

The Significance of the Sama Veda and its main theme.

IS SAMA VEDA AN INDEPENDENT VEDA ?

In the first four chapters of this Introduction, we have dealt with the glory of the Vedas, their distinguishing features and their conception of God. Let us now consider the significance of the Sama Veda and its main theme. There are some scholars who think that the Sama Veda has not got an independent or separate existence. It has borrowed almost all (with the exception of about 100) Mantras from the Rigveda and it is meant only for chanting. But that is a very erroneous idea. In the following and other Mantras of the Rig Veda, Sama Veda and its verses have been clearly mentioned.

अंगिरसां सामभिः स्तूयमानाः ॥ ऋ० १ । १०७ । २

अंगिरसो न सामभिः ॥ ऋ० १० । ७८ । ५

उभौ वाचौ वदति सामगा इव गायत्रं च त्रैष्टुभं चानु राजति ।

उद्गातेव शकुने साम गायसि, ब्रह्मपुत्र इव सवनेषु शंसति ॥

Rig. 2-43-10

यो जागार तमृचः कामयन्ते यो जागार तमु सामानि यन्ति॥

Rig. 5-44-14

तमेव ऋषिं तमु ब्रह्माणमाहुर्यज्ञन्यं सामगामुक्थशासम् ॥

Rig. 10-107-6

इन्द्राय साम गायत विप्राय बृहते बृहत् ॥

Rig. 8-98-1

बृहस्पतिः सामभिः ऋक्वो अर्चतु ॥

Rig. 10-30-5

ऋतस्य सामन् रणयन्त देवाः ॥

Rig. 1-147-1

साम कृखन् सामन्यो विपश्चित् क्रन्दन्नेति ॥

Rig. 9 96-22

परावतो न साम तद् यत्रारणन्ति धीतयः ॥

Rig. 9-101-2

आंगृष्टं शवनासाय नाम ॥

Rig, 1-62-2

ये परः साम्नो विदुः ॥

Rig. 2-23-16

त्वष्ट्राजनयत् साम्नः कविः ॥

Rig. 2-22-17

सहिद्युता विद्युता वेति साम॥

Rig. 10-99-2

In these and many other Mantras of the Rig Veda, the separate and simultaneous existence of the Sama Veda and its melodious Mantras with chanting has been clearly hinted at: It is specially worth-noting that in Rig. 10-90-9 the Sama Veda and its Mantras have been mentioned along with the Rig Veda, Yajurveda and Atharva Veda as Revealed by the Omniscient and Omnipresent God.

तस्माद् यज्ञात्सर्वहृत् ऋचः सामानिजज्ञिरे ।

छन्दांसि जज्ञिरे तस्माद् यजुस्तस्मादजायत ॥

This shows that all the four Vedas were revealed by the Most Adorable Omniscient Supreme Being, simultaneously in the beginning of the human creation and there is no question of one Veda borrowing from the other consequently. Therefore, the independent existence of the Sama Veda cannot be denied. In the Yajurveda 31-9 also the same Mantra is found. In the Atharva Veda 17-7-28 we find ;—

ऋचः सामानि छन्दांसि पुराणं यजुषा सह ।

उच्छ्वष्टाज्जज्ञिरे सर्वे दिवि देवा दिवि श्रिताः ॥

In this Mantra also, it is clearly stated that the Rig Veda, Sama. Veda, Yajur Veda and Atharva Veda, all were revealed by the immortal Supreme Being, who ever remains Immutable.

We have already quoted the passage from the Shatapath Brahman

एतस्य वा श्रे महतो भूतस्य निःश्वसितमेतद् यद्
ऋग्वेदो यजुर्वेदः सामवेदोऽर्थव वेदः॥

In the Gopath Brahman Poorva 2-16 we find :—

चत्वारो वा इमे वेदा ऋग्वेदो यजुर्वेदः सामवेदो
ब्रह्मवेद इति ॥

Gopath P. 2-16

Here also among the four Vedas, Sama Veda has been separately mentioned showing its separate and independent existence. It is therefore quite wrong to think that the Sama Veda has no independent existence and it is meant only for chanting.

It is to be remembered that in the Sama Veda, the order of the Mantras is quite different from the Rig Veda and most of the Mantras have variations which are meaningful. Even Griffith admits it in his Preface to the translation of the Hymns of the Sama Veda saying “In these compiled hymns there are frequent variations of more or less importance from the text of the Rig Veda as we now possess it, which variations, although in some cases they are explanatory, seem in others to be older and more original than the readings of the Rig Veda” (Griffith’s Preface P. 111).

We cannot see eye to eye with Griffith that the texts in the Sama Veda are older and original, but he is right in pointing out the important variations which are generally ignored. The order is quite different, for instance the first mantra of the Rigveda अग्निमीडे पुरोहितम् is No. 605 in the Sama Veda. As we will presently show, the main theme of the Rigveda is ज्ञान or knowledge while that of the Sama Veda is भक्ति or devotion. Therefore, even the same Mantras give different meanings in different Vedas and context. This is the significance and peculiarity of the wonderful Vedic Speech, which is seldom found anywhere else. The significance and glory of the Sama Veda has been sung in the Brahmanas and other

ancient literature in such terms as :—

सर्वेषां वा एष वेदानां रसो यत्साम ॥

Shatapath 12-8-3-23

and Gopath Uttar 5-7

i. e. The Sama Veda is the quintessence of all the Vedas.

साम हि नाष्ट्यग्णं रक्षसामपहन्ता ॥

Shatapath 4-4-5-6

i. e. The Sama Veda is the destroyer of all evils and obstacles.

सामवेद एव यशः ॥

Gopath P. 5-15

Sama Veda is glorious.

सामवेदो यशः ॥ Shatpath 12-3-4-9 Sama Veda is glorious or illustrious.

साम हि सत्याशीः॥ Tandy B. 11-10-10 Sama Veda is truly blessed.

सामवेदो ब्राह्मणानां प्रसूतिः ॥ Taittireeya 3-12-9-2

The Sama Veda is the origin of Brahmanhood.

It means that no one can become a Brahman unless he studies (at least) Sama Veda. In the Bhagavad Gita we find Shri Krishna showing the highest regard for Sama Veda by saying. वेदानां सामवेदोऽस्मि ॥

Bhagavad Gita Ch. 10-22

The main theme of the Sama Veda :—

The main theme of the Sama Veda as its very name denotes is devotion and contemplation. The root meaning of the word Sama is consolation or peace as it is derived from the root साम सान्त्वने । In Unadikosha 4-164 the word साम (Sama) has been derived from the root षो - अन्तकर्मणि Show-to put an end. It has been aptly explained, by Rishi Dayananda Sarasvati as स्यन्ति खण्डयन्ति दुःखानि येन तत् अत्र सर्वधातुभ्यो मनिन् इति करण कारके मनिन् ॥
i. e. It is called Sama, because with its help a man can put

an end to all miseries. This also denotes its significance and importance, because every one desires to be free from all misery. Therefore it is his duty to ponder over the Mantras of the Sama Veda which mainly deal with devotion and contemplation.

The Mantras of the Sama Veda teach us the real nature of true devotion and the means for its development. The attitude which we should have towards the Almighty God is stated in the following manner in Sama 1170,

ओं त्वं हि नः पिता वसो त्वं माता शतऋतो बभूविथ ।
अथा ते सुम्नमीमहे ॥

साम० ११७०

Thou art our Almighty Father

Thou art our Mother Divine.

To Thee alone we pray for peace

We are children always Thine.

In Sama 1841 we are told to pray...

ओरेस् उत वात पितासि न उत भ्रातोत नः सखा ।

स नो जीवातवे कृधि ॥

साम० १८४१

Life of our life, Thou art our Father

Thou art Brother and Friend.

Give us strength to lead pure life

Enabling us to achieve our end.

Here the word वात (Vata) stands for God, as it is derived from वात-सुख सेवनयोः i.e. Giver of True happiness and Adorable.

It is this intense love for and un-shakable faith in God that constitutes devotion (भक्ति) as defined by Maharshi Narada in his devotional aphorisms सा (भक्तिः) तु अस्मिन् परमप्रेमरूपा ॥

It is to be always borne in mind that the Sama Veda and other Vedas teach the worship of One God only. The various names like Agni, Indra, Soma and others are used to denote God's different and innumerable attributes. In Sama 242 and 1360 we read :—

ओं मा चिदन्यद् विशंसत सखायो मा रिषण्ठत ।

इन्द्रमित् स्तोता वृषणं सचा सुते मुहुरुकथा च शंसत ॥

(साम० २४२, १३६०)

Do not worship any one

Except God Almighty.

Showerer of Peace and Bliss

And Giver of all piety.

O friends, do not suffer

Worshipping any one else.

In solitude and public

Worship God and none else.

Agni means Omniscient Supreme Leader (अग्निगतौ उणा७ ४: ५०, अग्निःनिरुक्ते ७४१) Indra means the Lord of the world (इदि - परमैश्वर्ये) Soma means the Creator or the Source of Peace (पू - प्रज्ञवैश्वर्ययोः) In Sama Veda 548,1101 and 1654 The chief characteristics of a true devotee have been beautifully stated.

सोमाः पवन्त इन्द्रवोऽस्मभ्यं गातुवित्तमाः ।

मित्राःस्वाना श्रेष्ठसः स्वाध्यः स्वविदः ॥

(साम० ५४८, ६६०१)

Men of quiet and peaceful nature

Of disposition like the moon

Go everywhere and purify

Even wicked people soon.

Best Knowers of the True path

Avoid jealousy and wrath

Sweet and friendly to all

All comrades do they call .

What is Soma ?...

Rev. Stevenson, Griffith and other Western Commentators of the Sama Veda translate the word Soma as Wine or Liquor. But that is absolutely wrong. The word Soma stands primarily for God as clearly proved from the following and other Mantras and from the authorities like सोमो हि प्रजापतिः (शतपथ ब्राह्मणे ५।१५।२६) सोमो वै प्रजापतिः (शत० ५।१।३।७) यो वै विष्णुः सोमः सः (शत० ३।३।४।२। ३।६।३।१६)

Secondarily it stands for the Juice of devotion commingled with wisdom रसःसोमः (शत० ७-७-३-१-३) तद् यत् तदमृतं सोमः सः (शत० ६।५।१।८)

When used in plural form as सोमाः it stands for true devotees of God who are of quiet, peaceful nature. सोमो वै ब्राह्मणः ॥ (तारण्ड्य २३।५)

The adjectives used in the Sama Veda (even as translated by Dr. Stevenson and Griffith) for Soma prove beyond the least shadow of a doubt that the word stands primarily for God. For instance, In Sama 546 we are told about Soma:—

अयं पूषा रथिर्भगः सोमः पुनानो अर्षति ।

पतिविश्वस्य भूमनो व्यख्यद् रोदसी उभे ॥

(साम० ५४६)

Rev. Stevenson's Translation :—

"This wealth and property-conferring, purifying Soma, the Lord of all, the soul of the world in the person of the sun, enlightens the heaven and earth "

(Dr. Stevenson's Translation of the Sama Veda P. 73)

Griffith's Translation ;—

"As Pushan, Fortune Bhaga comes this Soma, while they make him pure. He, Lord of all the multitudes hath looked upon the earth and the heaven." "Hymns of the Sama Veda

Translated by Griffith P. 109”

Not even the most thoughtless and ignorant person can ever conceive the juice of a particular plant or liquor to be the lord of the world and enlightener of heaven and earth. Let us take one or two more Mantras where Soma has been described as the Creator of the world.

In the Sama Veda 943 we read :—

सोमः पवते जनिता मतीनां जनिता दिवो जनिता पृथिव्याः ॥

(साम० ६४३)

Dr. Stevenson's translation of the Mantra is “Soma is flowing down pure; he is the creator of intellect, the creator of earth, the creator of fire, the creator of the sun. Can even the most stupid person ever imagine that the Juice of a particular herb or liquor can be the creator of heaven, earth, fire and the sun etc ? Such a thing is inconceivable.

Griffith's translation is to the same effect.

“Father of holy hymns, Soma flows onward, the father of the earth, father of Agni, Surya's generator”.

It is clear that in these and other Mantras, the word Soma stands for God and not for liquor or wine. Rev. Stevenson was therefore obliged to remark in his Preface to the translation of the Sama Veda that ‘Soma, identified with the uncreated Spirit, holds the place of Brahma in the more modern Vedanta.’

(Rev. Stevenson's Preface P. VII)

While giving the translation of सोमः पवते जनिता मतीनां जनिता दिवो जनिता पृथिव्याः (Soma 943) quoted above, Dr. Stevenson has added the remarkable note that—Soma is here apparently identified with what the Hindus now term Brahm.” (P. 110).

In the Same Veda 604 we find the following significant Mantra.

ओं त्वमिमा ओषधीः सोम विश्वास्त्वमपो अजनयस्त्वं गाः ।
त्वमात्तत्त्वोर्वन्तरिक्षं त्वं ज्योतिषा वि तमो वर्वर्थ ॥

सा० ६ । ४ क्र० १ । ६१ । २२,

While strangely enough both Dr. Stevenson and Griffith have failed to translate it and other Mantras of the Aranya Kanda for reasons known only to themselves, Wilson has given the following translation in the Rig Veda 1-91-22

"Thou Soma hast generated all these herbs, the water and the kine; Thou hast spread out the spacious firmament; Thou hast scattered darkness with light.

(Wilson's Rigveda Translation Vol. 1., P. 140)

It is thus clear and even Europeans have to admit it willy nilly, that the word "Soma" stands primarily for God in the Vedas.

For details, readers are referred to our Notes and Comments particularly on the verses no. 888, 1031, 1089 and others.

Soma:—Devotional Juice and Divine Delight :—

Besides God, the other meaning of the word Soma is Juice of devotion mingled with knowledge, as readers will find in many of the Mantras translated in this book. Two Mantras may be quoted to illustrate the point.

In Same Veda 344 and 949 we are told :—

ओ३स् इममिन्द्र सुतं पिब ज्येष्ठममत्यं मदस् ।

शुक्रस्य त्वाभ्यक्षरन् धारा ऋतस्य सादने ॥

सा० ३४४, ६४६,

It may be rendered in to English Metrically as follows:—

Drink drink this immortalising

Drink which is the sweetest

Enjoy the bliss of meditating

On Him who is the Greatest.

Let the waves of purity
Flow in the seat of Truth.
Waves of wisdom also flow
From God Eternal Truth.

It will be evident to every thoughtful and impartial reader that this immortalising (अमृतम्) greatest drink (ज्येष्ठ मदम्) is not wine or liquor, but the juice of devotion commingled with wisdom which is meant here and which we are asked to take. The waves of purity and wisdom begin to flow in the heart which is the seat of Truth, when this immortalising spiritual juice is taken in.

The second Mantra which I would like to quote in this connection is from the Sama Veda 1433.

It gives the following beautiful description of the spiritual intoxication caused by Soma.

ओरेसु आनस्ते गन्तु मत्सरो वृषा मदो वरेण्यः ।
सहावाँ इन्द्र सानसिः पृतनाषाडमत्यः ॥ साम० १४३३

It can metrically be rendered into English as...

"Let us have that intoxication
Which is delightful and the best;
Which gives peace of devotion
And power of endurance, devotion's test
Which is immortal and the conqueror
Of evil's host that shares
The joy with others and is winner
Of peace, destroyer of cares.

Surely it is not the description of wine or liquor which mars one's moral sense and awakens lust and other evil passions. It is to distinguish this spiritual intoxication or ecstasy from the material one that adjectives like शुचिः पावको

अद्भुतः (साम० ६६६) वरेण्योमदः (साम० १४३६) जनिता मतीनाम्
(साम० ५२७) जनया पुरन्धिम् (साम० ८६१) देवावीः, अघशंसहा
साम० ४७०, ८१५.६६७ वृत्रहन्तमः ६६१ etc. have been used in the
Vedas, denoting that this spiritual intoxication is pure and
wonderfully purifying, is most acceptable, increaser of intel-
lect and divine virtues and most powerful destroyer of all sins.
We therefore see eye to eye with the view expressed by Sri
Aurabindo-a thinker and Yogi of world wide reputation in the
“Secret of the Vedas” regarding Soma.

He says...

“Soma is the Lord of the wine of delight, the wine of
immortality. The physical system of the human being is
imaged as the jar of the Soma wine and the strainer (Pavitra)
पवित्र through which it is purified is to be spread out in the
seat of Heaven (दिवस्पदे). The Strainer or purifying instru-
ment spread out in the seat of Heaven, seems to be the mind
enlightened by knowledge (चेतः), The humn system is
the Jar (कलशः)”. (On the Vedas P. 403)

“Soma the Lord of Ananda is the true creator who
possesses the soul and brings out of it a divine creation. For
him, the mind and heart enlightened have been formed into a
purifying instrument, freed from all narrowness and duality,
the consciousness in it has been extended widely to receive the
full flow of the sense life and mind life and turn it into pure
delight of the true existence, the divine, the immortal Ananda”

“(On the Vedas” P 406)

A short note on the Svaras and Metres of the Sama Veda

With regard to the Svaras of the Sama Veda and the way of reciting them properly, the readers are requested to learn them from the experts and from the study of the Naradi Shiksha-a book dealing with the subject.

Number 3 stands in the Sama Veda for अंनुदात्त (grave accent not elevated or raised-low pitch नीचैरनुदात्तः) Number 1 for उदात्त the acute, high or elevated accent उच्चैरुदात्तः)

Number 2 stands here for स्वरित (the third mixed tone lying between high and low समाहारःस्वरितः). When there are two Udāttas (acute accents), the first is numbered as 1 and the svarita following it is marked as २र. The svarita following anudatta is also marked as २र but the previous anudatta is marked as ३क

When there are two udāttas and anudātta follows them, then the first udātta is marked as २उ and the other remains un-marked. For greater details, one must study नारदीशिक्षा (Naradi Shiksha) or learn them from expert Sama Vedis. Seven Svaras of the Sama Veda are 1 Madhyama 2 Gaddhara 3 Rishabha 6 Shadja 5 Nishāda 6 Dhaivata 7 Panchama. They are generally marked as such by these numbers.

Seven important metres :

The following are most important metres used in the Sama Veda (1) Gayatri $8 \times 3 = 24$ (2) Ushnik $7 \times 4 = 28$ (3) Anushtup $8 \times 4 = 32$ (4) Brihati $9 \times 4 = 36$ (5) Pankti $10 \times 4 = 40$ (6) Trishtup $11 \times 4 = 44$ (7) Jagati $12 \times 4 = 48$.

Some other Metres used in the Veda are following :—

8. Satobrihati (सतोबृहती) = 12-8-12-8 (first & third padas twelve syllabic & fourth padas eight syllabic)
9. Prastara-Pankti (प्रस्तारपंक्ति) = 12-12-8-8 two twelve-syllabic & then two eight-

10. Pragātha (प्रगाथ)

syllabic Padas) ·
= a combination of Brihati
and Satobrihati metres.

Of the less common metres, the following are worthmentioning.

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|------------------------|--|
| 1. Viraj (विराज) | = 10-10-10-10 (four ten-syllabic Padas). |
| 2. Shakvari (शक्वरी) | = 14-14-14-14 (four fourteen syllabic Padas). |
| 3. Ashti (अष्टि) | = 16-16-16-16 (four sixteen syllabic Padas). |
| 4. Atyashti (अत्यष्टि) | = 17-17-17-17 (four seventeen-syllabic Padas). |

Many other metres are formed by combining the above said metres by altering the order of the various Padas (पाद) and by increasing or decreasing the number of syllables of different Padas in different metres.

Chhandah Shastra by the sage Pingala and Sarvānukramani (सर्वानुक्रमणी) of Katyāyana (कात्यायन) have dealt with the system of Vedic metres exhaustively.

Yogi Shri Aurabindo's note on "Repetitions in the Vedas and other Mystic Poetry"

Where is repetitions objectionable. ?

"In mystic poetry also repetition is not objectionable, it is resorted to by many poets, some times with insistence. I may cite as an example the constant repetition of the word "Retain truth, some times eight or nine times in a short poem of mine or ten stanzas and often in the same line. This does not weaken the poem, it gives it a singular power and beauty. The repetition of the same key ideas, key image and symbols, key words or phrases, key epithets, some times key lines or half lines is a constant feature. They give an atmosphere, a significant structure, a sort of psychological frame, an architecture. The object here is not to amuse or entertain, but the self-expression of an inner truth, a seeing of things and ideas

not familiar to the common mind, a bringing out of inner experience. It is true more than the new that the poet is after. He uses आवृत्ति repetition, as one of the most powerful means of carrying home, what has been thought or seen and fixing it in the mind in an atmosphere of light and beauty. This kind of repetition, I have used largely in Savitri.

It is only if the repetition is clumsy or awkward, too burdensomely insistent, at-once un-needed and inexpressive, or amounts to a disagreeable and meaningless echo that it must be rejected."

(Letters on Savitri by Shri Aurabindo, P. 839).

We have deemed it necessary to give this note to dispel the doubt of some, regarding the so-called repetition in the Vedas. As we have pointed out at several places in the book, certain Mantras have been repeated in the context as now we generally say or write—I have said or written before etc) and for emphasis. Such meaningful repetition is called in Nyaya Shastra or logic) अनुवाद् as different from पुनरुक्ति or vain repetition which is considered objectionable as Sage Vatsyayan has said in his commentary on the Nyāya Sootra (aphorism) अनुवादोपपत्तेश्च २-१-६० पुनरुक्तं दोषोऽभ्यासो नेति प्रकृतम्। अनर्थोऽभ्यासः पुनरुक्तम्, अर्थवानभ्यासोऽनुवादः ॥

Some times the meaning of the same Mantra becomes quite different In different context, when the devata or subject is different.