

Sama Veda



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Introduction to Samaveda

Samaveda is the third of the collections of Vedic mantras. It has exactly 1875 mantras or verses, each of which has a specific metre. The texts of most of these verses are in the Rigveda Samhita which has 10,552 verses, i.e., the text of each mantra of Samaveda is identical to the text of some mantra of Rigveda Samhita, but the corresponding mantras of the two Samhitas differ in their notation for intonation.

Samaveda is the earliest known systematic procedure for giving a melody to a chanted verse. Most persons who have heard with devotion the singing of Samaveda verses will attest to the sense of exhilaration or ecstasy experienced by them. It is no wonder that the famous epic poem Bhagavad Gita [Chap. 10, Verse 22] in the epic Mahabharata declares that the Samaveda is the best among the four Vedas. Each Sama vedic mantra contains in it not only the deep meaning of the counter part of Rig vedic mantra but also has the added dimension of music. Samaveda is the foundation for all systems of music in the subcontinent of India.

Recensions

Samaveda itself has three recensions namely Kouthumiya, rahayaniya and jaiminiya. The first two are identical in both text and intonation, they differ from each other only in grouping of the verses or mantras into adhyayas etc. This is the text given here. The Jaimini recension has fewer mantras, only 1693, but it has more ganas or final songs namely 3681. The distinction between the texts of these recensions is discussed in the edition by Satvlekar.

Each chapter or adhyaya takes verses for different mandalas of the Rigveda. For instance the first ten mantras of the first adhyaya of Samaveda having 11 mantras have same text as following RV Samhita: 6.16.10, 4.16.1, 1.12.1, 6.16.34, 8.73.1, 8.60.1, 8.11.7, 6.16.13. the eleventh mantra has no corresponding RV mantra.

The reason is that compiler made the selection based on musical considerations. All verses in the same adhyaya or decade have one common metre and one deity. All the deities present in RV are also present in this subset of RV verses, except that the verses for Pavamana Soma are numerous.





Sama, Rk and Yajus-Connections

Three types of mantras and four collections

In the Vedic books, there are three types of mantras, namely Rk, Yajus and Sama. A verse with a metre is Rk. A prose verse without metre is Yajus. A verse used for singing is Saman. The same text of verse, say in RV (6.16.10), can be chanted as a Rk mantra or as a Sama mantra as in the first verse of Samaveda. Rigveda is the collection of all Rks to be chanted. Yajurveda is the collection of all mantras useful in rituals; it includes all Yajus mantras and some mantras in Rigveda. Similarly Samaveda is made of all Sama verses. Atharvaveda consists mainly of Rks and some Yajus. All the four collections are equally sacred.

Samaveda and Rigveda

It was mentioned that the texts of most of the Samaveda verse came from Rigveda. The complete recension of Rigveda available today is Shakala. Of the 1875 mantras, 1770 are in Shakala recension of Rigveda. Another 29 verses can be traced to the mantras of the Khila suktas of Rigveda and some slightly modified versions of the mantras of RV. The remaining 76 mantras in Samaveda presumably are from the recensions of RV which are lost today.

The close relationship between the Rigveda and Samaveda are mentioned in several upanishads like *Chandogya*. The famous *Brhadaranyaka* upanishad compares the relationship between these two upanishads to that between a husband and wife [Br. up. 6.4.20 and Atharvaveda 14.2.71].



Rig and Sama connection

ऋग्वेदमन्त्राः ।

Original Verse From Rig Veda (RV.6.16.10)

अग्र आ याहि वीतये गृणानो हव्यदातये । नि होता सत्सि बर्हिषि ॥ (ऋ. ६-१६-१०)

agna ā yāhi vītaye gr̥ṇāno havyaḍātaye ni hotā satsi barhiṣhi (6.16.10)

सामवेदमन्त्रः (सामयोनिः)

The seed mantra of Samaveda 01 (1.1.1.1)

अग्र आ याहि वीतये गृणानो हव्यदातये । नि होता सत्सि बर्हिषि ॥ (साम. १.१.१.१)

agna ā yāhi vītaye gr̥ṇāno havyaḍātaye ni hotā satsi barhiṣhi (sāma 1.1.1.1)

अस्य गानानि । **The texts for chanting two versions**

(१) गौतमस्य परकम् । **Gotama's text**

ओग्रार्ह । आयाहीऽ ३ । वोइतोयाऽ २ इ । तोयाऽ २ इ । गृणानो ह ।

ognāi āyāhī voitoyā i toyā i gr̥ṇāno ha

व्यदातोयाऽ २ इ । तोयाऽ २ इ । नाइ होतासाऽ २ ३ । त्साऽ २ इ बाऽ २ ३ ४ औहोवा । हीऽ २ ३ ४ षी ॥१॥

vyadātōyā i toyā i nāi hotāsā tsā i bā oahovā hīṣhī

(२) कश्यपस्य बर्हिषम् । **Kashyapa's text for chanting**

अग्र आयाही वी । तया इ । गृणानो हव्यदाताऽ २ ३ याइ ।

agna āyāhī vī tayā i gr̥ṇāno havyaḍātā yāi

नि होता सत्सि बर्हाऽ २ ३ इषी । बर्हाऽ २ इ षाऽ २ ३ ४ औहोवा । बर्हाऽ ३ षीऽ २ ३ ४ ५ ॥२॥

ni hotā satsi barhā iṣhī barhā iṣhā auhovā barhiṣhī





Text of the Song and text of Verse

As mentioned earlier, the singing of the Samaveda Verse is not an adhoc improvisation, but follows a strict procedure. There is a method for producing the text for the song based on the corresponding Sama mantra. There are two stages. In the first stage, a more elaborate scheme is introduced for marking the text of the mantra, which is some mantra in Rigveda. For instance, the text of first verse in Samaveda is same that of the verse (6.16.10) of Rigveda. In Rigveda, each syllable is recited in one of three ways. Svarita [marked with a vertical line], udatta [horizontal line below letter], anudatta [no sign on syllable]. Each verse of Samaveda is marked with one or two of seven signs, namely the numerals 1, 2, 3 and the consonants *u*, *ra*, *ka*, the seventh being the absence of any mark. This version is called the shell of the Sama verse or basic Sama verse and is displayed on our web site and in printed books.

In the second stage, the basic text is expanded by adding new vowels, modifying some syllables and adding numerals at various points to denote the time duration of the singing of those syllables. This version is called as gana found only in books specializing in Samaveda singing. The text of the gana or song is displayed elsewhere as a gif file. For example, the first verse of Samaveda (whose text is same as RV 6.16. 10) has three gana versions or ganas named after the rishi who 'heard' it or developed it and their names as Gotama's parka, Kashyap's parka. The rishi Gautama is a son or descendent of rishi Gotama.

Thus from the basic 1875 verses, we get 2722 ganas which are sung. The ganas are divided into four categories, gramageya (ordinary folk), aranyageya (wood), uha (guess or extrapolation), uhya (secret), the corresponding numbers being 1197, 294, 1026 and 205.





Chanting and Error Correcting Codes

The Samaveda texts were preserved orally long before methods of preservation of written material became robust. Even today the emphasis is on oral mastery. The traditionalists feel strongly that all the benefits of singing of Samaveda accrue only when every syllable of every verse in the entire adhyaya or chapter is chanted or sung correctly. But we do know that the printed books of vedic hymns printed in this century in India have many errors. Moreover the pool of persons who completely concentrate on the oral mastery of these texts is shrinking day by day. What happens in a few decades or centuries when we have only different versions of the different texts? How can we locate the correct one among the many erroneous copies?

The Vedic sages were not only great spiritual savants, but also very practical people. They envisioned the possibility of having many erroneous copies. They developed a procedure for detecting the correct version. This procedure is similar to the modern parity control codes in the electrical communication and computer literature.

The great vedic scholar Pandit Sreepad Damodar Satvlekar discovered or recognized these procedures and he details them in the (Sanskrit) introduction to his edition of Samaveda Samhita published in 1956 (4th edition).

In this procedure, an entire adhyaya or chapter of about ten verses is regarded as a unit. At the end of this adhyaya a syllable is given. The syllables for the first five adhyayas are ve, kha, the, di and sha

From the syllable kha, we can infer the following numbers for the entire chapter or adhyaya 2:

1. the number of unmarked syllables not at end of a verse in the entire adhyaya, modulo 5: It is two.
2. the number of syllables with the udatta, marked 2u, (two symbols on the same syllable, 2 and u being Sanskrit numeral and vowel): It is two.
3. the number of svarita symbols marked 2 ra: It is six.

One can verify that these numbers are correct by counting the corresponding syllables. We detail the algorithm elsewhere.

