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=====UNDERSTANDING HINDUISM=====

Hindu Scriptures

Table of Vedas and their branches

As set out by Sri V.A.K.Ayer

Vedas	Rig Veda	Krishna Yajur Veda	Sukla Yajur Veda	Samaveda	Atharva Veda
No.of original Recensions	21	85	17	101	9
Available Recensions or Shakas	Shakala	Taitireeya Mitrayani Katha Kapisthala Swetaswetara	Kanva, Madyandina (Vajasanya)	Kauthuma, Ranaayaneeya, Jaimineeya	Pippalada Saunaka
Brahmanas	Aitaraya, Kaushitiki (or Shankhyayana)	Taittireeya (Samhita) Taitireeya	Sathapatha	Panchavimsa, Shadvimsa, Samavidhana, Aarsheya, Mantra, Devatadhyaya, Vamsa, Jaimineeya	Gopatha
Aranyakas	Aitaraya, Sankhyayana	Taittireeya	Brahad- aranyaka	-	-
Upanishads	Aitaraya, Kaushitiki, Bhashkala	Aitaraya, Maharanyana, Mitrayani, Katakha, Swetaswetara	Isavasya, Brihadaranyaka	Chandogya, Kena	Prasna, Mundaka, Mandukya
Shrouta Sutras	Aswalayana, Shankhyayana	Apasthamba, Baudhayana, Hiranyakesi, Bharadwaja, Vaikhanasa, Vadhoola, Manava, Varaha	Katyayana (Paaraskara)	Khadira, Latyayana, Drahyayana, Jaimineeya	Vikhanasa
Grihya Sutras	Ashwalayana, Shankyayana	Manava, Apasthamba, Baudhayana, Hiranyakesi, Vaikhanasa, Katha	Kaatyayana (Paaraskara)	Kadira, Gobhila, Gautama, Jaimineeya	Kaushika
Dharma Sutras	Vasishtha	Apasthamba Baudhayana Hiranyakesi	-----	Gautama	----
Upaveda	Ayurveda	Dhanurveda	Dhanurveda	Gandharvaveda	Artha-Sastra

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Hindu Scriptures Part 1

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The Vedas, The Upanishads, Puranas, Nyaya, Vaisesika,
Mimamsa, Brahma-Sutras, Sankhya, Yoga, Dharma-Sastras,
The Upa-Vedas, The Kalas.

1. The Valmiki-Ramayana
2. The Yogavasishtha
3. The Mahabharata
4. The Harivamsa

Hindu Scriptures Part 1

By Swami Shivananda
The Divine Life Society, Rishikesh

Sanskrit Literature

Sanskrit literature can be classified under six orthodox heads and four secular heads. The six orthodox sections form the authoritative scriptures of the Hindus. The four secular sections embody the latter developments in classical Sanskrit literature.

The six scriptures are:

1. Srutis
2. Smritis
3. Itihasas
4. Puranas
5. Agamas
6. Darsanas

The four secular writings are:

1. Subhashitas
2. Kavyas
3. Natakas
4. Alankaras

The Scriptures

The Srutis

The Srutis are called the Vedas, or the Amnaya. The Hindus have received their religion through revelation, the Vedas. These are direct intuitional revelations and are held to be Apaurusheya or entirely superhuman, without any author in particular. The Veda is the glorious pride of the Hindus, nay, of the whole world!

The term Veda comes from the root Vid, to know. The word Veda means knowledge. When it is applied to scripture, it signifies a book of knowledge. The Vedas are the foundational scriptures of the Hindus. The Veda is the source of the other five sets of scriptures, why, even of the secular and the materialistic. The Veda is the storehouse of Indian wisdom and is a memorable glory which man can never forget till eternity.

Revealed Truth Without Beginning Or End

The Vedas are the eternal truths revealed by God to the great Rishis of India. The word Rishi means a seer, from DRIS, to see. The Rishi is the Mantra-Drashta, a seer of Mantra or thought. The thought was not his own. The Rishis saw the truths or heard them. Therefore, the Vedas are what are heard (Sruti). The Rishi did not write. He did not create it out of his mind. He was the seer of thought which existed already. He was only the spiritual discoverer of the thought. He is not the inventor of the Veda.

The Vedas represent the spiritual experiences of the Rishis of yore. The Rishi is only a medium or an agent to transmit to people the intuitional experiences which he received. The truths of the Vedas are revelations. All the other religions of the world claim their authority as being delivered by special messengers of God to certain persons, but the Vedas do not owe their authority to any one. They are themselves the authority as they are eternal, as they are the Knowledge of the Lord.

Lord Brahma, the Creator, imparted the divine knowledge to the Rishis or seers. The Rishis disseminated the knowledge. The Vedic Rishis were great realised persons (souls) who had direct intuitive perception of Brahman or the Truth. They were inspired teachers. They built a simple, grand and perfect system of religion and philosophy from which the founders and teachers of all other religions have drawn their inspiration.

The Vedas are the oldest books in the library of man. The truths contained in all religions are derived from the Vedas and are ultimately traceable to the Vedas. The Vedas are the fountain-head of religion. The Vedas are the ultimate source to which all religious knowledge can be traced. Religion is of divine origin. It was revealed by God to man in the earliest times. It is embodied in the Vedas.

The Vedas are eternal. They are without beginning and end. An ignorant man may say how a book can be without beginning or end. By the Vedas, no books are meant. Vedas came out of the breath of the Lord. They are the words of God. The Vedas are not the utterances of persons. They are

not the composition of any human mind. They were never written, never created. They are eternal and impersonal. The date of the Vedas has never been fixed. It can never be fixed. Vedas are eternal spiritual Truths. Vedas are an embodiment of divine knowledge. The books may be destroyed, but the knowledge cannot be destroyed. Knowledge is eternal. In that sense, the Vedas are eternal.

The Four Vedas And Their Sub Divisions

The Veda is divided into four great books:

1. The Rig-Veda
2. The Yajur-Veda
3. The Sama-Veda
4. The Atharva-Veda

The Yajur-Veda is again divided into two parts:

1. The Sukla Yajur-Veda
2. The Krishna Yajur-Veda.

The Krishna or the Tattiriya is the older book and the Sukla or Vajasaneya is a later revelation to Sage Yajnavalkya from the resplendent Sun-God.

The Rig-Veda is divided into twenty-one sections, the Yajur-Veda into one hundred and nine sections, the Sama-Veda into one thousand sections and Atharva-Veda into fifty sections. In all, the whole Veda is thus divided into one thousand one hundred and eighty recensions.

Each Veda consists of four parts:

1. The Mantra-Samhitas or hymns.
2. The Brahmanas or explanations of Mantras or rituals.
3. The Aranyakas (philosophical interpretations of the rituals).
4. The Upanishads (The essence or the knowledge portion of the Vedas).

The division of the Vedas into four parts is to suit the four stages in a man's life.

The Mantra-Samhitas are hymns in praise of the Vedic God for attaining material prosperity here and happiness hereafter. They are metrical poems comprising prayers, hymns and incantations addressed to various deities, both subjective and objective. The Mantra portion of the Vedas is useful for the Brahmacharins (celibate; one who belongs to the first of the four Asramas or orders of life; one who lives in purity and studies the Veda; the first 25 years of life).

The Brahmana portions guide people to perform sacrificial rites. They are prose explanations of the method of using the Mantras in the Yajna or the sacrifice. The Brahmana portion is suitable for the householder (Grihastha; one who belongs to the second of the four Asramas or orders of life; from 25 to 50 years of age).

The Aranyakas are the forest books, the mystical sylvan texts which give philosophical interpretations of the Rituals. The Aranyakas are intended for the Vanaprasthas or hermits who prepare themselves for taking Sannyasa. (Vanaprastha = one who leads the third stage of life; from 50 to 75 years of age).

The Upanishads are the most important portion of the Vedas. The Upanishads contain the essence or the knowledge portion of the Vedas. The philosophy of the Upanishads is sublime, profound, lofty and soul-stirring. The Upanishads speak of the identity of the individual soul and the Supreme Soul. They reveal the most subtle and deep spiritual truths. The Upanishads are useful for the Sannyasins. (Sannyasi or Sannyasin = a monk; one who has embraced the life of complete renunciation ; one belonging to the fourth or the highest stage of life; from 75 to 100 years of age).

[Note: Although the division of the Vedas into four parts is to suit the four stages in a man's life, the study of the four Vedas is done by Brahmacharins or celibate students and the knowledge thus acquired serves as the basis of the goal of life through all the four stages of life. The studies of the Vedas continue throughout one's life. (Refer also to Dharma, Artha, Kama & Moksha). Thus the knowledge of the Upanishads is not to be confined to the last stage of life. The mind of the Sannyasin is intensely focussed upon the teachings of the Upanishads.]

The subject matter of the whole Veda is divided into

1. Karma-Kanda
2. Upasana-Kanda
3. Jnana-Kanda.

The Karma-Kanda or Ritualistic Section deals with various sacrifices and rituals.

The Upasana-Kanda or Worship-Section deals with various kinds of worship or meditation.

The Jnana-Kanda or Knowledge-Section deals with the highest knowledge of Nirguna Brahman. (Nirguna = without attributes or forms. Brahman = the Supreme Reality).

The Mantras and the Brahmanas constitute Karma-Kanda (rituals).

The Aranyakas constitute Upasana-Kanda (worship).

The Upanishads constitute Jnana-Kanda (knowledge).

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The Mantra Samhitas

The Rig-Veda Samhita is the grandest book of the Hindus, the oldest and the best. It is the great Indian scripture, which no Hindu would forget to adore from the core of his heart. Its style, the language and the tone are most beautiful and mysterious. Its immortal Mantras embody the greatest truths of existence, and it is perhaps the greatest treasure in all the scriptural literature of the world. Its priest is called the Hotri.

The Yajur-Veda Samhita is mostly in prose and is meant to be used by the Adhvaryu, the Yajur-Vedic priest, for superfluous explanations of the rites in sacrifices, supplementing the Rig-Vedic Mantras.

The Sama-Veda Samhita is mostly borrowed from the Rig-Vedic Samhita, and is meant to be sung by the Udgatri, the Sama- Vedic priest, in sacrifice.

The Atharva-Veda Samhita is meant to be used by the Brahma, the Atharva-Vedic priest, to correct the mispronunciations and wrong performances that may accidentally be committed by the other three priests of the sacrifice.

The Brahmanas and The Aranyakas

There are two Brahmanas to the **Rig-Veda**:

1. The Aitareya
2. The Sankhayana

The Satapatha Brahmana belongs to the **Sukla Yajur-Veda**.

The **Krishna Yajur-Veda** has the Taittiriya and the Maitrayana Brahmanas.

The Tandya or Panchavimsa, the Shadvimsa, the Chhandogya, the Adbhuta, the Arsheya and the Upanishad Brahmanas belong to the **Sama-Veda**.

The Brahmana of the **Atharva-Veda** is called the Gopatha.

Each of the Brahmana has got an Aranyaka.

The Upanishads

The Upanishads are the concluding portions of the Vedas or the end of the Vedas. The teaching based on them is called

Vedanta. The Upanishads are the gist and the goal of the Vedas. They form the very foundation of Hinduism.

There are as many Upanishads to each Veda as there are Sakhas, branches or recensions, i.e., 21, 109, 1000 and 50 respectively to the four Vedas (The Rig-Veda, The Yajur-Veda, The Sama-Veda and the Atharva-Veda).

The different philosophers of India belonging to different schools such as Monism, Qualified Monism, Dualism, Pure Monism, Difference-cum non-difference, etc., have acknowledged the supreme authority of the Upanishads. They have given their own interpretations, but they have obeyed the authority. They have built their philosophy on the foundation of the Upanishads.

Even the Western scholars have paid their tribute to the seers of the Upanishads. At a time when Westerners were clad in barks and were sunk in deep ignorance, the Upanishadic seers were enjoying the eternal bliss of the Absolute (God), and had the highest culture and civilisation.

The most important Upanishads are :

Isa, Kena, Katha, Prasna, Mundaka, Mandukya, Aitareya, Taittiriya, Chhandogya, Brihadaranyaka, Kaushitaki, and Svetasvatara and Maitrayani. These are supremely authoritative.

May the fundamental truths of the Vedas be revealed unto you all, like the Amalaka fruit in the palm of your hand. May Gayatri, the blessed Mother of the Vedas, impart to you the milk of Knowledge, the ancient wisdom of the Upanishads.

Click below on underlined words
(Pages featuring extracts from Upanishads)

[Chhandogya Upanishad](#)

[Katha Upanishad](#)

[Mandukya Upanishad](#)

[Mundaka Upanishad](#)

Wisdom versus knowledge

[Mundaka Upanishad](#)

Creation

[Svetasvatara Upanishad](#)

The Upa-Vedas

There are four Upa-Vedas or subsidiary Vedas:

1. The Ayurveda (science of life and health)
2. The Dhanurveda (science of war)
3. The Gandharva Veda (science of music)
4. The Arthasastra (science of polity)

The Vedangas

There are six Angas or explanatory limbs, to the Vedas:

1. The Siksha of Maharshi Panini (Phonetics)
2. Vyakarana of Maharshi Panini (Sanskrit Grammar)
3. The Chhandas of Pingalacharya (Prosody metre)
4. The Nirukta of Yaska (Philosophy or etymology)
5. The Jyotisha of Garga (Astronomy and astrology)
6. The Kalpas (Srauta, Grihya, Dharma and Sulba) belonging to the authorship of various Rishis.

Siksha is the knowledge of phonetics. Siksha deals with pronunciation and accent. The text of the Vedas is arranged in various forms or Pathas. The Pada-patha gives each word its separate form. The Krama-patha connects the word in pairs.

Vyakarana is Sanskrit Grammar. Panini's books are most famous. Without knowledge of Vyakarana, you cannot understand the Vedas.

Chhandas is metre dealing with prosody.

Nirukta is philosophy or etymology.

Jyotisha is astronomy and astrology. It deals with the movements of the heavenly bodies, planets, etc., and their influence on human affairs.

Kalpa is the method or ritual. The Srauta Sutras which explain the ritual of sacrifices belong to Kalpa. The Sulba, which treat of the measurements which are necessary for laying out the sacrificial area, also belong to Kalpa. The Grihya Sutras which concern domestic life, and the Dharma Sutras which deal with ethics, customs and laws, also belong to Kalpa.

The Pratishakhyas, Padapathas, Kramapathas, Upalekhas, Anukramanis, Daivatsamhitas, Parisishtas, Prayogas, Paddhatis, Karikas, Khilas, and Vyuhas are further elaborations in the rituals of the Kalpa Sutras.

Among the Kalpa Sutras, the Asvalayana, Sankhayana and the Sambhavya belong to the Rig-Veda. The Mashaka, Latyayana, Drahyayana, Gobhila and Khadira belong to the Sama-Veda. The Katyayana and Paraskara belong to the Sukla Yajur Veda. The Apastamba, Hiranyakesi, Bodhayana, Bharadvaja, Manava, Vaikhanasa and the Kathaka belong to the Krishna Yajur-Veda. The Vaitana and the Kaushika belong to the Atharva-Veda.

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The Smritis

Next in importance to the Sruti are the Smritis or secondary scriptures. These are the ancient sacred law-codes of the Hindus dealing with the Sanatana-Varnasrama-Dharma. They supplement and explain the ritualistic injunctions

called Vidhis in the Vedas. The Smriti or Dharma Sastra is founded on the Sruti. The Smritis are based on the teachings of the Vedas. The Smriti stands next in authority to the Sruti (Vedas). It explains and develops Dharma. It lays down the laws which regulate Hindu national, social, family and individual obligations.

The works that are expressly called Smritis are the law books, Dharma Sastras. Smriti, in a broader sense, covers all Hindu Sastras (scriptures) save the Vedas.

The laws for regulating Hindu society from time to time are codified in the Smritis. The Smritis have laid down definite rules and laws to guide the individuals and communities in their daily conduct and to regulate their manners and customs. The Smritis have given detailed instructions, according to the conditions of the time, to all classes of men regarding their duties in life.

The Hindu learns how he has to spend his whole life from these Smritis. The duties of Varnashramas (the four stages of life) are clearly given in these books. The Smritis describe certain acts and prohibit some others for a Hindu, according to his birth and stage of life. The object of the Smritis is to purify the heart of man and take him gradually to the supreme abode of immortality and make him perfect and free.

These Smritis have varied from time to time. The injunctions and prohibitions of the Smritis are related to the particular social surroundings. As these surroundings and essential conditions of the Hindu society changed from time to time, new Smritis had to be compiled by the sages of different ages and different parts of India.

The Celebrated Hindu Law-Givers

From time to time, a great lawgiver would take his birth. He would codify the existing laws and remove those that had become obsolete. He would make some alterations, adaptations, readjustments, additions and subtractions, to suit the needs of the time and see that the way of living of the people would be in accordance with the teachings of the Veda. Of such law-givers, Manu, Yajnavalkya and Parasara are the most celebrated persons. Hindu society is founded on, and governed by, the laws made by these three great sages. The Smritis are named after them. We have Manu Smriti or Manava Dharma-Sastra (Laws of Manu or the Institutes of Manu), Yajnavalkya Smriti and Parsara Smriti. Manu is the greatest law-giver of the race. He is the oldest lawgiver as well. The Yajnavalkya Smriti follows the same general lines as the Manu Smriti and is next in importance to it. Manu Smriti and Yajnavalkya Smriti are universally accepted at the present time as authoritative works all over India. Yajnavalkya Smriti is chiefly consulted in all matters of Hindu Law. Even the present day Government of India is applying some of these laws.

There are eighteen main Smritis or Dharma Sastras. The most important are those of Manu, Yajnavalkya and Parasara. The other fifteen are those of Vishnu, Daksha, Samvarta, Vyasa, Harita, Satatapa, Vasishtha, Yama, Apastamba, Gautama, Devala, Sankha-Likhita, Usana, Atri and Saunaka.

The Laws of Manu are intended for the Satya Yuga; those of Yajnavalkya are for the Treta Yuga; those of Sankha and Likhita are for the Dvapara Yuga; and those of Parasara are for the Kali Yuga.

The laws and rules which are based entirely upon our social positions, time and clime, must change with the changes in society and changing conditions of time and clime. Then only the progress of the Hindu society can be ensured.

Need For A New Law-Code

(By Swami Shivananda, The Divine Life Society, Rishikesh)

It is not possible to follow some of the laws of Manu at present time. We can follow their spirit and not the letter. Society is advancing. When it advances, it outgrows certain laws which were valid and helpful at a particular stage of its growth. Many new things which were not thought out by the old law-givers have come into existence now. It is no use insisting people to follow now those old laws which have become obsolete.

Our present day society has changed considerably. A new Smriti to suit the requirements of this age is very necessary. Another sage will place before the Hindus of our days a new suitable code of laws. Time is ripe for a new Smriti. Cordial greetings to this age.

The Inner Voice Of Dharma

He who is endowed with a pure heart through protracted Tapas (austerity), Japa, Kirtana, meditation and service of Guru and who has a very clear conscience, can be guided by the inner voice in matters of Dharma or duty or moral action. The inner voice that proceeds from a clean heart filled with Sattva is, indeed, the voice of God or Soul or Antaryamin or Inner Ruler. This voice is more than Smriti. It is Smriti of Smritis. Purify your heart and train yourself to hear this inner voice. Keep your ear in tune with the 'voice'.

The Sruti And The Smriti

The Sruti and the Smriti are the two authoritative sources of Hinduism. Sruti literally means what is heard, and Smriti means what is remembered. Sruti is revelation and Smriti is tradition. Upanishad is a Sruti. Bhagavad-Gita is a Smriti. (Bhagavad-Gita forms part of The Mahabharata, Bhishma Parva, Sections XIII – XLII (also known as Bhagavad-Gita Parva).

Sruti is direct experience. Great Rishis heard the eternal truths of religion and left a record of them for the benefit of posterity. These records constitute the Vedas. Hence, Sruti is primary authority. Smriti is a recollection of that experience. Hence, it is secondary authority. The Smritis or Dharma Sastras also are books written by sages, but they are not the final authority. If there is anything in a Smriti which contradicts the Sruti, the Smriti is to be rejected.

The Itihasas (history)

The Friendly Treatises And the Commanding Treatises

There are four books under this heading:

1. The Valmiki-Ramayana
2. The Yogavasishta

3. The Mahabharata

4. The Harivamsa

These embody all that is in the Vedas, but only in a simpler manner. These are called the Suhrit-Samhitas or the Friendly Treatises, while the Vedas are called the Prabhu-Samhitas or the Commanding Treatises with great authority. These works explain the great universal truths in the form of historical narratives, stories and dialogues. These are very interesting volumes and are liked by all, from the inquisitive child to the intellectual scholar.

The Itihasas give us beautiful stories of absorbing interest and importance, through which all the fundamental teachings of Hinduism are indelibly impressed on one's mind. The laws of Smritis and the principles of the Vedas are stamped firmly on the minds of the Hindus through the noble and marvelous deeds of their great national heroes. We get a clear idea of Hinduism from these sublime stories.

The common man cannot comprehend the high abstract philosophy of the Upanishads and the Brahma Sutras. Hence, the compassionate sages Valmiki and Vyasa wrote the Itihasas for the benefit of common people. The same philosophy is presented with analogies and parables in a tasteful form to the common run of mankind.

The well known Itihasas (histories) are the epics (Mahakavyas), Ramayana and Mahabharata. They are two very popular and useful Sastras of the Hindus. The Ramayana was written by the Sage Valmiki, and the Mahabharata by Sage Vyasa.

The Ramayana

The Ramayana, the Adi-Kavya or the first epic poem, relates the story of Sri Rama. The ideal man. It is the history of the family of the Solar race descended from Ikshvaku, in which was born Sri Ramachandra, the Avatara of Lord Vishnu, and his three brothers. The ideal characters like Rama, Sita, Lakshmana, Bharata and Sri Hanuman that we find in Ramayana firmly established Hindu Dharma in our minds. The story of the birth of Rama and his brothers, their education and marriages, the exile of Sri Rama, the carrying off and recovery of Sita, his wife, the destruction of Ravana, the Rakshasa King of Lanka, and the reign of Sri Rama, are described in detail in Ramayana. How a man should behave towards his superiors, equals, and inferiors, how a king ought to rule his kingdom, how a man should lead his life in this world, how he can obtain his release, freedom, and perfection, may be learnt from this excellent epic. The Ramayana gives a vivid picture of Indian life. Even today our domestic, social, and national ideals are copied from the noble characters in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. The great national heroes stand even today as beacon-lights to guide and inspire the people of the whole world. The lives of Rama, Bharata and Lakshmana provide a model of fraternal affection and mutual service. Sri Hanuman stands as an ideal unique Karma Yogi. The life of Sita is regarded as the most perfect example of womanly fidelity, chastity and sweetness. The Ramayana is written in twenty-four thousand verses, by Sage Valmiki.

The Mahabharata

The Mahabharata is the history of the Pandavas and the Kauravas. It gives a description of the great war, the Battle of Kurukshetra, which broke out between the Kauravas and the Pandavas who were cousins and descendants of the Lunar race. The Mahabharata is an encyclopedia of Hindu Dharma. It is rightly called the fifth Veda. There is really no theme in religion, philosophy, mysticism and polity which this great epic does not touch and expound. It contains very noble moral teachings, useful lessons of all kinds, many beautiful stories and episodes, discourses, sermons, parables and dialogues which set forth the principles of morals and metaphysics. The Pandavas obtained victory through the grace of Lord Krishna. The Mahabharata is written in one hundred thousand verses by Sage Krishna-Dwaipayana Vyasa

The Bhagavad-Gita

The most important part of the Mahabharata is the Bhagavad-Gita. It is a marvelous dialogue between Lord Krishna and Arjuna on the battlefield, before the commencement of the great war. Bhagavan Sri Krishna became the charioteer of Arjuna. Sri Krishna explained the essentials of Hindu religion to Arjuna. Just as the Upanishads contain the cream of the Vedas, so does the Gita contain the cream of the Upanishads. The Upanishads are the cows. Lord Krishna is the cowherd. Arjuna is the calf. The Gita is the milk. The wise men are those who drink the milk of Gita.

The Gita is the most precious jewel of Hindu literature. It is a universal gospel. The Gita teaches the Yoga of Synthesis. It ranks high in the religious literature of the world.

Arjuna saw before him his dear relatives and teachers in the battlefield. He fainted and refused to fight against them. Then Lord Krishna imparted knowledge of the Self to Arjuna and convinced him that it was his duty to fight regardless of the consequences. Afterwards Arjuna gave up his Moha, or delusion. All his doubts were cleared. He fought against the Kauravas and achieved victory.

Knowledge Of Ancient Indian History and Culture

The Mahabharata contains also immortal discourse of Bhishma on Dharma, which he gave to Yudhishtira, when he was lying on the bed of arrows. The whole Mahabharata forms an encyclopedia of history, morals and religion unsurpassed by any other epic in the world.

The Ramayana and the Mahabharata speak to us clearly about ancient India, about her people, her customs, her ways of living, her arts, her civilisation and culture, her manufactures, etc. If you read these two books, you will come to know how great India once was, and you will be inspired to make her great once more. No other country has produced so many great men, great teachers, great Yogis, great seers, great Rishis, great prophets, great Acharyas, great kings, great heroes, great statesmen, great patriots and great benefactors, as India. The more you know of India and Hinduism, the more you will honour and love it and the more thankful to the Lord you will be that you were born in India as a Hindu. Glory to India! Glory to Hinduism! Glory to the seers of the Upanishads! Glory, glory to Lord Krishna, the author of the Song Divine (Bhagavad-Gita).

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The Puranas

The Puranas are of the same class as the Itihasas. They have five characteristics (Panch-Lakshana):

1. History
2. Cosmology (with various symbolical illustrations of philosophical principles)
3. Secondary creation
4. Genealogy of kings
5. Manavantaras

All the Puranas belong to the class of Suhrit-Samhitas.

Vyasa is the compiler of the Puranas from age to age; and for this age, he is Krishna-Dwaipayana Vyasa, the son of Parsara.

The Puranas were written to popularise the religion of the Vedas. They contain the essence of the Vedas. The aim of the Puranas is to impress on the minds of the masses the teachings of the Vedas and to generate in them devotion to God, through concrete examples, myths, stories, legends, lives of saints, kings and great men, allegories and chronicles of great historical events. The sages made use of these things to illustrate the eternal principles of religion. The Puranas were meant, not for the scholars, but for the ordinary people who could not understand high philosophy and who could not study the Vedas.

The Darsanas are very stiff. They are meant only for the learned few. The Puranas are meant for the masses with inferior intellect. Religion is taught in a very easy and interesting way through these Puranas. Even to this day, the Puranas are popular. The Puranas contain the history of remote times. They also give a description of the regions of the universe not visible to the ordinary physical eye. They are very interesting to read and are full of information of all kinds. Children hear the stories from their grandmothers, Pandits and Purohits (priests) hold Kathas in temples, on banks of rivers and in other important places. Agriculturalists, labourers and bazaar people (common masses) hear the stories.

The Eighteen Puranas

There are eighteen main Puranas and an equal number of subsidiary Puranas or Upa-Puranas. The main Puranas are:

- 1.Vishnu Purana, 2.Naradiya Purana, 3.Srimad Bhagavata Purana,
- 4.Garuda (Suparna) Purana, 5.Padma Purana, 6.Varah Purana, 7.Brahma Purana,

8.Brahmanda Purana, 9.Brahma Vaivarta Purana, 10.Markandeya Purana, 11.Bhavishya Purana, 12.Vamana Purana, 13.Matsya Purana, 14.Kurma Purana,

15.Linga Purana, 16.Siva Purana, 17.Skanda Purana and 18.Agni Purana.

Of these, six are Sattvic Puranas and glorify Vishnu; Six are Rajasic Puranas and glorify Brahma; six are Tamasic Puranas and glorify Siva.

Neophytes or beginners in the spiritual path are puzzled when they go through Siva Purana and Vishnu Purana. In Siva Purana, Lord Siva is highly eulogised and an inferior position is given to Lord Vishnu. Sometimes Vishnu is belittled. In Vishnu Purana, Lord Hari (Vishnu) is highly eulogised and the inferior status is given to Lord Siva. Sometimes Lord Siva is belittled. This is only to increase the faith of the devotees in their particular Ishta-Devata (favourite or tutelary deity). Lord Siva and Lord Vishnu are one.

The best among the Puranas are the Srimad Bhagavata and the Vishnu Purana. The most popular is the Srimad Bhagavata Purana. Next comes Vishnu Purana. A portion of the Markandeya Purana is well known to all Hindus as Chandi, or Devimahatmya. Worship of God as the Divine Mother is its theme. Chandi is read widely by the Hindus on sacred days and Navaratri (Durga Puja) days.

Srimad Bhagavata Purana and the Ten Avatars

The Srimad Bhagavad Purana is a chronicle of the various Avatars of Lord Vishnu. There are ten Avatars of Vishnu. The aim of every Avatara is to save the world from some great danger, to destroy the wicked and protect the virtuous. The ten Avatars are: Matsya (the Fish), Kurma (the Tortoise), Varaha (the Boar), Narasimha (the Man-Lion), Vamana (the Dwarf), Parsurama (Rama with the axe, the destroyer of the Kshatriya race), Ramachandra (the hero of Ramayana, the son of King Dasharatha; Sri Rama who destroyed Ravana), Sri Krishna (the teacher of the Bhagavad Gita), Buddha (the prince-ascetic and the founder of Buddhism), and Kalki (the hero riding on a white horse, who is still to come at the end of the Kali-Yuga).

The object of the Matsya (Fish) Avatara was to save Vaivasvata Manu from destruction by a deluge.

The object of Kurma (Tortoise) Avatara was to enable the world to recover some precious things that were lost in the deluge. The Kurma gave its back for keeping (supporting) the churning rod when the gods and the Asuras (demons) churned the ocean of milk.

The purpose of Varaha Avatara was to rescue from the waters, the earth which had been dragged down by a demon named Hiranyaksha.

The purpose of Narasimha Avatara, half lion and half man, was to free the world from the oppression of Hiranyakasipu, a demon, the father of Bhakta Prahlada.

The object of Vamana Avatara was to restore the power of the gods which had been eclipsed by the penance and devotion of King Bali.

The object of Parasurama Avatara was to deliver the country from the oppression of the Kshatriya rulers. Parasurama destroyed the Kshatriya race twenty-one times.

The object of Rama Avatara was to destroy the wicked Ravana.

The object of Sri Krishna Avatara was to destroy Kamsa and other demons, to deliver His wonderful message of the Gita in the Mahabharata war, and to become the centre of the Bhakti Schools of India.

The object of Buddha Avatara was to prohibit animal sacrifices and teach piety.

The object of the Kalki Avatara is the destruction of the wicked and the re-establishment of virtue.

The Tamil Puranas

Lord Siva incarnated Himself in the form of Dakshinamurti to impart knowledge to the four Kumaras. He took human form to initiate Sambandhar, Manikkavasagar and Pattinathar. He appeared in flesh and blood to help his devotees and relieve their sufferings. The divine Lilas (sports) of Lord Siva are recorded in the Tamil Puranas like Siva Purana, Periya Purana, Siva Parakramam and Tiruvilayadal Purana.

The Upa-Puranas

The eighteen Upa-Puranas are: SanatKumara, Narasimha, Brihannaradiya, Sivarahasya, Durvasa, Kapila, Vamana, Bhargava, Varuna, Kalika, Samba, Nandi, Surya, Parasara, Vasishtha, Devi-Bhagavata, Ganesa and Hamsa.

Utility of the Puranas

Study of the Puranas, listening to sacred recitals of scriptures, describing and expounding of the transcendent Lilas (divine sports) of the Blessed Lord – these form an important part of Sadhana (spiritual practice) of the Lord's devotee. It is most pleasing to the Lord. Sravana (hearing of the Srutis or scriptures) is a part of Navavidha-Bhakti (nine modes of devotion). Kathas (narrative or story) and Upanyasas open the springs of devotion in the hearts of hearers and develop Prema-Bhakti (divine love for God) which confers immortality on the Jiva (individual soul).

[Note: The nine modes of devotion are: Hearing His (God's) names and glories, singing them, remembering the Lord, worship (service) of His Feet, adoration with flowers, prostrations, regarding oneself as His servant, as His friend, and total self-surrender.]

The language of the Vedas is archaic, and the subtle philosophy of the Vedanta and the Upanishads is difficult to grasp and assimilate. Hence, the Puranas are of special value as they present philosophical truths and precious teachings in an easier manner. They give ready access to the mysteries of life and the key to bliss. Imbibe their teachings. Start a new life of Dharma-Nishtha and Adhyatmic Sadhana from this very day.

[Note; Dharma-Nishtha = steadfastness or establishment in Dharma.
Adhyatmic (pertaining to the Inner Self) Sadhana (spiritual practice)]

The Agamas

Another class of popular scriptures are the Agamas. The Agamas are theological treatises and practical manuals of divine worship. The Agamas include the Tantras, Mantras and Yantras. These are treatises explaining the external worship of God, in idols, temples etc. All the Agamas treat of :

1. Jnana or Knowledge
2. Yoga or Concentration
3. Kriya or Esoteric Ritual
4. Charya or Exoteric Worship

They also give elaborate details about ontology and cosmology, liberation, devotion, meditation, philosophy of Mantras, mystic diagrams, charms and spells, temple-building, image-making, domestic observances, social rules, public festivals etc.

The Agamas are divided into three sections:

1. The Vaishnava
2. The Saiva
3. The Sakta

The chief sects of Hinduism, viz., Vaishnavism, Saivism and Saktism, base their doctrines and dogmas on their respective Agamas.

The Vaishnava Agamas or Pancharatra Agamas glorify God as Vishnu.

The Saiva Agamas glorify God as Siva and have given rise to an important school of philosophy known as Saiva-Siddhanta, which prevails in South India, particularly in the districts of Tirunelveli and Madurai.

The Sakta Agamas or Tantras glorify God as the Mother of the Universe, under one of the many names of Devi (Goddess).

The Agamas do not derive their authority from the Vedas, but are not antagonistic to them. They are all Vedic in spirit and character. That is the reason why they are regarded as authoritative.

The Vaishnava Agamas

The Vaishnava Agamas are of four kinds:

1. The Vaikhanasa
2. Pancharatra
3. Pratishthasara

4. Vijnana-lalita

The Brahma, Saiva, Kaumara, Vasishtha, Kapila, Gautamiya and Naradiya are the seven groups of the Pancharatras. The Naradiya section of the Santi Parva of the Mahabharata is the earliest source of information about the Pancharatras.

Vishnu is the Supreme Lord in the Pancharatra Agamas. The Vaishnavas regard the Pancharatra Agamas to be the most authoritative. They believe that these Agamas were revealed by Lord Vishnu Himself. Narada-Pancharatra says: "Everything from Brahma to a blade of grass is Lord Krishna". This corresponds to the Upanishadic declaration:

"All this is, verily, Brahman-Sarvam, Khalvidam Brahma".

The following extract is from The Mahabharata, Santi Parva Section CCCXL

Bhishma continued: Narada also, endued with great energy, having obtained the high favour that he had solicited, then proceeded with great speed to the retreat called Vadari, for beholding Nara and Narayana. This great Upanishad, perfectly consistent with the four Vedas, in harmony with Sankhya-Yoga, and called by him by the name of Pancharatra scriptures, and recited by Narayana Himself with His own mouth, was repeated by Narada in the presence of many listeners in the abode of Brahma (his sire) in exactly the same way in which Narayana (while that great God had showed Himself unto him) had recited it, and in which he had heard it from his own lips.

There are two hundred and fifteen of these Vaishnava texts. Isvara, Ahirbudhnya, Paushkara, Parama, Sattvata, Brihad-Brahma and Jnanamritasara Samhitas are the important ones.

The Saiva Agamas

The Saivas recognise twenty-eight Agamas, of which the chief is Kamika. The Agamas are also the basis of Kashmir Saivism which is called the Pratyabhijna system. The latter works of Pratyabhijna system show a distinct leaning to Advaitism (non-dualistic philosophy). The Southern Saivism, i.e., Saiva Siddhanta, and the Kashmir Saivism, regard these Agamas as their authority, besides the Vedas. Each Agama has Upa-Agamas (subsidiary Agamas). Of these, only fragmentary texts of twenty are extant. Lord Siva is the central God in the Saiva Agamas. They are suitable to this age, Kali Yuga. They are open to all castes and both the sexes.

The Sakta Agamas

There is another group of scriptures known as the Tantras. They belong to the Sakta cult. They glorify Sakti as the World-Mother. They dwell on the Sakti (energy) aspect of God and prescribe numerous courses of ritualistic worship of the Divine Mother in various forms. There are seventy-seven Agamas. These are very much like the Puranas in some respects. The texts are usually in the form of dialogues between Siva and Parvati. In some of these, Siva answers the questions put by Parvati, and in others, Parvati answers, Siva questioning.

Mahanirvana, Kularnava, Kulasara, Prapanchasara, Tantraraja, Rudra-Yamala, Brahma-Yamala, Vishnu-Yamala and Todala Tantra are the important works. The Agamas teach several occult practices some of which confer powers, while the others bestow knowledge and freedom. Sakti is the creative power of Lord Siva. Saktism is really a supplement to Saivism.

Among the existing books on the Agamas, the most famous are the Isvara-Samhita, Ahirbudhnya-Samhita, Sanatkumara-Samhita, Narada-Pancharatra, Spanda-Pradipika and the Mahanirvana-Tantra.

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The Six Darsanas

These are the intellectual section of the Hindu writings, while the first four are intuitional. And the fifth inspirational and emotional. Darsanas are schools of philosophy based on the Vedas. The Agamas are theological. The Darsana literature is philosophical. The Darsanas are meant for the erudite scholars who are endowed with acute acumen, good understanding, power of reasoning and subtle intellect. The Itihasa, Puranas and Agamas are meant for the masses. The Darsanas appeal to the intellect, while the Itihisas, Puranas, etc., appeal to the heart.

Philosophy has six divisions (Shad-darsana). The six Darsanas or ways of seeing things, are usually called the six systems or six different schools of thought. The six schools of philosophy are the six instruments of true teaching or the six demonstrations of Truth. Each school has developed, systematized and correlated the various parts of the Veda in its own way. Each system has its Sutrakara, i.e., the one great Rishi who systematized the doctrines of the school and put them in short aphorisms or Sutras

The Sutras are terse and laconic. The Rishis have condensed their thoughts in the aphorisms. It is very difficult to understand them without the help of commentaries by great sages or Rishis. Hence, there arose many commentators or Bhashyakaras. There are glosses, notes and, later, commentaries on the original commentaries.

The Shad-Darsana (the six schools of philosophy) or the Shat-Sastras are:

1. The Nyaya founded by Gautama Rishi
2. The Vaiseshika by Kanada Rishi
3. The Sankhya by Kapila Muni
4. The Yoga by Patanjali Maharshi
5. The Purva Mimamsa by Jaimini
6. The Uttara Mimamsa or Vedanta by Badarayana or Vyasa

The Darsanas are grouped into three pairs of aphoristic compositions which explain the philosophy of the Vedas in a rationalistic method of approach. They are:

1. The Nyaya and the Vaiseshika
2. The Sankhya and the Yoga
3. The Mimamsa and the Vedanta

Each set of Sutras has got its Bhashya, Vritti, Varttika, Vyakhyana or Tika and Tippani.

Sutra

A Sutra or an aphorism is a short formula with the least possible number of letters, without any ambiguity or doubtful assertion, containing the very essence, embracing all meaning, without any stop or obstruction and absolutely faultless in nature.

The Sutrakara or the composer of the aphorisms is said to be as happy as one would be while getting the first male child, if he is but able to reduce one letter in his abstruse Sutra of far-fetched words and ideas. The best example of the greatest, the tersest and the most perfect of Sutra literature is the series of aphorisms called the Ashtadhyayi composed by Panini. Panini is the father of all Sutrakaras from whom all others seem to have borrowed the method of composition. The Sutras are meant to explain a big volume of knowledge in short assertions suitable to be kept in memory at all times. The six Vedangas and the six systems of Hindu philosophy form the twelve sets of Sutra literature of the world. In addition to these, there are later compositions like the Narada-Bhakti Sutras, the Sandilya-Bhakti Sutras, etc., which also wish to assume an equal form with the famous Sutras mentioned above.

Bhashya

A Bhashya is an elaborate exposition, a commentary on the Sutras, with word by word meaning of the aphoristic precepts, their running translation, together with the individual views of the commentator or the Bhashyakara. The best and the exemplary Bhashya in Sanskrit literature is the one written by Patanjali on the Vyakarana (grammar) Sutras of Panini. This Bhashya is so very famous and important that it is called the Mahabhashya and its celebrated author is specially called the Bhashyakara. Patanjali is the father of Bhashyakaras. The next important Bhashya is the one on the Mimamsa Sutras written by Sabara-Swami who learnt the art from Patanjali's commentary. The third important Bhashya was written by Sankara on the Brahma Sutras, in close following with the Sabara-Bhashya. The Bhashyas on the six sets of aphorisms dealing with Indian philosophy were written by Vatsyayana, Prasastapada, Vijnanabhikshu, Vyasa, Sabara and Sankara. On the Vedanta or Brahma Sutras, there are about sixteen Bhashyas, like those of Ramanuja, Madhava, Vallabha, Nimbarka, etc.

Vritti

A Vritti is a short gloss explaining the aphorisms in a more elaborate way, but not as extensively as a Bhashya. An example is Bodhayana's Vritti on the

Brahma Sutras.

Varttika

A Varttika is a work where a critical study is made of that which is said and left unsaid or imperfectly said in a Bhashya, and the ways of making it perfect by supplying the omissions therein, are given. Examples are the Varttikas of Katyayana on Panini's Sutras, of Suresvara on Sankara's Upanishad-Bhashyas, and of Kumarila Bhatta on the Sabara-Bhashya on the Karma-Mimamsa.

Vyakhyana or Tika

A Vyakhyana is a running explanation in an easier language of what is said in the original, with little elucidations here and there. A Vyakhyana, particularly of a Kavya (poetry and prose), deals with eight different modes of dissection of the Sloka, like Pada-Chheda, Vighraha, Sandhi, Alankara, Anuvada, etc. This forms an important aspect in the study of Sanskrit Sahitya Sastra (science of Sanskrit literature). An Anu-Vyakhyana- like the one written by Sri Madhava- is a repetition of what is already written, but in greater detail. An Anuvada is merely a running translation or statement of an abstruse text of the original. Tika is only another name for Vyakhyana. The best Vyakhyanas are of Vachaspati Misra on the Darsanas, especially on Sankara's Brahmasutra-Bhashya.

Tippani

Tippani is just like a Vritti, but is less orthodox than the Vritti. It is an explanation of difficult words or phrases occurring in the original. Examples are Kaiyata's gloss on the Mahabhashya of Patanjali, Nagojibhatta's gloss on Kaiyata's gloss, or Appayya's gloss on Amalananda's gloss on the Bhamati of Vachaspati Misra.

Other Scriptures

The Tevaram and the Tiruvachakam which are the hymns of the Saiva saints of South India, the Divya-Prabandham of the Alvar saints of South India, the songs of Sant Kabir, the Abhangas of Sant Tukaram and the Ramayana of Sant Tulasidas- all of which are the outpourings of great realised souls- are wonderful scriptures. They contain the essence of the Vedas.

The Secular Writings

The Subhashitas

The Subhashitas are wise sayings, instructions and stories, either in poetry or in prose. Examples are Bhartrihari's three centuries of verses, the Subhashita-Ratna-Bhandagara and Somadeva Bhatta's Katha-Sarit-Sagara or Kshemendra's Brihat-Katha-Manjari. The Pachatantra and the Hitopadesa also belong to this category.

The Kavyas

These are highly scholarly compositions in poetry, prose or both. The greatest of poetical Kavyas are those of Kalidas (The Raghuvamsa and Kumara-

sambhava), Bharavi (The Kiratarjuniya), Magha (The Sisupalavadha), and Sri Harsha (The Naishadha). The best prose Kavyas in the whole of Sanskrit literature were written by Bhattabana (The Kadambari and Harshacharita), the great genius in classical Sanskrit. Among those containing both poetry and prose, the Champu-Ramayana and the Champu-Bharata are most famous. These are all wonderful masterpieces which will ever remain to glorify India's literary calibre.

The Natakas (dramas)

These are marvelously scholastic dramas embodying the Rasas (expressions, mostly facial) of Sringara (decorate or beautify), Vira (brave), Karuna (compassion), Adbhuta (astonishment), Hasya (laugh), Bhayanka (fearsome), Bibhatsa (disgusting or loathsome) and Raudra (terrible). It is told that none can write on the ninth Rasa, viz., Santi (peaceful). It is attainable only on final Liberation. The best dramas are written by Kalidasa ([Sakuntala](#)), Bhavabhuti (Uttara-Rama-Charita), and Visakhadatta (Mudrarakshasa).

The Alankaras

These are grand rhetorical texts, treating of the science of perfection and beauty of ornamental language and of effective composition with elegance and force, both in poetry and in prose. These are the fundamentals of Sanskrit Sahitya (literature), even superior to the Kavyas and the Natakas. The best Alankara Granthas (Granthas = volumes) are those of Mammata (Kavyaprakasa) and Jagannatha (Rasagangadhara).

Conclusion

These constitute the entirety of Sanskrit literature- sacred and secular. The Sruti is the root; the Smritis, Itihasas and Puranas are the trunk; the Agamas and Darsanas are the branches; and the Subhashitas, Kavyas, Natakas and Alankaras are the flowers of the tree of India's Culture.

The Smritis, the Itihasas, the Puranas, the Agamas and the Darsanas are only developments of the Veda. Their ultimate source is the Veda. Their one common aim is to enable man to annihilate his ignorance and attain perfection, freedom, immortality, and eternal bliss through knowledge of God or the Eternal. Their purpose is to make man like God and one with Him.

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Hindu Scriptures Part 2

Explanations by Sri V.A.K.Ayer

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The Vedas

The holy scriptures of India, as is well known, consist of the Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharva Veda, and the exegetical texts, the Vedangas which are six viz., Siksha, Vyakarana, Nirukta, Chandas, Jyotisha and Kalpa; and their four supplements viz., Purana, Nyaya, Mimamsa and Dharma Sastra.

The Upanishads (The twelve principal Upanishads)

The Vedangas The Vedangas (limbs of the Vedas) are six – Siksha (phonetics), Kalpa (Pronunciations and the usage of the Mantras), Vyakarana (grammar), Nirukta (etymology of words), Chandas (prosody), and Jyotisha (astrology and astronomy).

Puranas Puranas are eighteen in number.

Nyaya (Logic) **Vaisesika** (also logic)

Mimamsa (Mimamsa Sastra is of two kinds: the Karma or actions (or Poorva) Mimamsa and Sharirika (or Uttara) Mimamsa or Vedanta or knowledge)

Brahma Sutras [The object of Mimamsa Sastra (including Brahma Sutras) is to explain the process of realising the identity of Jiva (individual soul) with Brahman (Supreme Reality)]

Sankhya (The goal of life according to this Sastra is to get absolute freedom from the three kinds of miseries)

Yoga (The Yoga system explains the practical side of Sankhya. Sage Patanjali is the author of the text on this branch. Control of Character by control of body, mind (emotions), intellect etc., forms the subject matter of the eight-fold steps taught in this Sastra. It is also known as Raja-Yoga.)

Dharma Sastras (These are in the nature of texts prescribing or codifying social and religious norms during different stages of evolution of our society.

Dharma Sastras or Smritis, are the fourth supplementary Anga of the Vedas. A number of Smritis are known to exist. Some of them are the Manusmriti, Vishnu, Angirasa, Daksha, Shatatapa, Gautama, Yagnavalkya, Yama, Vasistha, Samvarta, Parasara, Shanka etc.

Although popularly known as epics, the Ramayana of Valmiki and the Mahabharata of Vyasa may be classified under the head Dharma Sastras for the purpose of this survey. The famous Bhagavad Gita is a portion of the Mahabharata.)

The Upa-Vedas (They are four in number. Ayurveda, Dhanurveda, Gandharva-Veda and Artha Sastra. Ayurveda

Ayurveda, is the science of life and health, including medicine.

Dhanur Veda is the science of archery.

Gandharva Veda deals with the science of music and dance.

Arthasastra dealing with the acquisition of material things like wealth by righteous means.

Under this head, Nitisastra, Shilpasastra, the sixty-four Kalas and also other physical and metaphysical subjects are included.

Two special items:

Pashupata Yoga. Here, the Jiva or effect is called Pashu and God or Karana, Pashupati.

Panchratra Tantra deals with the worship of Vishnu.

The Kalas

The first that calls for mention is the encyclopaedic Sastra which goes by the name of Akshara-laksha. All kinds (325 to be exact) of mathematics including modern geometry, algebra, trigonometry, physics or applied mathematics; minerology, hydels; the method of measuring air, heat and even electricity; geography etc. are said to have been treated.

The next science of importance is Sabda Sastra. It deals with sounds, echoes of moving and non-moving objects in creation. It also deals in five chapters with capturing or mechanically reproducing sounds, measuring their pitch, velocity, etc.

Lakshana Sastra, or the science of determining the sex in animate and inanimate creation.

Shilpa Sastra consists of 22 chapters. 307 varieties of Shilpas including 11 types of constructions like temples, palaces, halls etc.,
 Supa-Sastra deals with the science of cooking.
 Malinee Sastra consists of flower arrangements
 The science of Kala or Time was written by Lord Karttikeya. Its division into definite periods, their classification into auspicious and inauspicious moments
 Palmistry
 Science of Alchemy
 Science of Poisons
 Fine Arts
 Science of Gymnastics
 Parakaya Pravesha i.e., entering into one body from another body
 science of horses and Elephants
 Ratna Pariksha or testing of gems (precious stones). His analysis shows 24 characteristics of gems
 Mahendrajala or the science of magic.
 Artha Sastra consisting of three chapters, in which he teaches 82 ways of earning money, even while leading a righteous life.
 Shakti Tantra consisting of eight chapters in which Mulaprakriti, Maya etc., and 64 kinds of external Shaktis of bodies like those of the Sun, Moon and Air, Fire etc., are explained

science called Soudamini Kala by which all phenomena could be attracted through shadows and even ideas.

Science which treats of the clouds

In a work on Yantras by Bharadwaja, he explains about 339 types of vehicles useful in travelling on land, 783 kinds of boats and ships to be used on water and 101 varieties of airships,

The Vedas

By Sri V.A.K. Ayer

General Editors K.M.Munshi and R.R.Diwakar

The Legend

Knowledge about Brahman (the Supreme Being), and Dharma is the subject and object of all Hindu scriptures. These scriptures in the Sanskrit language, which are of the nature of revelations, have been handed down from master to disciple and thus from one generation to the next. In this hierarchy of literature, the Vedas are the first to be revealed, the others being evolved from them.

Towards the end of the last Kalpa, there was the Great Deluge or Pralaya; Rudra, as the then presiding Deity, created as part of His duty, a new Brahma for Swetavaraha Kalpa, the present Kalpa. It is said his choice fell on this Brahma by virtue of his tapas (austerity) in the previous Kalpa. Rudra then commissioned him to create a new Universe and disappeared.

As he started to work, Brahma realised to his consternation that he had completely forgotten the order of Creation, as a result of course, of the enormous lapse of time. Brahma, therefore, performed an austere penance. As a result of it, Rudra appeared before him (now called Prajapati) and taught him once again the technique and the order of creation.

Prajapati meditated as directed by God; the Lord Almighty appeared before him in the form of Pranava (AUM). Brahma prayed for knowledge when the Vedas manifested themselves and surrounded Brahma like a million suns.

Dazzled, Brahma appealed to the Lord and the Lord picked out the four Vedas and taught them to Brahma who thereupon created the universe.

The Lord ideated from Pranava the Vedas – The Rig Veda out of its letter "A", Yajur Veda from the letter "U", Sama Veda from the letter "M", and Atharva Veda from the Ardhamatra.

Esoterically, the birth of the Vedas is explained in this manner: by the joining of the Lord's Mind which is Pure Light with its Vritti or motion, Vak (speech) was produced which, by further mutation with Prana or breath, became successively Para, Pashyanti, Madhyama and Vaikhari forms of Vak. From out of the last form (Vaikhari), the Vedas manifested themselves.

From Atharva Veda, 9-10-27:

"Vak was divided into four categories. The learned ones know them. Three of them were hidden. Ordinary man can use the fourth category only and that is the word."

The word Veda means Holy Knowledge. The other names for the Vedas are Sruti, that which is 'heard' or 'revealed' and Amnaya, that which has come down by tradition. The Vedas are 'Apurusheya' (of super-human origin.)

The holy scriptures of India, as is well known, consist of the Rig Veda, Yajur Veda, Sama Veda and Atharva Veda, and the exegetical texts, the Vedangas which are six viz., Siksha, Vyakarana, Nirukta, Chandas, Jyotisha and Kalpa; and their four supplements viz., Purana, Nyaya, Mimamsa and Dharma Sastra.

In this arrangement, Upa-Puaranas form part of Puranas; Vedanta forms part of Mimamsa. The Mahabharata, Ramayana, as well as Sankhya, Patanjala, Pasupata and Vaishnava, form part of Dharma Sastras. Thus, altogether, they constitute 14 Vidyas (fields of knowledge).

Besides these, there are the four Upavedas viz., Ayurveda, Dhanurveda, Gandharva Veda and Artha Sastra, the respective appendages to the Vedas.

From another point of view, the contents of the Vedas can be broadly divided into two sections – Karma kanda (work section) and Jnanakanda (knowledge section). The first is said to be oriented towards the attainment of Swarga or Heaven and the second towards immortality. Textually, the Vedas are divided into what are called Mantra portion used for propitiating different deities and the Brahmana portion, which are in the nature of commentaries on the Mantras.

Mantras are of different kinds. The first is the Rik type which are made up of Padas or which are composed in metres, like Gayatri, consisting of 24 syllables, Ushnig 28 syllables, Anushtubh 32 syllables etc. These Mantras, when set to the musical scale are called Sama Mantras. Music in the Vedas admits of the seven notes. There is a third category of Mantras, which does not fall under any of the above two. They are the Yajur Mantras.

The Brahmanas also are of three different varieties depending upon their content: Vidhi, Arthavada and the third, Vedanta Vakyas.

Vidhis are of three kinds. Those that deal with the nature of Karma or a ritual are of one kind. Those that explain the results of those Karma, sacrifices etc. belong to the second type. Those that speak about the materials used in Karma are the third type. The composite body of these three types is known by the name Shrouta Kalpa.

The Upanishads

The closing portions of the Brahmanas are the Upanishads, of which one hundred and twenty are known to us. Aranyakas, too, are taken along with the Upanishads.

Isa, Kena, Katha, Prasna, Mundaka, Mandukya, Taittiriya, Aitareya, Chandogya, Brihadaranyaka, Svetasvatara and Kaushitiki are the twelve principal Upanishads. They set the highest ideal for man.

The Rig-Vedic seers (Rishis) were poets of great vision. They are the original founders of Indian civilisation. Their religion was poetic religion. Heroism and positive living appear to be the keynotes of most of the Rig-Vedic stories.

It is a common knowledge that in the matter of Vedic sacrifices, the Prayoga (operative) Mantras are taken from the Rig-Veda, Adhwaryu (priestly) from the Yajurveda and the Audgatra (singing) from the Samaveda.

The word Rik from which Rig-Veda is derived means 'praise'. The Rigveda consists of 1017 hymns addressed to various gods, grouped in 10 'mandalas' and each hymn being called a Sukta. The hymns are composed in a variety of metres- from those consisting of 24 syllables to those consisting of 104 syllables. Originally there were 21 Sakhas or recensions for this Veda but only six are prevalent now. They are Sakala, Bashkala, Ashwalayana, Sankayana, Mandukayana and Aitereya.

The Yajurveda, as the name implies, is purely devoted to the use in rites and rituals. It has two branches, the Krishna Yajurveda (Black) and Shukla Yajurveda (White). There are 101 recensions for the Krishna Yajurveda and 17 for Shukla Yajurveda. There are a few extant recensions of the former: Taittiriya, Kathaka, Maitrayani and Kapishtala Sakhas.

In Shukla Yajurveda, there are two recensions called Madhyandina and Kanva Sakhas. The main difference between Krishna and Shukla is that in the former, explanatory portions are included whereas the latter consists only of the Mantras. This Veda contains some prose passages also.

The Sama Veda is ritualistic in content and highly poetic in form. Only a small portion is original, the bulk being selected from the Rig Veda, grouped together for ritualistic purpose, being meant to be sung in certain tunes at the time of sacrifices and rituals. It consists of two sections – Purvaarchika and Uttaraarchika. Two recensions of this Veda, the Gautama and Jaimineeya, are prominent.

The Atharva Veda explains for the most part rituals connected with Shantika, Paushtika and Abhicharaka Vidyas i.e., for curing of diseases, acquiring wealth etc.; in other words, for specific purposes in material life. There are also some exquisite philosophical and poetic passages. This Veda consists of

about 6000 verses constituting 731 hymns grouped into 20 books. Some of the hymns are common to the other three Vedas.

There were originally nine recensions for this Veda of which the Pippalada and Saunaka Sakhas are available now.

The grand tradition about propagation of the Vedas is that Veda Vyasa codified the four Vedas and taught them to his four disciples Paila, Vaisampayana, Jaimini and Sumanta. These disciples taught their knowledge to their disciples. Thus the Vedas came down to later generations. In this process, as the Vedas spread throughout the world, certain peculiarities (depending upon geography and environment) caused slight variations in pronunciation and diction. This gave rise to what are called Sakhas or recensions. All the same, there was no material change in the contents.

It follows that each Sakha in order to be perfect must have the following complements: the Samhita, Upanishads, Sutras and Aranyakas. (See the table above).

The five ways of reciting the Vedas are (1) Mula, (2) Pada, (3) Krama, (4) Jata and (5) Ghana. In the first, the Mantras are recited continuously. In the second they are split word by word. In the third the Padas are joined as 1.2, 2.3, 3.4, etc. In the fourth, again Padas are joined and in textual order then in reverse order and once again in textual order as 1.2, 2.1, 1.2, 2.3, 3.2, etc. In the last, more complicated combinations like 1.2.2.1, 1.2.3.3.2.1, 1.2.3, etc. are used.

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The Vedangas

The Vedangas (limbs of the Vedas) are six – **Siksha, Kalpa, Vyakarana, Nirukta, Chandas and Jyotisha**. By using the name Vedanga the human origin of these subjects is indicated, although they are in close association with the Vedas.

Among Vedangas, i.e., limbs of the Vedas, Siksha comes first. Sage Panini is said to be the author of this branch. It deals with the science of Vedic Phonetics- treating of sound pitches, like Udatta, Anudatta, Swarita, Prachaya, Hraswa, Dirgha and Pluta of the vowels with the consonants appearing in the Vedic text.

A knowledge of this science, especially in the context of the use of the Mantras, is said to be absolutely essential. Defective pronunciation will bring contrary or even harmful results. This Siksha Sastra is common to all the Vedas.

Next comes Vyakarana or the science of grammar. Sage Panini is said to have composed this science too in Sutras by the grace of Lord Maheswara. It deals with the correct usage of Vedic words and contains exhaustive rules of grammar. It consists of eight chapters and is for that reason called Ashtadhyayi and contains 3996 Sutras. Muni Katyayana wrote a metrical commentary called Vartika on the Sutras of Panini and sage Patanjali has written a commentary on the latter called Mahabhashya (great commentary).

Apart from this specific Vedic grammar, there are references to other grammatical works like Maha Vyakarana, Aindra, Chandra, Shakatayana, Sphotayana, Poushkara, Saraswata, Kaumara, etc., besides others written in the Prakrit dialect of Sanskrit.

Next come the Vedic limb called Nirukta. Yaska is said to be the author of this science. This science explains the etymology of the words contained in Vedic Mantras as they have a good deal to do with their practical application. It is said that Nirukta is the *sine qua non* for understanding the Vedas. This lexiconic work consists of eight chapters. Vedic words are explained by dividing them into 4 classes: Nama, Akyhata, Nipata and Upasarga. A Nighantu of five chapters is also included in this work.

The science that deals with the prosody of Vedic Mantras is called Chandas Sastra. Pingala is said to have composed the work on Vedic prosody, Chandovichiti. It consists of eight chapters, three of which deal with Vedic metres and the other five with metres in secular works.

Next comes Jyotisha. The need for it arose by reason of the fact that Vedic Karmas had to be performed at certain periods and seasons of the year like the new moon and full moon day etc. The Sun-god is supposed to be the original author of this science and others like Sages Garga have followed him in writing on this science. The term Jyotisha here is used for both astronomy and astrology.

The next in order is Kalpa. The need for this arose because the followers of the different Shakhas or branches of the Vedas had to observe Vedic rites in a slightly different manner. Therefore, the Kalpa Sutras have taken upon themselves the task of explaining this small difference.

These are of three kinds, depending upon the kinds of usages to which the Mantras are put. For instance, Sages Aswalayana and Sankhyana have written the Sutras relating to Hotru (performing) Prayoga; Sages Boudhayana, Apasthamba and Katyayana have written of Adhwaryu (priestly) Prayoga, and Sages Latayana and Vreehyayana have written on the Oudgatru (musical) Prayoga

Besides these general texts there are certain special or specific texts called Pratishakya, based on the Vedas. These deal in particular with the way in which particular Vedas are to be recited in relation to grammar, phonetics etc. One may call them manuals. They are distinct from the general texts already mentioned. For instance, each of the three first Vedas has its own Pratishakya written by Sages Saunaka, Katyayana etc.

There is another kind of text relating to the Vedas called Anukramanika or Indices. This provides a list of Deities, Metres etc., of the different parts of the Vedas.

There are, again, some Vedic Koshas or lexicons other than Nirukta, which are very useful in the interpretation of Vedic Mantras.

We have thus a comprehensive set of literature on the Vedic methodology.

Two well-known Sanskrit commentaries on the Vedas are those of Sayanacharya and Bhatta Bhaskara. Great Acharyas like Sri Sankara and

Madhava have commented upon important Upanishadic portions of the Vedic texts.

Four planets are said to preside over the Vedas; Guru or Jupiter over the Rig Vedas, Sukra or Venus over the Yajur Veda, Mangal or Mars over Sama-Veda and Budha or Mercury over Atharva-Veda.

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Puranas

First among the supplementary Angas (limbs) come the Puranas. The essential character of Puranas has been defined that they should contain five essential features viz., Sarga, Pratisarga, Vamsa, Manvantara and Vamsanucharita.

Puranas are eighteen in number. These are Brahma Purana (10 000 verses), Padma (55 000), Vishnu (23 000), Siva (24 000), Bhagawata (18 000), Linga (11 000), Varah (24 000), Naradiya (25 000), Markandeya (9000), Agni (15 400), Bhavishya (14 500), Brahmavaivarta (18 000), Skanda (81 100), Vamana (10 000), Kurma (17 000), Matsya (14 000), Garuda (19 000), and Brahmanda (12 000).

Sage Bhadraryana, or Vyasa as he is otherwise called, is credited with the authorship of these Puranas.

Upa-Puranas

There are eighteen (or nineteen) Upa-Puranas or sub-Puranas. These are Sanatkumara, Narasimha, Nandikeshwara, Sivadharm, Durvasa, Narada, Kapila, Manava, Ushanasa, Brahma, Varuna, Kali, Vasishtha, Linga, Samba, Soura, Parasara, Maricha and Garga.

Nyaya

The next among the supplementary Angas is Nyaya Sastra or logic, written by Sage Gautama. It consists of 537 Sutras in five chapters. It helps in obtaining an intimate knowledge of topics like Prameya, Pramana and other items of learning. It deals with the analysis of the mental process of knowing. One Vatyayana has commented on it.

Vaiseshika

Vaiseshika Sastra which is supplementary to it (Nyaya) was written by Sage Kanada and it consists of about 373 Sutras in twelve chapters. This science helps us to get a clear knowledge of the six-fold type of existing things like Dravya (matter), Guna (Sattwa, Rajas, Tamas), Karma etc. The metaphysics and logic of both are more or less the same. This science recognises the scripture.

Mimamsa

The third in this list is Mimamsa Sastra which is of two kinds: the Karma (or Poorva) Mimamsa and Sharirika (or Uttara) Mimamsa or Vedanta. Sage Jaimini composed **the first** which consists of 12 chapters. Shabaraswamin has written a commentary on it. Sage Jaimini has also written the Upasana Kanda in four chapters.

Brahma Sutras

The second kind known as Brahma Sutras, consist of four chapters and is said to have been written by Sage Bhadrayana or Vyasa. It starts with "Athatho-Brahma-Jignyasa." The great Acharyas have written commentaries on it. The object of Mimamsa Sastra is to explain the process of realising the identity of Jiva (individual soul) with Brahman (Supreme Reality). In the first, the world is taken as eternally dynamic while in the second it is phenomenal.

Sankhya

Mention may also be made of what is known as Sankhya system of philosophy. The text is in six chapters and is attributed to Sage Kapila, according to whom the world is real, balanced by intelligence, activity and matter. The goal of life according to this Sastra is to get absolute freedom from the three kinds of miseries from the knowledge of the difference between Prakriti and Purusha. Sage Gaudapada and Sage Vachaspati Misra have commented upon it. This science recognises the scriptures as a source of valid knowledge.

Yoga

The Yoga system explains the practical side of Sankhya. Sage Patanjali is the author of the text on this branch and it consists of 194 Sutras in four parts. Sage Vyasa has commented upon it. Control of Character by control of body, mind (emotions), intellect etc., forms the subject matter of the eight-fold steps taught in this Sastra. It is also known as Raja-Yoga.

The philosophical views of the physical world in Indian Sastras are of three kinds. They are known by the names of Arambha Vada, Parinama Vada and Vaivartha Vada. According to them atoms are of four kinds- of the earth, water, light and air. They become molecules and gradually grow into the universe. Logicians hold that Asat itself has grown into the universe. Mimamkasa hold that the triple Gunas - Sattwa, Rajas, Tamas - become Mahat, Ahankara and develop into the universe. But the Yoga, Pasupata and Sankhya Schools hold that Sat itself brings the universe into being. The Vaishnava School holds that the universe is only a manifestation of Brahman. Brahnavadins hold that the universe is the illusion caused by the Maya of Brahman. All these views veer round the one God.

Dharma Sastras

Next come the Dharma Sastras or Smritis, the fourth supplementary Anga of the Vedas. A number of Smritis are known to exist.

Some of them are the Manusmriti, Vishnu, Angirasa, Daksha, Shatatapa, Gautama, Yagnavalkya, Yama, Vasistha, Samvarta, Parasara, Shanka, Harita, Ushanasa, Katyayana, Devala, Apasthamba, Vyasa, Brihaspati,

Narada and Pattheenasas-Smritis, going by the name of the respective authors.

These are in the nature of texts prescribing or codifying social and religious norms during different stages of evolution of our society.

Although popularly known as epics, the Ramayana of Valmiki and the Mahabharata of Vyasa may be classified under the head Dharma Sastras for the purpose of this survey. The famous Bhagavad Gita is a portion of the Mahabharata. The Bhagavad Gita is considered an Upanishad and has been commented upon by great Acharyas and savants. The Bhagavad Gita teaches the practical steps for the realisation of the high Upanishadic ideals.

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The Upa-Vedas

Next come the Upa-Vedas. They are four in number. **Ayurveda**, **Dhanurveda**, **Gandharva-Veda** and **Artha Sastra**. Each of them forms an appendage to one each of the four Vedas in the respective order.

Ayurveda, as the name suggests, is the science of life and health, including medicine. Although the Vedas as such have little to do with medicine, the science finds a place in the community of the Vedas for the reason that a healthy body is necessary for functioning in a healthy society.

Treatises on the above subject have been composed by Brahma, the Ashvini Devatas, Dhanvantari, Indra, Rishis Bharadwaja, Atri, Agnivesha and others.

Subsequently Charaka collected this knowledge in a book of his, known as Charaka Samhita. Later, Susruta followed him. Still later Vagbhata composed a work on the subject. Besides medicine, surgery and even injections appear to have been known to them.

Ayurveda treats the whole man under eight principal heads of treatment. Pharmacology too is included in this category. Kamasashtra (science of sex) also belongs to this category. Susruta has written a work on rejuvenation. Vatsyayana has written the Kamasashtra. The object of writing this Sastra appears to be not encouragement of indulgence but regulation of sex-life.

The authorship of Dhanur Veda or the science of archery is attributed to Sage Viswamitra. This work, comprehending earlier works of Brahma and others, consists of four chapters, dealing with Diksha, Sangraha, Siddhanta, and Prayoga. Both the offensive and defensive modes are treated. Missiles like Chakra, the sword, and propelled forms of weapons, form part of it. Brahmastra, Vaishnavastra, Pashupatastra, Agneyastra are some of the missiles treated in this work. The deities to be invoked, the spells to be uttered, the description of weapons, mock warfare are all dealt with.

Gandharva Veda deals with the science of music and dance. It is said to have been composed by Sage Bharata comprehending earlier works by Nandikeshwara, Narada and Hanuman. Vocal and instrumental music and

dances constitute this science. The object of this science appears to be spiritual i.e., to obtain concentration of mind in the worship of God.

The last of the Upa-Vedas is Arthasastra dealing with the acquisition of material things like wealth by righteous means. Under this head, Nitisastra, Shilpasastra, the sixty-four Kalas and also other physical and metaphysical subjects are included.

Before proceeding to the material part of this category, we shall mention two special items viz., Pashupata and Pancharatra-Tantras.

The author of Pashupata cult is one Pashupasavimokshana. This work consists of five chapters and deals with Pashupata Yoga. Here, the Jiva or effect is called Pashu and God or Karana, Pashupati.

Yoga consists in fixing the mind on Pashupati. The path of attaining it consists of bathing with Holy Ashes six times a day in the prescribed manner. This sastra is based on Shaiva system and is the fore-runner of Shaiva Siddhanta. Shaiva Mantras too come under this category.

Narada is the author of Pancharatra Tantra which deals with the worship of Vishnu. Vasudeva, Sankarshana, Pradyumna and Aniruddha are the four principles recognised in this system. Lord Vasudeva is the Supreme Lord. Jiva (individual soul) comes from Him and is called Sankarshana. Worship of Vasudeva by thought, word and deed is the goal of this science. Vaishnava Mantras are included in this category.

The Siva, Vishnu and Shakti cults have developed their own liturgic texts for temple worship under the banner of Vedas. These are called Agamas. Art, Music, Sculpture, Dance and Drama form an integral part of Agamas.

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[Note: In the following paragraphs, an attempt has been made to briefly note some of the remarkable achievements of the ancients as revealed in scattered form in extant works. Many of the original works appear to be hidden or lost.]

The Kalas

We shall now have a quick look at the different sciences or Kalas known to have existed, those that come under the category of Vedas.

The first that calls for mention is the encyclopaedic Sastra which goes by the name of Akshara-laksha. The authorship of this science is attributed to Sage Valmiki. All kinds (325 to be exact) of mathematics including modern geometry, algebra, trigonometry, physics or applied mathematics; minerology, hydels; the method of measuring air, heat and even electricity; geography etc., are said to have been treated. This work comprehends earlier discoveries by Sage Kashyapa, Ganapati, Soorya, Brihaspati, Jaimini, Hanuman and others

This work consists of 50 chapters. The first half deals with mathematics and the second half is about the Shaktis that make up the world.

The next science of importance is Sabda Sastra. One Kandika Rishi wrote this. It deals with sounds, echoes of moving and non-moving objects in creation. It also deals in five chapters with capturing or mechanically reproducing sounds, measuring their pitch, velocity, etc.

Sage Sakatayana is the author of Lakshana Sastra, or the science of determining the sex in animate and inanimate creation. Babhru Muni has written about Kanya-Lakshana in which 32 marks are indicated for chastity etc. Sage Garga has written on Sakuna Sastra, the determination of good and bad effects from the sounds of birds, words of human beings etc. (in other words, omens).

Shilpa Sastra is said to have been written by Sage Kashyapa and it consists of 22 chapters. 307 varieties of Shilpas including 11 types of constructions like temples, palaces, halls etc., are detailed. Earlier writers on this subject are Viswakarma, Maya, Maruti, Chayapurasha, etc., whose thoughts have been incorporated in the above.

Supa-Sastra deals with the science of cooking. One Sukesha is the first author of this science. 108 varieties of preparations, from condiments and pickles to sweetmeats, cakes, puddings, and 3032 kinds of dishes meant for people living in different parts of the world are mentioned.

Sage Rishyasringa is credited with writing a comprehensive treatise on the science called Malinee Sastra which consists of flower arrangements, making garlands, bouquets, hair-do's in various styles for women, writing love messages on flower petals to convey to beloveds in codes. This work consists of 16 chapters.

The science of Kala or Time was written by Lord Karttikeya. Its division into definite periods, their classification into auspicious and inauspicious moments, the deities that preside over each are dealt with in this work.

Samudra Raja, or the Lord of the Ocean is the original author of Samudrika Sastra. He noted down the auspicious marks on the body of Lord Vishnu while the latter was resting on Aadishesha in the ocean. This science was later developed by Sages like Narada, Varaha and Mandavya and Lord Karttikeya. Palmistry belongs to this sastra.

Aswini Kumaras are credited with writing the science of Dhatuvada which, in 7 chapters treats of natural as well as artificial Dhatus or primary substances, their combinations and transmutations. Alchemy or converting copper into gold etc. is dealt with in this work.

The science of poisons or Visha Sastra is said to have been exhaustively written about by Aswini Kumaras. This treats of 32 kinds of poisons, their properties, their preparations, effects and antidotes.

Bhima is credited with having composed the science of fine arts called Chitrakarma Sastra. It consists of 12 chapters and expounds nearly 200 kinds of drawings. There is a section in which students are taught to recreate the figure of a person after seeing a single hair or nail or a bone of that person.

One Malla is said to have composed a comprehensive work on Malla Sastra which deals with 82 kinds of gymnastics and sports necessary for preservation of health and athletic activities and 24 kinds of infantry warfare where hand to hand combat is involved. This work consists of 3 parts.

The revered Valakhilyas are credited with writing the science on Parakaya Pravesha i.e., entering into one body from another body, and it teaches 32 kinds of Yogas and the eight-fold Siddhis (super-human capabilities), Anima, Mahima etc.

One Agnivarma has written exhaustively on the science of horses, their auspicious marks, their physiology, breeding, training etc. Similarly, one Kumaraswamy has written exhaustively on Gaja Sastra (about elephants). He has given 16 methods to test various marks on the bodies of elephants.

Sage Vatsyayana has composed a work on Ratna Pariksha or testing of gems (precious stones). His analysis shows 24 characteristics of gems or precious stones, natural and artificial ones; their forms, weights etc are discussed and classified into categories. 32 methods of testing them for genuineness are also described.

Veerabahu, the lieutenant of Lord Subramanya, is the author of a work on Mahendrajala or the science of magic. It teaches how illusions, like walking on the water, riding in the air etc., are made.

Sage Vyasa is said to have composed a work on Artha Sastra consisting of three chapters, in which he teaches 82 ways of earning money, even while leading a righteous life.

Sage Agastya is credited with the composing of Shakti Tantra consisting of eight chapters in which Mulaprakriti, Maya etc., and 64 kinds of external Shaktis of bodies like those of the Sun, Moon and Air, Fire etc., are explained and their particular applications are also given. Atomic fission or nuclear science appears to form part of this science.

Sage Matanga is credited with composing a science called Soudamini Kala by which all phenomena could be attracted through shadows and even ideas. Also taught is the science of photographing interiors of mountains, earth etc.

Authorship of the science which treats of the clouds, is attributed to Sage Atri. This work deals with 12 kinds of clouds, their characteristics, 12 kinds of rains, 64 kinds of lightnings, 32 varieties of thunderbolts etc.

In a work on Yantras by Bharadwaja, he explains about 339 types of vehicles useful in travelling on land, 783 kinds of boats and ships to be used on water and 101 varieties of airships, by use of the Mantra, Tantra, and artificial means and those used by semi-divine beings like Gandharvas etc., are also explained.

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