

Introduction Note from the Author:

The Veda

The term Veda comes from the root '*Vid*', to know. The word Veda means knowledge. The *Srutis* are called the Vedas. These are direct intuitional revelations, eternal truths revealed by God to the great ancient Rishis (*Mantra-Drashta*) and are held to be entirely superhuman, without any author in particular. The Veda is the glorious pride of the Hindus. They are without beginning and end hence, Vedas are *apaurusheya* & *anadi* - not created by humans, and eternal.

Vedas are the basis of Hindu Dharma. They are the most ancient existing scripture of the world. The Hindus rightly believe that they have been revealed by God himself, and are considered the ultimate & valid means of knowledge.

There is a great tradition where the chanting & learning of these mantras is perfected to unbelievable limits. There is no possibility of error of even half a alphabet. The mantras of Vedas were revealed to different Rishis at different points of time were collected . For easy handling, one of the greatest sages of all times - Sri Veda Vyasa compiled into four parts (Rig, Yajur, Sama & Atharva). Later he gave each of these Vedas to one of his disciples to carry them forward. Rig Veda was given to Pailar, Yajur Veda to Vaishampayanar, Sama Veda to Jaimini, and the Atharva Veda to Sumantu.

Each Veda consists of four parts: (1) the *Mantra-Samhitas* or hymns, (2) the *Brahmanas* or explanations of Mantras or rituals, (3) the *Aranyakas*, and (4) the *Upanishads*.

Rig Veda : Rig is derived from the word 'ric' which literally means 'praise or verse', especially 'a sacred verse recited in praise of a deity. It has 8 Khandams or 10 Mandalams (Sections) with 85 Anuvaakams (sub sections). There are 1028 Suktas in these Mandalams and in total 397264 Aksharams (Letters). Suktas are a small group of Mantras, and have their own Devata, Rishi & Chandas. Totally there are 10552 Mantras in Rig Veda. The total number of Rishis in Rig Veda is 403. There used to be 21 sakAs (redactions) of the Rig VedAs . There is only one available today . That is Saakala SaakA . IythrEya Upanishad belongs to Rig Veda SamhithA .The Rig-Veda Samhita is the biggest, oldest of all the Vedic Samhitas, grandest book of the Hindus, and the best in the world. Its style, the language and the tone are most beautiful and mysterious. Its priest in yagya/ yaga is called the *Hotri/Hota*. It comprises of hymns in praise of Agni, Indra, Rudra, Aswins, Savitur, Surya, Varuna, Marutha, Ripu and Soma.

Yajur Veda : Yajur is derived from the word 'yajus', literally 'reverence, veneration or sacrifice'. Though it includes many of the hymns of the *Rig Veda*, the *Yajur Veda* deviates more from the original text in its collection of the ritual formulas for the priests (called *Adhvaryu*) to use in the sacrifices, (yagya/yaga)

The literary value of Yajur Veda is mostly for its prose, which consists of short terse sentences full of meaning and cadence. It is the Veda of Sacrifice or Yagya through oblations into the Agni (holy fire). Its deities are the same as the Rig Veda.

This Veda is divided into Krishna Yajur Veda and Sukla Yajur Veda, meaning black and white Yajur Veda. The White Yajur consists of 40 adhyayams (chapters), 303 anuvakas (sections) and 1975 kandikas. The Black Yajur is divided into 7 kandas (books) of forty 40 prasnas (chapters) and each of 651 anuvakas (sections). There are 2198 kandikas (or panjadi comprising fifty words). The two popular recensions of the Sukla Yajur Vedam are : VajasanEyi MaadhyAndhina and KaaNva (40 adhyayams (chapters), and 2086 kandikas); the KrishNa Yajur Vedam has three types of recensions : kAtaka, Kapishtala-Kata and MaithrAyaNee .

Sama Veda : Sama Veda was basically meant for singing the mantras known as Samagana. Most of the mantras of Sama Veda Samhita are common to Rig Veda. The Samhita of Sama Veda has two parts - Poorvarchik & Uttararchik. The former section has 6 chapters with 650 mantras, and the latter section has 21 chapters with 1225 mantras. Totally this Veda has 1875 mantras. Only 75 verses of the total of 1,875 verses of Saama Vedam are not to be found in Rig Vedam . The remaining 1,800 verses are essentially the repetitions of Rig Vedic verses . The important distinction however is that they are sung instead of being recited. The Rig Vedam deals with knowledge and Saama Vedam deals with UpAsanA , Worship and DhyAnam. Sama Vedam had originally 1001 branches . In yagya the priest is called "Udgata". The hymns are addressed to Indra, Agni, and Soma.

Atharva Veda : Atharva Veda has mantras to be used for various special purposes. The Atharva Veda Samhita has three parts. (1) The Atharva & (2) the Angirasa (3) Bruhu. Because of these two major sections, this Veda is also called Atharvangirasa, and in short Atharva Veda. This had nine branches or rescensions (navadhAatharvaNO veda): These nine

branches are : (1) PaippalAda (2) Tauda (3) MuNda (4) Saunaka (5) Jaajala (6) Jalada (7) BrAhmaveda (8) Devadarsa and (9) ChAraNavaidya . Today , only two of the nine branches of Atharva Vedam (Saunaka and PaippalAda) are available to us. "Gopata Brahmana" is the Brahmana for this Veda. "Kaushika Grhya Sutram" is used for its implementation (prayoga) for this Veda. The Samhita of this Veda has 20 kanda (chapters), 730 suktas and 5977 mantras. Some prefer to catalog the Atharva Veda Text (SamhithA)into prapaathakAs (Lessons or lectures). Under this classification , there are 34 prapAthakAs that house the 5977 verses. In yagya the priest is called "Brahma", (knows mantras of all Vedas) and has a very important place amongst all Ritwiks. Major portion of Atharva Veda is common to Rig Veda.

Common to All Vedas: The subject matter of the whole Veda is divided into *Karma- Kanda, Upasana-Kanda and Gynana-Kanda*. The Ritual Section or Karma-Kanda deals with various sacrifices and rituals. The Worship Section or Upasana-Kanda deals with various kinds of worship or meditation. The Knowledge-Section or Gynana-Kanda deals the highest level of knowledge. The Mantras and the Brahmanas constitute Karma-Kanda; the Aranyakas Upasana-Kanda; and the Upanishads Gynana-Kanda.

Vedanga (parts of Veda) are the different branches of study that one should undertake to understand Vedas fully. They are:

- a. **Siksha**- Phonetics, pronunciation ,
- b. **Chandas** - meter (1. Gayatri - 24 syllables 2. Usnik - 28 syllables 3. Anushtup - 32 syllables 4. Brihati - 36 syllables 5. Pangti - 40 syllables 6. Trishtup -44 syllables 7. Jagati - 48 syllables 8. Ati Jagati - 52 syllables 9. Shakvaree - 56 syllables

10. Ati Sakvari - 60 syllables 11. Ashti - 64 syllables 12. Atyashti - 68 syllables 13. Dhrti - 72 syllables 14. AtiDhrti - 76 syllables 15. Kriti - 80 syllable 16. Prakriti - 84 syllables 17. Akriti - 88 syllables 18. Vikriti - 92 syllables 19. Sanskriti - 96 syllables 20. AbhiKriti - 100 syllables 21. Utkriti - 104 syllables.),

- c. **Vyakaranam,**
- d. **Niruktham,**
- e. **Jyothisham,**
- f. **Kalpam.**

All the Vedas provide the same knowledge to experience the Supreme through different paths.

- a. The Rig Vedi would approach this goal through prayer and intellectual pursuits.
- b. The Yajur Vedi through Yagya and invocation of Agni to carry the message of the hymns to the Supreme.
- c. The Sama Vedi through musical renderings of the hymns
- d. The Atharva Vedi through tantra or other rituals.

The Vedas promote and accept all forms of religious practice in the pursuit of understanding and merging with the Supreme. Hence it is highly secular and tolerant in its teachings and/or preaching.

Without resort to in writing, our forefathers had devised many ways and different methods to keep it error free and to recite with correct pronunciation of letters/ words, correct duration for utterance of letters/ words and correct accent/ modulation of letters by applying numerous safeguards.

How much time it should take to utter each word is indicated by resort to the notation by "maatras"-the time it takes to pronounce

a short vowel. How to regulate breathing so that the vibrations can occur at what part of the body to give birth to the pure word and sound is also laid down in the Vedanga Seeksha. The Taitreeya Upanishad, for e.g., begins with Seeksha thus:

Seeksham Vyakyaa syaamah - Varna Swarah - Maatrabalam - Saama Santaanah

Seeksha deals with Varna, Swara, Maatra, Strength, Saama and Santaanah

Our Rishis prescribed several fool-proof methods to correctly recite the Veda mantra in various patterns and combinations known as Vaakya, Pada, Krama, Jata, Maala, Sikha, Rekha, Dhawaja, Danda, Ratha and Ghana

Vaakya Paatha or Samhita Paatha is to recite the mantras in a sentence straight. When mantras come in sentences, some of the words therein have to be conjoined in chanting.

Pada Paatha : To recite the Veda mantras, word by word, instead of joining the words. This gives the student of the Vedas, the knowledge of each word in a sentence.

Krama Paatha : In Krama Paatha, the first word of the mantra is added to the second, the second to the third, the third to the fourth and so on, until the whole sentence of the mantras is completed. The order of words will be 1-2 ; 2-3 ; 3-4 ; 4-5 and so on. This helps the students to understand changes occurs in swara in such a combination. The person who is well versed in reciting the Krama Paatha is known as "Krama Vit" (like Veda vit) When the Pada itself is a Veshtana, then, as soon as it leaves from its turn, we have to recit the Veshtana. For the last pada in

a sentence also, we have to recite the Veshtana, whether it is a Pada Veshtana or not. If we express this in Mathematical series:

Mathematical Sequence, Series for Krama Patha:

Sentence (S) = P₁, P₂, P₃, P_(n-2), P_(n-1), P_n

Krama Turn (T) number (T₁ to n-1)

Turn 1 (T₁) = P₁, P₂ ;

Turn 2 (T₂) = P₂, P₃ ;

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Turn n-2 (T_{n-2}) = P_(n-2), P_(n-1) ;

Turn n-1(T_{n-1}) = P_(n-1), P_n ;

Hence General Combination for Krama Patha is :

Turn n-1(T_{n-1}) = P_(n-1), P_n ;

where, n > 1, and Max No. of Turn < n (without any Veshtana)

P_n = nth Pada in a Sentence

T_n = Turn of Krama Patha

n = Number of Pada in a Sentence

Jata Paatha : In Jata Paatha, the first two words are first recited together and then the words are recited in a reverse order and then again in the original order. Hence, Krama + Inverse of Krama + Krama = Jata. The order will be 1-2-2-1-1-2, 2-3-3-2-2-3, 3-4-4-3-3-4, 4-5-5-4-4-5 and so on. It is to be noted, there all six padas has to recited together with proper sandhi (junction) In Jata Paatha, there will be 5 sandhies. When the Pada itself is a Veshtana, then, as soon as it leaves from its turn, we have to recite the Veshtana. For the last pada in a sentence also, we have

to recite the Veshtana, whether it is a Pada Veshtana or not. If we express this in Mathematical series:

Mathematical Sequence, Series for Jata Patha:

Sentence (S) = P₁, P₂, P₃, P_(n-2), P_(n-1), P_n

Jata Turn (T) number (T₁ to n-1)

Turn 1 (T₁) = P₁, P₂, P₂, P₁, P₁, P₂ ;

Turn 2 (T₂) = P₂, P₃, P₃, P₂, P₂, P₃ ;

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Turn n-2 (T_{n-2}) = P_(n-2), P_(n-1), P_(n-1), P_(n-2), P_(n-2), P_(n-1) ;

Turn n-1(T_{n-1}) = P_(n-1), P_n, P_n, P_(n-1), P_(n-1), P_n ; **

Hence General Combination for Jata Patha is :

Turn n-1(T_{n-1}) = P_(n-1), P_n, P_n, P_(n-1), P_(n-1), P_n ;

where, n > 1, and Max No. of Turn < n (without any Veshtana)

P_n = nth Pada in a Sentence

T_n = Turn of Jata Patha

n = Number of Pada in a Sentence

Ghana paatha : This is one of the most popular form of recitations and requires years of learning and practice by the student. A scholar proficient in recitation in this format is honored as Ghana paathi. In Ghana Paatha the combination will be: 1-2-2-1-1-2-3-3-2-1-1-2-3

2-3-3-2-2-3-4-4-3-2-2-3-4, 3-4-4-3-3-4-5-5-4-3-3-4-5 and so on till last pada ends in that sentence. Hence, Jata + 3rd Pada + Inverse of 3 Padas + 3 Padas in Straight way = Ghana Patha. It is to be noted, there all 13 padas has to recited together with proper sandhi (junction) In Ghana Paatha, there will be 12 sandhies. When the Pada itself is a Veshtana, then, as soon as it leaves

from its turn, we have to recit the Veshtana. For the last pada in a sentence also, we have to recit the Veshtana, whether it is a Pada Veshtana or not. If we express this in Mathematical series:

Mathematical Sequence, Series for Ghana Patha:

Sentence (S) = P₁, P₂, P₃, P_(n-2), P_(n-1), P_n

Jata Turn (T) number (T₁ to n-2)

Turn 1 (T₁) = P₁, P₂, P₂, P₁, P₁, P₂, P₃, P₃, P₂, P₁, P₁, P₂, P₃ ;

Turn 2 (T₂) = P₂, P₃, P₃, P₂, P₂, P₃, P₄, P₄, P₃, P₂, P₂, P₃, P₄ ;

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Turn n-2 (T_{n-2}) = P_(n-2), P_(n-1), P_(n-1), P_(n-2), P_(n-2), P_(n-1), P_n, P_n, P_(n-), P_(n-2), P_(n-2), P_(n-1), P_n ;

Turn n-1(T_{n-1}) = P_(n-1), P_n, P_n, P_(n-1), P_(n-1), P_n **

Hence General Combination for Ghana Patha is :

Turn n-2 (T_{n-2}) = P_(n-2), P_(n-1), P_(n-1), P_(n-2), P_(n-2), P_(n-1), P_n, P_n, P_(n-), P_(n-2), P_(n-2), P_(n-1), P_n ;

where, n > 2, and Max No. of Turn < n-1 (without any Veshtana)

P_n = nth Pada in a Sentence

T_n = Turn of Jata Patha

n = Number of Pada in a Sentence

When a sentence has more than 4 words (Padas), then 1st Pada repeats 5 times, 2nd Pada 10 times and last but one 11 times, and last pada 6 times back and forth in different combinations. (except for Pada Veshtana and Veshtana for the end of the sentence). The rest of padas (i e from 3rd pada to last but two will repeat for 13 times)

** We could see, even if a sentence has any number of pada, for last two padas, the Ghana is as same as Jata.

When a sentence has 4 Padas, then 1st Pada repeats 5 times, 2nd Pada 10 times, 3rd Pada 11 times and the last (4th) Pada 6 times back and forth in different combinations. (except for Pada Veshtana and Veshtana for the end of the sentence).

When a sentence has 3 Padas, then 1st Pada repeats 5 times, 2nd Pada 8 times, and the last (3rd) Pada 6 times back and forth in different combinations. (except for Pada Veshtana and Veshtana for the end of the sentence).

When a sentence has only 2 padas, then it is like Jata Patha only.

When we listen to a Ghanapathi reciting Vedas in Ghana form, we note that he repeats padas in various ways, back and forth and in different patterns. This would be pleasant to the ears and creates a sense of happiness within. It would seem that the natural splendor of the Veda mantras is heightened, as it were. We can now appreciate the rigor, a Ghanapathi has to go through in his education to learn, by heart, the thousands of mantras, to be able to recite in Ghana form.

The Samhita Paatha and Pada Paatha are called Prakrithi (or natural) Paathas, as the words of the mantras occur in normal sequence. The rest are called Vikrithi (or artificial and not natural) Paathas. In Krama, although the words do not occur in the natural order of one, two and three, since they do not revert like one after two and two after three, it cannot be called fully Vikrithi or artificial.

The Vikrithis are eight in number:

jatā mālā śikhā rekhā dhvajō daṇḍō rathō ghana :
aṣṭau vikṛtaya : proktā ; kramapūrvā maharṣibhi :

Jataa, Maalaa, Shikhaa, Rekhaa, Dhwaja, Danda, and Ratha and Ghana

Two types of maalaa (garland) exist: a) krama maalaa and b) pushpa maalaa. This is similar to krama paatha in that two-word units with the characteristic overlapping are the foundation. Shikhaa (top knot) is similar to jataa except that, third word will be combined at the end of Jataa . Recitations in Rekhaa (row), dhwaja (flag), Danda (Rod), and Ratha (chariot) are more complex and the learner/reader should get advice from pundits.

Further, there are three types of ratha, namely, dvipaada (two wheels), tripaada (three wheels) and chatuspaada (4 wheels). Each wheel corresponds to a quarter verse (rik) of the text.

By repeating the words in manifold ways, the correct tally of the words was also kept which naturally ensured the purity of the texts. They also believed that higher merits (punya) accompany greater complexities in chanting – for example, a Ghana recitation is several orders higher in merit than jataa recitation, which is higher in merit than krama recitation and so on.

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