Students begin their journey by mastering the recitation and interpretation of Vedic hymns and texts, often starting as early as childhood. The Gurukula system, where students reside with their teacher (guru) in an immersive environment, fosters deep personal and intellectual growth. The curriculum of Vedic education extends far beyond rote memorization, emphasizing critical thinking, moral development, and the pursuit of truth. Subjects range from grammar (Vyakarana) to metaphysics (Vedanta), from ethics (Dharma Shastra) to astronomy (Jyotisha). Through rigorous study and contemplation, students aim not only to understand the material but also to embody its teachings in their daily lives. Vedic education is not confined to academic pursuits; it also emphasizes physical fitness, meditation, and character development. Students learn the importance of self-discipline, humility, and service to others. This holistic approach cultivates well-rounded individuals who are not only knowledgeable but also compassionate and virtuous. In a rapidly changing world, the timeless wisdom of Vedic education continues to inspire seekers of knowledge and seekers of truth alike. The comprehensive guide to Vedic Education, blending ancient wisdom with modern pedagogy for holistic learning and personal transformation.



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