What is Veda?

A.S. Ramanathan
1. INTRODUCTION

The interpretation of Aryan culture as reflected in the Vedic literature comprising the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas, Upaniṣads etc. has been attempted by various scholars since very long time. It actually started with the Smṛtis and Purāṇas and subsequently the six systems of philosophy all based on the authority of the Vedas appeared. Each of these systems was commented upon profusely by a series of scholars of whom, Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and Madhvacārya are too well known. A systematic commentary of the Vedas and Brāhmaṇas was written by Śaṅkara around the fourteenth century. In more recent times a host of western scholars, Aurobindo, Dayānand and Madhusūdan Ojha made valuable contributions to the interpretation of Vedic thought. It is however most unfortunate that the contributions of Madhusūdan Ojha did not receive the publicity they deserve. Most of the recent investigations have gone into the contents of the literature, the rituals, the functions of Gods, the teachings of the Upaniṣads etc. and have come out with divergent conclusions. There are however gross deficiencies in most of these investigations. They may be briefly stated as follows:

1. There are many contradictory statements in the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads which if not understood in the correct perspective will lead to divergent conclusions when studied by different scholars.

2. Most of the scholars have not realised that unless the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads are studied together with cross references a correct picture of the Vedic thought will not emerge.
3. There have been certain basic concepts of the Aryans
which have guided them in their compositions, whether
they belong to the jñānakāṇḍa or karmakāṇḍa. Most of
the scholars have hardly tried to unearth these concepts.

4. Many technical words occur in the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas
and the Upaniṣads and unless their correct meaning is
understood, one will miss the correct purport of many
difficult passages occurring in the above literature.

5. The arthavāda portion of the Brāhmaṇas invariably contain
crucial information for the proper understanding of Vedic
passages. These have been by and large neglected by
most of the scholars.

It is in the above context one has to view the con-
tributions of Madhusūdan Ojha who with his encyclopaedic
knowledge of the entire cross section of ancient sanskrit
literature gave us real insight into Vedic wisdom. His
contributions which went a long way to overcome the
deficiencies mentioned above never received the publicity
they deserved mainly because they were not published in the
proper way and they were in the sanskrit language. Very
few people realised their value simply because most of the
scholars were tradition-bound. It is unfortunate that many of
his works have been lost to us for want of proper care on
the part of his family members to preserve them. Karpur
Chand Kulish founder - editor of Rajasthan Patrika, Jaipur,
is making every effort to trace the manuscripts and bring
them to light. Fortunately for us the works of Motilal
Shastri, Ojha’s principal disciple, written in Hindi throw light
on the contributions of his master.

Of late there has been an increased interest among
world scholars to understand the contributions of our Vedic
seers. Claims have been made by some interpreters that the
Vedic seers had already anticipated certain aspects of mod-
ern science. Physicists like Capra have found some profound
ideas in our ancient literature which compare very well with
the thinking in modern science. Indian scientists who have made outstanding contributions never had time to go deep into our literature and judge how for the claims made by non-scientists as well as a few scientists are justified. In the absence of a reliable review of these claims, it may not be possible to take these statements as they are. Many of us depend on interpretations which may not correctly reflect the meanings of passages interpreted. In such a situation the best way for us is to promote a scientific understanding of our ancient texts. Such studies undertaken by scientists in a systematic way will surely yield very fruitful results. One should search for the basic concepts on which the compositions have been built and also the logic in their thinking. It is only in such studies we will be able to assess their contributions to scientific thinking.

There is another aspect which deserves our consideration. The world is passing through a crisis. There is a great concern among certain people particularly those belonging to the intellectual section for the rapid erosion of values and the need to work out suitable strategies to arrest this degradation. Scientific and technological advances have led us to material prosperity and the present trend in scientific advancement will continue for sometime. But unfortunately our moral standards have not kept pace with material prosperity and the result has been that the world is facing too many problems, most of which defy solution. We have polluted the air we breathe. We have polluted the rivers, making pure drinking water a scarcity. There has been a large growth of infructuous population in many developing countries. We are squandering the limited resources of the earth without any concern for the future. Diseases not known to us earlier are affecting us now. In short the very existence of healthy human species is threatened. The question now being asked is, can we at this juncture draw inspiration from our great sages who gave us the Vedas, Brâhmanas and Upaniṣads and apply the wisdom enshrined
in them to meet the present challenges? It is very difficult to answer the above question. Before we even try to find an answer it is necessary to understand correctly what we mean by Veda and Vedic tradition. It is in this context the preparation of an account of Vedic thought in a coherent and logical way becomes necessary. In this account the aspects most relevant to modern society should be highlighted. It should clearly bring out how and why the commentators or interpreters have differed from each other though all of them believed in the authority of the Vedas. It should lay stress on the fact that the message of the Vedas cannot take divergent directions. It should bring people together who at present are divided for no reason.

It is on the above lines of thinking, the author, a scientist by profession, has ventured to attempt the presentation of the logic of Vedic thought through a series of books. It is hoped that we shall be able to present a complete account of Vedic wisdom in about two to three years. This the author believes will provide sufficient information to those interested scholars and scientists, who have no time to go through the entire literature.

In the present book, we have tried to explain what Veda is. The word 'Veda' has a far deeper meaning than what is normally understood by us. It is intimately related to the creative processes in Nature and therefore in the final analysis it is identical with Brahman. Therefore a close analysis of the meaning of the word with the help of various statements in the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads enables us to appreciate the high order of thinking developed even during the Vedic and Brāhmaṇic periods. In this light the Śabdaaveda as we have now, gets a new meaning and it is for this reason that the Śabdaaveda (ie the Veda as we have now in our texts and which we recite), inspite of its heterogeneous content, is held in very high esteem even today.
Introduction

Vedic religion is essentially a way of life applicable to the entire mankind. It aims at building up a healthy and prosperous society in which achievement of human excellence on a large scale becomes possible. It has all the potentialities of uniting the entire mankind if understood and conveyed to the people in the proper way.

The author is fully aware of the valuable contributions of both western and Indian scholars on this subject. But since the approach here is different, no attempt will be made to quote them or refer to them unless it becomes necessary. The author may be excused for the same.
II. TRAYI VIDYĀ

All of us are agreed that the Vedic compositions comprising Rgveda, Yajurveda, Sāmaveda and Atharvaveda, the Brāhmaṇas Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads are not the products of a single period of time. Even the various portions of Rgveda were composed at different times. While Rgveda is the oldest of the compositions, the other compositions that followed, contain to a great extent annotations, expansions, refinements and modifications of the ideas contained in the Rgveda. The Atharvaveda which stands out as a later addition to the other three Vedas contains, some beautiful hymns pertaining to philosophical speculations, incantations, spells and exorcisms. Then we have the Brahmaṇas, Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads to each of these Vedas. The sum total of all these constitutes Vedic literature. In our study we are not really concerned with any of these individual texts. We want to study them as a single collection representing Aryan culture. We believe that in such a study several interesting results come out such as the evolution, expansion and refinement of concepts, theories and life styles of our ancients who were the originators of the so called Vedic tradition. We shall show how in such a study in spite of the extremely heterogeneous character of the literature, it is possible to build a cogent and logical picture of this glorious culture.

The word ‘Veda’ did not have the same meaning as we know today, during the Rgvedic period while the words ṛk, yajus and sāma occur freely in the Rgveda, the use of the word ‘Veda’ as noun is extremely restricted. Even when it is used, it is used to mean wealth (dhana). The ṛks, yajus’ and sāmans are known generally as mantras since through
them we get to know the nature and functions of the Gods of Nature (*Devatāvijñānam*). The *ṛṣis* who composed the *mantras* are called seers of *mantras* (*mantradraśṭāraḥ*). Since these *mantras* are the source of all knowledge including details about *dharma* and guide lines for performing rituals, they are also known as ‘Vidyā.’ In the composition of the *mantras*, there are three distinct types viz 1) *padya* (verse) which is called *ṛk*, 2) *gadya* (prose) which is called *yajus* and 3) *gāṇa* (song) which is called *sāma*. There are no *mantras* which lie outside the above types. Because of this threefold character of the *mantras*, the sum total of these mantras is called *Trayī Vidyā*. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa says

“The *Vidyā* is threefold; they are the *ṛks, yajus* and *sāmans*.”

In the post Rgvedic period the words Rgveda, Yajurveda and Sāmaveda were freely used. For example Aitareya Brāhmaṇa says,

‘The three Vedas came into existence. Rgveda came out of *Agni*, Yajurveda from *Vāyu* and Sāmaveda from *Āditya* (sun).’

While in the beginning the word *Veda* was applied to only *mantras*, later the Brāhmaṇas which mainly deal with the rituals and their procedures, interpretations etc. came also under the category of *Veda* and were given the same authoritative status. Āpastamba in one of his *sūtras* in *Yajñā Paribhāṣā* says that both *mantras* and Brāhmaṇas are named *Veda*. This is also confirmed by Śadguruśiṣya. Sāyaṇa in
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his Rgīśyabhūmikā takes support from the above two scholars and says,

‘The sum total of words used in mantras and Brāhmaṇas constitutes Veda.’

Sāyana gives many other definitions of Veda in his commentary. Some of them we give below.

i) ‘Veda is the final word among the pramāṇas’ (direct experience, inference and Veda are pramāṇas)

ii) ‘Veda constitutes statements of divine origin’

iii) ‘That which reveals the superhuman way to achieve what is desired and avoid what is not desired, is Veda.’

iv) ‘When a solution is not available either by direct observation or by inference, the Veda reveals it to us.’

One important point we have to note here is that whenever we referred to Veda, it represented the triad only viz. rks, yajus’ and sāmans. We also said that there are no mantras which lie outside rks, yajus’ and sāmans. The question naturally arises, how did Atharvaveda find a place among the Vedas? Actually Atharvā was a rṣi who first discovered the yajña method of worship. The following passages support the above statement.

i. ‘Atharva laid the first path of pleasing Gods by yajñas’

6 मन्नवाक्यात्मकः श्रवणार्थवः (्रगवाहभूमिका - सायण)
7 प्रत्यक्षावुद्धनागमेव (प्रमाणपु) अनित्यमेव वेदः।
(्रगवाहभूमिका सायण)
8 अपीरुपयं बावयं वेदः। (्रगवाहभूमिका सायण)
9 हष्टप्राप्त्यनिपट्त परिहार्योरोलीककविकमुपायं यो वेदयति स वेदः।
(कृष्णाज्युवं भावभूमिका - सायण)
10 प्रत्यक्षावतिक्ष्या वा सत्तुपायं तु बहुधयते।
एतं विवन्ति वेदेन तस्मादेवदेवस्य वेदता॥
(कृष्णाज्युवं भावभूमिका सायण)
11 यजःरथवा प्रथमः पश्चस्त्तये (अ.व. 1.83.5)
ii. ‘The first ritual fire was lit by Atharvā’

iii. ‘Hail Atharva who is our father, friend of the Devas, the young child of the father in the womb of the mother, and who knew in his mind the yajña technique’

It is quite possible that the Veda was originally a single text only and it was Atharvā who first divided it into four parts for convenience in the performance of rituals (yajñas). In the yajñas four types of ṛtviks are employed. They are 1) Hotā who does hautra karma (invoking the Gods) using ṛks, 2) Adhvāryu who does the main work in Agni using yajas’ 3) Udgaṭā who does stotra karma (gāna) using sāmans and 4) Brahmā who does supervision work. Now the question arises what does Brahmā use for his work? Aitareya is quick to answer this question. He says Brahmā uses trayī vidyā for his work. It means that he is familiar with all the mantras. Yāska in his Nirukta says Brahmā should be a very knowledgeable person. Gopatha Brahmaṇa says that only a person knowledgeable in Atharva Veda can be chosen as Brahmā. The Yajurveda described Brahmā as an ocean of knowledge.

Taking all these into consideration we are led to believe that the four Samhitās were brought into existence to meet the needs of yajña karma. The collection of ṛks meant for hautra karma forms the Ṛksamhitā. The adhvāryu uses both ṛks and yajas’ in his work and therefore Yajussamhitā constitutes

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12 अनन्ततीतो अथर्वणा (क्र.वि. 10.21.5)
13 अथर्वाणि पितां देववन्थं मातुर्गमि पितुरसु युवानम।
   य ह्रमं यं हरसा चिकैत्त प्राणों बोर्च्चस्मिष्टं ह्रव:॥ (अथर्व.सं. 7.2.1)
14 यहैव हीतं क्रियते, यजुर्वाच्चवर्यं सामनोश्रेयं व्याख्या
   नवी विबंधा भवान्यथं केत्र ब्रह्मां क्रियते हि ज्ञया विवेदेष्यति: बृहात्। (प.ब्र. 5.5.8)
15 ब्रह्म्स सर्वविवेद: सर्व बेवित्तमातित। (नि. 1.3.3)
16 तस्मादहामानो मुनीवर्गाविमेधं तत्र ब्रह्मां बृहातं (गो.ब्र. 2.24)
17 समुद्रोऽसि विश्वव्यथा (वा.सं. 5.33)
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a collection of these. The *udgātā* uses *ṛks*, *yajus* and *sāmans* in his work and therefore Sāmasamhitā is a collection of these. The *mantras* which did not fall into any of these categories and had remained unused were compiled into a Samhitā and that constitutes, Atharvasamhitā. In other words a single Veda was divided into four Samhitās for convenience in the *yajña karma*. The texts that deal with the various procedures and the use of the *ṛks* in the various *yajñās* is called the Brāhmaṇa of the Ṛksamhitā. Both the Samhitā and Brāhmaṇa constitute the Ṛgveda. In the same way we have Yajurveda, Sāmaveda and Atharvaveda.

Since the Yajurveda contains both *ṛks* and *yajus* the *adhvaryu* was called *dvivedi* or *duve* in local language. The *udgātā* is familiar with *ṛks*, *yajus* and *sāmans* and therefore he was called *trivedi* or *tripāthī* or *tīvārī* in local language. The *Brahmā* has to know all *ṛks*, *yajus* and *sāmans* and therefore he has to be familiar with Atharvaveda also in addition to the other three Vedas. He is therefore called *caturvedī* or *cauve* in local language.

As the number of people learning the Vedas increased in the country, groups of students came into existence learning each Veda under one ṛṣi or teacher. Since the teaching consisted of only oral communication, hearing played an important role in learning the Vedas. Therefore they were also called *Śruti*. *Nigama*, and *Āgama* are also words used to represent the Vedas though *Āgama* later assumed some special significance. The influence of the locality and the periods during which the groups were active had their own impact on the texts they learnt and also on the mode of recitation. This gave rise to different versions of the same Veda and thus the *śākhās* of the Vedas came into existence. The variations from *śākhā* to *śākhā* are of course minor though today we find there is lot of difference in the mode of recitation from place to place. According to Caranaavyūha there were 21 *śākhās* of the Ṛgveda, 101 *śākhās* for the Yajurveda, 1000 *śākhās* for Sāmaveda and nine *śākhās* for
Atharvaveda. Each of these śākhās had also their own Brāhmaṇas. Today many of these are lost to us. In the Rgveda only one is in vogue. It is called Śākala śākhā. It has 1028 Śūktas, 10580 ṛks and 432000 aksaras. In the Yajurveda for some reason there was a major split and we have today Taittirīya Samhitā of Kṛṣṇayajurveda and Vājasaneyī Samhitā of Śuklayajurveda. In the Sāmaveda, Kauthuma Ṛṇāyaniya and Jaiminiya śākhās are popular. In the Atharvaveda, Śaunaka and Pippalāda śākhās are available. The Atharvaveda today is essentially a heterogeneous collection of mantras. It portrays life with all its shades and highlights the generally obscure human emotions and relations. It gives an account of primitive medicine and also contains some philosophical speculations which have earned it the name Brahma Veda.

The Vedāṅgas form an appendage to the Vedas. They are Śīktā (phonetics), Kalpa (socio-religious practices and rituals), Vyākarna (grammar), Nīruktā (etymology and exegesis), Chandās (metrics) and Jyotiṣa (astronomy). These Vedāṅgas are expected to be studied by everyone who studies the Vedas.

It is unfortunate that the most popular author of Nīruktā instead of throwing light on the meanings of passages and words has caused confusion simply because he goes against the interpretations available in the Brāhmaṇas and gives his own interpretations. In other words the author of Nīruktā gives no value to tradition while interpreting Vedic words or passages. We shall have occasion to comment more on this point later. Sāyaṇa takes care of the Brāhmaṇa passages also in his interpretations though he takes the help of Nīruktā also wherever he needs it. But for Sāyaṇa's commentary of the Vedas and Brāhmaṇas the meanings of many Vedic passages would have remained puzzles. His knowledge of Karmakānda was of great help to him in deciphering the meanings of Vedic passages. However he also has difficulties to find out the real meanings of many passages.
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According to Madhusūdan Ojha the propagation of the Vedas took place in the following manner.

1. Brahmā who was the teacher for the entire mankind was the first to propagate the Trayī Vidyā.

2. Atharvā who was the son of Bramhā was the first to propagate Atharvaveda and Yajñaveda.

3. Angiras who belonged to Atharvā group.

4. Satyavāha Bhāradvāja who was the son of Bṛhaspati and who belonged to Angiras group.

5. Angiras, the second, head of scholar community and belonging to Angiras family.

6. Šaunaka who belonged to Angiras group but later went over to Bhrigu family.

7. Atri who also headed the scholar community.

All the above people were only propagators of Vedas (Vedapraavartakāḥ) and not the originators of Vedas. There were also others in this line like the Saptarśis, Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana (Vyāsa) etc.

In this way the Vedas were preserved, through oral communication and not through written texts. In fact Sikṣa, one of the Vedāṅgas strictly forbids reading from texts. Great care was bestowed to keep the text unchanged by dividing various methods of recitation like pada, krama, jatā, ghana etc. The śvaras or intonations formed an important component of recitation and any mistakes in the śvaras were supposed to produce unwanted results.18

There is an inbuilt tradition in our society which has led to the belief that Vedas are our most sacred treasure through which we can achieve anything. Wealth, prosperity,

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18 द्वन्द्वं: स्वरतो वर्णतो वा मिथ्याप्रवृत्तो न तद्विभिः।
स वाम्बो यज्ञमानं स्हिन्नितं यथेष्ठश्च, स्वरतोऽपरापत॥ (महाभाष्य)
health, long life and many other things can be achieved through the mantras and rituals (yajñas).

The above account of what Veda is, constitutes in essence the traditional approach to the subject.\textsuperscript{19} We have not gone into details of the contents of any part of Vedic literature. For the present it is not required for our purpose. Actually Veda means much more than what many of us are familiar with. Scholars who are tradition-oriented never bothered about the more interesting details present in Vedic literature. These actually are those which have a direct bearing on the concepts of our ancients in various branches of knowledge like the earth sciences, astronomy, cosmogony, biosciences etc. The Vedic seers were earnest seekers of truth and were very much interested in understanding the functioning of Nature as well as the origin of the cosmos. The sun served them an ideal object for study. His immortal nature, his appearance in the celestial background as a glowing disc constantly sending out rays of light and heat in all directions, which in no way affects his form and brightness, his diurnal motion causing the day and night, his orderly north south movement during the year causing the seasons and thus his being the principal cause of life on earth, the moon, her phases and her north-south displacement in the celestial background, all these meant many things for them. They used them together with whatever observations they made on the earth, in a clever way to develop a theory of the origin of the cosmos, particularly the solar system and its functioning. The words \textit{rk}, \textit{yajus}, \textit{sāman}, \textit{agni}, \textit{soma}, \textit{vāk}, \textit{prāṇa}, \textit{manas}, \textit{ātman}, \textit{Brahmān}, \textit{ṛta}, \textit{satya}, \textit{rasa}, \textit{bala}, \textit{māyā}, \textit{ābhū}, \textit{abhva}, \textit{Puruṣa Prajāpati} etc. pregnant with meanings emerged as a result of this great intellectual exercise, the analysis of which is most fascinating to a scientist. We shall now pass on to this study and see how far we can penetrate into the mighty minds of our sages.

\textsuperscript{19} For more details the reader is referred to \textbf{धर्मविद्यापरिचय:}

by Satyavrata Sāmaśrami, Calcutta 1893.
III. THE ORIGIN OF THE VEDAS

The Vedic seers were essentially intellectuals who were eager to understand what they saw around them. As we have said earlier their speculations covered a wide range of topics of which the origin of the universe (Jagati) was one. Various possibilities were put forth by different scholars. Just like different schools of philosophy like Vaiśeṣika, Sāṇkhya, Vedāṇṭa etc. came into existence during the post Vedic period, there existed in the Vedic times ten different cosmogonic doctrines to which a reference is found in the Nāṣadiya sūkta of Ṛgveda.¹ All these theories were discredited subsequently and Brahman theory was established by Brahmā.² According to this theory the universe with all its diversities should have originated from a single source called Brahman which is all pervading and all powerful and should have been originally without any form or name (nirviṣeṣa). Since everything around us is changing, the Vedic seers believed in an all powerful agency causing all these changes without itself undergoing any change. In the highest stage this Brahman is described by the Upaniṣads as one without

¹ Madhurāda Ojha has discussed each of these doctrines in his वनाधारस्य He names them as (1) सर्वद्वावः; (2) वर्धीवाय; (3) वर्षेवाय; (4) अपरवाय; (5) अवर्षेवाय; (6) अभिवाय; (7) अभिवाय; (8) अवर्षेवाय; (9) वर्षेवाय; and (10) वर्षेवाय.

² ब्रह्मण: ब्रह्मणां प्रवाह: संबंधित विविधय वर्गं पूर्वस्य नि:पत्तं।

For a short description of these see V.S. Agarwala's Introduction to Ojha's ब्रह्मसिद्धान्त; Banaras Hindu University 1961.
any qualification (nirguna), formless (arūpa), limitless (asīma), perfect (pūrṇa), one without a second (advitiya) and indescribable by words (anirvacaniya). In the Rgveda a question is asked by the rṣi,

'What sort of forest was it? In the forest what was that tree that was cut and the earth-heaven pair was brought into existence? Let the wise ask themselves the above questions and say how the creator having created the worlds is supporting them himself and is also presiding over them.'

Interestingly enough, the reply is not found in Rgveda. It is actually found in the Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa.

'Brahman is the forest. He was the tree cutting which the earth-heaven pair was brought into existence. O wise men having thought over (your questions). I say, Brahman supports all these worlds (which he created) and presides over them.'

It is clear from the above passage that a small part of Brahman became the viśva (universe) which is supported and presided over by himself. Just like a small seed produces a big tree with all its branches, leaves etc., just like a small drop of fluid which forms the procreating substance (śukra) in the man evolves into a child with all its organs, flesh, blood, bones etc., in the same way, Brahman which was originally a single potential principle produced out of itself this viśva with all its diversities though we cannot fully comprehend the actual processes through which all that we see in the universe have come into existence. Different scholars conceived the relation between Brahman and Jagat

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3 किं स्वाधराय क उ वृक्ष आस यतो धावामृतियो निष्टतपुयः॥ मन्निष्ठियो मनसा पुरुषेनु तत्स्वयत्वस्येऽवदु मुच्यन्ति धार्यन्॥ (स.वे.10.81.4)
4 ब्रह्म वनं ब्रह्म स वृक्ष आस यतो धावामृतियो निष्टतपुयः॥ मन्निष्ठियो मनसा विब्राहीमि वो ब्रह्माध्यत्वस्ये भुवनानि धार्यन्॥ (त.ब्र.2.8.9)
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in different ways. These can be broadly classified into six types. They are

1. Jagat is Brahman (Śuddhādvaita)
2. Brahman is in Jagat (Viśiṣṭādvaita)
3. Brahman and Jagat are the same. That is Jagat is Brahman and Brahman is Jagat. (Advaita).
4. Brahman and Jagat are two different things. (Dvaita)
5. Brahman is different from Jagat but Jagat is not different from Brahman. (Dvaitādvaita)
6. The relation between Jagat and Brahman is indescribable (Mayāvāda).

The word ‘brahman’ has evolved from the root bṛhm to grow. We apply the term ‘bṛhmāṇa’ to that activity when an original substance which appears to expand does not gain anything which was not there already in some miniature form. Just like winds cause waves in the sea and the whole surface seems to grow or expand but in the process, the sea neither gains nor loses, in the same way, Brahman is affected by a power called ‘Māyā’ and it gives rise to this jagat on account of its bṛhmāṇa. It is all pervading like ākāśa (space) and therefore there is nothing bigger than it, nor smaller than it when it chooses to be so. The Upaniṣad says,

‘There is nothing superior to him and nothing smaller or bigger than him. He stands unperturbed like a tree in the heaven as a single entity. The whole universe is filled by this Puruṣa.’

This Puruṣa is conceived as having four parts. They are amṛta, brahma and śukra and the fourth part is the all pervading Parātpara himself. Of these it is the śukra part

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5 यस्मातपरं नायपरमस्ति किंचिद्वस्मात्रािणीयो न ज्यायोद्भो तिरित
तृस्तं इव स्तन्यं दिवि तिष्ठत्येकस्तेनेवं पूर्णं पुरुषेण सर्वम्॥ (भ.उप.3.9)
that becomes viśva. The other three parts remain unaffected. That is why the Veda says

'Three parts of the Puruṣa remained above and one part resided here.'\textsuperscript{6} This is also why the Veda said elsewhere that the viśva was brought into existence by cutting a tree in the forest.\textsuperscript{7}

The word brahman can also be derived from the root bhr which means supporting and feeding (dhāraṇa and poṣaṇa). The Brahman is described as 'uktha' and sāma. Uktha means the source from which things come out (prabhavasthāna) and sāma means that which resides in everything in equal measure (samāṇa rūpeṇa sthito vyāpto vā). The word brahma itself means that which supports. We conclude therefore that there is an entity which is at the same time, uktha, brahma and sāma of the jagat. The Vedic seers named this as the ātmān of the jagat and defined it as 'yo yasya uktham syāt, brahma syāt, sāma syāt, sah tasya ātmā' ie. that which constitutes uktha, brahma and sāma of a thing is its ātmān.

Whatever we see in this viśva can be brought under three classes viz name (nāma), form (rūpa) and activity (karma). There is nothing in this viśva which is outside these three things. What is the ātmān of this viśva? The answer is straight away Brahman is the ātmān of the viśva because he pervades the entire viśva, it is from him that the viśva has originated and it is he, who forms its basic support. We can therefore conceive the viśva as consisting of two parts: One is called amṛta (immortal) and the other is called satya (truth). The former is its ātmān and the latter is the one which has the attributes nāma and rūpa and is termed satya.

The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa says:

'This jagat is a triad consisting of names (nāma)

\textsuperscript{6} त्रिपादोधर्म उवैत पुरुषः पायोस्येवाहाभवत्युनः: (ऋ.वे.10.90.4)
\textsuperscript{7} ऋ.वे. (10.81.4),
form (rūpa) and action (karma). Vāk (speech) is the ukttha of these names since it is the source from which all names come out. It is the sāma because it is common to all names. It is also brahma since it supports all names.

Then (we shall deal with) forms. The eye is the ukttha of these forms since it is the source from which all forms arise (i.e. we see all forms). It is sāma because it is the same (i.e it acts in the same way) which brings all forms to vision. It is also brahma since it supports all forms.

Then (we shall deal with) actions. Ātman is the ukttha of all actions, since it is the source of all actions. It is sāma since it remains the same for all actions. It is also brahma since it supports all actions. This triad is ātman. It is only one, though a triad. This amṛta is covered by satya. Prāṇa is amṛta. Name and form are satya and cover the prāṇa?8

Here prāṇa, which is, as we shall see now only a part of ātman, is called the amṛta, because it plays the most important role in all creations and while functioning in different situations has given rise to all the diversities that we see in this universe. But this prāṇa never exists without

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8 चर्या वा इव नाम रूपं कर्म। तेनां नामां वाांसारियतेषुधिपक्ष्यमतो हि सर्वाणि
नामान्युक्तिप्रधन्ति। एतवेयां सामेर्द्धि सवैनामोभिःसमवेतेवा भ्राह्मक्ष्णि
सर्वाणि नाना निर्भवति।
अत्र रूपाणि। चच्चुरितेषुधिपक्ष्यमतो हि सर्वाणि रूपाण्युक्तिप्रधन्ति। एतवेयां
सामेर्द्धि सर्वं: रूपं: समवेतेवा भ्राह्मक्ष्णि सर्वाणि रूपाणि नाना निर्भवति।
अत्र कर्माणि। अत्यन्तसारियतेषुধिपक्ष्यमतो हि सर्वाणि कर्माण्युक्तिप्रधानते
सर्वं: कर्ममि: समवेतेवा भ्राह्मक्ष्णि सर्वाणि कर्माणि नाना निर्भवति। तदेवत्तथाय
सत्यक्षयामात्मा उ एक: समेतत्तथाय तदेवतवृत्त सत्येन छत्रं प्राणो वा अमृतं नामरूपे
सत्याय ताप्यायं प्राण: छत्र। (श.श्र.14.4.4)
vāk (matter) and manas (mind) and therefore the combined existence of all these three (ie. manas, prāṇa and vāk) constitutes ātman which forms the amṛta part. This is exactly what the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa says viz.

‘Ātman is the combined existence of manas prāṇa and vāk’.9

In other words the ātman of viśva whose components are manas, prāṇa and vāk (matter)10 has brought into existence the Jagat with all its diversities characterised by nāma, rūpa and karma and resides with it. This is what the Upaniṣad says.

‘Having created it, he entered into it’11

This Ātman is no other than the Brahman, we have been talking about and therefore Brahman can rightly be called viśvātmā and viśva is his body (śarīra).

It should be noted here that by saying that the ātman represents the combined existence of manas, prāṇa and vāk (matter), the ātman really means that they exist together in order to function in a coordinated manner. That is constructive creation is possible only when these function in a coordinated way. Since the principle of coordinated functioning is immortal ātman is immortal. What applies to the viśva applies also to every individual system in the, viśva and therefore when it is said that the ātman of the individual is immortal and it is only the body that dies, we have no difficulty in understanding it. The moment another body is available this principle automatically starts functioning. In

9 स व अयमात्मा बाह्यः प्राणमयः मनोमयः। (स०. स्रा. १४.४.३.१०) (वृ० उप. १.५.३)
10 The word vāk is a very difficult word to comprehend in Vedic literature. It means matter (in the finest form) as well as speech ie. expression through the mouth. We shall deal with this in detail in a later chapter.
11 तत्त्वद्वा तदेकानुप्राधिक्षितः। (तै० उप. २.५)
fact as we shall see, the major portion of Vedic literature is built upon two basic concepts. They are

1. Ātman or the coordinated functioning of manas prāna and vāk (matter) is responsible for initiating and carrying out the creative processes in the universe. It is also responsible for the sustenance of the created universe.

2. There are two fundamental entities in the universe. One is agni and another is soma. Agni is the eater of food (annāda) and soma is food (anna). It is the interaction of these two that is going on in the universe and all the diversities both in form and functioning of the universe can be explained by the ramifications of agni-soma interactions.

Both Ātman and Brahman and their relations to viśva and the individual have been the subjects of discussion by various commentators who have brought into existence many schools of thought thereby implying that the message of the Vedas can take divergent directions. It is most unfortunate that a well knit society was unnecessarily divided into various factions and in this process the real message of the Vedas was completely missed by the later generations for no fault of theirs.

We have seen that a single potential entity called Brahman or Ātman brought into existence this universe and resides with it. This is the meaning of the statements 'Brahmaivedam sarvam' (Everything is Brahman); 'Ātmaivedam sarvam' (Everything is Ātman); 'Ekam vā idam vibabhūva sarvam; (One single entity became all these); 'Puruṣa evedam sarvam' (Everything is Puruṣa) etc. In the light of what we have already explained, we do not have difficulty in also understanding the statements 'Aham Brahmadevi (I am Brahman); tattvamasi (you are Brahman) etc.

The Upaniṣad says,

'This Deva has spread in every direction. He was born first and is in the womb (of this viśva). He
is now born (in the form of *jagat*). He is going to be born in the future also. He is inside every living being and has faces in all directions."^{12}

The above passage clearly brings out the *viśvātma* and *viśva* aspects of the *Brahman*. There is the other state of *Brahman* which is described as pure, perfect (*pūrṇa*) undisturbed state. It is called the *viśvātma* state (beyond the *viśva*). It is this pure state that is described in the *Upaniṣads* as 'Rasa' (*Rasohyeva sah*). In this pure state he is indescribable by words and therefore he is called *Nirviśeṣa*, *Nirākāra*, *Nirguṇa* etc. But when we recognise him as an all powerful entity capable of bringing the creative forces into play, we call him *Parātpara*. Describing this state the *Upaniṣad* says

"There is nothing he has to do (ie he has not reached the stage of doing anything). Nothing is equal to him or above him. He wields immense power. Knowledge, power and action are his inborn assets."^{13}

A part of this *Parātparabrahman* gets associated with creation only when he is affected by a power called *Māyā*.

The Vedic seers conceived 'Rasa' as an infinite ocean having all the power to create (*bala*) but in the *Nirviśeṣa* state this *bala* is indistinguishable from the *rasa*. It is only in the *Parātpara* state they coexist as two entities but still the *bala* is in the dormant state. It is at this stage the *bala* called *Māyā* initiates the first action on *Rasa*. Actually the *balas* are infinite. Madhusūdan Ojha in his expositions on the *Brahman* catalogues sixteen of them. Of these *Māya* is the most powerful one which carries all the other fifteen in its womb.

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^{12} एष हि देवः प्रविशोर्नुसर्वः पूर्वोऽह जातः स उ गर्भेः अन्तः।
स एव जातः स जातिप्रपायः प्रतिपदातिनिपातिसंयत्संयतोऽमुखः। (भे.उप.2.16)

^{13} न तस्य कार्य करणं च विखं तत्तस्माभायवधन्विक्ष्मं हन्यते।
परास्य शक्तिः विविषिव भूयते स्वाभाविकी ज्ञानबलक्रिया च॥ (भे.उप.6.8)
The term Māyā is one of the most misunderstood terms in the Brahman theory of creation. According to Madhusūdana Ojha the word māya means that which measures or limits and therefore Māyā is the power which limits the region which was unlimited and is responsible for initiating the creative processes. The word is derived from the root mā to measure and is related to converting the infinite into finite sections. This power is a very tricky one and has defied correct definition simply because it belongs to bala category and bala is ephemeral (asat) unlike rasa which is ever present (sat). Because of association with Māya this viśva can be called māyika (ie. result of Māyā) but it is certainly not mithyā (untruth). The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa says that the viśva characterised by nāma and rūpa is satya (nāma rūpe satyam). Moreover since the Upaniṣad says that Brahman created the viśva and resides with it, the viśva cannot be considered as mithyā. Viśva just does not exist when Māyā merges with Rasa.

When the impact of Māyā on Rasa initiates the creative process, the very first thing that comes into existence is manas (mind). When a desire to create arises in the mind, prāṇa and vāk come into existence. In other words manas, prāṇa and vāk are the three entities which a region of Rasa (a part of Parāparā) gives rise to, after it is affected by Māya. It is this triad that has been instrumental in creating the universe. This triad has already been named by us as Ātman. This Ātman is named Prajāpati. He is also called Puruṣa because he lies in an enclosed space (puri śete). He is actually called Šodasipuruṣa because he has three major components viz Ayyayapuruṣa whose predominant constituent is manas, Aksara-puruṣa whose predominant constituent is prāṇa and Kṣarapurūṣa whose predominant component is vāk (matter). Each of these have again five components which we shall not go into now, and all these fifteen components supported by all pervading Parāparapurūṣa constitute our Šodasipuruṣa or Šodasiprajāpati. For our purpose, it is enough
if we understand that Prajāpati is simply the triad of manas, prāna and vāk (matter) and has emerged from a region of Rasa affected by the power Māyā. He is for all purposes the creator and there can be infinite number of Prajāpatis engaged in the creative activity.

From our point of view, the emergence of Prajāpati is an important landmark in the theory of creation propounded by the Vedic seers. The primordial rasa (which we shall see later is essentially agni) corresponds to the hot dense substance which suddenly underwent the big bang (explosion) billions of years ago in the modern theory of the origin of the universe. Here it is Māyā which gives a series of bangs (not a single big bang) in various regions of the ocean of Rasa and causes the emergence of Prajāpatis who create their own systems. Of these the most important Prajāpati is the Samvatsaraprajāpati who has been responsible for the emergence of the solar system.

According to another view, prāṇa came into existence first and it was of manifold nature. It was called rṣi as is evident from the statement,

‘In the beginning there was only asat (nonexistence). What was that asat? Rṣis were asat. Who were the rṣis? Prāṇas were the rṣis.’

If we go into details, the prāṇas are of infinite kinds. Of these the Saptarṣiprāṇas or the Sākanjaprāṇas played their first role in creation. In fact they were responsible for the coming into existence of Svayambhūprajāpati as described in Satapatha Brāhmaṇa.

‘This prāṇa in the middle is Indra. Because he kindled the prāṇa in the middle by means of his

14 अबत्र इवमय आति || तद्वाहः किं तद्वन्दजीविति || कृष्यो वा व तेजे
तद्वन्दजीवित || तद्वाहः के ते कृष्यः इति || प्राणः वा कृष्यः || (श.ब्र.6.1.1.1)

15 क.ब. (1.164.15)
sense organs (indriyas) he is called Indha whom they call Indra mystically. They having been kindled created seven separate persons. Being unable to generate they decided to make them into one person and then made the seven into one. Two of them were compressed above the navel and two below the naval. Two, they placed in the two wings and one formed the pratiśtha (base). The excellence (śrīhi) or essence (rasa) of these seven persons formed the head. Because śrī was put, it is called śiras. Because the prāṇas were spread over (the body) it is called sarīra. This person became Prajāpati.\footnote{16}

In another place in the same Brāhmaṇa it is said vāk and manas appeared first and then only prāṇa came into existence. In any case for the creation to start the combined presence of manas (mind) prāṇa and vāk (matter) was necessary and therefore we conclude, Ātman whom we call Prajāpati is the first to emerge from Rasa and he is nothing but the combined existence of manas, prāṇa and vāk (matter).

The first activity of this Prajāpati in yajña. It is through this yajña process creation and sustenance of created objects take place. We have therefore to understand the term yajña. In the manas part of Prajāpati a desire to take food arises.

\footnote{16 स योजय मध्ये प्राण: एवं एवं-द्रस्तानेष प्राणान मध्यत इन्द्रियेन्द्रु यदेन्द्र तस्मादिन्द्र इन्द्रो ह वे तमिन्द्र इत्याचालते परोक्षं परोक्षकामा हि वेताश्च इत्यः सपत्न नाना पुरुषानसृजनन्।
तेजस्विन्। न वा इन्द्रं सन्त: शक्य्यम्: प्रजनन्यतुतिमान् सपत्तपुरुषानेकं पुरुषं करवामेति। त पतान्त सपत्त पुरुषानेकं पुरुषमधुर्वनु। यदुभ्य प्राणेश्वरो श्री सपत्तमन्ययदवात्न-नामेश्वरो श्री पश्च: पुरुष: पश्च: पुरुष: प्रतिष्ठेन्त्वित।
अष्टेन सपत्तां सन्तानां पुरुषानां श्री।। यो रस आसीतमृव्य समुद्विंस्तवस्य शिरोदाववाच्च कुम्भयं समुद्विंस्तस्मादिश्रिंशिवमन्ततस्मिन् प्राणा अश्रयन्त।
तस्मादेवैतिष्क्रोदेष्या यत्राद्य: अश्रयन्त। तस्मादु प्राणां: श्रीयोजय यतस्विस्मितश्रयन्त: तस्मादु शरीरम्।
स एव पुरुष: प्रजनस्तिरभवत्। (शा.शा.6.1.1)
because be feels hungry. The hunger is termed *aśanāyā* which we see in every created object. For example it is because of this *aśanāyā* the sun is consuming parts of the earth but is also returning something to the earth so that in the process the sun-earth system remains conserved. We can identify three things in *Prajāpati* viz *uktha*, *arka* and *aśītī*. *Uktha* is the inner part of *Prajāpati* where the *manas* resides. When *aśanāyā* arises in the *uktha* of *Prajāpati*, he gives rise to some rays (ie. activity of *prāṇa*) which are spread out on all sides to get food. These are called *arka*. The food that is drawn in through the *arkas* is *aśītī*. This food fills up the *vāk* part of *Prajāpati* who now becomes quiet and the *arkas* die down and merge with the *uktha*. Since there are infinite number of *Prajāpatīs* a confrontation between one another takes place and each tries to survive at the cost of the other. The *anna* (food) in converted into a finer essence called *ūrk* which is finally converted into *prāṇa*. This *prāṇa* in turn becomes *arka* and goes out for food. In this way *anna*, *ūrk* and *prāṇa* are constantly converted into each other and this process is called *yajña* (*annorkprānānām anyonya parigraho yajñah*). No *Prajāpati* can exist without *yajña* even for a while. In this process some *Prajāpatīs* may disappear and some new *Prajāpatīs* may come into existence. It is by this process the sun, moon, earth have come into existence and they maintain their size and shape also by this process. Since we cannot conceive of *Prajāpati* without *yajña*, the Vedic seers sometimes identified *Prajāpati* with *yajña* itself.\(^\text{17}\)

Every object in this universe whether self luminous like the sun, fire etc. or illuminated by a light source, like moon, mirror or any other reflecting surface, or nonluminous like a black stone has two constituents. One is called *uktha* and the other is called *mahimā* (merit or greatness). For

\(^{17}\) प्रजापतियों एव वितायते यद्य: (ति.श्र.1.4.6)
एव वे प्रजापतियिः एव यज्ञस्तायते (श्र.श्र.4.4.8.1)
example if we take a lamp, the wick constitutes its uktha and the light which spreads out in all directions is its mahimā. In a flower the central core is its uktha and the smell it sends out in all directions is its mahimā. The source region which gives rise to the rays which spread around creating a region of mahimā around it, is its uktha. It is also called ṛk of the object. The mahimā part is called sāma because it spreads equally in all directions. There is an activity (of prāṇa) in the object and the surrounding region which may be termed as taking in and giving out process (ādānavisarga) and this is called yajus.

Since Prajāpati has three constituents viz manas, prāṇa and vāk (matter) his greatness is of three kinds. That which pertains to manas is called Veda. That which pertains to his prāṇa is yajña and that which pertains to his vāk (matter) is prajā (ie: subjects). Thus Veda, yajña and prajā are the first creations of Prajāpati and he can never be conceived without them. Since in the universe only these three are there we can conclude that Prajāpati is universe itself. He is both viśva and viśvāma. This is the meaning of the statement ‘Prajapatistva vedam sarvam’.

The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa while dealing with the origin of the Vedas brings to our attention the activities of manas, prāṇa and vāk (matter) viz. desire that arises from manas, tapas ie. mental straining that results in the activation of the prāṇas and śrama (physical labour) that involves vāk (matter). In other words prāṇa and vāk achieve what is desired or planned by the manas and the creation starts. The very first creation of Prajāpati was Vedas (Trayī Vidya). Since the Veda is born of Prajāpati (made of prāṇas) it is also called Brahmaniśvasitaveda. The Brāhmaṇa says

‘He thought ‘May I reproduce’. He toiled and heated himself up (atapyata). As a result of toil and heat he produced first the Brahman, the triad of knowledge (Veda). It became the seat of his
establishment. The Veda is the foundation of everything.\textsuperscript{18}

The Brāhmaṇa goes further and says that he then produced the waters (अपाह) and creation of various things started.

Prajāpati can also be conceived as having three components viz. nābhi (core), mūrti (physical form) and mahimā (greatness). The nabhi part pertains to manas, the mūrti part to matter (vāk) and the mahimā part to prāṇa. While it is usual to conceive Prajāpati as all these put together, in literature we come across Nabhyaprajāpati, Vyākriaprajāpati (for nābhi and mūrti) and Sarvaprajāpati (for all the three put together). The Vedas have described each of these.\textsuperscript{19}

Let us now recollect Prajāpati’s form and function before we pass on to the analysis of the Vedas he produced. Prajāpati is the originator of the Vedas. His livelihood is yajña. His main achievement is the universe with all its diversities (Prajā). Vedas are the products of his mind. Yajña results from the activity of his prāṇa. Prāja results from his vāk (part). In short he is the embodiment of Vedas and their after effects.

At this stage we can easily understand what exactly Vedas are. Vedas simply mean the constructive processes of creation which finally result in what all we see in the universe. The manas part of Prajāpati is involved in bringing into existence these processes, his prāṇa part is involved in making these processes work and his vāk part provides the primordial substance on which the processes work and finally bring into existence what all we see in the universe. Prajāpati himself is nothing but the combined existence and coordinated functioning of manas prāṇa and vāk which we have called Ātman, Brahman or Puruṣa.

\textsuperscript{18} सीतास्य पुरुषः प्रजापितिरकामयत। भूतान्तरस्या प्रजापितेयति। सीताश्रामयत। स
tपोजन्तयत। स श्रान्तरस्येपानो ब्रह्मव प्रथमान्तन्तत्र ज्ञेयस्व विद्वान। सेवास्ये
प्रतिष्ठाभवत। तस्मात्तत्तद्विषयः सर्वत्र प्रतिष्ठा इति (श.श्रा.1.1.1.8)

\textsuperscript{19} वा.सं. 31.19; राव. 10.169.4; वा.सं. 23.65
The origin of Atharvaveda is separately dealt with in the Gopatha Brāhmaṇa of the same Veda. This itself is sufficient evidence to infer that Atharvaveda is a later addition to the three Vedas (trayī vidyā). However many hold the view that the concept of Atharvaveda was developed simultaneously with the concept of the other three Vedas. In our study we are not really concerned with arguments for and against this view since historical aspects do not have any importance in our study. The Gopatha Brāhmaṇa says\(^{20}\) that Prajāpati created the waters first and these waters had two components viz bhṛgu which represents sneha (stickiness) principle and angiras which represents tejas (heat) principle. These waters are also called ‘Suveda’ since they appeared as sweat of Prajāpati. The combined presence of bhṛgu and angiras and the processes that are initiated as a result of this combined presence constitute Atharvaveda. This is also in effect agni-soma principle and the originator of creation by copulation (maithunī srṣṭi).

The same Brāhmaṇa says,

The (primordial waters contain bhṛgu and angiras. They are bhṛgu and angiras and nothing else. The entire matter starts from waters only. There is nothing but bhṛgu and angiras. The three Vedas lie in between and follow the bhṛgu-angiras principle.\(^{21}\) This would suggest that the concept of Atharvaveda was developed simultaneously with the other three Vedas.

Before we close this topic it will be useful to summarise the characteristics of manas, prāna and vāk as available in Vedic literature. Madhusūdan Ojha has given an account of

\(^{20}\) गोपथ ब्राह्मण 1.1.1-4

\(^{21}\) आपो भूम्भ्रग्निरोधपमो भूम्भ्रग्निरोधयम।
सर्वमायोयम्यं शूलं सर्वं भूम्भ्रग्निरोधयम।
अन्तरंति त्रयोदश: भूम्भ्रग्निर्दश्वनुभ: ॥ (गोपथ ब्राह्मण 1.39)
The Origin of the Vedas

these in his book entitled *Brahmavijnāna*. It is most unfortunate that the manuscript of his work entitled ‘Veda Samīkṣā’ is not traceable at all.

1. Characteristics of manas:

   a) *Manas* does not bind itself to any single thought. When it is engaged in one thought, it is not difficult for it to completely get rid of it and get involved in another thought. By nature it is detached (*asanga*) and is not sticky (*nirlepa*).

   b) *Manas* cannot by itself act (*niśkriya*). It takes the help of *prāṇa* to become active.

   c) *Manas* does not limit itself in any way, when it is engaged in thoughts. It is not possible to mark the boundaries of its activity. It is therefore said to be *anavacchinna* (not well defined).

2. Characteristics of Prāṇa

   a) *Prāṇa* is always active. The entire activity in the universe is the work of *prāṇa*. The five *tanmātras*, *śabda*, *sparśa*, *rūpa*, *rasa* and *gandha* do not exist in the *prāṇa*. We can however recognise its presence by its capacity to hold material particles together.

   b) *Prāṇa* can never exist without matter. For this reason it is called *artha-vān*.

   c) *Prāṇas* are of four kinds viz. 1) *parorajā*, 2) *āgneya* 3) *saumya* and 4) *āpya*. *Parorajāprāṇa* is what holds

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22 भ्रमविज्ञान (in Hindi) by Madhusūdan Ojha. 2nd edition printed and published by Rajasthan Patrika Ltd., Jaipur 1991. This book has an interesting history. Madhusūdan Ojha’s writings are all in sanskrit. Only this work is in Hindi. One ardent elderly student of Ojha, Gopinath Joshi by name could not cope up with his sanskrit works and therefore requested him to explain Brahmvijnāna in Hindi to him. The extempor lectures of Ojha in Hindi were carefully recorded by him and compiled by him in the form of a book. The present book is the second edition brought out by Rajasthan Patrika Ltd.
material particles together. That is, it is responsible for the cohesive forces in a body. Ágneyaprāṇa causes disruption of particles in a body. Saumyaprāṇa enables the body to contract and build up density. Āpyaprāṇa acts on waters and causes physical transformation in them.

d) Unlike manas, prāṇa binds itself to vāk (matter). This property is called āsanjana.

e) Prāṇa carries out the orders of manas.

f) Prāṇa is always active and never rests. This property of prāṇa is called aprasupti.

g) Prāṇa migrates from one place to the other. The transfer of heat from a hot body to another body which is cold is the work of prāṇa.

h) Prāṇa works in a discontinuous way. For example in breathing the action is discontinuous.

3. Characteristics of vāk (matter)

a) Vāk occupies space.

b) It changes form. For example starting from waters the earth was formed.

c) Vāk holds prāṇa and leaves it also. For example when a man dies, prāṇa leaves his body.

d) Every object made of vāk exhibits a central core (kendra). It also exhibits physical properties like length breadth height, heaviness, lightness etc.

e) Every object has well defined boundaries in space.

f) Every object exhibits some properties which go under the name dharma.

4. Common characteristics

a) Manas, prāṇa and vāk always exist together. Manas is associated with knowledge (jñāṇa). Prāṇa shows itself in work. Vāk is associated with artha (matter).
b) When manas, prāṇa and vāk exist together in an object manas, functions like a presiding deity (abhimanī devata), prāṇa gets into every bit of the object and rules over the object (adhiṣṭhata) and vāk forms the base for prāṇa and manas (adhiṣṭhana).

c) There are three viṛyas in men. These are brahmavīrya (present in brahmaṇas) kṣatrabīrya (present in kṣatriyas) and vidvīrya (present in vaisyas). In brahmavīrya, manas plays the predominant role. In kṣatrabīrya, prāṇa plays the predominant role and in vidvīrya, vāk (matter) plays the predominant role. These three are interdependent.

d) Soma has its origin in manas. Agni has its origin in prāṇa and waters have their origin in vāk. These three are called 'rasas'. Somarasa is the origin of moon. Agnirasa is the origin of the sun and waters constitute the origin of the earth. These in turn are responsible for the creation of all objects around us. In other words manas, prāṇa and vāk are responsible for all creations.

e) In this Viśva some one is always consuming some other and this act takes place with the involvement of manas, prāṇa and vāk which play the roles of āvapana (the seat of establishment for the eater of food) annāda (eater of food) and anna (food) respectively.

f) Desire arises from the mind, tapas activates, the prāṇa and in śrama, (physical strain) vāk is involved. In other words when a desire arises in the mind, prāṇa and vāk achieve the desired objective through tapas and śrama.
IV. ṚK, YAJUS AND SĀMAN

In the last chapter we identified the Vedas with the creative processes in Nature. Since these processes are infinite, Vedas also are infinite. That is why Indra told Bharadvāja 'anantah vai Vedah'.\(^1\) However since there are three broad divisions of the Veda, they go under the name 'Trayi Vidya'. These are termed Ṛk, Yajus and Sāman. It may be noted here that Ātman consists of three components, manas, prāṇa and vāk. The Veda is the offspring of Ātman which is the uktha, brahma and sāma of this viśva. It is therefore natural that the Veda produced by Ātman should also have three divisions. Since Veda is identical with creative processes Ṛk, Yajus and Sāman also are closely linked to creative processes.

According to the Vedic seers ākāśa which is an important medium for the propagation of the Vedas is filled with vāk (matter in its finest form) prāṇa and manas. But the medium is hot and therefore wherever we see, we see only an ocean of agni (which is also a form of vāk) in which both prāṇa and manas are embedded. The Vedic seers believed that everything in the universe whether it is a man, or animal or a heavenly body or earth or even a stone, is a lump of agni (agnipinda) with a central core and a physical shape and size. Its influence whatever be its nature and magnitude is felt in a certain region around and this region of influence constitutes its greatness (mahimā). The physical content of the body is achieved by the piling up of vāk (agni) around the central core and this is essentially the work of prāṇa which not only builds up the body but also provides a give and take

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\(^1\) तै. ब्रा. 3-10-11
mechanism in the body so that the body sustains itself. The principle of finitisisation governing all creations gives a finite size and shape to the body and now it can be identified by its name (nāma) form (rūpa) and action (karma). According to one school of thought, the object is called vayuna (sarvamidam vayunam) and is made up of two parts viz. vaya and vayonādha. The inner content of the body is called vaya and that which gives shape and external appearance by which we recognise the body is called vayonadha. Vaya is inside vayonadha and vayonadha binds it and finitisises it. Vayonadha is also called Chandas in Vedic literature. The inner content (vastu tatva) of the body consists of two parts. One is martya (mortal) which is simply its material content (vastu pinda) by which we recognise its nāma and rūpa and the other is amṛta (immortal part) which is the active triad viz. maṇas, prāṇa and vāk which is responsible for its greatness (mahimā) that is built round the object. The vaya with both these above parts is called rasa indicating that it is agni that is active. The spreading of the influence of the object around it is called vitāna. The protection or sustenance of the object is looked after by prāṇa which organises a process of taking in food by stretching out its rays (arka) and this constitutes the activity in the object. The central core is called uktha and chandas finitisises its size and shape. The rks are responsible for the physical form (mūrti) the yajus is responsible for the activity in the object and the sāman represents the mahima (greatness) of the object. This is what the Brāhmaṇa says.

(The physical form (mūrti) is achieved by the rks. All movements are caused by yajus. The halo round the object (ie. mahimā) are sāmans. All these are created by Brahman.2

2 सङ्क्षेपो जातां सर्वशो मूर्तिमाधुः
सबा गतियोजुशी हैव शापततः।
सर्व तेजः सामरूपं हि शापतः
सर्व हीं व्रहणा हैव सुष्ट्मः॥ (ते.व्रा. 3.12.9)
N.B. Brahman may also mean Atharva which would mean that agni-soma interactions are responsible for all creations.

Since all these three are components of Veda we may call that part consisting of ṛks as Ṛgveda, that part consisting of yajus as Yajurveda and the one consisting of sāmans as Śāmaveda. Every object in this universe is an exhibit of chandās, rasa and vitāna, or an exhibit of mūrti (physical form), gati (movement) and tejas (halo or mahimā) or an exhibit of pinda (lump of matter), kriyā (activity) and vikāsa (spreading of greatness), or an exhibit of Ṛgveda, Yajurveda and Śāmaveda. That is why the Brāhmaṇa says,

‘He (Prajāpati) saw all the beings (bhūtani) in the Traya Vidyā’

The earth-atmosphere-sun system with all its structural and functional details constitutes an ideal example for explaining the ṛk, yajus, sāman principles. Individually also they exhibit the three Vedas. According to the Vedic seers, the earth-atmosphere-sun system constitutes the Śamvatsaraprajāpati and has its origin in what is called Samvatsarāgni. The same Agni has manifested itself in three forms viz. the agni of the earth, which exhibits the pinda or murti (lump having definite shape and size) character, the agni of the middle region (antarikṣāgni) in which the wind blows, exhibiting movement (gati) and the agni of the āditya whose predominant characteristic is vitāna (spreading of tejas or mahimā) and therefore which constitutes the greatness part of the earth-atmosphere-sun system. In other words Samvatsarāgni while manifesting itself in three forms is also exhibiting the working of three Vedas, Ṛk, Yajus and Sāman. Since Samvatsaraprajāpatiś main activity is yajña and since yajña is nothing but creative forces in action we may say that Prajāpati used these Vedas for carrying out his yajña activity. That is why Manu said:

3 स प्रयामेव विधायं सवांण्यं भूतान्यपन्यथ ॥ (म.भ्रा.10.4.2.21)
‘Prajāpati milked the three Vedas for the success of his yajña activity’

The earth by itself also exhibits the working of the three components of the Veda. The material part of the earth which is a lump (vastu pinda) limited by its size and shape represents the working of Rgveda. All the activity inside this which has contributed to its structural details and also its give and take mechanism by which it maintains itself are the working of Yajurveda. The prāṇa part of it spreads its greatness upto a certain distance and this manifestation is Sāmaveda. In fact the Brāhmaṇa says that earth gets its name Prthivi because of this spreading of its influence (yadaprathayat tasmāt Prthivi - because it spread it is called Prthivi).

In the middle region we have agni in which vāyu (wind) moves. The antarikṣa itself provides the background in which the movement of vāyu takes place. Actually the word yajus consists of two parts yat and jūh. The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa says,

‘This wind which blows is yajus. It is this ‘yat’ which while moving produces everything. Because the wind blows, everything is produced. Therefore vāyu is yajus. This ākāśa (space) is jūh. It is the middle region (antarikṣa). It is in this akāśa the wind blows. Therefore this yajus is vāyu and antarikṣa, yat and jūh. Therefore this wind that blows is yajus. This yajus is established on rk and sāman. Rk and sāman support yajus.’

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4 अन्नवायुविभ्यंस्तु अर्थं ब्रह्म सनातनम्।
दुःध यजसिद्धयथे कन्यजुन्त्सचामलक्षणम्॥ (मनुस्मृति 1.23)

5 अर्थं बाब यजर्योऽद्य पवते | एष हि वनेवं सवं जनयति ।
एतं यज्ञमनुश्रुटं यज्ञायुरुपेऽ यजुः।
अययमेवाकाशं जुः यद्विदमंत्रिक्षम्। एतं भ्राकाशमनुश्रुतं
तदेवतदुर्ध्रायुक्तं, अन्तरिः च यज्ञ जूढः तत्साधनः।
एव एवं यत एष होति। तदेवद्वजुः ऋक्सायोऽ: प्रतिस्थतं ऋक्सामे वहतः॥ (श, ब्रा
10.3.5.1.2)
We have seen that the physical form of the body containing the matter represents $rk$ of the object. The activity inside the object is $yaju$ and the region of influence around the object which appears as its halo is sâman. Actually the body represents the triad vâk (matter) prâna and manas functioning together and this triad is present both inside the body and in its mahimâ region. Though these three always exist together, vâk and manas are by themselves inactive (nîskriya). It is only prâna that does everything. It is prâna that produces the halo but the halo itself is the background of vâk and manas in which prâna moves. In other words, $rk$ and sâman form a good support for $yaju$ to do its work. That is why in the Brâhmaṇa it is said (yajuḥ $rksâmayaḥ pratiṣṭhitam; $rksâme vahatah).

The sun by himself is by far the best example where the roles of the three Vedas are demonstrated. Let us examine the following passage in Satapatha Brâhmaṇa

"This vâk is āditya (sun),
This vâk is set in three ways viz. $rks$, $yaju$ and sâmans. The disc constitutes the $rks$. The halo of rays constitutes samans. The Puruṣa (inside the disc) constitutes yajus'. The disc that shines is Mahadukththa. They are the $rks$. It is the world of $rks$. The rays that shine (as a halo round the disc) is Mahâvratâ. They are the sâmans. It is the world of sâmans. The Puruṣa in the disc constitutes the yajus'. They are the world of yajus'. This triad of Vidyâ shines.\textsuperscript{6}

\textsuperscript{6} सा या सा वागसी स आदित्यः।
सा या एषा बाङ्द्र वेश्या विहिता। ऋचो यंजुषिः सामानिः।
मण्डलमेवः, अर्धि-सामानि पुरुषो यंजुषिः।
यदेत्तमण्डलं तप्ति तम्र-हाबृवषेऽ तां ऋचः स ऋचां लोकः।
अयं यदेत्तर्चिद्वैष्टते तम्रहाबृवं तानि सामानि, स सामानं लोकः। अयं य एता
एतस्मिन-मण्डले पुरुषः सोऽऽमानस्तानि यंजुषिः स यजुशां लोकः।
सैन्त्र ऋषयेव विषा तप्ति। (श.श्र. 10.5.1,2)
The above passage nicely summarises the concepts of the Vedic seers regarding the nature and functioning of ṛks, yajus' and sāmans. The glowing disc constitutes the lump of agni (agni pinda). This lump has a size and shape as seen by us. It has got a core called uktha from which the rays emanate and form a halo round the disc. There is an active puruṣa (prāṇāgni) inside the disc who through his rays not only exhibits his greatness (mahimā) but also collects his food to sustain himself. The glowing disc (mandala) which is just a vāk pinda in which both prāṇa and manas are present, is here called Mahaduktha. Agni is only a form of vāk. That is why the Brāhmaṇa says elsewhere ‘tasya vā etasyāgnervāgevopaniṣat’. It is actually Mahān uktha, the big source region. The Brāhmaṇa says it is the world of ṛks ie. it is the region where the finitised physical content of the sun is present. The active prāṇāgni in the disc sends out its rays around and forms a halo around it. This halo of rays is termed Mahāvrata. It should be kept in mind that the halo of rays is formed out of what is thrown out in the form of vāk, prāṇa and manas, already present in the disc which goes under the name Mahaduktha. The term Mahāvrata is full of significance. Vrata in the language used in the rituals (yajñas) is essentially food, in the form of milk given to the yajamāna (the person who takes the vow to perform the ritual). Here it is called Mahāvrata because it provides food to the sun who is the ātman of the entire jagat (Śurya ātmā jagataḥ taṣṭhūṣaśca). It is the divine soma that feeds the sun and keeps him immortal. It is the yajus' or the prāṇāgni that is inside the disc which through its rays (arka) collects this food and feeds the sun. It is this yajus that has free movement both inside the disc as well as in the halo region built up of rays round the sun. The disc and the halo which are made up of vāk provide the base for its movement. That is why in the Brāhmaṇa elsewhere, it is said that ṛk and sāman act as horses of Indra (ie. yajus).
The following passage appears in Chāndogya Upaniṣad.

"The earth is ṛk. Agni is sāma. Sāma has the support of ṛk. That is why sāma is sung on the ṛk. This earth is 'sā' and agni is 'amah'. It is sāma. The middle region (antarikṣa) is ṛk. Vayu is sāma. The sky above is ṛk. The sun is sāma. The nakṣatras (stars) are ṛk. The moon is sāma. Then the human system. Vāk (matter) is ṛk. Prāṇa is sāma. The eye is ṛk. Åtmā is sāma. The ear is ṛk. Manas is sāma. The white portion of the eye is ṛk. The black portion (the cornea) is sāma."

It is easy to see in the above passage that the merit portion of every created thing is described as sāma while the support base is described as ṛk. The Rgveda, in one of the ṛks, describes the superiority of yajus' over ṛk, sāma and soma. The ṛk says,

The Agni is awake. The ṛks love him. Agni is awake. The sāmans follow him. The Agni is awake soma says, ‘I am your friend though I belong to a lower order’.

Here Agni represents the active yajus. But ṛk and sāman require its assistance to play their roles. In other words yajus is the leader and ṛk and sāman are his supporters. Since Agni is annāda (eater of food) and Soma is food,
Soma tells Agni that he belongs to a lower rung because Agni is the enjoyer and Soma is his food only. When Agni and Soma interact, yajus', ṛks and sāmans play their roles.

By now it is clear to us, that Yajurveda is functionally the most important one of the three Vedas. It constitutes the active Puruṣa who is Agni himself. Since Agni is often named as rasa in the literature, the Yajurveda is called Rasaveda just as Ṛgveda is called Chandoveda and Sāmaveda is called Vitanaveda. The natural tendency of Agni is to cast away part of it. It becomes weak and to compensate for it, it takes food from outside. This is the give and take process established in the object by the yajus. Since whether it is yajus or ṛk or sāman, Agni is involved it will not be wrong if we say that ṛk and sāman merge with yajus. This is what the Brāhmaṇa says elsewhere viz.

'Ṛk and sāman are consumed by yajus.'

There is a statement in the literature that sāman consists of three ṛks (tṛcāṃ sāma). That is while reciting the sāman they take three times the time taken for the ṛk. This arises because the ṛk is identified with the size or diameter of the object, while sāman is identified with the circle of influence around it. It only reflects the fact that the circumference is three times the diameter.

There are many passages in the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads, which try to interpret the nature and functions of ṛk, yajus and sāman in various ways. Especially the sāmaveda has been dealt with in many ways. We have sāmans associated with the earth like Rathantara, Vairūpa and Śākvara and sāmans associated with the sun like Brhaft Vairaja and Raivata. Then interaction between these sāmans take place and there is a transfer of influence from one to the other. Getting into these details will take us too far from our objective, we shall certainly deal with them elsewhere when we deal with the rituals.

9 Taduṁ ca ca aṣṭām sāmarṣpit: (Sa. Br. 10.1.4-6)
Some of the passages in the Brāhmaṇas dealing with ṛk, yajus and sāman are really difficult to interpret. For example let us take the following passage.

'Once yajña disappeared from the Devas. It assumed the form of black antelope and roamed about. The Devas found it and removed its skin and used it in the yajña. The black hairs on the skin of the antelope represents the form of the ṛks and the white hairs the form of the sāmans. Or in the other way, the white hairs represent the form of the ṛks and the black hairs represent the form of the sāmans. The brown ones represent yajus' form. The Trayi Vidyā represents yajña. The colour represents its role in the yajña. The black antelope's skin represents the all pervasive role of the yajña. That is why the yajamāna uses the black antelope skin and takes the vow (for performing the yajña).'

The black antelope that is referred to here is really a representative of the earth in which Agni is hiding and is being searched for (mṛgynamāna) by the ṛviks who want to light the fire for the yajña. It is the pravargya (oozed out portion) of the sun and is black as opposed to the white colour of the sun. The Vedic seers identified the black antelope as a representative of Agni and its skin as a representative of the Vedas (all the three Vedas are used

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10 यजो हि देवेभ्योउपचाराम् स कृष्णामुग्गो भूत्वाचचार।
तत्र देवा अनुविच्छ तवच्छेवावच्छायाना।
तत्त्व यानि.शुक्लानि च कृष्णानि च लोमानि, तान्य-युच्यां च साम्यां च रूपम्।
यानि शुक्लानि तानि साम्यां रूपम्। यानि कृष्णानि तानि रघाम्।
यदि वेतरथा - यान्येव कृष्णानि तानि साम्यां रूपम्। यानि शुक्लानि तान्य-युच्याम्।
यान्येव बुध्वीव हरीणि तानि यनुषु: रूपम्
सेश त्रियी विधि यजु:। ततः। एततिल्पेतव वर्णं। तदतु कृष्णानिन्मं भवति यज्ञस्वेतः
सर्वः भा।
तस्मात कृष्णानिनमथिदीक्षते यज्ञस्वेत सर्वः
(श्र.श्र.1.1.4.1,2,3)
in the *yajña*. It has three colours on the skin. The white is representative of the Sāmaveda because it is the *mahimā* part of earth-atmosphere-sun system that is the light of the sun. The black colour is representative of *rk* which again refers to the earth as *agni* pinda (a lump of *agni*). The antarikṣa in the middle region exhibits both these colours and is therefore brown. Thus the *yajña* covers the earth, antarikṣa (middle region) and the heaven and thus the all pervasive character of the *yajña* is achieved. The *ṛṣi* here is explaining why black antelope’s skin is used in *yajnas*.

That portion of the Brāhmaṇa where the *ṛṣi* says, ‘or in the other way the white hair represents *rk*’s form and black hair the *saman*’s form’ is a little difficult to grasp because the *ṛṣi* suddenly changes to the ādhyātmik sphere where in the human eye, the white portion represents *rks* and the black portion (the cornea) represents the *sāma* (*mahimā*). The human eye and the sun have a close relation because it is said in Aitareyopaniṣad that sun became the power of vision and entered the eyes\(^{11}\) (see also Chāndogyopaniṣad).\(^{12}\) Let us now recollect what all we have learnt about *rk*, *yajus* and *sāman*.

1. *Agni* is an important constituent of the universe and therefore every object in the universe whether living or non-living may be considered as a lump of *vāk* (matter) or *agni* in which both *manas* and *prāṇa* are embedded.

2. The Rgveda decides the size and form of the object and represents its material content. The activity inside the body which goes to work out the structural details of the body is contributed by the *prāṇa* part of the body working under the direction of *manas*, on the *vāk* part of the body. This *prāṇa* which is essentially the active *prāṇāagni* is also responsible for the organisation of the

\(^{11}\) आदित्ययभुपूर्वा अक्षिणी प्राविष्टत | (प्रकाश, 1.2.4)

\(^{12}\) येवेतत्सात्यस्य शुक्रः भाग; सेव ऋक | अय यन्ति परः क्रृष्ण तत्साम | (छां.उप., 1.5)
give and take process (ādānavisarga) in the body. All this is the work of Yajurveda. In fact Yajurveda is the real creator of various objects in the universe and prāṇa which has movement is its main asset. The Sāmaveda is mainly responsible for supplying food to the body, which enables it to sustain itself. It is established around the object as its mahimā (greatness) component.

3. In short, every object in the universe is an exhibit of the functioning of the three Vedas Ṛk, Yajus and Sāman. The functioning of the Vedas involves, agni-soma interactions in some form. Agni is the eater of food (annāda) and soma is food (anna).

The Vedic seers were able to bring all processes under these three types and were able to interpret many phenomena in the universe in terms of these. When something is not observed like for example the horns of a rabbit or horse or the upper row of teeth in some animals, they explained them away by saying that the Veda does not exist for them. Every human being exhibits the functioning of the three Vedas in him. His finitised physical frame constitutes Ṛgveda and it provides a base for manas and prāṇa to work. He has a circle of influence around him which forms his Sāmaveda and from this region he collects his food through the activity of his prāṇa and he himself or the agni in him containing the prāṇa together with his manas working on his vāk constitutes the Yajurveda.

Even in a society, the Vedic principles are reflected. For example we have already seen that every object in the universe is the result of the combined working of manas prāṇa and vāk. This applies to human beings also who have an ātman and a physical body (śarīra). The coordinated functioning of manas, prāṇa and vāk (matter) constitutes the ātman. The Vedic seers did not take much time to realise that this functioning is not the same in all individuals. They knew also that the human being is the most perfect of all God’s creations. Vyāsa said
'I tell you a secret, that is, there is no creation superior to that of human being.'

In some people the working of manas (jñānaśakti) is predominant. In some others the working of prāṇa (kriyāśakti) is predominant and in yet some others the presence of vāk (arthaśakti) is predominant. The Vedic seers identified them as belonging to three vīryas and named the vīryas as brahma, kṣatra and vit. They named the people belonging to these three vīryas as brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas and vaisyās respectively. The brāhmaṇas were interested in acquiring knowledge (jñānaśaktipradhānāh) and were also interested in protecting the áman (atmarakṣana). The kṣatriyas exhibited valour, courage and physical activity (kriyāśaktipradhānāh) and were interested in protection from external dangers (bahirangarākṣana) and the vaisyās were interested in acquiring wealth (arthaśaktipradhānāh). The Rgveda uses three words viz. śarma, varma and chardih for these three qualities. Fittingly enough the Vedic seers attributed Rgveda to vaisyās, Yajurveda to kṣatriyas and Sāmaveda to the brāhmaṇas because vāk is predominant in Rgveda, prāṇa is predominant in Yajurveda and manas is predominant in Sāmaveda.

The Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa says

'The vaisyā group were born of ṛks. The Yajurveda is the origin of kṣatriyas. The Sāmaveda gave birth to the brāhmaṇas and this was told by the ancients to their successors.'

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13 गुष्ट्रं ब्रवीथि न मानुषाल श्रेष्ठतरं हि किचित्। (व्यास, महाभारत)
14 हस्ते विप्रश्वेजना वायाणि शर्म, वर्म छर्दिरस्मयं यंसत। (कृ.ब. 1.114.5)

Compare the names शर्म, वर्म and श्रेष्ठ (सेती) used by us.

15 कथ्यो नात्त कैथ्यवर्ममाहः
युयुम्बं श्रवित्यापुरोहिनिम्।
साम्येवो ब्राह्मणानां प्रसूति:
पूर्व पूर्वम्यो वच एतदुः।। (ते.ब्रा.3.12.9)
To conclude we can precisely define Vedas in the following way:

1. They are the processes in Nature involving manas, prāṇa and vāk in a planned manner leading to the creation and sustenance of various objects in the universe.

2. They represent agni-soma interactions and their ramifications as found in Nature.

When Vedas are defined in the above way we have no difficulty at all in accepting that they are apauruṣeya (not of human origin).

At this stage it is worthwhile to mention that the creation and sustenance processes described by the Vedic seers through the medium of ṛk, yajus and sāman, though looks simple, really implies a fairly complicated model of the creation and sustenance process involving the parameters, manas, prāṇa, vāk, ṛk, yajus, sāman, agni and soma. By this model, the Vedic seers covered the creation and sustenance processes of all objects of the universe, irrespective of whether they pertain to the ādhidaivika plane, or ādhibhautika plane or ādhyātmika plane. Looked at, from that angle, the Vedic seers were extremely clever people and their capacity to generalise observations is really very commendable.

The above definition of Vedas will not satisfy us unless we know what the relation is between the Vedas we have described above and the mantras we have inherited from our ancients as Vedas. In other words, what is the relation between the Śabdaveda as we have in the texts and the Vedas we have described above? This we shall examine in the next chapter.
V. THE EVOLUTION OF ŚABDAVEDA

We have already seen that the universe is a manifestation of the three Vedas Rk, Yajus' and Sāman. The primary constituent of every object is vāk (matter) and this vāk in subtle form occupies the entire space (atha vágevedam sarvam - Ait Brāh). We may also say that it is agni that pervades the entire space since according to the Brāhmaṇas, agni is also a form of vāk only (tasya vā etasyāgneh vagevopaniṣat). It is in this ocean of primordial matter manas and prāna play their parts and creation takes place with the help of rk, yajus and sāman. The atharva also plays its role in the sense that it brings into being the primordial fluid containing soma as one of its constituents and this soma interacts with agni in various ways in all creative processes.

We have been so far using the word vāk to represent matter in a subtle form and as one of the important components of Prajāpati or Brahman or Ātman who is nothing but the combined existence and coordinated functioning of manas, prāna and vāk. It is not only interesting but rather intriguing at the first thought that the same word vāk is also used to mean speech and it is this meaning of the vāk that we are more familiar with. The Vedic seers were extremely clever thinkers and developed interesting concepts about the functioning of Nature. One instance of such attempts is the way they analysed the origin of the sound we produce through our mouth and finally developed the concept of Śabdabrahman through which the Parabrahman or Paramātman can be reached or realised.

At a very early stage the Vedic seers realised that
sound (śabda) constitutes an important means of communication of knowledge. The creative processes may be conceived as revealing themselves in the form of sound and if these sounds can be interpreted in terms of the knowledge about the processes, then they form the basis of Śabdaveda. According to our definition of Veda the sounds themselves constitute the Śabdaveda since they represent the processes which result in the creation of an object. For example take thunderstorm. From an intelligent analysis of the sounds produced by thunder, the Vedic seers were able to infer the nature and intensity of the oncoming rainfall. Here thunder is the process and creation achieved is rain. Here we get a clear clue as to how the Śabdaveda evolved. It will be interesting to the reader to note that several rainfall forecasting rules exist in post-Vedic literature based merely on the sounds emanating from thunder. In this respect the sound produced by thunder is Vedavāk (i.e. Śabdaveda). It is now easy to understand why so much importance is given to the proper intonation of the letters while the Vedas are recited. However every creative process is not accompanied by sounds (in the audible range) which can be identified with the process and therefore the best that is possible is the use of choice sounds or expressions which will have a direct relation with the object that will result from the process involved. This would imply that the Vedic compositions (i.e. Śabdaveda) requires exceptional skill on the part of the composer and it was believed that the Vedic seers alone had this capacity. It was even said that ākāśa (i.e. space) is filled with sounds which when deciphered properly will reveal to us the Vedic expressions. That is why śabda is considered as the rudimentary substance (tanmātra) of ākāśa. In other words the Śabdaveda is the oral expression of the seers to whom the creative processes revealed themselves while they were in deep meditation. They passed on their direct knowledge orally as mantras or expressions of extremely special character to others who did not have the capacity to acquire it themselves. Since hearing plays an
important role in communication, the Šabdaveda is also called Śruti.

The post-Vedic scholars have analysed the origin and nature of the Šabdaveda from various angles and have given us so much information on this subject that a sincere unbiased student going through all this literature gets thoroughly confused at the complexity of the problem. The complexity arises mainly because some hold Šabdaveda is apauruṣeya (not of human origin) while some others are of the view that it is pauruṣeya (of human origin). Madhusūdan Ojha lists as many as forty two views on the pauruṣeya - apauruṣeya question of the Šabdaveda. While we shall briefly refer to it later, we shall now confine ourselves to the analysis of Šabdavāk as understood by the Vedic seers and its relation to the vāk pertaining to the world of matter (artha-prapana).

We have already seen that Svayambhūprajāpati (Prajāpati made up of prānas) produced the Vedas first (Brahmanīvasita Veda) and with these Vedas, he operated on vāk and produced the primordial waters.1 The region of these primordial waters is called Paramēṣṭhī (Paramēṣṭhī vā āpah) and is located above the Sauramandala (region of the sun). We have already seen that these waters contain two principles viz. bhṛgu (sneha) and angiras (tejas) and these two together go under the name atharvā. Now these waters are only a form of vāk. Above these waters is the vāk region of Svāyambhu. This Svāyambhūvī vāk is called gaurī vāk. It is also called Paramā vāk, Satyā vāk, Brāhmī vāk, Veda vāk etc. It is this vāk only which after reaching the Paramēṣṭhī region gives rise to two streams one associated with Šabdaprpanca and another associated with artha-prapana. In this way śabda (sound) and artha (matter) have the same

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1 तस्प्रथं प्रतिप्रथा नित्यतिन्द्रतन्त्रम्। सौपूर्वग्राजुत्व वाच एव ज्ञातव्। वग्रेष्व
सामुन्यतु। सेण्ड स्वर्मिन्दमान्त्रों यवितं किं च। यवान्त्रोंत्व तत्स्मादाप्यः। (ग.व्र.6.1.1.8,9)
origin and are intimately related. The Vedic seers sincerely believed that they can reach Parabrahman (i.e. arthabrahman) through Śabdabrahman. Knowledge of one leads to the knowledge of the other. This is what the Upaniṣad says.

‘Brahman has two forms. One is Śabdabrahman and the other is Parabrahman (arthabrahman). If we establish ourselves on the Śabdabrahman ie. if we realise Śabdabrahman we are led to the realisation of Parabrahman.\(^2\)

This genetic relation (autpattika sambandha) between śabda and artha (matter) led the Vedic seers to believe that there is nothing in the world which is not associated with sound. The ākāśa is filled with sound. Rain is associated with sound of the thunder. Running water produces sound (whenever there is friction). Blowing wind produces sound (when it is obstructed by material objects). Burning fire produces sound. Thinking on these lines the Vedic seers were led to believe that matter can be produced through sounds and sounds can be created by matter. The Aitareya Upanisad says,

‘Agni became vāk (speech) and entered the mouth.’\(^3\)

It is interesting to note that śabda and artha are closely related in another way since every word (śabda) has a specific meaning (arth). Now if the relation between śabda and artha is total, then every śabda (sound) need not necessarily be associated with a particular object (arth). In the absence of clear cut guide lines, all sounds as śabdabrahman can pervade all objects and all objects as arthabrahman can pervade all sounds. This is the basis of the statement ‘Brahma vidyayā hi sarvam bhavisyanto manyante’ i.e. Brahmavidya can achieve

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\(^2\) छ वाव व्रामणो स्ये शब्दब्रह्म परं च यत्
शास्त्र व्रामणि निर्माणत: परं प्राप्तिगच्छि॥ (०१.उप.)

\(^3\) अन्नवचान्मूलवा मुख प्राप्तिस्त (०.उप.१.२)
anything. But this is not to be. Therefore we have specific sounds or names conveyed by sounds, relating to specific objects and the knowledge of this relation is what we have acquired from our elders. In the case of Vedic processes this relation assumes a very special character and Śabdaveda composed by the Vedic seers becomes the only source of our knowledge of this relation. They therefore acquire an authoritative status.

The above reasoning gives us lot of clues regarding the composition of the Śabdaveda. The Vedic seers subjected it to special rules. In fact we recognise three types of languages. One is used for the mantra portion, another belonged to the Brähmanas and a third was used in the sūtras. The Vedic seers saw to it that the language of the mantra portion of the Rgveda exhibits all the characteristics of the ṛks of the arthaprapanca. It should provide the support base for the mantras of the Yajurveda and should also exhibit the mahaduktha characteristic. That is, it should be condensed and should be subjected to finitisation by chandas. The Yajurveda mantras should not be limited by chandas and should run like prose, indicating free movement. The Sāmaveda mantras should exhibit the mahinā character and therefore should be sung as gāna. The language was perfected in every way (samskrta). Words like prajāpati, puruṣa, agni, soma, yajña, vāk, brahman, ātman, rasa, bala etc. were very comprehensive terms pregnant with meaning. When mantras were recited, the letters were subjected to intonations (svaras) for which there were prescribed rules. Any mistake in the sounds or intonations or use of letters in the recitations, were said to produce disastrous results. The mantra language was considered as the language of the Devas. The language of the Brähmanas was supposed to contain both

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4 शब्दः शब्दः स्वरतो वर्णतो वा मिथ्याप्रयुक्तो न तत्वमेवति।
स वान्यब्रजो यजमानं हिनस्ति यथेन्द्रशशु: स्वरतोपरापात्। (महाभाष्य)
the language of the *Devas* and that of the *manuṣyas* (human beings). There are many references in the Brāhmaṇas where a distinction is made between these two languages. The *rtrviks* were supposed to know both the languages and used them in a carefully planned manner according to requirements in the *yajña karma*.

The *Rgveda* says that the words have been planned by learned men and only the learned knows their meanings. Just as a dutiful wife exposes herself fully to her husband only, the *mantras* reveal themselves fully only to the learned. The others who are not well equipped cannot get at the real sense of the *mantras*. The learned men who know their meanings and also their applications in *yajña karma* is respected by all and is sought after by others who seek real knowledge of the *mantras*. On the other hand the person who merely recites the *mantras* without knowing their meanings roams about like a sterile cow which cannot produce calves or milk. Those who neglect the study of the Vedas and indulge in worldly activities involving hearing and talking neither achieve anything nor get to know the right way of living.\(^5\) In this way the *rṣi* cautions us against interpreting the *mantras* according to our whims and fancies.

Sometimes the *mantras* contain words which do not occur at all anywhere else. For example the 106th *Sūkta* of tenth *Mandala* is full of such words. The words when

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5 सत्तुमभितितं तितुमा पुनर्तो यज्ञं धीरा मनसा वाचमक्रतं।
अन्तम सर्वायः सर्वमाति जानते भविष्यो लक्ष्मीर्नादिविधि वाचि॥

क्षेत्र वाचके पदीविकार्यन्तः तामन्थकितवतुपुत्रस्य प्रविष्टाम्।

तामामृत्यु व्यवधुः पुरुशः तां सप्त रेका अभि सं नवे।

उत्त पवः पश्चात् न ददर्श वाचमूल तवः श्रुण्वत श्रुण्वायनम्।

उत्त पवः सविन्ये तन्भं विस्तरं जाह्ययं पत्यं उपाती सुस्वासाः।

उत्त तवं सविन्ये स्विचरपीतमाहुर्यं हिन्नात्त्वथिः वाजिनेशु॥

अवेन्यात चरसि मात्येष्व वाचमु सुश्रुषों अफलामपुष्पाम्।

यमस्तत्त्वान सविचर्यं सवचारं न तस्य वाच्यं प्‌भागोपिनिः।

यद्वव श्रुण्वोप्यतरं श्रुण्वति न हि प्रवेद सुकुस्तत्त्व पन्थाम॥ (क्ष्मे.१०.७१.२-६)
pronounced impress us in some way. Except first and last ṛks all the other ṛks exhibit structural peculiarities indicating that some special language has been used here. Words like maderū, sanerū, uṣṭārā cacarā, patarā, ārangarā, kīnārā, phārivā, kharamajrā etc. do not occur anywhere else. They were probably believed to be of divine origin. For the benefit of the readers, selected ṛks of this sūkta are given in the footnote below and interested readers may refer to Sāyaṇaś commentary for the meaning conveyed by them.

The Vedic seers sincerely believed that the Vedavāk pertaining to the Śabdaprapanca is divine vāk and therefore whatever the Veda says it will be achieved. The yajñas performed using the Trayī Vidya can give us anything we want, because the Devas speak truth and used yajñas to achieve what they wanted. It is said Uddālaka Āruni told Vājasaneyā Yājñavalkya who was his student that if a dry twig is sprinkled with water reciting proper mantras in the yajña it will get life and grow branches and leaves. Such was the efficacy of mantras and yajña karma.

6 उद्वाश्च फवर्षु अथेये प्रायोऽनेव भात्रया शाचुन्यः।
दुःत्रे हि ग्रो यजरासा जनेतु नान स्त्वां महिषेवश्रवणात्॥
बासेवे पुष्याः शिम्भासा मिजेव्हैं जता शतत्रा शात्सप्तन्ता॥
वासेवच्चा वयस्वा चम्बेद्दा मेसेवा सप्तया पुरैया॥
सुषुष्येव जरमये तुर्वरितश् नेतोतेव तुर्वरी पर्वरीकाः॥
उदन्येवेव जेमना मदेरू ता मे जरायवकर् मरायु॥
पक्रेव चर्चर्ये जारं मरायु क्लेशवार्षेचु तत्तत्रीयेव उग्रा॥
ध्रुवनाशकारमप्पप्पुरूस्वप्पुरूस्वप्पुरूस्काराकोणात्॥
चर्चमच प्रमुखाः सनेनौ भोगविता तुर्वरी फारिवासम्।
पतेवंत सब्रार वाचनाणिर्वद्रू मन्य्यान न जगमी॥
आर्ज्ञरेव मदेवेवेव सारेर्ये गवि निश्चीनवरे।
क्रीतान्वेव स्वेदसमिर्वात्सानास्त्रामोदबिन्नौ सूतविसात् सचेथे॥ (श्रम. 10.106.2, 5–8.10)

7 सा वे देवी वर्षु यज्रे यावेव वदति तत्तववंति। (श्रम. 14.4.3.27)

8 तं हेतुमुखात्मक आर्ज्ञनावांजसनेवाय भाज्यल्प्यवाचास्वाय उक्तयोवाच ्य पतं सप्तन्ते स्माणो निनिर्चेत् - जायेर्यु साखल: प्रोहेये पल्लाणात। (श्रम. 14.9.3.15)
Let us now get back to Śabdabrahman and see some more details pertaining to its structure and its relation to Arthabrahman. We have already seen that in the Parameshti region two streams of vāk coexist. One is responsible for the creation of arthaprapanca and another for the creation of śabdaprapanca. Actually there is no such clear cut demarcation of the vāk streams. The demarcation exists only in our mind. That is, we can talk of śabdaprapanca only at one time and arthaprapanca only at other time. As far as the vāk is concerned it gives rise to both these worlds. For example Taittiriya Brāhmaṇa while dealing with the all pervasive character of vāk clearly brings out its dual character viz. it brings into existence the śabdaprapanca as well as arthaprapanca. It says,

‘All the Devas have their support on vāk only. The gandharvās the animals and man are all supported by vāk only. (This means that prānās require a material support for their operations and vāk provides it:) The entire universe is of matter only. The same vāk is responsible for the coming into existence of śabdaprapanca. Let this vāk (goddess of speech) who is Indra’s wife accept our offerings.9

N.B. The speech characterised by letters (varnas) is called Indrapatnī because Indra perfected the vāk (vyākṛta) which was originally imperfect (avyākṛta).

Similarly the Rgveda deals with the nature and functioning of the all powerful and all pervading āmbhrī vāk. One of the rks in the sūkta says,

‘I pervade space like the wind while I am engaged in the creation of all the worlds. My greatness pervades the earth as well as the heavenly regions.10

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9 वाचे देवा उपजीविष्ठे विषये वाचे मन्त्रवर्ण: पवयो मनुष्याः।
वाचीमा विषया भृवनामार्थमित्ता सा नो हवं जुष्टाचादिन्त्रपतिः॥ (ते.श्र.2.8.8.4)

10 अहंमेव वात हव प्रवर्धारशभमाणा भृवनानि विषया।
परसो विषय पर एवं पुरविभूति तात्विनि महिनां संज्ञावेः॥ (र.वे.10.125.8)
The Evolution of Śabdaveda

The same Rgveda says elsewhere, that vāk pervades wherever Brahman pervades (yavadi brahma viśhitam tāvati vāk). It would therefore appear that the Vedic seers have purposely used the word vāk both for speech and matter in order to achieve oneness of sabda and artha (śabdārthatādātmya).

The Rgveda in a ōk describes how the gaurī vāk undergoes sizering as it gets associated with various regions. In the Parameshti region it splits into two streams, one is associated with waters and is called āpyā vāk. It is this vāk that gives rise to the all pervasive ambhrni vāk. The other stream is associated with soma and therefore is called soumyā vāk. It gives rise to subrahmanyā vāk. When this stream gets associated with the sun, it gives rise to brhati vāk. This brhati vāk is nine syllabled. When this brhati vāk gets associated with the earth, it gives rise to anuṣṭup vāk which is eight syllabled. In the solar region it becomes thousand syllabled through the rays of the sun (who is called sahasrāṃśu). Thus gaurī vāk which was single in the beginning becomes, at first, two footed then four footed, then eight footed and nine footed and in space it splits into thousand (a large number) syllables.11

While brhati vāk is presided over by Indra, Agni presides over the anuṣṭup vāk of the earth. The anuṣṭup vāk of the earth requires the support of the brhati vāk of the sun. While the first three vāks (viz gaurī vāk, subrahmanyā vāk and brhati vāk) are of divine origin and therefore are everlasting (nitya), the last one is of the earth and therefore ephemeral (anitya). That is why the Rgveda says

‘There are four stages of vāk which are measured ones. These the, wise brāhmīns know. Three of these are hidden in secret places (and therefore not

11 गौरीभूतियम् सहितकालिन तत्स्तक्षेपकादी द्वितीयोऽसा चतुर्दशी।
आष्टादशी नवपदी वर्षपूर्वी सहस्राश्रयम् परमेव व्योमनम्॥ (ऋ.वे.1.164.41)
WHAT IS VEDA?

accessible to us). It is the fourth one that the human beings speak.\textsuperscript{12}

The above \textit{rk} has been annotated in many ways. Madhusúdan Ojha deals with this in detail in his work entitled \textit{Pathyāśvasti}. Motilal Shastri gives many interpretations to this \textit{rk} in his writings. We give below some salient points found in their analysis.

1. The four stages of \textit{vāk} referred to here are \textit{parā}, \textit{paśyantī}, \textit{madhyamā} and \textit{vaikhari}. \textit{Parā} is associated with pure consciousness (\textit{prajñā}) part of the mind. When \textit{prāṇa} acts on \textit{prajñā}, the \textit{vāk} produced is \textit{paśyantī}. The sound associated with wind like breathing is called \textit{madhyamā} and \textit{vāk} which produces sound is called \textit{vaikhari}. All these pertain to the \textit{adhyaṭma} system.

2. There are four types of \textit{vāk}. They are \textit{vācaspatyā}, \textit{bṛhmaṇasperṣyā}, \textit{aindra}, and \textit{bhauma}. They are also called \textit{vēkūrā}, \textit{subrahmanyā}, \textit{gaurīvītā} and \textit{āmbhrīnī}. It is \textit{āmbhrīnī} \textit{vāk} that pervades the entire earth. The rest are not accessible to us.

The \textit{vāk} of the Vedas consisting of \textit{rk}, \textit{yajus} and \textit{sāman}, though apparently accessible to us is actually kept away from us (\textit{guhayām nihitā}). In other words, we do not understand it fully (\textit{na samyaktaya pariṣṭhitāyate}).\textsuperscript{13}

3. The created \textit{vāk} is fourfold. On the earth it was placed in \textit{Agni} and \textit{Rathantara sāma}. In the middle region it was placed in the wind and \textit{Vāmadevya sāma}. In the heavens it was placed in \textit{bṛhat sāma} and in the thunder. The fourth one was placed in the living beings here. Whatever was left was placed in the \textit{bṛhmanas}. Therefore \textit{bṛhmanas} speak what is known and what is not

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\textsuperscript{12} चतुरारि वाक परिमिता पद्धिति तत्तनि विदुःश्च ये मनीषिणः।
गुहायाम निहिता नेक्षयन्ति तूरीये वाच्ये मनुष्ये वदन्ति॥ (\textit{ऋ. \textit{वै.} 1.164.45})

\textsuperscript{13} बृहस्पते प्रथमे वाचो अयं यत्रिर्भ नामभिः क्षणः।
यदेव्यं श्रेष्ठं यदवप्रामाणिक्षे प्रमणं तद्विप निहितं गुहाविः।॥ (\textit{ऋ. \textit{वै.} 10.71.1})
known. They have access to the unknown through the sāmans in rituals.\(^\text{14}\)

4. The four components of vāk are amṛta, divyā, vāyavyā and aindri. The amṛta vāk is embedded in manas and prāṇa and is called satyā. It is the vāk of r̥k, yajas and sāman. This vāk is the seat of everything. It is also the origin of everything. It is also called ākāśa. It is actually agni pervading space. Agni is its brahma (supporter). It is therefore called agneyī vāk. The divyā vāk is Atharvaveda. It is the origin of all divine beings and beings on the earth. This vāk is also called Paramesthinī vāk or sasrasvān. Soma is its brahma (supporter). It is therefore called saumyā vāk. Both the above types of vāks do not produce sound (dhvani). Therefore we cannot hear them. The third one is vāyavyā. It is embedded in vāyu (wind). It produces sounds like nāda, breathing (which are associated with wind only). These sounds do not convey any sense (anarthakāh). It is also called Sarasvatī and it supports us all. From this only Indra (who is essentially prāṇa) produced the decipherable sounds consisting of letters and which is called vyākṛtā vāk. This is the fourth one called aindri vāk.

Madhusudan Ojha discusses various aspects of vāk in his excellent book called Pathyāsvasti. Pathyāsvasti is another name for vāk (vāgvai pathyāsvastih (Brāhmaṇa))

The mimāmsakas took great pains to prove that the Śabdaveda is apauruṣeya (not of human origin). All that the mimāmsaka sūtras of Jaimini could establish was that śabda and artha (matter) have the same origin and therefore they

\(^{14}\) वागचित्वाभास्य प्रसवः। सा वे वाक्ष मुख्य चतुर्घ्य व्यभिचारः।
पुत्रो लोकं श्रीणि तुर्विरागः। पशुपु तुर्विरागः। या पृथिविः साहजी सा स्थनते।
वायुस्निर्णी सा वालं सा यामदेवः। या दिविस्सा बृहति सा स्तनयिनी। अथ पशुपु।
ततो या वागचित्वाभास्य तां ब्राह्मणं न्यदुपः। तस्मात् ब्राह्मणं उभयं वाचं वदति -
यथा वेद, यथा न। या वृहद्ध्रपन्तरयोः। यजावेन (वाजन) तथा गच्छति। या पशुपति तथा
कते यजम्॥ (मेवाच.ग्र.1.11.4)
have genetic relation (*autpattika sambandha*). It is easy for us to see that as long as we identify *śabda* with a process in Nature it is clearly *apauruseya*. But when human effort is involved in the production of sounds which are of course decipherable it loses its *apauruseya* status. In other words *Śabdaveda* should really mean a creative process like the sound produced by thunder which is certainly *apauruṣeya*. But when the process is described or interpreted through expressions of human origin it should be called *Śabdavidyā*. When we go to the root cause of *Śabda* and identify it as *Brahman* it can be called *Śabdabrahman* just like we have *Arthabrahman* or *Parabrahman*. Thus we have no difficulty in resolving the *pauruṣeya - apauruseya* question of the *Śabdaveda*.

The Vedic seers did everything to achieve one to one relation between *arthaprapanca* and *śabdaprapanca*. They discovered the *Prāṇava* ie *Omkāra* which consists of three letters ओ, ॐ, and म. The letter ओ denotes detachment (*asanga*). While pronouncing this letter we keep the concerned organs of speech open. In the case of *Arthabrahman* we have a stage *Avyaya* which is detached (*asanga*) and does not take part in creation. When we pronounce the letter ॐ, we bring the concerned organs of speech closer but we do not close them. This corresponds to the *Aksara* stage of the *Arthabrahman* and when we pronounce म we close them and this corresponds to the *Ksara* stage of the *Arthabrahman* which represents attachment (*sasanga*). We can also strike the similarity between *Arthabrahman* and *Śabdabrahman* by establishing one to one correspondence between *Avyaya*, *Aksara* and *Ksara* on one side and dhvani, svara and varṇa on the other other side.
The Aitareya Ṛānyaka strikes many similarities between Arthabrahman and Śabda-brahman.\(^\text{15}\)

The following statement found in Vedic literature clearly brings out what śabda can achieve.

‘The śabda principle is Brahman without beginning or end. It assumes the form of matter by which the Jagat is created.’\(^\text{16}\)

Based on the above belief the Vedic seers planned their yajñas, which in a way constitute experimentation of their beliefs. We may also say that they constituted the demonstration of their belief that śabda and artha have genetic relation (autpattika sambandha) and therefore, it is possible to achieve things in arthapanca through the medium of śabdapanca. The mīmāṃsakas believe that Vedas were produced only for performing the rituals and achieving material ends (Vedah hi yajñarthamabhipravṛttah). Everything is planned in the rituals as it occurs in Nature and the forces of Nature are urged through the mantras to produce beneficial effects like rain, food and prosperity. That āgni-soma interactions play the major role in creation is fully demonstrated in the yajña. The following passage of Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa clearly shows their expectations from the performance of the yajñas.

‘The Devas produced the easterly winds by uttering ‘O śrāvaya’. They brought the clouds by uttering ‘astu śrouṣṭa’. They produced lightning by uttering

\(^{15}\) पृथ्वीवर्युप्तम् स्पष्टा: अन्तरिक्षस्योप्यमाण: विब: स्वरा:
अन्ये स्वर्युप्तम् स्पष्टा: वायुस्योप्यमाण: आविभवस्य स्वरा:
क्रमवेदस्य युप्तम् स्पष्टा: यज्ञवेदस्योप्यमाण: सामवेदस्य स्वरा:
चःसूपो स्वर्युप्तम् श्रीस्रोतस्योप्यमाण: मनस्स: स्वरा:
प्राणस्य रुपं स्पष्टा: अपापस्योप्यमाण: व्यायामस्वरा: || (ऐ.आ.3.2.5)

\(^{16}\) अनाविविधं ब्रह्म शब्दवत्तवं प्रवत्ति
बिवत्ति अर्थमावेन प्रक्रिया जगतो यत: || (उपनिषदांक्र?)
yaja. They produced thunder by uttering ‘ye yajamahe’ when they said ‘vouṣat’ the rains fell.17

The Vedic seers believed that by performing the various Vedic rituals like Agnihoṭra (day and night) Darśapūrṇamāsa (fortnightly), the Cāturmasyeṣṭis (seasonal) and the annual Soma yāga, they can become bhūsuras (Devas on earth) capable of achieving everything they wanted while living on the earth and attain a blissful life after death. They believed in some sort of unity in the structure of the universe at the three levels viz. ādhidaivīka, ādhibhautika and ādhyātmika levels and built up their concepts and ideas at the ādhidaivīka level based on what they observed at the ādhibhautika and ādhyātmika levels. Sometimes they stretched their imagination so much that it led to highly artificial concepts.

At this stage it is useful to recapitulate the salient points that have emerged out of our analysis.

1. The apauruṣeya Veda has its origin in Svayambhūprajāpati who is nothing but prāṇas operating on Brahmāgni (parā vāk). The Vedas produced by this Prajāpati is called Brahmaṇiśvasitaveda.

2. This Veda acts on vāk and produces the primordial waters of the Paramēṣṭhi region. It is here that the two streams of vāk are formed. One (āpyā vāk) is responsible for the creation of arthaprapana and the other (saumyā vāk) is responsible for the śabdaprapana.

3. The Brahman theory that is applicable to arthaprapana is also applicable to śabdaprapana. That is, just like we have four stages of Arthābrahman viz. Parātāpara, Aavyaya, Akṣara and Kṣara and manas prāṇa and vāk play their parts, we have also four stages of Śabdabrahman

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17 “ओ आतम । इति वेदः पुरुषार्टि सर्वजीरे। “अस्तु श्रोषितः” इति अभ्राणि समस्तावययम्। “यज” इति विषुतम्। “ये यजामहे” इति स्तनविन्यतुम्। वन्दकरेण्यः प्रावर्ण्यः। (श. वा. 1.5.2)
viz. Svāyambhūvī vāk, Parameśthī vāk, Brhatī vāk and Anuṣṭup vāk or amṛta vāk, divyā vāk, vāyavyā vāk and aindri vāk.

4. Just like three parts of the Puruṣa are above and only one part has come down and has become viśva (as mentioned in the Puruṣasūkta), in the case of Sabdabrahman also, three parts are above and only one has come down to the earth.

5. Just like we have ṛk, yajus and sāman in the Arthaprapanca, we have in the Šabdaprapanca, Ṛgveda which is subjected to chandas, Yajurveda which is not subjected to chandas and Sāmaveda which is sung as gāna. In fact every possible thing is done to match the Šabdaveda with the Arthaveda. Now to bring the arthaprapanca into existence, the manas prāṇa and vāk of Prajāpati, the ṛks, yajus' and sāmans and the agnisoma interactions play their part. After having created the viśva, Prajāpati enters into it as viśvātmā. If there is perfect equation (tādātmya) between Šabdabrahman and Arthabrahman ie. if śabda can lead to the creation of artha (matter) and arthavāk can lead to the creation of śabda, then for the Šabdabrahman to be effective in the creation of arthaprapanca we require the manas, prāṇa ānd vāk of the ātman (ie. the amṛta part) of Šabdabrahman to play their effective roles in the creation of arthaprapanca. The Vedic seers were quite aware of this necessity and that is why in the Vedic ritual, they employed special type of brahmins (rtviks) who during the ritual, work on the ātman of the yajamāna (the person who performs the ritual) with the help of Šabdaveda and try to link it with the ātman of Prajāpati (Devātman). Whatever he does in the ritual

18 विशादकृत्यं उदेत् पुरुषं; पादोस्येयाभयब्ययुन।। (ऋ.व.10.90.7)

19 चत्वारि वाकः परिमिता पदानि तानि विदुब्राह्मणेण ये मनोष्ठिष्ण।।
गुह्य त्रीणि निहिता नेक्ष्यायितु सूरीयं वाचं मनुष्यः बदत्ति।। (ऋ.व.1.164.45)
he says that he is doing what the Devas did (*Devah
yadakurvan tadaham karavâni*). It is this linking, he
thinks, that enables him to achieve what he wants in
the material world (*arthaprapanca*) i.e. wealth, prosperity,
long life etc.

In actual practice how far the *yajñas* were successful in
realising the objective, it is extremely difficult to say.
Madhusûdan Ojha mentions that the Vedic seers were adepts
in several *vidyâs* and he names them in his works. Many
of these pertain to the rituals. Therefore in the absence of
sufficient observational data, it will not be correct to pass
any judgment on them. Today we are far removed from
Vedic tradition and therefore we are totally incompetent to
assess the skills of our Vedic seers. However from our point
of view their approach is extremely interesting. It is quite
possible that the philosophy of the *Upaniṣads* is the direct
outcome of such ideas. Many of us really do not understand
what is meant by realisation of the *ātman* or self as is
taught in the *Upaniṣads*. In our opinion it has a direct
relation to the *yajamâna* in a Vedic ritual trying to link his
*ātman* i.e. the coordinated functioning of his *manas*, *prâṇa*
and *vâk* with the functioning of *manas*, *vâk* and *prâṇa* of
*Prajâpati* or *Devas*, so that he functions on the earth as a
human being of a higher order.

At this stage it is pertinent to point out that a scientist
engaged in fundamental research in subjects like earth sci-
ences or astronomical sciences is as much involved with the
forces of Nature as another who wants to link his *ātman*
with that of the Devas in a Vedic ritual. It is because of
this linking of his *ātman* with that of the forces of Nature
he is able to hit at his invention or discovery through which
he is able to achieve material ends for the good of the
people. He certainly makes use of the Vedas in the truest
sense of the term whether they are of the *arthaprapanca* or
*sabdaprapanca*. In this respect the ideas of the Vedic seers
have very wide application.
They sincerely believed that material prosperity should go hand in hand with spiritual prosperity. According to Madhusūdan Ojha\textsuperscript{20} there was a very learned person of divine qualities called Brahmā among the sādhyas who lived in the early Rgvedic period. He composed the first Śabdaaveda. Sādhyas were experts in yajñavidyā,\textsuperscript{21} prāṇavidyā and adhyātmavidyā. Brahmā expanded their knowledge by making observations on the sun and other heavenly bodies and also studied the phenomena on the earth. Thus he extended their knowledge to ādhidāvīka and ādhibhautika spheres. He was the first to reject the various theories of creation prevalent at that time\textsuperscript{22} and to propound the Brahman theory of creation. Thus the Veda composed by Brahmā contained many branches of knowledge prevalent at that time. His Veda contained four lakh verses. This Veda was lost in course of time and the Vedas we now have, have been composed by some rṣis after deep study of Nature. The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa says that the rṣis recovered the lost Vedas from the ocean after digging with sharp weapons (i.e. they recovered the lost Vedas with great effort).\textsuperscript{23} They went on adding to their collection as and when they composed new ones. According to Purāṇas, Vyāsa later arranged them into four samhitas. During the early period of Vedic composition there were ślokas and gathās which in course of time were lost. Whatever survived are available here and there.

Satapatha Brāhmaṇa while dealing with the creation of Vedas says that Prajāpati created twelve bṛhati thousands

\textsuperscript{20} vide जगद्धरस्वाभम् - by Madhusudan Ojha, published by Rajasthan Patrika Jaipur 1990

\textsuperscript{21} यज्ञोन यज्ञोपवन्त प्रवासानि धर्माणि प्रतिमाणायामसं सह नारक महाभासस्मृत्य यत्र पूर्वे साध्या: सन्ति देवाः || (ऋ.वे.1.164.50)

\textsuperscript{22} नारवीयसुक्तः, कथेव (10.87)

\textsuperscript{23} ये समुद्रान्तरसृष्टिः देवास्तीत्वाणिमिराचिभि: सूक्तेऽवृत्त तदंविचारं यत्र निर्विशेषं दमुः || (श.प्रा.7.5.2.52)
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(bṛhatiśahasra) of rks. Bṛhati consists of 36 syllables and therefore he created $12 \times 36 \times 1000 = 432000$ syllables of rks. When he arranged them in the pankti chandas, there were 10800 panktis of rks. Pankti chandas consists of forty syllables. (10800 x 40 = 432000) He also created eight bṛhati thousands of yajus' and four bṛhati thousands of sāmans. That is the syllables of yajus' and sāmans put together were as many as what rks had viz. 432000. The total of all the three is, 864000 syllables. One year has got 10800 muhūrtas in it and it is seen that the Rgveda as we have today has 10580 rks and 432000 syllables, which shows some similarity to the Rgveda created by Prajāpati.\(^\text{24}\)

It is not our intention to deal with the contents of each Veda in this book. These details are already available to the reader in a number of books which have already been published. Our aim in writing this book has been mainly to highlight those aspects which have not been dealt with by any other author. In the light of what we have said about the Śabdaiveda, there seems to be vast scope for research on Vedic texts and the sounds produced when they are recited. It is very unfortunate that scientific research on Vedic texts and traditional methods of reciting the Vedas is almost nil. There are many mantras in the Vedas whose

\(^{24}\) स रशस्य स्मृत्योहत भ्रात्स्र बुद्धि साध्याणि। एतावत्यो सर्चः। या: प्रज्ञापतिसुष्ट्या:।
तत्रस्मिन्तमेव यूहे पद्व-कन्तवत्तित्तिन्नत: ता: यत्त्विन्तमेव यूहे तित्तित्तिन्नत
तस्मातिविश्वमार्गस्य रात्रय:। अथ यत्त्विन्तितिन्नत:। तत्रस्मातिविश्वमार्गस्य रात्रय:।
तत्राशि: अन्तानि पद्व: कन्तवा भवन:।
अधीवेदव वृहत्विश्वमार्गस्य संगमं चत्वारिस साम्याम।
एतावद्वेदव यत्त्विन्तपिसुष्ट्या:।
तै त्रिशतमेव यूहे पद्व-कन्तवत्तित्तिन्नत:।

ती यत्त्विन्तमेव यूहे अन्तिमात: तत्मातु बिव्यान्नास्य रात्रय:। अथ यत्त्विन्तितिन्नत:।
तस्मातिविश्वमार्गस्य रात्रय:। अथ अन्त्राशरतमेव अन्तानि पद्व: कन्तवा भवन:।
ते सर्वेव तच्छो वेदव: दशाभिश्वमार्गव्यो ध्यानं अर्चीत्तयानमभवन:।
स महार्तस्म महोहत्वार्थीतिमान्योऽनम्
महार्तस्म महोहत्वार्थीतिः: सम्पर्यात:। (श.व्र.10.4.2.23-25)
meanings have not been understood at all by us. In any case interpreting the Vedic passages, according to one’s own whims and fancies should stop since we have shown that Śabdaveda can convey only one meaning which has to be found by intensive study of the literature, especially the Brāhmaṇas which throw light on the meanings of many Vedic passages. Incidentally it may be said that mere recitation of the Vedas without understanding their meanings leads us nowhere.

With the above remarks we now pass on to define Vedic religion.
VI. DEFINITION OF VEDIC RELIGION

We have seen in the last four chapters what Vedas is. The next question we have to address ourselves is, what is Vedic religion? Can we define it? The answer is yes, we can define it. To put it in one sentence we can define it thus: Vedic religion aims at understanding Nature and its relation to the individual and the society and recommends a way of life to every individual in the light of such understanding. The Vedic seers were intellectuals of a high order and therefore their statements carry a certain amount of authority with them.

The Vedic seers sincerely believed as we have already said that the coming into existence of the human being marked a distinct stage of perfection in the creation process. We have also seen how they discovered the three vīryas, brahma, kṣatra and vit in tune with the three Vedas and these three correspond to predominance of jñānaśakti, predominance of kriyāśakti and predominance of arthaśakti respectively. In their opinion the division of men according to their qualities and potentialities was extremely beneficial for a healthy society in which everybody has an allotted role and by playing that role he contributes to the well being of the society as a whole. It is most unfortunate that the true spirit underlying the division of men into classes was lost in course of time. Complexes developed and exploitation became the bane of society. If only we had understood the true value of the vīryas as per Vedic tradition, we would have nurtured them and today we would have amongst us a large number of scientists and philosophers (jñānaśaktipradhānāḥ), an equally large number of technolo-
gists, artists, administrators, commanders and leaders who exhibit skill, valour and courage (kriyāśaktipradhānāḥ) and also a large number of businessmen, bankers, and economists who amass wealth only to help others (tyāgāya sambṛtarthāḥ) (arthaśaktipradhānāḥ). We would be the enjoyers (bhoktāraḥ) of the material and spiritual prosperity of the land for which the above three categories would toil continuously. Such is the ideal society in which we ought to have lived if only we had understood the true value of Vedic tradition. The achievement of human excellence on a large scale would have been a distinct possibility only in such surroundings.

As scientist-philosophers the Vedic seers argued that since the observed universe is the outcome of a divine intelligent process it follows that the qualities and activities of the created objects are also the product of some intelligent process. While they named the process as Vedas, they named the qualities and activities of the created objects as 'dharma'. This is the meaning of the statement,

'Vedaddharmo hi nirbabhau'
'From Veda, dharma came into existence'

The living habits, the eating habits the degree of intelligence, physical power, behaviour etc. are all covered by dharma. Because man alone has got the capacity to change his dharma on account of his thinking power (kevalam manusya eva atikrāmati), certain regulations of his mental and physical activities become necessary in the interests of society (the well being of the surroundings) as well as the individual himself. This regulation is possible only when we understand what dharma is. The source from which we can understand the same is naturally the Śabdaveda. That is why Manu said,

'To those who want to know dharma Veda is the supreme authority'¹

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¹ धर्मं जिज्ञासमानानां प्रमाणं परमं स्तुति:। (मनुस्मृति)
In other words it is possible to get a correct picture of dharma only when we study and understand Nature in all its entirety which is very difficult for a normal human being. The Vedic seers alone had this capacity and therefore they were called 'saksāt kṛta dharma' and their interpretation of dharma becomes automatically authoritative.

Since action (karma) is related to dharma, it becomes necessary to analyse action (karma). A thoughtful action that benefits the individual as well as his surroundings is called karma. It also goes under the name punya, sukṛta as well as dharma. When action ends in unwanted results it is called vikarma, pāpa, duṣkṛta etc. When it neither does good nor bad to the individual or surroundings it is called akarma. Karma brings happiness and prosperity while vikarma brings misery, disease etc.

In all actions karmendriyas (organs of action) and jñānendriyas (organs of knowledge) do not play equal role. In some the former dominate and in some the latter. The qualities of men directly related to dharma and karma can be classified as follows.

1. Inherited by birth.

2. Developed by training in an atmosphere in which the natural qualities are enriched and all impediments to such enrichment are removed.

3. Acquired by force.

The above analysis led the mahaṛṣis to conclude that only karma that conforms to one's own dharma leads to prosperity of the individual and of the society as a whole. Since they had already identified three main types among men viz. 1) with predominant capacity to acquire knowledge (jñāna śaktipradhānāh) with predominant capacity for action, exhibition of valour, spirit of sacrifice etc. (kriyā śakti- pradhānāh) and 3) with predominant capacity to acquire wealth (artha śaktipradhānāh) pertaining to the three viryaś or
Definition of Vedic Religion

Varnas it was easy for them to declare that for prosperity, each has to direct his activity (karma) towards the enrichment of the above natural qualities and regulate it according to place, time and society (deśa, kāla, pātra). In this process they discovered three types of karma viz. yajña, tāpas and dāna.

We have already said that yajña is closely related to creative processes in Nature. We shall examine it here in association with tapas and dāna. Tapas is that activity through which the man acquires from outside such of the qualities which are absent in him and which are required for the enrichment of his natural qualities. Dāna is to part with superfluous portions of one’s own qualities or possessions for the sake of others who need them. If we cast off some of our possessions without naming the individual or society benefitting by it, it is called tyāga. Fruit bearing trees rainfall etc. are the best examples of this. There is thus a give and take activity that sustains the universe and the prosperity of the whole society depends on this activity. This principle of constructive feeding of this universe (jagadāpyāyana) is carried out by the yajña process which is essentially anna-annāda bhāva or donor-enjoyer principle or agni-soma interaction. Because yajña applies to the entire universe it becomes a universal dharma and therefore the most sacred act of the individual (yajño hi śreṣṭatamam karma).

It would therefore be clear from the above analysis that the prosperity of mankind lies in his capacity to live in tune with Nature. Veda helps him to understand Nature and dharma helps him to live in tune with her.

The above account in short constitutes Vedic religion. It is needless to point out that this covers the entire mankind and therefore is universal in nature. It assures every individual both spiritual and material prosperity. It provides the right atmosphere for the emergence of human
species of a higher order if at all it is possible in the future. If only we had understood this message of the Vedas properly we would have been able to unite the entire mankind into a single unit following certain codes of conduct which are universal in character. Then why did we not do it? Where did it go wrong? Well, there are some valid reasons for our not being able to convey the message of the Vedas effectively to mankind. A careful study of the Vedic literature and the available commentaries on them would suggest that there should have been some gaps of knowledge between the original composers of Vedas and planners of rituals and the subsequent priests who inherited their knowledge. It is quite likely that the missing links both in the interpretation of Vedic passages as well as in the proper mantras to be used in the rituals were filled up by later priests according to their capacity. Many times the śastra mantras in the rituals do not have direct relation to the particular karma for which the mantras are recited. Further a convincing explanation is required why the Vedic compositions such as the āks and yajus’ abruptly ended somewhere. If we accept that the Vedic passages should contain mostly statements of creative processes in Nature and associated phenomena pertaining to ādhyātmika, ādhyātaṃśa and ādhibhautika spheres, the discoveries should have gone on continuously and therefore the composition of mantras should have gone on continuously. It is quite possible that the composers of mantras were victims of natural calamity like earth-quakes avalanches, advancement of glaciers, land slides etc. and the group which survived started with whatever knowledge they had inherited from their ancestors and carried on their priestly activities to the best of their abilities. From that time onwards the message of the Vedas started taking diverse directions. The systems of philosophy like Vaiśeṣika, Sāṅkhya and Vedānta which were inseparable components of a single Vedic tradition became the breeding ground for the division of society, some people swearing by Karmakānda and some others swearing by Iñānakānda. Even
among those who believed in the supremacy of Śaṅkara there were so many factions with the result the real message of the Vedas was completely lost.

We have had kings and kingdoms and great kings ruled over different parts of this country at different times. There were many great scholars in their courts or in the land they ruled. Scholars like Kālidāsa, Bṛha, Bhāravi, Kṣemendra, Māgha, Bhatti have lived and flourished in this country. But they never made any serious study of Vedas and Vedic literature and did nothing to unite the people by pointing out that the message of the Vedas cannot take diverse paths. They were more interested in glorifying kings and kingdoms.2 The result has been that there have been very few individuals who made a deep study of the Vedas and Vedic tradition during the past thousand years and fewer people understood the real message of the Vedas. We will show in one of our books how and why these people have differed from each other though all of them based their conclusions on the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads. Even a simple beautiful text like Bhagavad Gītā has been interpreted differently by different people according to their whims and fancies. The impact of foreign invasion and then foreign rule did have their own effect on the propagation of Vedic message. By the time we were free we were already in a mess. But with all these negative forces, if at all the country has remained intact as a single unit, it is because of Veda and Vedic tradition only, whatsoever may be the manner in which it has influenced the people.

Above all the greatest drawback has been that no scientist worth the name has ever made a deep study of Vedic literature and made a scientific assessment of their contributions to our understanding of Nature. Many of them have been repelled by the language problem and others have just not cared to find out what these people were talking.

2 We are here reminded of the old saying “वेदां हृदय रामब्रह्माण्डल”
Moreover an encyclopaedic knowledge of many branches of science is really required to tackle many mantras because the Vedic seers covered the ādhibhautika and ādhyātmika spheres in their mantras. For example it is not possible for a physicist to say whether a plant which grows and decays according to the phases of the moon is possible at all in Nature. Can a physicist develop a model of the creation and sustenance of an object based on the Vedic concepts of ṛk, yajus and sāman? Can we parameterise and incorporate manas in our evolution models? These are thought provoking problems for the scientists. Vedic literature if studied in the right way is a fascinating subject. The author would appeal to the scientific community to come forward and spare some time to study this literature and bring out the true message of the Vedas for the sake of the entire mankind. It is quite possible that the future Vedavits (knowers of Vedas) will be scientists only.
VII. CONCLUSION

We have come to the end of our small thesis. If this can draw more people especially the scientists into this field, the writing of this thesis is more than justified. Of course the mental equipment that is required to study the Vedic literature is of a fairly high order and only a few fortunate people can enter this field. It is only to them the mantras will reveal their meanings as the Ṛk says¹

उत्त त्वः पञ्चमृत दशर्त वाचमुन त्वः श्रुतिन्त श्रुतोत्तेनाम्।
उत्त त्वः तन्त्रं विस्मये जायेव पत्य उशाती सुवासा:॥

At the same time intensive research is called for on the sounds produced while reciting the Vedas. We have to understand the effect of sounds on the individual and on the environment, if at all such an effect exists or can be detected.

Before we conclude, let us recall the advice of the Vedic seer who said,²

संगमश्रव्यं संवदध्यं सं दो मनांसि जानन्ताम्।
देवं भाग्यं यथा पूर्वं संज्ञानना उपासते॥
समानी व आबूति: समाना हृदयानि व:॥
समानमस्तु यो मनो वधावः सुसहासिति॥

'Let us go together, speak together and understand together. Just like the Devas, share the offerings together, we shall also share our fortunes together.'

'Let your thoughts be alike, let your hearts and minds be alike and let your thoughts bring prosperity to all.'

¹ क.वे.10.71.5
² क.वे.10.191.2.4