

Hindu Dharma:

Part-2

"Hindu Dharma" is a book published by Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan which contains English translation of two volumes of the Tamil Book "Deivatthin Kural"; which is a collection of invaluable and engrossing speeches of Sri Sri Sri Chandrasekharendra Saraswathi MahaSwamiji.





The Four Vedas

"Anantah vai Vedah", the Vedas are unending. The seers have, however, revealed to us only a small part of them but it is sufficient for our welfare in this world and next. We are not going to create many universes like Brahma that we should know all the Vedas. We need to know only as many as are necessary to ensure our good in this world.

In each of the four Vedas there are different "pathas" and "pathabhedas" or "pathantaras". The same musical composition or raga is sung in different "panis". For instance, the same musical composition or raga is expounded in different styles by, say, Maha-Vaidyanatha Ayyar, Konerirajaouram Vaidyanatha Ayyar and Sarabha sastri. Just as in some panis there are more sangatis to a composition than in some others, there are more suktas in some pathas than in others. There may also be differences in the order of the mantras.

Each pathantra or each version is called a sakha or recension. The various sakhas are branches of the Vedic tree, indeed a great tree like the Adyar banyan [in Madras]. The branches big and small belong to one or another of the four Vedas, Rg, Yajur, Saman and Atharvan.

Modern indologists are of the view that the Rgveda came first, that the Yajurveda came later and so on. But, according to our sastras, all Vedas are eternal. To state that one Veda belongs to a period prior to, or later than, another is not correct since all the Vedas are associated with the sacrifice that came to mankind with creation itself. The same argument holds good in

the matter of fixing the dates of the divisions of any of the sakhas - the Samhita, the Brahmana and Aranyaka. The Vedas belong to a realm in which there is no scope for any research. If we believe that they were discovered by seers who knew past, present and future -- themselves, though, remaining in a state beyond time -- we will realise that it is meaningless to attempt to fix their date.

In the Rgveda itself the Yajurveda and the Samaveda are mentioned in a number of passages. In Purusasuktha occurring in the Rgveda (tenth mandala, 90th suktha) there is a reference to the other Vedas. We learn from this, don't we, that one Veda does not belong to a period prior to, or later than another?

I stated that each recension consisted of the Samhita, the Brahmana and the Aranyaka. When we speak of "Veda-adhyayana" (the study or chanting of the Vedas) we normally have in mind the Samhita part only. When we bring out a book consisting of the Samhita alone of the Rgveda we still call it the "Rgveda". The Samhita is indeed the very basis of asakha, its life-breath. The word means "systematised and collected together".

The Rgveda Samhita as all in the form of poetry. What came to be called "sloka" in later times is the "rk" of the Vedas. "Rk" means a "stotra", a hymn. The Rgveda Samhita is made up entirely of hymns in praise of various deities. Each rk is a mantra and a number of rks in praise of a deity constitute a sukta.

The Rgveda, that is its Samhita, has 10, 170 rks and 1, 028 suktas. It is divided into ten mandalas or eight astakas. It begins with a sukta to Agni and concludes with a sukta to the same deity. For this reason some believe that the Vedas must be described as the scripture of fire worship, a view with which we would be in agreement if Agni were believed to be the light of the Atman (the light of knowledge of the Reality). The concluding sukta of the Rgveda contains a hymn that should be regarded as having a higher significance than the national anthem of any country: it is a prayer for amity among all nations, a true international anthem. "May mankind be of one mind, " it goes. "May it have a common goal. May all hearts be united in love. And with the mind and the goal being one may all of us live in happiness. "

"Yajus" is derived from the word "yaj" meaning "to worship". "Yajna" (as we have already noted) is also from the same root. Just as "rk" means a hymn, "yajus" means the worship associated with sacrifices. The chief purpose of the Yajurveda is the practical application of the Rgvedic hymns in the religious work called yajna or sacrifice. The Yajurveda describes in prose the actual conduct of the rites. If the Rgveda serves the purpose of adoring deities verbally the Yajurveda serves the same purpose through rites.

The Yajurveda is different from the other Vedas in that it may be said to be divided into two Vedas which are considerably different from one another: the Sukla-Yajurveda and the Krsna-Yajurveda. "Sukla" means white, while "Krsna" means black. The Samhita of the Sukla-Yajurveda is also called "Vajasaneyi Samhita". "Vajasaneyi" is one of the names of the sun god. It was the sun god who taught this Samhita to the sage Yajnavalkya.

There is a long story about this, but let me tell it briefly. Before the time of Yajnavalkya, the Yajurveda was an undivided scripture. Yajnavalkya learned it from Vaisampayana. Later some misunderstanding arose between the two and the guru bade his student to throw up what he had taught him. Yajnavalkya did so and went to the sun god for refuge. The latter taught him a new Veda, an addition to the scripture that is endless. That is how we came to have Vajasaneyi or Sukla-Yajurveda. The other Yajurveda already taught by Vaisampayana acquired the appellation of "Krsna", so "Krsna-Yajurveda"

In the Krsna-Yajurveda, the Samhita and the abrahmanas do not form entirely different parts. The Brahmanas are appended here and there to the mantras of the Samhita.

The glory of the Rgveda is that it is replete with hymns to all deities. Scholars are of the opinion, besides, it contains teachings for our life. The wedding rites are based on tht part of this Veda which pertains to the marriage of the daughter of the sun god. There are also passages of a dramatic character like the dialogue between Pururavas and Urvasi. In later times Kalidasa based one of his dramatic works on this [the Vikramorvasiyam]. The hymn to Usas, the goddess of dawn, and similiar mantras are considered to be of high poetic beauty by men of aesthetic discernment.

Since the Rgveda is placed first among the four Vedas it must naturally have an exalted position. It is the matrix of the works (karma) of the Yajurveda and the songs of the Samaveda.

The importance of the Yajurveda is that it systematises the karmayoga, the path of works. The Tattitiriya Samhita of the Krsna-Yajurveda deals with sacrifices like darsa-purnamasa, somayaga, vajapeya, rajasuya, asvamedha. Besides it has a number of hymnic mantras of a high order not found in the Rgveda. For example, the popular Sri Rudra mantras are from the Yajurveda. The Rgveda does contain five suktas known as "Pancarudra", but when we mention Sri Rudra we at once think of the mantras to this deity in the Yajurveda. That is why a supreme Saiva like Appayya Diksita laments that he was not born a Yajurvedin - he was a Samavedin.

Among the followers of the four Vedas, Yajurvedins predominate. The majority in the North(Brahmins) belong to the Sukla-Yajurveda while most people in the South belong to Krsna-Yajurveda. The day on which Yajurvedins perform their upakarma is declared a holiday. There is no such holiday for upakarma of Rgvedins and Samavedins. This is because Yajurvedins are in a majority. The Purusasukta of the Rgveda occurs with some changes in the Yajurveda. Today it is generally understood to be a Yajurvedic hymn.

For non-dualists, the Yajurveda has a special importance. A doctrine and its exposition consist of three parts: the sutra, the bhasya and the vartika. The sutra states the doctrine in an apophthegmatic form; the bhasya is a commentary on it; and the vartika is an elucidation of the commentary. To non-dualists the term "vartikakara" at once brings to mind Surasvaracharya. What is the commentary or bhasya for which he wrote his vartika? Sankara's bhasya on the Upanishads are to be regarded as sutras. He wrote, in addition, a bhasya for the Brahmasutra also. His disciple Suresvara wrote a vartika on his master's commentaries. In this work he chose only two of the ten Upanishads for which Sankara had written his commentary - the Taittiriya Upanishad and the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad. These two are from the Krsna and Sukla- Yajurvedas respectively, which means both are from the Yajurveda. Nother distinction of the Yajurveda is that of the ten Upanishads ("Dasopanishad") the first and the last are from it - the Isavasyopanishad and the Brhadaranyaka Upanishad.

"Sama" denotes that which brings equipoise or tranquillity to the mind. There are four well-known ways of dealing with an opponent or rival: sama, dana, bheda and danda. The first method is that of conciliation, making an enemy a friend through affection. The Samaveda enables us to befriend the divine forces, even the Paramatman. How do we make a person happy? By praising him. If the panegyrics set to music and sung he would be doubly pleased. Many of the mantras of the Rgveda are intoned with a cadence in the Samaveda; thus we have Samagana. While the riks are chanted with the tonal differences of udatta, anudatta and svarita, the samans are intoned musically according to certain rules. Our music, based on the seven notes (saptasvara), has its origin in Samaveda. All deities are pleased with Samagana. We become recipients of their grace not only through the offerings made in the sacrificial fire but through the intoning of the samans by the udgata. Samagana is particularly important to soma sacrifices in which the essence of the soma plant is offered as oblation.

Though the samans are indeed Rgvedic mantras, they are specially capable of pleasing the deities and creating Atmic uplift because they are intoned musically. This is what gives distinction to the Samaveda. Sri Krsna Paramatman says in the Gita : "Vedanam Samavedosmi"(Of Vedas I am samaveda). The Lord is everything, including good as well as bad. Even so, as he speaks to Arjuna about the things in which his divine quality specially shines forth, he mentions the Samaveda among them. In the Lalitha-Sahasranama (The One Thousand Names of the Goddess Lalitha), Amba has the name of "Samagana-priya (one who delights in Samagana); she is not called "Rgveda-priya" or "Yajurveda-priya". Syamasastri refers to the Goddess Minaksi as "Samagana-vinodhini" in one of his compositions. In the Siva-astottaram ["Siva astottara-satam, the 108 names of Siva], Siva is worshipped thus:"Samapriyaya namah" The Tevaram extols Siva as one who keeps chanting the Chandoga-Saman (Chandoga-Saman odum vayan). Appayya Dikshita has sought to establish that Isvara or Siva, Amba and Visnu are "Ratna-trayi" (the Three Gems) occupying the highest plane. And all three have a special relationship with Samaveda.

"Atharvan" means a purohita, a priest. There was a sage with this name. That which was revealed by the seer Atharvan is the Atharvaveda. It contains mantras with which one wards off misfortunes and disasters and brings about the destruction of one's enemies. The Atharvaveda is a mixture of prose and poetry. The mantras of other Vedas also serve the same purpose as those of

the Atharvaveda. But what is special about the latter is that it has references to deities not mentioned in the others and has mantras addressed to fierce spirits. What has come to be known as "mantrikam" (magical rites) has its source in this Veda.

But it is to be noted that the Atharvaveda also contains mantras that speak of lofty truths. It has the Prithvi-sukta, the hymn to earth, which glorifies this planet with all its creatures.

The Atharvaveda is noteworthy for the fact that the brahma, the supervisor of sacrifices, is its representative. The Atharvaveda, that is its Samhita, is rarely chanted in the North and is not heard at all in the South. But we must remember that of the ten important Upanishads three belong to this Veda - Prasna, Mundaka and Mandukya. It is believed that those who seek liberation need nothing to realise their goal other than Madukya Upanishad.

We learn from stone inscriptions that the Atharvaveda had a following until some centuries ago. Information about Vedic schools is provided by such inscriptions found near Perani, not far from Tindivanam, at Ennayiram and a place near Walajabad, in the neighbourhood of Kancipuram. Even during the reign of the later Colas the Atharvaveda was learned in the Tamil country.

There are eighteen divisions among the Brahmins of Orissa. One of them is made up of "Atharvanikas", that is Atharvavedins. Even today Atharvavedins are to be met, though their number is small, in parts of Gujarat like Saurashtra and in Kosala(in U. P).

Gayatri is the mantra of mantras and it is believed to be the essence of the three Vedas - which means that the Atharvaveda is excluded here. According to one view, before he starts learning the Atharvaveda, a brahmacharin must go through a second upanayana ceremony. Generally, the Gayatri imparted to a child at Brahmopadesa ceremony is called "Tripada- Gayatri" - it is so called because it has three padas or three feet. Each foot encompasses the essential spirit of one Veda, The Atharvaveda has a separate Gayatri and if people belonging to other Vedas want to learn this Veda they have to go through a second upanayana to receive instruction in it. For the followers of the first three Vedas, however there is only one Gayatri and those belonging to any one of them can learn the other two Vedas without another upanayana.



To Discover The One Truth

All Vedas have one common goal though there are differences among their adherents. What is the goal? It is the well-being of the entire world and all creatures living in it, and the uplift of the Self of each one of us and its everlasting union with the Ultimate Reality.

We may take pride in the Vedas for another reason also. They do not point to a single way and proclaim, "This alone is the path" nor do they affirm, "This is the only God" with reference to their own view of the Supreme Being. Instead, they declare that, if one adheres to any path with faith or worships any deity with devotion, one will be led towards the Truth. The scripture of no other religion speaks thus of the many paths to liberation. On the contrary, each of them insists that the way shown by it alone will lead to liberation. The Vedas alone give expression to the high-minded view that different people may take different paths to discover the one and only Truth.



Brahmana and Aranyaka

So far, in speaking of the Vedas, I have dealt mainly with the Samhita part of each sakha or recension. We have already seen that the Samhitas are the main text of the Vedas. Apart from them, each sakha has a Brahmana and an Aranyaka.

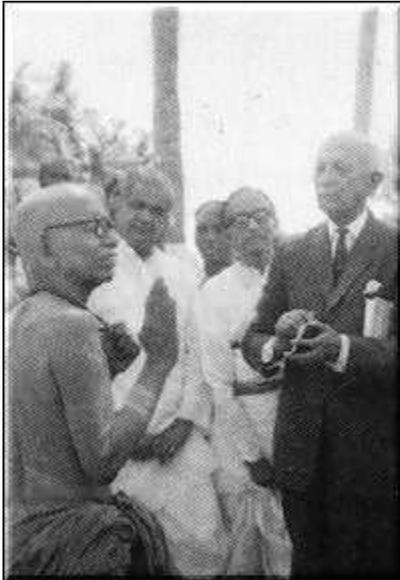
The Brahmana lays down the various rites - karma - to be performed and explains the procedure for the same. It interprets the words of the mantras occurring in the Samhita, how they are to be understood in the conduct of sacrifices. The Brahmanas constitute a guide for the conduct of yajnas.

The word "Aranyaka" is derived from "aranya". You must have heard of places like "Dandakaranya" and "Vedaranya". "Aranya" means a "forest". Neither in the Samhita nor in the Brahmana is one urged to go and live in a forest. Vedic rites like sacrifices are to be performed by the householder (grhastha) living in a village. But after his mind is rendered pure through such rites, he goes to a forest as a recluse to engage himself in meditation. It is to qualify for this stage of vanaprastha, to become inwardly pure and mellow, that Vedic practices like sacrifices are to be followed.

The Aranyakas prepare one for one's stage in life as an anchorite. They expound the concepts inherent in the mantras of the Samhitas and the rites detailed in the Brahmanas. In other words, they explain the hidden meaning of the Vedas, their metaphorical passages. Indeed, they throw light on the esoteric message of our scripture. For the Aranyakas, more important than the performance of sacrifices awareness of their inner meaning and

significance. According to present-day scholars, the Aranyakas incorporate the metaphorical passages representing the metaphysical inquiries conducted by the inmates of forest hermitages.

The Brhadaranyaka Upanishad, as its very name suggests, is both an Aranyaka and an Upanishad, and it begins with a philosophical explanation of the horse sacrifice.



The Upanisads

The Upanisads come at the close of the Aranyakas. If the Samhita is the tree, the Brahmana the flower and the Aranyaka the fruit (i. e. in its unripe stage), the Upanishads are the mellow fruit - the final fruit or "phala". The Upanisads are to the seeker the direct means of realising the non-difference between the jivatman (individual self) and the Paramatman. The purpose of the Samhita and the Aranyaka is to take us to this path of knowledge. Though a number of deities are mentioned here and there in the Upanisads, the chief objective of these texts is inquiry into the Ultimate Reality and the attainment of the stage in which one becomes wise enough and mature enough to sever oneself from all karma. It is on this basis that the Vedas are divided into the karmakanda and the jnanakanda, the part dealing with works and the part dealing with knowledge [enlightenment]. The two are also spoken of as the Purvamimamsa and the Uttaramimamsa respectively.

The great sage Jaimini's sastra based on his inquiry into the karmakanda is called Purvamimamsa. His teaching is that the karmakanda, constituting the Vedic rites and duties, is itself the final fruit of the scripture. Similarly,

Vyasa has in his work, the Brahmasutra, inquired into the jnanakanda and come to the conclusion that it represents the ultimate purpose of the Vedas. The Upanisadic jnanakanda is small compared to the karmakanda. The Jaiminisutra has a thousand sections ("sahasradhikarani"), while Vyasa's Brahmasutra has only 192 sections. Just as the leaves of a tree far outnumber its flowers and fruits, in the case of the Vedic tree the karmakanda is far bigger than the jnanakanda.

In other countries philosophers try to apprehend the Truth on an intellectual plane. The Upanisadic inquiry is different, its purpose being to realise inwardly the Truth perceived by the mind or the intellect. Is it enough to know that halva is sweet? You must experience its sweetness by eating it. How are the Upanisads different from other philosophical systems? They (the Upanisads) consist of mantras, sacred syllables, and their sound is instinct with power. This power transforms the truths propounded by them into an inward reality. The philosophical systems of other countries do not go beyond making an intellectual inquiry. Here, in the Vedas - in the karmakanda - a way of life is prescribed for the seeker with actions and duties calculated to discipline and purify him. After leading such a life and eventually forsaking all action, all Vedic karma, he meditates on the truths of the Upanisads. Instead of being mere ideas of intellectual perception, these truths will then become a living reality. The highest of these truths is that there is no difference between the individual self and the Brahman.

It is to attain this highest of states in which the individual self dissolves inseparably in the Brahman that a man becomes a sannyasin after forsaking the very karma that gives him inward maturity. When he is initiated into sannyasa he is taught four mantras, the four [principal] mahavakyas. The four proclaim the identity of the individual self (jivatman) with the Brahman. When these mahavakyas are reflected upon through the method known as "nididhyasana", the seeker will arrive at the stage of realising the oneness of the individual self and the Brahman. The four mahavakyas occur in four different Upanisads. Many are the rites that you have to perform, many are the prayers you have to recite and many are the ways of life you are enjoined to follow - all these according to the Samhitas and Brahmanas. But, when it comes to achieving the highest ideal, the supreme goal of man, you have no alternative to the Upanisads and their mahavakyas.

"The Brahman means realising the jnana that is the highest" (Prajnanam Brahma): this mahavakya occurs in the Aitareya Upanisad of the Rgveda. "I am the Brahman" (Aham Brahmasmi) is the mahavakya belonging to the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad of the Yajurveda. "That thou art" or "the Paramatman and you are the one and the same" (Tat tvam asi) is from the Chandogya Upanisad of the samaveda. The fourth mahavakya, "This Self is the Brahman" (Ayam Atma Brahma), is from the Mandukya Upanisad of the Atharvaveda.

In his Sopana Pancaka, which contains the sum and the substance of his teachings, the Acharya urges us to chant the Samhitas (of the Vedas), perform the duties laid down in the Brahmanas and, finally, to meditate on the mahavakyas after receiving initiation into them, the purpose being our oneness with the Brahman.

The Vedas find their final expression in the Upanisads. Indeed, the Upanisads are called "Vedanta". They form the final part of the Vedas in two ways. In each recension we have first the Samhita, then the Brahmana which is followed by the Aranyaka, the Upanisad coming at the close of the last-mentioned. The Upanisads throw light on the meaning and the purpose of the Vedas and represent the end of the scripture in more than one sense: while their text forms the concluding part of the Vedas, their meaning represents the Ultimate Truth of the same. A village or town has a temple; the temple has its gopuram; and the gopuram has a sikhara over it. The Upanisads are the sikhara, the summit, of our philosophical [and metaphysical] system.

"Upa-ni-sad" means to "sit near by". The Upanisads are the teachings imparted by a guru to his student sitting by his side [sitting at his feet]. You could also take the term to mean "that which takes one to the Brahman". "Upanayana" may be interpreted in two ways: leading a child to his guru; or leading him to the Brahman. Similarly, the term Upanisad could also be understood in the above two senses.

If a student sits close to the teacher when he is receiving instruction it means that a "rahasya" (a secret or a mystery) is being conveyed to him. Such teachings are not meant to be imparted to those who are not sufficiently mature and who are not capable of cherishing their value. That is why in the Upanisads themselves these words occur where subtle and esoteric truths are expounded: "This is Upanisat. This is Upanisat". What is held to be a secret in

the Vedas is called a "rahasya". In the Upanisads the term "Upanisat" is itself used to mean the same.



The Brahmasutra

I said that every doctrine or system has a sutra (text consisting of aphoristic statements), a bhasya (commentary) and a vartika (elucidation of the commentary). The systems founded by Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhva, Srikantha (acarya of Saiva-Sidhanta) belong to Vedanta. All these acaryas cite the authority of the Vedas in support of their respective doctrines and they have chosen the same ten Upanisads to comment upon according to their different philosophical perceptions. The Upanisads are not in the form of sutras; yet for the Vedantic system they must be regarded as having the same "place" (or force) as the sutras.

How is a sutra to be understood? It must state truths in an extremely terse form. What is expressed in the least possible number of words to convey an idea or truth is a sutra, an aphorism. According to this definition the Upanisads cannot be said to be sutras. However, there does exist a basic text for all Vedantic schools in the form of sutras. This is the Brahmasutra.

In the Brahmasutra, on which there are commentaries according to the various philosophical schools, Vyasa presents in an extremely terse form the substance of the ten (principal) Upanisads. Since he dwelt under the badari tree (jujube) he came to be called "Badarayana" and his work became well-known as "Badarayana-sutra". Who or what is man (the individual self)? What is the nature of the world (jagat) in which he lives? And what is the truth underlying

all this? The Brahmasutra, which is a basic text of all Vedantic schools, seeks to answer these fundamental questions. Vyasa does not project his personal views in his work. All he does is to make a penetrating study of the science of Vedanta that is already constituted by the Upanisads. Since it is an inquiry into the Upanisads which form the latter part of the Vedas, the Brahmasutra is called "Uttaramimamsa"

There are 555 sutras in the Brahmasutra which is divided into four chapters, each consisting of four padas (or "feet"). Altogether there are 192 sections or "adhikaranas" in it. The Brahmasutra is also called "Bhiksu-sutra" since it deals with sannyasa, the final goal of the seeker. And, because it is all about the Self in the body, it has another name, "Sariraka".

"Sutra" literally means a rope or string. The word occurs in the term "mangala-sutra", the thread worn by the bride at her wedding. Keeping the meaning of thread or string in mind, our Acarya has made a pun on the word in his commentary: "Vedanta-vakya-kusuma-grathanarthatvat sutranam". If the flowers that are Upanisads in the tree called the Vedas are strewn all over the earth, how can we gather them to make a garland? Our Acarya remarks that in the Brahmasutra the flowers are the Upanisads are strung together to form a garland.

All Hindu philosophical systems are based on the Brahmasutra, but the Brahmasutra itself is based on the Upanisads. That is why it has become customary to describe all Vedic schools of thought as "Upanisadic systems". When Westerners keep extolling our philosophy, chanting, "Vedanta! Vedanta!", they have in mind the Upanisads. If a person turns against the petty pleasures of this world and makes a remark suggestive of jnana, people tell him, "Arre, are you mouthing Vedanta? "

If the Vedas were personified as Purusa, the Upanisads would be his head or crown. That is why these texts are called "Sruti-siras".



Veda and Vedanta : Are They Opposed to One Another?

The rituals mentioned in the karmakanda of the Vedas are sought to be negated in the jnanakanda which is also part of the same scripture. While the karmakanda enjoins upon you the worship of various deities and lays down rules for the same, the jnanakanda constituted by the Upanisads ridicules the worshipper of deities as a dim-witted person no better than a beast.

This seems strange, the latter part of the Vedas contradicting the former part. The first part deals throughout with karma, while the second or concluding part is all about jnana. Owing to this difference, people have gone so far as to divide our scripture into two sections: the Vedas (that is the first part) to mean the karmakanda and the Upanisads (Vedanta) to mean the jnanakanda.

Vedanta it is that Lord teaches us in the Gita and in it he lashes out against the karmakanda. It is generally believed that the Buddha and Mahavira were the first to attack the Vedas. It is not so. Sir Krsna Paramatman himself spoke against them long before these two religious leaders. At one place in the Gita he says to Arjuna : "The Vedas are associated with the three qualities of sattva, rajas and tamas. You must transcend these three qualities. Full of desire, they (the practitioners of Vedic rituals) long for paradise and keep thinking of pleasures and material prosperity. They are born again and again and their minds are never fixed in samadhi, these men clinging to Vedic rituals. " In another passage Krsna declares : "Not by the Vedas am I to be realised, nor by sacrifices nor by much study. . . . "

Does not such talk contradict all that I have spoken so far about the Vedas, that they are the source of all our dharma?

With some thinking we will realise that there is in fact no contradiction. Would it be possible for us, in our present condition, to go beyond the three gunas even to the slightest extent and realise the true state of the Self spoken of in the Upanisads? The purpose of the Vedic rituals is to take us, by degrees, to this state. So long as we believe that the world is real we worship the deities so as to be vouchsafed happiness. And this world, which we think is real, is also benefited by such worship. Thinking the deities to be real, we help them and in return we are helped by them. Living happily on this earth we long to go to the world of the celestials and enjoy the pleasures of paradise. So far so good. But if we stopped at this stage would it not mean losing sight of our supreme objective? Is not this objective, this goal, our becoming one with the Paramatman? Would it not be foolish to ignore this great ideal of ours and still cling to mundane happiness?

In our present state of immaturity it is not possible to think of the world being unreal. Recognising this, the Vedas provide us the rituals to be performed for happiness in this world. Because of our inadequacies we are unable to devote ourselves to a formless Paramatman from whom we are not different. So the Vedas have devised a system in which a number of deities are worshipped. But, in course of time, as we perform the rituals and worship the deities, we must make efforts to advance to the state of wisdom and enlightenment in which the world will be seen to be unreal and the rites will become unnecessary. Instead of worshipping many deities, we must reach the state in which we will recognise that we have no existence other than that of our being dissolved in the Paramatman. We must perform Vedic sacraments with the knowledge that they prepare us to go to this state by making our mind pure and one-pointed.

If we perform rituals with the sole idea of worldly happiness and carry on trade with the celestials by conducting sacrifices (offering them oblations and receiving benefits from them in return), we will never come face to face with the Truth. Even if we go to the world of the celestials, we will not be blessed with Self-realisation. Our residence in paradise is commensurate with the merit we earn here and is not permanent. Sooner or later we will have to return to this world and be in the womb of a mother. The ritual worship and other sacraments of the Vedas are to some extent the result of making an

adjustment to our present immature state of mind. But their real purpose is to take us forward gradually from this very immature state and illumine us within. It would be wrong to refuse to go beyond the stage of ritual worship.

If, to begin with, it is not right to refuse all at once to perform Vedic rites, it would be equally not right, subsequently, to refuse to give them up. Nowadays, people are averse to ritual to start with itself. "What?" they exclaim. "Who wants to perform sacrifices? Why should we chant the Vedas? Let us go directly to the Upanisads." Some of them can speak eloquently about the Upanisads from a mere intellectual understanding of them. But none has the inward experience of the truths propounded in them and we do not see them emerging as men of detachment with a true awareness of the Self. The reason for this is that they have not prepared themselves for this higher state of perception through the performance of rituals. If this is wrong in one sense, refusal to take the path of jnana from that of karma is equally not justifiable.

If one has to qualify for the B. A. degree one has to begin at the beginning - one has to progress from the first standard all the way to the degree course. One cannot naturally join the B. A. class without qualifying for it. At the same time, is it not absurd to remain all the time as a failure in the first standard itself?

In the old days there were many people belonging to the latter category (that is people who refused to take the path of knowledge and wished to remain wedded to the path of karma). Now people belonging to the former category predominate (that is those who want to take the path of jnana, without being prepared for it through karma). During the time of Sri Krsna also the majority clung to rituals. His criticism is directed against them, against those who perform Vedic sacraments without understanding their purpose and who fail to go beyond them. Unfortunately, this is mistaken for criticism of the Vedas themselves. The Lord could never have attacked the Vedas *per se*. After all, it was to save them that he descended to earth again and again.

In keeping with his times, Krsna Paramatman spoke against people who confined themselves to the narrow path of karma. If he were to descend to earth again to teach us, he would turn against those who plunge into a study of the Upanisads, spurning Vedic rites. It seems to me that he would be more

severe in his criticism of these people that he was against those who were obsessed with karma.

Graduating to the Upanisads without being prepared for them through the performance of Vedic rites is a greater offence than failure to go along the path of jnana from that of karma. After all, to repeat what I said before, one has to go through the primary and secondary stages of education before qualifying for admission to college. The man who insists on being admitted to the B. A. class without qualifying for it is not amenable to any suggestion. The one who wants to remain in the first standard learns at least something; the other type is incapable of learning anything.

The Vedas and Vedanta are not at variance with one another. The karmakanda prepares us for Vedanta or the jnanakanda. The former has to do with this world and with many deities and its adherents are subject to the three gunas. But it is the first step to go beyond the three gunas and the sever oneself from worldly existence. If we perform the rites laid down in the karmakanda, keeping in mind their true purpose, we shall naturally be qualifying for the jnanakanda.

Some questions arise here. The sound of the Vedas and the sacrifices benefit not only the person who chants the Vedas and performs the sacrifices but all creatures. If such a man (that is like the one who learns the Vedas and conducts sacrifices) renounces the world thinking it to be unreal and becomes a jnanin, what will happen to the world, to its welfare? Even if you think that the world is unreal, it is real in the sense that it is the cause of so much suffering. The jnanin does not perform any rites like sacrifices so as to rid the world of its troubles. Who will then work for the welfare of the world?

The answer: the jnanin is an exalted state of awareness and while being in it he does not have to perform any sacrifices or other rites to ensure the good of the world. His life itself is a sacrifice, a yagna, and through him the world will receive the Lord's blessings even if he looks upon it as unreal or a "sport" of the Supreme Being. Why do people flock to a jnanin? Why do they fall at his feet even if he keeps himself aloof from them? It is because they receive his grace. Whether or not he wants to give any blessings, the Lord's grace flows into this world through him. In his very presence people feel tranquil and, sometimes, even their worldly desires are satisfied. A jnanin who realises within that there is no deity apart from himself can give his blessings in

greater measure than the deities themselves. So it is wrong to think that, since he does not perform sacrifices, he does not do anything for the good of the world.

Followers of other faiths are mistaken in their view of Hinduism. they separate the Vedantic system from the Vedic system of sacraments and observe: "To the Hindus what matters is individual salvation. They ignore the wellbeing of the world. Meditation, yoga, samadhi are a means of individual liberation. Hindus are unlike the followers of Jesus Christ and the Prophet Mohammed because they do not preach love and brotherhood nor do they promote the growth of social consciousness among themselves. "

One who has a proper understanding of our religion will recognise that it is wrong to divide Hinduism into two compartments, the Vedic religion and the Vedantic. As a sannyasin in the final stage of his life a man becomes a Vedantin and jnanin and merits liberation for himself. But we must remember that he leaves behind him another stage of life in which he has worked for the welfare of the world by chanting the Vedas and by performing rituals. Indeed it was because of this work that he became mentally pure and qualified for the Vedantic path and for his own release from worldly existence.

Also to be noted is that even after achieving perfection in Vedanta and becoming a jnanin, he keeps blessing the world without performing any rites and, indeed, by virtue of his mere presence. I am not examining here the big question of which of the two goals of a religion is greater, individual liberation or collective welfare. That is a separate subject. Let us leave aside for the present the question of social welfare. The question to be answered now is this: If an individual owing allegiance to a religion does not become a jnanin with inward experience of the Truth of the Supreme Being, what does it matter whether or not that religion exists?

All rituals, all worship, are meant to make a man aware of the Reality. Varnasrama with its one hundred thousand differences and with its countless stipulations as to who can do what is a preliminary arrangement to arrive at the stage in which there is a oneing of all, with all the differences banished. If we fail to go beyond the stage of karma, observing all the differences of varnasrama, we shall be committing a wrong. Krsna Paramatman directs his criticism against those who claim that the karmakanda of the Vedas alone matters, that the jnanakanda does not serve any purpose. In doing so he

seems to attack the Vedas themselves. In reality he faults those who are, in his words, "Veda-vada-ratah", those who are deceived by flowery accounts of the Vedas without realising their true meaning and those who do not exert themselves to rise to the level of experiential jnana.

To start with, we must perform the rites prescribed by the Vedas. But in this there must be the realisation that they are but steps leading us to the higher state in which we will ultimately find bliss in our Self, a state in which there will be neither rites nor duties to perform. Similarly, to start with, the deities must be worshipped but again with the conviction that such worship serves the ultimate purpose of arriving at the point where we will recognise that the worshipper and the worshipped are one. Thus, to begin with, all differences in functions must be recognised and life lived according to them. Different divisions of people have different duties, and the customs and rites assigned to each are such as to help them in the proper discharge of those duties. But in the very process of maintaining such differences there must be the conviction within that ultimately there are no differences, that all are one.

If the Vedas are to be learned and chanted and if the Vedic rituals are to be practiced - and the Vedas must be learned and chanted even as the Vedic rituals must be practiced - it is because in this way we shall be led to that supreme experience of the Reality in which there will be no need for these very Vedas. First the flowers, and from them the fruit. Though the flower looks beautiful, the fruit emerges only when it wilts or falls to earth. A tree does not fruit before it flowers. In the same way, to plunge into Vedanta without first going through a life of Vedic discipline is neither wise nor in keeping with reality. It is equally wrong to remain confined to the karmakanda and refuse to make an effort to acquire Vedantic knowledge: it is like wishing that we must have only flowers and no fruits. There must be a sense of balance, a sense of proportion, in everything we do.

There is a passage in the *Brhadaranyaka* Upanisad similar to that in the *Gita*: "He who becomes aware of the nature of the Atman - for him the Vedas will no longer be Vedas, the gods will cease to be gods, Brahmins will no longer be, Brahmins.".

As we have already seen, "Sruti" by which we mean the Vedas, contains not only the Samhitas but also the Brahmanas, Aranyakas and the Upanisads. The

Gita is not Sruti and it is customary to regard it as belonging to the category of Smrti. I shall speak to you later about Smrti when I deal with Dharmasastra, one of the fourteen branches of learning (caturdasa-vidya). The Smrti that is the Gita observes: "Vedic rites and worship are futile if they do not take you to the path of jnana. " The Puranas too are among the three categories of authoritative texts of our religion - the other two being Sruti and Smriti - and they have the same view about a life confined to rituals. The sages in the Daruka forest were proud about their sacrificial worship, but Paramesvara curbed their pride - how he did so is narrated in the Saiva Puranas. The *Bhagavata* tells us how the yajnapatnis, the simple and unpretentious wives of the sages, were able to see Mahavisnu as he appeared in the form of the Yajnapurusa. But their husbands who were wedded to ritual could not see the Lord and very much regretted it.

Sruti is higher as an authority than Smriti or the Puranas. I referred to a passage from the *Brhadaranyaka* Upanisad to show that we have the testimony of the Sruti itself to prove that rituals are not enough for Atmic advancement. However, it might be argued that Sruti itself is divided into the karmakanda and the jnanakanda and that, after all, it is natural that in the jnanakanda the quest for jnana should be spoken of highly. So there is nothing remarkable about it declaring that rituals cannot be the final goal of the seeker.

However, in the karmakanda itself there is criticism of the view that rituals are all and they are the ultimate goal. Sri Krsna declares in the Gita that it is laudable to perform the many sacrifices mentioned in the Vedas realising their true purpose ("Evam bahuvridha yajna vitata Brahmano mukhe"). However, all these sacraments have their culmination in jnana ("Sarvam karm'akhilam Partha jnana parisamapyate").

The same idea is expressed forcefully through an illustration in the Vedic karmakanda itself: "He who performs only rituals, without wakening to Isvara feeds the fire to raise the smoke and nothing else" (*Taittiriya Kathakam*, first prasna, last anuvaka, fourth vakya). If you feed the fire with firewood you must keep the pot over it to cook rice. Once who does not exert oneself to be "cooked" in jnana is like the man who lights the kitchen fire without keeping the cooking pot on it. This is what the Vedas say. What purpose is served by building a big sacrificial fire if you do not offer the oblations in it? The result will be only smoke and more smoke. A sacrifice must be performed with the

consciousness that you are offering the fruit of your karma itself as an oblation. Otherwise there will be nothing but smoke.

"The Self must be offered as an oblation in the fire of the Brahman. All sensual pleasures must be offered in the fire of self-control. The five vital breaths must be given over in sacrifice in one another ", says the Gita. Vedic sacrifices involving materials and works have this goal. A man may perform any number of sacrifices but he would be a fool to perform them without realising this truth. The Vedas too say that such a man is unintelligent. What do you expect his buddhi (intuitive intelligence) to become? It would also be like the smoke of the sacrificial fire that darkens everything in its course and ends up in nothing.

When Vedic rites are performed in a spirit of dedication to Isvara they will loosen your ties little by little, instead of keeping you bound to this world. If you perform rites to please the Lord, without expecting any reward, your mind will be cleansed and you will transcend the three gunas. This is the meaning and purpose of "yajna". Is not the word understood in English as "sacrifice"? "Yaga" also means sacrifice, "tyaga". When an offering is placed in the fire we say "na mama" ("not mine"): it is this attitude of self-denial that is the life and soul of a sacrificial rite. Is it possible to retrieve what has been offered in the fire? Even if it were, it would soon disintegrate. In this way you must reduce your ego-sense to ashes, also your possessiveness ("ahamkara-mamakara"). One who performs a sacrifice without being conscious of such high ideals but with the purpose of petty gains like ascending to paradise - is he not a fool?

There is no contradiction between the karmakanda and the jnanakanda. *In the karmakanda itself jnana is given an elevated place and the limitations of karma mentioned.* There are hymns incorporating high philosophical truths in the Samhita part itself of the Vedas like, for instance, the "Nasadiyasukta", the "Purusasukta" and the "Tryambaka mantra". *Also to be noted is the fact that the Upanisads themselves mention rites (karma) like the "Naciketagni".* How would you explain this if the karmakanda and the jnanakanda were opposed to one another? The underlying idea is that we must graduate from the one to the other [from karma to jnana].

As we have already seen, the Gita (which is a Smṛti) says that sacraments performed in a spirit of dedication to Isvara are a means of obtaining jnana.

The same idea is found expressed in a Sruti text, the *Isavasya Upanisad*. The first of the ten major Upanisads, it commences with the statement : "Live a hundred years performing Vedic rites. But do so in a spirit of dedication to Isvara. Then it will not keep you bound. " So it would be wrong to believe that the Upanisads teach inaction.

Karma, however, is not the goal of the Vedas. You must go beyond the stage of performing Vedic rituals even if they be for such a noble purpose as that of creating welfare in the world, cleansing your consciousness and propitiating the deities. You must rise higher to the plane where you will realise that nothing other than the Paramatman exists, that the phenomenal world is unreal, that there are no entities called deities (devatas) with an independent existence of their own and that there is no "I". When you come to this state there will be no need for the Vedas too for you: this is stated in the Vedas themselves.

The Vedas are the laws laid down by Paramesvara. All people, all his subjects, must obey them. But there is no need for the man who is always steeped inwardly as well as outwardly in the Reality that is the Paramatman to refer to this law with respect to all his actions. That is why it is said that for such men the Vedas cease to be Vedas. (We too do not respect the Vedas as the law. For us also the Vedas are not Vedas. But we do not have even a whiff of jnana!).

If you do not realise that the karmakanda is a means to take you to the "paravidya" that is constituted by the Upanisads, then the Vedas (that is their karmakanda) is an apara vidya like any other subject such as history or geography that is learned at school. It is for this reason that the *Mundaka Upanisad* includes the Vedas in the category of apara-vidya. This Upanisad describes a person who performs Vedic rites for ephemeral enjoyments, mundane benefits, as a mere beast (pasu).

To the jnanin who is united with the Paramatman the deities are not entities outside of himself for they too have emanated from the same Parmatman. Indeed, these deities inhere in him since he is dissolved in the Paramatman to become the Paramatman. If he does not have such inward experience of being dissolved in the Supreme Godhead, when he worships a deity as an entity separate from him, he must do so regarding it as integral to the Atman. Even if it be necessary to carry out all our outward functions according a system

based on differences, we must always be conscious of the truth that in the end we will be united with that fundamental Reality in which all these differences will cease to exist. The *Brhadaranyaka Upanisad* declares: "He who worships the deities as entities entirely separate from him does not know the truth. For the gods he is like a pasu (beast)". (1. 4. 10).

The word "pasu" is very meaningful here. In a superficial sense it means one who does not possess the sixth sense of a human and lives on an animal level. Let me tell you the inner meaning. Why do we keep a cow? Because it gives us milk. That is why we feed it grass, oil cake, cottonseed and so on. We offer oblations in the fire to please the gods. In return they grant us blessings in the form of rain, crops, etc. These celestials, as we have seen, are superior to us but they do not know the bliss that is boundless. Indeed they are unaware of even a fraction of the bliss that a jnanin who is but a mortal experiences.

The *Taittiriya Upanisad* (2. 8. 1) and the *Brhadaranyaka Upanisad* (4. 3. 33) deal with the ananda, bliss, experienced by various orders like humans, the fathers, the celestials. We have here something of an arithmetical table on bliss. The bliss experienced by each order is a hundred times greater than that experienced by the preceding one - it is all in the ascending order. Among the celestials the degrees of bliss known to Indra, Brhaspati and Prajapati are given separately. The highest bliss is experienced by the jnanin, the bliss of knowing the Brahman (Brahmananda). Thus the devas (celestials) are deficient in the matter of bliss. Also, they do not make any effort to attain to the highest state of blessedness. They look forward to the gains to be made from us, from the sacrifices we perform from our worship. For this reason they do not like us humans to become jnanins. This is clearly stated in the *Brhadaranyaka Upanisad*: "The celestials do not like humans who realise the Self" (1. 4. 10). Why? When a man realises himself he will not perform any sacrifices and other rites to please the deities.

Take the case of our domestic servant. We pay him a small wage and we know that we will have to pay more if we appoint a new man in his place. He wants to go to school, pass some examination or other so that, eventually, he will be able to take some better job and do well in life. If he really appeared for an examination, would we honestly like him to pass? No. We would like him to fail. If he passes he will find a better job for himself and have a better "status" than now. We may not find it easy to hire a new servant on the same

small wages. We are similarly situated in our relationship to the celestials. They will not like us to become jnanins because we will then cease to worship them.

If a jnanin is not dear to the devas, it follows that one who is not jnanin is dear to them. In other words he who is dear to the gods is an ajnanin. That is why in grammar an idiot ("murkha") has the name of "devanampriya:" ("dear to the gods or celestials "). This term has its source in the Upanisads. In his commentary on the *Brahmasutra*, Sankara Bhagavatpada says to one who maintains that the Paramatman and the jivatman (individual self) are different: "Idam tavad devanamapriyah prastavyah" (This is what you idiot should be asked). You had probably thought that "devanampriya" to be a big title of honour.

In the Asokan edicts the emperor is referred to as "devanampriya". Even before the time of Asoka, Panini had said that the term meant an idiot. For this reason it would be wrong to believe that the followers of the Vedic religion in later times took the word to mean an idiot with the deliberate intent of denigrating the Buddhist Asoka. Our Acarya, as I have said earlier, refers in his commentary on the *Brahmasutra* to one who does not know the true purpose of the Vedas as a "devanampriya", meaning by the term an "idiot". But now in the Asokan edicts the same appellation is given to one opposed to the Vedas, one who belongs to the non-vedic Buddhist religion.

One who follows the Vedic tradition and becomes a jnanin by learning the truths propounded in the Upanisads no longer performs sacrifices to please the gods. No more will he be dear to them now. Since sacrifices are prohibited in Buddhism obviously the celestials do not like followers of that religion. Then why is Asoka, who was a great supporter of Buddhism, called "devanamapriya"? As a Buddhist he would not have performed Vedic rituals, but at the same time he would not have come under the influence of Vedanta to become a jnanin. Asoka must have earned the appellation of "devanamapriya" in the sense that anyone who did not follow the teachings of Vedanta does not become a jnanin.

(It is also likely that someone not acquainted with such matters, a sculptor or a government official, must have inscribed the title "devanamapriya" thinking it to be highly complimentary to the emperor.)

When a man, dear to the celestials, ceases to perform sacrifices on turning to the path of jnana, they place obstacles before him. We read in the Puranas stories of the apsarases who disturb the sages in meditation and austerities.

Until a man becomes a jnanin he keeps performing the rites intended for the celestials. In return they bring him various benefits. They have to be given their share of the oblations. If a man helps us we have to help him in return. Is that not so? We have to help the celestials who bring us rain and other benefits. That is why we perform sacrifices. Some Brahmin or other gives the "havirbhaga" (a share in the oblations) to the devas, doing so as a representative of us all. It is like one man paying taxes on behalf of all.

To the celestials a person who performs Vedic rituals is like a milch cow. When the cow goes dry what use is it to man (its owner)? The celestials will be pleased with a person so long as he remains a milch cow (performing sacrifices and other rites). If he ceases to be a milch cow they will dislike him, cause him suffering. That means man is like a cow to the devas in more than one sense: in the sense that he is ignorant (not a jnanin); and in the sense that they do not protect him when he stops performing rites (do we take care of a cow that has gone dry?).

It is part of wisdom and enlightenment to realise that the gods are not separate from us. Vedanta points a way to realise this truth, and shows us how we may free ourselves from works and even worship of the gods and reach the stage where there is no difference between us and all the rest. Let me tell you about the great esteem in which Vedanta has been held in this country.

Though the Vedas are infinite, the seers have brought us only a few of them. But since, in this age of Kali, even these are difficult to master, they divided them into 1, 180 sakhas or recensions, each with Samhita, Brahmana, Aranyaka and Upanisad. Later, out of these many passed into oblivion. Now the remaining too are threatened with extinction because people belonging to this generation have brought Vedic studies to such a sad state and earned merit thereby!

We have some Upanisads belonging to recensions of which neither the Samhitas nor the Brahmanas are studied. Even their texts are not available. The Samhita of the *Sankhayana Sakha* of the Rgveda is no longer chanted

now; the fact is we have lost it. But the *Kausitaki Upanisad* which is a part of this recension is still extant. The *Baskala Mantropanisad*, also from the Rgveda, is still available: I am told a palm-leaf manuscript of the same is in the Adyar Library, Madras. But neither the Samhita nor the Brahmana of the *Baskala Sakha* is known to us. The *Katha Upanisad* belongs to the *Katha Sakha* of the Krsna-Yajurveda. Did I not tell you that the Upanisad comes at the end of the Aranyaka? The *Kathopanisad* is very famous and is one of the major Upanisads; but its Aranyaka is not available. The Atharvaveda is totally forgotten in the South and is studied but in one or two parts of the country. But still extant are *Prasna*, *Mundaka* and *Mandukya* which belong to this Veda and which form part of the Dasopanisad.

All this points to the fact that, while parts of many Vedic recensions that pertain to karma or works have become extinct or have been forgotten, many of the Upanisads which are the means of jnana have been preserved. Great care has been taken to protect that part of our heritage which shows us the way to wisdom and light.

The Upanisads are believed to have been large in number. Two hundred years ago, an ascetic belonging to Kancipuram wrote a commentary on 108 Upanisads. He earned the name of "Upanisad Brahmendra". His monastic institution is still to be seen in Kanci.



The Ten Upanisids

Sankara Bhagavatpada selected ten out of the numerous Upanisads to comment upon from the non-dualistic point of view. Ramanuja, Madhva and others who

came after him wrote commentaries on the same based on their own philosophical points of view. These ten Upanisads are listed in the following stanza for the names to be easily remembered.

Isa-Kena-Katha-Prasna-Munda-Mandukya-Tittari

Aitareyan ca Chandogyam Brhadranjakam dasa

Sankara has followed the same order in his Bhasya (commentary).

"Isa" is Isavasya Upanisad (Isavasyopanishad). It occurs towards the end of the Samhita of Sukla-Yajurveda. The name of this Upanisad is derived from its very first word, "Isavasya". The next, "Kena", is *Kenopanisad*. The *Isavasyopanisad* proclaims that the entire world is pervaded by Isvara and that we must dedicate all our works to him and attain the Paramatman.

An elephant made of wood looks real to a child. Grown-ups realise that, though it resembles an elephant in shape, it is really wood. To the child the wood is concealed, revealing the elephant; to the grown-up the animal is hidden revealing the wood. Similarly, all this world and the five elements are made of the timber called the Paramatman. We must learn to look upon all this as the Supreme Godhead.

Marattai maraittadu mamada yanai

Marattil maraindadu mamada yanai

Parattai maraittadu parmudal bhutam

Parattil maraindadu parmudal bhutam

Tirumalar says in this stanza that, because of our being accustomed to seeing the five elements all the time, we must not forget that the Paramatman is hidden in them. We must recognise that it is indeed he who pervades them and learn to see that everything is instinct with Isvara. Sankara expresses exactly the same idea in his Bhasya when he speaks of "dantini daru vikare". I don't wish to enter into a debate as to who came first, Tirumalar or Sankara. Great men think alike.

The *Kenopanisad* is also called the *Talavakara Upanisad* since it occurs in the *Talavakara Brahmana* of the *Jaimini Sakha* of the *Samaveda*. This Upanisad contains a story about the devas. The celestials in their arrogance failed to recognise the Supreme Being whose crown and feet are unknown. Ambika then appeared to give instruction in jnana to Indra, the king of the devas. She explained to him that all our power emanated from the one Great Power, from the one Mahasakti.

The Acarya has written two types of commentaries for this Upanisad, the first word by word as in the case of the other Upanisads and the second sentence by sentence. In his *Saundaryalahari* he has the *Kenopanisad* in mind when he prays to Amba: "Place your feet on my head, the feet that are held by Mother Veda. " The Upanisads (Vedanta) are also called "Veda-siras", "Sruti-siras", the "head" or "crown" of the Vedas - the Upanisads which are the "end" of the Vedas (Vedanta) are also their crown. To say that Amba's feet are placed on the head of Mother Veda means that they are held by the Upanisads. It is in the *Kenopanisad* that we see Amba appearing as Jnanambika (the goddess of jnana). "Samaganapriya" is one of her names in the *Lalitasahasranama* (The One Thousand Names of Lalita): this is in keeping with the fact that Amba's glory is specially revealed in an Upanisad belonging to the *Samaveda*.

What we see is the object and who see it are the subject: the seen is the object, the seer is the subject. We can see our body as an object, we can know about it, know whether it is well or ill. It follows that there is an entity other than it that sees it, the subject called "we". That which sees is the Atman. The subject called the Atman cannot be known by anything else. If it can be known, it also becomes an object and it would further mean that there is another entity that sees: and that will be the true "we". The Atman that is the true "we" can only be the subject and never the object. We may keep aside objects like the body and *experience* ourselves, the subject called "we", but we cannot *know* the "we". "To know" means that there is something other than ourselves to be known. It would be absurd to regard the Atman as something other than ourselves. The true "we" is the Atman, the Self. "Knowing " it implies that that which knows it("we") is different from that which is known (the Self). What can be there that is different in us from our true Self? What is it that is other than the Self that can know the Self? Nothing. We say "Atmajnana" which literally means "knowing the Atman". But is the phrase, "knowing the Atman", used in the sense of a subject knowing an

object? No. "Atmajnana" means the Self experiencing itself, and that is how "jnana" or "knowing" is to be understood. This is the reason why the *Kenopanisad* says that "he who says that he knows the Atman does not know it". It goes on: "He who says that he does not know knows. He who thinks that he knows does not know and he who thinks he does not know knows. "

The *Kathopanisad* comes next. It occurs in the *Katha Sakha* of the Krsna Yajurveda. this Upanisad contains the teachings imparted by Yama to the brahmacarin Naciketas. It begins as a story and leads up to the exposition of profound philosophical truths. The *Gita* contains quotations from this Upanisad.

What I said just now about the subject-object relationship is explained in depth in the concluding part of the *Kathopanisad*. How do we remove the ear of grain from the stalk? And how do we draw the pith from the reed? Similarly, we must draw the subject that is the Self from the object that is the body, says the *Kathopanisad*. "Desire, anger, hatred, fear, all these appertain to the mind, not to the Self. Hunger, thirst and so on appertain to the body - they are not 'mine'. " By constant practice we must learn to reject all such things as do not belong to the Self by "objectifying them". If we do so with concentration, in due course we will be able to overcome the idea that has taken root in us that the body and the mind constitute the "we". We can then exist as the immaculate Self without the impurities tainting the body and the mind.

The *Kathopanisad* compares the spiritual exercise of separating the Self from the body and the mind to that of drawing off the pith, bright, pure and soft, from the reed. Before you is the spadix of a plantain. When it wilts do you also droop? Think of the body as a lump of flesh closer to you than this spadix of the plantain. This spadix is not the subject that is "we", but the object. On the same lines you must become accustomed to think of the body as an object in relation to the subject that is the Self. During our life in this world itself - during the time we seem to exist in our body - we must learn to treat the body as not "me", not "mine". Moksa or liberation does not necessarily mean ascending to another world like Kailasa or Vaikuntha. It can be attained here and now. What is moksa? It is everlasting bliss that comes of being freed from all burden. He who lives delighting in his Self in this world itself without any awareness of his body is called a "jivanmukta". The supreme goal of the Vedas and Vedanta is making a man a jivanmukta.

Krsna Paramatman speaks of the same idea in the Gita. He who, while yet in this world ("ihaiva"), controls his desire and anger before he is released from his body ("prak sariravimoksanat") - he will remain integrated (in yoga) and achieve everlasting bliss. "Ihaiva" = "iha eva", while yet in this world. If you realise the Self, as an inner experience, while yet in this world, at the time of your death you will not be aware that your body is severed from you. The reason is that even before your death, when you are yet in this world, the body does not exist for you. So is there any need for what is called death to destroy it? There is no death for the man who has absolute realisation of his body being not "he" (when you mention the body the mind is also included in it). Where is the question of his dying if he knows that the body is not "me" (that is "he")? The death is only for his body.

The man who has no death thus becomes "amrta" ("immortal"). Hymns like the Purusasukta which appear in the karmakanda of the Vedas also speak of such deathlessness. This idea recurs throughout the Upanisads.

The body, and the mind that functions through it, are the cause of sorrow. All religions are agreed that liberation is a state in which sorrow gives place to everlasting happiness. However, according to religious traditions other than Advaita (non-dualism), a man has to go to some other world for such bliss after his death. Sankara Bhagavatpada establishes that true liberation can be won in this world itself if one ceases to identify oneself totally with the body and remains rooted in the Self.

"Tadetat asariratvam moksakhyam", so he proclaims in his *Sutrabhasya* (1. 1. 4). The word "asariri" is popularly understood as a voice we hear without knowing its origin (disembodied voice). It means to be without a body.

"Asariratvam", bodylessness (being incorporeal), is a state in which one is not conscious of the existence of one's body. This is liberation, says the Acaya. To remain bodyless, disincarnate, does not mean committing suicide. When we reduce our desires little by little a stage will be reached when they will be totally rooted out. When they are thus eradicated, consciousness of the body will naturally cease too. The Self alone will remain then, shining. To arrive at such a state is not necessary to voyage to another world. It is this idea that the Vedas and Vedanta refer to when they say "Ihaiva, ihaiva" (Here itself, here itself) - the ideal of liberation here and now.

We have two enemies who prevent us from reaching the state of amrta (deathlessness): according to the Gita they are desire and anger. The basis for this is the *Chandogya Upanisad* (8. 12. 1) which is a part of the Sruti - the passage in which "priya apriya" occurs: the words mean "what one likes and what one hates". The first is denoted by desire, of Kama, the second by anger. The *Chandogya Upanisad* says that one who has no body (that is one who is not conscious of his body) is not affected either by desire or by anger. That is (it says): "If you wish to be free from the evils of desire and anger you ought to make ourself without your body (free yourself of our body) right now when you are yet in this world".

A jivatman (individual self) is divided into three parts in association with the ego: "gaunatman", "mithyatman" and mukhyatman". These are mentioned in Sankara's commentary on the *Brahmasutra*.

Gauna-mithyatmano'sattve putradehadi badhanat

Sadbrahmatmahamityevam bodhe karyam katham bhavaet

-Sutrabhasya, 1. 1. 4

It is part of human nature to believe that one's children and friends are the same as oneself and that their joys and sorrows are one's own. That is what is meant by "gaunatman". "Gauna" denotes what is ceremonial or what is regarded as a formality. We know that our children and friends are different from us and yet we want to believe that they are our own.

The "I-feeling" in relation to the body which is closer to us than our children and friends is "mithyatman".

There is a state in which the pure Self is seen separate from the body and identified inwardly with the Brahman: it is called "mukhyatman".

When the first two - gaunatman and mithyatman - are separated from us we will be freed from attachments to our children, friends and the body as well as its senses. The realisation will dawn then that "I am the Brahman". Now there will be nothing for us to "do". This is the meaning of the *Sutrabhasya* passage.

Svami Vivekananda who wanted to rouse the people of India chose a mantra from the *Kathopanisad* ("Arise, awake", etc) for the Ramakrsna Mission. This Upanisad is the source of many a popular quote. For instance, there is the mantra which states that the Self cannot be known either by learning or by the strength of one's intellect. "Know that the Self is the Lord of the chariot, that the body is the chariot and that the intellect is the charioteer", is another.

"In the cavern of the heart the Supreme Being is radiant like a thumb of light. "

Then there is the mantra we recite at the time of the "diparadhana rite" ("Na tatra suryo bhati. . ."): "The sun does not shine there, nor the moon, nor the stars. There is no flash of lightning. Agni too does not shine there. When he (the Paramatman) shines everything shines; all his shines by his light. " All our knowledge is derived from that Great Light. With our limited knowledge we cannot shed light on that Reality.

Later, the *Kathopanisad* mentions what Sir Krsna Paramatman says in the Gita about the cosmic *pipal* tree, the symbol of samsara or worldly existence. If all the desires of the heart are banished a man can become immortal and realise the Brahman here itself.

After the *Kathopanisad* comes the *Prasnopanisad*, the *Mundakopanisad* and the *Mandukyopanisad*, all three being from the Atharvaveda. "Prasna" means "question". What is the origin of the various creatures? Who are the deities that sustain them? How does life imbue the body? What is the truth about wakefulness, sleep and the state of dream? What purpose is served by being devoted to Om? What is the relationship between the Supreme Godhead and the individual self? These questions are answered in the *Prasnopanisad*.

"Mundana" means "tonsure". Only sannyasins, ascetics with a high degree of maturity, are qualified to study the *Mundakopanisad* - that is how it came to be so called. This Upanisad speaks of the Aksarabrahman, aksara meaning "imperishable" and also "sound". We speak of "Pancaksara", "Astaksara"and so on. The source of all sound in "Pranava", or "Omkaara". Pranava is a particularly efficacious means to attain the Aksarabrahman.

One mantra in the *Mundakopanisad* asks us to string the bow of Omkara with the arrow of the Atman and hit unperturbed the target called the Brahman. Like the arrow you must be one with the Brahman. It is also in this Upanisad that the individual self and the Paramatman are compared to two birds perched on the body that is the pippala tree. The jivatman (individual self) alone eats the fruit (of karma) and the Paramtman bird is merely a witness. This is the basis of the biblical story of Adam (Atman) and Eve (jiva). Adam does not eat the apple (pippala) but Eve does.

The motto of the Union of India - "Satyameva Jayate" - is taken from this Upanisad. .

There is also a mantra which speaks of sannyasins who, after being jivanmuktas in this world, become "videhamuktas" (liberated without their body). It is chanted when ascetics are received with honour with a "purna-kumba".

The *Mundakopanisad* speaks of the jnanin thus: "Different rivers with different names lose their names and forms in the ocean. Similarly the knower (jnanin) freed from name and form unites inseparably with the Brahman. "

Next is the *Mandukyopanisad*. "Manduka" means "frog". Why the name "Frog Upanisad"? One reason occurs to me: the frog does not have to go step by step. It can leap from the first to the fourth step. In the *Mandukyopanisad* the way is shown to reach the turiya or fourth state from the state of wakefulness through the states of sleep and dream. By devoting oneself to (by intense meditation of) Om (that is by aksara upasana) one can in one bound go up to the fourth state. That perhaps is the reason why this Upanisad is called "*Mandukya*". According to modern research scholars, the *Mandukya Upanisad* belonged to a group of people who had the frog as their totem! (It is also said that the sage associated with the Upanisad is Varuna who took the form of a frog.)

The text of the *Mandukyopanisad* is very brief and contains only twelve mantras. But it has acquired a special place among seekers because it is packed with meaning. It demonstrates the oneness of the individual self and the Brahman through the four feet (padas) of Pranava. There is a famous passage occurring towards the end of this Upanisad which describes the experience of the turiya or fourth state in which all the cosmos is dissolved in

"Siva-Advaita" (Sivo' dvaita). Sankara Bhagavatpada's guru's guru, Gaudapadacarya, has commented on this Upanisad (*Mandukyopanisad-Karika*) and Sankara has written a further commentary on this work.

Now the *Taittiriya Upanisad*. I had referred earlier to the misunderstanding that developed between Vaisampayana and his disciple Yajnavalkya. In his anger the teacher asked his student to eject the Veda he has taught him. Yajnavalkya did as bidden. Later the sun god taught him the Sukla-Yajurveda which had until then not been revealed to the world.

It was with the power acquired through mantras that Yajnavalkya became a gander to throw up the Veda he had first learned from Vaisampayana. Now that master's other disciples, bidden by him assumed the form of tittiri birds (partridges) and consumed what had been ejected by Yajnavalkya. Thus this recension of the Yajurveda came to be called "*Taittiriya Sakha*". The name "Taittiriya" is also applied to the Samhita, Brahmana and Aranyaka of this sakha. The *Taittiriya Upanisad* is part of the *Taittiriya Aranyaka* and it is perhaps studied more widely than any other Upanisad. Many mantras employed in rituals are taken from it. There are three parts to it - "Sikshavalli", "Anandavalli" and "Bhruguvalli".

Sikshavalli contains matters relating to education rules of the brahmacaryasrama (the celibate student's stage of life), its importance, order of Vedic chanting, meditation of Pranava. The "Avahanti homa" is in Sikshavalli. It is performed by the acarya to ensure that disciples come to learn from him without any let or hindrance. We know from our own experience that, even today, as a result of performing this sacrifice, Vedic schools which were in decay have received a new lease of life with the admission of many new students.

Sikshavalli mentions "Atma-svrajya" that is eternal, a state which transcends in meaning the "svrajya" we are familiar with in politics.

"Satyam vada, dharmam cara" (Speak the truth, do your duty according to dharma): such exhortations to students are contained in this Upanisad. Students are urged not to neglect the study of the Vedas at any time. They are asked to marry and beget children so that Vedic learning will be kept up from generation to generation. "Matr-devo bhava, pitr-devo bhava, acarya-devo bhava, athithi-devo bhava" (Be one to whom your mother is a god; be one

to whom your father is a god; be one to whom your teacher is a god; be one to whom your guest is a god) - all such mantras are in this Upanisad. The importance of charity and dharma is specially stressed here.

Earlier I spoke to you about a "multiplication table" of bliss in which each successive type of bliss is a hundredfold greater than the previous one. Anandavalli is the part of the *Taittiriya Upanisad* in which you see this. The highest form of bliss of ananda in this "table" is Brahmananda (the bliss of realising the Brahman).

Different sheaths (kosas) of man are mentioned in this Upanisad. The first is the "annamaya-kosa" (the sheath of food), the flesh that grows with the intake of food. Inside it is the "pranamaya-kosa" (the sheath of vital breath). Then comes the "manomaya-kosa" (the sheath of mind) that gives rise to thoughts and feelings. The fourth is "vijñanamaya-kosa" (the sheath of understanding). And, finally, the fifth, the "anandamaya-kosa" (the sheath of bliss). It is here that the Self dwells in blessedness. Each sheath is personified as a bird with head, wings, body, belly - there is a philosophical significance in this. This Upanisad contains the oft-quoted mantra ("Yato vaco. . ."). It says: "He who knows the bliss of the Brahman, from which speech and mind turn away unable to grasp it, such a man does not have to fear anything from anywhere. "

"Bhrguvalli" is the teaching (upadesa) imparted by Varuna to his son Bhrgu. "Upadesa" here is not to be understood as something dictated by the guru to his student. Varuna encourages his son to ascend step by step through his own experiments and experience. Bhrgu performs austerities and thinks that the sheath of food is the truth. From this stage he advances gradually through the sheaths of breath, mind and understanding and arrives at the truth that is the sheath of bliss. He realises as an experience that the Atman (the nature of bliss) is the ultimate truth.

This does not mean that the *Taittiriya Upanisad* rejects the factual world represented by the sheath of food. While being yet in this world, taking part in its activities, we must become aware of the supreme truth. For this we must strive to make life more dharmic, as a means of Atmic advancement. That is why even those who have attained the sheath of bliss are admonished: "Do not speak ill of food. Do not throw it away. Grow plenty of food". Even the government has used this mantra for its grow more food campaign. The

Taittiriya Upanisad concludes with the mantra which says: "I am food, I am food, the one who eats it. . .".

The *Aitareya Upanisad* forms part of the *Aitareya Aranyaka* of the Rgveda. the name is derived from the fact that it was the sage Aitareya who made it widely known. A jiva (individual self) originating in the father, says the Upanisad, enters the womb of the mother. He is born in this world and goes through his life of meritorious and sinful actions. Then he is born again and again in different worlds. Only by knowing the Atman does he find release from the bondage of phenomenal existence.

The sage called Vamadeva knew about all his previous births when he was in his mother's womb. He passed through all fortresses and, like an eagle soaring high in the skies, voyaged seeking liberation. In this context prajana, direct perception of the Atman, is spoken of in high terms. It is not merely that one attains the Brahman through such jnana (prajana) - the fact is such prajana itself is the Brahman. And this is the mahavakya of the Rgveda: "Prajnanam Brahma".

The *Chandogya* and *Bṛhadaranyaka Upanisads* are the last two of the ten major Upanisads and is also the biggest. They are bigger than all the other eight of the ten put together. The first is part of the *Chandogya Brahmana* of the Samaveda. "Chandogya" means relating to "chandoga", one who sings the Saman. The *Tamil Tevaram* refers to Paramesvara as "*Candogan kar*". The Zoroastrian scripture called the Zend-Avesta could be traced back to "Chandoga-Avesta. "

Just as there are passages in the *Gita* from the *Kathopanishad*, so has the *Brahmasutra* passages from the *Chandogya Upanisad*. In these two Upanisads the teachings of a number of sages are put together.

The introductory mantras of the *Chandogya Upanisad* refer to Omkara as "udgita" and explains how one is to meditate on it. A number of vidyas are mentioned like "Aksi", "Akasa", "NMadhu", "Sandilya", "Prana", and "Pancagni". These help in different ways in knowing the Ultimate Reality. "Dahara vidya" is the culmination of all these: it means perceiving the Supreme Being manifested as the transcendent outward sky in the tiny space in our heart. A number of truths are expounded in this Upanisad in the form of stories.

From the story of Raikva we learn about the strange outward behaviour of one who has realised the Brahman. There is then the famous story of Satyakama who does not know his gotra, but is accepted as a pupil by Gautama. The guru thinks that Satyakama must be a true Brahmin since he does not hide the truth about him. Before the pupil is taught he is made to undergo many tests. The guru's wife, out of concern for the pupil, speaks to her husband for him. When we read such stories we have before us a true picture of gurukulavasa in ancient times.

In character Svetaketu was the opposite of Satyakama and was proud of his learning. His father Uddalaka Aruni teaches him to be humble and in the end imparts to him the mantra, "Tat tvam asi" (That thou art), the mantra which proclaims the non-difference between the individual self and the Brahman. "Tat tvam asi" is the mahavakya of the Samaveda.

Unlike Svetaketu, the sage Narada, who had mastered all branches of learning, was humble and full of regret that he had remained ignorant of the Atman. He finds enlightenment in the teachings of Sanatkumara which are included in the *Chandogya Upanisad*. In the *Taittiriya Upanisad* Bhrgu is taught to go step by step to obtain higher knowledge [from the sheath of food to the sheath of bliss]. Here Sanatkumara teaches Narada to go from purity of form to purity of the inner organs ("antah-karanas"). That is the time when all ties will snap and bliss reached.

Another story illustrates how different students benefit differently from the same teaching according to the degree of maturity of each. Prajapati gives the same instruction to Indra, the king of the celestials, and to Virocana, the king of the asuras. This is what Prajapati teaches him: "He who sees with his eyes, he is the Self". He subtly hints at the object that is behind the eye, knowledge, etc, and that is the basis of all these. Without understanding this, the two see themselves in a mirror and take the reflection to be the Self. You see only the body in the mirror and Virocana comes to the conclusion that that is the Self. It is from this idea that atheism, materialism and the Lokayata system developed. Although Indra also took this kind of wrong view from his reflection, eventually [similar to the story in the *Taittiriya Upanisad* of Bhrgu advancing from the sheath of food to the sheath of bliss] he goes in gradual stages from the gross body to the subtle body of sleep and later to the turiya or fourth state mentioned in the *Mandukyopanisad* - the turiya is the Self.

The *Brhadaranyaka Upanisad* comes last. "Brhad" means "great". It is indeed a great Upanisad, *Brhadaranyaka*. Generally, an Upanisad comes towards the close of the Aranyaka of the sakha concerned. While the *Isavasyopanisad* occurs in the Samhita of the Sukla-Yajurveda, the *Brhadaranyaka Upanisad* is in the Aranyaka of the same Veda: as a matter of fact the entire Aranyaka constitutes this Upanisad. There are two recensions of it: the *Madhyandina Sakha* and the *Kanva Sakha*. Sankara has chosen the latter for his commentary.

This Upanisad consists of six chapters. The first two are the "Madhukanda", the next two are the "Muni-kanda" in the name of Yajnavalkya, and the last two are the "Khila-kanda". Madhu may be understood as that which is full of the flavour of bliss. If we have the realisation that all this world is a personification of the Parabrahman it would be sweet like nectar to all creatures - and the creatures would be like honey to the world. The Atman then would be nectar for all. This idea is expressed in the Madhu-kanda.

It is in this Upanisad that the celebrated statement occurs that the Atman is "neither this, nor this" ("Neti, neti"). The Self cannot be described in any way. "Na-iti" - that is "Neti". It is through this process of "Neti, neti" that you give up everything - the cosmos, the body, the mind, everything - to realise the Self. After knowing the Atman in this manner you will develop the attitude that the phenomenal world and all its creatures are made up the same essence of bliss.

The first kanda contains the teachings received by the Brahmin Gargya from the Ksatriya Ajatasatru. This shows that kings like Ajatasatru and Janaka were knowers of the Brahman. We also learn that women too took part on an equal footing with the sages in the debates in royal assemblies on the nature of the Brahman. There was, for instance, Gargi in Janaka's assembly of the learned. The *Brhadaranyaka Upanisad* also tells us about Yajnavalkya's two wives: of the two Katyayani was like any housewife and the second, Maitreyi, was a Brahnavadini (one who inquires into the Brahman and speaks about it). The instruction given by Yajnavalkya to Maitreyi occurs both in the Madhukanda and the Muni-kanda. Here we have a beautiful combination of story-telling and philosophical disquisition.

When Yajnavalkya is on the point of renouncing the world, he divides his wealth between his two wives. Katyayani is contented and does not ask for

anything more. Maitreyi, on the other hand, is not worried about about her share. she tells her husband: "You are leaving your home, aren't you, because you will find greater happiness in sannyasa that from all this wealth? What is that happiness? Won't you speak about it? "

Yajnavalkya replies: "You have always ben dear to me, Maitreyi. Now, by asking this question, you have endeared yourself to me more. " He then proceeds to find out what is meant by the idea of someone being dear to someone else. His is indeed an inquiry into the concept of love and affection. He says: "A wife is dear to her husband not for the sake of his wife but for the sake of his Self. So is a husband dear to his wife for the sake foor the sake of her Self. The children too are dear to us not for their sake but for the sake of the Self. So is the case with our love of wealth. We have affection of a person or an entity because it pleases our Self. It means that this Self itself is of the nature of affection, of love, of joy. It is to know this Self independently of everything else that we forsake all those who are dear to us and take to sannyasa. When we know It, the Self or the Atman, we will realise that there is nothing other than It. Everything will become dear to us. To begin with, when we had affection for certain people or certain things, we had dislike for certain other people and certain other things. If we cease to be attached to those people or to those things that we loved and realise the Atman, then we will become aware that there is nothing other thatn the Atman. Then, again, we will dislike none and will love all without any distinction. "

Before renouncing the world, Yajnavalkya held disputations on the Ultimate Reality with Kahola, Uddalaka Aruni and Gargi in Janaka's royal assembly. These debates, together with the teachings he imparted to Janaka, are included in Muni-kanda. The concept of Antaryamin (Inner Controller) belongs to Visistadvaita (qualified non-dualism). The basis for this is to be found in Yajnavalkya's answer to a question put to him by Uddalaka Aruni.

According to non-dualism all this phenomenal world in Maya. The idea behind the concept of Antaryamin is that if the world is the body, the Paramatman dwells in it as its very life. Though Yajnavalkya accepts this concept on a certain level, at all other times his views are entirely in consonance with non-dualism. In his concluding words to Maitreyi, the supreme Advaitin that he is, Yajnavalkya remarks: "Even if you be little dualistic in your outlook, it means that you look at something other than yourself, smell, taste, touch and hear

something other than yourself. But when you have realised the Self experientially, all these 'other things' cease to exist. That which is the source of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, and so on - how can you see, hear, taste, smell That? " Expounding non-dualism Yajnavalkya tells Janaka (4. 3. 32), "Like water mingled with water all become one in the Paramatman. " "He who is freed from all desire exists as the Brahman even when he is in the world (with his body) and when he dies is united with the Brahmin.

The two concluding chapters that form the Khila-kanda of the Upanisad bring together scattered ideas. (If a thing is broken or divided it is called "khila". That which is whole and unbroken is "akhila".)

A story in the Khila-kanda illustrates how the same teaching is interpreted differently according to the degree of maturity of the aspirants. The devas (the celestial race), humans and the demons (asuras) seek instruction from Prajapati (the Creator). Prajapati utters just one syllable, "Da", as his teaching. The devas who do not possess enough control over their senses take it to mean "damyata" ("control your senses"). Humans who are possessive understand the syllable as "datta" ("give", "be charitable"). The asuras who are cruel by nature take the same as "dayadhvam" (be compassionate).

A mantra occurring in the concluding part of the *Brhadhranyaka Upanisad* seems to me not only extremely interesting but also comforting. What does it say? "If a man suffers from fever it must be taken that he is practising austerities (tapas). If he recognises illnesses and afflictions to be tapas, he passes on to a very high world" (5. 11. 1). [Etadvai paramam tapo yadvyahitastapyate paramam haiva lokam jayati ya evam veda. . .]

What is the meaning of this statement and what is interesting about it? And how is it comforting?

By observing vows, by fasting, by living an austere life and by suffering physically, we will become less attached to the body, and the sins accumulated in our past lives will diminish. Tapas is a way of expiating the sins of past lives. The offences committed with our body are wiped away by the very body when it undergoes suffering (that is by bodily tapas).

That is why the Puranas speak of great men having performed austerities. Ambika herself - she is the mother of the universe - performs tapas. Not

heeding the word of her husband Paramesvara, she [as Sati] attends the sacrifice conducted by her father Daksa. Because of the humiliation she suffers there she immolates herself in the sacrificial fire and is reborn as the daughter of Himavan. As atonement for disobeying her husband's command during her past life and for the purpose of being united with him again, she performs severe austerities. Kalidasa gives a beautiful and moving account of this. How bitterly cold it will be during the winter in the Himalaya. But in that season Parvati (that is Ambika) performs austerities seated on icy rocks or standing on frozen lakes. In the summer, when the sun is beating down harshly, she does tapas with fires burning all round her. Performing austerities with the fires on four sides and with the sun burning above is called "pancagni-tapas".

Many great men have performed such severe austerities.

How about ourselves? If they, the great men, were guilty of one or two lapses, we cannot even keep count of our sins. But we have neither the will nor the strength to perform a fraction of the austerities that they went through. How then are we going to wipe away our sins?

It is when we are troubled by such thoughts that we find the foregoing Upanisadic mantra comforting. Since ours is not a disciplined life we keep suffering from one ailment or another. The Upanisadic mantra seems to be directed to us: "You must learn to think that the affliction you are suffering from is tapas. If you do so you will be freed from your sins and liberated. " Though the message is not given in such plain terms, such is the meaning of the mantra.

We often speak of "jvara-tapa" or "tapa-jvara" (literally "hot fever"). "Tapa" means "boiling" or "cooking". The root is "tap" to burn. "Tapana" is one of the names of the sun. Even if we do not perform the austerities mentioned in the sastras, we must take it that the fever contracted by us is the tapas Isvara has awarded us to become free from our sins.

When we are down with malaria we keep shivering in spite of covering ourselves with blankets. Our attitude now must be to suffer the affliction in lieu of the tapas we ought to perform in the winter months remaining on snow. Do you feel that your body is being roasted when you are suffering from typhoid or pneumonia and a running temperature of 105° or 106°F? You must

comfort yourself, believing that God has given you the fever as a substitute for the pancagni-tapas you are unable to perform.

You will in due course learn to take such an attitude and develop the strength to suffer any illness. Instead of sending for the doctor or rushing to the medicine chest you may take it easy, telling yourself, "Let the illness take its course". When we happen to fall ill as a means of reducing our burden of sin, is it right to seek a cure for it? Also we save on doctor's fees, medicine, etc. The gain bigger than all the rest is that of learning to take the high attitude of treating suffering as not suffering. This is called "titiksa".

All this is briefly indicated in the Upanisadic mantra. When we keep lamenting that we are unable to expiate our sins - when we are unable to perform tapas - we may take comfort from the fact that when we suffer from a disease it is God's way of making us perform austerities.

In the last chapter of the *Brhadranyaka Upanisad* we have strong proof of the fact that Vedanta is not opposed to the karmakanda. Here are mentioned the pancagni-vidya and the rites to be performed to beget virtuous children (supraja).



[What do the Vedas Teach Us?](#)

The Vedas speak of a variety of matters. So how are we to accept the view that their most important teaching is the concept of Self-realisation expounded in the Upanisads constituting the Vedanta? They mention a number of sacrifices like agnihotra, somayaga, sattra and isti and other rituals in

addition. Why should it not be maintained that it is these that form their chief purpose?

What are the rites to be performed at a marriage? Or at a funeral? How best is a kingdom(or any country) governed? How must we conduct ourselves in an assembly? You will find answers to many such questions in the Vedas. Which of these then is the main objective of our scripture?

The Vedas tell you about the conduct of sacrifices, ways of worship, methods of meditation. How is the body inspired by the Self? What happens to it (the body) in the end? And how does the self imbue the body again? We find an answer to such questions in these sacred texts. Also we learn from methods to keep the body healthy, the rites to protect ourselves from enemy attacks. What then is the goal of the Vedas?

The Upanisads proclaim that all the Vedas together point to a single Truth (Kathopanishad, 2. 15)What is that Truth? "The Vedas speak in one voice of a Supreme Entity revealing itself as the meaning of Omkara. "

There was a judge called Sadasiva Ayyar. He had a brother, Paramasiva Ayyar, who lived in Mysore. "The Vedas deal with geology, "so wrote Paramasiva Ayyar. "In those early times, people in India looked upon the sun and the moon with wonder, " some Westerners remark. "it was an age when science had not made much advance. People then regarded natural phenomena according to their different mental attitudes. Not all are capable of turning their thoughts into song. But some have the talent for the same. The songs sing by people in the form of mantras constitute the Vedas. "

Though the Upanisads declare that the Vedas speak of the One reality, there is an impression that they speak of a variety of entities. There is a well-known stanza on the Ramayana:

Vedavedye pare pumsi jate Dasarathatmaje

Vedah Pracetasadasitssaksadramayanatmana

"Vedavedye"=one who is to be known by the Vedas. Who is he? "Pare pumsi"=the Supreme Being. The Supreme being to be known by the Vedas descended to earth as Rama. When he was born the son of Dasaratha, the Vedas took the form of Valmiki's child Ramayana. According to this stanza,

the goal of the Vedas is the Supreme Being or Omkara, the One Truth. Just as the kathopanisad speaks of "sarve Vedah", the lord says in the Gita:"Vedaisca sarvair ahameva vedyah"(I am indeed to be known by the Vedas)

Considering all this, we realise that, although the Vedas deal with many matters, all of them together speak of one goal, the One reality. But the question arises why they concern themselves with different entities also when their purpose is only the One entity?

It is through the various entities, through knowledge of a multiplicity of subjects, that we may know of this One Object. Yoga, meditation, austerities, sacrifices and other rites, ceremonies like marriage, state affairs, social life, poetry: what is the goal of all these? It is the One Reality. And that is the goal of the Vedas also. All objects and all entities other than this true Object are subject to change. They are like stories remembered and later forgotten. (In our ignorance) we do not perceive the One object behind the manifoldness of the world. The Vedas take us to the One Reality through the multifarious objects that we do know.

To attain this One reality we need to discipline our mind in various ways. Performing sacrifices, practising austerities, doing the duties of one's own dharma, building gopurams, digging ponds for the public, involving ourselves in social work, samskaras like marriage, all these go to purify our consciousness and, finally to still the mind that is always agitated. (cittavrtti-nirodha). The purpose of different works is to help us in our efforts to attain the Brahman.

"Ved"[from"vid"] means to know. The Upanisads proclaim:" The Atman is that by knowing which all can be known. " The goal of the Vedas is to shed light on this Atman. The rituals enjoined on us in their first part and the jnana expounded in the second have the same goal-knowing Iswara, the Brahman or the Atman. The beginning of the beginning and the end of the end of our scripture have the same ultimate aim. During the "mantrapuspa" ceremony at the time of welcoming a great man this mantra is chanted:"Yo Veda dau svarah prokto Vedante ca prathisthitah. " These words are proof of the words mentioned above. The mantra means : " What is established in the beginning of the Vedas as well as their end is the One Truth, the Reality of Isvara. " The works associated with the beginning and the jnana associated with the end- there is no difference between the goals of the two.

For the rituals that are divided in a thousand different ways and for the knowledge(jnana) that is but one, the subject is common. That is the Vedas have a common subject. The senses are incapable of perceiving the Self. They are aware only of outward objects and keep chasing them. This is mentioned in the kathopanisad(4.1).when one's attention is diverted from the object in hand we say "parakku parppadu"[in Tami] Our object is the Self. To be diverted from it and to look around-or look away-is to be "paramukha"-it is the same as "parakku parppadu". It is this idea that is expressed by the kathopanisad. But the mind does not easily remain fixed on our goal. So it is only by performing outward functions that we will gain the wisdom and maturity to turn our look inward. We will develop such inner vision only by refusing to be dragged down by the mind and the senses, and for this we must perform Vedic works.

After learning about, or knowing all other matters by inquiring into them and by making an assesment of them, we are enabled to grasp that by knowing which we will know everything. That is the reason why the Vedas deal with so many branches of learning, so many types of worship, so many different works and so many arts and so many social duties. By applying the body in various rites we lose consciousness of that very body. By directing our thoughts to various branches of learning, by examining various philosophical systems and by worshipping various deities the mind and the intellect will in due course be dissolved.

We are more conscious when we are engaged in evil actions than otherwise. By thinking about evil matters the mind becomes coarser. Instead, if we perform Vedic sacraments and worship and chant Vedic mantras for the well-being of the world, the desires of the body and the mind will wilt. Eventually, we will develop the maturity and the wisdom to gain inner vision. In this way we will obtain release here itself("ihaiva") Release from what? From samsara, from the cycle of birth and death. When we realise that the body and the mind are not"we" and when we become free from them-as mentioned in the Upanisads-we are liberated from worldly existence.

The purpose of the Vedas is achieving liberation in this world itself. And that is their glory. Other religions promise a man salvation after his departure for another world. But we cannot have any idea of that type of deliverance. Those who have attained will not return to this world to tell us about it. So we may have doubts about it or may not believe it at all. But the Vedas hold

out the ideals of liberation here itself if we renounce all desire and keep meditating on the Self. Moksha then will be within our grasp at once. there is no room for doubt in this.

Other paths give temporary relief like quinine administered to a person suffering from malaria. If malarial fever is never to be contracted by the patient again the root cause of the disease must be found and eradicated. The Vedic religion goes deep into the root of life and cuts away that which separates it from the supreme being The freedom realised in this manner is eternal and not "temporary relief"(from the pains and sorrows of worldly existence)

The karmakanda of the Vedas deals with matters that give only such temporary relief. However, it must be realised that a man racked by difficulties cannot at once be placed in a position where he would all the time delighting in his Self. Through the " Temporary relief" gained from performing Vedic rites, his consciousness is freed from impurities and he becomes "qualified" for everlasting peace. Sacrifices, vows, philanthropic work, and so on, do not take us to the final goal but they are necessarily to reduce ourselves physically, to cleanse our consciousness and make our mind one-pointed in our effort to reach our final goal.

A variety of subjects are spoken in detail in the Vedas but all of them have the one purpose of leading us to the Vedantic enquiry into Truth and jnana. The concluding portion of a work, speech, article etc, is usually the most significant. If we want to find what so-and-so has said in a speech or in an article, we do not have to read all of it. We glance through the first para and, skipping through, come to the last. Here we get the message of the speech or article. We are able to decide on the content of either by going through the first and concluding passages. The first and last parts alike of the Vedas speak of the Paramatman; so that can be said to be the "subject" of the Vedas.

The government enacts many laws. But, later in the course of their enforcement, doubts arise with regard to their intention. Then another law is enacted to settle its meaning:it is called the law of interpretation. In this way Mimamsa has come into being as the law of interpretation for the Vedas which constitute the eternal law of the Lord. I will speak to you in detail about

Mimamsa which is one of the fourteen branches of the Vedic lore. But one aspect of it I should like to mention here itself.

According to Mimamsa sastra, there are six ways in which to determine the meaning of the Vedic pronouncement or "vakhya". They are listed in this verse:

Upakrama-upasamharau abhyasao purvata phalam

Arthavado pappati lingam tatparya-nirnaye

"Upakrama" and "upasamhara" together form the first method. The other five are "abhyasa", "apurvata", "phala", "arthavada" and "upapatti". These six are employed to determine the meaning or intent not only of Vedic passages but of, say, an article or discourse.

"Upakrama" means the initial part of work, treatise, and "upasamhara" the conclusion. If the first and concluding parts of a work speak of the same idea, it is to be taken as its subject. "Abhyasa" is repeating the same thing, the same idea, again and again. If the same view or the idea is repeated in a work, it must be understood as its theme. "Apurvata" denotes an idea not mentioned before or mentioned for the first time. So a view or idea expressed afresh in the course of work or discourse is to be taken as the purpose or message intended. "Phala" is fruit, benefit, reward or result. If, in the course of work or speech, it is said, "If you act in this manner you will gain such and such a fruit or benefit", it means that the purpose of the work or speech is to persuade you to act in the manner suggested so that you may reap the fruit or "phala" held out.

Suppose a number of points are dealt with in a work or discourse. Now, based on them, a story is told and, in the course of it, a particular matter receives special praise. This particular point must be regarded as the purpose of the work or speech in question. The method employed here is "arthavada". If a viewpoint is sought to be established with reasoning it must be treated as the subject of the work concerned. Here you have "upapatti".

A gentleman told me his view of the Vedas based on his reading of the first and last hymns: "The chief point about the Vedas is fire worship (Agni upasana). In the upakrama there is 'Agnimile' and in the upasamhara also

there is a hymn to Agni. Both the beginning and the end being so, the purpose of the Vedas (their 'gist') is fire worship". Agni is the light of the Atman, the light of the jnana. The light of jnana is nothing but the spirit of the Self which is the knower, the known and the knowledge: this is the ultimate message of the Vedas.

However, to understand the hymns in question in a literal sense and claim that the Vedas mean fire worship is not correct. The greatness of our scripture consists in the fact that it does not glorify one deity alone. The Vedas proclaim that the Atman, the Self, must be worshipped, the Atman that denotes all the deities (Brahadranyaka Upanishad), 4. 5. 6 : "Verily, O Maitreyi, it is the Self that should be perceived, that should be seen, heard and reflected upon. It is the Self that must be known. When the Self is known everything is known". This truth that the Yagnavalkya teaches his wife Maitreyi is the goal of the Vedas.

What is the implication of the word "goal"? Now we are here at a particular point. From this point, where we start, we have to go to another point which is final. Such a meaning is suggested by the word "goal". "Atah" is what is pointed to at a distance ("that") as the goal. "Itah" is where we are now (here), the starting point. From "here" we have to go "there" to reach the goal.

But as a matter of fact, is not "that", the goal, here itself (this)? Yes, when we recognize that everything is the Brahman, we will realise that "that" and "this" are the Brahman - in other words, "that" and "this" are the same. What we now think to be "this" becomes the true state denoted by "that".

Like "atah" the Vedas refer to the Paramatman as "TaT" which means "that". At the conclusion of any rite or work it is customary to say "Om TaT sat". It means, "That is the Truth".

We add the suffix "tvam" to some words: "purusatvam", "mahatvam" and so on. Here "tvam" means the quality or nature of a thing. The quality of "mahat" is "mahatvam". The nature of "purusa" being a "purusa" is "purusatvam". All right. What do we mean when we refer to the truth, the Ultimate Truth, as "tattvam"? "Tattvam" means "being TaT". When we speak of enquiry into tattva or instruction in tattva it means enquiring into the nature of the Brahman (or rather Brahmanhood or what is meant by the Brahman.)

If the Vedas proclaim the Paramatman as "Tat", that is a distant entity, how does it help us? Actually, it is not so. What is far away is also close by. The Vedas proclaim: "Durat dure antike ca"

Once the parents of a girl arranged her marriage to a boy who happened to be a relative. But the girl said "I'll marry the greatest man in the world. "She was stubborn in her decision and the parents in their helplessness said to her "Do what you like. "

The girl thought that the king was the greatest of men and that she would get married to him. One day, as the king was being taken in a palanquin, an ascetic passed by. The king got down and prostrated himself before the sanyasin and got into his palanquin again. Witnessing the scene the girl thought to herself: "I was wrong all these days in thinking that the king was the greatest of men. The ascetic seems to be greater. I must marry him. "She then followed the holy man. .

The ascetic stopped on his way to worship an idol of Ganapati installed under a pipal tree. The girl saw it and came to the conclusion : "This Ganapati is superior to the sanyasin. I must marry him. " She gave up her chase of the ascetic and sat by the idol of Ganapati.

It was a lonely place and no devotee came up to worship the god. After some days a dog came and relieved itself on the idol. The girl now decided that the dog must be greater than Ganapati. She went chasing the dog and as it trotted along, with the girl keeping pace with it, a boy threw a stone at it and it wailed loudly in pain. a young man saw this and reprimanded the boy for his cruelty. The girl now told herself "I had thought that the boy was superior to the dog. But here comes a young man to take him to task. So he must be the greatest of them all. "Eventually it turned out that the young man was none other than the groom that her parents had chosen for her.

The girl in the story went in pursuit of one she thought was far away but in the end it turned out that what she had sought was indeed closeby.

"You look for God thinking him to be far from you. So long as your ignorant(that is without jnana)he is indeed far from you. Even if you look for him all over the world you will not find him. He is in truth with you. ""Durat

dure antike ca, "says the sruti(Farther than the farthest, nearer than the nearest).

When we look afar at the horizon it seems to be the meeting point of the earth and the sky. Suppose there is a palm-tree there. We imagine that if we go upto the tree we will arrive at the point where the earth and the sky meet. But when we actually arrive at the spot where the tree stands we see that the horizon has receded further. The further we keep going the further the horizon too will recede from us. "We are here under the palm tree but the horizon is still far away. We must also go further to overtake it. "Is it ever possible to overtake the horizon? When we are at a distance from the palm the horizon seems to be near it. But when we came to it the horizon seemed to have moved away further. So where is the horizon? Where you are that is, the horizon. You and the horizon are on the very same spot. What we call "That" the lord who we think is far away, is by your side. No, he is in you. "That thou art, "declare the Vedas-He is you(or you are He).

"That you are "or "That thou art"(Tat Tvam Asi)is a Vedic mahavakya. The "Tvam" here does not mean the quality or essential nature of any entity or object. The word has two meanings:"essential nature"("beingness")is one meaning; and" you "or "thou" is another. The Acarya has used "Tvam" as a pun in a stanza in his saundaryalahari.

It is a combination of the two words "taat" and "tvam" that the word "tattvam" has come into use. Any truth arrived at the conclusion of an inquiry is "tattva"-thus it denotes the One Truth that is the Paramatman.

What we call "I", what we think to be "i", that indeed is Isvara; or such awareness is Isvara. If you do not possess the light within yiou to discern this truth you will not be able to even concieve of an entity called Isvara, The consciousness of "I" is what we believe to be the distant "That". "That and you are the same, child "is the Ultimate message of the Vedas.

What we call "this"("idam") is not without a root or a source. Indeed there is no object called "this" without a source. Without the seed there is no tree. The cosmos with its mountains, oceans, with its sky and earth, with its man and beast, and so on has its root. Anger, fear and love, the senses, power and energy have their root, Whatever we call "this " has a root. Whatever we see, hear and smell, what we remember, what we feel to be hot or cold, what

we experience-all these are covered by the term "idam". Intellectual powers, scientific discoveries, the discoveries yet to come - all come under Idam and all of them have a root cause. There is nothing called "idam" or "this" without a root. Everything has a root or a seed. So the cosmos also must have a root cause; so too all power, all energy contained in it.

To realise this Truth examine a tamarind seed germinating. When you split the seed open. you will see a miniature tree in it. It has in it the potential to grow, to grow big. Such is the case with all seeds.

The mantras have "bijaksaras"(seed letters or rather seed variables). Like a big tree (potentially) present in a tiny seed, these syllables contain immeasurable power. If the bijaksara is muttered a hundred thousand times, with your mind one-pointed, you will have its power within your grasp.

Whatever power there is in the world, whatever intellectual brilliance whatever skills and talents, all must be present in God in a rudimentary form. The Vedas proclaim, as if with the beat of drums:"All this has not sprung without a root cause, The power that is in the root or seed is the same as the power that pervades the entire universe. Where is that seed or root? The Self that keeps seeing all from within, what we call "idam" is the root.

When you stand before a mirror you see your image in it. If you keep four mirrors in a row you will see a thousand images of yourself. There is one source for all these images. The one who sees these thousand images is the same as one who is their source. The one who is within the millions of creatures and sees all "this" is the Isvara. That which sees is the root of all that is seen. That root is knowledge and it is the source of all the cosmos. Where do you find this knowledge? It is in you. The infinite, transcendent knowledge is present partly in you-the whole is present in you as a part.

Here is a small bulb. There you have a bigger bulb. That light is blue, this is green. There are lamps of many sizes and shapes. But their power is the same-electricity, electricity which is everywhere. It keeps the fan whirling, keeps the lamps burning. The power is the same and it is infinite. When it passes through a wire it becomes finite. When lightning strikes in flashes, when water cascades, the power is manifested. In the same way you must make the supreme Truth within manifest itself in a flash. All Vedic rites, all

worship, all works, meditation of the mahakavyas, Vedanta-the purpose of all these is to make the truth unfold itself to you-in you-in a flash.

Even the family and social life that are dealt with in the Vedas, the royal duties mentioned in them, or poetry, therapeutics or geology or any other sastra are steps leading towards the realisation of the Self. At first the union of "Tat" and "tvam"(That and you) would be experienced for a few moments like a flash of lightning. The Kenopanisad(4. 4) refers to the state of knowing the Brahman experimentally as a flash of lightning happening in the twinkling of an eye. But with repeated practice, with intense concentration, you will be able to immerse yourself in such experience. It is like the electricity produced when a stream remains cascading. This is moksa, liberation, when you are yet in this world, when you are still in possession of your body. And, when you give up the body, you will become eternal Truth yourself. This is called "videhamukthi"(literally bodiless liberation). The difference between jivanmukthi and videhamukthi is only with reference to an outside observer; for the jnanin the two are identical.

The goal of the Vedas is inward realisation of the Brahman here and now. we learn about happenings in the world from the newspapers. The news gathered by reporters stationed in different countries, at different centres, also through news agencies. It is recieved through letters, telegrams or teleprinter messages. There are things that cannot be known by such means, things that are not comprehended by the ordinary human mind. should we not have a special newspaper to keep us informed about them? The Vedas constitute such a paper. They tell us all about things that cannot be known to ordinary news-gatherers and also about things occuring in aplace where there is neither telegraphy nor any teleprinter. It is through the medium of this newspaper that the sages who possess trans-sensual powers keep us informed about matters that are beyond this world and beyond the comprehension of the average man.

There are, however, certain portions in the Vedas that are to be discarded. "To be discarded" is not to be taken to mean to be rejected outright as wrong. There cannot be anything wrong about any part of the Vedas. Even to think so is sacrilegious. There are matters in these texts that are preliminary to an important subject or that lend support to it. According to the arrangement made by our forefathers the important part is to be retained and the other preliminary or supporting portion is to be excluded. Certain things

are necessary at a certain stage of our development. But these are to be excluded as we go step by step to a higher stage.

There are then passages that are of utmost importance and have the force of law. These are to be accepted in full, Things that are to be discarded belong to the category of "arthavada" and " anuvada".

The Vedas contain stories told to impress on us the importance of a concept, stories that raise ideas to a higher level. The injunctions with which these stories are associated must be accepted in full but the stories themselves may be discarded as "arthavada", that is they need not be brought into observance.

What is "anuvada"? Before speaking about a new rule or a new concept, the Vedas tell us about things that we already know. They go on repeating this without coming to the new rule or concept, that is things known to us in practical life and not having the authority of Vedic pronouncements. This is "anuvada".

Anuvada and arthavada are not of importance and are not meant to convey the ultimate purpose or message of the Vedas. What we do not know otherwise through any other authority and what the Vedas speak of is "vidhi". And that is the chief "vada", the true tattva, the true intent of the Vedas.

To explain further. What is mentioned in the Vedas but can be known by other (mundane) means is not incontrovertible Vedic authority. The purpose of the Vedas is to make known what is not known. They speak about things we know and do not know, but their chief purpose is the latter- what they state about what we do not know. It is out of compassion that they speak about what is known to us as a prelude to telling us what we do not know. But if telling us they deal with things that we do not know? If the Vedas deal at length with the things that we are ignorant about, would it not be ridiculous to discard them and retain only what we know already? Indeed such an act would be sacrilegious. The question, however, arises: why should things known to us have been dealt with at length?

The Vedas could have been silent about them. Well, what is that we know, what is that we do not know?

There are two views about all mundane objects, worldly phenomena. Do all the objects that we perceive constitute one entity or are they all disparate? Opinion is divided on this. Based on our physical perceptions we regard all objects to be separate from one another. It is only on such a basis that our functions are carried out properly in the workday world. Water is one thing and oil is another. To light a lamp we need oil [to feed the wick]. We cannot use water for the same. But if the lamp flares up and objects near by catch fire we will have to put it out with water. With oil the fire will only spread. We have thus to note how one object is different from another and to learn how best each is to be used.

To view each object as being distinct from another is part of "Dvaita", dualism. Many of the rituals in the Vedas, many of the ways of worship found in them, are based on the dualistic view. As Advaitins (followers of the non-dualistic doctrine) we need not raise any objections on this score. We must, however, find out whether or not the Vedas go beyond dualism. If they do not, we have to conclude that their message is Dvaita. But what is the truth actually found expressed in them?

The non-dualist truth is proclaimed in a number of hymns and in most of the Upanisads, but this is not in keeping with our outward experience. The ultimate Vedic view is that all objects are indeed not separate from one another but are the outward manifestation of the same Self.

Our religious and philosophical works have two parts - purvapaksa and siddhanta. In the purvapaksas or initial section of a work, the point of view to be refuted [the view opposed to that of the author of the work] is dealt with. If we read only this part we are likely to form an impression opposite to what the work intends to convey. To refute an opinion other than one's own, one has naturally to state it. This is the purpose of the purvapaksa. In the siddhanta section there is refutation of the systems opposed to one's own before the latter is sought to be established. scholars abroad are full of praise for the fact that in our darsanas or philosophical works the views of systems opposed to those expressed in the darsanas are not concealed or ignored but that their criticisms and objections are sought to be answered.

From what is said before, does it mean that non-dualism is incorporated in the purvapaksa of the Vedas so as to be refuted in the latter part? No, it is not so. The jnanakanda in which the Upanisads lay emphasis on non-dualism is the

concluding part of the Vedas. The karmakanda which speaks of dualism precedes it. So if the Vedas first speak about the dualism that we know and later about the non-dualism that we do not know, it means that the non-dualistic teaching is the supreme purpose of the Vedas.

I will tell you why the dualism in the purvapaksas in the Vedas is not rebutted. The works and worship performed with a dualistic outlook are not a hindrance for us to advance on the path of non-dualistic experience. On the contrary, they are a means to make precisely such progress. So the works and worship are not to be taken as constituting a point of view opposed to the main message of the Vedas and to be refuted in the second part. First the flower, then the fruit. Similarly, we have to advance to non-dualism from dualism. The flower is not opposed to the fruit, is it? Do we despise the flower because the fruit represents its highest [natural development]?

From the non-dualistic standpoint there is no need to counter other systems, viewed on their own proper levels. It is only when these levels are exceeded that the need arises to counter them. That is how our Acarya and other exponents of non-dualism countenanced other systems.

By the grace of Isvara scientific advancement so far has done no injury to things Atmic and indeed modern science takes us increasingly close to Advaita whose truth hitherto could not be known by anything other than the Vedas. In the early centuries of science it was thought that all objects in the world were different entities, separate from one another. Then scientists came to the conclusion that the basis of all matter was constituted by the different elements, that all the countless objects in the world resulted from these elements combining together in various ways. Subsequently when atomic science developed it was realised that all the elements had the same source, the same energy.

Those who meditate on the Self and know the truth realise that this power, this Atman, is made up of knowledge, awareness. And it is knowledge (jnana) that enfolds not only inert objects but also the individual self to form the non-dualistic whole.

Whether it is one energy or one caitanya, the One Object that both vijñānins (scientists) and jñānins (knowers) speak of is not visible to us. We see only its countless disguises as different objects, that is we see the One Object

dualistically [or pluralistically]. You need not seek the support of the Vedas for this, for what is obvious. Why do you need the testimony of the Vedas for what our eyes and intellect recognize? If they speak of a truth that we are not aware of but which we can realise from what we know, and if this truth is proclaimed to be their final conclusion, we must accept it as their ultimate message. This message is the doctrine, the truth, that the individual self is inseparably (non-dualistically) dissolved in the Paramatman to become the Paramatman.



Essence of the Upanisadic Teaching

What is the essence of the Upanisadic teaching? How do we realise the ideal state mentioned in the Upanisads [the oneing of the individual self and the Overself]?

The phenomenal universe, in the view of modern science, is embraced by the concepts of time and space [It exists in the time-space frame]. The Upanisads declare that only by being freed from time and space factors can we grasp the ultimate truth that is at the source of the cosmos. I told you about the horizon - where we are right there the horizon is. A recognition of this truth takes us beyond space. In this way we must also try to transcend time.

Is it possible?

To give us the confidence that it is, an example could be cited from everyday life. To spend the time we lap up newspaper reports of the fight going on in a

distant country like, say, the Congo [now called Zaire]. If a dispute or trouble erupts nearer home, in a country like Pakistan (or at home in Kashmir), we forget the Congo and turn to Pakistan or Kashmir. The newspapers themselves push reports of the Congo trouble to some corner and highlight developments in Pakistan or Kashmir. But when a quarrel breaks out even nearer, say, a quarrel over Tiruttani between the Tamils and the Telugus, Pakistan and Kashmir are forgotten and the boundary quarrel claims all our interest, Now, when we come to know of a street brawl in our neighbourhood, we throw aside the newspaper to go out and see for ourselves what the trouble is all about. Again, when we are watching the street fight, a friend or relative comes and tells us that a war is going on in our own home between the wife and the mother. What do we do then? We forget the street brawl and rush home at once.

On an international level the Congo dispute is perhaps of great importance. But we pass from that to quarrels of decreasing importance. Our interest in each, however is in inverse proportion to its real importance. Why? The Congo is far away in space. We are more concerned about what happens nearer us than about distant occurrences. It is all like coming to the horizon, the spot where we are.

Now let us turn our gaze inward. If we become aware of the battle going on within us, the battle fought by the senses, all other quarrels will become distant affairs like the Congo dispute. Let us try to resolve this inner conflict and try to remain tranquil. In this tranquility all will be banished including place, space, and so on. When we are asleep we are not aware of either knowledge or space, but the jnana (in the state of enlightenment of the inner truth) we will experience knowledge without any consciousness of space.

The time factor is similar. How inconsolably we wept when our father died ten years ago. How is it that we do not feel the same intensity of grief when we think of his death today? On the day a dear one passes we weep so much, but not so much on the following day. Why is it so? Last year we earned a promotion, or won a prize in a lottery. We jumped for joy then, didn't we? Why is it that we don't feel the same thrill of joy when we think about it today?

Just as nearness in space is a factor in determining how we are affected by an event, so too is nearness in time. Even when we are turned outward and

remain conscious of time and space, they lose their impact without any special effort on our part. So the confidence arises that we can be totally freed from these two factors of time and space if we turn inward. When we are asleep we are oblivious of time and space without any effort on our part. But we do not then have the awareness of being free from them. We must go to the state spoken of by Tayumanavar, the state in which we sleep without sleeping and are full of jnana and are immersed in the bliss of freedom from time and space. Then nothing will affect us, not even a quarrel right in our presence, in our home. Even when we receive a stab wound we will not be affected by it - it would be like a happening in a remote land like Congo. When someone very dear to us dies in our presence - husband, wife or child - it would be an occurrence remote in time, like our father's passing ten years ago.

Let us, for the time-being, forget arguments about non-dualism and dualism. Let us think about our real need. What is it?

Peace. Tranquility.

We are affected by good and bad things alike. We cry, we laugh. Both sorrow and joy have their impact on us. Even excessive laughter causes pain in the stomach, enervates us. When we are tickled we react angrily. "Stop it!" we cry. Even when we dance for joy we are fatigued. We like to remain calm without being affected by anything, without giving way to any type of emotion. Such is our need. Not dualism or non-dualism.

Let us consider what we must do for this goal. One point will become clear if we think about how the impact produced by a happening or an emotion is wiped away. "When news about the Congo war broke how we became engrossed in newspaper reports of the dispute. How did we lose interest in it later? Why does it not have any impact on us now? " If we think on these lines we will realise that the impact of any event - or whatever - is progressively reduced as it is pushed further in space. If we also consider why we are not as much affected now by our father's death as we were ten years ago when he died, we will realise that with receding time we are less and less affected by past events. So if we are to remain detached we must learn to think that what happens close by is happening in a remote place like the Congo.

Similarly, we must also learn to think that all the happy and unhappy incidents of the moment occurred ten years ago. We must assiduously train ourselves to take such an attitude. No joy or sorrow is everlasting. They are all relative [that is they do not have their own integral or independent force but rely on other factors]. So without being part of anything or else dependent on anything, we must remain in the absolute state of being ourselves. Then alone will be free from all influences and experience eternal peace. This is how Einstein's Theory of Relativity is applied to the science of the Self (Atmavidya).

The essence of Upanisadic message is the burning desire to be free from time and space. It would be in proportion to the extent to which we burn within in our endeavour to be free from the spatio-temporal factor that we will be rewarded with the grace of Isvara and be led towards the fulfilment of the great ideal.

There is no need to go to the mountains or to the forest for instruction. Space and time teach us how to remain unaffected by events. All that we need to do is to pray to the Lord and make an effort to develop the will and capacity to put happenings of the moment back in time and distant in space

The first of the ten [major] Upanisads. Isavasya, says: "It is in motion and yet it is still. It is afar and yet near. It is indeed within. . . . ". This statement refers to space and time and creates the urge in us to be freed from both. The next mantra asks us to see time and space and all creatures in our Self itself. Then there will be no cause for hatred, delusion or sorrow, that is nothing will affect us. Another mantra of the same Upanisad declares that the Self is all - pervading, going beyond space, and distributing things through the endless years according to their natures.

On the whole, the Upanisads speak of the same basic truth of space and time that modern science teaches. But there is this difference. For science this truth is a mere postulate. For the Upanisads it is a truth to be realised within as an experience.

This is a conclusion of the Upanisads which themselves are the concluding part of the Vedas.



Vedic Sakhas

When the Vedas are said to have no end, how can one talk of there being an "end to the Vedas (Vedanta)"? The message of the Vedas, the truths proclaimed by them, the teachings with respect to self-realisation occur in the concluding part (Upanisads) of each of the Vedas, that is Vedanta.

Why should the Vedas, which are infinite have been divided into so many sakhas or recensions? A man must be imparted all that is necessary to purify his mind and prepare him for Self-realisation. For this purpose he needs hymns, mantras, employed in the performance of sacrifices and other works; he has to examine the principles behind the sacrifices; and, finally, he has to inquire into the Paramatman adopting the meditative practice called nididhyasana so as to make the Ultimate Truth an inner experience. It is not necessary for him to learn all the countless Vedas; in any case it would be an impossible task. You remember the story I told you of the great sage Bharadvaja who could go only three steps up the Vedic mountain. What a man needs to learn to refine himself, become free from all impurities and finally mingle in the Supreme Being- the text confirming to such needs is separated from the unending Vedas to make a sakha.

A Vedic recension includes all the works relating to a Brahmin's life from birth to death. A Brahmin must memorise the mantras of the Samhita, perform sacrifices according to the Brahmanas to the chanting of the mantras, and later cross the bridge constituted by the Aranyaka, the bridge that connects the outward with the inward, that is study intensely the Upanisads that are

concerned exclusively with the inward. In this way he finally becomes liberated, with the inward and the outward becoming one.

For the wise and the mature a single mantra is enough to free them from worldly existence. But to become pure an ordinary man needs to perform many works and conduct worship in many ways. He has to do japa and meditation. Each sakha contains mantras, rituals and instruction in the science of the Self to enable him to find release.



Brahmins and Non-Brahmins

What about non- Brahmins? Is it not necessary for them too to become pure within? Even if they do not have to perform Vedic rituals or chant mantras, they too have to become cleansed inwardly by doing their allotted work.

Whatever his caste or jati, if a man performs his hereditary work in a spirit of dedication to Isvara he will become liberated. This is stated clearly in the Gita: "Svakaramana tam abhyarcya siddhim vindati manavah. "

One man has the job of waging wars, another that of trading and rearing cattle, a third has manual work to do. What work does the Brahmin do for society?

Is not the grace of the Supreme-Being important even in worldly life? The Brahmin's vocation is doing such works as would enable all jatis earn this grace. The devas or celestials are like the officials of the Paramatman. It is the duty of the Brahmin to make all creatures of the world dear to them. The work he performs, the mantras he chants are intended to do good to all jatis.

Since he has to do with forces that are extra-mundane, he has to follow a religious discipline of rites and vows more strictly than what others have to follow so as to impart potency to the mantras. If it were realised that he has to perform rituals and observe vows for the sake of other communities also, people would not harbour the wrong notion that he has been assigned some special [privileged] job.

Apart from this, the Brahmin has to learn the arts and sastras that pertain to worldly life, the traits and vocations of all other castes and instruct them in such work as is theirs by heredity. His calling is that of the teacher and he must not do other jobs. His is a vocation entailing great responsibility and is more important than the job of affording bodily protection to people, or of trade or labour. For the Brahmin's duty is to preserve the arts and crafts and other skills by which other communities maintain themselves to nurture their minds and impart them knowledge.

If the man discharging such a responsibility is not mentally mature, his work will not yield the desired results. If he himself is not noble of mind he will not be able to rise others to a high level. At the same time, he has a handicap which he does not share with others. If he believes that he is superior to others because he does intellectual work, he will only be a hindrance to himself. That is why the Brahmin has to be rendered pure. Since there are reasons for him to feel superior to others, there must be the assurance that he does not suffer from the least trace of egoism and arrogance. That is why he is tempered by means of the forty samskaras and his impurities wrung out.

If the mantras are to be efficacious, the one who chants them must be disciplined and must observe a variety of vows. There is, for instance, the mantra to cure a person stung by a scorpion. The man who chants it must observe certain strict rules. If he is lax in the matter, the mantra will have no effect- this is what the mantrikas themselves say. There are rules for the recitation of each mantra, a time when it is to be chanted and when it is not to be. If the rules are violated it will have no effect. It is said that the mantras are more efficacious when recited during eclipses.

A Vedic sakha contains all the rites needed to be performed by a Brahmin to become pure within.



Sakhas now Studied

People in the distant past had remarkable abilities and possessed great yogic and intellectual power. So they could gain mastery of many Vedic recensions. As for the great sages it was a matter of the Vedas revealing themselves to them in a flash. Others with their unusual abilities were able to master not only the Vedas but other branches of learning. The Vedas in their infinitude being like the expanse of an endless ocean, no one has been able to master all of them. Even so in the remote past there were individuals conversant with a large number of sakhas.

In later times men began to lose their divine yogic power. At the beginning of the age of Kali it became very weak indeed. The life-span of man began to get shorter and his health and intelligence declined. It is all the sport of the Paramatman. Why should there have been a diminution in human power and human intelligence? It is difficult to answer the question. Would it not be natural to expect an increase, generation after generation, in the number of people learning the Vedas, performing sacrifices and conducting Atmic inquiry? Why is it not so? Again it is a question that is hard to answer.

The Paramatman conducts the cosmic drama playing in strange and ever new ways. Although scientists like Darwin speak of evolution, in the matter of Atmic strength, intellectual enlightenment, character and yogic power, we seem to have been going further and further down on the scale.

Since the Krta-Yuga there has been a decline in the powers of man. In that age a man lived so long as his skeleton lasted. Even if his blood dried up and

his flesh was destroyed he survived until his bones collapsed. People in the Krta age had much power of knowledge. They were called "asti-gata-pranas".

In the Treta age people were "mamsa-gata-pranas", that is they lived so long as their flesh lasted and did not perish even when their blood dried up. They had a special capacity for performing sacrifices. In the Dvapara age people were "rudhira-gata-pranas" and lived until such time as their blood dried up. They were known especially for the puja they performed. We of the Kali age are "anna-gata-pranas" and life will remain in our body so long as the food [nourishment] lasts. We have little capacity to meditate, perform rituals and puja. But we are capable of chanting the names of the Lord - Krsna, Rama, and so on. It is true that by muttering the names of the Lord we will be liberated.

Even so we must not allow the Vedas to become extinct. They were bequeathed to us from the time of creation. Must we allow them to be lost?

When Sri Krsna departed from this world, grim darkness enveloped the world. There is "darkness" in his name itself ("Krsna" means dark). He was also born in darkness, in the dungeon of a prison at midnight. But he was the radiance of knowledge for all the world, the light of compassion. When he departed much injury was done to jnana, and darkness descended into the world. Kali, who is the evil incarnate, acceded to authority. All this is the sport of Paratman, the sport that is inscrutable. Sri Krsna came as a burst of light. Then, urged by his compassion, he decided that the world must not go to waste. He thought that it could be saved by administering an antidote against the venom of Kali. This antidote was the Vedas. It would be enough if precautions were taken to make sure that the "Kali Man" did not devour them- the world would be saved. In the darkness surrounding everything they would serve the purpose of a lamp lighting the path of mankind. In the age of Kali they would not shine with the same effulgence as in the previous ages. But the Lord resolved that they must burn with at least the minimum of lustre to be of benefit to mankind and this he ensured through Vedavyasa who was partially his incarnation.

The sage who was to carry out Bhagvan Krsna's resolve was not then called Veda Vyasa. His name too was Krsna and, since he was born on an island, he had the appellation "Dvaipayana" (Islander). Badarayana is another name of his. Krsna Dvaipayana knew all the 1, 180 sakhas (recensions) of the Vedas

revealed to the world by various sages. They were mingled together in one great stream. Being remarkably gifted, our ancestors could memorise all of them. For the benefit of weaker people like us, Vyasa divided them into four Vedas and subdivided each into sakhas. It was like damming a river and taking the water through various canals. Vyasa accomplished the task of dividing the Vedas easily because he was a great yogin with vision and because he had the power gained from austerities.

The Rgvedic sakhas contain hymns to invoke the various deities; the Yajurvedic sakhas deal with the conduct of sacrifices; the Samaveda sakhas contain songs to please the deities; and the Atharvaveda sakhas, besides dealing with sacrifices, contain mantras recited to avert calamities and to destroy enemies. The Samaveda had the largest number of recensions, 1, 000. In the Rgveda there were 21; in the Yajus 109 (Sukla-Yajur veda 15, and Krsna Yajur veda 94); and in the Atharvaveda 50.

While, according to one scholar, the Visnu Purana mentions the number of sakhas to be 1, 180, another version is that there were 1, 133 recensions—the Rgveda 21, the Yajurveda 101, the Samaveda 1, 000 and the Atharvaveda 11.

Considering that people in the age of Kali would be inferior to their forefathers, Krsna Dvaipayana thought that it should be sufficient for them to learn one sakha of any one of the four Vedas. It was the Lord that put this idea into his head. Vyasa assigned the Rgveda sakhas to Paila, the Yajurveda sakhas to Vaisampayana, the Samaveda sakhas to Jaimini and the Atharvaveda sakhas to Sumantu.]

Krsna Dvaipayana came to be called "Vedavyasa" for having divided the Vedas into four and then having subdivided them into 1, 180 recensions. "Vyasa" literally means an "essay" or a "composition". Classifying objects is also known as "vyasa".

According to Krsna Dvaipayana's arrangement, though it is obligatory for a person [that is a Brahmin] to learn only one recension, it does not mean that there is a bar on learning more. The intention is that at least one sadha must be studied. Even after Vyasa's time, there have been examples of panditas mastering more than one sakha from the four Vedas. (Vyasa divided the Vedas some 5, 000 years ago. This has been established to some extent

historically. Instead of accepting this date arrived at according to our sastras, modern historians maintain that the date of the Mahabarata must be 1500 B. C. But of late, opinion is veering round to the view that the epic dates back to 5, 000 years ago.

I said that there was no bar on anyone learning more than one sakha. Even today we find North Indians with appellations like "Caturvedi", "Trivedi" and "Dvivedi".

We had a "Trivedi", who was governor of one of our states. "Duve" and "Dave" are derived from "Dvivedi". One descended from a family well versed in the four Vedas is called a "Caturvedin". In Bengal he is called a "Catterji". Those who have mastered three Vedas are "Trivedins". Today it is rare to see a man who has learned even one Veda, but the fact that members of some families still call themselves "Trivedins" or "Caturvedins" show that in the past there must have been individuals who knew more than one Veda. Jnanasambandhar calls himself "Nanmarai Jnanasambandhar". Since he was suckled by Amba herself it must have been easy for him to master the four Vedas.

During these 5, 000 years and more since Vedavyasa divided the Vedas, many sakhas have been lost. Out of the 1, 180 we are in the unfortunate position of having only six or seven. Of the 21 sakhas of the Rgveda there is only one extant- it is called the Sakala Sakha, or the Aitareya Sakha, since the Aitareya Upanishad occurs in it. Of the 15 recensions of the Sukla- Yajurveda only two are extant, the Kanva Sakha having a large following in Maharashtra and the Madhyandina Sakha in North India. Of the 94 sakhas of the Krsna- Yajurveda, the Taittiriya has a large following, particularly in the South. We have lost 997 of the 1, 000 sakhas of the Samaveda. In Tamil Nadu those who follow the Kauthuma Sakha are more in number than those who follow the Talavakara Sakha, while in Maharastra there is a small following for Ranayaniya. Once it was feared that out of the 50 recensions of the Atharvaveda none was extant. But on inquiry it was discovered that there was a Brahmin in Sinor, Gujarat, who was conversant with the Saunaka Sakha of this Veda. We sent students from here (Tamil Nadu) to learn the same from him.

The Aitareya Brahmana and the Kausitaki Brahmana (also called Sankhayana Brahmana) of the Rgveda are still available to us. The Aitareya Upanisad and

the Kausitaki Upanisad, which are part of the Aranyakas belonging to these, are still extant.

Of the Sukla- Yajurveda we have the Satapatha Brahmana. This is common- with minor differences- to both the Madhyandina and Kanva Sakhas. It is a voluminous work which serves as an explanation for all the Vedas. Only one Aranyaka is extant from this Veda and it constitutes the Brhadaranyaka Upanisad. I have already mentioned that the Isavasya Upanisad belongs to the Samhita part of the Veda.

Of the Krsna- Yajurveda the Taittiriya Brahmana alone is extant. Among the Aranyakas of this Veda we have the Taittiriya; the Taittiriya Upanisad and the Mahanarayana Upanisad are part of it. The latter contains a number of mantras commonly used. The Maitrayani Aranyaka and the Upanisad of the same name also belong to the Krsna- Yajurveda. As mentioned before, of the Katha Sakha only the Upanisad(Kathopanisad) is available, not the Samhita, Brahmana and Aranyaka.

(Similarly, the Svetasvatoaropanisad of the Krsna- Yajurveda is still extant, but no other part of the relevant sakha.)

Nine hundred ninety- seven sakhas of the Samaveda are lost and of its Brahmanas only some seven or eight have survived- Tandyā, Arseya, Devatadhyaya, Samhitopanishad, Vamsa, (Sadvimsa, Chandogya, Jaiminiya). The Talavakara Aranyaka of this Veda is also called the Talavakara Brahmana. The Kenopanishad comes at the end of it: so it is also known as the Talavakara Upanisad. The Chandogya Brahmana has the Chandogya Upanisad.

To repeat what I mentioned earlier, we still have three important Upanisads from the Atharvaveda- Prasna, Mundaka and Mandukya. (The Nrsimha Tapini Upanisad also belongs to this Veda.) The only Brahmana of this Veda to have survived is Gopatha.

We should be guilty of a grave offence if the seven or eight sakhas of the 1, 180 that still survive become extinct because of our neglect: there will be no expiation for the same.

In the South, which is called "Dravidadesa", Vedic learning is still kept alive by the Namputiris in Kerala. And it was well maintained in Andhra Pradesh until

recently. A great encouragement to this was the annual Navrathri festival at Vijayavada every year when examinations for Vedic students and an assembly of Vedic scholars were held. Those who took part in the assembly were given cash awards as well as certificates. Brahmacharins and pandits came from all over the country to take part in the examination and the assembly respectively. The certificate was highly valued. A scholar returning home with the certificate was honoured by householders all along the way. There was a custom in Andhra Pradesh to set aside a tidy sum to be presented to Vedic scholars at weddings. Vedic learning flourished in that state because of such incentives.

A Brahmin ought not to run after money; if he does he ceases to be a Brahmin. However, we have to consider the fact that today any occupation or profession other than that of the Vedic scholar is lucrative. One learned in the Vedas cannot make ends meet. Such being the case it becomes incumbent on us to devise a system by which the Vedic scholar too can live without any care. It is because the minimum needs of Vedic students and scholars were met in the Telugu country that scriptural learning flourished there.

We are making efforts to promote Vedic learning all over India and in particular in Tamil Nadu- and a scheme has been drawn up to raise funds for pathasalsas(Vedic schools). In Tamil Nadu there was patronage for Vedic learning until the reign of Hindu rulers like the Nayakas. Later it received encouragement from the princely states. A Brahmin who has mastered an entire Veda sakha is called a "srotriya", from "Sruti" meaning the Vedas. It was customary for Tamil rajas to donate land to such Brahmins and sometimes an entire village was given away, it being exempt from taxes. This is described as "iraiyili" in old inscriptions. "Brahmadesam" is the name given to lands made over to Brahmins as gifts. In the royal edicts the word used is "Brahmadeyam". "Caturvedimangalam" was the name given to a village donated by royalty to Brahmins proficient in all four Vedas. Those who spent all their time in learning and teaching the scriptures had no other source of income. So they were exempt from kisti. This exemption was in force even during the rule of the Nawabs, the East India Company and its successor British government. Even though the British did nothing to promote Vedic studies, they exempted srotriya villages from taxes. However, the Brahmins during the time sold their lands, converting them into certificates, and abandoned the villages of their forefathers to settle in towns. This also meant something most unfortunate, severing their connection with the long Vedic tradition.

Our country has an ages- old tradition- and it is a glorious tradition- that has no parallel in any generation, worked not only for their own Atmic uplift but for the well- being of the entire society. And this they have done to the exclusion of being involved in worldly affairs. Later, however, they (Brahmins) failed to recognise the unique importance of such a tradition and broke away from it to take to the Western way of life. A situation soon arose in which others also forgot the importance of having a class of people devoting themselves solely to the Atmic quest.



Duty of Brahmins

If any purpose has been served by listening to me all the while, it is up to you [Brahmins] to take whatever steps you think fit to promote Vedic learning. Every day you must perform " Brahmayajna" which is one of the five great sacrifices(mahayajnas). The term "Brahma" in " Brahmayajna" means the Vedas. The power of the mantras must be preserved in us as an eternal reality. It must burn bright like a lamp that is never extinguished. For this reason it is that we perform Brahmayajna. We must offer oblations to the presiding rsi or seer of our Vedic recension. Failing that, the least we can do is perform the Gayatri- japa every day. Gayatri is the essence of the Vedas, their substance. To qualify to chant it, you must be initiated into it by a Guru. The Gayatri you thus learn must be mentally repeated at least a thousand times every day. Again, the least you can do - and you must do it- is to chant the mantra atleast ten times morning, noon and dusk. The sun god is the presiding deity of Gayatri. Sunday, the day of the sun, is a universal holiday. On this day you must get up at 4 in the morning and, after your

ablutions, recite the Gayatri a thousand times. This will ensure your well-being as well as of all mankind.

All Brahmins must learn to chant the Purusasukta, the Srisukta, Sri Rudram, etc. I am speaking particularly to office going Brahmins here. Since they will find it difficult to devote themselves fully to Vedic learning they must try to acquire at least a minimum of scriptural knowledge. But it should be creditable if they accomplish something- in the present case learning the Vedas- in the face of difficulties. If you start learning the scripture now you will be able to complete your study in a few years. But you need faith and devotion. The Vedas are a vidya that has come down to us through the millennia. If you study them with determination you are bound to succeed. Haven't you seen 50- and 60- year- old people engaged in research in the hope of gaining a Ph. D. or some other degree? If you have the will you will have the way to accomplish anything however difficult. There are examples of individuals who at 40 had been totally in the dark about the Vedas but who later learned to chant them with ardour. As a matter of fact there are such men among the office- bearers of our Veda Raksana Nidhi Trust. So what is needed is faith as well as resoluteness.

Leave aside the question of Brahmins who are in jobs and are middle- aged or older. Whether or not they themselves can chant the Vedas or want to learn to chant them, they must see to it that their sons at least receive instruction in the scriptures. Perhaps the children cannot be sent for a full-time course in the Vedas, but the parents could at least ensure that, after they perform the upanayana of their sons at the age of eight years, the boys are taught the Vedas for one hour every evening for a period of eight years. A Vedic tutor may be engaged on a cooperative basis for all children of a locality or village. This should be of help to the children of poor Brahmins.

Above all, efforts must be made to ensure that the existing Vedic schools that are in bad shape are not forced to close down. These institutions must be reinvigorated and more and more students encouraged to join them. To accomplish this task both teachers and taught must be adequately helped with money.

Let me repeat that Brahmins ought not to be afforded more than the minimum cash or creature comforts. But we see today that there are many lucrative jobs to tempt them. So there is the danger of their not being fully involved in

their svadharma (own duty) of learning and teaching the Vedas if they are not kept above their want. We must provide them with certain facilities so that we are not faced with the unfortunate situation in which such Brahmins become more and more scarce. There are new comforts, new avenues of pleasure, not known in the past. It is unrealistic to expect a few Brahmins alone to deny themselves all these and adhere to their svadharma. If we adopt such an attitude the Vedic dharma will suffer. So when some Brahmins are engaged exclusively in their dharma it is obligatory on our part to help them with money and material. Though they must not be afforded any luxuries, we must provide them with enough comforts so that they are not enticed into other jobs. We have drawn up a number of schemes bearing this in mind.



Veda-bhasya

The sound of the Vedas must be kept alive. For this purpose, it would be enough if Brahmins memorised the mantras and chanted them every day. The power of the sound, the power of the mantras vocalised, is sufficient to bring good to mankind. I said, you will remember, that chanting the Vedas with faith, even though without knowing their meaning, is "viryaavattaram". The statement, however, does not fully reflect my view.

A student will have to spend many years to memorise the Vedas and study their meaning. It is not easy to keep him confined to the Vedic school for such a long time. I must explain here why I said that "it is not necessary to know the meaning of the Vedas and their sound is all we need". To insist that a student should chant the Vedas only if he knows the meaning of the mantras

is expecting too much of him. It might also mean that nobody would come forward even to memorise the hymns. In that case how will their sound be kept alive? That is why I said, half seriously and half sportingly, that " the meaning is not necessary, the sound would be sufficient. . . . ".

There must indeed be a large number of people who can chant the Vedas and keep their sound alive. In addition, there must be a system by which some of them at least will be taught their meaning. That is how we have come to be seriously involved in teaching the Veda-bhasya(commentary on the Vedas). It is because the Vedas are profound in their import that a number of great men have commented upon them. Their efforts must not go in vain.

We perform a number of rites in our home: marriage, sraddha, upakarma, and so on, and during these functions we chant Vedic mantras as instructed by the priest. By the grace of Isvara we have not reached the unfortunate state of totally discarding such rites. However, there is a declining trend, a weakening of Vedic practices. One important reason for this is that we do not know the meaning of the mantras chanted. Educated people nowadays have no true involvement in rites in which they have to repeat the mantras after the priest without knowing the meaning.

We cannot expect to convince people that the chanting of the mantras(even without knowing their meaning) is beneficial. The hymns for each function are different and also different in significance. If we appreciate this fact, we will realise that there is a scientific basis for them. Besides, they have an emotional appeal which will be evident only when we know their meaning. So to know the meaning of the mantras is to have greater involvement in the functions in which they are chanted. That is the reason why the mouthing of syllables purposelessly has come to be [irreverently] likened to the chanting of " sraddha mantras". The meaning of the mantras (including those chanted at sraddhas) must be understood by the priest as well as by the performer of the rites; we must evolve a scheme for this purpose.

First the priest himself must know the meaning of the mantras and the significance of the rituals at which he officiates. Today the majority of priests are ignorant of the meaning of what they chant. If a karta or a yajamana (the man on whose behalf a rite is conducted) asks his priest, " What does this mean? ", the latter is unable to give an answer. How would you then expect the karta to have faith in the rites?

I believe that many middle-aged people today are keen to know the meaning of the mantras. I also think that if they tend to lose faith in rituals it is because they have to repeat parrot-like the hymns chanted by the priest. So we are making efforts to ensure that those who officiate at rituals (the upadhyayas) acquire proficiency in Veda- bhasya to enable them to explain the meaning of the mantras.

According to the Nirukta(one of the six Angas of the Vedas) a Brahmin comes under a curse by chanting the Vedas without knowing their meaning.

A number of great men have written commentaries on the Vedas so as to inspire faith in the sacraments. Sri Madhvacarya has written a commentary for the first 40 suktas of the first kanda of the Rg Veda. Skandasvamin has also written a bhasya on the Rg Veda. To BhattaBhaskara we owe a commentary on the Krasna-Yajur Veda, and to Mahidhara on that of the Sukla-Yajur Veda. In recent times, Dayananda Saraswati and Aravinda Ghose as well as his disciple Kapali Sastri have written expository treatises on the Vedas. Though there are so many commentaries, the one by Sri Sayanacarya is particularly famous: many scholars, including Western Indologists, treat it as authoritative.

There are five Vedas if you reckon the Yajur Veda to be two with its Sukla and Krsna divisions. Sayana has written commentaries on all the five. Expository treatises on the Vedas had been written before him but he was the first to write a bhasya for all the Vedas.

Though Sayanacarya's commentary had been studied for centuries, a stage came recently when we feared that it would cease to hold any interest for students. Those who learned to chant the Vedas, without knowing their meaning, became priests while those who studied poetry and other subjects did not learn even to chant the mantras. So much so interest in the study of the Veda-bhasya declined. It was at this time that the Sastyabdapurti Trust was formed with a view to maintain the study of the Veda-bhasya.

When the Trust started to conduct examinations, the Veda-bhasya meant no more than the printed text of the Vedic commentary kept in bookshops. The publishers were then worried that not many copies would be sold. After the creation of the Trust we gave students not only scholarships but also copies of the Veda-bhasya. Our worry now was whether there would be enough copies in

stock for fresh students. It is with the grace of Parasakti, the Supreme Goddess that we have succeeded in reviving the study of the Veda-bhasya. And so long as we have her grace there will be students ready to learn the subject and there will also be enough copies of the text.

On the eve of a wedding, upanayana or simanta ceremony, we must consult a Vedic scholar who knows the Veda-bhasya to explain the meaning of the mantras employed in these rituals. On the day of the function itself the time at our disposal would be short. If we grasp the meaning and significance of the mantras beforehand we will have a more rewarding involvement in the function.

Nowadays, we do not have a month's time in which to prepare for a wedding. The problem facing the bride's people is which group is to play the band, who is to give the dance recital, how the marriage procession is to be conducted. . We attach the least importance to that which is the very soul of the marriage sacrament, I mean the Vedic mantras chanted at that time. Those who recite these mantras, the Vedic panditas, are also treated as the least important to a marriage celebration. There are perhaps a few who have faith in the mantras and for their benefit and enlightenment at least some Brahmins must be instructed in the Veda-bhasya.

We print invitation cards for wedding and upanayana ceremonies and distribute them among a large number of friends and relatives - in fact we invite an entire town or village to the function. And we spend thousands. But we do not pay any attention to the ritual itself, to its significance. This is not right.

If we know the meaning of the mantras chanted at a function, we stand to gain more benefits from it. We go through rites because we do not have the courage to give them up. Similarly, we must come to realise that it is wrong to perform a rite without knowing the meaning of the mantras chanted; we must therefore take the help of a pandita in this matter. As mentioned before, going through works with a knowledge of the significance and meaning of the mantras is more beneficial. We must have faith in the Upanishadic saying "Yadeva vidyaya karoti tadeva viryavattaram bhavati".

At an upanayana, it is the brahmacarin (as the karta) who chants the mantras; similarly it is the groom alone who intones them at a marriage. What do you expect of all invitees to do at such functions? Do they come only for

the luncheon or dinner, or to keep chatting, to see the dance recital or to listens to the nagasvaram music? Is their part only to make themselves happy in this manner? No. The Vedic mantras deserve our highest respect. When they are being intoned we must honour them by listening to them intently. The mantras create well-being for all. If the invitees and others at a function listen to them and are able to follow their meaning they will earn merit even though they do not have the role of the karta in it.

Take the case of the asvamedha (horse sacrifice). Only a king who has subdued all other rulers, that is a maharaja or a sarvabhauma, is qualified to perform it. So only a monarch during a particular period in history, a monarch whose sway extends all over the world, is entitled to conduct this sacrifice. The asvamedha brings more benefits than any other rite. Now the question arises: In any generation only one individual is perhaps capable of earning so much merit(by performing the horse sacrifice). Why are the Vedas so partial that they have made it impossible for the vast majority of people (who cannot perform the sacrifice themselves) to earn such merit? Is it true that only a ruler, who has immense strength and enormous resources at his command, is capable of benefiting from such a sacrifice? If people of good conduct and character are denied the same merit as a powerful emperor can earn, does it not amount to deceiving them? How can the Vedas be so partial to one man?

In truth no partiality can be ascribed to the Vedas. A Vedic rite is admittedly beneficial to the man who performs it. But, at the same time, it does good to all the world. If I light a lamp in the darkness here does it not bring light to all the people present and not to me alone?

It may be that the performer of a Vedic work receives more special benefits than others. But the sastras shows the way by which these others may also reap the same fruits as the karta- in fact the Vedas themselves mention it. If ordinary people cannot conduct a horse sacrifice they may get to know how it is performed. They may pay attention to the hymns chanted during the sacrifice and also try to follow their meaning. In this way they derive the full benefits of the sacrifice performed by an imperial ruler. This fact is referred to in the section dealing with horse sacrifices in the Vedas.

In the same way, whether it is a marriage or a funeral, the merit will be earned in full if we closely follow the rite and listen to the mantras with due knowledge of their meaning.



My Duty

My duty is to impress upon you again and again that it is your responsibility to keep the Vedic tradition alive. Whether or not you listen to me, whether or not I am capable of making you do what I want you to do, so long as there is strength in me, I will keep telling you tirelessly: "This is your work. This is your dharma. " It is for the sake of the Vedas that the Acarya established this Matha. So, no matter how I keep deceiving you in other ways, as one bearing his name I should be guilty of a serious offence if I failed to carry out with all sincerity at least the responsibility placed on my shoulders of protecting the Vedic dharma. That is why I keep speaking again and again, and again, not minding the tedium, about the need to sustain this dharma.

It has not been all talk. A number of concrete schemes have been and are being implemented in pursuance of our ideal. I have come here to beg of you for your help. If you think I am not begging for your help, take it that I am issuing you a command to serve the cause of the Vedas. However it be, the work I have undertaken must be done.

Vedam odiya Vedyarkkor mazhai

Niti mannar neriyinarkkor mazhai

Madar karpudai mangaiyarkkor mazhai

Madam munru mazhai enappeyyume

According to this well known Tamil poem, the earth will become cool and the crops will grow in plenty only if it rains thrice a month. It rains once for the Brahmin who chants the Vedas in the right manner; it rains once for the king who rules justly; and again it rains once for the woman who remains true and constant to her husband.

It is not in my hands to make sure that the rulers rule justly, strictly adhering to dharma. Sannyasins like me have nothing to do with the government. But I believe that, as the head of a Matha with the duty of protecting dharma, I have a responsibility with regard to the other two matters. How does a religious head see to it that a woman adheres to her dharma, remains true to her husband? The trends seen today are contrary to stridharma (code of conduct for women). I have the title of "guru" and so it is my duty to warn womanhood against things that are likely to undermine their dharma. When child marriages were prevalent there was little opportunity for women to go astray. If a girl is already married before she attains puberty she will develop strong attachment for her husband. If she is not married at this age she is likely to feel mentally disturbed. But our hands are tied because of the Sarada Act.

But, if I have not entirely washed my hand of the subject, it is because of the hope that public opinion could be created against the Sarada Act and the government compelled to respect it. After all, so many other laws have been changed in response to public opinion or otherwise. Unfortunately, the attitude of parents and of women in general has become perverse. Instead of trying to conduct the marriage of their daughters in time, parents send them to co-educational colleges and later to work along with men. When I see all this I inwardly shed tears of blood: I am losing my confidence in my ability to arrest this trend.

If Brahmins keep chanting the Vedas, the rulers will rule justly and women will remain steady in their wifely dharma. It is in this hope that all my efforts are turned to maintaining the Vedic dharma.

You must make a gift of your sons for this purpose, also of your money. Well-to-do people must help children of the poor with cash so that they may be encouraged to learn the Vedas. We need money to pay the teachers, to buy books, to administer the Vedic schools. We have drawn up a modest scheme to raise funds. You pay one rupee a month and in return you will receive (by

post), apart from the blessings of the Veda Mata(Mother Vedas), the prasadas of Sri Candramaulisvara after the puja performed to him at the Kanci Matha. If you send your donation mentioning your nakshatra [the asterism under which you are born] the prasada will be sent to you every month of the day on which the asterism falls.

Nowadays, we receive "chain letters" invoking the name of Sri Venkatalpati (of Tirupati) and with the threat added, "if you don't send copies of this letter to such and such number of people, you shall turn blind or shall be crippled. " Out of fear many people make copies of the letter to be sent to various addressees. I too sometimes wonder whether we could do something similar to promote the Vedic dharma!

I do not ask you much- just one rupee a month. Don't you pay the government taxes, whether or not you like to do so? Take this - the one rupee- as a levy imposed by me. It is a tax you pay to run my government, my sarkar which is no bigger than a mustard seed. You deny yourself a bit of your pleasure for this, your outing to beach or your visit to the cinema. You will thus carry out a fraction of your duty and my duty will have been fulfilled.



Greatness of the Vedas

The glory of the Vedas knows no bounds and it is manifested in the affairs of the world in a manner that defies comparison.

Of all the sacred places on earth Kasi comes foremost. When we speak in praise of other hallowed centres, we say that they are equal to Kasi in

holiness. From this we know the importance of that city. In the south there is a pilgrim centre which has come to be called "Daksina Kasi (Southern Kasi). There is an Uttara Kasi (Northern Kasi) in the Himalaya. Vrddhacalm in Tamil Nadu is also known as "Vrddha Kasi". In Tirunelveli district (of Tamil Nadu) there is a town called " Tenkasi" (this also means " Southern Kasi"). When we speak in praise of a sacred place it is customary to describe it as being "equal to Kasi". But Kumbhakonam is considered greater than Kasi (" in greatness it weighs one grain more than Kasi"). Here is a stanza that speaks of the high place accorded to Kumbhakonam.

Anyaksetre krtam papam punyaksetre vinasyati

Punyaksetre krtam papam Varanasyam vinasyati

Varanasyam krtam papam Kumbhakone vinasyati

Kumbhakone krtam papam Kumbhakone vinasyati

"The sin committed in any (ordinary) place is washed away in a sacred place. That committed in any sacred place is washed away in Varanasi (that is Kasi). The sin committed in Varanasi is wiped away in Kumbhakonam. And the sin earned in Kumbhakonam, well it is destroyed only in Kumbhakonam. "

The glory of Kasi is that all other sacred places are likened to it. Even when a place is said to be superior to Kasi the implication is that Kasi is uniquely great. It has acquired a distinction by being made an object of comparison. A great man has composed a poem on Kasi. " ksetranam uttamanam api yad upamaya ka pi loke prasastih, " so it begins. It means: "By being likened to it even highly esteemed places become famous- that is Kasi. "

Similarly, when you speak highly of scared tirthas you liken them to the Ganga or say that they are more holy than that river. We must conclude from the foregoing that Kasi comes first among the sacred places and that the Ganga is the holiest of the tirthas.

It is in this way that, when any work is to be extolled, it is said to be " equal to the Vedas". The Ramayana is a very famous poetic work. There are many versions of it. Take any language in India: the story of Rama will be seen to be a theme in drama, poetry, music, etc, in its literature. The greatness of the Ramayana is such that it is exalted to the position of a Veda. "Vedah

Pracetasadasisaksadramayanatmana. " The Veda itself was born as Ramayana to Valmiki, the son of Pracetas.

The Mahabharatha too is celebrated as a Veda: in fact it is called the fifth Veda ("pancamo Vedah").

Vaisnavas glorify the Tiruvaymozhi as a Veda. It is the work of Nammazhvar, who is also called Sathakopan and Maran. They say: "Maran Sathakopan composed the Tamil Veda. " The famous Tamil work on ethics, the Tirukkural, is also called the "Tamil Veda. "

During the time of the author of the Kural, Tiruvalluvar, there was the "Kadai Sangam" in Madurai. In that city there was a seat received as a gift from Sundaesvara. Only the worthy could sit on it. The unworthy would be pushed aside. Was such a thing possible? We cannot believe it; but we do believe that when a coin is inserted in a machine we get a ticket.

[Here the Paramaguru tells the story of Tiruvalluvar and his Kural and how the poets of his time came to regard Tamil as great as Sanskrit since it had now come into possession of a work like Kural which, they said, was equal to the Vedas. This story occurs in Chapter 5, Part Two, "The Vedas in their Original Form. "]

Saivas [in Tamil Nadu] regard the Tiruvacakam as the Tamil Veda. To the Christians in India the Bible is the "Satya - Veda. " Thus we see that the Vedas have a special place of honour. The Vedic river is ageless and it traverses the length and breadth of our land as the very life-blood of our culture. This river should not be allowed to dry up. There is no greater responsibility for a Hindu than that of keeping the Vedas a live and vibrant tradition.

The sound of the Vedas must pervade everywhere, must fill all space. The truths enshrined in them must be spread far and wide and the rituals enjoined on us by them must be made to flourish. Sufficient it would be if the Vedic dharma remains vigorous and is maintained atleast in our land. If a man's heart is stout he will survive even if all other parts of his body are afflicted. In the same way, if the Vedas flourish in this land all nations will prosper and live in peace and happiness. This is the prayer of the Vedic dharma.

"Lookah samastah sukhnio bhavantu. "



Sadanga : Introductory Discourse. The Six Limbs of the Vedas

Among the basic texts of Hinduism, the six Angas or limbs of the Vedas are next in importance to the Vedas themselves. The Vedapurusa has six limbs or parts- mouth, nose, eye, ear, hand, foot. These are called "Sadanga". The Tamil term "cadangu" denoting any ceremony is derived from this word. The Tamil Tevaram refers to Sadanga in this line, "Vedamo(du) aru angam ayinan. "

In the past all moral and religious edicts were inscribed on the stone walls of temples. In a sense the temple in ancient and medieval times was the "subregistrar's office" that "registered" all [acts of, contribution to] dharma. In the princely state of Travancore there used to be an official called " Tirumantira olai". In the old days all kings in Tamil Nadu had such an official. He was like the present-day private secretary. His duty was to write down the ruler's orders or communication and the royal message would be sent to the people concerned.

In those days the raja had to be informed about all private charities. In fact they required the royal asent and were instituted on royal orders. These were written down by the olai with these concluding words, " to be inscribed on stone and copper. " The royal command was passed on to the place which received the charity. The authorities there had all this inscribed on the walls of the local temple. Most of the stone inscriptions to be found in temples are of this nature.

Inscriptions were also made on copper- plates. If more than one plate was needed, the plates were pierced and held together with a ring. The local council or assembly had to accept these inscriptions. The copper-plates were kept underground in the temple premises in a place called "ksema". The life of a land, its destiny, was entrusted in the hands of the lord and it was natural that the temple was considered the standing monument to its life. It had something of the function of the registrar's office, the epigraphy department, and so on.

Let me now come to subject of the local assembly.

Every village had a Brahmin sabha or assembly. Its membership was open to those who knew the Vedas and the Mantra-Brahmana. People guilty of certain offences and their relatives were debarred from membership. The names of candidates wanting to be members were written on pieces of palm-leaf and a child would be asked to pick one from the lot. The one whose name was inscribed on it was adopted as a member. Details of such elections to the local assembly are mentioned in the Uttaramerur Inscriptions. There were a number of divisions of the sabha to look after different subjects like irrigation, taxation, etc. All charities, whether in the form of land or money, had to be made through the sabha. So too cattle offered to the temple or the lamps to be lighted there. The members of the sabha had to give their written consent for all this. This is how we have come to know the names of some of them. We also learn the titles conferred on some Brahmins like "Sadanganiratan" and "Sadangavi", the latter being an eroded form of "Sadangavid" "Sad+anga +vid" = one who knows the six angas or limbs of Vedic learning. From these old inscriptions we come to know that there were many such Brahmins even in small Villages, Brahmins proficient in the "Sadanga". That is why Vedic rites themselves came to be called "cadangu" in Tamil Nadu. The Brahmin who gave away his daughter in marriage to Sundaramurtisvami was called "Cadangavi Sivacariyar. "

The six Angas are Siksa (Phonetics); Vyakarana (grammar); Nirukta (lexicon, etymology); Kalpa (manual of rituals); Chandas (prosody); Jyotisa (astronomy-astrology). A Brahmin must be acquainted with all. That he must be well-versed in the Vedas goes without saying. He must first learn to chant them and proficiency in the six Angas will later help him to gain insights into their meaning.

Siksa is the nose of the vedapurusa, Vyakarana his mouth, Kalpa his hand, Nirukta his ear, Chandas his foot and Jyotisa his eye. The reason for each sastra being identified with a part of the body will become clear as we deal with the Angas individually.



Nose of the Vedapurusa

Siksa comes first among the six limbs of the Vedas, the nose of the Vedapurusa. The function of the nose here is not be taken only as that of perceiving smells. It has also the function of breathing; in fact it is one of the organs of breathing. Siksa serves as the life-breath of the Vedic mantras.

Where is the life of a Vedic mantra centred? Each syllable of a hymn is to be enunciated strictly according to its measure. Clarity of pronunciation is what is intended. Apart from this, each syllable is raised, lowered or pronounced evenly -- udatta, anudatta, savarita. If attention is paid to these points, there will be tonal purity. A mantra yields the desired fruit if each syllable is vocalised with clarity and tonal accuracy. The phonetic and tonal exactitude of a mantra is even more important than its meaning. In other words, even though the meaning is not understood, if the tonal form takes shape correctly, the mantra will bring the intended benefit. So the life-breath of the Vedas, which are a collection of mantras, is their sound [the "sound form"].

There is a mantra to cure scorpion sting. Its meaning is not revealed. Its potency is in its sound. Certain sounds have certain powers associated with them. It is sometimes asked: Why should the sraddha mantras be in Sanskrit?

May they not be in English or Tamil? Those who raise these questions do not realise that it is the sound that matters here, not the language as such. If the teeth of a sorcerer were knocked off, his witchcraft [magic] would have no effect. Why? Because the man would not be able to recite this spell properly.

Enunciation of the mantras is most important to the Vedas. What do we do about it? Siksa is the science that deals with the character of Vedic syllables it determines their true nature. The science of the sounds of human speech is called phonetics and it is more important to the Vedic language than to any other tongue. The reason is that even if there is a slight change in how you vocalise a syllable the efficacy of the mantra will be affected. [The result sometimes will be contrary to what is intended].

It is because of the importance of Vedic phonetics that Siksa has been placed first among the six Angas. It is dealt with in the Taittiriya Upanishad. Its "Siksavalli" begins like this: "Let us now explain the Siksa sastra ". The name of the sastra occurs here as well as in many other Vedic texts with a long "i" ("Siksa"). Sankara observes in his commentary: "Dairghyam Chandasam": it means that the usually short "i" occurs as long [in the Vedas]. (Such examples are to be found in Tamil poetry also.) I told you that the Vedic language is not called Sanskrit but Chandas. "Chandasam", from "chandas", denotes here a Vedic usage.



[Yoga and Speech](#)

When you play the harmonium, the nagasvaram or the flute, the sound is produced by the air discharged in various measures through different outlets. Our throat has a similar system to produce sound. It is not that the throat alone is involved in this process. How do we speak and sing? Speaking or singing is an exercise that has its source below the navel in the "muladhara" or "root-base" of the spinal column. From this point the breath is brought up in various measures as we speak or sing. The human instrument made by the Lord is far superior to the harmonium, the nagasvaram or the flute. These latter can produce only mere sounds and cannot articulate the syllables a, ka, ca, etc. Man alone possesses this faculty. Animals can produce one or two types of sound but do not have the ability to articulate.

We may gauge the importance of articulate speech from the fact that the Lord has bestowed this faculty only on man. Such a wonderful gift of Isvara must not be squandered or abused in idle gossip or useless talk. We must use it to grasp the divine powers and endeavour to create the well-being of mankind thereby. And we must also try to raise our own Self with it. All these lofty purposes can be served with the Vedic mantras that the sages have gathered from space for our benefit.

If you recognise this fact you will realise why there should be a sastra called Siksa specially for the purpose of guiding us in the enunciation of Vedic mantras. This science as developed by our forefathers arouses the wonder of linguistic scientists even today. It teaches us how the syllables are to be produced accurately and describes in the minutest detail how the passage of the breath coming from the pit of the stomach is to be controlled. Further, it tells us on which parts of the body the breath must impinge and how it must be discharged from the mouth.

In a sense, air going into our body in different ways is a manifestation of the yogic science: it is because of the vibrations caused in our nadis as a result of the passage of our breath that our emotions and powers take shape. There is a saying, "What is in the macrocosm is present in the microcosm. " As mentioned before, the vibrations within us produce vibrations outside also and these are the cause of worldly activities. That is why those who have mastered the mantras have the same powers as those who have achieved yogic perfection controlling their breath. The one is mantrayoga, the other is Rajayoga.

Siksa explains how each syllable of a mantra is to be produced by the human voice, what its tone should be like. It lays down the duration or matra for each syllable. In determining the matra the short and long syllables (the "hrsva" and "dirgha") are taken into account. Siksa also describes how words that are joined together (according to the rules of "sandhi") are to be enunciated without breaking them. All such matters as help in the correct chanting of the mantras are included in this sastra.

Siksa explains in very fine detail how the sounds of the various syllables are to produced. A sound like "ka" is to be created from between the neck and the throat; another like "na" is nasal. To produce the sound of 'ta" the tongue should come into contact with particular teeth - this is mentioned in this sastra; so too how the tongue should touch the upper palate for a sound like "na". Phonemes like "ma" arise from completely closing the lips together and those like "va" (labia-dental) are produced using both the lips and the teeth. It is all scientific and at the same time part of mantrayoga and sabdayoga.



Root Language - Sanskrit

In speaking about the Vedas I stated that the sound of a word was more important than its meaning. That reminds me. In the Vedic language called "Chandas" and in Sanskrit which is based on it, there are words the very sound of which denotes their meaning. Take the word "danta". You know that it means a tooth. We have to use our teeth to produce the sound of the word "danta" - the tongue has to make an impact on the teeth. You will note this phenomenon when you ask a toothless person to say "danta". He will not be able to vocalise the word clearly.

From such small observations comparative philology can discover an important fact : which word has come first in what language. Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, German, French, etc, have been jointly referred to as belonging to the Indo-European group and derived from one mother language. Western philologists do not accept Sanskrit as the original language, the mother of all Indo-European tongues. But words like "danta" point to the fact that Sanskrit is the root language.

Consider the English word "dental". There is so much similarity between "dant" and "dent". In languages like French and Latin also the word for tooth is akin to "dent", though it is "da-kara" and not the "da-kara" of Sanskrit. "Why shouldn't you derive the Sanskrit word 'danta' from 'dental'?" it might be asked. But you must consider the fact that to say "danta" you have to make use of your teeth. Not so to say "dental". You get the sound "dental" as a result of the tip of your tongue touching your upper palate. It is only in Sanskrit that the sound of the word itself signifies its meaning. So that must be the root form of the word. Hence languages like English, French, Latin, etc, must have been derived from Sanskrit.

By interchanging the letters of some words you get other words which are related in meaning to the original. What is the nature of the animal called lion, the quality you associate with it most? It is violence. "Himsa" is violence and the word turns into "simha" to denote the lion. Kasyapa was the first among the sages. Celestials, non-celestials, human beings, all may be traced back to him. He knew the truth or, rather, saw the Truth. Jnana is also called "drsya". Kasyapa is thus a seer, "Pasyaka": "Pasyaka became Kasyapa".

In Tamil one who sees, the seer, is "parppan". It is in this sense, as men who know the Truth or Reality, that Brahmins in the Tamil land came to be called "Parppans". But now the word is used in a pejorative sense.



Pronunciation

Siksa deals with "uccarna", "svara", "matra", "bala", "sama" and "santana". The sound of each mantra is determined with the utmost accuracy. How different sounds have their source in different parts of the body and how they are vocalised, all such details which are of scientific and practical importance are dealt with in this Anga. If it says, "Join your lips in this way and such and such a sound will be produced as you speak", you may verify it for yourself in practice and find it to be true.

Here I am reminded of an interesting fact. The lips come into use in "pa", "ma", "va". They are not used in "ka", "nga", "ca", "na", "ta", "na", "ta", and "na". A poet has composed a Ramayana which can be read without using your lips. It is called "Nirosthya- Ramayana". "Ostha" means "lip". "Austraka", the word for camel, is derived from it and the Tamil word "ottagai" has the same origin. "Nir-osthya" means without lips. Nirosthya-Ramayana was perhaps composed by its author to demonstrate his linguistic ingenuity. But another reason occurs to me. The poet must have been very much concerned about ritual purity and felt that the story of Sri Ramancandra must be read without bringing the lips together.

There is a beautiful verse in Paniniya Siksa(its author, as the name itself suggests, is Panini) which tells us how careful we must be in pronouncing Vedic syllables.

Vyaghri yatha haret putran

Damstrabhyam na ca pidayet

Bhitapatanadhedabhyam

Tadvad varnan prayojayet

"The Vedic syllables must be pronounced with clarity. The character of their sound should not be distorted a bit. But no force must be used in vocalising the syllables. There should be no damage done - no erosion of the sound - and no violence should be suggested in the pronunciation. How does a tigress carry its cubs? Tigresses and cats carry their young ones by holding them firmly with their teeth, yet in doing so they do not cause any hurt to the little ones. The Vedic hymns must be chanted in the same way, the syllables enunciated gently and yet distinctly. Panini, the author of the above stanza, has written the most important work on grammar, a subject which comes next(after Siksa) among the Vedangas. Apart from him many others written on Siksa. There are thirty works in this category. Panini's and Yajnavalkya's are particularly important.

Each Veda has attached to it a "Pratisakhya" which examines Vedic sounds. There are also ancient commentaries on them and these too are included in Siksa.



Scripts

The evolution of the script of any language must be based on symbols or signs denoting various "units" of its speech(phonemes). Most of the European

languages including English are written in the Roman script. There is a script called Brahmi and the Asokan edicts are in it. In fact it is from Brahmi that the scripts of most Indian languages have evolved and these include not only the Devanagari script in which Sanskrit is written but also the Tamil and Grantha scripts.

The Brahmi lipi or script has two branches. Of the two, the Pallava Grantha script was prevalent in the South and it is from it that scripts of most of the Dravidian languages evolved.

The Telugu script has a unique feature. While in all other scripts the letters are written in a clockwise fashion, in Telugu there are letters written in an anticlockwise fashion, that is the loops are shaped leftward. Parasakti, the Supreme Goddess, is to the left of Isvara and there is leftist worship associated with her("vama-marga"). For this reason it is believed that some of the letters of the Sricakra should be written in Telugu. The Andhra language itself is said to have a Saiva character. In most parts of India, the child is first taught to write the "Astaksari", [prayer to Vishu] but in Andhra Pradesh it is the "Siva Pancaksara". There are places sacred to Siva in three corners of this state: Kalahasti in the south, Srisailam in the west and Kotalingaksetram in the north. It is because this land is within the area marked by these lingas that it is called "Telungu-desa" (from "Trilinga"). Appayya Diksita has composed a stanza in which he expresses his regret that he was not born in Andhra.

Andhratvam Andhrabhasacapyandhradesa svajanmabhuh

Tatrapī Yajusi Sakha na 'lpasya tapasah phalam

Appayya Diksita was a Samadevin by birth. "Of the Vedas I am the Samaveda, "so says Bhagavan in the Gita. But Diksita, a great devotee of Siva, regrets that he was not born in Andhra, and that too as a Yajurvedin, and states that the reason for this was his failure to perform austerities in sufficient measure. The Yajurveda, it will be remembered, contains the Siva-Pancaksara mantra.

Let me revert to the question of script. As I said before, almost all the scripts in India today have evolved from Brahmi. But it is hard to make out elements of the original Brahmi in them. So anything that we find difficult to

understand or make out is referred to as "Brahmi-lipi". Later this came into usage as "Brahma-lipi", the Creator's "writing" on our forehead [our destiny]. Now anything we find difficult to understand or cannot make out is called "Brahma-lipi". Another old script is "Kharosthi". "Khara-ostham" means the lips of a donkey - these resemble bellows. The loops protrude in the script. Persian is written in Kharosthi.

Brahmi was our common script just as Roman is today for most European languages. Now Devanagari [with variations] is the common script for most Northern languages. We do not realise that each letter or syllable represents a particular sound or phoneme. There are two different letters in Tamil to represent "na". Why should there be two to represent the same sound, we wonder, thinking it to be unique to that language. But there is a subtle difference between the two "na"s.

In Telugu there is only one "na". So is the case with other languages. There are two types of "r" common to Tamil and Telugu. But the two types differ in the two languages. In Tamil, two 'r's together of one of these two types form a consonant with a special sound value (kurram, marrum, sorannai). In Telugu it is different. The Tamil word for horse is "kudirai"; in Telugu it is "kurram" - the two r's are pronounced fully. In Tamil there is no such phoneme. There are some other unique phonemes in Telugu. In some words "ja" is pronounced as "za". Andhras pronounce "sala" as "tsala". The Devanagari and Grantha alphabets have 50 letters. In Telugu there are 52 (including the additional letters in the "ja" and "ca" groups. The Telugu-speaking people sometimes interchange "tha" and "dha". I am told you find this in some of the compositions of Tyagaraja himself.

When we transliterate passages from one language into another we must keep these peculiarities in mind. In English also for the same labial there are two letters, "v" and "w". A professor told me that there is a difference between the two. The English "v" should be pronounced with the lower lip folded and the upper row of teeth coming into contact with it. When "w" is pronounced the lips do not come into contact with the teeth but are turned round. Words like "Sarasvati" and "Isvara" must be written with a "v" (not as "Saraswati" and "Iswara").

Sanskrit, more than any other language, exemplifies the principle of phonetic spelling. In English the spelling is erratic and confusing. I remember reading a

newspaper heading recently: "Legislature wound up. " Absent-mindedly I read the word "wound" in the sense of a hurt or injury. Of course it was actually used as the past participle of "wind". Now the word "wind" can also mean a breeze but then it is pronounced differently. So it is all confusing. Is the word "put" pronounced in the same way as "cut" or "but"? In "walk" and "chalk", the "l" is silent.

Seemingly, such is not the case with Tamil which contains many words from other languages like Sanskrit. In other Indian languages for each series of consonants there are four different letters in place of the one in Tamil. For instance, the same "ka" is used for "kan" (Tamil for eye) and the Sanskrit "mukha" (in Tamil it is written as "mukham") while "Ganga" is written as "kanga" and "ghatam" (pot in Sanskrit) is written as "katam". In Tamil the word for mace (the weapon wielded by Bhima) and for story are written alike as "katai", instead of as "gadai" and "kathai".

In Tamil, unlike in other Indian languages, "ka" serves the purpose of "kha", "ga", and "gha". "ta" serves for "da" also. Words that have almost opposite meanings are spelt identically: "Dosam" and "tosam" meaning blemish and happiness respectively are written identically. Letters from the Grantha script are added in Tamil for proper pronunciation _ "sa", "ha", "ja", "ksa", etc. In the past these letters were not used in Tamil poetry following the tradition of poetic usage. But now some authors do not use these Grantha characters even in prose. Since they find it difficult to get rid of Sanskrit words from the Tamil vocabulary, the next best thing they can do perhaps is to rid the language of the letters representing the phonemes of Sanskrit which have no equivalents in the Tamil alphabet. This causes confusion. If an author writes "catakam" in the strict Tamil manner it can read also as "sad(h)akam" or "jatakam". From the very beginning Tamil has not had all the consonants. But why should characters added to meet this deficiency be dropped? Does it mean "victory" for Tamil and "defeat" for Sanskrit? Why should there be a fight over languages? There is no need to nurse any bitterness against languages that we think are not our own.

The Tamil script is adequate to write words that are strictly Tamil. The difficulty is when it comes to its adopting words from other languages with sounds representing "kha", "ga", "gha", etc. In Sanskrit, Telugu, Kannada and so on, there are letters for the entire "ka-varga", "ca-varga", "ta-varga", "ta-varga", and "pa-varga". In English, as we have already seen, we cannot

pronounce the words according to their spelling. It is not so in Tamil. But in that language too the script is not entirely self-sufficient. You may not agree. But I will tell you what I learned from my own experience.

A Northerner learned the Tamil alphabet sufficiently well, that is he learned to read the individual letters of the alphabet. But he had no one to help him in pronouncing the words properly. He wanted to learn Tamil because he was keen to read the Tevaram and the Tiruvacakam in the original. After learning the alphabet he tried to read the Tevaram from a book. Though he had no knowledge of the language he thought he could earn merit by reading the hymns of the great saints even without understanding their meaning. Then, one day, he came to me and announced: "I am going to recite the "Tevaram". " I felt happy and asked him to go ahead.

His recitation caused me amusement. The passage he had was a famous one - what Appar had sung at Tiruvaiyaru of his experience of seeing everything in the form of Umamahesvara [that is the entire cosmos revealed as Siva] and the song was "Madar piraikkanniyanai. . . " He got the very first word wrong. Instead of "madar" he said "matar". It sounded so strange to me. Then he said "malaiyan makalotu" for "malaiyan mahalodu" laying stress on the "k" and the "t". For "padi" he said "pati". I was on the verge of laughter. His recitation went on in this fashion. He said "pukuvar" instead of "puhuvar".

I heard him silently because I thought a Northerner learning a Tamil song deserved to be encouraged. But soon I found that I could no longer suffer his erratic reading. So I told him in a friendly manner that his pronunciation was faulty. To this he said: "What can I do? It is all in the book. " What he said was right and it showed that in Tamil too the words are not always written according to how they are pronounced. Letters that come in the middle of a word are not pronounced as they are written. We write "makalotu" but say "mahalodu"; we write "atarkaka" but say "adarkaha". "Ka" becomes "ha" in the middle and end of the word. "Ta" in the beginning of a word remains "ta" but in the middle becomes "da". For instance, "tantai" (father) is pronounced as "tandai" and "Katavul" (God) and "itam" (place) pronounced as "Kadavul" and "idam". Such matters are dealt with in detail in Tamil grammar books.

Like Sanskrit, Tamil too has excellent works on grammar - for example, the Tolkappiyam and Nannul. They deal with the morphology of words and their

vocalisation. For instance there are such rules: After such and such a syllable "sa" becomes "ca", "ka" becomes "ha".

Generally speaking, if "ka" is the initial letter of a word in Tamil it retains its sound of "ka". In the same way if the initial letter of a word is "ta" it retains its true sound, but in the middle or end of a word it sounds "da". "Pa" is "pa" if it is the initial letter of a word but sounds "ba" in the middle of a word. (In Tamil we do not see "pa" occurring as an independent letter in the middle or end of a word. "Anpu"(love), "ampu"(arrow), "inпам"(pleasure) -"pa" in these words is joined with other letters. Words like "japa" (muttering the names of the Lord or any mantra); "sapam" (curse), "kapam" ("kapham", phlegm), "supam" ("subham", auspicious) have letters belonging to the "pa-varga" independently in the middle of the words but they are from the Sanskrit.

There is something interesting about "ca". While in Tamil "ka", "ta", "pa". etc, retain their true sound when they are the initial letters of words, "ca" as the initial letter is voiced as "sa". "Catti" (cooking vessel) and "civappu" (red) are pronounced as "satti" and "sivappu". But when the letters come together as "cca", they are not pronounced as "ssa"- for example, "accam" (fear), "paccai"(green). "Col" (to speak) is pronounced as "sol", but "peryarccol" and "vinaiccol" are not pronounced as "peyerssol" and "vinaissol". But in Malayalam which is derived from Tamil "ca" in the beginning of a word is pronounced as "ca": "civappu" is "civappu". But at other times when the "cca" comes in the middle of a word the word is pronounced as "ssa", not "cca", e. g, place names like "Kavisseri", "Nellisseri", while Tamils pronounce the same as "Kavicceri" and "Nellicceri". In words like "accan" (father) and "Ezhuttaccan", however, there is no change.

The genius of the Tamil language is to be known from its works on grammar-how a word is changed and where. However, the pronunciation is not in strict consonance with the spelling.

It is only in Sanskrit that the pronunciation is fully phonetic but for two exceptions. One is when there is a visarga before "pa". Visarga more or less has the same sound as "ha" - not a full "ha", though. In Tamil Nadu it is pronounced fully as "ha" and Northerners who slur over it are made fun of. But their pronunciation is correct according to the rules of Siksa. With the visarga occurring before it, "pa" becomes "fa".

The second exception: "Subrahmanya", "Brahma", "vahni"(fire) are pronounced as "Subramhanya", "Bramha" and "vanhi". But all words with "ha" coming as a conjunct consonant are not like this as, for example, "jahvara"(deep, inaccessible), "jihva"(tongue), "guhya"(secret), and "Prahlada" [son of the demon Hiranyakasipu and a great devotee of Visnu].



A Language that has all Phonemes

From the foregoing it is clear that Sanskrit has the "f" sound. In fact there is no sound vocalised by humans that is not present in that language. "Zha" is not, as is usually imagined, unique to Tamil. It exists in the Vedic language which is the source of Sanskrit. The "da" in the Yajurveda has to be pronounced as "zha" in the corresponding passages in the Samaveda. In the Rgveda also in some places the "da" has to be similarly pronounced. The very first word in the first sukta of the Rigveda, "Agnimile", has to be pronounced almost as "Agnimizhe" - not a full "zhe" for "le", but almost.

There is a sound very close to "zha" in French. But neither in that language nor in Sanskrit is there a separate letter to represent that sound. "Ja" and "ga" serve the purpose of "zha" in French. In Sanskrit "la" serves the same purpose

(I am told there is "zha" in Chinese.)

The three-dot symbol in Tamil, called "aytam", is present in Sanskrit also. There is a Panini sutra, "h kap pauc". According to it, if a visarga comes before a word beginning with "ka"(Ramah + Karunakarah), it will not have the

sound of "h", as mentioned before, but of "h" in the "aytam". Here it is the visarga that is the aytam that becomes the "f" before "pa-kara".

Ramah + panditah =Rama f panditah. This "f" sound is called "upatmaniya". "Tma" suggests the sound created by blowing the pipe to build the kitchen fire. When you blow thus you get the "f" sound. The initial letter of the English word "flute" is "f", is it not?

One more point about "fa". We generally pronounce "fa" as "pa". But it would be wrong to think that we[in the South] pronounce coffee as "kapi" in the same way. In Sanskrit "kapisa" means dark brown - that is the colour of coffee powder. Our kapisa is the white man's coffee.

What Tamils call kurriyalukaram is present in Sanskrit also -r and l. People write both "Rigveda" and "Rugveda" - the first letter of the word is neither "Ri" nor "Ru". It represents in fact the Kurriyalukara sound. It is between "u" and "i". We write "Krishna" in Roman. In the North some people write the same as "Krushna". It is amusing to listen to Andhras pronouncing "hrdayam" as "hrudayam". Both the "ra-kara" and "la-kara" of Sanskrit have vocalic forms. But in "la-kara" the vocalic form comes only in conjunction with another consonant. In the ra-kara vocalic form we have examples like "Rg", "rsi"; in the "la-kara" vocalic form we have "klpta".

In Sanskrit the vocalic "r" and "l" are not included among the consonants but regarded as vowels: a, a, u, u, i, i, r, l, e, ai, o, au, am, ah.

There is no short "e" or "o" in Sanskrit. I felt this to be a minus point for that language. Parasakti, the Supreme Goddess, is the personification of all sounds. So should there not be all sounds in a language (like Sanskrit)? Why should it lack these two sounds (short "e" and short "o")? On going through Patanjali's commentary on the sutras of Panini, I discovered that Sanskrit too had these short vowels and it was a comforting discovery. Patanjali says that, in chanting the Satyamugri and Ranayaniya Sakhas of the Samaveda the short "e" and "o" are used.

Thus Sanskrit embraces all sounds. It has also a script in which the sound of every letter is determined with the utmost accuracy.



Languages and Scripts : Indian and Foreign

A special feature of our language is that each syllable of every word is pronounced distinctly. Take the English word "world". The sound of the first syllable has no clear form; it is neither "we" nor "wo". Then the letter "r" is slurred over. There are many such indistinct words in foreign tongues. They come under the category of "avyakta-sabda" (indistinct sounds). In our country all languages are "spasta"(clear and distinct).

In the languages of many other countries there is no accord between spelling and pronunciation. For the sound of "ka" there are three letters in English "k", "c" and "q". Such is not the case with our languages. The "f" sound in English is represented in three different ways as illustrated in the words "fairy", "philosophy", "rough". When you say "c" as a letter of the English alphabet, it sounds like a "sa-kara" letter, but many words with the initial letter "c" have the "ka-kara" sound. The "sa-kara" sound occurs only in a few words like "cell", "celluloid", "cinema". The spelling is totally unrelated to the pronunciation as in "station" and "nation".

The Roman alphabet has only 26 letters and is easy to learn. The alphabets of our languages have more letters and are comparatively difficult to learn. But, once you have learned them, our languages are easier to read and write than their European counterparts. Take English, for instance. Even a person who has passed his M. A. has often to consult the dictionary for spelling and pronunciation.

But among Indian languages themselves Sanskrit is the best in the matter of spelling and pronunciation. By saying this I do not mean that the languages of other countries are inferior to ours. At the same time, so far as our own country is concerned, I do not wish to downgrade other tongues in comparison with Sanskrit. I merely mentioned some facts to underline the point that Sanskrit fully represents the Supreme Being manifested as the Sabda-brahman.

If we develop the attitude that all languages are our common heritage, we will not run down other people's tongues. We often forget the fact that the purpose of language, any language, is communication, exchange of ideas. It is our failure to recognise this basic fact that is the cause of fanatical attachment to our mother tongue and hatred of other languages. We are often asked to be broad-minded and to develop an international outlook, but in the matter of language we remain narrow-minded. I feel sad when I think of it.



Aksamala

"Rudraksa" means the eye of Rudra or Siva. "Rudraksa-mala" is a "garland" (or rosary) made up of such "eyes". "Aksa" means eye. In Tamil the rudraksa is called "tirukkanmani"[the sacred pupil of the eye]

What is the meaning of "aksamala" or "sphatika-aksamala"? Here the word "aksa" is not taken to mean the eye but the letters of the alphabet from "a" to "ksa". In the Sanskrit alphabet "a" comes first and "ksa" comes last. To learn the "A" to "Z" of a subject means to have a thorough grasp of it. To

convey the same idea in Sanskrit we say "a-karadi ksa-karantam". There are 50 letters from "a" to "ksa". So an aksamala consists of 50 beads. There is of course a 51st bead which is bigger than the rest and it is called "Meru". The sun, the legend goes, does not go beyond the Meru mountain during his daily journey. When we make one round thus, muttering the name of the Lord or a mantra, first clockwise up to the Meru and then anticlockwise up to the Meru again, we will have told the beads a hundred times.



Importance of Enunciation and Intonation

You must not go wrong either in the enunciation or intonation of a mantra. If you do, not only will you not gain the expected benefits from it, the result might well be contrary to what is intended. So the mantras must be chanted with the utmost care. There is a story told in the Taittiriya Samhita(2. 4. 12) to underline this.

Tvasta wanted to take revenge on Indra for some reason and conducted a sacrifice to beget a son who would slay Indra. When he chanted his mantra, "Indrasatrur varddhasva. . .", he went wrong in the intonation. He should have voiced "Indra" without raising or lowering the syllables in it and he should have raised the syllables "tru" and "rddha"(that is the two syllables are "udata"). Had he done so the mantra would have meant, "May Tvasta's son grow to be the slayer of Indra". He raised the "dra" in Indra, intoned "satru" as a falling svara and lowered the "rddha" in "varddhasva". So the mantra meant now: "May Indra grow to be the killer of this son (of mine)". The words of the mantra were not changed but, because of the erratic intonation, the result

produced was the opposite of what was desired. The father himself thus became the cause of his son's death at the hands of Indra.

The gist of this story is contained in this verse which cautions us against erroneous intonation.

Mantrohinah svarato varnato va

Mithya prayukto na tamarthamaha

Sa vagvajro yajamanam hinasti

Yathendrasatruh svarato' paradhat

What was the weapon with which Tvasta 's son was killed? Not Indra's thunderbolt but the father's wrongly chanted mantra.



Versions with Slight Differences

I have spoken about the importance of maintaining the purity of Vedic syllables. All over India, from the Himalaya to Ramesvaram and all through the ages, the Vedas have been taught entirely in the oral tradition, without the aid of any printed books and without one part of the country being in touch with another. And yet 99 percent of the texts followed everywhere is the same to the letter.

So it means that there is a difference of one per cent, is there not? Yes, there is, among the recensions in the different regions. Is it proper to have

such slight differences? After claiming that the consequences would be unfortunate even if one syllable of a mantra goes wrong, how are we to accept that the same mantra in the different recensions or in the different regions differ by one percent? If the original Vedas in their true form are one, will not the departure by even one percent mean undesirable consequences?

There is an answer to this question. You will come to harm if the medicine you take is different from what your physician has ordered. Similarly, if you chant a mantra with its syllables changed, you will suffer an adverse consequence. The rule that the medicine prescribed must not be changed applies to the patient, not to the doctor. The patient cannot, on his own, change the medicine that his doctor has prescribed. But the doctor can, cannot he? There is more than one medicine available to treat a particular ailment. So there is nothing wrong if the doctor substitutes one medicine for another. While treating two patients suffering from the same illness the doctor may, while prescribing essentially the same medicine for both, make small changes in the ingredients according to their different natures.

It is in the same manner that the sages have introduced slight changes in the different Vedic recensions, but these are not such as to produce any adverse effect: indeed, even with the changes, the mantra yields the expected benefits. As a matter of fact, the sages have introduced the changes for the benefit of people who are entitled to learn the particular recensions. The rules with regard to these are clearly stated in the Pratisakhya.

The syllables of the mantras in the different recensions do not vary to any considerable degree. Nor are they unrelated to one another. On the whole they sound similar. Even when the letters vary there is a kinship to be seen between them.



Vedic Vocalisation and the Regional Languages

If we relate certain characteristics of the different languages of India to how Vedic chanting differs syllabically from region to region, we will discover the important fact that the genius of each of these tongues and the differences between them are based on how the Vedas are chanted in these regions. I make here certain observations based on my own philological researches.

The letters da, ra, la and zha are phonetically close to one another. Ask a child to say "rail" or "Rama", in all likelihood it will say "dail", "Dama". The reason is "da" is phonetically close to "ra". Quite a few people say "Sivalatri" for "Sivaratri". And some say "tulippora" for "tulippola" (Tamil for "just a little"). Here "la" and "ra" sound similar. I spoke about how "ra" and "da" change. So "la" can change to "da". "La" is very close to "la". Usually what we pronounce as "lalita", "nalina", and "sitala" will be found in Sanskrit books as "lalita", "nalina" and "sitala". There is no need to say how "la" and "zha" are close friends. Madurai is indeed the city of Tamil but here people say "valapalam" (plantain) for "vazha-pazham". That is they use "la" for "zha", a letter we believe to be unique to the Tamil (or Tamizh) language.

Here I should like to mention an idea likely to sound new to you. What is considered unique to Tamil, "zha" [retroflex affirmative], is present in the Vedas also. Jaimini is one of the Samaveda sakhas: it is also called the Talavakara Sakha. The "da" or "la" of other Vedas or sakhas sounds like "zha" in the Talavakara Sakha. Those who have properly learned this recension say "zha" for "da" or "la". Perhaps it is not a full "zha" sound but something approximating to it, or something in which the "zha" sound is latent.

The "zha-kara" occurs even in the Rgveda in some places. Usually "da" and "la" are interchanged and where there is "da-kara" in the Yajurveda it is "la-kara" in the Rgveda. The very first mantra in the Vedas is Agnimide". "Agnimide" is according to the Yajurveda which has the largest following. In the Rgveda the same word occurs as "Agnimile". The "le" here is to be pronounced almost as "zhe". In the famous Sri Rudra hymn of the Yajurveda occurs the word "Midustamaya". The same word is found in the Rgveda also and the "du" in the "midu" sound like "zhu" instead of sounding like "lu" - that is the "zha-kara" is latent in how the syllable is vocalised.

Generally speaking, the "la" in the Rgveda is "da" in the Yajurveda and "zha" in the Talavakara Samaveda. Now let us take up the regions where each of the Vedas has a large following and consider the social features of the language spoken in each such region.

The view is propagated that the Vedas belong to the Aryans, that the Dravidians have nothing to do with them. Let us take three of the four Dravidian states for consideration, that is the regions where Tamil, Telegu and Kannada are spoken.

The "zha-kara" is special to Tamil, "da" to Telugu and "la" to Kannada. Where "zha" occurs in Tamil, it is "da" in Telugu and "la" in Kannada. Take the Sanskrit word "pravala" (coral). It is "pavazham" in Tamil, "pakadalu" in Telegu and "havala" in Kannada.

"Pavazham" is derived from "pravala", so too "pakadalu" in Telegu, in which language the original Sanskrit word has changed more than in Tamil: the "va" of "pravala" has become "ka" but it is according to the genius of that language. How has the word changed in Kannada? In Tamil and Telegu the change from the Sanskrit "pra" to "pa" is but small. But in Kannada the "pra" becomes "ha" and that of course is according to the genius of that language. The "pa" in the other languages becomes "ha" in Kannada. Thus "Pampa" becomes "Hampa" and then "Hampi" (you must have heard of the ruins of Hampi). The Tamil "pal" for milk is "halu" in Kannada and the Tamil "puhazh" (fame) is "hogalu" in Kannada. In the same manner "pravala" becomes "havala" in Kannada.

It was not my purpose to speak about the "pa-ha" relationship. All I wanted to point out was how the "la" of Sanskrit is the "zha" of Tamil and the "da" of Telugu. In Kannada, however, there is no change. The "la" remains "la".

You see this difference not only with respect to words of Sanskrit origin but also with respect to those belonging to the Dravidian group. The word "puhazh"(or pugazh) cited earlier is an example in this connection- it is not a Sanskrit word.

(From our present state of investigations we know this: our people belong to one family. They are not racially divided into Aryans and Dravidians but are divided into those speaking languages related to Sanskrit on the one hand and those speaking Dravidian tongues on the other. Further research is likely to reveal that even this linguistic difference is not real and that both Sanskrit and Dravidian languages are from the same parent stock. Some linguists are known to be examining the possible bounds that unite Sanskrit and Tamil. If we go back to very early times, we may discover that the two languages are of the same stock. But during the thousands of years subsequent to that period, the Dravidian languages must have evolved separately. It is in this sense that I speak of the "Dravidian" languages as being distinct from Sanskrit.)

I wondered whether there was any special reason why the "zha" of Tamil should be the "da" of Telugu and the "la" of Kannada. I came to the conclusion that the differences were related to how the Vedas are chanted in the regions where these languages are spoken.

The predominant Veda in the western region [of Peninsular India], including Maharashtra and Karnataka, is the Rgveda. In the region from Nasik to Kanyakumari, the Rgveda has the widest following. Kannada is one of the languages spoken here and "la" has a unique place in it. And this "la", special to Kannada, which is considered a Dravidian regional language, is Vedic in origin.

If we go to that part of the eastern seashore and the hinterland that form Andhra Pradesh, we find that 98 out of 100 people (Brahmins) here are Yajurvedins. The remaining two percent are Rgvedins. There are practically no Samavedins in Andhra Pradesh. Since Yajurvedins are the predominant group the Rgvedic "la" is "da" here, so also the "la" of other languages.

In Tamil Nadu also Yajurvedins are in a majority though not to the same extent as in Andhra Pradesh. Here 80 percent are Yajurvedins, 15 percent Samavedins and 5 percent Rgvedins. In ancient times, however, the Samavedins formed quite a large group- there is evidence for such a belief. It is likely that there were Brahmins belonging to all the 1,000 recensions of the Samaveda in the Tamil land. Isvara is extolled in the Tevaram as "Ayiram-sakhai-udaiyan" (one with a thousand Vedic recensions).

Among the Samavedins those belonging to the Kauthuma Sakha form the majority. But in the old days the followers of the Jaiminiya or Talavakara Sakha were quite large in number. Cozhiyar are people of the Cola land. Even today they are all Samavedins and they follow the Talavakara Sakha- the Cozhiyar residing in Tirunelveli(which is identified as a Pandya territory) still belong to this recension. Originally the Samaveda had a great following not only in the land of the Colas but also in the land of the Pandyas.

"Cozhiyar" may be understood as Brahmins belonging to the Tamil land from very ancient times. They are indeed the Brahmin "Adivasis" of that region. I will tell you how. Among Tamil Smarta Brahmins there is a sect called "Vadamas"(Vadamar). They must have come to the Tamil land from the North, specially from the Narmada valley. Their very name suggests that they are from the North. Cozhiyar must have been inhabitants of Tamil Nadu from the earliest times.

From what I have said about "Vadamar" I should not be taken to mean that I believe that all Brahmins in the South came from the North as is suggested by some people today. As a matter of fact, in the very word "Vadamar" there is proof that all Brahmins did not come from the North. If all Brahmins in Tamil Nadu or in the rest of the South had their original home in the North, why should one sect have been singled out for the name of "Vadamar"? The rest of the Brahmins must have belonged to the Tamil land from the very beginning. Cozhiyar are among these first Brahmins.

There is one proof to show that "Vadamar" originally belonged to the Narmada valley. Only they, among the Brahmins[in the South], recite the following verse in the sandhyavandana.; it is a prayer for protection from snakes.

Narmadayai namah pratah Narmadayai namo nisi

Namostu Narmade tubhyam pahi mam visa-sarpatah

Among the Cozhiyar there was a great man called Somasimara Nayanar who was one of the 63 Nayanmars. Somasi is not an eatable, but means a "sodayajin", one who has performed the soma sacrifice. Sri Ramanujacarya's father had also performed the same sacrifice and he was called "Kesava Sodayajin". The Samaveda has an important place in the soma sacrifice.

If there were a large number of Cozhiyar Brahmins in the very early times in Tamil Nadu, it means that the Talavakra Sakha of the Samaveda must have had a large following then. I have spoken about the Cola and Pandya kingdoms but not of the Pallava and Chera lands. In the dim past there was no Pallava kingdom. The "Muvendar" are the Cheras, colas and Pandyas. The region where the Pallava kingdom arose later was then part of the cola territory. So the early Brahmins who had come from the North, the Vadamar, settled in the northern part of Tamil Nadu, that is the Pallava territory. Subsequently they came to be called "Auttara Vadamar". There are Samavedins among the "Vadamar" also, but they do not belong to the Talavakara Sakha but to the Kauthama Sakha. The "Vadamar" came to the Tamil land long after the Tamil language had developed into its classical stage. So their Vedic chanting is not germane to our subject. The same could be said about the Pallavas after the Sangam literature came to flourish.

Let us now turn to the Chera land. Malayalam is spoken in Kerala. If I did not touch upon this language when I dealt with Tamil, Telugu and Kannada, it was because of the fact that it appeared much later than the other three. Until about a thousand years ago, Kerala was part of the Tamil land and its language too was Tamil. Malayalam evolved from Tamil. If the Tamil "zha" is "da" in Telegu and "la" in Kannada, it remains "zha" in Malayalam. Tamils say "puzhai" for a river. Malayalis say "puzha". If the former say "Alappuzhai" and "Amblappuzhai"[both names of places in Kerala], the latter say "Alappuzha" and "Amblappuzha".

Leaving aside the question of the Malayalam language, let us turn to the subject of the Vedic tradition of Kerala. The Malayala Brahmins called Namputris have a long tradition of learning the Vedas in the sastric manner. There are among them Trivedins(those well-versed in the Rgveda, Yajurveda and Samaveda, and among the last-mentioned a number of people following the Talavakara Sakha). The Pancanmana family is one such and it has behind it a

fine Vedic tradition. They belong to the Talavakara Sakha. Today those who follow the Kauthama Sakha are in a majority among the Samavedins in Tamil Nadu but in Kerala the Samavedins belong to the Talavakara Sakha.

From generation to generation, the Namputiris have been chanting the Talavakra Sakha. They pronounce the "da" or "la" of other sakhas as "zha"- which means they follow the same practice as in Tamil Nadu. Both the palm-leaf and printed versions of the Talavakara Sakha, in Tamil Nadu as well as in Kerala, have "zha" in the relevant places.

Thus we see that from early times the Talavakara Sakha of the Samaveda has had a following in the Tamil land larger than in any other part of the country. And with this recension has come the "zha" which is a phoneme not found elsewhere. Naccinarkkiniyar is among the commentators of the Tamil Sangam works. In his commentary on the Tolkappiyam (famous Tamil grammatical treatise), he mentions "four Vedas": "Taittiriyaṃ, Paudikam, Talavakaram and Samam". He mistakes recensions for full-fledged Vedas. However, we note from his list that the Talavakara Sakha had the place of a full-fledged Veda in Tamil Nadu. "Taittiriyaṃ" is a recension of the Kṛṣṇa_Yajurveda. The Kausitaki Brahmana of the Sankhayana Sakha of the Rgveda is called "Pausa". What Naccinarkkiniyar calls "Paudiyaṃ" is referred to by the Azhvars as "Pauzhiyaṃ"- here again you see the relationship between "zha:" and "da".

All told the phonemes unique to the languages spoken in the different regions have evolved on the basis of the differences in pronunciation in the various Vedic recensions.

So far I have confined myself to the languages of the Dravidian region. Now I will speak on the same theme with reference to the other parts of India and to other countries of the world.

It is customary in the North to use "ja" for "ya" and "ba" for "va"- both in literary and colloquial usage. The use of "ba" for "va" is noticeable particularly in Bengal and "ja" for "ya" in Uttar Pradesh, and Punjab, etc.

In Bengal they follow the dictum, "vabayorabhedam" - there is no difference between "va" and 'ba". In Tamil too "Bhisma" is sometimes referred to as "Vittumar" and "Bhima" as "Vima". In Bengali, all "va's" are vocalised as "ba's". Indeed "Bengal" itself is from "Vanga".

Bengalis say "Bangabasi" for "Vangavasi"(a resident of Bengali). Once they realised that changing all"va's" universally into "ba's" was not right and called a parisad[a meeting of scholars] to consider the question- it was called the "Vanga Parisad". According to one of its decisions all "ba-kara" in Bengali books to be printed thenceforth was to be changed to "va-kara". They strictly carried out the decision. But in doing so they also changed what should naturally be "ba" into "va"- for instance, "bandhu" into "vandhu", "Bangabandhu" into "Vangavandhu".

As observed earlier, in other regions of the North too "ba" is used for "va". For example, the name "Bihar" itself is from "Vihar". (Once there were many Buddhist viharas, temples or monasteries, in this region) The name "Rasbihari" is from "Rasavihari". How would you explain this practice? Such usage is laid down in the Pratisakhya of the Vedic recension followed in these parts. People there applied the rule of the Pratisakhya to their ordinary writing and speech also. It also follows that the rules laid down by the Vedic sastras have been faithfully followed in this region.

Yajurvedins, it will be remembered, from the majority in the country taken as a whole. The Krsna-Yajurveda is followed in the South and the Sukla-Yajurveda in the North. There is a sakha of the latter called "Madhyandina" and it has a large following in the North. In its Pratisakhya it is said that "ja" may be used in place of 'ya", and "ka' in place of 'sa". we say in the South "yat Purusena havisa"(from Purusasukta); the Northern version of the same is "jat Purusena havika". We are amused by such chanting and we even feel angry that the Vedas are being distorted. At the same time we feel proud that we in the south maintain the purity of the Vedic sound. However, the "ja" and 'ka" in the Northern intonation have the sanction of the Siksa sastra.

It is only phonemes that are close to one another that are interchanged. There are examples in Tamil also to show that "ja" and " ya" are closely related. "Java(the "Javaka" island) is referred to in Tamil works as "Yavaka". Generally, if 'ja" comes as the initial letter of a word it is spelt as 'sa" in Tamil, but if it comes in the middle it becomes "ya" - "Aja(n)" and "Pankaja(m)" become "Ayan and Pangayam". "Sa" is a form of sa. If "sa" and 'ka" are interchangeable so too, it seems, "sa" and "ka". In keeping with this what is "kai" (hand) in Tamil is "sey" in Telugu. "Doing" (performing some work) is the function of the hand(in Tamil "seyvadu"). So better than the Tamil "kai"

is the Telegu "sey" which denotes the function of the hand. In Sanskrit the word "kara" has the meaning of "to do" as well as the hand-- "Samkara"("Sankara") one who does good; "karomi" is "I do". One wonders whether in Tamil too "sey" was originally used to denote the hand and then "kai" came to be used. Now "sey" is a verb in that language. The "sa"(or "sa"), it is likely, changed to "ka" and then "kai". One more point: "sa" and "ksa" are related sounds. So for "ksa" to become "ka" is natural "Aksam" - "akkam"; "daksinam" - "dakkanam"; "ksanam" _"kanam". Such examples could be multiplied.

We have seen that "ba" becomes "va" in Tamil while in the Northern languages it is the other way round. Similarly, "ja" becomes "ya" and 'sa" becomes "ka" in Tamil while in the Northern languages "ya" and "sa" become "ja" and "ka" respectively. That is according to the Vedic recension followed there and the rules of the Siksa relating to it. That is the reason why Northerners chant "jat" Purusena havika" for "yat Purusena havisa".

This change is to be seen in so many other words in the North: "Jamuna" for Yamuna"; "jogi" for yogi(n); "jug-jug" for yuga-yuga; "jaatra for "yatra". "Sa" is changes to ka" and so "rsi" becomes "riki". As we have seen, "ksa" and "sa" are related. Even in the South we hear people saying "Lasimi for "Laksmi"- they even write like that. In the North "ka" is used for "ksa"- for instance "Khir" for "ksira". The same applies to Tamil usage also-"Ilakkumi" for "Laksmi".

Let us now turn to other countries, first to the land which saw the birth of Christianity, to the Semitic countries like Palestine and Israel. The Old Testament is basic to the Quran also. Some characters are common to Christianity and Islam, but in Arabic they are pronounced differently. Joseph becomes "Yusuf" and Jehovah becomes "Yehivah". There are differences among the Christian nations too. In some languages you see "ja-kara" to be prominent. "Jesu" and "Yesu", the name of the very founder of Christianity, is spelt differently. "Ja-kara" is a characteristic of Greek also. We could trace the root of all this to the Vedas. Jehivah or Yehovah is the same as the Vedic deity Yahvan. "Dyau-Pitar"(Dyava_Prithivi)becomes Jupiter. Sanskrit words lose their initial letter when borrowed by other languages. So Dyau_Pitar becomes "Yau-Pitar" and then Jupiter.

What were originally Yahvan and Dyau-pitar changed to Jehovah and Jupiter with the addition of the "ja-kara". In the beginning the Vedic religion was practised everywhere. It is likely that the Madhyandina Sakha was followed in Greece and its neighbourhood.



Impact of Siksa Sastra

In the foregoing we noticed that certain Vedic syllables had a special association with certain regions and that these were absorbed in the languages spoken there. We also learned from this that the Vedas flourished in all countries. There was never a period in Tamil Nadu, the land we know intimately when Vedic dharma was not practised there.

The name "Tamizh" itself has the "zha" characteristic of the Talavakara Sakha of the Samaveda. Am I right in making such a claim? Or is it all the other way around? Suppose the argument goes like this: it is the "zha" characteristic of Tamil and the "ja" characteristic of Northern tongues that are seen as the distinguishing phonemes in the Vedic texts prevalent in Tamil Nadu and the North respectively. In other words what was already present in the regional languages came to be absorbed in the Vedic sakhās prevalent in the areas concerned. Did I put the whole thing topsy-turvy when I made the statement that the Vedic "zha", "ja" and "ba" became characteristic for the Tamils, Northerners and the Bengalis respectively, that these were reflected in the speech of each of these linguistic groups?

That the rules of the Siksa sastra had their impact on the regional languages is the correct view. The rules of the Pratisakhya do not apply to one area

alone but to all those parts where the Vedic recension concerned is followed. If there is a Brahmin chanting the Talavakara in Kamarupa(Assam) or Kasmir, he will use "zha" where others use "da" or "la" in the mantras. A Brahmin who chants hymns from the Krsna-Yajurveda has to use "da" instead of "zha" or "la" whether he belongs to Gujarat or Maharastra or any other place in India. In the same way, it is not only the Kannadiga, any Rgvedin anywhere will use "la" where others use "da" or "zha" in chanting the mantras. The Pratisakhya determines the sound of Vedic mantras not for a particular area alone but for the whole country. In course of time the local language takes on the characteristics of the sakha where it is practised.

The name of the month "Margasirsi" is derived from the fact that generally the full moon falls on the day to which is conjoined the asterism of Mrgasirsa during that month. Margasirsi is Margazhi in Tamil. "Si" changed to "di" and "di": to "zhi". It is according to the genius of that language that "sa" becomes "da". "Purusa" is called "purudan" in Tamil and "Nahusa" is "Nag(h)udan" in Tamil poetry. Kambar calls Vibhisana "Vidanana". But, if Margasirsi changed to "Margasirdi" and then the "sir" in the middle dropped, should not the word have the final form of "Margadi"? How do you explain the presence of the "zha-kara"? In other words, how does the name of the month finally take the name "Margazhi"? The "zha-kara" must be attributed to the Talavakara Sakha that was predominant in Tamil Nadu.

People belonging to this recension use "zha" and Krsna-Yajurvedins use "da", don't they? This habit they still retain unconsciously. The Telugu Vaisnavas sing the Tamil Divyaprabandham during worship in the temples. In Tirupati the Tamil Tiruppavai is sung before the Lord. It starts with the words "Margazhi-t-tingal". "Zhi" is difficult for Telugus to vocalise. How is it that they do not say "Margali" or "Margali" then? They say "Margadi-t-tingal", that is with the "da-kara" instead of the "zha-kara". When they chant hymns from the Samaveda that is prevalent in Tamil Nadu they unconsciously use the "da-kara" for the "zha-kara". "Da is in the blood of the Yajurvedins, so they say "Margadi" instead of "Margazhi".



Names of Months

From our inquiry into the derivation of the Tamil margazhi from Margasirsi, you must have formed an idea of how the genius of one language differs from that of another. You may note this from how the original Sanskrit names of other months have changed in Tamil. Usually, as observed before, the name of a month is derived from the asterism under which the full moon falls in that month. Citra-purnima is a sacred day. The Tamil Cittirai does not represent much of a change from the Sanskrit "Citra".

Vaishaka is connected with the asterism Visakha; it is "Vaikasi" in Tamil. Just as Madurai becomes Marudai, so the Sanskrit, Vaishaki has changed to "Vaikasi" in Tamil. (In Bengal the month is called "Baisakhi",)Visakha is the asterism under which Nammazhvar was born. Now Vaisakha purnima is celebrated as Buddha purnima.

The month Anusi is associated with the asterism of "Anusa"[Anuradha]. The full moon usually falls under this asterism during this month. In Tamil the month is called "Ani"- the "sa-kara" of the original has dropped.

There are two "Asadhas"- Purvasadha and Uttarasadha (Earlier Asadha and later Asadha). Purvasadha is called "Puradam" in Tamil; in the Tamil name the "rva" of the original is eroded and the "sa" has dropped. Similarly, Uttarasadha is "Utradam "in Tamil. The Sanskrit "Asadhi" is the Tamil month of "Adi".

Sravana means that which is associated with the asterism Sravana. In the Tamil "Onam" the "sra" of the original has dropped and "vana" has become "onam". Since it is the asterism sacred to Mahavisnu the honorific "Tiru" [equivalent of Sri] is prefixed to its name --thus we have "Tiruvonam". (Ardra is the asterism sacred to Siva. It is called " Adirai" in Tamil and with the prefixing of "Tiru" it becomes "Tiruvadirai". It is not customary to add "Tiru" to the Tamil names of other asterisms. In the South, there is a festival of lights in the month of "Karttigai" --the original Sanskrit name is Krttika. During this time alone is "Tiru" added to "Karttigai". But to the asterisms sacred to Hari and Hara-- Visnu and Siva--"Tiru" is added. Here is proof of the fact that it is part of the religious culture of Tamils not to maintain any distinction between these two gods). To come back to Sravana. The full moon in this month generally falls under the asterism of Sravana. In the Tamil name of "Avani", the "sra" of the original has dropped.

For this linguistic phenomenon of letters dropping off in Tamil there is the example of "Izham" for Simhala [the island nation known as Sri Langa]. "Sa" and "sa" become "a" in Tamil. If "sahasra" is "sasiram" in Kannada, it is "ayiram" in Tamil.

"Ayiram" reminds me of other numbers. The Tamil numbers onru, irandu, mundru (one, two, three) seem to have no connection with the Sanskrit eka, dvi, tri. But ancu and ettu (five and eight) seem to be related to the Sanskrit panca and asta. The English "two" and "three" are related to the Sanskrit dvi and tri. Sexta, hepta, octo, nano, deca -- these are obviously connected with the Sanskrit sasta, sapta, asta, nava and dasa. But the very first number "one" seems totally unrelated to the Sanskrit "eka". But, strangely enough, it appears to have some connection with the Tamil "onru". The Telugu equivalent is made up of the "o" of the Tamil "onru" and the "ka" of the Sanskrit "eka" - - "okati". If we consider all this, just as we are one racially, in the matter of language for Sanskrit and Dravidian tongues.

In Simhala the "sa" and "ha" of "Simha" have dropped off and the word has become "Ilam" and the "la" has changed to "zha" to become "Izham".

Like Asadha, Prosthapada has also a Purva and an Uttara. Purva-Prosthapada is "Purattadi" in Tamil: "asta" changing to "atta" is already known to us. Uttara-Prosthapada is "Utrattadi" in Tamil. The full moon falls under this

asterism or the one near it in the Tamil month Purattasi which name is derived somehow from Prosthapadi.

We call Asvayuja Asvini or "Asvati". The full moon conjoined with the asterism Asvayuja makes the month Asvayuji which in Tamil is "Aippasi".

The "Karttika" of Sanskrit (adjective of Krttika) has not changed much in its Tamil equivalent of Karttigai. The "Tirukkarttigai" festival of lights usually falls on a full moon. I stated with how Margasirsi changes to "Margazhi". The full moon of that month is celebrated as Tiruvadira, the day sacred to Siva.

"Pusya" is the Tamil "Pusam". (We in Tamil Nadu have got so used to "Pusam" that we have made the asterism "Punarvasu" into "Punarpusam". Of course there is no Sanskrit equivalent like "Punarpusya") "Pausya" means what is associated with Pusya. Pusya is also known as Taisya. The Tamil name of the month "Tai" is the result of the second syllable of "Taisya" dropping off.

The month "Magha" is named after the asterism Magha -- in Tamil it is "Masi". The "si" ending is reminiscent of "Vaikasi", "Purattasi" and "Aippasi".

There are two asterisms called Purva-Phalgun and Uttara-Phalgun. In the corresponding Tamil names the important part of the Sanskrit original, "Phalgun", has dropped off. So "Purva-Phalgun" is mere "Puram" in Tamil and "Uttara-Phalgun" is mere "Utram". But the month in which the full moon falls under the asterism of Uttara-Phalgun is "Panguni" for Tamils. It is a festive day in many parts of the south. We celebrate it as Panguni-Utram Tiruk-kalyanam.

From an examination of the Tamil names of the months we form an idea of how the phonemes of Sanskrit change in Tamil.



Other Notable Aspects of Siksa

The general rule is that the sound of the Vedas ought not to be changed, that there should be no tonal alterations. But there are rules permitting slight modifications based on the differences between the recensions - and these rules are according to the Siksa sastra. Slight tonal changes are also allowed. In some hymns of the Rgveda the "a-kara" and "e-kara" are drawn out further than in the other Vedas. In some recensions we have "m" and in some others "gm" - these are called "anusvara". The differences are not so much related to letters or syllables as they are tone and accent.

Sound means so much to the Vedic tradition, so due importance must be given to it. Thus Siksa sastra is the Vedapurusa's organ of breathing.

The 50 letters of the Sanskrit alphabet are derived from the Vedic sounds. If you add "jna" to them you will have 51. These letters are called "matrka". The word has more than one meaning. Importantly, "matr" or "mata" means Amba, the World Mother. The 51 letters make up her form - Amba, Parasakti, personifies them. If the cosmos is the creation of this Supreme Goddess and, if it is also remembered that creation was accomplished with sound, Amba must be the incarnation of the 51 letters. The Sakta Tantras declare that the 51 letters are the limbs of Amba and correlate the letters with different parts of her sacred body. The 51 Sakti pithas [seats of the Supreme Goddess] are associated with one or another of these letters.

If siksa is particularly esteemed as the breathing organ of the Vedapurusa, we must also remember that it is made more glorious by the fact that it sheds light on the 51 letters which personify Amba.



Mouth of the Vedapurusa

Vyakarana or grammar is the "mukha" of the Vedapurusa, his mouth. The Tamil word for grammar is "illakanam". Grammar deals with the "laksanas" of a language. "Laksmāna(n)" is "Ilukkumanan" in Tamil. In the same way, "laksana(m)" becomes "illakanam" in that language.

There are a number of works on Sanskrit grammar. The most widely used and important is the one by the great sage Panini. There is a gloss - a vartika- on his "Vyakarna-sutra" by Vararuci. Patanjali has written a bhasya or commentary on Panini's sutras. These three are the chief works on Sanskrit grammar.

There is a difference between grammar and other sastras. In the case of other subjects the original sutras constituting them are esteemed more than their bhasyas. But, in the case of grammar, or Vyakarana, the Vartika is more valued than the sutras and still more valued is the bhasya.

According to one reckoning, there are six sastras. Vyakarana is one of them. Four of the sastras are particularly important : apart from Vyakarana, Tarka(logic), Mimamsa and Vedanta. Vyakarna is also one of the vedic sadanga(six limbs of the vedas).

"Sucant sutram ", so it is said. (The sutra is just an indication of something, a truth or a principle.) Every sastra has a bhasya and each such bhasya is known by a particular name. The vyakarana bhasya (of Patanjali) alone is called "Mahabhasya", "the great commentary ".



Grammar and Siva

Siva temples have a mandapa (pavilion or hall) called " vyakarana-danamandapa". In Tamil it has come to be called " vakkanikkum mandapam". There are such halls in many temples in the Chola territory of Tamilnadu. One such is in Tiruvorriyur near Madras. Why should there be a mandapa for grammar in Siva temples? What is Siva's connection with language? Is not Siva in his form of Dakshinamurti all silence?

Nrttavasane Nataraja-rajo nanada dhakkam navapancavaram

Uddhartukamah Sankadisiddhanetadvimarse Sivasutrajalam

I will speak briefly about this stanza. The silent Siva remains still [as Dakshinamurti]. But the same Siva [in another form of his] keeps dancing all the time and it was from his dance that the science of language was born.

Nataraja is the name of the dancing Paramesvara. "Nata" is a member of a troupe which also consists of the "vita" and "gayaka". The nata dances. Nataraja is the king of all dancers-- he who cannot be excelled as a dancer-- and he is also called Mahanata [the great dancer]. The Amarakosa, the Sanskrit lexicon, has these two words: " Mahakalo mahanatah". In Tamil they

say " Ambala- k-kuttaduvan". We find from royal inscriptions that in the old days Brahmins too had such Tamil names-- " Ambala-k-kuttaduvan Bhattan", for instance.

There used to be a publishing establishment in Bombay called the NirnayaSagara Press. It once brought out old poetical works in Sanskrit under the general name, " Kavyamala Series ". There were some books in this series with the name " Pracinalekhmalala" . Reproduced in one of them is the text of a copper-plate inscription belonging to the Vengi kingdom. Vengi is situated between the Godavari and the Krsna.

The Cola rulers of the Telugu country and the Colas of Tanjavur were related by marriage. Rajaraja Cola (Narendra) reigned in Tanjavur; it was he who built the Brhadisvara temple. Kulottunga Cola who belonged to the family of the grandson of a king of Vengi ruled as a member of the Cola dynasty of Tanjavur. Once he visited the Cola kingdom and on his return took some 500 Brahmins with him to promote Vedic learning in Vengi. The "Dravidalu" of Andhra Pradesh are the descendants of these Brahmins.

The names of all these Brahmins and their gotras are mentioned in the copper-plate inscription together with the subjects in which they were proficient and duties they had to perform. The landed property allotted to each is referred to, so also the names of the donors and of the recipients. The Brahmins from Tamil Nadu had to teach the Vedas and sastras. That is why gifts of lands were made to them.

" Rupavatara-vaktuk eko bhagah": these words are from the inscription. It means " one share to the Brahmin who is proficient in the Rupavatara. " Rupavatara is a work on grammar.

In Ennayiram, near Tindivanam (Tamil Nadu), there was a school with 340 students. Of them 40 studied Rupavatara, says an inscription of Rajendra Cola I. In Tribhuvanam, Pondicerrri(Pondicherry), also there was a Vedic school supported by Rajadhiraja (A. D. 1018-1050) where the Rupavatara was taught. We also learn from an inscription of Vira-Rajendra Devam dated A. D 1067, that this grammatical work was taught at a school in Tiru, ulldal, near Kanchi.

Siddhanta-Kaumudi is a very popular treatise on grammar. It is a commentary on Panini's sutras by Bhattoji Diksita who was a disciple of Appayya Diksita. The latter was born in Adayappalam and was the author of 104 works, many of them on Saiva themes. His Kuvalayananda, a work on poetics, is also famous.

Ardha-matra-Iaghavena putrotsavam

manyante vaiyakaranah

This speaks of the great joy experienced by grammarians: if they gain as much as half a matra it is a cause for jubilation like the birth of a son to a man who has been long childless.

The sutras are very brief and very precise. The Siddhanta- Kaumudi is also famous for its brevity and exactitude; there is no circumlocution in it, no beating about the bush. May be the sutras themselves are wordy but not Bhattoji Diksita's commentary on the same. Written some 400 years ago, it is very popular even today and is the first book of grammar prescribed for students. (Bhattoji Diksita also wrote the Tattavakaustubha and dedicated it to his guru, Appayya Diksita. In this he seeks to establish that there is no Truth other than the Brahman and that, to claim that there is, is not in keeping with the teachings of the Upanisads. Bidden by his guru, he also wrote an attack on Madhvacarya's philosophy of dualism. The work, Madhvatamatavidhvamsanam, is a cause of dispute among philosophers but Bhattoji Diksita's commentary on grammar is acceptable to all systems.)

Before Siddhanta-Kaumudi, Rupavataram was the grammar work famous among students. "Rupam" here means the "complete form of sound"; "avataram" is descent, but in the present context "history". Rupavataram was published by Rangacari, of Presidency College, Madras.

That gifts of land were made to scholars who taught Rupavataram [the reference here is to the Vengi inscription], shows the importance attached to sanskrit grammar in those times.

The Vengi inscription dates back to 850 years ago. As mentioned earlier, the names of Brahmins who received gifts are given in it. Many of them had the title "Sadangavid" (learned in the six Vedic Angas). Some had Tamil names --

"Ambala-k-kuttaduvan Bhattan", "Tiruvarangamudayan Bhattan", etc. Of the foregoing two names the first is associated with the Cidambaram temple which is Saiva and the second with the Srirangam temple which is Vaisnava . Both Brahmins were Smartas, even the one with the Vaisnava name. There has been as much devotion to Siva as there has been to Visnu at all times. In the North and in Kerala, even today, Smartas perform puja in all temples. The man called "Tiruvarangamudayan Bhattan" is not to be taken as a Vaisnava from his name. The Sanskrit equivalent of the name is Rangasvamin. "Udayan" means "svamin", "svam" denoting possession.

The Tamil name of Nataraja is "Tiruvambala Kuttaduvan". I wanted to speak about Nataraja and his connection with grammar. Let us go back to the stanza with the first word, "Nrttavasane. . ." Nataraja performs an awe- inspiring dance. It seems to bring together all the dance that all of us have to perform, the rhythms of all our lives. The head of the Nataraja idol has something that seems spread over it, something falling down on both sides. What is it? It is the god's mass of matted locks. I am reminded of the snapshot photographs taken nowadays. A snapshot is a rapid photograph that captures an object in one of its fleeting moments. It is not a study that is static but one suggestive of motion. Nataraja dances fast, but momentarily seems to stop dancing. His matted locks give the impression of fanning out over the two sides of his face. The sculptor of those times seems to have taken a mental snapshot of that moment to create the image of Nataraja.

Nataraja has a drum in one hand, called the dhakka or damaruka. The tala of this drum (the time kept by it) is in keeping with the "footwork" of the dancing god, the movement of his feet. The beat of his drum is referred to in the words, "nanada dhakkam".

There are chiefly three types of musical instruments. Those made of skin like the dhakka, the tavil (drum accompaniment to nagasvaram music), the kanjira (a kind of hand drum), the mrdanga; stringed instruments like the vina, the violin; wind instruments like nagasvaram, the flute. The final beat of the drum is called cappu. Similarly at the end of Nataraja's dance (" nrttavasane ") the damaruka produced the cappu sound.

When Nataraja dances, Sanaka and his brother sages, Patanjali Vyaghrapada and so on stand round him. They are great ascetics, so they are able to see the dance. Nataraja's dance can be seen only by those who have the inner

vision of jnana. The Lord himself bestowed on Arjuna the divine eye with which the pandava could see his cosmic form. Vyasa imparted the same power to Sanjaya so that he could describe this wondrous form to Dhrtarastra. Only they (Arjuna and Sanjaya) could see Krsna's universal form. Others on the battlefield of Kuruksetra could not. Because of the great efforts made by them, the celestials, the sages and yogins obtained the divine eye to see the dance of Nataraja. In the Gita such sight is called "divya-caksus" (divine eye).

Sanaka and others saw the dance with their real eyes. Visnu played the drum called the maddala, while Brahma kept time. At the close of the dance, the concluding beats(cappu) produced fourteen sounds. It is these fourteen that are referred to in the stanza ("Nrttavasane", etc) as "navapancavaram"; "nava" is nine and "panca" is five, so fourteen in all. "Nanada dhakkam navapancavaram. " If the number of sounds produced by Nataraja's dhakka is fourteen, the branches of Vedic learning are also the same number (caturdasavidya). If the foundation of Hindu dharma is made up of these fourteen vidyas, Nataraja'a cappu produced fourteen sounds which, according to the verse, were meant for the [Atmic] uplift of Sanaka and others. You must have seen in the sculptural representations of Dakshinamurti in temples four aged figures by his side. They are the Sanaka sages. It is not Saiva works like the Tevaram and the Tiruvacakam alone that mention how instruction was given to the four but also the Vaisnava songs of the Azhvars.

The fourteen sounds produced by Nataraja's drum are the means by which the reality of Siva is to be known and experienced within us in all its plenitude. Nandikesvara has commented upon the fourteen sounds in his Sivabhaktisutra.

Among those present at Nataraja's dance was Panini. His story is told in the Brhatkatha which was written by Gunadhya in the Prakrt called Paisaci. Ksemendra produced a summary of it in Sanskrit and, based on it, Somadeva Bhatta wrote the Katha-sarat-sagara. It is the source of some of the stories of The Arabian Nights, Pancatantra and Aesop's Fables. Perunkathai is a Tamil version, the title being Tamil for Brhatkatha.

The story of Panini is told in the Katha-sarit-sagara. In Pataliputra (modern Patna), in Magadha, there were two men called Varsopadhyaya and Upavarsopadhyaya - the second was the younger of the two. Upakosala was Upavarsopadhyaya's daughter. Panini and Vararuci were Varsopadhyaya's

students. Panini made little progress in his lessons. So his teacher asked him to go to the Himalaya and practise austerities. The student did so and through the grace of Isvara received the power to witness the tandava dance of Nataraja. With this divine gift of the Lord, Panini indeed saw the tandava and heard the fourteen sounds at its conclusion. For him these sounds meant the fourteen cardinal sutras of grammar and on them he based his Astadhyayi. As its very name suggests, this work, which is the source book of Sanskrit grammar, has eight chapters.

The fourteen sounds are recited at the upakarma ceremony. Since they emanated from the drum of Mahesvara(Nataraja), they are called "Mahesvarasutras". Human beings can produce only inarticulate sounds on the musical instruments played by them. The hand of Paramesvara is verily the Nadabrahman and Sabdabrahaman incarnate, so his cappu on the damaruka at the conclusion of his tandava sounded as a series(garland) of fourteen letters:

1. a i un; 2. rlk; 3. e on; 4. ai auc; 5. hayavarat; 6. lan; 7. nama nana nam; 8. jha bha n; 9. gha da dha s; 10. ja ba ga da da s; 11. kha pha cha tha tha catatav; 12. kapay; 13. sa sa sar; 14. hal-iti Mahesvarani sutrani.

When you listen to these sutras at the upakarma ceremony, you are amused. You repeat them after the priest without knowing what they are all about. They are the concluding strokes Siva made on his drum as he stopped dancing, stopped whirling round and round.

We say, don't we, that the anklets sound "jal-jal", that the damaru sounds "timu-timu", that the tavil sounds "dhum-dhum"? These are not of course the sounds actually produced by the respective drums. Even so the words give us some idea of the beats. We don't say "pi-pi" to describe the sound of a drum or "dhum-dhum" to describe the sound of the pipe. The sound produced by plucking the strings of the instruments like the veena is usually described as "toyn-toyng". From this it follows that, though the musical instruments do not produce articulate sounds, they create the impression of producing the phonemes of human speech. If this be so in the case of instruments played by humans, why should not the drum beaten by Nataraja during his pancakrtya dance produce articulate sounds?

How did Panini make use of the fourteen sounds? He created an index from the sutras to vocalise the letters or syllables together. According to the

arrangement made by him, the first letter or syllable of a sutra voiced with the last letter or syllable of another sutra will indicate the letters or syllables in between. For example, the first syllable of "hayavarat", "ha", and the last letter of "hal", "l", together make "hal". This embraces all the consonants in between. Similarly, the first letter of the first sutra, "a", and the last letter of the fourth sutra together form "ac"-this includes all the vowels. The first letter of the first sutra and the last letter of the fourteenth sutra together form "al" - it includes all letters.

"Halantasya" is one of the sutras of Astadhyayi. "Al" itself has come to mean writing.

"A-kara" is the first letter in all languages. In Urdu it is alif; in Greek it is alpha. Both are to be derived from "al". So too "alphabet" in English. Here is another fact to support the view that, once upon a time, the Vedic religion was prevalent all over the world.

We know thus that the prime source of grammar is constituted by the Mahesvara-sutras emanating from the drum of Nataraja. Since Paramesvara was the cause of the sabda-sastras (all sciences relating to sound, speech), "grammar-pavilions" have been built in Siva temples, but not in Visnu shrines.

By the side of Nataraja are Patanjali and Vyaghrapada. I had been to a temple near Sirkazhi(in Tamil Nadu). There, beside Nataraja, were Patanjali and Vyaghrapada. Beneath their images were inscribed their names. Patanjali's name was seen here as "Padamcolli" - the error must be attributed to the ignorance of the man who had inscribed the names. I was however happy that ironically enough, this name benefited the sage and that even ignorance was the cause of something appropriate. "Padam" has the meaning of grammar[as in] "padavakya pramana". Here "pada" means grammar. So "Padamcolli" [the second half of the name in Tamil] means one who "says" grammar.

When I saw this inscription I was reminded of another thing. We speak of "gunaksara-nyaya". "Guna" here means an insect like the white ants which eats into wood and palm-leaves. Sometimes in this process letters are formed accidentally. If something meaningful results from an act committed unconsciously or unwittingly it is said to be according to the "gunaksara-nyaya". This term is thus applicable to Patanjali being written as "Padamcolli"

Some years ago I happened to see the Sahitya-Ratnakara. The author of this poetical work is Yajnanarayana Diksita who composed it 400 hundred years ago during the reign of Raghunatha Nayaka of Tanjavur. Diksita was a great devotee of Siva and in one of his hymns there is a reference to grammar.

Adau pani-ninadato' ksara-samamnayopadesena yah

Sabdanamanusasananyakalayat sastrena sutratmana

Bhasyam tasya ca padahamsakaravaih praudhasayam tam gurum

Sabdarthapratipatti-hetumanisam Candravatamsam bhaje

--- Sahitya-Ratnakara, 11. 124

"Aksara-samamnayam" in this stanza means grammar, a grouping together of letters. Isvara's breath constitutes the Vedas. The wind produced by his hand [as he beats the drum] is "Aksara-Veda", the Mahesvara-sutras. It is called "sabdanusasanam". "Pani-ninadatah" means "produced sounds with your hands" or "the sounds came by to Panini". Thus the words have two meanings. The idea is that Panini created his grammar with the sounds produced by Isvara with his hand.

The stanza goes on to say: "With the movement of your hand the sutras of grammar were created and with the movement of your feet its commentary has been produced. " Patanjali, author of the Mahabhasya, was an incarnation of the primordial serpent Adisesa. Adisesa is now the anklet of Parameshvara. It is in keeping with this that the poet says that Siva created the bhasya with the movement of his feet. He concludes by remarking that sound and meaning originate in Siva.

In this way, Siva is the prime source of grammar. That is why there are mandapas in his temples where vyakarana is to be taught.



Works on Grammar

In the stanza [in the previous chapter] we saw that the poet calls Siva "Candravatamsa". It means the god who has the moon for a head ornament. "Candrasekhara" and "Indusekhara" mean the same. Remarkably enough, "Indusekhara" occurs in the titles of two grammatical works. One is Sabdendusekharam, and the other pariposendusekharam. A student who has read grammar up to Sabdendusekharam is considered master of the subject.

If there are thirty books on Siksa, there are any number on grammar. Foremost among them are Panini's sutras, Patanjali's bhasya for it and vararuci's vartika (mentioned earlier). I make this statement in the belief that Vararuci and Katyayana are the same person. Some think that they are not. Vararuci was one of the "Nine gems" of Vikramaditya 's court.

Bhartrhari's Vakyapadiyam is also an important grammatical treatise. There are said to be nine [notable] Sanskrit grammar works, "nava- vyakarana". Hanuman is believed to have learned them from the sun god. Sri Rama praises him as "nava-vyakarana -vetta ". One of these nine works is Aindram authored by Indra. It is said that the basic Tamil grammar book, the Tolkappiyam, follows Aindram.



Sanskrit and Tamil Grammar

Just as "illakanam", the Tamil word for grammar, is derived from the Sanskrit "laksana", so too a number of other words that have to do with grammar in that language are of Sanskrit origin. For instance, there are two terms used in Tamil grammar, pakuti (pahuti) and vikuti (vihuti). To illustrate in the word "Ramanukku" (for Raman), "Raman " is pakuti and "ku" is "vikuti". Both terms pakuti and vikuti are derived from Sanskrit grammar. "How do you say so? " it might be asked. "Is it not pakuti an original tamil word derived from "pakuttal? "

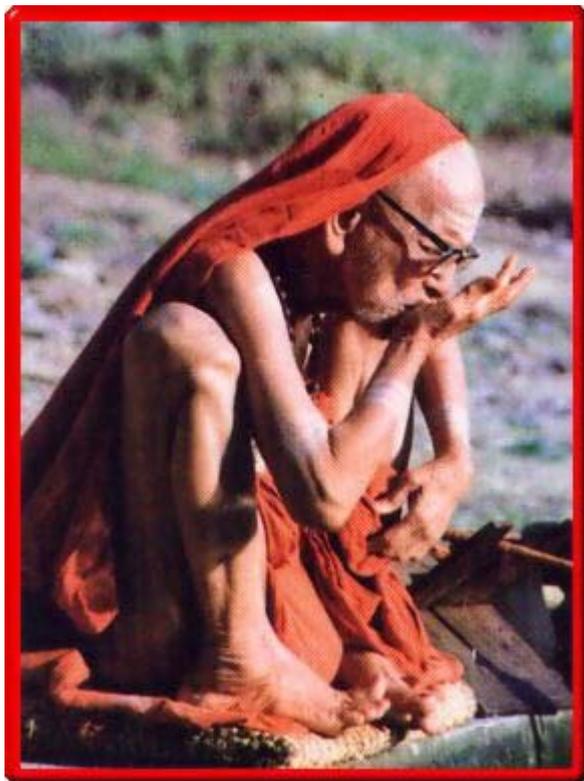
Pakuti in the sense of that which has been divided is indeed a Tamil word. But I say that there is another pakuti that is a corrupt form of the Sanskrit "prakarti". It is in the sense of "prakarti" that the word "Raman" in "Ramanukku" is described as pakuti. As for "vikuti" it is from the Sanskrit "vikriti": there is no such word as "vikuttal" in Tamil corresponding to pakuttal. From the undisputed fact that vikuti is from vikriti, we may conclude for certain that pakuti is from prakrti.

(Vikrti also called "pratyaya", that which gives many meanings to the same prakrti. When it is said "Ramanai aditten"-(I) beat Raman-the pratyaya "ai"

added makes Raman the person who is beaten. If it is said Ramana adipatten- (I) was beaten by Raman-the prakruti Raman with the al makes him the one who beat.)

It is not my purpose to claim that Sanskrit is superior to Tamil. When do feelings of superiority arise to make us happy? When we are conscious of differences between what we believe is "ours" and what we believe is "theirs". Where we to have racial bias, we could be tempted to speak in appreciative terms of what is "ours" and to deprecate what is "theirs". If we realise that to harbour feelings based on racial differences is itself wrong, that our languages have sprung from the same family, from the same cultural tradition, there will be no cause for speaking highly of one language at the expense of another.

On the subject of grammar I have mentioned certain facts and it is not my intention to elevate one language above another.



Sanskrit : The Universal Language

Sanskrit is the language of all mankind; it is an international language and also the language of the gods. The gods are called "girvanas"; so Sanskrit is called "Gairvani". While the emperor of Tamil poetry, Kambar, describes it as the

"devabhasa", the Sanskrit poet Dandin calls it " daivi vak"(divine speech) in his Kavyadarsa: " Samskr̥tam nama daivi vak. "

Sanskrit has no syllable that indistinct or unclear. Take the English "word". It has neither a distinct "e-kara" nor "o-kara". There are no such words in Sanskrit. Neither is the "r" in "word" pronounced distinctly nor is it silent.

Sanskrit, besides, has no word that cannot be traced to its root. Whatever the word it can be broken into its syllables to elucidate its meaning. Sanskrit is sonorous and auspicious to listen to. You must not be ill disposed towards such a language, taking the narrow that it belongs to a few people.

To speak Sanskrit is not to make some noises and somehow convey your message. The sounds, the phonemes, in it are, as it were, purified and the words and sentences refined by being subjected to analysis. That is why the language is called "Sanskrit"[Samskr̥tam]. The purpose of Siksa, and in greater measure of Vyakarana, is to accomplish such refinement.

To speak the language of Sanskrit itself means to be refined, to be cultured. As the language of the gods it brings divine grace. The sounds of Sanskrit create beneficial vibrations of the nadis and strengthen the nervous system, thereby contributing to our health.



Linguistic Studies and Religion

Siksa, Vyakarna and the subjects I have yet to deal with -Chandas and Nirukta-are Vedangas-(limbs of the vedas)connected with language. After I said that I would deal with matters basic to our religion, I have been speaking about linguistic studies and grammar. Next I am going to deal with prosody. By works on religion we ordinarily mean those[directly] relating to God, worship, devotion, jnana, dharma and so on. Would not the right thing for me then be to speak about such works?

When we dealt with the vedas a number of matters cropped up, matters regarded as germane to religion. Religion will find a prominent place in the subjects that I have yet to speak about, Kalpa, Mimamsa, the Puranas and Dharmasastra., But in between has arisen the science of language that has apparently no connection with religion.

In the vedic view everything is connected with the Lord. There is no question of dividing subjects into "religious" and "non-religious". Even the science of medicine, Ayurveda, which pertains to physical well being, is ultimately meant for Atmic uplift- or for that matter, military science(Dhanurveda). That is why they were made part of traditional lore. So too political economy which is also an Atma-sastra.

Why are works belonging to these fields held in great esteem? All subjects, all works, that teach a man to bring order, refinement and purity in every aspect of his life and help him thus to take the path to liberation are regarded as religious in character.

Sound is the highest of the perceived forms of the Paramatman and language is obviously connected with it. It is the concern of Siksa and Vyakarana to refine and clarify it and make it a means for the well-being of our Self.

Grammar is associated with Sabdabrahman. Worship of the Nadabrahman which is the goal of music is a branch of this. If sounds are well discerned and employed in speech they will serve not only the purpose of communication but also of cleansing us inwardly. The science of language is helpful here.

I have already mentioned that Pathanjali's commentary on Panini's Sutras is called the Mahabhasya. The prefix "Maha" in the name of the work is an indication of high degree of importance given to grammar in our tradition. Illustrious teachers have written commentaries on the Vedas, on the Brahmasutra, on the Upanisads, on the Bhagavadgita, and so on. But none of these has "maha" prefixed to it. There is a saying that a scholar derives as much happiness from learning the Mahabhasya as from ruling an empire.

Mahabhasyam va pathaniyam

maharajyam va sasaniyam

I recently came across another piece of evidence like the Vengi inscription to prove how in the old days our rulers nurtured and propagated the science of grammar.

Dhar was a state in the former Central Provinces(now a part of Madhya Pradesh). It is the same as Dhara which was the capital of Bhojaraja who was a great patron of arts and who made lavish gifts to poets and artists. There is a mosque in the town of Dhar now. Once a cave was discovered in the mosque which on examination revealed some writings in Sanskrit. But the department of epigraphy could not carry out any investigations until some years after freedom. Then, with the permission of the authorities of the mosque, they studied their finding.

To their amazement they saw a wheel inside with verses dealing with grammar inscribed on it in the form of a chart. The mosque stands today where a temple to Sarasvati stood during Bhojaraja's time. The idea behind the wheel is that the science of language (grammar) must form part of the temple to Sarasvati, the goddess of speech---and grammar is the Vedapurusa's mouth. They say that grammar could be learnt at a glance from this wheel. It is because the science of language is worthy of worship that the wheel inscribed with grammar was installed in the temple. With the blessings of Vagdevi(Sarasvati) we have obtained the wheel, though long after the mosque was built at that site. The department of epigraphy has published the text of the inscription with an English translation.

We learn thus that sastras like grammar were not regarded merely as of worldly interest but in fact considered worthy of worship. That is why rulers promoted them.



Foot of the Vedapurusa

We so often hear people[Tamils] speak of "Chanda-t-Tamizh". Men of devotion say that the praises of the lord must be sung in "Chanda-t-Thamizh". "Chanda(m)" is derived from "Chandas".

"Chandas", as I have already said, means the Vedas. Bhagavan says in the Gita that the Vedas are leaves of the pipal tree called Creation-- Chandamsi yasya parnani. Instead of "Veda", the Lord uses the word "Chandas". However, the "Chandas" I am going to speak about does not mean the Vedas but prosody and represents the foot of the Vedapurusa.

The Rgveda and the Samaveda are entirely poetical in form. The Yajurveda consists of both prose and poetry. It is because poetry forms their major part that the Vedas are called Chandas.

The tailor takes your measurement to make your suit. He will not otherwise be able to cut the cloth properly. Similarly, poetry gives form to our thoughts and feelings. Your shirt has to be so many inches wide, so many inches long, isn't so? Similarly, poetry also has its measurement expressed in "feet" and number of syllables. The Sastra that deals with such measurement is "Chandas" and the text on which it is chiefly based is Chanda sutra by Pingala. People who have received initiation into a mantra touch their head with their hand, mentioning the name of the sage associated with the mantra, touch their nose mentioning the chandas and touch their heart mentioning the deity invoked.

All Vedic mantras in verse are Chandas. Non-Vedic poetry is in the form of "slokas". Prose is called "gadya" and poetry "padya". In Tamil, poetry is called "seyyul", in Telugu "padyam". The term chandas also refer to poetic metre(prosody). There is a metre called "Anustubh" in which are composed the Ramayana and the Puranas.

There are rules governing the number of feet in each stanza, and the number of syllables in each foot. The metre "Arya" is based on matras, syllables short and long. Take the word "Rama": the long syllable "Ra" is two matras while the short one "ma" is one matra. There are stanzas in which each foot is determined by the number of syllables, no matter whether they are short or long. Other metres are based on matras.



Pada or Foot

I said Chandas is the foot of the Vedapurusa. Poetry also has its foot. In tamil poetry there are "iradikkural" (stanzas with two feet), naladiar(stanzas with four feet), etc: "adi" here has the same meaning as "pada", that is foot. Naladiar does not mean four adiyars. Great devotees are called adiyars because they lie at the lotus feet of the Lord. (In Sanskrit too we have similar terms like "Acaryapada", Govindapada", and "Bhagavatpada". Naladiar means stanzas with four feet.

If "foot" is called "pada" or "pada" in sanskrit, it is known as "adi" in tamil. (It goes without saying that "foot is the English equivalent) A stanza must have a certain number of feet and its metre must have a certain number of letters or syllables. "Pada", "adi", "foot"--thus all languages have words with the same meaning to denote a line of a stanza. The realisation that there is something common to all mankind, something that shows the unity of the human race, is inwardly satisfying.

One-fourth of a mantra or a stanza is called a "pada". In Tamil one out of four parts is called "kal"(that is foot). The foot ("leg")forms one-fourth of the human body. From the head to the waist is one half of the body, and from the waist to the feet is another half. And half of the latter half, i.e. one fourth is "kal" in Tamil or foot(leg). The waist is called "arai" in that language, meaning half.

In Tamil "kal" usually means the entire leg and "padam" or "padam" is used to denote the foot. But in some contexts kal is used in the sense of the foot. For instance, in terms "ullangal" and "purangal" (sole and upper part of the

foot respectively) only the foot is referred to. In Sanskrit too "pada" means both leg and foot.



Feet and Syllables

A Vedic mantra or the stanza of an ordinary poem is divided into four parts. In most metres there are four feet and each foot is divided into the same number of syllables or mantras. When the feet are not equal we have what is called a metre that is "visama": "vi+sama" = "visama". "Sama" indicates a state of non-difference, of evenness. When we do something improper, departing from our impartial "middle position", our action is characterised as "visama". The word is also used in the sense of "craftiness" or "cunning". But the literal meaning of "visama" is "unequal".

To repeat, if all padas of a stanza are not uniform they are said to be "visama". If alternate lines or padas are equal they are called "ardha-samavrta". The first and second are unequal here, so too the third and the fourth. But the first and third and the second and the fourth are equal.

In most poems the padas are equal. Let me illustrate with a sloka with which, I suppose, all of you are familiar:

The four feet of this stanza:

1. Suklambaradharam Visnum
2. Sasivarnam caturbhujam
3. Prasannavadanam dhyayet

4. Sarvavighnopasantaye

Each pada in this has eight syllables.

Only vowels and consonants in conjunction with vowels are to be counted as syllables; other consonants are not to be counted. Then alone will you get the figure of eight. The eight syllables in the first pada are :1. su; 2. klam; 3. ba; 4. ra; 5. dha; 6. ram; 7. vi; 8. snum. The other padas will have similarly eight syllables each.

The stanza with four feet, each foot of eight syllables, is "Anustubh", which metre is used in the Vedas and in poetical works of a later period.



How Poetry was Born

There is no tonal variation in poetry as there is in Vedic mantras. The unaccented poetic stanza corresponding to the accented Vedic mantra owes its origin to Valmiki, but its discovery was not the result of any conscious effort on his part.

One day Valmiki happened to see a pair of kraunca birds sporting perched on the branch of a tree. Soon one of the birds fell to the arrow of a hunter. The sage felt pity and compassion but these soon gave way to anger. He cursed the hunter, the words coming from him spontaneously: "O hunter, you killed a kraunca bird sporting happily with its mate. May you not have everlasting happiness".

Manisada pratistham tvam

Agamah sasvatih samah

Yat krauncamithunadekam

Avadih kamamahitam

Unpremeditatedly, out of his compassion for the birds, Valmiki cursed the hunter. But, at once, he regretted it. "Why did I curse the hunter so? " When he was brooding thus, a remarkable truth dawned on him. Was he not a sage with divine vision? He realised that the very words of his curse had the garb of a poetic stanza in the Anustubh metre. That the words had come from his lips, without his being aware of them himself (in the same way as he had, without his knowing, felt compassion and anger in succession), caused him amazement.

It occurred to him that the stanza he had unconsciously composed had another meaning. The words aimed at the hunter were also words addressed to Mahavisnu. How? "O consort of Laksmi, you will win eternal fame by having slain one of a couple who was deluded by desire. " Ravana and his wife Mandodari are the couple referred to here and Ravana was deluded by his evil desire for Sita. Sri Rama won everlasting fame by slaying him. Without his being aware of it, the words came to Valmiki as poetry. Realising it all to be the will of Isvara, the sage composed the Ramayana in the same metre.

The "sloka" (without the Vedic tonal variation) was born in this manner. Valmiki was filled with joy that he had come upon the sloka as a medium that facilitated the expression of the highest of thoughts in a form that made it easy to remember like the Vedas themselves.

Prose is not easily retained in memory, not so poetry composed in metrical form. That is why in ancient times everything was put down in verse. Prose developed [in any significant sense] only after the advent of the printing press after which books began to be produced in large numbers for ready reference, obviating the need to memorise everything.

However it be, in conveying an idea or a message (or in imparting information) poetry has greater beauty and greater power. The Ramayana was the first poetical work, hence its name "Adikavya". We received the gift of the birth

of various metrical forms used in the hymns to various deities, in the Puranas and in other poetical works.



Some Metrical Forms

"Indravajra", "Upendravajra", "Bhujangavijrmbhita", "Sragdhara" are some of the metres in devotional and other poetical works. Some of them are intricate and only highly gifted people are capable of composing them.

As mentioned earlier, the foot of a stanza with eight syllables Anustubh. With nine syllables it is "Brhati" and with ten "Pankti". "Tristubh" has eleven syllables and "Jagati" twelve. We have a 26-syllable metre ("Bhujangavijrmbhita") which belongs to the category of "Utkrti". Beyond this is "Dandaka" of which there are several types. The metre in which Apparasvamigal's Tiru-t-tandagam is composed is related to this metre.

Some metres have beautiful names. In poems composed in a certain metre the flow of words reminds of a playful tiger lunging forward; the metre is appropriately called "Sardulavikridita". "Sardula" means tiger; "vikridita" is playfulness. (This metre, belonging to the category of "Atidhriti", has 19 syllables). Each pada in it is divided into 12 and 7 syllables. Adi Sankara's Sivanandalahari is partly in this metre (a number of verses from the 28th stanza onwards). The initial verses of the part called "Stuti-satakam" of the Muka-Pancasati (which is a hymn to Kamaksi) are in this metre. The concluding one hundred verses, "Mandasmita-satakam", are entirely in this metre. "Bhujangaprayata" is the name of another metre which suggests a snake(bhujanga) gliding along. Our Acharya's Subrahmanya-bhujangam is in

this metre. It belongs to the Jagati type with 12 syllables a foot, divided into six and six as in

Ma-yu-ra-dhi-ru-dham

Ma-ha-va-kya-gu-dham

Our Acharya's Saundaryalahari is in the Sikharini metre. It has 17 syllables in each pada. (It belongs to the category of Atyasti) The 17 syllables are divided into two parts of six and 11. The "Padaravinda-satakam" of the Muka-Pancasati is in this metre. The metre called "Sragdhara" suggests a flow of words breaking through the floodgates of poetry. It has 21 syllables (belonging to the "Prakrti" class) and each pada has three sets of seven syllables. Our Acarya's hymns to Siva and Visnu (describing them from foot to head and from head to foot - padadikesanta and kesadi-padanta) are in this metre.

I mentioned "Indravajra" first. It belongs to the Tristubh category with 11 syllables in each pada. Another 11 syllables metre is "Upendravajra". A mixture of both is "Upajati": Kalidasa's Kumarasambhavam is in this metre.

All these metres belong to the post-Vedic period and are employed in poetical works as well as in hymns to various deities. "Gayatri", "Usnik", "Anustubh", "Pankti", "Tristubh" and "Jagati" are Vedic metres.

"Gayatri" is a maha-mantra, the king of mantras. A mantra is usually named after the deity it invokes. "Siva-Pancaksari", "Narayana-Astaksari", "Rama-Trayodasi": in each of these the name of the deity as well as the number of syllables in the mantra are combined. The deity for Gayatri is Savita. Gayatri is the name of the metre also. The metre too, one should infer from this, has divine power expressed through the sound and tone of a mantra.

Gayatri, unlike most other mantras and slokas, has only three feet. Each foot has eight syllables and altogether there are 24 syllables. Because it has only three padas or feet it is called "Tripada-Gayatri". There are other Gayatris also. The first Vedic mantra, "Agnimile", is in the Gayatri metre.

(The 24-syllable Gayatri metre used in poetry and non-Vedic hymns has four padas, each of six syllables. Usnik has also four padas, each of seven syllables).

So far I have spoken about metres based on the number of syllables, that is without worrying about whether a syllable is long or short. In prosody the long and short syllables are called "guru" and "laghu" respectively. Poems that make no distinction between "short" and "long" are called "vrttas": those based on mantras are called "jati". In the latter type, a short syllable is one mantra and a long syllable is two mantras. Instead of the number of syllables what matters here is the number of matras.

The "Arya-satakam" of Muka-Pancasati is in the Arya metre. Amba, as Arya, belongs to the most plane; so it is proper that the verse used in singing her praises should also belong to an equally high order. That is why they are in the Arya metre, which is based on matras and not on the number of syllables. if you go by the number of syllables you are likely to be misled into thinking that the metre differs from verse to verse.



Uses of Chandas Sastra

Siksa sastra may be said to be a "guard" to ensure the right enunciation of a (Vedic) mantra. But it is Chandas that determines whether the form of the mantra is right. Of course the form of a mantra can never be wrong. The mantras, as mentioned so often, were not created by the sages and are not the product of their thinking. It was Bhagavan who caused them to be revealed to them. Man, beast, tree and other sentient creatures and insentient objects of creation exist as they should be according to the law of nature. In the same way, the metre of a Vedic mantra must be naturally correct. However, Chandas helps us to find out whether a mantra or sukta that is being taught or chanted has come down to us in its true form. We may

check the hymn according to its metre and if we find it faulty we may correct it in consultation with people who are well-versed in such matters.

Apart from the mantras, which appeared on their own, are the composition of poets. Chandas is of help in giving shape to poetic thought and imagination. Like tala to music is chandas to poetry.

It is because poetry is composed according to a certain measure and its rhythm determined in a certain order of syllables that it acquires a definite form. It is also easy to memorise. Modern society is discarding all those rules of discipline meant to give it a definite character and purpose. In keeping with this new trend, poetry too is being written without any metre and "poets" compose as they please. People don't realise that to be free means to be firmly attached to a system, that discipline is the road to a higher freedom.

Chandas is the means by which we ensure that the Vedic mantra is preserved in its original form, it being impossible to add one letter to it or take away another. The very purpose of the Vedas is the raising up of the Self. Must we then permit a single sound to be added to it or be taken away?



Foot for the Vedas - Nose for the Mantras

Each mantra has a deity (the deity it invokes), its own metre and its own seer (the seer who revealed it to the world). Mentioning the name of the rsi and touching our head with our hand have their own significance, that of holding his feet with our head. We first pay obeisance to the sages because it is from them that we received the mantras. We then mention the chandas or metre of the hymn and touch our nose with our hand. Chandas protects the sound of a mantra and is like its vital breath. So we place our hand on that

part of our body with which we breathe. Without breath there is no life. While for all the Vedas taken as a whole Siksa is the nose and Chandas the foot, for the mantras proper Chandas is the nose.

When we commence to chant a mantra we must meditate on its adhi devata, or presiding deity, and feel his presence in our hearts. This is the reason why we touch our hearts as we mention the name of the deity.

The Vedapurusa stands on Chandas. "Chandah pado Vedasya": the Vedic mantras are supported by Chandas.



Ear of the Vedapurusa

Nirukta serves the purpose of a Vedic dictionary, or "kosa". A dictionary is also called a "nighantu", which term is used in Tamil also. Nirukta, which deals with the origin of words, their roots, that is with etymology, is the ear of the Vedapurusa. It explains the meaning of rare words in the Vedas and how or why they are used in a particular context. Many have contributed to Nirukta, the work of Yaksa being the most important.

Take the word "hrdaya" (heart). The Vedas themselves trace its origin. "Hrdayam" is "hrdi ayam" : it means that the Lord dwells in the heart. "Hrd" itself denotes the physical heart. But with the suffixing of "ayam" - with the Lord residing in it - its Atmic importance is suggested. The purpose of any sastra is to take you to the Supreme Being. "Hrdaya" is so called because Paramesvara resides in "hrd". Thus each and every word has a reason behind it. Nirukta makes an inquiry into words and reveals their significance.

"Dhatu" means "root" in English. In that language one speaks of the root only of verbs, not of nouns. In Sanskrit all words have dhatus. Such words, transformed or modified, must have been adopted in other languages. That is why we do not know the root of many words in these tongues. After all, such an exercise would be possible only if the words in question belonged naturally to them. Take the English word "hour". Phonetically it should be pronounced "h o u r" ("h" being not silent) or "h o a r". At one time the word indeed must have been pronounced "hoar". "Hora-sastra" is the name of a science in Sanskrit, "hora" being from "ahoratra" (day and night). "Hora" is two and half nadikas or one hour. The English "hour" is clearly from this word. In the same way "heart" is from "hrd". There are so many words like this which could be traced to Sanskrit. It must have taken a long time for words in other languages to evolve into their present form. That is why those who speak them find it difficult to discover their origin [or root].

How does it help to listen to someone speaking a language without understanding what he says? It is as good as not listening to him. In other words it is like being deaf. Nirukta finds the meaning of words by going to the root of each. That is why it is called the ear of the Vedapurusa: it is the ear of Sruti which itself is heard by the ear.

Western scholars learned Vyakarna and Nirukta from *pandits* in Kasi and acquainted themselves with the origin of words as described in the latter sastra. From this they developed the new science of philology. It is primarily from our Vyakarana and the Nirukta that the linguistic science has developed.

From their researches, Western scholars have arrived at the conclusion that all languages have one source. People all over the world are the descendants of the original inhabitants of the area where this primal language was spoken. There are differences of opinion with regard to this area, the home of this tongue. We need have no worry about it. After all, we believe that all places on earth are our home. "Yadum mure!" is a famous Tamil declaration. "Svadeso bhuvanatrayaam" - the three worlds are our motherland.



Eye of the Vedapurusa

Of the fourteen branches of learning basic to our Vedic religion, I have so far dealt with siksa, Vyakarana, Chandas and Nirukta. These four form part of Sadanga (the six limbs of the Vedas). I will now speak about Jyotisa, it being the first of the remaining two of the Sadanga. Jyotisa, which is the science of the celestial bodies and the eye of the Vedapurusa, consists of three "skandhas" or sections. So it is called "Skandha-trayatmakam". Sages like Garga, Narada and Parasura have written samhitas (treatises) on this subject. The sun god, in disguise, taught the science to Maya, the carpenter of the Asuras. The work incorporating his teachings is called the Suryasiddhanta. There are treatises on astronomy written by celestials and sages and ordinary mortals. Of them some are by Varahamihira, Aryabhata and Bhaskaracarya. In recent times we had Sundareshvara Srautin who wrote a work called Siddhanta-Kausthubham.

Why is Jyotisa regarded as the eye of the Vedapurusa?

What purpose is served by the eye? Near objects may be perceived by the sense of touch. With our eyes we learn about distant objects. Just as our eyes help us to know objects that are distant in space (that is just as we see distant object with our eyes), Jyotisa sastra help us to find out the position of the heavenly bodies that are distant in time (their configuration many years ago in the past or many years hence in future).

We can find out directly the positions of the sun and the moon and other heavenly bodies. Just as we can know near objects, even if we are blind, by feeling them with our hands, we can learn about the positions of the heavenly bodies near in time even without the help of astronomy. What is 50 feet away

is to be perceived by the eye. Similarly, if you want to know the position of planets 50 years ago or 50 years hence, you have to have recourse to Jyotisa.

We cannot, however, form a full picture of near objects only by feeling them. For instance, we cannot know whether they are green or red. For this, we must see them with our eyes. Again, even if we are able to see the planet with our naked eye, we will need the help of astrology to find out its effects on our life, how its positions in the heavens will influence our destiny.

This is the reason why Jyotisa is called the eye of the Vedapurusa. Vedic rituals are performed according to the position of the various planets [and the sun and the moon]. There are rules to determine this. The right day and hour [muhurta] for a function is fixed according to the position of the celestial bodies. Here again, Jyotisa performs the function of the eye.

This Anga of the Vedas is indeed called "nayana" which word means "to lead". A blind man needs to be led by another. So it is the eye that leads. Astronomy / Astrology is the eye that enables us to fix the hours for Vedic rituals.



[Astronomy and Astrology](#)

Astronomy examines the position of the planets and other heavenly bodies. It does not concern itself with how they affect the life of the world or the individual. It is not its function to find out how far the celestial bodies are beneficial to us or how they may be made favourable to us. Such functions belong to astrology. Jyotisa includes both astronomy and astrology.

Telling us about the results of performing a ritual at a given time, keeping in mind the position of the planets, the sun and the moon and the nakshatras (asterisms), comes under the purview of astrology. The hours favourable to the performance of Vedic rites are determined according to calculations based on the movement of planets. All this entails mathematical work.

The measurements of the place where a sacrifice is to be conducted (yajnabhumi) are based on certain stipulations. These must be strictly adhered to if the sacrifices is to yield the desired benefits. Mathematics developed in this way as a handmaid to the Vedic dharma.



Ancient Mathematical Treatises

Jyotisa, as we have seen, consists of three sections. There was a scholarly man in the Matha who was particularly learned in this science. We wished to honour him with a title and decided upon "Triskandha-Bhaskara". "Skandha" literally means a big branch springing from the trunk of a tree. The three skandhas of Jyotisas are : siddhanta, hora and samhita.

The siddhanta-skandha deals with arithmetic, trigonometry, geometry and algebra. The higher mathematics developed by the west in later centuries is found in our ancient Jyotisa.

Arithmetic, called "vyakta-ganita" in sanskrit, includes addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. "Avyakta-ganita" is algebra. "Jya" means the earth and "miti" is method of measurement. "Jyamiti" evolved with the need to measure the sacrificial place : "geometry" is derived from this word. The "geo" in geography is from "jya". There is a mathematical exercise called "samikarana" which is the same as "equation".

The sixth Anga of the Vedas, Kalpa (I will speak about it later), has a great deal to do with the fifth, that is Jyotisa. Kalpa has a section on "sulba-sutras". These sutras mention the precise measurements of the "yajurvedi" (sacrificial altar). The character of the yajnavhumi is called "cayana". The sulba- sutras deal with a number of cayanas like, for instance, the one shaped like Garuda. They tell us how to construct a brick-kiln ---the number of bricks required for the cayana of such and such shapes. The siddhanta-skandha is used in all this.

There is an equation in the Apastamba sulba sutras which could not be proved until recently. Westerners had thought it to be faulty merely as they could not solve it. Now they accepted it as right. That Indians had taken such great strides in mathematics, thousand of years ago has caused amazement in the West. There are a number of old equations still to be solved.

Our sastras mention branches of mathematics like "rekhaganita", "kuttaka", "angapaka", etc. "Avyakta-ganita" is also called "bijaganita".

Eight hundred years ago there lived a great mathematician called Bhaskaracarya. An incident in his life illustrates how relentless destiny is. Bhaskaracarya had a daughter called Lilavati. The great astrologer that he was, he found that she had "mangalya-dosa" in her horoscope, but he felt confident that he could change his daughter's destiny, as foreshadowed by the stars, with his ingenuity and resourcefulness, as an astrologer. He decided to celebrate Lilavati's marriage during a lagna in which all the planets would be in positions favourable to the bride. This should, he thought, ensure that Lilavati would remain a "dirgha-sumangali".

In those days there were no clocks as we have today. A water-pot was used to measure time. It consisted of an upper as well as a lower part. The water in the upper receptacle would trickle down through a hole into the lower container. The lower part was graduated according to the unit of time then followed ---nazhikai (nadika), one sixtieth of a day or 24 minutes. So the time of day was calculated by observing the level of the water in the lower container. ("Water-clock" and "hour-glass" are English names for such an apparatus. Since water evaporates quickly sand was used instead.)

According to the custom then prevailing, Lilavati's marriage was to be celebrated when she was still a child. On the appointed day, she sat beside

the water--clock and bent over it fascinated by the apparatus. As she fumbled around a pearl from her nose--stud got loosened and fell into the apparatus lodging itself in its hole. The flow of water into the lower receptacle was reduced. So what the clock indicated as the hour fixed for the marriage was not the right one---the auspicious hour had passed. Nobody including Lilavati, had noticed the pearl dropping into the water-clock. When they came to know about it, it was too late. They realised that destiny could not be overcome.

Later Bhaskaracarya wrote a mathematical treatise and named it "Lilavati" after his daughter. The father taught his widowed daughter mathematics and she became highly proficient in the subject. Lilavati deals with arithmetic, algebra, etc. It is a delightful book in which the problems are stated in verse as stories. Bhaskaracarya also wrote the Siddhanta-Siromani which deals with how the positions and movement of the heavenly bodies are determined.

We learn the text of an edict in the Pracinalekhamala that a Gurjara (Gujarat) king had made an endowment to popularise the works of Bhaskaracarya.

Parts 7, 8, 9 and 10 of Euclid's *Geometry* are believed to be lost. All the 12 books on mathematics in Sanskrit are still available. "Making additions several times is multiplication; carrying out subtraction several times is division. " We remain ignorant of such easy methods of calculations dealt with in our mathematical texts.

Varahamihira lived several years before Bhaskaracarya, that is about 1, 500 years ago. He wrote a number of treatises including the *Brhat-Samhita* and the *Brhajjatika*. The first is a digest of many sciences, its contents being a wonderful testimony to the variety of subjects in which our forefathers has taken strides. *Brhajjatika* is all about astrology.

Aryabhata, famous for his *Aryabhatiya-Siddhanta*, also lived 1, 500 years ago. The *vakya--ganita* now in use is said to be based on his *Siddhanta*. Varahamihira and Aryabhata are much acclaimed by mathematicians today.

All these books on mathematics also deal with the movements of the celestial bodies. There are seven "grahas" according to the ancient reckoning--the five

planets and the sun and the moon. Rahu and Ketu are called "chaya -grahas" (shadow planets) and their orbits are opposite of the sun's and the moon's.



Planets and Stars

How do the planets differ from the stars? The planets revolve round the sun; the stars do not belong to the sun's "mandala" [they are not part of the solar system]. If you hold a diamond in your hand and keep shaking it about, it will glitter. The stars glitter in the same way and twinkle, but the planets do not twinkle.

The sun and the stars are self-luminous. The stars dazzle like polished diamonds. The planets Jupiter and Venus shine like the bigger stars but they do not twinkle. The sun too has the brilliance of the stars[it is in fact a star]. If you gaze intently at the sun for a moment the watery haziness surrounding it will vanish. Then it will look like a luminous disc of glass floating in water and it will not be still. The moon is not like it. I will tell you how to prove the sun twinkles. Observe the sun sun's light pouring down from an opening in the roof. Observe similarly moon's light also coming into your room. You see the sun's rays showing some movement but not the moon's. The planets are also like the moon.

If the star is a big one, we may be able to see its light refracted into the seven colours(vibgyor), like the colours emanating from a brilliant diamond.

The sun is called "Saptasva" (one with seven horses--the sun god's chariot is drawn by seven horses). It is also said that there is only one horse drawing the chariot but it has seven different names. "Asva" also means "kirana" or ray. So "Saptasva" could mean that the sun emits seven types of rays or

colours. It is of course the same light that is split into seven colours. In the Taittiriya Aranyaka it is clearly stated that the same "asva" or ray has seven names: "Eko asvo vahati saptanama. "

The stars are self-luminous, while the planets shine by reflected light. The light of the stars is not still. That is how we say, " Twinkle, twinkle little star ". The stars rise in the east and set in the West. The planets too travel westward but they keep moving a bit towards the east every day. It is like a passenger walking westward on a train speeding eastward. The seven planets thus keep moving eastward.



The Grahas and Human Life

The conditions of man corresponds to the changes in the position of the nine grahas. A human being does not enjoy happiness all the time nor does he always suffer hardships-- that is he experiences a mixture of happiness and sorrow. While he may be pushed up to a high position today, he may be thrust down to the depths tomorrow. It is not man alone that is subject to changes of fortune. Establishments too have their ups and downs, so also nations.

The sages saw a relationship between the position and movements of the planets and the destiny of man, the sorrow and happiness experienced by him. There is a branch of astrology called "hora--skandha". If we knew the planetary position at the time of commencing a job or enterprise, with its help we should be able to find out how it would take shape, how we would fare in it. If our horoscope is cast on the basis of the configuration of the planets at the time of our birth, our fortunes over the entire period of our life can be predicted.

Different reasons are given for the ups and downs in a man's life for his joys and sorrows. It is similar to finding out the different causes of the ailment he suffers from. The physician will explain that the disease is due to an imbalance in the "dhatus". The mantravadin will say that it is due to the gods being displeased with the patient, while the astrologer will observe that it is all in his (the patient's) stars. The pandit versed in Dharmasastra will explain that the illness is the fruit of the man's past actions, his karma. And the psychologist will express the view that the bodily affliction is related to an emotional disturbance. What is the true cause?

All these different causes may be valid. All of them together go to create an experience. When it rains it becomes wet and the place is swarmed with winged white ants. Frogs croak. All these are indicators of the rain. Many outward signs manifest themselves as the fruits of our past karma. They are all related to one another. The course of the planets governing our life is in accordance with our karma. We come to know the consequences of our past actions in previous births in various ways. Astrological calculations help us to find out such consequences as indicated by the heavenly bodies.



Omens. Signs

Where can you discover water? Where does ground water occur? Or where do streams flow inside the earth? By what signs on the surface do you make out the presence of water underground? How are perfumes manufactured? What are the right measurements for a house? These questions are discussed in the samhita-skandha of Jyotisa. Also omens and signs.

"Sakuna" is one thing, "nimitta" quite another. "Sakuna" literally means a bird: only signs connected with birds come under the category of "Sakuna". All

things in this world are interrelated: all happenings are linked to one another. If we know the precise scale and manner in which events are woven together, we would be able to know everything. Everything in this world occurs according to the will of the One Being and according to a precise system. So with reference to one we can know all others. Palmistry, "arudam" (a method of divination), astrology, all are interrelated.

What does a bird flying from right to left indicate? What is foretold by the chirping of such and such a bird? Question like these belong to the sakuna-sastra. "Nimitta" means omen. "Nimittani ca pasyami viparitani Kesava" says Arjuna to Krsna before the start of the battle of Kuruksetra. He uses the right word "nimitta" while we use the word "sakuna" carelessly. When a cat crosses our path it is an omen; when an eagle flies above us it is a sakuna.

To go back to Arjuna. The Lord tells Arjuna: "Nimittamatram bhava Savyasacin". This is in answer to Arjuna telling Krsna, lamenting, that it is sinful to kill one's enemies [or one's kin]. Says krsna: "I have already resolved to slay them in this battle. So they are already as good as dead. It is I who will kill them. You are a mere tool" (Nimittamatram bhava).

A nimitta does not produce any result on its own. It points to the result that has already been ordained by some other factor--or, in other words, it merely indicates the fruits of our past karma.



Modern Discoveries in Ancient Works

There are a few scientific discoveries that are not found mentioned in Varahamihira's Brhat-Samhita.

How do heavenly bodies remain in the skies? How is it that they do not fall? Everybody thinks that it was Newton who found the answer to such questions. The very first stanza in the Suryasiddhanta, which is a very ancient treatise, states that it is the force of attraction that keeps the earth from falling.

In Sankara's commentary on the Upanisads there is a reference to the earth's force of attraction. If we throw up an object it falls to the ground. This is not due to the nature of object but due to the earth's force of attraction. "Akarsana-sakti" is force of attraction, the power of drawing or pulling something. The breath called "prana" goes up, "apana" pulls it down. So the force that pulls something downward is apana. The Acarya says the earth has apana-sakti. The Prasnopanisad (3. 8) states: "The deity of the earth inspires the human body with apana". In his commentary on this, Sankara observes that, just as an object thrown up is attracted by the earth, so prana that goes up is pulled down by apana. This means that our Upanisads contain a reference to the law of gravitation. There are many such precious truths embedded in our ancient sastras. Because of our ignorance of them we show inordinate respect for ideas propounded by foreigners, ideas known to us many centuries before their discovery by them. Our Jyotisa is also some thousands of years old. Even so it foresaw the mathematical systems prevalent in the world today.

At the beginning of the kalpa, all grahas were in alignment. But over the ages they have changed their courses. When another kalpa commences, they will again remain in alignment.

The "samkalpa" we make before the performance of any ritual contains a description of the cosmos, a reference to the time cycle, and so on. All this is part of Jyotisa.

Centuries ago, we knew not only about the earth's force of attraction but also about its revolution round the sun. Aryabhata, Varahamihira and others spoke of the heliocentric system long before the Western astronomers or scientists. Until the 16th century people in Europe believed that the earth remained still at the centre of the universe and that the sun revolved around it. They further believed that this was how day and night were created. If anybody expressed a different view he was burned at the stake by the religious leaders.

"It is the earth that revolves around the sun, not the sun round the earth", declared Aryabhata. He used a beautiful term to describe the logic behind his view : "laghava-gaurava nyaya". "Laghu" means light, small, etc and "laghava" is derived from it. The opposite of "laghu" is "guru", weighty, big, etc. "Guru" also denotes a weighty personality, a great man, like an acarya or teacher, one who has mastered a sastra. If the acarya is guru the disciple must be laghu. The student is small and "light" compared to his guru. So he goes round the latter. This is based on "laghava-gaurava nyaya". By adducing this reason for the earth going round the sun, Aryabhata combined science with a traditional sastric belief.

In the old days religious leaders in Europe were opposed to science and even burned scientists as heretics. But today we join the descendants of the very same people to make the preposterous charge that the Hindu religion stood in the way of scientific advancement, that it ignored the matters of this world because of its concern for the other world. As a matter of fact our traditional sastras are a storehouse of science.

"The sun remains still and it is the earth that goes round it. It is only because the earth revolves round the sun that it seems to us that the sun rises every day in the east and sets in the west". This is mentioned in Aitareya Brahmana of Rgveda. The text says clearly : "The sun neither rises nor sets".

That all learned people in India knew about the earth's revolution is shown by a passage in the Sivotkarsa-Manjari by Nilakantha Diksita who was minister of Tirumala Nayaka. One stanza in this work begins like this : "Bhumir bhramayati" and from it we must also gather that the author's great-uncle, Appayya Diksita, also knew about this truth. What is the content of this verse?

Siva is called "Astamurti". Earth, water, air, fire, space, the sun and the moon, the yajamana or sacrificer--they are all the personification (murti) of Isvara. Among them only the yajamana has no bhramana or motion. All the rest have bhramana, says Appayya Diksita. That he has said so is mentioned in the verse in question by his younger brother's grandson, Nilakantha Diksita.

We see that air has movement, that fire does not remain still, that water keeps flowing. When we look up into the sky, we notice that the sun and the

moon do not remain fixed to their spots. As for space, it is filled with sound and it cannot be still. But the earth apparently stands still. Even so, says Appayya Diksita, it has motion. "It revolves".

Let us now consider the shape of the earth. Europeans claim that they were the first to discover that the earth is like a ball, that in the past it had been thought to be flat like a plate. All right. What word do we use for "geography"? "Bhugola sastra", not just "bhu-sastra". We have known from early times that the earth is a "gola", a sphere.

We call the universe with all its galaxies, "Brahmanda". It means the egg created by Brahma (the cosmic egg). An egg is not exactly spherical in shape, but oval. According to modern science the universe too is oval in shape. The cosmos is always in motion, so observe modern astronomers. "Jagat" is the word by which we have known it from Vedic times. What does the word mean? That which does not stand still but is always in motion, that which "is going".

In our country too there were people who refused to believe that the earth rotates on its axis. I will tell you the view of one such school of thought. The earth's circumference is about 25, 000 miles. So if it rotates once in 24 hours then it means it rotates more than 1, 000 miles an hour or 16 or 17 miles in one minute. Those who did not accept the fact of the earth's rotation tried to prove their point thus : "There is a tree in Mylapore [in Madras]. Imagine there is a crow perched on one of its branches. It leaves its perch this moment and soars high and, by the next minute, it perches itself again on the branch of the same tree in Mylapore. If the rotation of the earth were a fact how would this be possible? The crow should have descended to a place 16 or 17 miles away from where it had started.

I have not checked on how this argument was answered. But when I asked people who know modern science they said : "Surrounding the earth for some 200 miles is its atmosphere. Beyond that there are other spheres. When the earth rotates these too rotate with it". I may have gone slightly wrong in stating the view of modern science. However it be, there is no doubt that when the earth rotates, its atmosphere also rotates with it.

What are called Arabic numerals actually belong to India. This fact was discovered by Westerners themselves. The zero is also our contribution and without it mathematics would not have made any advance. Bhaskaracarya

established the subtle truth that any quantity divided by zero is infinity ("ananta"). He concludes one of his mathematical treatises with a benedictory verse in which he relates zero to the Ultimate Reality.

When the divisor goes on decreasing the quotient keeps increasing, does it not? If you divide 16 by 8 the quotient is 2; if the same quantity is divided by 4 the result is 4. Divided by 2, the quotient is 8. Divided by zero? The quotient will be infinity. Whatever the number divided, the result will be infinity if the divisor is 0. Bhaskaracarya gives it the name of "khahara". "Kham" means zero, "haram" means division. Bhaskaracarya says : "I pay obeisance to the Paramatman that is Infinity".



Not Blind Belief

"Hindu sastras are all nonsensical, " exclaim critics of our religion. "They say that north of the earth is the Meru mountain, that our one year is one day for the celestials residing there, and that the sun revolves round it. They believe that, besides the ocean of salt, there are oceans of sugarcane juice and milk, in fact several kinds of oceans. They describe the earth with its five continents as consisting of seven islands. It is all prattle. "

Why should the ocean be salty? Who put the salt in it? Why should not there have been an ocean tasting sweet or of milk? Is the talk about the seven islands and the seven oceans absurd? What to the sastras say about the position of the earth, the same sastras that speak about the seven ocean, and so on? "Meru is situated on the northern tip of the earth, " they state. "Directly opposite to it is the Pole star(Dhruva). "

The northern tip of the earth is the North pole. Is the Pole star directly opposite to it? No. "Eons ago, " scientists explain, "it was so. But later big changes took place and the earth tilted a bit. " The sastras refer to a time when the Pole star was directly opposite the North Pole and at that time the seven islands and the seven oceans must have existed. When the rotating earth tilted a bit the oceans must have got mixed and become salty and in the process the seven islands must have become the five continents.

If there is a place above the North Pole it must be Meru where we have our svarga or paradise. Let us imagine that this earth is a lemon. A spot on its top is the Meru peak. In relation to that spot any other part of the fruit is south. Where can you go from there, east or west? You can go only south. You will learn this if you mark a point on the top of the lemon. For all countries of the earth, for all "varsas", north is Meru. "Sarvesamapi varsanam Meruruttaratahsthitah. "

On the North pole it is six months day and six months night. We must have been taught this in our primary classes. It means our one year is one day on the North pole. This is what is meant by saying that our one year is one day for the celestials.

When the earth rotates, the northernmost and southernmost points are not affected. In some places there will be sun for 18 hours and in other places only for six hours. There are many differences in the durations of day and night with regard to different places on earth. Only on some days does the sun rise directly in the east and is overhead without departing even by one degree. On other days it rises from other angles(from north-east to south-east). Such is not the case on the North pole. There the sun shines six months and the other six months it is darkness. And, again, during the sunny months it would seem as if the sun were revolving round this place(the North pole).

The six-month period when there is sun in the North Pole is called uttarayana and the similar sunny period on the South Pole is daksinayana.

The North Pole is called " Sumeru" and the South Pole "Kumeru". ("Sumeria" is from Sumeru. In that land, it is said, the Vedic gods were worshipped.) Just as the North pole is the abode of the gods, the South pole is the abode of the fathers (pitrs) and hell. To see the gods and the pitrs who are in the

form of spirits and the denizens of hell one must obtain divine sight through yoga. Merely because we do not possess such sight we cannot deny their existence. There was Blavatsky who was born in Russia, lived in America and later came to India. She speaks about the worlds of the gods and of the spirits. A great scientist of our times, Sir Oliver Lodge, affirmed the existence of spirits and deities and stated that mankind could benefit from them. If you ask why Jyotisa, after dealing with the science of astronomy, should turn to spiritualism, the answer is that there is no contradiction between the two as supported by the example of a scientist like Sir Oliver who too turned to spiritualism.

Our sastras came into existence at a time when mortals mixed with the gods. We would be able to appreciate this fact if we tried to understand the samkalpa we make at the time of performing any religious function. The samkalpa traces the present from the time of creation itself. From Jyotisa we learn the position of the grahas at the commencement of the yuga: then they were all in a line.

Some calculations with regard to heavenly bodies today are different from those of the past. And, if the findings at present are not the same as seen in the sastras, it does not mean that the latter are all false. The sastras have existed from the time the grahas were in a line and the North pole was directly opposite the Pole star. Since then vast changes have taken place in nature. Valleys have become mountains, mountains have become oceans, oceans have become deserts and so on. Geologists speak about such cataclysmic changes, and astronomers tell us about the change in the courses of the heavenly bodies. So what we see today of the earth and the heavenly bodies is different from what is mentioned in the sastras.

The date of creation according to Jyotisa agrees more or less with the view of modern science.

Kali yuga--the age of Kali--has a span of 432, 000 years. Dvapara yuga is twice as long, 864, 000 years, Treta yuga is 1, 296, 000 years and Krta yuga 1, 728, 000 years. The four yugas together, called maha yuga, are 4, 320, 000 years long. A thousand mahayugas add up to the period of 14 Manus. The regnal period of a Manu is a manvantara. There are royal and republican rulers on earth, but God has appointed Manu as ruler of all the worlds. There are fourteen Manus ruling the world successively from the creation of man. The

word "manusya" and "manuja" are derived from Manu. So too the English word "man". In the samkalpa for any ritual we perform we mention the year of the seventh Manu, Vaivasvata. If we go back to the first Manu, Svayambhuva, we arrive at a date for the origin of the human species which agrees with the view of modern science.

The Sanskrit word, "man", means to think. Manu was the first of the human race with its power of thinking. There is a saying in English : " Man is a thinking animal. " "Since man's distinctive characteristic is his capacity to think the descendants of Manu came to be called "manusyas. "

The life-span of the fourteen Manus put together make one day(daytime) of Brahma, that is 4, 320, 000, 000 years. His night has the same length. While one day of Brahma is thus 8, 640, 000, 000 years his one year is 365 such days and his life-span is 100 such years. The life of his cosmos is the same. When Brahma's life comes to an end the Brahman alone will remain and there will be no cosmos. Then another Brahma will start creation all over again. It is believed that Hanuman will be the next Brahma.

Bhuloka, Bhuhvarloka, Suvvarloka, Maharloka, Janaloka, Tapoloka and Satyaloka comprise the seven worlds. The gods, mortals and so on live in these worlds. Bhuloka, Bhuhvarloka and Suvvarloka form one group. "Bhurbhuvassuvaha, " we pronounce this so often while performing rituals. The remaining four belong to higher planes. When Brahma goes to sleep at night the first three worlds will be dissolved in the pralaya (deluge). This is called "avantara-pralaya"("intermediate deluge"). All other worlds will perish when his life-span ends.

Scientists say that the heat of the sun is decreasing imperceptibly. Without the warmth of the sun there will be no life on earth. Scientists have calculated the time when the sun's heat will be reduced so much that life on earth cannot be sustained. Then this world itself will perish. The date on which this will occur agrees with that given by our sastras for the next "avantara-pralaya".

Half of Brahma's allotted life-span is over. This life-span is divided into seven "kalpas". Now we have come more than half way of the fourth kalpa, "Svetavaraha". We mention in samkalpa how old Brahma is at the time we perform a rite, which year we are in of the saka era, also the year according

to the 60-year cycle beginning with Prabhava--all details of the almanac including the day, the asterism and the lagna. The date of Brahma's appearance, according to this calculation is said to agree with the view of modern science of when this cosmos came into being.

Brahma is called "Parardha-dvaya-jivin". It means he lives for two "parardhas". A "parardha" is half the number meant by "para". When Brahma is called "Paradha-dvaya-jivin" it means he lives as many years as is meant by $2 \times 1/2$ paras. Two half paras are the same as one para. Then why say "parardha-dvaya" instead of just one "para". The reason for this is that Brahma has already completed half of one para and is going on 51. So it is meaningful to use the term "half of para"[two half-paras].

Fourteen Manus reign successively during one daytime of Brahma which lasts a thousand caturyugas. So one manvantara is 71 caturyugas. Now running is the 28th caturyuga, the Vaivasvata manvantara. And of it, it is Kali yuga now. In our samkalpa we mention all this and, in addition, the day according to the moon, the Lagna, etc. We also mention how we are situated in the space, from the Brahmanda down to the locality where we are performing the function (for which the samkalpa is made). It is all similar to writing the date and address on a letter.



Empirical Proof

A ray of light pouring through an opening in the roof of a building falls on a particular spot. Normally, we shall not be able to tell where the same ray of light will fall next year. But a prediction can be made with the help of Jyotisa. This is how it was done in the olden days. A pearl attached to a thread was hung from the roof. If a man was able to indicate correctly in

advance where its shadow would fall on a particular day, he received a reward from the king. One's competence in other sastras is established through argument, but in Jyotisa it has to be proved by actual demonstration. You cannot deceive anyone by employing the methods taught by this science. The sun and the moon are witness to what you do. "Pratyaksam Jyotisam sastram."



Hand of the Vedapurusa

The sixth limb or Anga of the Vedapurusa is Kalpa, his hand. The hand is called "kara" since it does work (or since we work with it). In Telugu it is called "sey". Kalpa is the sastra that involves you in "work". A man learns to chant the Vedas, studies Siksa, Vyakarana, Chandas, Nirukta and Jyotisa. What does he do next? He has to apply these sastras to the rites he is enjoined to perform. He has to wash away his sins, the sins earned by acting according to his whims. This he does by the performance of good works. For this he must know the appropriate mantras and how to enunciate them correctly, understanding their meaning. Also certain materials are needed and a house that is architecturally suited to the conduct of the rituals. The fruits yielded by these must be offered to the Isvara. Kalpa concerns itself with these matters.

Why does a man learn the vedas? Why does he make efforts to gain perfection with regard to the purity and tone of their sound by learning Siksa, grammar and prosody? And why does he learn Jyotisa to find out the right time to perform rituals? The answer is to carry out the injunctions of Kalpa.

How is a rite to be performed, what are the rituals imposed upon the four castes and on people belonging to the four asramas (celibate students, householders, forest recluses and ascetics)? What are the mantras to be chanted

during these various rites and what are the materials to be gathered? What kind of vessels are to be used, and how many rtviks (priests) are needed for the different rituals? All these come under the province of Kalpa.

A number of sages have contributed to the Kalpa sastra. Six sages have composed Kalpasutras for the Krsna-Yajurveda which is predominantly followed in the South - Apastamba, Baudhayana, Vaikhanasa, Satyasadha, Bharadvaja, Agnivesa, Asvalayana and Sankhayana have written Kalpasutras for the Rigveda but the former's is most widely followed. For Sukla-Yajurveda there is the Kalpasutra by Katyayana. For the Kauthuma, Ranayaniya and Talavakara Sakhas of the Samaveda, Latyayana, Drahyayana and Jaimini respectively have composed Kalpasutras.

Kalpa contains Grhyasutras and Srutasutras for each recension. Both deal with the 40 samskaras to be performed from conception to death. The cremation of the body is also a sacrifice, the final offering: it is called "antyeshti" and it is also to be performed with the chanting of mantras. "Isti" means a sacrifice and in antyeshti the body is offered in the sacred fire as a "dravya" or material.

A Brahmin has to perform 21 sacrifices: seven "haviryajnas" based on agnihotra; seven pakayajnas and seven somayajnas. Of them the seven haviryajnas and the seven somayajnas are not included in the Grhyasutras. They belong to the Srutasutras. Together with these there are forty rites for a Brahmin -- they are called samskaras. A samskara is that which refines and purifies the performer.

Agnihotra is performed at home and yajnas [of a bigger type] in specially constructed halls. While the srutasutras contain instructions for the conduct of big sacrifices, the Grhyasutras are concerned with domestic rites. The names given before are of the authors of Srutasutras.

The Kalpasutras deal with the forty samskaras and with the eight "Atmagunas" [qualities to be cultivated by individuals]. Apart from the seven haviryajnas and seven somayajnas (together 14) the remaining 26 belong to the category of Grhyasutras. Among them are garbhadhana, pumsavana, simanta, jatakarma, namakarana, annaprasana, caula, upanayana and vivaha. I shall be dealing with them later.

The eight Atmagunas are compassion, patience, freedom from jealousy, purity or cleanliness, not being obstinate, keeping a cool mind, non-covetousness and desirelessness. These are among the "samanya-dharmas", universal virtues, to be cultivated by all jatis.

When we do "abhivadhana" [as we prostrate ourselves before the fire or before a preceptor or any elder], we mention, among other things, the sutra that we follow. To illustrate: Samavedins mention Drahyayana-sutra. Drahyayana has authored only Srautasutra. Another, Gobhila, has written a Grhyasutra. In the old days when it was a common practice to conduct big sacrifices the Srautasutras which deal with them were mentioned in the abhivadhana. This practice continues though we no longer perform srauta sacrifices and go through only such functions as marriage which are dealt with by Grhyasutras.

In the past even poor people performed srauta rituals. They got all the materials required by begging. Brahmins who were called "prati-vasanthasomayajins" conducted soma sacrifices every year during the spring [that is what the term means]. If a man had enough income to meet three years' expenses (of his family) he conducted the soma sacrifice during every season of spring.

Now there is a decay in all fields. Things have turned topsy-turvy. People spend three times their annual income but, ironically enough, owing to changes in trade and commercial practices all, including the rich, suffer from poverty and hardship. There must be moderation in everything. All the ingenuity and resourcefulness of our times have led only to indigence even in the midst of plenty. The rich man has brought himself to a position of not being able to afford all his expenses. With moderation alone will there be the means to do good works.

The sikha, the pundra and the religious rites vary from sutra to sutra. Some wear "urdhva-sikha" [lock of hair on the crown of the head], some "purva-sikha" [lock of hair on the forepart of the head]. Similarly there are differences in wearing the marks on the forehead: some wear vertical marks (urdhva-pundra) and some horizontal (tripundra). These are according to the tradition one follows.

Cayana is an important feature of sacrifices. There are two types of sulba-sutras in Kalpa: "samanya" (ordinary or common) and "visesa" (special). There are sulba-sutras by Katyayana, Baudhayana, Hiranyakesin and so on. In the south there is what is called "Andapillai-prayoga". "Andapillai" belong to Tiruppanantal and was named after the deity Ganesa ("pillayar ") of Tiruvidaimarudur (Tanjavur district). It is according to his method that srauta works are performed. The srauta sacrifices are large-scale sacraments not conducted in the home but in a "yagasala". Rites that are not so big are "grhya" and performed at home. Since big sacrifices have become rare, the Grhyasutras have gained greater importance. Besides, alien sastras, alien practices, are becoming more and more popular.

All our sastras have one goal, that of holding the lotus-feet of Isvara. Whatever we read must be in the form of an offering to the Lord and it must be capable of bringing us Atmic merit. Our sastras belong to such a category. It is a matter for regret that the conduct of srauta works (havis and soma sacrifices), which are of the utmost importance to the Vedic religion, has become very rare.

Among those who have authored Kalpasutras, but for Drahyayana and Katyayana, all the rest, like Apastamba, Baudhayana and Asvalayana, have written both Srauta and Grhya sutras.

Apart from the above two types of sutras, we have the "Dharmasutras". These deal with a man's individual, domestic and social life. The Dharmasastra is based on them. What we understand by the English term "law" is derived from them. They are also the basis of the moral and legal sastras of Manu, Mitaksara and so on. (The following Dharmasutras have been handed down to us: those of Vasistha and Visnu for the Rgveda; those of Manu, Baudhayana, Apastamba and Hiranyakesin for the Krsna-Yajurveda; and those of Gautama for the Samaveda). Since the Atharvaveda has hardly any following its Kalpasutras are not in observance.

Kalpa deals with rites in their minutest detail. All the actions of a Brahmin have a Vedic connection. Through each and every breath he takes in, with each step he takes, he will be able to grasp the divine powers for the well-being of the world because of this Vedic connection and only because of it. The Kalpasutras contain rules with regard to how a Brahmin must sit, eat, wear his clothes and so on.

This "limb" of the vedas also deals with the construction of houses. Why? The design -- or architecture -- of a Brahmin's dwelling must be such as to help him in the performance of his duties according to the scriptures. If, say, there is a rule about the doorway where he should offer the " vaisvadeva-bali ", should not the doorway be constructed in the required sastric manner? Is the modern "flat" suitable for such rites? The character of the place where the " aupasana " is to be performed is described in Kalpa. A class-room where children are taught has to meet certain requirements: it must have a desk, benches, etc. The laboratory has to be different from it. Similarly, the architecture of a house and the design of a class-room differ functionally.

I perform puja. The place where I do it must have a certain special character. All rooms are similar in a bungalow. If a puja is performed in such a place, rules regarding ritual purity and difference based on varna and asrama cannot be properly maintained since people will come crowding together. The bungalow is built according to the white man's way of life. There must be separateness and at the same time togetherness; there must be a place for everybody. Even if we wish to have a place according to our customs and traditions, the new type of house does not help in this way. Our architecture has developed according to our traditions and needs. A cement floor cannot be maintained clean after eating. When washed or scrubbed with water, the " eccil " will spread. Westerners living in bungalows (or flats) eat at table.

We must build our houses according to our architectural science. The term "grhastha" itself is from "grha" (house). Those who observe ritual purity in matters like eating, living and clothing, must build their houses according to our architectural concepts. But we are now accustomed to living in houses built in an alien style. At first we may feel some qualms about the difficulty in practising our customs and traditions. Eventually, however, we are likely to get used to style of living and become careless about our religious observances. Instead of abandoning such houses, we abandon the religious and other practices which are part of our dharma.

I shall be speaking to you in some detail about the 40 samakaras included in Kalpa when I deal with Dharmasastra.

We have discussed ten of the caturdasa-vidya, the fourteen branches of vedic lore - the four vedas, Siksa, Vyakarana, Chandas, Niruktha, Jyotisa, and Kalpa. Four remain.



Explication of Vedic Laws

Of the fourteen branches of learning(caturdasa-vidya), after the four Vedas and the Sadanga, we have the four Upangas of the vedas remaining.

"Upa+anga"="Upanga. "The prefix "upa" is added to suggest what is auxiliary to a subject. "Sabhanayaka" means speaker; "upa-sabhanayaka" means deputy speaker. In the same way we have, after the six Angas(Sadanga), the four Upangas. These are Mimamsa, Nyaya, the Puranas and Dharmasastra.

"Mam" is the root of the word "Mimamsa"; "san" is the pratyaya. "Mimamsa" means "esteemed or sacred inquiry", an exposition. What is esteemed or worthy of worship? The Vedas. Mimamsa is an exegesis of the Vedas. Nirukta explains the meaning of the words of the Vedas, also their etymology in the fashion of the dictionary. Mimamsa goes further, to find out the significance of the mantras, their intent. It also gives its decisions on these points.

We have already discussed the karmakanda and the jnanakanda of the Vedas. Karmakanda is called the purva-bhaga, the first or early part of each Vedic recension, and the second or concluding part is the uttara-bhaga. Mimamsa too is divided in this way into Purvamimamsa and Uttaramimamsa. The first holds that sacrifices and other rites of the karmakanda form the most important part of the Vedas, while the second maintains that the realisation of the self taught in the jnanakanda is their true goal. I spoke about the Uttaramimamsa when I dealt with the Upanishads and the Brahmasutra.

Uttaramimamsa, that is the Brahmasutra as well as the Upanishads, constitutes "Brahmavidya" or vedanta here. It is the foundation of the three important philosophic systems - Advaita (non-dualism or monism), Visistadvaita (qualified non-dualism or qualified monism) and Dvaita (dualism).

Our present subject is Purvamimamsa. As a matter of fact the term "Mimamsa" itself usually denotes "Purvamimamsa". But mention of it brings to mind Uttaramimamsa also.

Every system has, as we have seen its sutras, bhasya, and vartika. The Purvamimamsa-sutra is by Jaimini Maharsi, its bhasya by Sabarasvamin and its vartika by Kumarilabhatta. Kumarilabhatta's Bhattadipika remains the most important Purvamimamsa work. Kumarila was an incarnation of Kumarasvamin or Subrahmanya. Prabhakara has written a commentary on Purvamimamsa in which he expresses views which, on some points, are divergent from Kumarilabhatta's. So two different schools are identified in Mimamsa-"Bhatta-mata" and "Prabhakara-mata". Let us consider Mimamsa in general terms, ignoring the difference between the two schools. "Bhattamata", it is obvious, gets its name from the fact that it represents the views of Kumarilabhatta.

Jaimini's Purvamimamsa-sutra is a voluminous work and has twelve chapters, each having a number of "padas" and each pada having a number of "adhikaranas". In all, there are 1000 adhikaranas.

The Vedas constitute the law of Isvara. Since they are eternal and endless the law is also eternal. All of us are the subject of the monarch called Isvara. He has engaged many officials, authorities, like Indra, Vayu, Varuna, Agni, Yama, Isana, Kubera, Nirrti and so on to take care of this world. They need a law to protect the creatures of all the fourteen worlds. How should we, the subjects of Isvara, conduct ourselves according to this law, how are the officials appointed by Isvara to rule over his domain? We may find out the answer to these by examining the Vedas. There are judges who deliberate on the laws of this world and resolve doubts concerning them with the help of lawyers. If the Vedas are the law that determines how dharma is to be practised, it is jaimini who interprets the meaning of this law. His interpretation is Mimamsa.

When there is legal dispute, a verdict is given, say, according to the decision of the Allahabad or Bombay high court based on similar cases. The decision

given by one court with regard to one case may be applied to a similar case that comes up before another court. In Jaimini's Mimamsa a thousand issues (or points) are examined, taking into account the views opposed to those of the author of the sutras, and the meaning of the Vedic passage determined with cogent reasoning. To explain: first, a Vedic statement is taken up; second, questions are raised about its meaning ("samasya"); third, the opposing school's point of view is presented ("purvpaksa"); fourth, that point of view is refuted ("uttarpaksa"); and, fifth, a conclusion is arrived at ("nirnaya"). The process of arriving at the meaning of each issue or point constitutes an *adhikarana*.

The sutras of Jaimini are very terse. Sabara's commentary on them is called *Sabaram*. The word "sabari" usually means a hunter. "Sabari" of the Ramayana, they say, was originally a huntress. Sabara, the Mimamsa commentator, had an aspect of Isvara in him. It is believed that Isvara composed the commentary (*Sabaram*) when he appeared as a hunter to grant the Pasupata weapon to Arjuna.

Since it has one thousand *adhikaranas*, Purvamimamsa is called "Sahasradhikarani". One must add here that in this work the meaning of the Vedic texts are determined by countering many a captious argument ("kuyukti").

While Purvamimamsa concerns itself with the meaning of the karmakanda of the Vedas, Uttaramimamsa deals with the meaning of the jnanakanda, that is the Upanisads. The Upanisads speak primarily of the Paramatman and our inseparable union with him. Vyasa, in his Brahmasutra, determines the meaning of the divine law constituted by the Upanisads. Ironically enough, the sage who composed the sutras for Uttaramimamsa, Vyasa, was the guru of Jaimini who composed the sutras of Purvamimamsa.

Suresvaracarya wrote a commentary on the *Taittiriya* and *Brhadaranyaka Upanisads* from the non-dualistic point of view. It is not worthy that he had earlier been an adherent of Purvamimamsa. He made the transition from the path of works to the path of jnana, on becoming a disciple of Sankara and wrote a commentary on his guru's bhasya. Before becoming a disciple of our Acarya and a sannyasin he was called Mandanamisra. The story goes that Sankara approached Mandanamisra for a philosophical disputation during a

sraddha performed by the latter. Vyasa and Jaimini were the two Brahmins to take part in the ceremony.



No Concept of God in Mimamsa

Why should the Acarya have sought a debate with Mandanamisra, the mimamsaka? (A mimamsaka is an adherent of Purvamimamsa. We Uttaramimamsakas are called "Vedantins".) The Acarya it was who revived the Vedic religion and re-established it on a firm footing. Why, then, should such a preceptor have been critical of Mimamsa which is an Upanga of the very Vedas we prompted?

Before answering this question, we must consider the goal of any sastra or system, whether it be Mimamsa or anything else. Any discipline, to repeat what I said before, must have the ultimate purpose of leading us towards Isvara. I further observed that even subjects like grammar, lexicography, prosody had such an end in view and that was the reason why they were included among the fourteen branches of Vedic learning. Now what is the concept of God like in Purvamimamsa?

We must here consider how Vedanta or Uttaramimamsa views God, for it is the system to which is the Acarya gave his whole-hearted support and which he also commented upon. After all, it is the Acarya who chiefly matters to us. And to him it is that Vyasa's *Brahmasutra* matters most. What does this text have to say about Isvara?

The Brahmasutra declares : "Karta sastrarthavattvat. " It means Isvara is the creator of the cosmos. Even adherents of other religions call God " Karta ". But Isvara is more than a Karta and has one more function. We do good

and bad - good actions and bad actions. It is Isvara who vouchsafes us the fruits of such actions: "Phalam ata upapatteh". Isvara is the "phaladata" (giver of the fruits of our actions) of our karma. We do good and evil with our mind, speech and body. The lord is witness to all this and he dispenses the fruits of our actions. These are the two characteristics (laksanas) of Isvara according to Uttaramimamsa.

What does Purvamimamsa say about Isvara?

Both Sankhyas and mimamsakas belong to the Vedic system. But the Sankhyas believe that Isvara is not the Karta or author of the jagat (universe). "Isvara is pure knowledge, jnana, " they say. "This cosmos is insentient, made of earth and stone. What constitutes jnana cannot be the cause of insentient matter. To believe that Isvara is the author of the universe is not right. "Such is the Sankhya view. Supporters of Sankhya describe Isvara, who unattached to the universe and is pure jnana, as "Purusa". It is this Purusa that our Acarya calls the ultimate "Nirguna-Brahman" (the Brahman without attributes). However, he criticises the Sankhya concept maintaining that the Nirguna-Brahman itself becomes the Saguna-Brahman of Isvara to create the world and to engage itself in other activities.

To mimamsakas only such rites matter as are enjoined on us by the Vedas. They are silent on the question of Isvara and of who created the world. However they are emphatic on one point - that Isvara is not the one who dispenses the fruits of our actions. They don't quarrel on the point of whether or not Isvara is the Karta of the universe. They declare : "It is wrong to claim that Isvara gives us the fruits of our actions according to whether they are good or evil. He is not the one who metes out the fruits of our actions. It is the Vedic works performed by us that decide the fruits to be earned by us. "

So adherents of both Sankhya and Mimamsa, in their different ways, reject the view of the Vedas and the Brahmasutra that Isvara possesses the two laksanas mentioned earlier. The mimamsakas believe that Isvara doesn't dispense the fruits of our actions because, according to them, the Vedic works we perform give rewards on their own. We earn merit or demerit according to how the Vedas and sastras view our actions. So it is our karma that brings its rewards or retribution, as the case may be, not Isvara.

Among the religious systems that accept the Vedas, Sankhyas and Mimamsa alone hold the view that Isvara is not the creator of the world, that he does not award the fruits of our actions.



Nyaya and Mimamsa :They brought about the Decline of Buddhism

Many believe that Buddhism ceased to have a large following in India because it came under the attack of Sankara. This is not true. There are very few passages in the Acarya's commentaries critical of that religion, a religion that was opposed to the Vedas. Far more forcefully has he criticised the doctrines of Sankhya and Mimamsa that respect the Vedic tradition. He demolishes their view that Isvara is not the creator of the world and that it is not he who dispenses the fruits of our actions. He also maintains that Isvara possesses the laksanas or characteristics attributed to him by the Vedas and the Brahmasutra and argues that there can be no world without Isvara and that it is wrong to maintain that our works yield fruits on their own. It is Isvara, his resolve, that has created this world, and it is he who awards us the fruits of our actions. We cannot find support in his commentaries for the view that he was responsible for the decline of Buddhism in India.

Then how did Buddhism cease to have a considerable following in our country? Somebody must have subjected it to such rigorous attack as to have brought about its decline in this land. Who performed this task? The answer is the mimamsakas and the tarkikas. Those who are adept in the Tarka-sastra(logic) are called tarkikas. The Tarka is the part of Nyaya which is one of the fourteen branches of Vedic learning and which comes next to Mimamsa. People proficient in Nyaya are naiyayikas; those well versed in grammar are "vaiyakarani"; and those proficient in the Puranas are "pauranikas".

Udayanacarya, the tarkika, and Kumarilabhatta, the mimamsaka, opposed Buddhism for different reasons. The former severely criticised that religion for its denial of Isvara. To mimamsakas, as I have said earlier, Vedic rituals are of the utmost importance. Even though they don't believe that it is Isvara who awards us the fruit of our actions, they believe that the rituals we perform yield their own fruits and that the injunctions of the dharmasastras must be carried out faithfully. They attacked Buddhism for its refusal to accept Vedic rituals. Kumarilabhatta has written profusely in criticism of that religion. He and Udayanacarya were chiefly responsible for the failure of Buddhism to acquire a large following in this country. Our Acarya came later and there was no need for him to make a special assault on that religion on his own. On the contrary, his chief task was to expose the flaws in the systems upheld by the very opponents of Buddhism, Kumarilabhatta and Udayanacarya. He established that Isvara is the creator of the universe and that it is he who awards the fruits of our actions.

I am mentioning this fact so as to disabuse you of the wrong notions you must have formed with regard to Sankara's role in the decline of Buddhism. There is a special chapter in one of Kumarilabhatta's works called "Tarkapadam" in which he has made an extensive refutation of Buddhism. So too has Udayanacarya in his *Bauddhadhikaram*. These two acaryas were mainly responsible for the decline of Buddhism in our land and not Sankara Bhagavatpada. What we are taught on the subject in our textbooks of history is not true.



Buddhism and Indian Society

In my opinion at no time in our history did Buddhism in the fullest sense of that religion have a large following in India. Today a number of Hindus, who are members of the Theosophical Society, celebrate our festivals like other Hindus and conduct marriages in the Hindu way. There are many devotees of Sri Ramakrsna Parmahansa practising our traditional customs. Sri C. Ramanujacariyar, "Anna" (Sri N. Subramanya Ayyar) and some others are intimately associated with the Ramakrsna Mission but they still adhere to our traditional beliefs.

When great men make their appearance people are drawn to them for their qualities of compassion and wisdom. In the organisations established after them our sanatana dharma is followed with some changes. But a large number of the devotees of these men still follow the old customs and traditions in their homes.

Many regard Gandhiji as the founder almost of a new religion (Gandhism), and look upon him as one greater than avataras like Rama and Krsna. But in their private lives few of them practise what he preached- for instance, widow marriage, mixing with members of other castes, and so on. People developed esteem for Gandhiji for his personal life of self-sacrifice, truthfulness, devotion and service to mankind. But applying his ideas in actual life was another matter.

It was in the same way that the Buddha had earned wide respect for his lofty character and exemplary personal life. "A prince renounces his wife and child in the prime of his youth to free the world from sorrow": the story of Siddhartha, including such accounts, made an impact on people. They were

moved by his compassion, sense of detachment and self-sacrifice. But it did not mean that they were ready to follow his teachings. They admired the Buddha for his personal qualities but they continued to subscribe to the varnasrama system and the ancient way of religious life with its sacrifice and other rites. Contrary to what he wished, people did not come forward in large numbers to become monks but continued to remain householders adhering to Vedic practices.

Emperor Asoka did much to propagate Buddhism; but in society in general the Vedic dharma did not undergo any change. Besides, the emperor himself supported the varnasrama dharma as is evident from his famous edicts. But for the Buddhist bhiksus(monks), all householders followed the Vedic path. Though they were silent on the question of Isvara and other deities, some book written by great Buddhist monks open with hymns to Sarasvati. They also worshipped a number of gods. It is from Tibet that we have obtained many Tantrik works relating to the worship of various deities. If you read the works of Sriharsa, Bilhana and so on in Sanskrit, and Tamil poetical works like that of Ilango Adigal, you will realise that even during times when Buddhism wielded influence in society, Vedic customs and varnasrama were followed by the generality of people.

Reformists today speak in glowing terms about Vyasa, Sankaracarya, Ramanujacarya and others. But they do not accept the customs and traditions I ask people to follow. Some of them, however, come to see me. Is it not because they feel that there is something good about me, because they have personal regard for me, even though they do not accept my ideas? Similarly, great men have been respected in this country for their personal qualities and blameless life notwithstanding the fact they advocated views that differed slightly from the Vedic tradition or were radically opposed to it. Our people any way had long been steeped in the ancient Vedic religion and its firmly established practices and, until the turn of the century, were reluctant to discard the religion of their forefathers and the vocations followed by them. Such was our people's attitude during the time of the Buddha also. When his doctrines came under attack from Udayanacarya and Kumarilabhata even the few who had first accepted them returned to the Vedic religion.



Sankara and Non- Vedantic Systems

The Acarya views the last stage or asrama in a man's life as the years during which he renounces Vedic works and devotes himself to meditation and metaphysical inquiry. But, unlike the Buddha, he does not want Vedic karma to be given up in the earlier stages. According to him, only after a man cleanses his consciousness through years of Vedic rituals is he to become exclusively devoted Atmic inquiry. First accept the karma that Mimamsa asks us to perform and finally give up that very karma as suggested by Buddhism.

The Acarya goes along with systems like Buddhism, Mimamsa, Sankhya, and Nyaya up to a point. He accepts them on a certain level, but on another level he disapproves of them. Each of these systems regards one aspect of truth to be final. Our Acarya harmonises them all into a single whole Truth.



Sankhya

According to Sankhya, the Atman is Purusa and is the basis of all, though, at the same time detached from everything. In its view Maya which keeps everything going is Prakriti. The cosmos is contained in 24 "tattvas" ["thatnesses" or principles or categories] of which Prakriti is one- Prakriti is indeed the first of these and it has the name of "pradhana". From it arises the second tattva of "mahat" which is the intellect of Prakriti (like the intellect of man). From mahat(the great) is derived the third tattva of "ahamkara", the ego, self-consciousness, the feeling that there is a separate entity called "I".

Ahamkara divides itself into two: first as the sentient and knowing life of a man, his mind, his five jnanendriyas and five karmendriyas. The second is constituted by the five "tanmatras" and the five "mahabhutas" of the insentient cosmos. The jnanendriyas are faculties with which a man gets to know outside objects: the eyes that see objects, the nose that smells, the mouth that tastes, the ear that hears and the skin that feels by touch. With his karmendriyas he performs various actions. The mouth serves as a karmendriya also since it performs the function of speech. The hand, the leg, the anus and the genitals are all karmendriyas. The "asrayas" for jnanendriyas are sound (ear), feeling, sparsa (skin), form (eye), flavour or taste (mouth), smell (nose). These five are tanmatras. The tattvas in their expanded insentient forms are space (sound), air (feeling or touch), water (flavour), earth (smell), fire (form)- these are mahabhutas. Thus Prakriti, mahat, ahamkara, mind, the five jnanendriyas, the five karmendriyas, the five tanmatras, the five mahabhutas- all these make up the 24 tattvas.

These tattvas are accepted by non-dualistic Vedanta also. According to it, it is Isvara (the Brahman with attributes) who unites Purusa (or the Atman without attributes) with Prakrti or Maya. Sankhya, however, is silent on Isvara.

The three qualities of sattva, rajas and tamas, according to the Sankhya philosophy, are accepted by all Vedantic systems including non-dualism. Sattva denotes a high state of goodness, clarity and serenity; rajas is all speed and action and passion; and tamas denotes sleep, inertia, sloth. The Gita has much to say on the subject in its "Gunatraya-vibhaga yoga". The Lord says: "Nistraigunyo Bhava" (Go beyond all three gunas and dwell in the Atman). Sankhya also believes that all undesirable developments are due to an imbalance of the gunas and that they must be maintained evenly. But, unlike the Gita, Sankhya does not tell us the means to achieve this- like worship of Isvara, surrender to him, Atmic inquiry and so on.

Purusa alone has life, Prakrti is inert. By itself Prakrti is incapable of performing any function. It manifests itself as the 24 tattvas only in the presence of Purusa. But Sankhya also speaks contradictorily that Purusa is "kevala-gnana-swarupin" unrelated to Prakrti. "Kevala" means what is by itself, isolated, without the admixture of anything else. "Kaivalya" is the name Sankhya gives to liberation. The state in which an individual, after discarding the 24 tattvas and being released from inertia, remains in the vital Purusa by himself is "kaivalya". (In Tamil "kevalam" has somehow come to mean "inferior" or "unworthy".)

Advaita also has the goal of one being absorbed in Purusa, that is the Atman, and discarding all else as Maya. To attain this state, the Acarya has cut out a path for us, the path that takes us to final release through works, devotion and philosophic inquiry. Sankhya does no such thing. Most of its teaching relates to forsaking the 24 tattvas.

Another unsatisfactory aspect of Sankhya is this. Purusa (the Atman) is jnana by itself and has no function. Prakrti has a function but is insentient and without jnana. How does this insentient Prakrti unfold itself as the 24 tattvas? According to Sankhya, this phenomenon occurs in the presence of Purusa. This is not a convincing explanation. How does Prakrti perform its function under Purusa that has no function? Supporters of Sankhya answer: "Are not iron filings brought into motion by the presence of a magnet? Does

the magnet consciously want to keep them in motion? The magnet is by itself and the iron filings are in motion. Similarly, though Purusa is by himself, Prakrti is activated as a consequence of its vitality. "

Purusa and Prkrti work together like a cripple carried by a blind man. The cripple cannot walk and the blind man cannot see. So the cripple perched on the shoulders of the blind man shows the way and the latter follows his directions. Similarly, Prakrti which has no jnana carries Purusa who is full of jnana, but Prkrti without jnana is behind all affairs of the world. This may sound good as a story or a metaphor but it does not make sense unlike the explanation provided by the Advaita concept- that the Nirguna-Brahman becomes Saguna-Brahman (Isvara) to conduct the world.

Another important difference between Advaita and Sankhya is this. Although Sankhya believes in a Purusa made up of jnana it does not state unequivocally like Advaita that all souls are the same as Purusa. All individual souls, according to Sankhya, exist by themselves. Though the ideas of Sankhya are confusing sometimes, it is regarded as one of our basic systems of philosophy. ("Sankhya " means enumerating, numbers: from it comes Sankhya.)

The author of Sankhya Sutra is Kapila Maharishi. Notable works of this system are Isvarakrsna's Sankhya karika and Vijnanabhiksu's commentary on the Sankhya-sutra.

The Gita too deals with Sankhya. When Bhagavan Krsna speaks of the two paths, Sankhya and Yoga, He means jnana by the former and karmayoga by the latter (not Rajayoga.)

Sankhya does not go beyond asking us to have an awareness of Purusa separate from Prakrti. Rajayoga, however, goes further from this point and tells us the practical means, the "sadhana", to be followed to become aware of Purusa dissociated from Prakrti. The concept of Isvara and devotion to him is part of yoga and it has lessons to bring the mind under control. What generally goes under the name of yoga is Patanjali's Rajayoga, according to which yoga is the stopping the mental process (or the oscillating vitality of consciousness). It is this yoga that has become popular in Western countries.

Sankhya and yoga are not included in caturdasa-vidya but, all the same, they are important among our sastras.

Though devotion to Isvara is not part of Mimamsa, it accepts the authority of the Vedas. Likewise Sankhya too respects the authority of the Vedas and does not support belief in Isvara.

Buddhism on the one hand, Nyaya and Mimamsa on the other which were opposed to it, and Sankhya, which does not accept Isvara but respects the pramanas of the Vedas: of these our Acarya accepts elements that are to be accepted and rejects elements that are to be rejected. He establishes the Vedantic system which harbours all these and which is their source. Sankara's view is not at variance with the ultimate message of Buddhism, that is the exalted state of jnana. He accepts some of the basic concepts of Sankhya like Purusa that is jnana by itself and equivalent to the Nirguna-Brahman and Prakrti which is the same as Maya. At the same time, he accepts the Vedic rituals of Mimamsa and the Isvara of Nyaya. But he sees each of them as an aspect of the one Truth, not as the final goal which it is to the various individual systems mentioned. He integrates these different aspects into a harmonious whole in his own system of thought.



Mimamsa and Adi Sankara

As we have already seen, Udayana and other supporters of the Nyaya system criticised Buddhism on the score that it was silent on the question of God, while mimamsakas like Kumarilabhatta attacked the same because it did not favour Vedic rituals. The acarya was in sympathy with these views and believed that Vedic sacraments, considered all-important by the mimamsakas were essential to the cleansing of the mind and to the proper conduct of the affairs of the community. However, he was opposed to the mimamsakas not only because they did not accept an entity like Isvara as the dispenser of the fruits of our actions but also because they did not believe that, after being rendered pure by works, there is any need for one to go further and take the path of jnana. He also did not agree with their view that to become a sanyasin giving up all karma is not right.

Kumarilabhatta and Mandanamisra are particularly important among the mimamsakas. The Acarya had a debate with Kumarilabhatta during the last days of that mimamsaka and won him over to his viewpoint. Similarly, Mandanamisra also became a convert to Advaita Vedanta and came to be one of the Acarya's chief disciples assuming the title of Suresvaracarya.

If the Acarya opposed Mimamsa, which is one of the fourteen branches of Vedic lore, it was not because he thought it to be wholly unacceptable. He was in agreement with the sacraments dealt with in that system, but he differed from it on the question of devotion to the Lord. He further believed that the fruits yielded by the rites, rewards like paradise, must be dedicated to Isvara and that in this very act of renunciation the mind is purified. Sankara's teaching is this: it is only if we realise that Isvara is the Phala-

data, the one who awards the fruits of our actions, that we will not be tempted by petty rewards like paradise. Only then will we be inspired to go beyond to attain the higher reward of inner purity. The Vedic works were wholly acceptable to our Acarya. But for the mimamsakas they were an end in themselves; they did not transcend them to become devoted to the Supreme Godhead and to acquire jnana, the final realisation that Isvara and we are one and the same. Sankara criticised mimamsakas for their failure to understand this truth. That he did not oppose Vedic karma is proved again by the fact that in his upadesa (teaching) -it is called Sopana-Panchaka- before giving up his body he made the admonishment that the Vedas must be chanted every day and that the rites mentioned in them must be performed.

Vedo nityam adhiyatam

Taduditam karma svanushtiyatham

The Acarya, however, taught us not to stop with karma (performed for the sake of karma), but to go beyond it. The rites that we conduct must be made an offering to Isvara. This is a means of obtaining inner purity and also that of receiving instruction in jnana. That is the time when we must give up all karma to meditate upon the teaching we have received, indeed meditate on it with intensity and make it our inner experiential reality. Sankara takes us, step by step, in this way to final release. He opposed the mimamsakas because they failed to understand the purpose of Vedic karma and refused to go beyond it.

We must accept the Mimamsa system's interpretation of the Vedas, especially because it surrenders wholly to the "Sabda-pramana", the sound of the Vedas, its authority, and it is in this spirit that it has understood the meaning of the scripture. An interesting thought occurs to me. Mimamsa does not surrender to a perceptible God nor seek to understand his form. Does that matter? The Vedas themselves constitute a great deity. The sound of the Vedas does not take the form of a deity that can be seen with our eyes but one that can be perceived with our ears. Let us perform the works that that sound bids us to do without asking questions. Such an act implies an attitude of surrender and it is in this spirit that the mimamsakas have determined the meaning of the Vedas. So whether or not they believed in a tangible God, they knew the God that could be grasped by the ears. (that is they had a good understanding of the meaning of the Vedas).



Determining the Meaning of Vedic Texts

The Vedas, as we know, contain "vakyas" and "adhyayas". How are we to know their content, their meaning? What must we do to find out their purpose, their message?

The rules according to which the Vedas are to be interpreted are contained in the Mimamsa sastra. If the Vedas are the law, Mimamsa is the law of interpretation. As I said before, when the government enacts a great number of laws doubts arise as to their intention and application. So to interpret these the government enacts another law. Mimamsa is such a law with reference to the Vedas. It formulates certain methods to discover the meaning of the Vedic texts.

Six methods are mentioned: upakarma-upasamhara, abhyasa, apurvata, phala, atharvada, upapatti. According to Mimamsa the meaning, the intent, of the Vedic Mantras may be understood by applying these methods



Mimamsa Beliefs

Let me now speak a little more on the doctrines of Mimamsa.

Let us not worry about whether or not there is a God. Let there be a God or let there be none. Our duty is to perform the rites prescribed by the Vedas and they will yield fruits on their own. Any work we do produces its own results, doesn't it? Why do we need God in between? The work generates results on its own. Do we pay the greengrocer if he fetches plantain leaves from our own garden? It is the same to give credit to Isvara for the fruits we reap by performing karma. We till the land and rice grows on it. It is the same with performing karma. If we do what we do not know, as told by the Vedas, we will derive certain benefits. Why should we think that the cosmos was created by God? It has always existed as it exists today: why should we believe that it came into being all of a sudden? "Na kadacit anidrsam jagat. " This universe has always existed as it exists today. Do works; they will yield fruits on their own. When the engine is wound the car starts. It is all like that.

The Vedas speak about things not comprehended by the human mind. If we perform rites imposed on us by them, the fruits thereof will naturally follow. Sound has always existed: it has indeed no beginning and the Vedas are this sound. Like time and space they are ever-present.

If you do evil, the consequence shall be evil; if you do good the result shall be correspondingly good. The rites keep yielding fruits, and we keep enjoying them - and thus we go on and on. No God is required for all this. We should never cease to do work because not to work is sinful. It will take us to hell.

There are three types of karma: "nitya", "naimittika", and "kamyā". "Nitya-karma" as the name suggests includes sacraments that must be performed every day. "Naimittika" rites are conducted for a specific purpose or reason or on a specific occasion. For instance, when there is an eclipse we must bathe and offer libations to our fathers. When a great man visits our home he has to be honoured ceremonially - this is also naimittika. Nitya and naimittika rites are to be performed by all. A kamyā-karma is a ritual that has a special purpose. When there is a drought we conduct Varuna-japa to invoke the god and seek his blessings in the form of rain. When we are desirous of a son we perform the "putrakamesti"(sacrifice to beget a son). These belong to the kamyā category.

The sacraments to be performed everyday are defined in Mimamsa. "Akarane pratyavaya janakam, karane'bhyudayam"- this statement refers to two types. The non-performance of certain rites brings us ills, troubles- these form one type. On the other hand some rites bring us happiness- these form the second type. A good house, wealth, sons, fame, knowledge are part of " abhyudaya". Vedanta speaks of "nihsreyas", the supreme bliss of liberation. " Abhyudaya " is different; it is happiness on the lower plane. Mimamsa is concerned with the latter, and does not speak of the ultimate blessedness of release from worldly existence.

If rites belong to the category of "nitya" are not performed, we will have to face trouble. Suppose you ask a man to perform sandyavandana and he replies: " I won't do it. I don't care whether or not it does me good ". Mimamsa has an answer to it: Sandyavandana is not a kamyā or optional rite and its non-performance will bring you unhappiness.

It stands to reason to say the performance of certain rites will bring you happiness. But how do you justify the statement that the non-performance of certain other rites will have ill-effects? Not performing sandyavandana is sinful, but its performance is not claimed to bring any good. It is because this rite belongs to the category referred to in this statement, "akarane pratyavaya janakam. . "

Worshipping the deity in the temple, feeding the poor, such acts are said to be beneficial and belong to the second category referred to in the statement, ". . . . karane abhyudayam ". This makes sense. But how is it sensible to say

" akarane pratyavaya janakam "? Are there examples to illustrate this dictum? Yes, there are.

We give alms to beggars, or make a donation to some organisation or other in the belief that there is merit to be earned thereby. Sometimes we do not practice such charity because we may not feel the urge to earn any special merit. We have, of course, to do our duty, but not helping people with money or material cannot be said to be sinful.

Suppose we have borrowed Rs. 500 from a friend or an acquaintance. How far are we justified in refusing repayment of the loan, saying: " I don't wish to earn any merit by returning your money? ". Is it possible to escape the obligation to the lender in this manner? He will naturally tell us: " I came to ask you for my money. I don't care about whether you or I earn any merit ". If we refuse to repay a loan we will be taken to court and eventually we will have to repay it along with the penalty. This illustrates the statement: " Akarane pratyavayajanakam. . . "

Not performing sandyavandana is like not repaying a debt. In Tamil the sandyavandana performed at dawn and dusk are aptly called " kalai-k-kadan " and " malai-k-kadan " [" morning debt " and " evening debt "]. These are beautiful terms.

You may wonder how sandyavandana can be described as something " borrowed ". The Taittiriya Samhita(6. 3) of the Vedas says: " A Brahmin is born with three debts. These are " rsi-rna ", " deva-rna " and " pitr-rna (that is a Brahmin is indebted to the sages, the devas and to his fathers) ". The first debt is repaid by chanting the Vedas; by conducting sacrifices and other rites the second is repaid; and by offering libations and performing the sraddha ceremony the third is repaid. The Vedas enlighten us on matters of which we are ignorant. From the pronouncements made in them, those who have faith will find reasons to perform the rites. Others who perverse in their reasoning will find an excuse for not performing the same.

There are two brothers. One is a magistrate and the other a Vedic scholar. The first cannot refuse to attend the court saying, " My brother does not go to any law court. Why should I? ". The authorities will tell him: "You applied for the job of a magistrate. We issued orders appointing you to the office and you accepted the job. So there is no choice for you but to attend the

court ". Similarly, we have applied for liberation, for moksa, and have received orders that we have to perform certain rites. The one who issued orders is not seen by us but he sees all and is witness to all. Such is the view of the Vedanta.

Mimamsa believes that the karma that we " applied for " gives its own reward. According to it, the fruit of Vedic works come to us " automatically ".

Our birth in this world is according to our past karma and we have to perform the rites that are proper to it. If we do not, we will suffer. The customs and rites must be adhered to properly. The duty of a Brahmin is to know the truth contained in the Vedas, to bring solace to those who are sorrowing and to give instruction to people in their respective vocations. Similarly, each man must perform the duties allotted to him by virtue of his birth. The oil-monger must produce oil; the cobbler must make footwear; and so on. The Brahmin must keep his body, mind and Self pure and he must be careful about what he eats. The reason for this is that not only has he to remain meditating on the Paramatman, he has also the duty of bringing others to the path of dhyana. It was for the proper discharge of such duties that in the old days he was given gifts of rent-free lands. Then every worker was allotted land. If he stopped doing the work assigned to him society would suffer. So he forfeited his land and it was allotted to another worker.

According to the sastras, not to do the work assigned to us is not only sinful but also disadvantageous in a worldly sense. In the past one earned respect only because one did one's karma, the duties expected of one. Our nation is in a lamentable state today only because of the failure on the part of the people to follow their respective callings, callings inherited from their forefathers. If everybody does his allotted job, performs the duties expected of him by birth, there should be happiness for all even in a mundane case. If there is so much poverty in the country today it is because of our failure to maintain the social order in which everybody is expected to do his allotted work, contributing to the social prosperity and harmony.

Sandyavandana and the like are everyday rites. The non-performance of nitya-karma is a sin; performance means we will not incur any demerit. That apart, there will be general well-being. If we repay a loan in instalments it means that we shall no longer remain indebted to the lender (here we see a gain); additionally we earn a name for being honest and trust-worthy. By

performing nitya-karma no sin will attach to us and, besides, it should mean some good to us. Thus there are two types of gains.

Vedanta too accepts the idea implicit in the statement "Akarane pratavaya janakam, karane' bhyudayam". We must never fail to perform nitya-karma; for instance, Sruta rites like agnihotra and Smarta rites like aupasana.

It is the view of mimamsakas that agnihotra must be performed so long as one is alive. So they do not favour the sannyasasrama (the last stage of life, that of the ascetic). In this asrama there are no rites like agnihotra. Giving up works, according to the mimamsakas, is extremely sinful. To do so consciously and become an ascetic is like embracing another religion. The Isavasyopanishad (second mantra) says that a man must live a hundred years performing works. The Taittiriya Brahmana has it that to extinguish the agnihotra fire is to earn the demerit of killing a hero.

According to Mimamsa, to give up nitya-karma is tantamount to doing evil karma. "The sannyasin deprives himself of karma ('karma- bhrashta'). To look at him is sinful and you must atone for it. To look at the sinner, to talk to him, to dine with him, " say Mandanamisra and mimamsakas like, "is to earn sin. To look at a sannyasin is equally sinful. "

The jnanakanda of the Vedas, speaks of sannyasa, the Parabrahman, liberation, jnana and so on. Why should concepts be attacked? What is answer of the mimamsakas to this?

It is true, they say, that the Upanisads speak of jnana and Parabrahman. But what are the Vedas? The Vedas are sound, they are made up of words. Why did they come into existence? To tell us about things that we do not know. The Vedas constitute the Sabda-pramana which speaks about things that cannot be perceived by the eyes and are beyond conjecture. Their purpose is not to tell us about matters that are of no use. All words serve a two-fold purpose. They bid you "Do this" or "Do not this. "

Pravrttirva nivrttirva nityena krtakyena va

Pumsam yenopadisyete tacchastram abhidhiyate

Words that speak of things that serve no purpose belong to the category of useless, idle talk. Suppose a man says, "The crow flies." How does the

statement help you? "The crow is black." Do these words also help you in any way? Take this sentence for example: "Tomorrow night a discourse will be held here." This has some purpose. It gives a bit of information and implicit in it is an invitation to people to come and listen to the discourse. Such usefulness is "pravrtti". If someone says that there will be a discourse at Kumbhakonam tomorrow, it is as good as gossip. You are in Madras and how will you go to Kumbhakonam in such a short time to listen to the discourse? Any word, any sabda, must have some objective or other. It must either involve you in work, "pravrtti" or keep you out of it, "nivrtti". If the Vedas mention all the five terrible sins (panca-maha-patakas) and bid us not to commit them, it is nivrtti, because they warn us against committing those dreadful crimes.

Words that do not serve the purpose of either pravrtti or nivrtti are useless. One part of the Vedas asks you to do this or that and another part asks you not to do this or that (ordinances regarding what you must do and what you must not). But there is another part which is like story-telling. The stories are meaningful only if they are connected with the injunctions and interdictions of pravrtti and nivrtti.

Suppose there is an advertisement of a tonic that claims to give you vigour and strength. It carries an illustration showing a man wrestling with a lion. What is the purpose of this drawing? It is a kind of deception, the idea behind it being to induce you to buy the tonic, and make money. Such "stories" in the Vedas become purposeful only because of the injunctions associated with them and they belong to the category of "arthavada". Why does a doctor print his certificate in advertising his medicine? To persuade people to buy it (the medicine). In this way in arthavada untruth is mixed with truth. The untrue part is called "gunavada". There is another term called "anuvada". It means stating what is already known. For instance, the statement that "fire burns".

Mentioning the ingredients of a medicine is an example of "bhutarthavada". "Gunarthavada" is to tell a story, even though untrue, to make it useful for the observance of a rule. "Do not drink liquor" is an injunction (or interdiction). To tell the "story" that a man who got drunk was ruined is arthavada. The purpose- or moral- is that one must not drink. To say that if a man drinks he will be intoxicated is anuvada. All told, the stories or statements belonging to arthavada must make us conform to the commandments of the Vedas.

In dealing with a sacrifice, the Vedas ask us to pay the daksina in gold, not in silver. According to the Taittiriya Samhita silver should not be given as daksina in sacrifices. In this connection a long story is told to illustrate the "nisedha" or the prohibitory rule regarding silver. ("Do this" is a "vidhi"; "do not do this" is a "nisedha".) But the words by themselves in such arthavada do not serve any purpose.

It is in this manner that the mimamsakas try to counter the objections raised against their system by adherents of the jnanakanda of the Vedas.

When the Upanisads speak about the Brahman there is no mention of any work to be performed. The Upanisads themselves show that the realisation of the Brahman is a state in which there is no action. When do the Vedas become an authority? When they speak about the performance of a karma. So the Upanisads belong to the arthavada category because they deal with existing things. What is it that we must know? Existing things or the karma we ought to perform?

"The Brahman exists. The Atman is the Brahman" In such pronouncements there is no mention of any rites to be performed. It is obligatory for us to conduct sacrifices and we need the Vedas only for that purpose, to tell us about such works, not to speak about the things that exist. What exists will be known at one time or another, even if we do not know it now. That part of the Vedas which speaks of existing things belongs to arthavada. So the Upanisads are not to be regarded as an authority. Then what is their purpose? They are meant to elevate the sacrificer. By extolling him he would be made to perform more and more works. It is not right to forsake karma to become a sannyasin. The Upanisadic declaration that the individual self is the same as the Brahman is meant only to glorify one who leads a life of works. The man who takes the tonic (in the story mentioned earlier) will never be able to wrestle with the lion. Similarly, the individual self will never attain the Brahman. The Upanisads are in the nature of a story and we do not need any talk of the Brahman, jnana, moksa, Isvara, and so on. Karma is all for us. So goes the argument of the mimamsakas.



Sankara's Reply

What is Sankara's reply to this argument?

What the Vedas state need not necessarily serve the purpose of involving us in any work. The mimamsakas accept the Vedas because, according to them, the karma mentioned in them serves a purpose. So the purpose served by karma is the message of the Vedas, not the karma itself. If to be without any karma, without any work, is itself a great purpose, must not the jnanakanda of the Vedas then be acceptable since it deals with a condition in which there is no karma to be performed, or nothing is to be done? That is if being without karma is "useful" by itself - if it serves a "purpose" - that can also then be the message of the Vedas. So the underlying goal of the Vedas is not karma itself but the purpose behind it.

The Vedas admonish us: "Do not drink wine". How do we react to this interdiction? We react by doing nothing; there is indeed nothing for us to do. The message of this Vedic commandment is that we ought not to ruin ourselves by drinking. To remain without doing anything is called "abhava". All nisedha (prohibition) belongs to the abhava category. The mimasakas themselves admit that the Vedas forbid certain actions. If it is beneficial not to perform certain actions, how can you object to the possibility that not doing any karma at all can also constitute a great purpose? Vedanta has great "use" thus since it serves the supreme purpose of the action-less or quiescent state in which we realise the Self. This cannot be rejected as arthavada.

Krsna says in the Gita: "Sarvan karma' khilam Partha jnane parisamapyate" (All works, Partha, find their goal in jnana). All karma must be consecrated to Paramesvara, must be laid at the feet of the Supreme Lord. To be without

work, and experience the bliss of the Brahman is he greatest of "uses". In this state there is no birth again and it means freedom from worldly existence. That is the ultimate message of the Vedas. The karmakanda must be woven together with the jnanakanda if it is to be meaningful and if it is to serve a purpose.

Sankara succeeded in convincing Mandanamisra, Kumarilabhatta and others about the rightness of this view. To recapitulate his argument: "The karmakanda of the Vedas mentions works because their performance is of some use in cleansing the mind. If the purpose achieved by not performing them is a million - million times greater than that gained by performing them, then that must be understood to be the message of the Vedas, the ultimate teaching of the jnanakanda. The karmakanda helps a seeker in his early stages. The performance of rites creates inner purity and takes him to Isvara. Karma performed for the sake of karma leads a man nowhere. The Vedas speak of the sannyasin's stage of life in which the ascetic, as he attains the Paramatman, becomes the Paramatman". The Acarya spoke in this vein to Mandanamisra [converted him to his point of view] and gave him initiation into sannyasa.

In the karmakanda certain acts are declared sinful. If a person keeps doing them it is because he feels he finds some pleasure in them. But such pleasure is momentary and becomes an obstacle in his efforts to know the joy that is greater. The mimamsakas, respecting the injunctions of the Vedas, abjure sinful acts. By the performance of Vedic karma they derive certain fruits, a certain degree of happiness, find well-being in their mundane existence and go to the pitr-loka or devaloka. But these do not mean everlasting bliss. When the fruits of their virtuous acts are exhausted, the joys also come to an end. Even if they go to the world of the celestials they will have to plunge into this world again on exhausting their merit. "Ksine punye martyalokam visanti".

What is that well-being which is eternal? The answer is that which is experienced by the jnanin when he dissolves in the Supreme Godhead. Then there is no "doing" for him. One must abjure sinful acts that afford petty momentary pleasure and instead perform noble works such as those mentioned in the Vedas. But what use are even these if they do not lead to the experience of plenary bliss? Are we, however, capable of directly attaining such blessedness abandoning Vedic karma? No. Jnana is not easy to obtain.

For it the consciousness, the mind, must be made pure and un-oscillating. So Vedic rituals are essential.

But they must be performed not for impermanent rewards like paradise but for the removal of inner impurities. We must not be deflected from the higher path by the fruits yielded by karma- these must be placed devotedly at the feet of the Lord. He will bless us with the higher fruit of inner purity and then the mind will become mellow enough for Atmic inquiry, for the inward journey. That is the way to the supreme blessedness, the quiescent state in which one is oneself.



Vedanta and Mimamsa

Advaita or non-dualism is in agreement with Mimamsa up to a point. It accepts Vedic karma as well as the six pramanas (perceptions or sources of knowledge) defined by Kumarilabhatta. Sankara's non-dualism, Ramanuja's qualified non-dualism, and Madhva's dualism are all Vedantic doctrines and all three are not against Vedic rituals. While non-dualism accepts all the six pramanas of Mimamsa, qualified non-dualism accepts only three- pratyaksa, anumana and the Vedas. I will explain these terms when I deal with Nyaya.

The three leading Vedantic teachers (Sankara, Ramanuja and Madhva), do not completely reject Mimamsa, but the paths they have cut out go beyond the mimamsic view: devotion in the case of Visistadvaita and Dvaita and jnana in the case of Advaita.

Mimamsa is called karmamarga since it teaches that karma is all. But karma here does not have the same meaning as in Vedanta which speaks of the three paths- karma, bhakti and jnana. In Vedanta karma is not performed for the sake of karma and is not an end in itself, but consecrated to Isvara without any expectation of reward. This is also karmamarga or karmayoga. It is this view of karma that the Lord expounds in the Gita. In the karmamarga of mimamsakas there is no bhakti. But, all the same, the Vedic rituals create well-being in the world, lead to a disciplined and harmonious social life and bring inner purity to the performer. Mimamsa holds karma to be a goal in itself; Vedanta regards it as a means to a higher end.



How Mimamsa is Esteemed

Mimamsa is of great help in understanding the meaning of the Vedic texts. For this reason many scholars, including those opposed to its karmamarga, have made a thorough study of it and also written books on it. Raju Sastri of Mannargudi (Tanjavur district), who was an outstanding Vedantin, Venkatasubba Sastri of Tiruvisanallur, Nilamegha Sastri of the same place, Krsnamacariyar of Rayampettah, Krsnatatacariyar, Cinnasvami Sastri of Nandakullatur, and so on, were "scholar-lions" who made a deep study of Mimamsa. Ironically enough, Tiruvisanallur Ramasubba Sastri was opposed to sacrificial rites. However, though he was against the srauta karma that is such an important part of Mimamsa, he was impressed by the theoretical excellence of the system and was himself recognised as an authority on the subject.

The Sanskrit College, Mylapore, Madras, has produced outstanding mimamsakas.