

Indian Knowledge System- An Introduction

UNIT 1

By:

Mr. Hirdesh Sharma

JIMS, Greater Noida

Do we need Indian Knowledge System?

- IKS is not about merely knowing about some ancestral (पैतृक) knowledge.
- It is about protecting revised wisdom (संशोधित ज्ञान), economic security and national pride.
- India has a long surviving civilizational history to at least 5000-8000 year back.
- There is an impression that all knowledge that we benefit from has originated from west. (This is not true)

Do we need Indian Knowledge System?

- Indians were extraordinary in steel making until the 17th century. The Indian 'wootz' steel was used to manufacture what was famously known as 'Damascus blades'.
- Due to major changes in the educational system in India introduced about 200 years back, there was a rather abrupt (आकस्मिक) end to the process of knowledge transmission.

Importance of Ancient Knowledge

- Ancient (प्राचीन) knowledge is the accrued knowledge over several generations and preserved in formal and informal means.
- Formal means include documented knowledge and informal means include several values and practices through oral traditions.
- Ancient knowledge provides a head start to society to march on the highway of innovation and new knowledge creation.

Importance of Ancient Knowledge

Importance of Ancient Knowledge--

- Identity- It defines the context for several aspects of the day to day living of every individual.
- Culture- It is the manifestation (अभिव्यक्ति) of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively by society over time.
- Received Wisdom- Innovation and new knowledge creation for the society.
- Economic Value- Transforming knowledge into economic values for the benefit of the country.

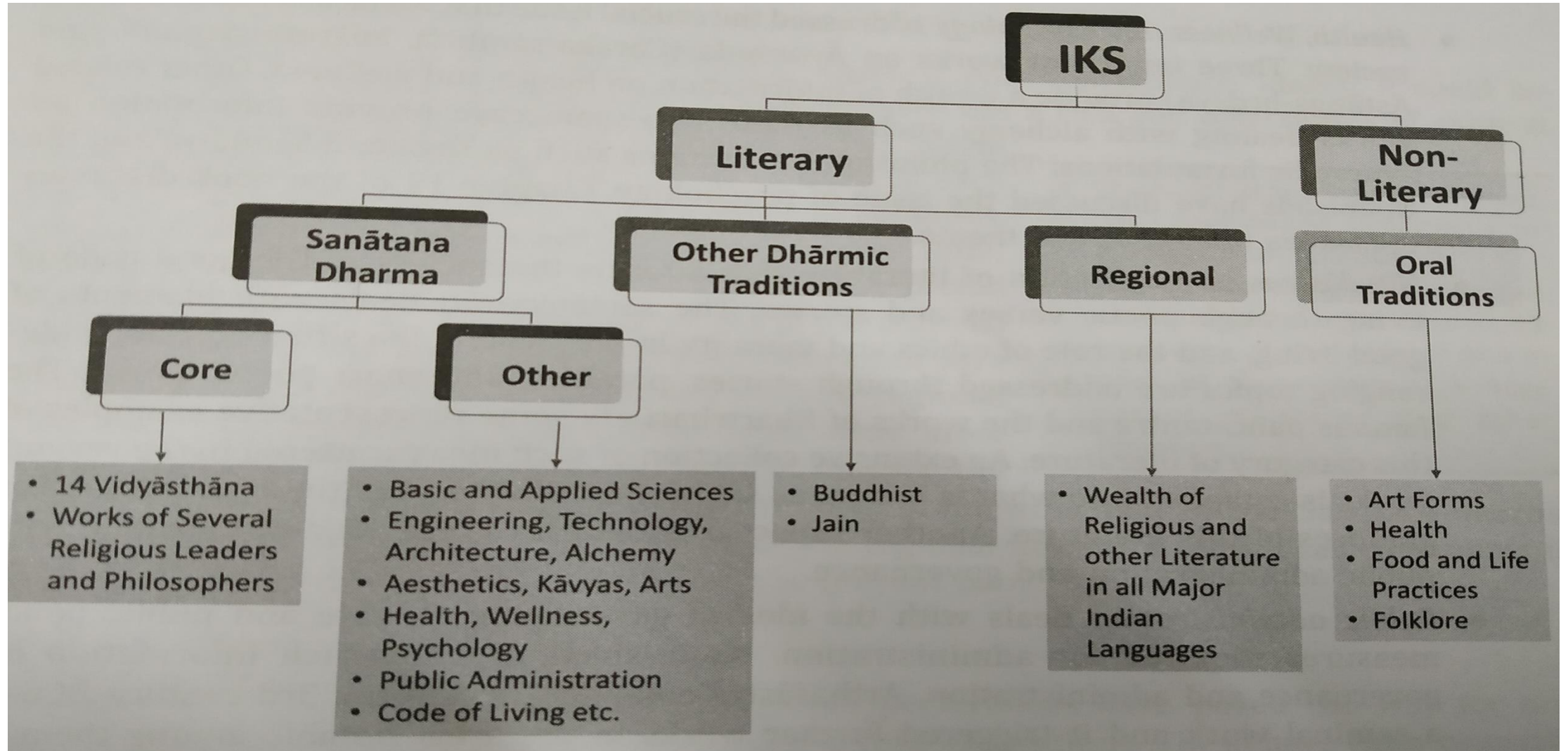
Defining Indian Knowledge System

- IKS is generic phrase that covers practically everything about India.
- We have recorded history, abundant (भरपूर) culture, literature and social and community practices defining what Indian knowledge.
- Knowledge assets available in India from the pre-historic times to the current day will all qualify to be part of the IKS.
- The term IKS has three words in it:
 - Indian
 - Knowledge
 - System

Defining Indian Knowledge System

- Indian- By this term, we mean the indigenous sources of knowledge generated by Indian society. The term 'Indian' points to the undivided Indian subcontinent (**Akhanda Bharata**).
- Knowledge- It is obtained by the insights gained by personal experiences with life situations, facing problems and coming up with means of solving them. Knowledge may or may not be converted to a literary format. The tacit knowledge can be preserved and transmitted through an oral tradition without loss.
- System- Means a structured methodology and a classification scheme to access the available corpus (कोष) of knowledge.

The IKS Corpus- A Classification Framework



The IKS Corpus- A Classification Framework

- There are many ways to define and identify what constitutes IKS.
- Ex:-
 - One approach to merely pick the important topics representatively of knowledge corpus such as Vedas, Yoga, Vastu, Silpa Sastras, Ayurveda, Buddhism and Jainism to define IKS.
 - Another approach is to select phrases such as Indian psychology, Indian arts, dance, architecture and put together related works into it to construct IKS.
 - NOTE:- These examples bring out the components of IKS.

The IKS Corpus- A Classification Framework

The usefulness of a classification framework depends on three factors: **Completeness, Compactness and inter-connectedness.**

- **Completeness** assures that all important components of IKS are included in the proposed framework.
- **Compactness** indicates the efficacy (प्रभाव) of the grouping of various topics in KIS in logical manner.
- **Inter-connectedness** brings logical relationship among the various sub- classifications.

The IKS Corpus- A Classification Framework

Closer scrutiny of IKS knowledge repository provides us following details:

- The knowledge is available in both formal literary sources and informal literary source.
- Among the literature sources, we can identify three categories
 - I. Vedic and allied literature
 - II. Other Dharmic Traditions
 - III. Regional
- The non literary sources is available through a rich set of oral traditions found throughout the country.

Sanatana Dharma- Core Literature

- This comprises a vast repository of knowledge starting with the Vedas, Known as Sruti.
- Although the vedic corpus is oral in nature and still transmitted using oral methods.
- The Vedas are considered foundational by the indian society.

Sanatana Dharma- Other Literature

- The other literature consists of works that addressed key issues of day to day life such as health, wellness, science, engineering, technology that aided societal progress of development and art forms.
- This category covers several areas:
 - Basic and Applied Science
 - Engineering, Technology & Architecture
 - Health, Wellness, Psychology
 - Public Administration
 - Code of living

Other Dharmic Traditions

- Other dharmic traditions have stayed out of the Vedic framework but have immensely contributed to IKS in the religious, Philosophical and other domains.
- Two of them, **the Buddhist and the Jain** literature are noteworthy and they have contributed right from 500 BCE to IKS.

Regional Literature

- The separation of regional language in this figure is only convenience.
- Ideally, it could be included under sanatana dharma.
- Indian constitution has listed 22 languages of the country, in each of these languages, there is a huge corpus of religious, philosophical and other literature.
- Ex:- Tamil literature has several contributions in the Sangam Period.

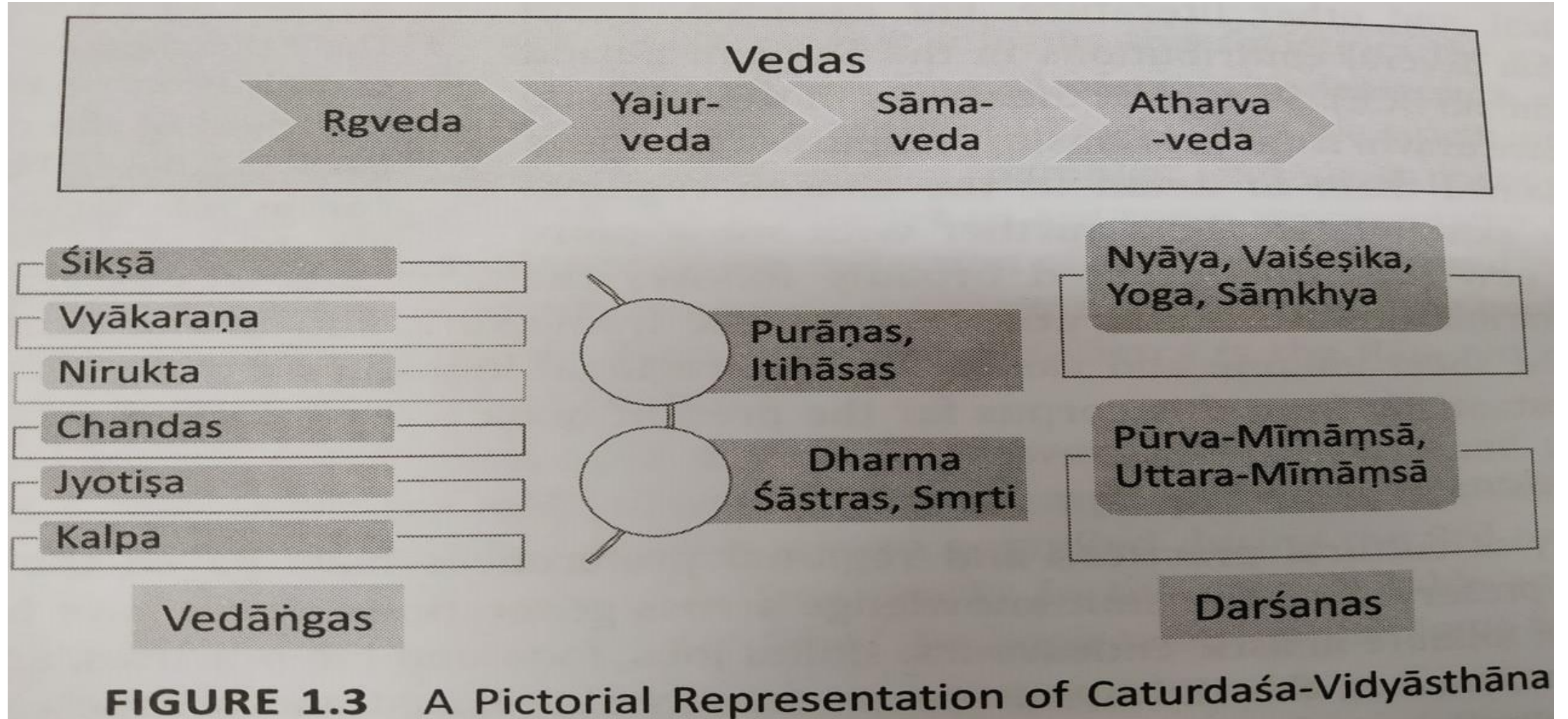
Oral Traditions

- The diversity of cultural practices and regional preferences have paved the way for oral traditions to preserve and transmit knowledge across generations.
- These have been primarily in the form of folklore artistic endeavors, skillful jobs, foods and life practices and health.
- Sanskrit has been dominant language for transacting knowledge for a long time in india.

Chaturdaśa-Vidyāsthāna (चतुर्दश-विद्यास्थान):

- A classification framework for the sanatana-dharama literature as we have defined in the previous section is available within the resources itself.
- In this framework, the literature is systematically organized under 14 major divisions.
- The components of the 14 part knowledge contain the four vedas (and their upa-vedas), the six vedangas, puranas, the Dharma-sastras, Nyaya.

Chaturdaśa-Vidyāsthāna (चतुर्दश-विद्यास्थान):



Vedas

- The Vedas are the primordial source of knowledge in the scheme of the Sanatan-dharma literature.
- They are also known as Sruti.
- Vedas provides the overall defining framework for living.
- The upa-vedas are typically associated with the vedas on account of the material being found in the respective Vedas.

Vedangas

- To benefit fully from the Vedas some complementary tools and skills are required.
- These help to understand the exact meaning and intent of what is presented in the Vedas and follow them based on specific instructions provided.
- These are collectively referred to as Vedangas.

Darasanas

- It is a natural quest for everyone to understand three forces that operate and interact with one another: an individual (Jiva), the Universe (Jagat), and a larger force governing the other two (variously referred to as Isvara, Brahman etc.)
- Darsana essentially means a philosophical thought or view.
- There are six schools of philosophy in the sanatan-dharma literature.

Puranas and Itihasas

- Puranas contains a rich repository of ideas that seek to explain various aspects of the Vedic thoughts using detailed stories and anecdotes (उपाख्यानो).
- They present several socio-cultural ideas and practices of living.
- The stories in the purans related to per-historic events.
- Itihasas, related to historical events that have taken place which can be associated with specific timelines.
- As we know, Mahabharata and Ramayana are two well known itihasas.

Dharma-sastras and Smrtis

- A guide to lead a dharmic life based on the principles of the Veda is required.
- The dharmic principles engrained in the Vedic corpus are presented in multiple formats in our knowledge traditions.
- Smrtis are rule books with specific operating guidelines of how to put the dharmic principles into action and what are the consequences of not doing so.

Historicity of IKS

- Dating of the Indian Literature is a major challenge for today's researchers.
- Other related challenge is that most of the indian knowledge repositories in the BCE (Before Common Era or Before Current Era or Before Christian Era) were oral.
- A useful source of data to fix the Indian knowledge is the astronomical references found in the texts.

Before 3000 BCE

- This era is categorized as the dark age for western civilization since no evidence of any organized knowledge (either oral or written) is available.
- Earlier estimates of time periods for Vedas, puranas and the Itihasas prove it be erroneous as new evidence and methods to date the knowledge becomes available.

3000 BCE to 500 CE

- This period roughly starts with the beginning of recorded human history as per the western context and extending as far as 500CE.
- In an oral tradition, the entire knowledge is to be committed to one's memory.
- Therefore, it needs to be concise, and specific.

500 CE to 1800 CE

- During this era, Indians have significant strides in the area of mathematics, astronomy, philosophy, spirituality.
- Several contributions have also been made in other areas such as alchemy, metalworking etc.

A Sample list of the IKS Repository

<i>Sl. No.</i>	<i>Name of the Work</i>	<i>Keyword 1</i>	<i>Keyword 2</i>
Before 3,000 BCE			
1	Vedas	Dharma (Code of Living)	Several Other Topics
2	Purāṇas*		
3	Mahābhārata, Rāmāyaṇa		

A Sample list of the IKS Repository

3,000 BCE to 500 CE			
1	Vedāṅga-jyotiṣa	Astronomy	
2	Manu-smṛti	Public Administration	Dharma (Code of Living)
3	Śulba-sūtras	Mathematics	Dharma (Code of Living)
4	Suśruta-saṃhitā	Health	Wellness
5	Aṣṭādhyāyī, Nirukta	Linguistics	Grammar
6	Nāṭyaśāstra	Art Forms	Dance, Theatre
7	Buddhist Texts	Philosophy	Mathematics
8	Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika Sūtras	Logic, Epistemology	Knowledge Framework
9	Jaina Mathematical Works	Mathematics	
10	Arthaśāstra	Public Administration	Finance, Foreign Policy
11	Chandaḥ-śāstra	Metrical Pattern, Prosody	Binary Maths Ideas
12	Yoga-sūtras	Control of Mind	Philosophy
13	Kāmasūtra	Art Forms	Dharma (Code of Living)
14	Mahā-bhāṣya	Sanskrit Language	Grammar
15	Rasaratnākara	Alchemy	
16	Caraka-saṃhitā	Health	Wellness
17	Sāṃkhya-darśana	Philosophy	Psychology
18	Amarakośa	Linguistics	Lexicography
19	Sūrya-siddhānta	Astronomy	Mathematics
20	Bṛhat-saṃhitā	Astronomy, Mathematics	Several Other Topics
500 CE to 1800 CE			

A Sample list of the IKS Repository

20	Bṛhat-saṃhitā	500 CE to 1,800 CE	
			Mathematics
1	Āryabhaṭīya, Ārya-siddhānta	Astronomy	
2	Pañca-siddhāntikā	Astronomy	
3	Mayamata	Architecture	
4	Brāhmasphuṭa-siddhānta	Astronomy	Mathematics
5	Mānasāra	Architecture	Town Planning
6	Āryabhaṭīya-bhaṣya, Mahābhāskariya	Astronomy	Mathematics
7	Nārada-śilpa-śāstra	Architecture	Iconography
8	Gaṇita-sāra-saṅgraha	Mathematics	
9	Siddhānta-śekhara	Astronomy	

A Sample list of the IKS Repository

<i>Sl. No.</i>	<i>Name of the Work</i>	<i>Keyword 1</i>	<i>Keyword 2</i>
10	Yukti-kalpataru	Shipbuilding	Several Other Topics
11	Samarāṅgaṇa-sūtradhāra	Architecture	Several Other Topics
12	Siddhānta-śiromaṇi	Astronomy	Mathematics
13	Kāśyapa-śilpa-śāstra	Temple Architecture	Iconography
14	Aṣṭāṅga-hṛdaya, Rasaratna-samuccaya	Alchemy	Health, Wellness
15	Kerala School of Mathematics	Mathematics	Astronomy
16	Graha-lāghava	Astronomy	

Some Unique aspects of IKS

- **Nuances (बारीकियों) of an Oral Tradition:**

- ✓ IKS is by and large oral tradition. If knowledge needs to be transmitted orally, it requires a few things.
- ✓ In IKS a single work can provide simultaneously ideas on three streams: Spiritual, Religious and Secular.
- ✓ A large number of works in IKS are in verses set to a metrical (दशांश) structure irrespective of whether the subject matter is literature, mathematics, or engineering.
- ✓ Two important dimensions of oral traditions are:
 - Religious Vs Material Dimension
 - Spiritual Vs Material Dimension

Some Unique aspects of IKS

- **Typical Presentation Style- Sutras, Encryptions:**

- ✓ This is used irrespective of whether the work is original or a commentary on another work.
- ✓ It is also independent of whether the subject matter is literature, mathematics, or engineering.
- ✓ Several innovation methods are used to make the message concise and amenable (संक्षिप्त और उत्तरदायी) to a metrical presentation.

VEDAS

- The word Vedas is generally derived from the Sanskrit root vid.
- The word Veda can be derived from five verbal roots, these means:
 - ✓ To exist
 - ✓ To discriminate
 - ✓ To obtain
 - ✓ To know
 - ✓ To make

VEDAS

- Veda is transmitted orally and preserved intact from time immemorial.
- Vedas have well-developed system of phonetics that has ensured its preservation.
- Recognized by UNESCO as heritage.
- It is well-known that the *Vedas* are the oldest surviving literary works in the whole world.

The four VEDAS

- *Ṛgveda*
- *Yajurveda*
- *Sāmaveda*
- *Atharvaṇaveda*

R̥gveda

- R̥gveda is the oldest, largest and the main repository.
- R̥gveda should be studied by one who want to understand Indian Literature and spiritual culture.
- Lofty and interesting set of ideas found in R̥gveda makes it contextually relevant.

Yajurveda

- Yajurveda mainly focus on Yajna and a list of various Yajnas are found in this Veda.
- Yajurveda is in two major branches: Krsna (Black) -Yajurveda and Sukla (White) -Yajurveda.
- Yajurveda include anatomy, metals, constellation, seasons, numbers and geometry, grains and yogic insights.

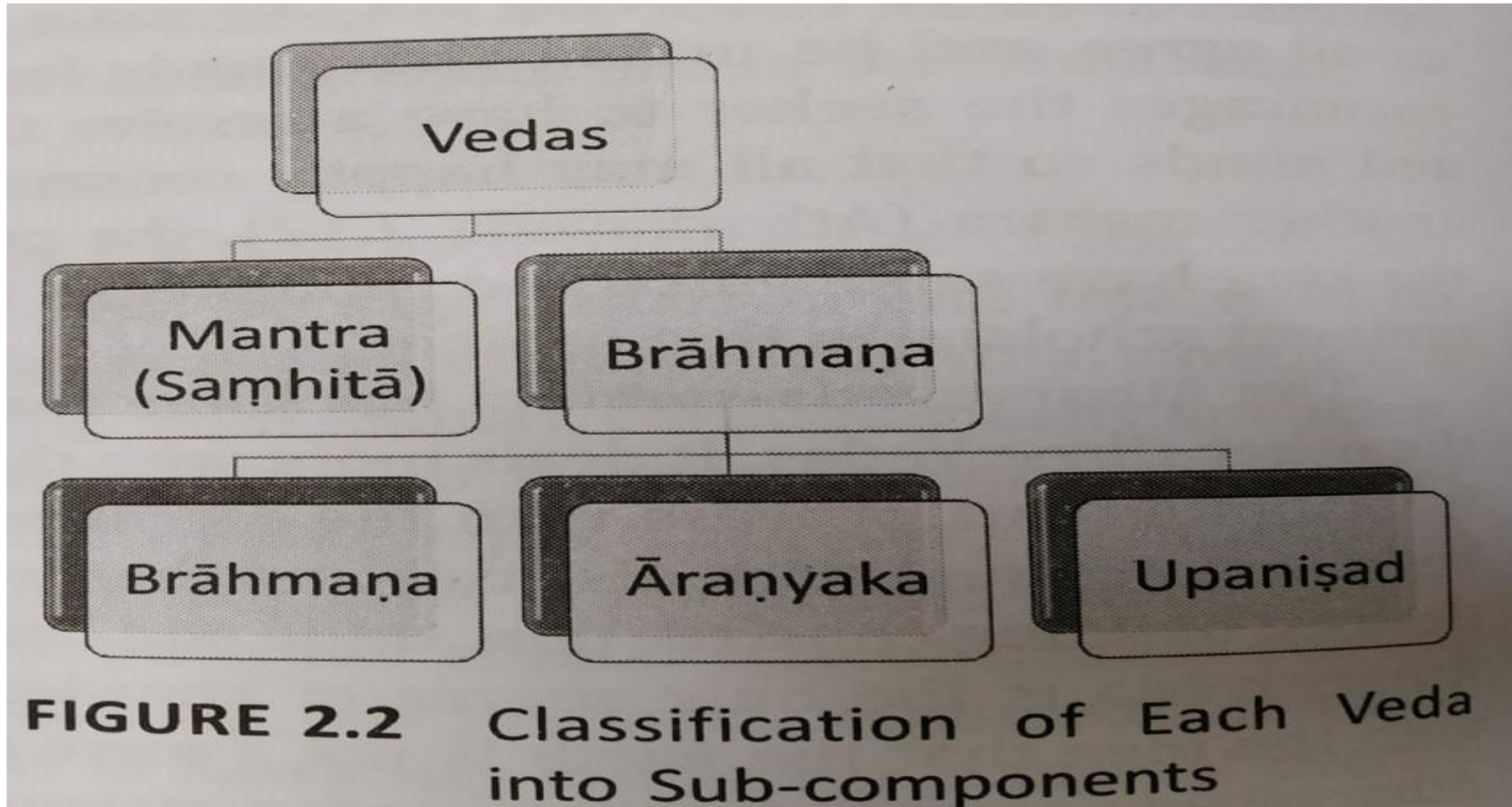
Sāmaveda

- The word Sāmaveda is derived from the Sanskrit word Sama indicating 'to please pacify or satisfy', it refers to the singing of Rgveda mantras.
- Sāmaveda has currently three branches: Kauthuma, Ranayaniya and Jaiminiya.
- Sāmaveda is used to please the devatas by singing mantras after making the offering.

Atharvaṇaveda

- Atharvaṇaveda has details on diseases and their cure.
- Paryers for prosperity and peace in the Vedas invariably included all the living organism in the Universe, not just the mankind.

The Four Divisions of Each Veda



The Four Divisions of Each Veda

TABLE 2.2 A Summary of the Content in the Four Veda

	<i>Rg Veda</i>	<i>Yajur Veda</i>	<i>Sāma Veda</i>	<i>Atharva Veda</i>
No. Mantras (Saṃhitā)	10,552	7,154 Kṛṣṇa: Taittirīya, Kāṭhaka, Maitrāyaṇīya Śukla: Vājasaneyā (Mādhyandina, Kāṇva)	1,549; only 75 unique	6,077 (last kāṇḍa is heavily borrowed from Rgveda)
Śākhās	21, only 5 available now	Kṛṣṇa: 85, only 4 available now Śukla: 17, only 2 available now	1000, only 3 available now	9, only 2 available now
Āraṇyakas	Aitareya, Śāṅkhāyana	Kṛṣṇa: Taittirīya Śukla: Bṛhadāraṇyaka	Talavakāra or Jaiminīya	None
Brāhmaṇas	Aitareya, Kauṣītakī	Kṛṣṇa: Taittirīya Śukla: Śatapatha	9 Brāhmaṇas (Tāṇḍya-mahā-brāhmaṇa important)	Gopatha Brāhmaṇa
Major Upaniṣads	Aitareya, Kauṣītakī	Kṛṣṇa: Taittirīya, Kāthopaniṣad Śukla: Bṛhadāraṇyaka, Īśāvāsyā	Chāndogya, Kena	Praśna, Muṇḍaka, Māṇḍūkya

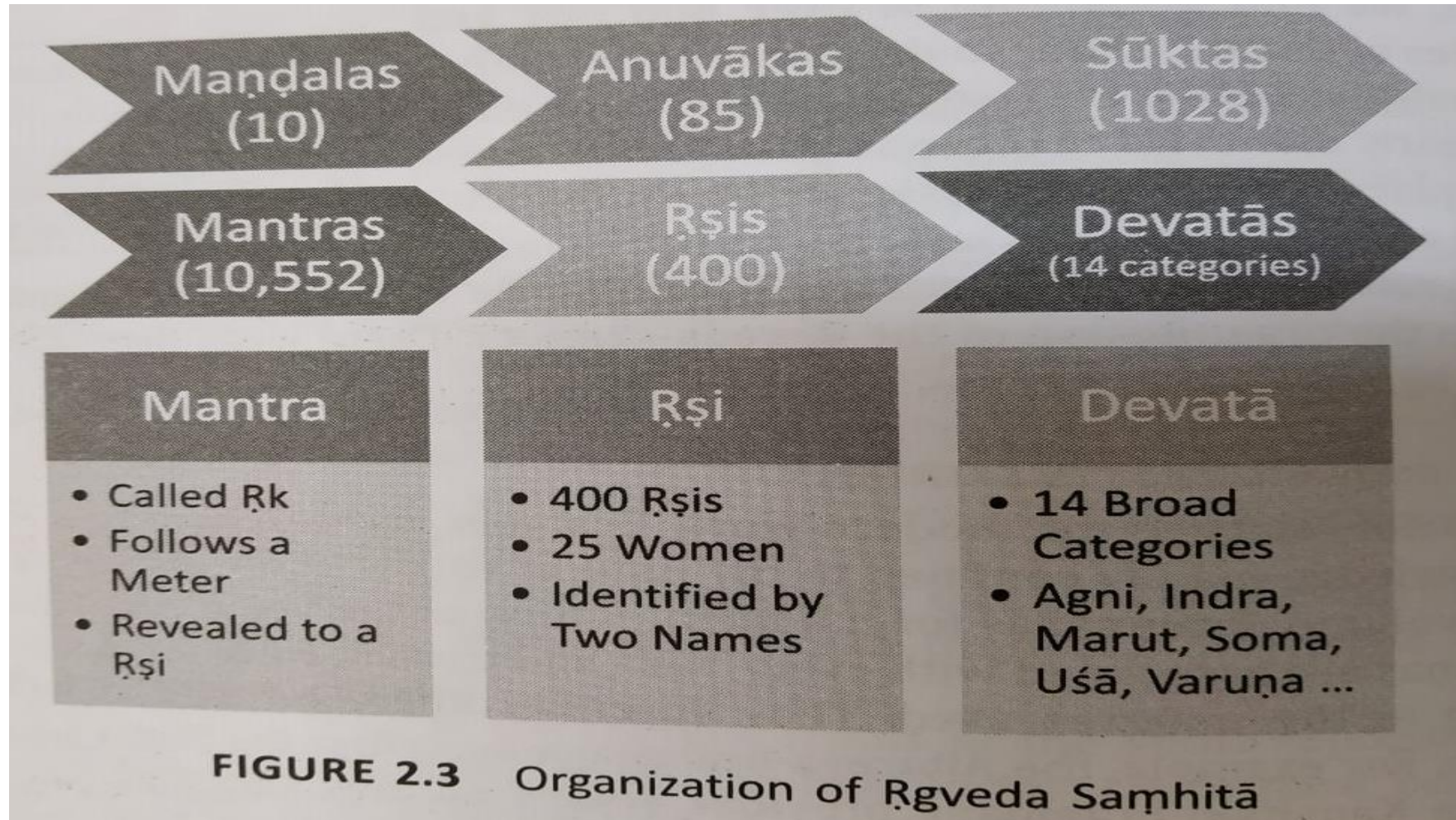
Samhita

- Each Veda consists of Samhita, Brahmana, Aranyaka and Upanisads.
- There were 25 women rishis who have composed hymns in Rgveda.
- Samhita constitutes the main portion of each Vedas and consist of a certain number of mantras presented in metrical form.

Brahmanas

- Brahmanas does not relate to the modern word 'Brahmin', used to denote the caste.
- These are a collection of knowledge mainly confined to the issue of ritual and rites written in prose.
- Brahmanas prescribe the mantras from the Samhitas that need to be recited for the rituals.

Brahmanas



Aranyakas

- Aranyakas inquire into the philosophical aspect of a yajna.
- Aranyakas are considered as bridge between brahmanas and Upanisads.
- Aranyakas represent the Upasana kanda of the Vedas.

Upanisads

- Upanisads are philosophical treatises dealing with the ultimate problems of life that every one of us confronts.
- The word Upanisads means sitting near a Guru and receiving his wisdom through teaching-learning process.
- Over 1180 Upanisads were supposed to have been part of the vedic corpus.
- 108 Upanisads in the four Vedas.

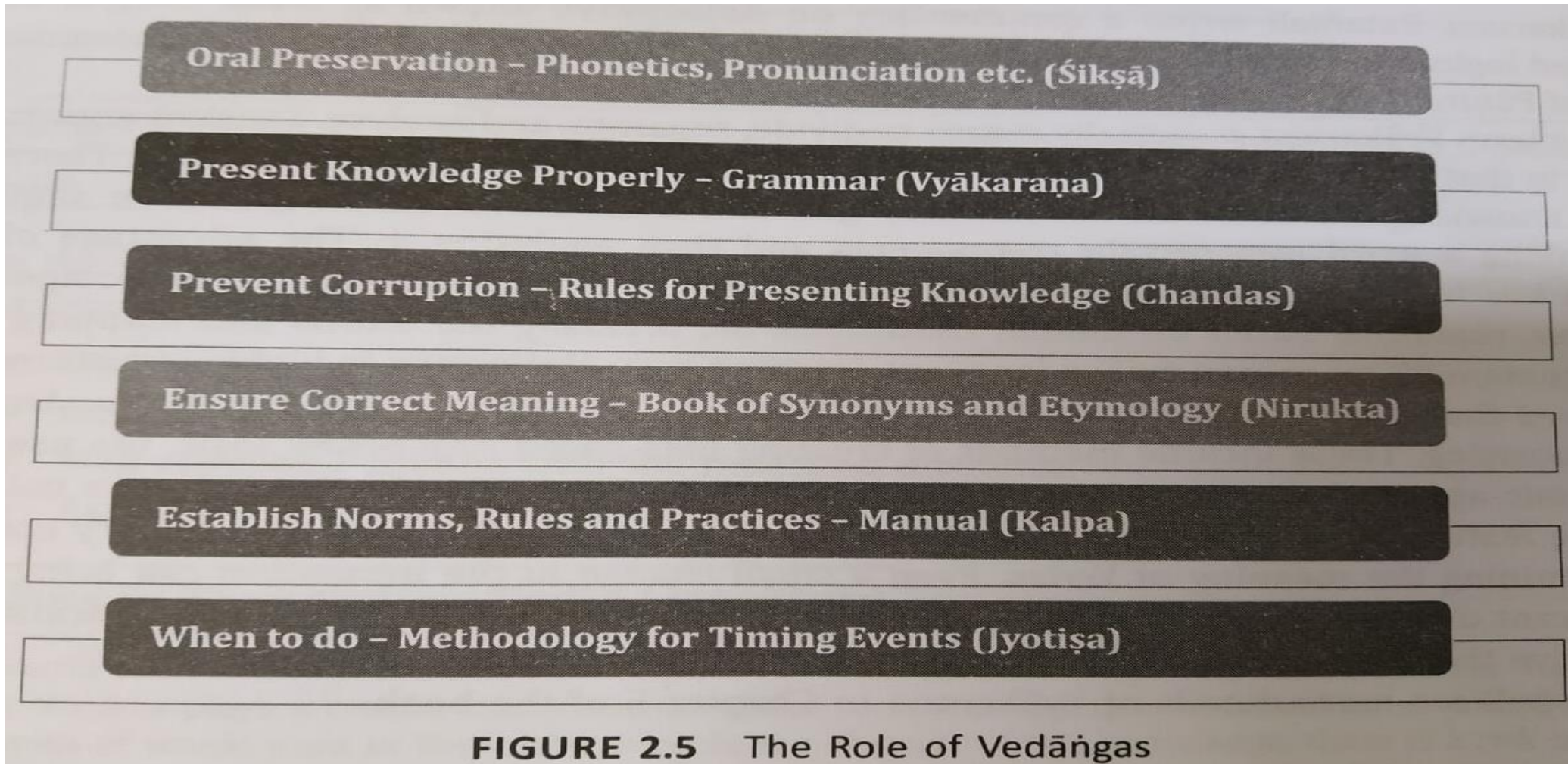
Upanisads

- The loftiest thoughts of the vedic seers are found in Upanisads.
- Upanisads pertains to the jnana-kanda of the vedas.
- There are 10 principal upanisads.
- The Maha-vakyas are found in the Upanisads.

Vedangas

- Vedangas texts help us decipher the Vedic texts and know their practical applications, they have other values of practical applicability in other fields also.
- There are six vedangas:
 - 1) Siksa
 - 2) Vyakarana
 - 3) Chandas
 - 4) Nirukta
 - 5) Kalpa
 - 6) Jyotisa

Vedangas



Siksa

- The word Siksa means to acquire knowledge.
- This has been described in Taittiriya Upanisad very briefly.
- Siksa-sastra, therefore, is a systemic approach to the art and practice of phonetics.
- It defines the characteristics of the basic units of the sound of the language known as varna.

Vyakarana

- Grammar is the foundational aspect of any language.
- TO understand the Vedic repository rules of grammar are required. Vyakarana is one the Vedangas that deals with this issue.
- The term Vyakarana essentially means to divide, separate and analyze.

Nirukta

- Nirukta is etymology, which is extracting the meaning of a word using linguistic theories and considering phonetic changes.
- Nirukta is a collection of rarely used words in Vedas.
- Nirukta is the most ancient work available on etymology anywhere in the world.

Chandas

- Rhythm is the key aspect of an oral tradition be it Vedic mantras or music.
- Chandas is the metre of poetic composition.
- A Chandas (metre) can be viewed using three level hierarchy.
 - Syllables (aksara)
 - Padas
 - Metre

Kalpa

- Kalpa focused on several operational aspects of the issues discussed in the Vedic Corpus.
- Kalpa can be thought of as a guide or user manual that provides instructions and directions to lead all aspects of life including personal, family and social dimensions.
- Following are the components of Kalpa:
 - Dharma-sutras
 - Grhya-sutras
 - Sulba-sutras
 - Srauta-sutras

Jyotisa

- Like several other ancient civilizations, Indians were using the natural calendar which is based on keen observation of the sky with moon and stars.
- This knowledge of the movement of stars and planetary bodies is called jyotisa.
- Jyotisa-sastra is classified into vaidika (related to Vedas) and laukika (related to the world).

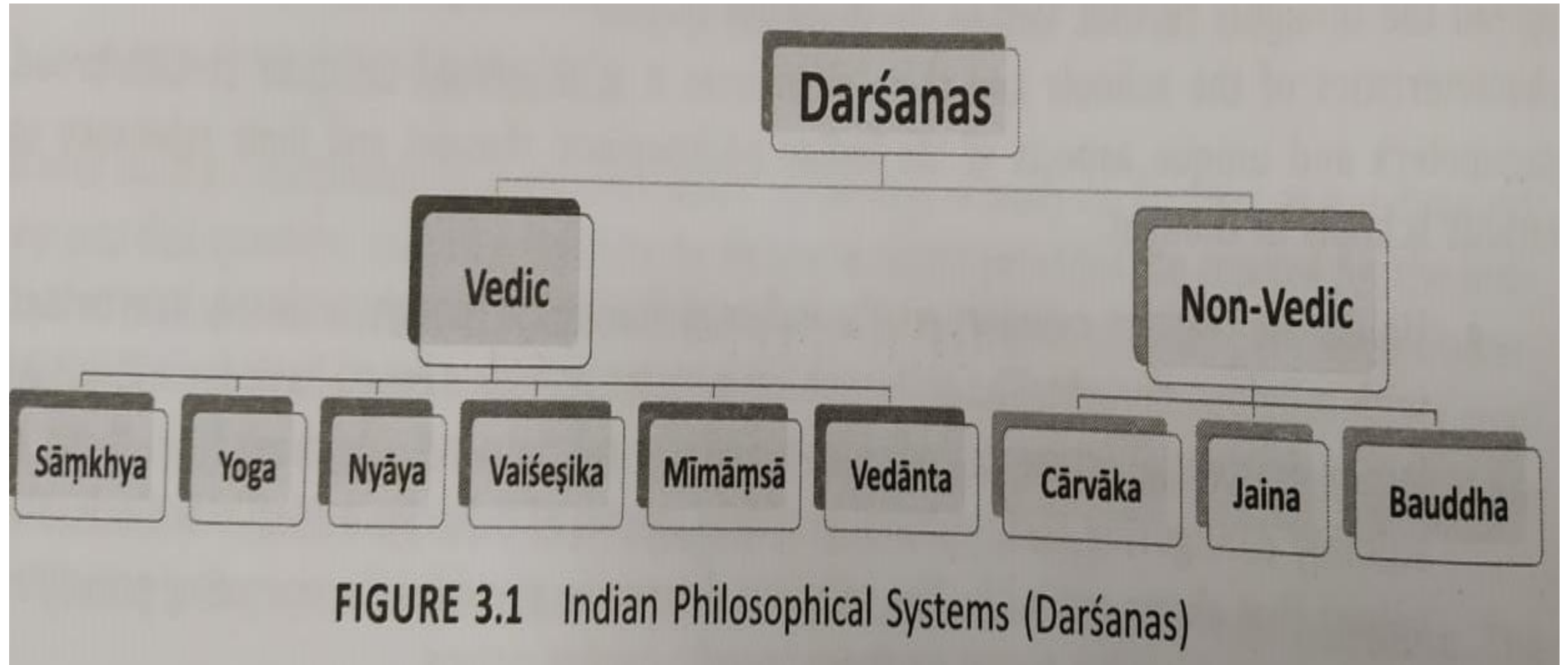
Philosophical Systems

- The Philosophical systems provide a true worldview and a vision for life and helps us resolve the issues that we face in our life.
- The teaching of the Upanisads suggest that attainment of the knowledge of Brahman is the highest goal of human life.

Indian Philosophical Systems- Development and Unique Features

- The beginning of the Philosophical inquiry in India can be traced to the Vedic literature.
- Unlike the western counterpart, the indian Philosophical thought closely intertwined with religious thought.
- The ultimate goal of the human life is clearly spelt out and the path for attaining the same is also articulated in all the darsanas.
- Two generic classes of philosophical systems could be thought about; Vedic schools of Philosophy and non-vedic schools (Jaina Philosophy, Buddhist Philosophy etc).

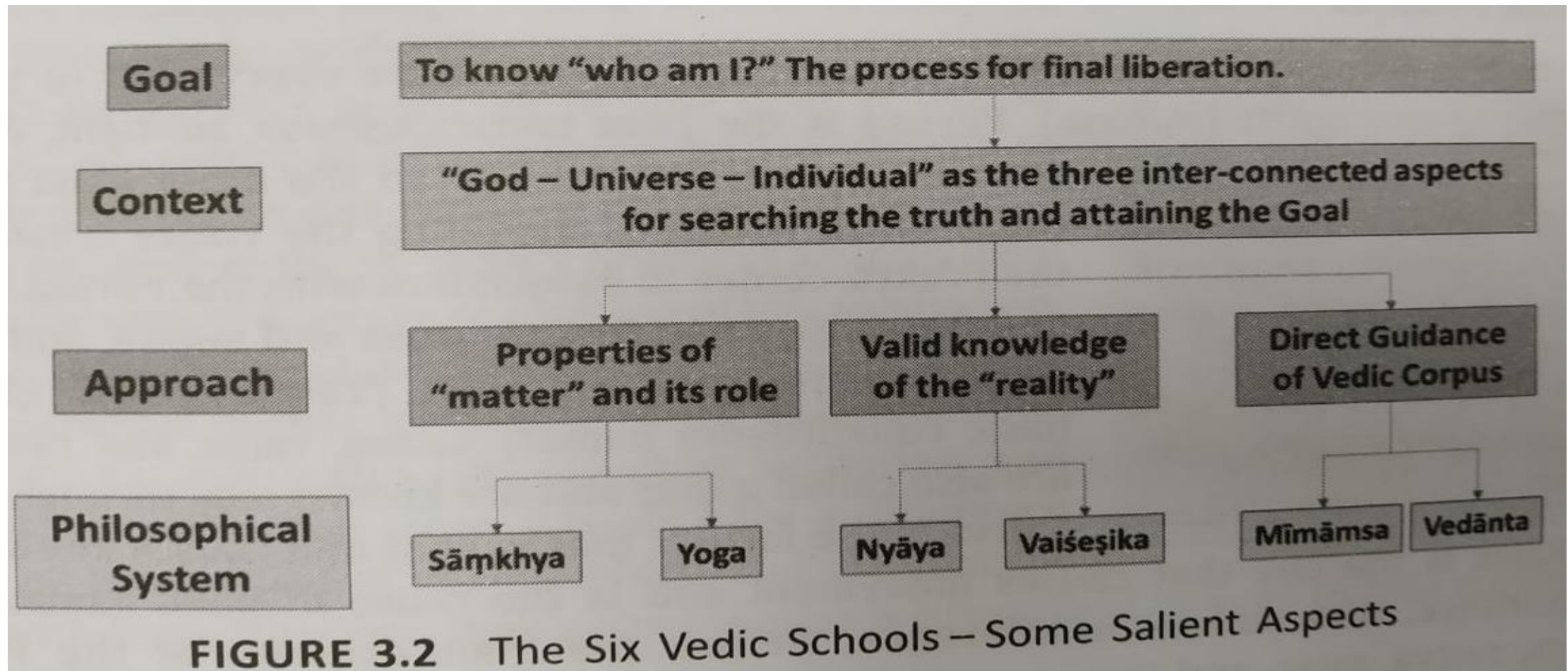
Indian Philosophical Systems- Development and Unique Features



Vedic Schools of Philosophy

- Vedic schools acknowledge the authority of the Vedic text whereas Non-Vedic schools do not.
- The context for philosophical discussion is three inter-related concepts of God-Universe-Individuals.

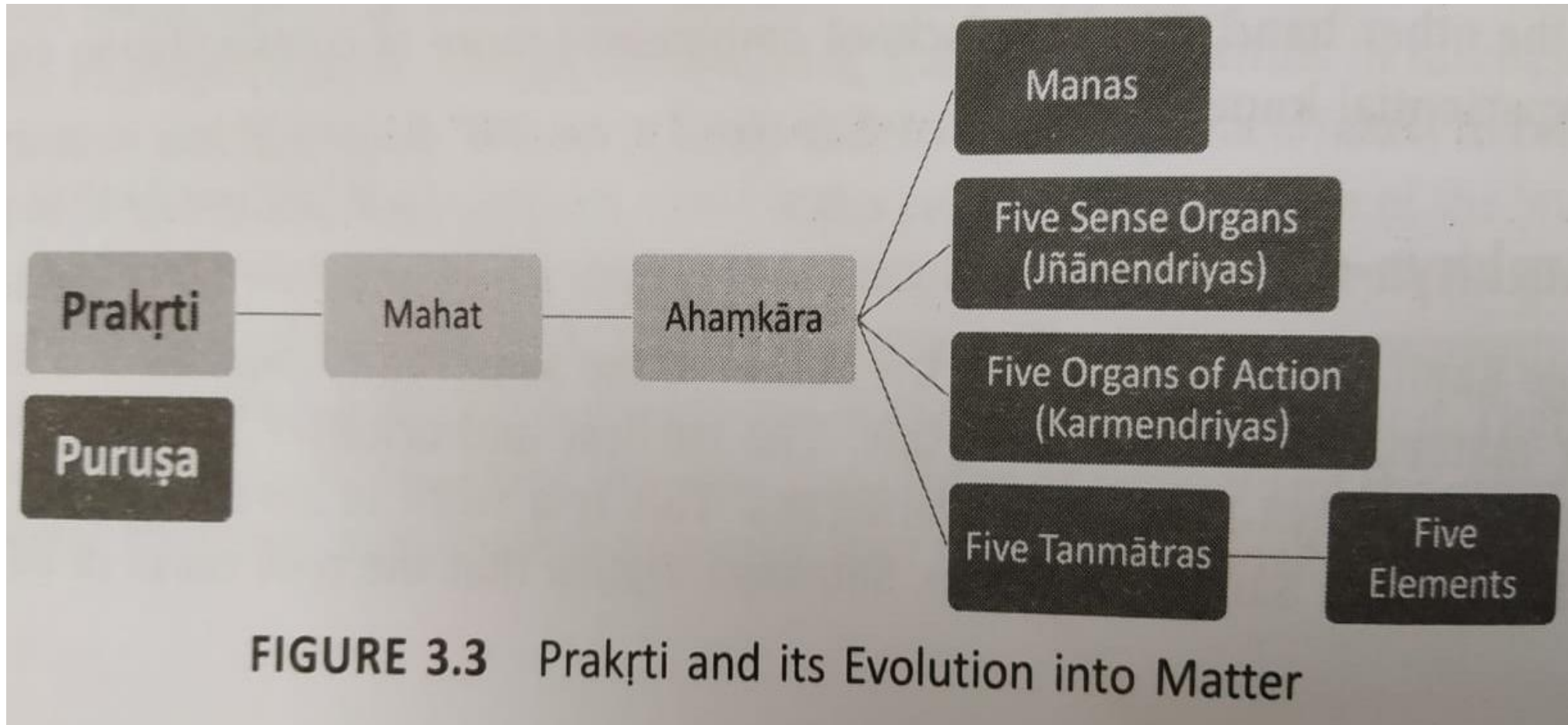
Vedic Schools of Philosophy



Samkhya and Yoga schools of Philosophy

- Samkhya-darsana- Purusa and Prakrti
- Yoga-darsana
- Purusa and Prakrti- According to the Samkhya system, two basic elements constitute everything in this world, matter (Prakriti) and spirit (Purusa). Prakriti is made of three basic constituents namely sattva, rajas, and tamas.

Purusa and Prakṛti



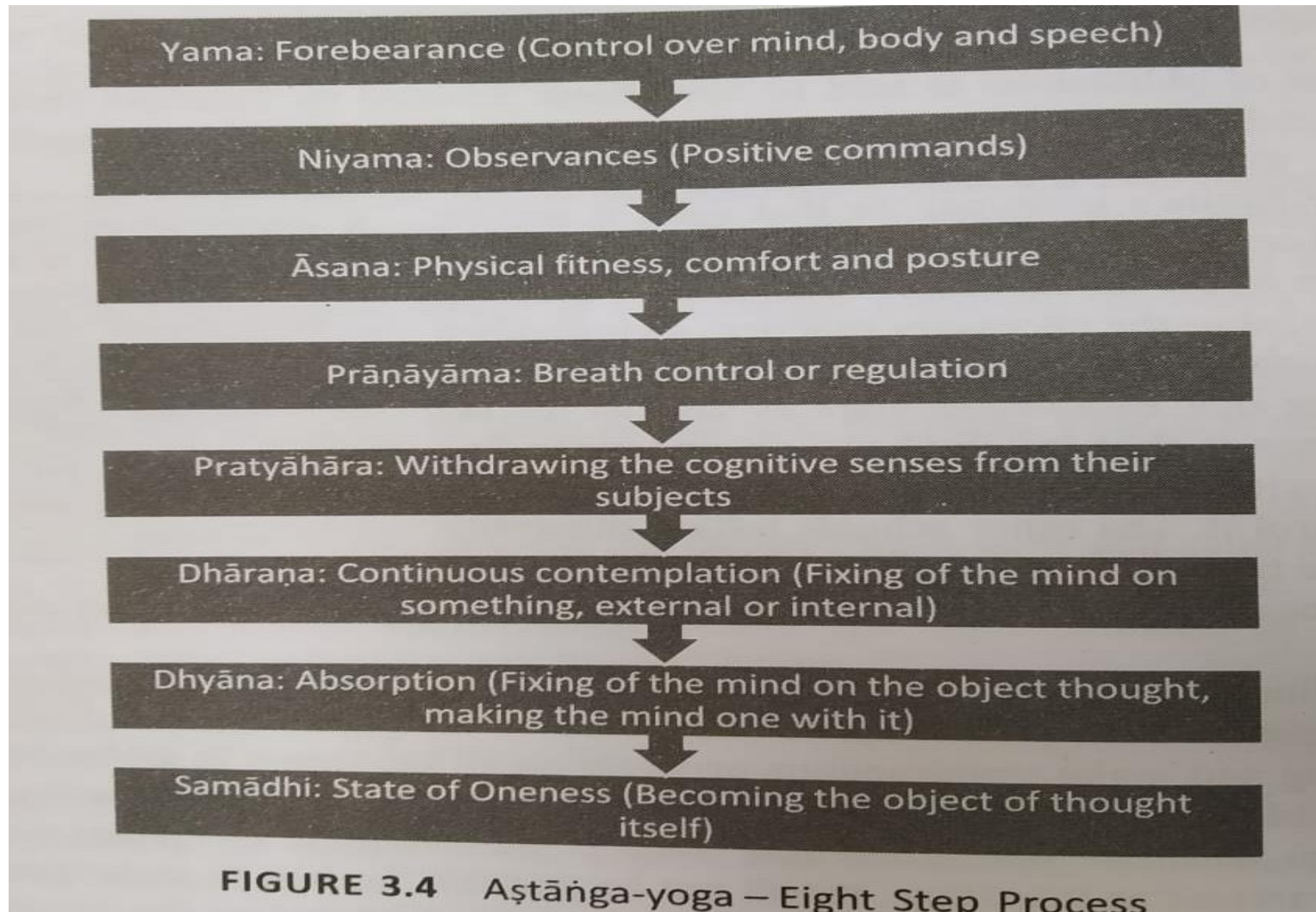
Yoga-darsana

- Yoga as a school of philosophy is said to have been founded by Patanjali through his Yoga-sutras.
- According to Yoga Philosophy to attain liberation, an individual must focus on the physical, psychological and moral states of his being.

Yoga-darsana

- Yoga provides a structured and practical eight-step process gradually reach a stage of complete cession of the activities of Citta.
- Yoga can help an individual address the vexing problem of stress-induced lifestyle leading to health and wellness challenges that modern society is facing.

Yoga-darsana



Nyaya and Vaishesika schools of Philosophy

- Nyaya deals with 'ways of knowing the reality' and Vaishesika with 'objects in the reality that knowable'.
- Nyaya and Vaishesika schools place a greater emphasis on obtaining the right knowledge for liberation.
- The word Vaishesika is derived from the word Vaisesa meaning difference or unique attributes in a thing.
- The Vaishesika school presents the knowable that form all the real entities in the universe using certain categories.

Nyaya and Vaisesika schools of Philosophy

- Categories of Nyaya and Vaisesika schools of Philosophy:
- Nyaya-darsana
- Vaisesika-darsan

Purva- Mimamsa and Vedanta schools of Philosophy

- This portion typically referred to as Karma Kanda of the Vedic Corpus.
- Both the schools share common beliefs in several of the philosophical principles.
- This includes the notion of atman, the existence of karma, rebirth and long seemingly endless cycle of birth-death.

Purva- Mimamsa Darsana

- The word Mimamsa conveys different meanings: reflection, consideration, profound thoughts, investigation, examination and discussion.
- In the context of Purva- Mimamsa schools Mimamsa Means reflection or critical investigation.
- Purva – Mimamsa school has established its tenets based on the karma kand.
- The Purva- Mimamsa text provides rules for the interpretation of the Vedas and Provide philosophical justifications for the observance of Vedic rituals.

Vedanta (Uttara- mimamsa darsana)

- The Vedanta school has established its tenets based on Jnana Kanda.
- The Vedanta school rely on three major texts known as Prasthanatraya for establish their tenets.
- This includes the Brahma-sutras written by Badrayana (Vyasa).
- Following are the aspects of schools of Vedantas:
 - Advaita- Vedanta (reconizing what is one's inherent nature)
 - Visistadvaita- Vedanta (combines the bhakti to the personal God and impersonal God as espoused in the Upanisads into a single school of thought)
 - Dvaita- Vedanta (that Visnu is the supreme God, the world is real and there is a difference between God and the Jivas.

Non- Vedic Philosophical Systems

- 1) Jaina School of Philosophy
- 2) Buddha School of Philosophy
- 3) Carvaka School

Jaina School of Philosophy

- The word Jaina is derived from the Sanskrit root “ji” to conquer essentially indicating someone who has successfully subdued his passions and obtained mastery.
- In this, the cycle of birth-death is attributed tiny particles of matter that have embedded themselves into Jiva; this is called karma.
- In the Jain philosophy, spiritual growth is to overcome this karma.

Buddha School of Philosophy

- The Buddha School of Philosophy is largely based on the teaching of Gautama Buddha.
- There are two forms of Buddhism: the northern form and the southern form.
- Buddha's philosophy focuses on the means of ending the suffering of the individuals.
- The four noble truths of Buddhism are:
 - i. Suffering by clinging to 5 aggregates
 - ii. Thirst causes rebirth and suffering
 - iii. Cessation of suffering by destruction of desire
 - iv. 8-fold path to end the suffering

Carvaka School

- Carvaka School of thought closely maps to the trait of materialism which emphasizes a life of enjoyment based on certain principles and assumptions about life.
- According to Carvaka school whatever is directly perceivable can only be accepted as valid means of knowledge.
- No text of the Carvaka school is available to us today which discusses its tenets in totality.

Features of Carvaka School

- Matter is ultimate reality
- World is made of four basic elements
- No room for any of the transcendental entities
- No afterlife, rebirth
- Conclusions and knowledge are embodied, not eternal
- Goal of life is experience pleasure 'here and now'

Wisdom through the Ages

- Stories provide a powerful medium through which one can impart education on a wide range of topics.
- The genesis of this text provides interesting insights into the power of storytelling in bringing the accumulated wisdom to use.

Puranas- An Encyclopedic Work

- Puranas are one of the most important literary sources of ancient and medieval Indian history and culture.
- Puranas are companion texts to help understand and interpret the Vedas.
- The study of Puranas and the Upapuranas are critical to developing an understanding of the social and religious institutions of India.
- Puranas deals with the evolution of the universe, the recreation of the universe, genealogies of Gods and seers (देवताओं और द्रष्टाओं की वंशावली), and history of royal families.

Categories of Puranas

1) Maha- puranas

- 18 in number, about 400,00 verses
- Cover a wide variety of topics
- Has five laksanas

2) Upa- puranas

- Several available
- 18 identified as prominent
- Smaller than Maha-Puranas

3) Sthala- puranas

- Several of them available
- Regional focus
- All Languages (mainly in Sanskrit)

Contents/ Characteristics of the Puranas

- There are five Characteristics of Puranas known as panca-laksanas.
 - i. Sarga (Creation of the Universe)
 - ii. Prati-Sarga (Destruction and re-creation)
 - iii. Vamsa (Dynasties (राजवंशों) of Kings)
 - iv. Manvantara (Times of different Manus)
 - v. Vamsanucarita (Stories of the Dynasties)

Issues of Interest in the Puranas

- Puranas contain several discussions related to the plant kingdom and its role in addressing food, medicine and other requirements of society.
- Several Puranas have discussions on astronomy, which consists of ideas in the pre-telescope age.
- Issues of Interest:
 - i. Food and Medicine
 - ii. Foetal Development: Stages of Growth
 - iii. Astronomy
 - iv. Geography

Itihasa as a source of Wisdom

- The etymology of the word Itihasa provides us some clues about the nature of the work and its content.
- The word Itihasa points to history.
- The text which teaches the four goals of life Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha and which deals with stories of historical happenings is called Itihasa.
- According to Kautilya- history (Purana, Itivrtta), tales (Akhyayika), illustrative stories (Udaharana), Dharmasastra and Arthasastra are known by the name Itihasa.

Uniqueness of the two Epics

- The two Itihasa Ramayana and Mahabharata occupy a very unique position in the repository of the Indian Knowledge System.
- Itihasa is stories related to some past events viewed through the lens of four purusarthas.
- Ramayana and Mahabharata are two encyclopedias of the ancient Aryan life and Wisdom, Portraying and ideal civilization.

Uniqueness of the two Epics

- Ramayana takes a normative approach while Mahabharata takes descriptive approach to present events and decisions.
- Indian drama, dance and other performing arts have been greatly influenced by the two epics.

Ramayana- Key Issues and Messages

- Ramayana consists of seven books which are called as Kandas, organized into 654 sargas (chapters) and 23672 verses.
- Ramayana is a vast history of Rama but also consist of many other related instances.
- In India, more than 40 versions of Ramayana in different languages like the Ramcaritmanas in Avadhi, Kamba-Ramayana in Tamil. Madhava-Kandali in Assamese, Gona Budha's Ranganatha-Ramayana in Telugu, Jagamohan- Ramayana in Oriya, Narahari-Ramayana in Kannada, etc.

Ramayana- Key Issues and Messages

- Ramayana has played a significant role in cultural transmission between Indian and other Asian countries.
- According to Ramayana, Rama is not merely a human being but an embodiment and a living entity of the concept of Dharma.
- Ramayana provides a rich opportunity to understand important aspects of peaceful; co-existence and successful living.

Ramayana- Kandas

Ramayan encourages one to contemplate the difference between 'goodness' and 'greatness' and the need to have both to succeed in life.

- Bala-Kanda
- Ayodhya-Kanda
- Aranya-Kanda
- Kiskindha-Kanda
- Sundera-Kand
- Yuddha-Kand
- Uttara-Kand

Mahabharata- A Sourcebook For Worldly Wisdom

- Mahabharata is one of the greatest poems in the world composed by Krsna - Dvaipayana (Veda Vyasa).
- Mahabharata discuss a verity of topics including law, philosophy, religion and custom.
- Mahabharata presents the reality of life and allows the reader to pick up their lessons for living.
- Nitis are the guidance to take a person to the path od Dharma by providing the right perspectives about life and goals.

Mahabharata- Issues Discussed in the Text

- 1) Birth, Childhood and Rivalry
- 2) Banishing of Pandavas
- 3) Failed peace parleys leading to war
- 4) Post-war conversation between Yudhishthira and Bhishma
- 5) The exit of the character

Mahabharata

- 1,00,000 verses, over 2,000 chapters
- Descriptive approach- characters present the reality of life
- Rich collection of deeply nested stories
- Many nuggets of wisdom- Yaksha Prasna, Vidhur Niti, Sanat- sujatiya, Bhagavad Gita

Niti-Sastras- Collection of Snippets of Wisdom

- Nitis are the guidelines to take a person to the path of Dharma by providing the right perspectives about life and life goals.
- The role of Niti- sastras lies in providing us helpful direction from past experiences.
- Niti texts take into consideration the very basic rules that all purusarthas are generally guaranteed to the individuals by the universe.

Niti-Sastras (Some Selected Niti Texts)

- i. Barhaspatyam
- ii. Vidura-Niti (Part of Mahabharata)
- iii. Pancatantra (Visnu Samra)
- iv. Hitopadesa (Narayana Pandita)
- v. Niti- sataka (Bartrhari)

Subhasitas- A Collection of Insights From Various Texts

- The concise poetry which communicates the valuable message for the society with some interesting examples is called Subhasitas.
- These are nothing but a systematic collection of insightful observations, examples and principles of life from a wide range of existing repositories of literary work.
- Collection of ideas from various texts comes from certain traditions of the great Indian poets.

THANKS