

What is Veda?

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ॐ श्री गुरुभ्यो नमः

I. INTRODUCTION

The interpretation of Aryan culture as reflected in the Vedic literature comprising the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas, Upaniṣads etc. has been attempted by various scholars since very long time. It actually started with the Smṛtis and Purāṇas and subsequently the six systems of philosophy all based on the authority of the Vedas appeared. Each of these systems was commented upon profusely by a series of scholars of whom, Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and Madhvācārya are too well known. A systematic commentary of the Vedas and Brāhmaṇas was written by Sāyaṇa around the fourteenth century. In more recent times a host of western scholars, Aurobindo, Dayānand and Madhusūdan Ojha made valuable contributions to the interpretation of Vedic thought. It is however most unfortunate that the contributions of Madhusūdan Ojha did not receive the publicity they deserve. Most of the recent investigations have gone into the contents of the literature, the rituals, the functions of Gods, the teachings of the Upaniṣads etc. and have come out with divergent conclusions. There are however gross deficiencies in most of these investigations. They may be briefly stated as follows:

1. There are many contradictory statements in the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads which if not understood in the correct perspective will lead to divergent conclusions when studied by different scholars.
2. Most of the scholars have not realised that unless the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads are studied together with cross references a correct picture of the Vedic thought will not emerge.

3. There have been certain basic concepts of the Aryans which have guided them in their compositions, whether they belong to the *jñānakāṇḍa* or *karmakāṇḍa*. Most of the scholars have hardly tried to unearth these concepts.
4. Many technical words occur in the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas and the Upaniṣads and unless their correct meaning is understood, one will miss the correct purport of many difficult passages occurring in the above literature.
5. The *arthavāda* portion of the Brāhmaṇas invariably contain crucial information for the proper understanding of Vedic passages. These have been by and large neglected by most of the scholars.

It is in the above context one has to view the contributions of Madhusūdan Ojha who with his encyclopaedic knowledge of the entire cross section of ancient sanskrit literature gave us real insight into Vedic wisdom. His contributions which went a long way to overcome the deficiencies mentioned above never received the publicity they deserved mainly because they were not published in the proper way and they were in the sanskrit language. Very few people realised their value simply because most of the scholars were tradition-bound. It is unfortunate that many of his works have been lost to us for want of proper care on the part of his family members to preserve them. Karpur Chand Kulish founder - editor of Rajasthan Patrika, Jaipur, is making every effort to trace the manuscripts and bring them to light. Fortunately for us the works of Motilal Shastri, Ojha's principal disciple, written in Hindi throw light on the contributions of his master.

Of late there has been an increased interest among world scholars to understand the contributions of our Vedic seers. Claims have been made by some interpreters that the Vedic seers had already anticipated certain aspects of modern science. Physicists like Capra have found some profound ideas in our ancient literature which compare very well with

the thinking in modern science. Indian scientists who have made outstanding contributions never had time to go deep into our literature and judge how far the claims made by non-scientists as well as a few scientists are justified. In the absence of a reliable review of these claims, it may not be possible to take these statements as they are. Many of us depend on interpretations which may not correctly reflect the meanings of passages interpreted. In such a situation the best way for us is to promote a scientific understanding of our ancient texts. Such studies undertaken by scientists in a systematic way will surely yield very fruitful results. One should search for the basic concepts on which the compositions have been built and also the logic in their thinking. It is only in such studies we will be able to assess their contributions to scientific thinking.

There is another aspect which deserves our consideration. The world is passing through a crisis. There is a great concern among certain people particularly those belonging to the intellectual section for the rapid erosion of values and the need to work out suitable strategies to arrest this degradation. Scientific and technological advances have led us to material prosperity and the present trend in scientific advancement will continue for sometime. But unfortunately our moral standards have not kept pace with material prosperity and the result has been that the world is facing too many problems, most of which defy solution. We have polluted the air we breathe. We have polluted the rivers, making pure drinking water a scarcity. There has been a large growth of infructuous population in many developing countries. We are squandering the limited resources of the earth without any concern for the future. Diseases not known to us earlier are affecting us now. In short the very existence of healthy human species is threatened. The question now being asked is, can we at this juncture draw inspiration from our great sages who gave us the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads and apply the wisdom enshrined

in them to meet the present challenges? It is very difficult to answer the above question. Before we even try to find an answer it is necessary to understand correctly what we mean by Veda and Vedic tradition. It is in this context the preparation of an account of Vedic thought in a coherent and logical way becomes necessary. In this account the aspects most relevant to modern society should be highlighted. It should clearly bring out how and why the commentators or interpreters have differed from each other though all of them believed in the authority of the Vedas. It should lay stress on the fact that the message of the Vedas cannot take divergent directions. It should bring people together who at present are divided for no reason.

It is on the above lines of thinking, the author, a scientist by profession, has ventured to attempt the presentation of the logic of Vedic thought through a series of books. It is hoped that we shall be able to present a complete account of Vedic wisdom in about two to three years. This the author believes will provide sufficient information to those interested scholars and scientists, who have no time to go through the entire literature.

In the present book, we have tried to explain what Veda is. The word 'Veda' has a far deeper meaning than what is normally understood by us. It is intimately related to the creative processes in Nature and therefore in the final analysis it is identical with *Brahman*. Therefore a close analysis of the meaning of the word with the help of various statements in the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads enables us to appreciate the high order of thinking developed even during the Vedic and Brāhmanic periods. In this light the *Śabdaveda* as we have now, gets a new meaning and it is for this reason that the *Śabdaveda* (ie the Veda as we have now in our texts and which we recite), inspite of its heterogeneous content, is held in very high esteem even today.

Vedic religion is essentially a way of life applicable to the entire mankind. It aims at building up a healthy and prosperous society in which achievement of human excellence on a large scale becomes possible. It has all the potentialities of uniting the entire mankind if understood and conveyed to the people in the proper way.

The author is fully aware of the valuable contributions of both western and Indian scholars on this subject. But since the approach here is different, no attempt will be made to quote them or refer to them unless it becomes necessary. The author may be excused for the same.

II. TRAYĪ VIDYĀ

All of us are agreed that the Vedic compositions comprising Ṛgveda, Yajurveda, Sāmaveda and Atharvaveda, the Brāhmaṇas Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads are not the products of a single period of time. Even the various portions of Ṛgveda were composed at different times. While Ṛgveda is the oldest of the compositions, the other compositions that followed, contain to a great extent annotations, expansions, refinements and modifications of the ideas contained in the Ṛgveda. The Atharvaveda which stands out as a later addition to the other three Vedas contains, some beautiful hymns pertaining to philosophical speculations, incantations, spells and exorcisms. Then we have the Brahmanas, Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads to each of these Vedas. The sum total of all these constitutes Vedic literature. In our study we are not really concerned with any of these individual texts. We want to study them as a single collection representing Aryan culture. We believe that in such a study several interesting results come out such as the evolution, expansion and refinement of concepts, theories and life styles of our ancients who were the originators of the so called Vedic tradition. We shall show how in such a study in spite of the extremely heterogeneous character of the literature, it is possible to build a cogent and logical picture of this glorious culture.

The word 'Veda' did not have the same meaning as we know today, during the Ṛgvedic period while the words *ṛk*, *yajus* and *sāma* occur freely in the Ṛgveda, the use of the word 'Veda' as noun is extremely restricted. Even when it is used, it is used to mean wealth (*dhana*). The *ṛks*, *yajus* and *sāmans* are known generally as *mantras* since through

them we get to know the nature and functions of the Gods of Nature (*Devatāvijñānam*). The ṛṣis who composed the *mantras* are called seers of *mantras* (*mantradraṣṭārah*). Since these *mantras* are the source of all knowledge including details about *dharma* and guide lines for performing rituals, they are also known as 'Vidyā.' In the composition of the *mantras*, there are three distinct types viz 1) *padya* (verse) which is called *ṛk*, 2) *gadya* (prose) which is called *yajus* and 3) *gāna* (song) which is called *sāma*. There are no *mantras* which lie outside the above types.¹ Because of this threefold character of the *mantras*, the sum total of these *mantras* is called *Trayī Vidyā*. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa says

"The *Vidyā* is threefold; they are the *ṛks*, *yajus*' and *sāmans*."²

In the post Ṛgvedic period the words Ṛgveda, Yajurveda and Sāmaveda were freely used. For example Aitareya Brāhmaṇa says,

"The three Vedas came into existence. Ṛgveda came out of *Agni*, Yajurveda from *Vāyu* and Sāmaveda from *Āditya* (sun)."³

While in the beginning the word Veda was applied to only *mantras*, later the Brāhmaṇas which mainly deal with the rituals and their procedures, interpretations etc. came also under the category of Veda and were given the same authoritative status. Āpastamba in one of his *sūtras* in *Yajña Paribhāṣā* says that both *mantras* and Brāhmaṇas are named Veda.⁴ This is also confirmed by Śadguruśiṣya.⁵ Sāyaṇa in

1 ऋक्पादबद्धो गीतस्तु साम गद्यं यजुर्मन्त्रः।

चतुर्ष्वपि हि वेदेषु त्रिधैव विनियुज्यते॥

(षड्गुरुशिष्यस्य ऋग्वेदानुक्रमणीवृत्तिभूमिका)

2 त्रयी वै विद्या ऋचो यजूंषि सामानि (श.ब्रा. 4.6.7.1.)

3 त्रयो वेदाः अजायन्त। ऋग्वेद एवाग्नेरजायत।

यजुर्वेदो वायोः सामवेद आदित्यात्। (ऐ.ब्रा.)

4 मन्त्रब्राह्मणयोर्वेदनामधेयम् (यज्ञपरिभाषा सू.34)

5 मन्त्रब्राह्मणयोराहुर्वेदशब्दं महर्षयः (सर्वानुक्रमणीवृत्तिभूमिका षड्गुरुशिष्यस्य)

his *R̥gbhāṣyabhūmikā* takes support from the above two scholars and says,

‘The sum total of words used in *mantras* and *Brāhmaṇas* constitutes Veda.’⁶

Sāyaṇa gives many other definitions of Veda in his commentary. Some of them we give below.

- i) ‘Veda is the final word among the *pramāṇas*’ (direct experience, inference and Veda are *pramāṇas*)
- ii) ‘Veda constitutes statements of divine origin’⁸
- iii) ‘That which reveals the superhuman way to achieve what is desired and avoid what is not desired, is Veda.’⁹
- iv) ‘When a solution is not available either - by direct observation or by inference, the Veda reveals it to us.’¹⁰

One important point we have to note here is that whenever we referred to Veda, it represented the triad only viz. *ṛks*, *yajus*’ and *sāmans*. We also said that there are no *mantras* which lie outside *ṛks*, *yajus*’ and *sāmans*. The question naturally arises, how did Atharvaveda find a place among the Vedas? Actually Atharvā was a *ṛṣi* who first discovered the *yajña* method of worship. The following passages support the above statement.

- i. ‘Atharva laid the first path of pleasing Gods by *yajñas*’¹¹

6 मन्त्रब्राह्मणात्मकः शब्दराशिर्वेदः (ऋग्भाष्यभूमिका - सायण)

7 प्रत्यक्षानुमानागमेषु (प्रमाणेषु) अन्तिमो वेदः।

(ऋग्भाष्यभूमिका सायण)

8 अपौरुषेयं वाक्यं वेदः। (ऋग्भाष्यभूमिका सायण)

9 इष्टप्राप्त्यनिष्टपरिहारयोरलौकिकमुपायं यो वेदयति स वेदः।

(कृष्णयजुर्वेदभाष्यभूमिका - सायण)

10 प्रत्यक्षेणानुमित्या वा यस्तूपायो न बुध्यते।

एतं विदन्ति वेदेन तस्माद्वेदस्य वेदता॥

(कृष्णयजुर्वेदभाष्यभूमिका सायण)

11 यज्ञैरथर्वा प्रथमः पथस्तते (ऋ.वे. 1.83.5)

- ii. 'The first ritual fire was lit by Atharvā'¹²
- iii. 'Hail Atharva who is our father, friend of the *Devas*, the young child of the father in the womb of the mother, and who knew in his mind the *yajña* technique'¹³

It is quite possible that the Veda was originally a single text only and it was Atharvā who first divided it into four parts for convenience in the performance of rituals (*yajñas*). In the *yajñas* four types of *ṛtviks* are employed. They are 1) *Hotā* who does *hautra karma* (invoking the Gods) using *ṛks*, 2) *Adhvaryu* who does the main work in *Agni* using *yajus* 3) *Udgātā* who does *stotra karma* (*gāna*) using *sāmans* and 4) *Brahmā* who does supervision work. Now the question arises what does *Brahmā* use for his work? Aitareya is quick to answer this question. He says *Brahmā* uses *trayī vidyā* for his work.¹⁴ It means that he is familiar with all the *mantras*. Yāska in his *Nirukta* says *Brahmā* should be a very knowledgeable person.¹⁵ Gopatha Brāhmaṇa says that only a person knowledgeable in Atharva Veda can be chosen as *Brahmā*.¹⁶ The Yajurveda described *Brahmā* as an ocean of knowledge.¹⁷

Taking all these into consideration we are led to believe that the four Samhitās were brought into existence to meet the needs of *yajña karma*. The collection of *ṛks* meant for *hautra karma* forms the *Ṛksamhitā*. The *adhvaryu* uses both *ṛks* and *yajus* in his work and therefore Yajussamhitā constitutes

12 अग्निर्जातो अथर्वणा (ऋ.वे. 10.21.5)

13 अथर्वाणं पितरं देवबन्धुं मातुर्गर्भे पितुरसुं युवानम् ।

य इमं यज्ञं मनसा चिकेत प्राणो वोचस्तमिहेह ब्रुवः ॥ (अथर्व.सं. 7.2.1)

14 यद्वै चैव ह्यीदं क्रियते, यजुषाध्वर्यवं साम्नोद्गीथं व्याख्या

त्रयी विद्या भवत्यथ केन ब्रह्मत्वं क्रियते इति त्रय्या विद्ययेति ब्रूयात् । (ऐ.ब्रा. 5.5.8)

15 ब्रह्मा सर्वविद्यः सर्वं वेदितुमर्हति । (नि. 1.3.3)

16 तस्माद्यजमानो भृग्वज्जिरोविदमेव तत्र ब्रह्माणं वृणुयात् (गो.ब्रा.2.24)

17 समुद्रोऽसि विश्रव्यचा (वा.सं.5.33)

a collection of these. The *udgātā* uses *ṛks*, *yajus*' and *sāmans* in his work and therefore *Sāmasamhitā* is a collection of these. The *mantras* which did not fall into any of these categories and had remained unused were compiled into a *Samhitā* and that constitutes, *Atharvasamhitā*. In other words a single Veda was divided into four *Samhitās* for convenience in the *yajña karma*. The texts that deal with the various procedures and the use of the *ṛks* in the various *yajñas* is called the *Brāhmaṇa* of the *Ṛksamhitā*. Both the *Samhitā* and *Brāhmaṇa* constitute the *Ṛgveda*. In the same way we have *Yajurveda*, *Sāmaveda* and *Atharvaveda*.

Since the *Yajurveda* contains both *ṛks* and *yajus*' the *adhvaryu* was called *dvivedī* or *duve* in local language. The *udgātā* is familiar with *ṛks*, *yajus*' and *sāmans* and therefore he was called *trivedī* or *tripāthī* or *tivārī* in local language. The *Brahmā* has to know all *ṛks*, *yajus*' and *sāmans* and therefore he has to be familiar with *Atharvaveda* also in addition to the other three Vedas. He is therefore called *caturvedī* or *cauve* in local language.

As the number of people learning the Vedas increased in the country, groups of students came into existence learning each Veda under one *ṛṣi* or teacher. Since the teaching consisted of only oral communication, hearing played an important role in learning the Vedas. Therefore they were also called *Śrutis*. *Nigama*, and *Āgama* are also words used to represent the Vedas though *Āgama* later assumed some special significance. The influence of the locality and the periods during which the groups were active had their own impact on the texts they learnt and also on the mode of recitation. This gave rise to different versions of the same Veda and thus the *śākhās* of the Vedas came into existence. The variations from *śākhā* to *śākhā* are of course minor though today we find there is lot of difference in the mode of recitation from place to place. According to *Caraṇavyūha* there were 21 *śākhās* of the *Ṛgveda*, 101 *śākhās* for the *Yajurveda*, 1000 *śākhās* for *Sāmaveda* and nine *śākhās* for

Atharvaveda. Each of these śākhās had also their own Brāhmaṇas. Today many of these are lost to us. In the Ṛgveda only one is in vogue. It is called Śākala śākhā. It has 1028 Śūktas, 10580 ṛks and 432000 akṣaras. In the Yajurveda for some reason there was a major split and we have today Taittirīya Samhitā of Kṛṣṇayajurveda and Vājasaneyī Samhitā of Śuklayajurveda. In the Sāmaveda, Kauthuma Rāḍyaṇīya and Jaiminiya śākhās are popular. In the Atharvaveda, Śaunaka and Pippalāda śākhās are available. The Atharvaveda today is essentially a heterogeneous collection of mantras. It portrays life with all its shades and highlights the generally obscure human emotions and relations. It gives an account of primitive medicine and also contains some philosophical speculations which have earned it the name Brahma Veda.

The Vedāṅgas form an appendage to the Vedas. They are Śikṣā (phonetics), Kalpa (socio-religious practices and rituals), Vyākarna (grammar), Nirukta (etymology and exegesis), Chandas (metrics) and Jyotiṣa (astronomy). These Vedāṅgas are expected to be studied by everyone who studies the Vedas.

It is unfortunate that the most popular author of Nirukta instead of throwing light on the meanings of passages and words has caused confusion simply because he goes against the interpretations available in the Brāhmaṇas and gives his own interpretations. In other words the author of Nirukta gives no value to tradition while interpreting Vedic words or passages. We shall have occasion to comment more on this point later. Sāyaṇa takes care of the Brāhmaṇa passages also in his interpretations though he takes the help of Nirukta also wherever he needs it. But for Sāyaṇa's commentary of the Vedas and Brāhmaṇas the meanings of many Vedic passages would have remained puzzles. His knowledge of Karmakāṇḍa was of great help to him in deciphering the meanings of Vedic passages. However he also has difficulties to find out the real meanings of many passages.

According to Madhusūdan Ojha the propagation of the Vedas took place in the following manner.

1. Brahmā who was the teacher for the entire mankind was the first to propagate the *Trayī Vidyā*.
2. Atharvā who was the son of Brahmā was the first to propagate Atharvaveda and Yajñaveda.
3. Angiras who belonged to Atharvā group.
4. Satyavāha Bhāradvāja who was the son of Bṛhaspati and who belonged to Angiras group.
5. Angiras, the second, head of scholar community and belonging to Angiras family.
6. Śaunaka who belonged to Angiras group but later went over to Bṛgu family.
7. Atri who also headed the scholar community.

All the above people were only propagators of Vedas (*Vedapravartakāḥ*) and not the originators of Vedas. There were also others in this line like the Saptarṣis, Kṛṣṇadvaipāyana (Vyāsa) etc.

In this way the Vedas were preserved, through oral communication and not through written texts. In fact *Sikṣa*, one of the Vedāṅgas strictly forbids reading from texts. Great care was bestowed to keep the text unchanged by devising various methods of recitation like *pada*, *krama*, *jaṭā*, *ghana* etc. The *śvaras* or intonations formed an important component of recitation and any mistakes in the *śvaras* were supposed to produce unwanted results.¹⁸

There is an inbuilt tradition in our society which has led to the belief that Vedas are our most sacred treasure through which we can achieve anything. Wealth, prosperity,

18 दुष्टः शब्दः स्वरतो वर्णतो वा मिथ्याप्रयुक्तो न तदर्थमिति।

स वाम्बद्धो यजमानं हिनस्ति यथेन्द्रशत्रुः स्वरतोऽपराधात् ॥ (महाभाष्य)

health, long life and many other things can be achieved through the *mantras* and rituals (*yajñas*).

The above account of what Veda is, constitutes in essence the traditional approach to the subject.¹⁹ We have not gone into details of the contents of any part of Vedic literature. For the present it is not required for our purpose. Actually Veda means much more than what many of us are familiar with. Scholars who are tradition-oriented never bothered about the more interesting details present in Vedic literature. These actually are those which have a direct bearing on the concepts of our ancients in various branches of knowledge like the earth sciences, astronomy, cosmogony, biosciences etc. The Vedic seers were earnest seekers of truth and were very much interested in understanding the functioning of Nature as well as the origin of the cosmos. The sun served them an ideal object for study. His immortal nature, his appearance in the celestial background as a glowing disc constantly sending out rays of light and heat in all directions, which in no way affects his form and brightness, his diurnal motion causing the day and night, his orderly north south movement during the year causing the seasons and thus his being the principal cause of life on earth, the moon, her phases and her north-south displacement in the celestial background, all these meant many things for them. They used them together with whatever observations they made on the earth, in a clever way to develop a theory of the origin of the cosmos, particularly the solar system and its functioning. The words *ṛk*, *yajus*, *sāman*, *agni*, *soma*, *vāk*, *prāṇa*, *manas*, *ātman*, *Brahmān*, *ṛta*, *satya*, *rasa*, *bala*, *māyā*, *ābhū*, *abhva*, *Puruṣa* *Prajāpati* etc. pregnant with meanings emerged as a result of this great intellectual exercise, the analysis of which is most fascinating to a scientist. We shall now pass on to this study and see how far we can penetrate into the mighty minds of our sages.

19 For more details the reader is referred to त्रयीविद्यापरिचयः
by Satyavrata Sāmaśrami, Calcutta 1893.

III. THE ORIGIN OF THE VEDAS

The Vedic seers were essentially intellectuals who were eager to understand what they saw around them. As we have said earlier their speculations covered a wide range of topics of which the origin of the universe (*Jagat*) was one. Various possibilities were put forth by different scholars. Just like different schools of philosophy like *Vaiśeṣika*, *Sāṅkhya*, *Vedānta* etc. came into existence during the post Vedic period, there existed in the Vedic times ten different cosmogonic doctrines to which a reference is found in the *Nāśadiya śūkta* of Ṛgveda.¹ All these theories were discredited subsequently and *Brahman* theory was established by *Brahmā*.² According to this theory the universe with all its diversities should have originated from a single source called *Brahman* which is all pervading and all powerful and should have been originally without any form or name (*nirviśeṣa*). Since everything around us is changing, the Vedic seers believed in an all powerful agency causing all these changes without itself undergoing any change. In the highest stage this *Brahman* is described by the Upaniṣads as one without

1 Madhusūdan Ojha has discussed each of these doctrines in his

यशस्वावरहस्य He names them as (1) सदसद्वादः (2) रजोवादः

(3) व्योमवादः (4) अपरवादः (5) आवरणवादः (6) अम्भोवादः

(7) अमृतमृत्युवादः (8) अहोरात्रवादः (9) देववादः and (10) संशयवादः

For a short description of these see V.S. Agarwala's Introduction to Ojha's ब्रह्मसिद्धान्तः Banaras Hindu University 1961.

2 ब्रह्मा देवानां प्रथमः संबभूव विश्वस्य कर्ता भूतस्य गोप्ता।

स ब्रह्मविद्यां सर्वविद्याप्रतिष्ठामथर्वाय ज्येष्ठपुत्राय प्राह॥ (मुण्ड.उ.1.1)

any qualification (*nirguna*), formless (*arūpa*), limitless (*asīma*), perfect (*pūrṇa*), one without a second (*advitīya*) and indescribable by words (*anirvacanīya*). In the Ṛgveda a question is asked by the ṛṣi,

‘What sort of forest was it? In the forest what was that tree that was cut and the earth-heaven pair was brought into existence? Let the wise ask themselves the above questions and say how the creator having created the worlds is supporting them himself and is also presiding over them’³

Interestingly enough, the reply is not found in Ṛgveda. It is actually found in the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa.

‘*Brahman* is the forest. He was the tree cutting which the earth-heaven pair was brought into existence. O wise men having thought over (your questions). I say, *Brahman* supports all these worlds (which he created) and presides over them.’⁴

It is clear from the above passage that a small part of *Brahman* became the *viśva* (universe) which is supported and presided over by himself. Just like a small seed produces a big tree with all its branches, leaves etc., just like a small drop of fluid which forms the procreating substance (*śukra*) in the man evolves into a child with all its organs, flesh, blood, bones etc., in the same way, *Brahman* which was originally a single potential principle produced out of itself this *viśva* with all its diversities though we cannot fully comprehend the actual processes through which all that we see in the universe have come into existence. Different scholars conceived the relation between *Brahman* and *Jagat*

3 किं स्विद्वनं क उ वृक्ष आस यतो धावापृथिवी निष्टतक्षुः।

मनीषिणो मनसा पुच्छतेदु तद्यदध्यतिष्ठद् भुवनानि धारयन्॥ (ऋ.वे.10.81.4)

4 ब्रह्म वनं ब्रह्म स वृक्ष आस यतो धावापृथिवी निष्टतक्षुः।

मनीषिणो मनसा विब्रवीमि वो ब्रह्माध्यतिष्ठद् भुवनानि धारयन्॥ (तै.ब्रा.2.8.9)

in different ways. These can be broadly classified into six types. They are

1. *Jagat* is *Brahman* (*Śuddhādvaita*)
2. *Brahman* is in *Jagat* (*Viśiṣṭādvaita*)
3. *Brahman* and *Jagat* are the same. That is *Jagat* is *Brahman* and *Brahman* is *Jagat*. (*Advaita*).
4. *Brahman* and *Jagat* are two different things. (*Dvaita*)
5. *Brahman* is different from *Jagat* but *Jagat* is not different from *Brahman*. (*Dvaitādvaita*)
6. The relation between *Jagat* and *Brahman* is indescribable (*Mayāvāda*).

The word 'brahman' has evolved from the root *bṛmh* to grow. We apply the term '*bṛmhana*' to that activity when an original substance which appears to expand does not gain anything which was not there already in some miniature form. Just like winds cause waves in the sea and the whole surface seems to grow or expand but in the process, the sea neither gains nor loses, in the same way, *Brahman* is affected by a power called '*Māyā*' and it gives rise to this *jagat* on account of its *bṛmhana*. It is all pervading like *ākāśa* (space) and therefore there is nothing bigger than it, nor smaller than it when it chooses to be so. The Upaniṣad says,

'There is nothing superior to him and nothing smaller or bigger than him. He stands unperturbed like a tree in the heaven as a single entity. The whole universe is filled by this *Puruṣa*.'⁵

This *Puruṣa* is conceived as having four parts. They are *amṛta*, *brahma* and *śukra* and the fourth part is the all pervading *Parātpara* himself. Of these it is the *śukra* part

5 यस्मात्परं नापरमस्ति किञ्चिद्यस्मान्नाणीयो न ज्यायोऽस्ति कश्चित्।

वृक्ष इव स्तब्धो दिवि तिष्ठत्येकस्तेनेदं पूर्णं पुरुषेण सर्वम्॥ (श्वे.उप.3.9)

that becomes *viśva*. The other three parts remain unaffected. That is why the Veda says

‘Three parts of the *Puruṣa* remained above and one part resided here.’⁶ This is also why the Veda said elsewhere that the *viśva* was brought into existence by cutting a tree in the forest.⁷

The word *brahman* can also be derived from the root *bhṛ* which means supporting and feeding (*dhāraṇa* and *poṣaṇa*). The *Brahman* is described as ‘*uktha*’ and *sāma*. *Uktha* means the source from which things come out (*prabhavasthāna*) and *sāma* means that which resides in everything in equal measure (*samāna rūpeṇa sthito vyāpto vā*). The word *brahma* itself means that which supports. We conclude therefore that there is an entity which is at the same time, *uktha*, *brahma* and *sāma* of the *jagāt*. The Vedic seers named this as the *ātman* of the *jagat* and defined it as ‘*yo yasya uktham syāt, brahma syāt, sāma syāt, sah tasya ātmā*’ ie. that which constitutes *uktha*, *brahma* and *sāma* of a thing is its *ātman*.

Whatever we see in this *viśva* can be brought under three classes viz name (*nāma*), form (*rūpa*) and activity (*karma*). There is nothing in this *viśva* which is outside these three things. What is the *ātman* of this *viśva*? The answer is straight away *Brahman* is the *ātman* of the *viśva* because he pervades the entire *viśva*, it is from him that the *viśva* has originated and it is he, who forms its basic support. We can therefore conceive the *viśva* as consisting of two parts: One is called *amṛta* (immortal) and the other is called *satya* (truth). The former is its *ātman* and the latter is the one which has the attributes *nāma* and *rūpa* and is termed *satya*.

The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa says:

‘This *jagat* is a triad consisting of names (*nāma*)

6 त्रिपादूर्ध्व उदैत् पुरुषः पादोऽस्येहाभवत्पुनः (ऋ.वे.10.90.4)

7 ऋ.वे. (10.81.4),

form (*rūpa*) and action (*karma*). *Vāk* (speech) is the *uktha* of these names since it is the source from which all names come out. It is the *sāma* because it is common to all names. It is also *brahma* since it supports all names.

Then (we shall deal with) forms. The eye is the *uktha* of these forms since it is the source from which all forms arise (ie. we see all forms). It is *sāma* because it is the same (ie it acts in the same way) which brings all forms to vision. It is also *brahma* since it supports all forms.

Then (we shall deal with) actions. *Ātman* is the *uktha* of all actions, since it is the source of all actions. It is *sāma* since it remains the same for all actions. It is also *brahma* since it supports all actions. This triad is *ātman*. It is only one, though a triad. This *amṛta* is covered by *satya*. *Prāṇa* is *amṛta*. Name and form are *satya* and cover the *prāṇa*?⁸

Here *prāṇa*, which is, as we shall see now only a part of *ātman*, is called the *amṛta*, because it plays the most important role in all creations and while functioning in different situations has given rise to all the diversities that we see in this universe. But this *prāṇa* never exists without

8 अथ वा इदं नाम रूपं कर्म। तेषां नाम्नां वागित्येतदेषामुक्त्यमतो हि सर्वाणि नामान्युत्तिष्ठन्ति। एतदेषां सामेतद्वि सर्वैर्नामभिस्सममेतदेषां ब्रह्मेतद्वि सर्वाणि नामानि विभर्ति।

अथ रूपाणां। चक्षुरित्येतदेषामुक्त्यमतो हि सर्वाणि रूपाण्युत्तिष्ठन्ति। एतदेषां सामेतद्वि सर्वैः रूपैः सममेतदेषां ब्रह्मेतद्वि सर्वाणि रूपाणि विभर्ति।

अथ कर्मणां। आत्मेन्येतदेषामुक्त्यमतो हि सर्वाणि कर्माण्युत्तिष्ठन्त्येतदेषां सामेतद्वि सर्वैः कर्मभिः सममित्येतदेषां ब्रह्मेतद्वि सर्वाणि कर्माणि विभर्ति। तदेतत्त्रयं सदेकमयमात्मा उ एकः सन्नेतत्त्रयं तदेतदमृतं सत्येन छत्रं प्राणो वा अमृतं नामरूपे सत्यं ताभ्यामयं प्राणः छत्रः। (श.ब्रा.14..4.4)

vāk (matter) and *manas* (mind) and therefore the combined existence of all these three (ie. *manas*, *prāṇa* and *vāk*) constitutes *ātman* which forms the *amṛta* part. This is exactly what the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa says viz.

‘*Ātman* is the combined existence of *manas* *prāṇa* and *vāk*.⁹

In other words the *ātman* of *viśva* whose components are *manas*, *prāṇa* and *vāk* (matter)¹⁰ has brought into existence the *Jagat* with all its diversities characterised by *nāma*, *rūpa* and *karma* and resides with it. This is what the Upaniṣad says.

‘Having created it, he entered into it’¹¹

This *Ātman* is no other than the *Brahman*, we have been talking about and therefore *Brahman* can rightly be called *viśvātmā* and *viśva* is his body (*śarīra*).

It should be noted here that by saying that the *ātman* represents the combined existence of *manas*, *prāṇa* and *vāk* (matter), the *ṛṣi* really means that they exist together in order to function in a coordinated manner. That is constructive creation is possible only when these function in a coordinated way. Since the principle of coordinated functioning is immortal *ātman* is immortal. What applies to the *viśva* applies also to every individual system in the *viśva* and therefore when it is said that the *ātman* of the individual is immortal and it is only the body that dies, we have no difficulty in understanding it. The moment another body is available this principle automatically starts functioning. In

9 स वा अयमात्मा वाङ्मयः प्राणमयः मनोमयः । (श.ब्रा.14.4.3.10) (बृ.उप.1.5.3)

10 The word *vāk* is a very difficult word to comprehend in Vedic literature. It means matter (in the finest form) as well as speech ie. expression through the mouth. We shall deal with this in detail in a later chapter.

11 तत्सृष्ट्वा तदेवानुप्राविशत् । (तै.उप.2.6)

fact as we shall see, the major portion of Vedic literature is built upon two basic concepts. They are

1. *Ātman* or the coordinated functioning of *manas prāna* and *vāk* (matter) is responsible for initiating and carrying out the creative processes in the universe. It is also responsible for the sustenance of the created universe.
2. There are two fundamental entities in the universe. One is *agni* and another is *soma*. *Agni* is the eater of food (*annāda*) and *soma* is food (*anna*). It is the interaction of these two that is going on in the universe and all the diversities both in form and functioning of the universe can be explained by the ramifications of *agni-soma* interactions.

Both *Ātman* and *Brahman* and their relations to *viśva* and the individual have been the subjects of discussion by various commentators who have brought into existence many schools of thought thereby implying that the message of the Vedas can take divergent directions. It is most unfortunate that a well knit society was unnecessarily divided into various factions and in this process the real message of the Vedas was completely missed by the later generations for no fault of theirs.

We have seen that a single potential entity called *Brahman* or *Ātman* brought into existence this universe and resides with it. This is the meaning of the statements '*Brahmaivedam sarvam*' (Everything is *Brahman*); '*Ātmaivedam sarvam*' (Everything is *Ātman*); '*Ekam vā idam vibabhūva sarvam*'; (One single entity became all these); '*Puruṣa evedam sarvam*' (Everything is *Puruṣa*) etc. In the light of what we have already explained, we do not have difficulty in also understanding the statements '*Aham Brahmāsmi* (I am *Brahman*); *tattvamasi* (you are *Brahman*) etc.

The Upaniṣad says,

'This *Deva* has spread in every direction. He was born first and is in the womb (of this *viśva*). He

is now born (in the form of *jagat*). He is going to be born in the future also. He is inside every living being and has faces in all directions.¹²

The above passage clearly brings out the *viśvātma* and *viśva* aspects of the *Brahman*. There is the other state of *Brahman* which is described as pure, perfect (*pūrṇa*) undisturbed state. It is called the *viśvātīta* state (beyond the *viśva*). It is this pure state that is described in the Upaniṣads as '*Rasa*' (*Rasohyeva sah*). In this pure state he is indescribable by words and therefore he is called *Nirviśeṣa*, *Nirākāra*, *Nirguṇa* etc. But when we recognise him as an all powerful entity capable of bringing the creative forces into play, we call him *Parātpara*. Describing this state the Upaniṣad says

'There is nothing he has to do (ie he has not reached the stage of doing anything). Nothing is equal to him or above him. He wields immense power. Knowledge, power and action are his inborn assets.'¹³

A part of this *Parātparabrahman* gets associated with creation only when he is affected by a power called *Māyā*.

The Vedic seers conceived '*Rasa*' as an infinite ocean having all the power to create (*bala*) but in the *Nirviśeṣa* state this *bala* is indistinguishable from the *rasa*. It is only in the *Parātpara* state they coexist as two entities but still the *bala* is in the dormant state. It is at this stage the *bala* called *Māyā* initiates the first action on *Rasa*. Actually the *balas* are infinite. Madhusūdan Ojha in his expositions on the *Brahman* catalogues sixteen of them. Of these *Māyā* is the most powerful one which carries all the other fifteen in its womb.

12 एष हि देवः प्रविशोऽनुसर्वाः पूर्वोऽह जातः स उ गर्भे अन्तः।

स एव जातः स जनिष्यमाणः प्रत्यङ्-जनांस्तिष्ठतिसर्वतोमुखः। (श्वे.उप.2.16)

13 न तस्य कार्यं करणं च विद्यते न तत्समश्चाभयधिकश्च दृश्यते।

परास्य शक्तिः विविधैव श्रूयते स्वाभाविकी ज्ञानबलक्रिया च ॥ (श्वे.उप.6.8)

The term *Māyā* is one of the most misunderstood terms in the *Brahman* theory of creation. According to Madhusūdan Ojha the word *māya* means that which measures or limits and therefore *Māyā* is the power which limits the region which was unlimited and is responsible for initiating the creative processes. The word is derived from the root *mā* to measure and is related to converting the infinite into finite sections. This power is a very tricky one and has defied correct definition simply because it belongs to *bala* category and *bala* is ephemeral (*asat*) unlike *rasa* which is ever present (*sat*). Because of association with *Māya* this *viśva* can be called *māyika* (ie. result of *Māyā*) but it is certainly not *mithyā* (untruth). The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa says that the *viśva* characterised by *nāma* and *rūpa* is *satya* (*nāma rūpe satyam*). Moreover since the Upaniṣad says that *Brahman* created the *viśva* and resides with it, the *viśva* cannot be considered as *mithyā*. *Viśva* just does not exist when *Māyā* merges with *Rasa*.

When the impact of *Māyā* on *Rasa* initiates the creative process, the very first thing that comes into existence is *manas* (mind). When a desire to create arises in the mind, *prāṇa* and *vāk* come into existence. In other words *manas*, *prāṇa* and *vāk* are the three entities which a region of *Rasa* (a part of *Parātpara*) gives rise to, after it is affected by *Māya*. It is this triad that has been instrumental in creating the universe. This triad has already been named by us as *Ātman*. This *Ātman* is named *Prajāpati*. He is also called *Puruṣa* because he lies in an enclosed space (*puri śete*). He is actually called *Ṣoḍaśīpuruṣa* because he has three major components viz *Avyayapuruṣa* whose predominant constituent is *manas*, *Akṣara-puruṣa* whose predominant constituent is *prāṇa* and *Kṣarapuruṣa* whose predominant component is *vāk* (matter). Each of these have again five components which we shall not go into now, and all these fifteen components supported by all pervading *Parātparapuruṣa* constitute our *Ṣoḍaśīpuruṣa* or *Ṣoḍaśīprajāpati*. For our purpose, it is enough

if we understand that *Prajāpati* is simply the triad of *manas*, *prāṇa* and *vāk* (matter) and has emerged from a region of *Rasa* affected by the power *Māyā*. He is for all purposes the creator and there can be infinite number of *Prajāpatis* engaged in the creative activity.

From our point of view, the emergence of *Prajāpati* is an important land mark in the theory of creation propounded by the Vedic seers. The primordial *rasa* (which we shall see later is essentially *agni*) corresponds to the hot dense substance which suddenly underwent the big bang (explosion) billions of years ago in the modern theory of the origin of the universe. Here it is *Māyā* which gives a series of bangs (not a single big bang) in various regions of the ocean of *Rasa* and causes the emergence of *Prajāpatis* who create their own systems. Of these the most important *Prajāpati* is the *Samvatsaraprajāpati* who has been responsible for the emergence of the solar system.

According to another view, *prāṇa* came into existence first and it was of manifold nature. It was called *ṛṣi* as is evident from the statement,

'In the beginning there was only *asat* (nonexistence). What was that *asat*? *Ṛṣis* were *asat*. Who were the *ṛṣis*? *Prāṇas* were the *ṛṣis*.¹⁴

If we go into details, the *prāṇas* are of infinite kinds. Of these the *Saptarṣiprāṇas* or the *Sākanjapraṇas*¹⁵ played their first role in creation. In fact they were responsible for the coming into existence of *Svayambhūprajāpati* as described in *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa*.

'This *prāṇa* in the middle is *Indra*. Because he kindled the *prāṇa* in the middle by means of his

14 असद्वा इदमग्र आसीत्। तदाहुः किं तदसदासीदिति। ऋषयो वा व तेऽग्रे तदसदासीत्। तदाहुः के ते ऋषयः इति। प्राणाः वा ऋषयः। (श.ब्रा.6.1.1.1)

15 ऋ.वे (1.164.15)

sense organs (*indriyas*) he is called *Indha* whom they call *Indra* mystically. They having been kindled created seven separate persons. Being unable to generate they decided to make them into one person and then made the seven into one. Two of them were compressed above the navel and two below the navel. Two, they placed in the two wings and one formed the *pratiṣṭha* (base). The excellence (*śrīh*) or essence (*rasa*) of these seven persons formed the head. Because *śrī* was put, it is called *śiras*. Because the *prāṇas* were spread over (the body) it is called *śarīra*. This person became *Prajāpati*.¹⁶

In another place in the same Brāhmaṇa it is said *vāk* and *manas* appeared first and then only *prāṇa* came into existence. In any case for the creation to start the combined presence of *manas* (mind) *prāṇa* and *vāk* (matter) was necessary and therefore we conclude, *Ātman* whom we call *Prajāpati* is the first to emerge from *Rasa* and he is nothing but the combined existence of *manas*, *prāṇa* and *vāk* (matter).

The first activity of this *Prajāpati* in *yajña*. It is through this *yajña* process creation and sustenance of created objects take place. We have therefore to understand the term *yajña*. In the *manas* part of *Prajāpati* a desire to take food arises

16 स योऽयं मध्ये प्राणः एष एवेन्द्रस्तानेष प्राणान् मध्यत इन्द्रियेणैन्द्र यदेन्द्र तस्मादिन्द्र इन्द्रो ह वै तमिन्द्र इत्याचक्षते परोक्षं परोक्षकामा हि देवास्त इन्द्राः सप्त नाना पुरुषानसृजन्त।

तेऽब्रुवन् । न वा इत्थं सन्तः शक्यामः प्रजनयितुमिमान् सप्तपुरुषानेकं पुरुषं करवामेति । त एतान् सप्त पुरुषानेकं पुरुषमकुर्वन् । यदूर्ध्वं नाभेस्तौ द्वौ समौऽब्जान्यदवाङ्नाभेस्तौ द्वौ पक्षः पुरुषः पक्षः पुरुषः प्रतिष्ठैकासीत् ।

अथ एतेषां सप्तानां पुरुषाणां श्रीः । यो रस आसीत्तमूर्ध्वं समुदौहस्तदस्य शिरोऽभवच्छिर्यं समुदौहस्तस्माच्छिरस्तस्मिन्नेतस्मिन् प्राणा अश्रयन्त ।

तस्मादेवैतच्छिरोऽथ यत्प्राणाः अश्रयन्त । तस्मादु प्राणाः श्रियोऽथ

यत्सर्वस्मिन्नश्रयन्त तस्मादु शरीरम् ।

स एव पुरुषः प्रजापतिरभवत् । (श. ब्रा. 6.1.1)

because he feels hungry. The hunger is termed *aśanāyā* which we see in every created object. For example it is because of this *aśanāyā* the sun is consuming parts of the earth but is also returning something to the earth so that in the process the sun-earth system remains conserved. We can identify three things in *Prajāpati* viz *uktha*, *arka* and *aśīti*. *Uktha* is the inner part of *Prajāpati* where the *manas* resides. When *aśanāyā* arises in the *uktha* of *Prajāpati*, he gives rise to some rays (ie. activity of *prāṇa*) which are spread out on all sides to get food. These are called *arka*. The food that is drawn in through the *arkas* is *aśīti*. This food fills up the *vāk* part of *Prajāpati* who now becomes quiet and the *arkas* die down and merge with the *uktha*. Since there are infinite number of *Prajāpatis* a confrontation between one another takes place and each tries to survive at the cost of the other. The *anna* (food) is converted into a finer essence called *ūrṅk* which is finally converted into *prāṇa*. This *prāṇa* in turn becomes *arka* and goes out for food. In this way *anna*, *ūrṅk* and *prāṇa* are constantly converted into each other and this process is called *yajña* (*annorkprāṇānām anyonya parigraho yajñah*). No *Prajāpati* can exist without *yajña* even for a while. In this process some *Prajāpatis* may disappear and some new *Prajāpatis* may come into existence. It is by this process the sun, moon, earth have come into existence and they maintain their size and shape also by this process. Since we cannot conceive of *Prajāpati* without *yajña*, the Vedic seers sometimes identified *Prajāpati* with *yajña* itself.¹⁷

Every object in this universe whether self luminous like the sun, fire etc. or illuminated by a light source, like moon, mirror or any other reflecting surface, or nonluminous like a black stone has two constituents. One is called *uktha* and the other is called *mahimā* (merit or greatness). For

17 प्रजापतिर्वा एष वितायते यद्यज्ञः (ते.ब्रा.1.4.6)

एष वै प्रजापतिर्य एष यज्ञस्तायते (श.ब्रा.4.4.8.1)

example if we take a lamp, the wick constitutes its *uktha* and the light which spreads out in all directions is its *mahimā*. In a flower the central core is its *uktha* and the smell it sends out in all directions is its *mahimā*. The source region which gives rise to the rays which spread around creating a region of *mahimā* around it, is its *uktha*. It is also called *ṛk* of the object. The *mahimā* part is called *sāma* because it spreads equally in all directions. There is an activity (of *prāṇa*) in the object and the surrounding region which may be termed as taking in and giving out process (*ādānavisarga*) and this is called *yajus*.

Since *Prajāpati* has three constituents viz *manas*, *prāṇa* and *vāk* (matter) his greatness is of three kinds. That which pertains to *manas* is called *Veda*. That which pertains to his *prāṇa* is *yajña* and that which pertains to his *vāk* (matter) is *prajā* (ie. subjects). Thus *Veda*, *yajña* and *prajā* are the first creations of *Prajāpati* and he can never be conceived without them. Since in the universe only these three are there we can conclude that *Prajāpati* is universe itself. He is both *viśva* and *viśvātma*. This is the meaning of the statement '*Prajapatistvevedam sarvam*'.

The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa while dealing with the origin of the Vedas brings to our attention the activities of *manas*, *prāṇa* and *vāk* (matter) viz. desire that arises from *manas*, *tapas* ie. mental straining that results in the activation of the *prāṇas* and *śrama* (physical labour) that involves *vāk* (matter). In other words *prāṇa* and *vāk* achieve what is desired or planned by the *manas* and the creation starts. The very first creation of *Prajāpati* was Vedas (*Trayī Vidyā*). Since the Veda is born of *Prajāpati* (made of *prāṇas*) it is also called *Brahmaniśvasitaveda*. The Brāhmaṇa says

'He thought 'May I reproduce'. He toiled and heated himself up (*atapyata*). As a result of toil and heat he produced first the *Brahman*, the triad of knowledge (Veda). It became the seat of his

establishment. The Veda is the foundation of everything?¹⁸

The Brāhmaṇa goes further and says that he then produced the waters (*āpah*) and creation of various things started.

Prajāpati can also be conceived as having three components viz. *nābhi* (core), *mūrti* (physical form) and *mahimā* (greatness). The *nabhi* part pertains to *manas*, the *mūrti* part to *matter* (*vāk*) and the *mahimā* part to *prāṇa*. While it is usual to conceive *Prajāpati* as all these put together, in literature we come across *Nabhyaprajāpati*, *Vyākṛtaprajāpati* (for *nābhi* and *mūrti*) and *Sarvaprajāpati* (for all the three put together). The Vedas have described each of these.¹⁹

Let us now recollect *Prajāpati*'s form and function before we pass on to the analysis of the Vedas he produced. *Prajāpati* is the originator of the Vedas. His livelihood is *yajña*. His main achievement is the universe with all its diversities (*Prajā*). Vedas are the products of his mind. *Yajña* results from the activity of his *prāṇa*. *Prāja* results from his *vāk* (part). In short he is the embodiment of Vedas and their after effects.

At this stage we can easily understand what exactly Vedas are. Vedas simply mean the constructive processes of creation which finally result in what all we see in the universe. The *manas* part of *Prajāpati* is involved in bringing into existence these processes, his *prāṇa* part is involved in making these processes work and his *vāk* part provides the primordial substance on which the processes work and finally bring into existence what all we see in the universe. *Prajāpati* himself is nothing but the combined existence and coordinated functioning of *manas prāṇa* and *vāk* which we have called *Ātman*, *Brahman* or *Puruṣa*.

18 सोऽयं पुरुषः प्रजापतिरकामयत। भूयान्तस्यां प्रजायेयेति। सोऽश्राम्यत्। स तपोऽतप्यत। स श्रान्तस्तेपानो ब्रह्मैव प्रथममसृजत त्रयीमेव विद्याम्। सेवास्मै प्रतिष्ठाऽभवत्। तस्मादाहुर्ब्रह्मास्य सर्वस्य प्रतिष्ठा इति (श.ब्रा.1.1.1.8)

19 वा.सं. 31.19; ऋ.वे 10:169.4; वा.सं. 23.65

The origin of Atharvaveda is separately dealt with in the Gopatha Brāhmaṇa of the same Veda. This itself is sufficient evidence to infer that Atharvaveda is a later addition to the three Vedas (*trayī vidyā*). However many hold the view that the concept of Atharvaveda was developed simultaneously with the concept of the other three Vedas. In our study we are not really concerned with arguments for and against this view since historical aspects do not have any importance in our study. The Gopatha Brāhmaṇa says²⁰ that *Prajāpati* created the waters first and these waters had two components viz *bhṛgu* which represents *sneha* (stickiness) principle and *angiras* which represents *tejas* (heat) principle. These waters are also called '*Suveda*' since they appeared as sweat of *Prajāpati*. The combined presence of *bhṛgu* and *angiras* and the processes that are initiated as a result of this combined presence constitute Atharvaveda. This is also in effect *agni-soma* principle and the originator of creation by copulation (*maithunī sṛṣṭi*).

The same Brāhmaṇa says,

The (primordial) waters contain *bhṛgu* and *angiras*. They are *bhṛgu* and *angiras* and nothing else. The entire matter starts from waters only. There is nothing but *bhṛgu* and *angiras*. The three Vedas lie in between and follow the *bhṛgu-angiras* principle.²¹ This would suggest that the concept of Atharvaveda was developed simultaneously with the other three Vedas.

Before we close this topic it will be useful to summarise the characteristics of *manas*, *prāna* and *vāk* as available in Vedic literature. Madhusūdan Ojha has given an account of

20 गोपथ ब्राह्मण 1.1.1-4

21 आपो भृग्वज्जिरोरुपमापो भृग्वज्जिरोमयम् ।

सर्वमापोमयं भूतं सर्वं भृग्वज्जिरोमयम् ।

अन्तरिते त्रयोवेदाः भृगूनज्जिरसोऽनुगाः ॥ (गोपथ ब्रा. 1.39)

these in his book entitled *Brahmavijnāna*.²² It is most unfortunate that the manuscript of his work entitled '*Veda Samīkṣā*' is not traceable at all.

1. Characteristics of manas:

- a) *Manas* does not bind itself to any single thought. When it is engaged in one thought, it is not difficult for it to completely get rid of it and get involved in another thought. By nature it is detached (*asanga*) and is not sticky (*nirlepa*).
- b) *Manas* cannot by itself act (*niṣkriya*). It takes the help of *prāṇa* to become active.
- c) *Manas* does not limit itself in any way, when it is engaged in thoughts. It is not possible to mark the boundaries of its activity. It is therefore said to be *anavacchinna* (not well defined).

2. Characteristics of Prāṇa

- a) *Prāṇa* is always active. The entire activity in the universe is the work of *prāṇa*. The five *tanmātras*, *śabda*, *sparsa*, *rūpa*, *rasa* and *gandha* do not exist in the *prāṇa*. We can however recognise its presence by its capacity to hold material particles together.
- b) *Prāṇa* can never exist without matter. For this reason it is called *arthavān*.
- c) *Prāṇas* are of four kinds viz. 1) *parorajā*, 2) *āgneya* 3) *saumya* and 4) *āpya*. *Parorajāprāṇa* is what holds

22 ब्रह्मविज्ञान (in Hindi) by Madhusūdan Ojha. 2nd edition printed and published by Rajasthan Patrika Ltd., Jaipur 1991. This book has an interesting history. Madhusūdan Ojha's writings are all in sanskrit. Only this work is in Hindi. One ardent elderly student of Ojha, Gopinath Joshi by name could not cope up with his sanskrit works and therefore requested him to explain *Brahmavijnāna* in Hindi to him. The extempore lectures of Ojha in Hindi were carefully recorded by him and compiled by him in the form of a book. The present book is the second edition brought out by Rajasthan Patrika Ltd.

material particles together. That is, it is responsible for the cohesive forces in a body. *Āgneyaprāṇa* causes disruption of particles in a body. *Saumyaprāṇa* enables the body to contract and build up density. *Āpyaprāṇa* acts on waters and causes physical transformation in them.

- d) Unlike *manas*, *prāṇa* binds itself to *vāk* (matter). This property is called *āsanjana*.
- e) *Prāṇa* carries out the orders of *manas*.
- f) *Prāṇa* is always active and never rests. This property of *prāṇa* is called *aprasupti*.
- g) *Prāṇa* migrates from one place to the other. The transfer of heat from a hot body to another body which is cold is the work of *prāṇa*.
- h) *Prāṇa* works in a discontinuous way. For example in breathing the action is discontinuous.

3. Characteristics of *vāk* (matter)

- a) *Vāk* occupies space.
- b) It changes form. For example starting from waters the earth was formed.
- c) *Vāk* holds *prāṇa* and leaves it also. For example when a man dies, *prāṇa* leaves his body.
- d) Every object made of *vāk* exhibits a central core (*kendra*). It also exhibits physical properties like length breadth height, heaviness, lightness etc.
- e) Every object has well defined boundaries in space.
- f) Every object exhibits some properties which go under the name *dharma*.

4. Common characteristics

- a) *Manas*, *prāṇa* and *vāk* always exist together. *Manas* is associated with knowledge (*jñāna*). *Prāṇa* shows itself in work. *Vāk* is associated with *artha* (matter).

- b) When *manas*, *prāṇa* and *vāk* exist together in an object *manas*, functions like a presiding deity (*abhimānī devata*), *prāṇa* gets into every bit of the object and rules over the object (*adhiṣṭhatā*) and *vāk* forms the base for *prāṇa* and *manas* (*adhiṣṭhana*).
- c) There are three *vīryas* in men. These are *brahmavīrya* (present in *brahmaṇas*) *kṣatравīrya* (present in *kṣatriyas*) and *vidvīrya* (present in *vaiśyas*). In *brahmavīrya*, *manas* plays the predominant role. In *kṣatравīrya*, *prāṇa* plays the predominant role and in *vidvīrya*, *vāk* (matter) plays the predominant role. These three are interdependent.
- d) Soma has its origin in *manas*. Agni has its origin in *prāṇa* and waters have their origin in *vāk*. These three are called 'rasas'. *Somarasa* is the origin of moon. *Agnirasa* is the origin of the sun and waters constitute the origin of the earth. These in turn are responsible for the creation of all objects around us. In other words *manas*, *prāṇa* and *vāk* are responsible for all creations.
- e) In this *Viśva* some one is always consuming some other and this act takes place with the involvement of *manas*, *prāṇa* and *vāk* which play the roles of *āvapana* (the seat of establishment for the eater of food) *annāda* (eater of food) and *anna* (food) respectively.
- f) Desire arises from the mind, *tapas* activates, the *prāṇa* and in *śrama*, (physical strain) *vāk* is involved. In other words when a desire arises in the mind, *prāṇa* and *vāk* achieve the desired objective through *tapas* and *śrama*.

IV. ṚK, YAJUS AND SĀMAN

In the last chapter we identified the Vedas with the creative processes in Nature. Since these processes are infinite, Vedas also are infinite. That is why Indra told Bharadvāja '*anantah vai Vedah*'.¹ However since there are three broad divisions of the Veda, they go under the name '*Trayī Vidyā*'. These are termed *Ṛk*, *Yajus* and *Sāman*. It may be noted here that *Ātman* consists of three components, *manas*, *prāṇa* and *vāk*. The Veda is the offspring of *Ātman* which is the *uktha*, *brahma* and *sāma* of this *viśva*. It is therefore natural that the Veda produced by *Ātman* should also have three divisions. Since Veda is identical with creative processes *Ṛk*, *Yajus* and *Sāman* also are closely linked to creative processes.

According to the Vedic seers *ākāśa* which is an important medium for the propagation of the Vedas is filled with *vāk* (matter in its finest form) *prāṇa* and *manas*. But the medium is hot and therefore wherever we see, we see only an ocean of *agni* (which is also a form of *vāk*) in which both *prāṇa* and *manas* are embedded. The Vedic seers believed that everything in the universe whether it is a man, or animal or a heavenly body or earth or even a stone, is a lump of *agni* (*agnipinda*) with a central core and a physical shape and size. Its influence whatever be its nature and magnitude is felt in a certain region around and this region of influence constitutes its greatness (*mahimā*). The physical content of the body is achieved by the piling up of *vāk* (*agni*) around the central core and this is essentially the work of *prāṇa* which not only builds up the body but also provides a give and take

¹ तै. ब्रा. 3-10-11

mechanism in the body so that the body sustains itself. The principle of finitisation governing all creations gives a finite size and shape to the body and now it can be identified by its name (*nāma*) form (*rūpa*) and action (*karma*). According to one school of thought, the object is called *vayuna* (*sarvamidam vayunam*) and is made up of two parts viz. *vaya* and *vayonādha*. The inner content of the body is called *vaya* and that which gives shape and external appearance by which we recognise the body is called *vayonadha*. *Vaya* is inside *vayonadha* and *vayonadha* binds it and finitises it. *Vayonadha* is also called *Chandas* in Vedic literature. The inner content (*vastu tatva*) of the body consists of two parts. One is *martya* (mortal) which is simply its material content (*vastu pinda*) by which we recognise its *nāma* and *rūpa* and the other is *amṛta* (immortal part) which is the active triad viz. *maṇas*, *prāṇa* and *vāk* which is responsible for its greatness (*mahimā*) that is built round the object. The *vaya* with both these above parts is called *rasa* indicating that it is *agni* that is active. The spreading of the influence of the object around it is called *vitāna*. The protection or sustenance of the object is looked after by *prāṇa* which organises a process of taking in food by stretching out its rays (*arka*) and this constitutes the activity in the object. The central core is called *uktha* and *chandas* finitises its size and shape. The *ṛks* are responsible for the physical form (*mūrti*) the *yajus* is responsible for the activity in the object and the *sāman* represents the *mahima* (greatness) of the object. This is what the Brāhmaṇa says.

(The physical form (*mūrti*) is achieved by the *ṛks*. All movements are caused by *yajus*. The halo round the object (ie. *mahimā*) are *sāmans*. All these are created by *Brahman*.²

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- 2 ऋग्भ्यो जातां सर्वशो मूर्तिमाहुः
 सर्वा गतिर्याजुषी हेव शश्वत् ।
 सर्व तेजः सामरूपं हि शश्वत्
 सर्व हीदं ब्रह्मणा हेव सृष्टम् ॥ (तै.ब्रा. 3.12.9)

N.B. *Brahman* may also mean *Atharva* which would mean that *agni-soma* interactions are responsible for all creations.

Since all these three are components of Veda we may call that part consisting of *ṛks* as *Ṛgveda*, that part consisting of *yajus* as *Yajurveda* and the one consisting of *sāmans* as *Sāmaveda*. Every object in this universe is an exhibit of *chandas*, *rasa* and *vitāna*, or an exhibit of *mūrti* (physical form), *gati* (movement) and *tejas* (halo or *mahimā*) or an exhibit of *pinda* (lump of matter), *kriyā* (activity) and *vikāsa* (spreading of greatness), or an exhibit of *Ṛgveda*, *Yajurveda* and *Sāmaveda*. That is why the *Brāhmaṇa* says,

‘He (*Prajāpati*) saw all the beings (*bhūtani*) in the *Trayī Vidyā*’³

The earth-atmosphere-sun system with all its structural and functional details constitutes an ideal example for explaining the *ṛk*, *yajus*, *sāman* principles. Individually also they exhibit the three Vedas. According to the Vedic seers, the earth-atmosphere-sun system constitutes the *Samvatsaraprajāpati* and has its origin in what is called *Samvatsarāgni*. The same *Agni* has manifested itself in three forms viz. the *agni* of the earth, which exhibits the *pinda* or *murti* (lump having definite shape and size) character, the *agni* of the middle region (*antarikṣāgni*) in which the wind blows, exhibiting movement (*gati*) and the *agni* of the *āditya* whose predominant characteristic is *vitāna* (spreading of *tejas* or *mahimā*) and therefore which constitutes the greatness part of the earth-atmosphere-sun system. In other words *Samvatsarāgni* while manifesting itself in three forms is also exhibiting the working of three Vedas, *Ṛk*, *Yajus* and *Sāman*. Since *Samvatsaraprajāpatiś* main activity is *yajña* and since *yajña* is nothing but creative forces in action we may say that *Prajāpati* used these Vedas for carrying out his *yajña* activity. That is why *Manu* said:

³ स ऋष्यामेव विद्यायां सर्वाणि भूतान्यपश्यत् (श.ब्रा.10.4.2.21)

'*Prajāpati* milked the three Vedas for the success of his *yajña* activity'⁴

The earth by itself also exhibits the working of the three components of the Veda. The material part of the earth which is a lump (*vastu pinda*) limited by its size and shape represents the working of *Ṛgveda*. All the activity inside this which has contributed to its structural details and also its give and take mechanism by which it maintains itself are the working of *Yajurveda*. The *prāṇa* part of it spreads its greatness upto a certain distance and this manifestation is *Sāmaveda*. In fact the *Brāhmaṇa* says that earth gets its name *Pr̥thivī* because of this spreading of its influence (*yadaprathayat tasmāt Pr̥thivī* - because it spread it is called *Pr̥thivī*).

In the middle region we have *agni* in which *vāyu* (wind) moves. The *antarikṣa* itself provides the background in which the movement of *vāyu* takes place. Actually the word *yajus* consists of two parts *yat* and *jūh*. The *Satapatha Brāhmaṇa* says,

'This wind which blows is *yajus*. It is this '*yat*' which while moving produces everything. Because the wind blows, everything is produced. Therefore *vāyu* is *yajus*. This *ākāśa* (space) is *jūh*. It is the middle region (*antarikṣa*). It is in this *ākāśa* the wind blows. Therefore this *yajus* is *vāyu* and *antarikṣa*, *yat* and *jūh*. Therefore this wind that blows is *yajus*. This *yajus* is established on *ṛk* and *sāman*. *Ṛk* and *sāman* support *yajus*.'⁵

4 अग्निवायुरविभ्यस्तु त्रयं ब्रह्म सनातनम् ।

दुदोह यज्ञसिद्धयर्थं ऋग्यजुस्सामलक्षणम् ॥ (मनुस्मृति 1.23)

5 अयं वाव यजुर्योऽयं पवते । एष हि यन्नेवेदं सर्वं जनयति ।

एतं यन्तमिदमनुप्रजायते तस्माद्वायुरेव यजुः ।

अयमेवाकाशो जूः यदिदमन्तरिक्षम् । एतं ह्याकाशमनुजवते

तदेतद्यजुर्वायुश्च, अन्तरिक्षं च यच्च जूश्च तस्माद्यजुः ।

एष एवं यत् एष होति । तदेतद्यजुः ऋक्सामयोः प्रतिष्ठितं ऋक्सामे वहतः ॥ (श.ब्रा

10.3.5.1.2)

We have seen that the physical form of the body containing the matter represents *ṛk* of the object. The activity inside the object is *yajus* and the region of influence around the object which appears as its halo is *sāman*. Actually the body represents the triad *vāk* (matter) *prāṇa* and *manas* functioning together and this triad is present both inside the body and in its *mahimā* region. Though these three always exist together, *vāk* and *manas* are by themselves inactive (*niṣkriya*). It is only *prāṇa* that does everything. It is *prāṇa* that produces the halo but the halo itself is the background of *vāk* and *manas* in which *prāṇa* moves. In other words, *ṛk* and *sāman* form a good support for *yajus* to do its work. That is why in the Brāhmaṇa it is said (*yajuh ṛksāmayoh pratiṣṭhitam; ṛksāme vahatah*).

The sun by himself is by far the best example where the roles of the three Vedas are demonstrated. Let us examine the following passage in Satapatha Brāhmaṇa

'This *vāk* is *āditya* (sun),
This *vāk* is set in three ways viz. *ṛks*, *yajus* and *sāmans*. The disc constitutes the *ṛks*. The halo of rays constitutes *sāmans*. The *Puruṣa* (inside the disc) constitutes *yajus*'. The disc that shines is *Mahaduktha*. They are the *ṛks*. It is the world of *ṛks*. The rays that shine (as a halo round the disc) is *Mahāvraṭa*. They are the *sāmans*. It is the world of *sāmans*. The *Puruṣa* in the disc constitutes the *yajus*'. They are the world of *yajus*'. This triad of *Vidyā* shines.'⁶

6 सा या सा वागसौ स आदित्यः।

सा वा एषा वाक् त्रेधा विहिता। ऋचो यजूषि सामानि।

मण्डलमेवर्चः, अर्चिःसामानि पुरुषो यजूषि।

यदेतन्मण्डलं तपति तन्महादुक्थं ता ऋचः स ऋचां लोकः।

अथ यदेतदर्चिर्दीप्यते तन्महाव्रतं तानि सामानि, स साम्नां लोकः अथ य एष

एतस्मिन्मण्डले पुरुषः सोऽग्निस्तानि यजूषि स यजुषां लोकः।

सैवैवा त्रय्येव विद्या तपति। (श.ब्रा. 10.5.1,2)

The above passage nicely summarises the concepts of the Vedic seers regarding the nature and functioning of *ṛks*, *yajus* and *sāmans*. The glowing disc constitutes the lump of *agni* (*agni pinda*). This lump has a size and shape as seen by us. It has got a core called *uktha* from which the rays emanate and form a halo round the disc. There is an active *puruṣa* (*prāṇāgni*) inside the disc who through his rays not only exhibits his greatness (*mahimā*) but also collects his food to sustain himself. The glowing disc (*mandala*) which is just a *vāk* pinda in which both *prāṇa* and *manas* are present, is here called *Mahaduktha*. *Agni* is only a form of *vāk*. That is why the Brāhmaṇa says elsewhere '*tasya vā etasyāgnervāgevopaniṣat*'. It is actually *Mahān uktha*, the big source region. The Brāhmaṇa says it is the world of *ṛks* i.e. it is the region where the finitised physical content of the sun is present. The active *prāṇāgni* in the disc sends out its rays around and forms a halo around it. This halo of rays is termed *Mahāvrata*. It should be kept in mind that the halo of rays is formed out of what is thrown out in the form of *vāk*, *prāṇa* and *manas*, already present in the disc which goes under the name *Mahaduktha*. The term *Mahāvrata* is full of significance. *Vrata* in the language used in the rituals (*yajñas*) is essentially food, in the form of milk given to the *yajamāna* (the person who takes the vow to perform the ritual). Here it is called *Mahāvrata* because it provides food to the sun who is the *ātman* of the entire *jagat* (*Śurya ātmā jagataḥ tasthuṣaśca*). It is the divine *soma* that feeds the sun and keeps him immortal. It is the *yajus* or the *prāṇāgni* that is inside the disc which through its rays (*arka*) collects this food and feeds the sun. It is this *yajus* that has free movement both inside the disc as well as in the halo region built up of rays round the sun. The disc and the halo which are made up of *vāk* provide the base for its movement. That is why in the Brāhmaṇa elsewhere, it is said that *ṛk* and *sāman* act as horses of Indra (i.e. *yajus*).

The following passage appears in chândogyopaniṣad.

'The earth is *ṛk*. Agni is *sāma*. *Sāma* has the support of *ṛk*. That is why *sāma* is sung on the *ṛk*. This earth is 'sā' and agni is 'amah'. It is *sāma*. The middle region (*antarikṣa*) is *ṛk*. Vayu is *sāma*. The sky above is *ṛk*. The sun is *sāma*. The *nakṣatras* (stars) are *ṛk*. The moon is *sāma*. Then the human system. *Vāk* (matter) is *ṛk*. *Prāṇa* is *sāma*. The eye is *ṛk*. *Ātmā* is *sāma*. The ear is *ṛk*. *Manas* is *sāma*. The white portion of the eye is *ṛk*. The black portion (the cornea) is *sāma*.⁷

It is easy to see in the above passage that the merit portion of every created thing is described as *sāma* while the support base is described as *ṛk*. The *Ṛgveda*, in one of the *ṛks*, describes the superiority of *yajus* over *ṛk*, *sāma* and *soma*. The *ṛk* says,

The *Agni* is awake. The *ṛks* love him. *Agni* is awake. The *sāmans* follow him. The *Agni* is awake *soma* says, 'I am your friend though I belong to a lower order'.⁸

Here *Agni* represents the active *yajus*. But *ṛk* and *sāman* require its assistance to play their roles. In other words *yajus* is the leader and *ṛk* and *sāman* are his supporters. Since *Agni* is *annāda* (eater of food) and *Soma* is food,

7 इयमेव ऋक् अग्निः साम। तदेतस्यामृच्यध्यूढं साम।

तस्माद्वच्यध्यूढं साम गीयते। इयमेव सा अग्निरमस्तत्साम।

अन्तरिक्षमेव ऋक् वायुः साम। द्यौरेव ऋक् आदित्यः साम।

नक्षत्राण्येव ऋक् चन्द्रमाः साम।

अथाध्यात्मं। वागेव ऋक् प्राणः साम। चक्षुरेव ऋक् आत्मा साम। श्रोत्रमेव ऋक्

मनस्साम। अथ यदेतदक्ष्णः शुक्लं भाः सैव ऋक् अथ यन्नीलं परः कृष्णं तत् साम।

(छा.उप.1.6,7)

8 अग्निर्जगार तमृचः कामयन्ते अग्निर्जगार तमु सामानि यन्ति।

अग्निर्जगार तमयं सोम आह तवाहमस्मि सख्ये न्योकाः। (ऋ.वे.4.2.85)

Soma tells *Agni* that he belongs to a lower rung because *Agni* is the enjoyer and *Soma* is his food only. When *Agni* and *Soma* interact, *yajus*, *ṛks* and *sāmans* play their roles.

By now it is clear to us, that Yajurveda is functionally the most important one of the three Vedas. It constitutes the active *Puruṣa* who is *Agni* himself. Since *Agni* is often named as *rasa* in the literature, the Yajurveda is called *Rasaveda* just as Ṛgveda is called *Chandaveda* and Sāmaveda is called *Vitānaveda*. The natural tendency of *Agni* is to cast away part of it. It becomes weak and to compensate for it, it takes food from outside. This is the give and take process established in the object by the *yajus*. Since whether it is *yajus* or *ṛk* or *sāman*, *Agni* is involved it will not be wrong if we say that *ṛk* and *sāman* merge with *yajus*. This is what the Brāhmaṇa says elsewhere viz.

‘*Ṛk* and *sāman* are consumed by *yajus*.’⁹

There is a statement in the literature that *sāman* consists of three *ṛks* (*trcam sāma*). That is while reciting the *sāman* they take three times the time taken for the *ṛk*. This arises because the *ṛk* is identified with the size or diameter of the object, while *sāman* is identified with the circle of influence around it. It only reflects the fact that the circumference is three times the diameter.

There are many passages in the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads, which try to interpret the nature and functions of *ṛk*, *yajus* and *sāman* in various ways. Especially the sāmaveda has been dealt with in many ways. We have *sāmans* associated with the earth like *Rathantara*, *Vairūpa* and *Śākhvara* and *sāmans* associated with the sun like *Bṛhat Vairāja* and *Raivata*. Then interaction between these *sāmans* take place and there is a transfer of influence from one to the other. Getting into these details will take us too far from our objective, we shall certainly deal with them elsewhere when we deal with the rituals.

9 तदुभे ऋक्सामे यजुरपीतः (श.ब्रा.10.1.१६)

Some of the passages in the Brāhmaṇas dealing with *ṛk*, *yajus* and *sāman* are really difficult to interpret. For example let us take the following passage.

'Once *yajña* disappeared from the *Devas*. It assumed the form of black antelope and roamed about. The *Devas* found it and removed its skin and used it in the *yajña*. The black hairs on the skin of the antelope represents the form of the *ṛks* and the white hairs the form of the *sāmans*. Or in the other way, the white hairs represent the form of the *ṛks* and the black hairs represent the form of the *sāmans*. The brown ones represent *yajus*' form. The *Trayī Vidyā* represents *yajña*. The colour represents its role in the *yajña*. The black antelope's skin represents the all pervasive role of the *yajña*. That is why the *yajamāna* uses the black antelope skin and takes the vow (for performing the *yajña*)'.¹⁰

The black antelope that is referred to here is really a representative of the earth in which *Agni* is hiding and is being searched for (*mrgyamāṇa*) by the *ṛtviks* who want to light the fire for the *yajña*. It is the *pravargya* (oozed out portion) of the sun and is black as opposed to the white colour of the sun. The Vedic seers identified the black antelope as a representative of *Agni* and its skin as a representative of the Vedas (all the three Vedas are used

10 यज्ञो हि देवेभ्योऽपचक्राम। स कृष्णमृगो भूत्वाचचार।

तस्य देवा अनुविद्य त्वचमेवावच्छायाजुः।

तस्य यानि शुक्लानि च कृष्णानि च लोमानि, तान्यृचां च साम्नां च रूपम्।

यानि शुक्लानि तानि साम्नां रूपम्। यानि कृष्णानि तानि ऋचाम्।

यदि वेतरथा - यान्येव कृष्णानि तानि साम्नां रूपम्। यानि शुक्लानि तान्यृचाम्।

यान्येव बभ्रूणीव हरीणि तानि यजुषां रूपम्

सैषा त्रयी विद्या यज्ञः। तस्या एतद्विलम्बमेष वर्णः। तद्यत् कृष्णाजिनं भवति यज्ञस्यैव सर्वत्वाय। तस्मात् कृष्णाजिनमधिदीक्षन्ते यज्ञस्यैव सर्वत्वाय।

(श.ब्रा.1.1.4.1,2,3)

in the *yajña*). It has three colours on the skin. The white is representative of the Sāmaveda because it is the *mahimā* part of earth-atmosphere-sun system that is the light of the sun. The black colour is representative of *ṛk* which again refers to the earth as *agni pinda* (a lump of *agni*). The *antarikṣa* in the middle region exhibits both these colours and is therefore brown. Thus the *yajña* covers the earth, *antarikṣa* (middle region) and the heaven and thus the all pervasive character of the *yajña* is achieved. The *ṛṣi* here is explaining why black antelope's skin is used in *yajñas*.

That portion of the Brāhmaṇa where the *ṛṣi* says, 'or in the other way the white hair represents *ṛk's* form and black hair the *saman's* form' is a little difficult to grasp because the *ṛṣi* suddenly changes to the *ādhyātmik* sphere where in the human eye, the white portion represents *ṛk's* and the black portion (the *cornea*) represents the *sāma* (*mahimā*). The human eye and the sun have a close relation because it is said in Aitareyopaniṣad that sun became the power of vision and entered the eyes¹¹ (see also Chāndogyaopaniṣad).¹² Let us now recollect what all we have learnt about *ṛk*, *yajus* and *sāman*.

1. *Agni* is an important constituent of the universe and therefore every object in the universe whether living or non-living may be considered as a lump of *vāk* (matter) or *agni* in which both *manas* and *prāṇa* are embedded.
2. The Ṛgveda decides the size and form of the object and represents its material content. The activity inside the body which goes to work out the structural details of the body is contributed by the *prāṇa* part of the body working under the direction of *manas*, on the *vāk* part of the body. This *prāṇa* which is essentially the active *prāṇāgni* is also responsible for the organisation of the

11 आदित्यश्चक्षुर्मृत्वा अक्षिणी प्राविशत्। (ऐ.उप.1.2.4)

12 यदेतदादित्यस्य शुक्लं भाः सेव ऋक्। अथ यन्नीलं परः कृष्णं तत् साम। (छा.उप. 1.5)

give and take process (*ādānavisarga*) in the body. All this is the work of Yajurveda. In fact Yajurveda is the real creator of various objects in the universe and *prāṇa* which has movement is its main asset. The Sāmaveda is mainly responsible for supplying food to the body, which enables it to sustain itself. It is established around the object as its *mahimā* (greatness) component.

3. In short, every object in the universe is an exhibit of the functioning of the three Vedas *Ṛk*, *Yajus* and *Sāman*. The functioning of the Vedas involves, *agni-soma* interactions in some form. *Agni* is the eater of food (*annāda*) and *soma* is food (*anna*).

The Vedic seers were able to bring all processes under these three types and were able to interpret many phenomena in the universe in terms of these. When something is not observed like for example the horns of a rabbit or horse or the upper row of teeth in some animals, they explained them away by saying that the Veda does not exist for them. Every human being exhibits the functioning of the three Vedas in him. His finitised physical frame constitutes *Ṛgveda* and it provides a base for *manas* and *prāṇa* to work. He has a circle of influence around him which forms his Sāmaveda and from this region he collects his food through the activity of his *prāṇa* and he himself or the *agni* in him containing the *prāṇa* together with his *manas* working on his *vāk* constitutes the Yajurveda.

Even in a society, the Vedic principles are reflected. For example we have already seen that every object in the universe is the result of the combined working of *manas*, *prāṇa* and *vāk*. This applies to human beings also who have an *ātman* and a physical body (*śarīra*). The coordinated functioning of *manas*, *prāṇa* and *vāk* (matter) constitutes the *ātman*. The Vedic seers did not take much time to realise that this functioning is not the same in all individuals. They knew also that the human being is the most perfect of all God's creations. Vyāsa said

'I tell you a secret, that is, there is no creation superior to that of human being.'¹³

In some people the working of *manas* (*jñānaśakti*) is predominant. In some others the working of *prāṇa* (*kriyāśakti*) is predominant and in yet some others the presence of *vāk* (*arthaśakti*) is predominant. The Vedic seers identified them as belonging to three *vīryas* and named the *vīryas* as *brahma*, *kṣatra* and *vit*. They named the people belonging to these three *vīryas* as *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas* and *vaiśyas* respectively. The *brāhmaṇas* were interested in acquiring knowledge (*jñānaśaktipradhānāḥ*) and were also interested in protecting the *ātman* (*ātmarakṣana*). The *kṣatriyas* exhibited valour, courage and physical activity (*kriyāśaktipradhānāḥ*) and were interested in protection from external dangers (*bahirangaṛakṣana*) and the *vaiśyas* were interested in acquiring wealth (*arthaśaktipradhānāḥ*). The R̥gveda uses three words viz. *śarma*, *varma* and *chardih*¹⁴ for these three qualities. Fittingly enough the Vedic seers attributed R̥gveda to *vaiśyas*, Yajurveda to *kṣatriyas* and Sāmaveda to the *brāhmaṇas* because *vāk* is predominant in R̥gveda, *prāṇa* is predominant in Yajurveda and *manas* is predominant in Sāmaveda.

The Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa says

'The *vaiśya* group were born of *ṛks*. The Yajurveda is the origin of *kṣatriyas*. The Sāmaveda gave birth to the *brāhmaṇas* and this was told by the ancients to their successors.'¹⁵

13 गुह्यं ब्रवीमि तदिदं न मानुषात् श्रेष्ठतरं हि किञ्चित् । (व्यास, महाभारत)

14 हस्ते बिभ्रद्भेषजा वार्याणि शर्म, वर्म छादिरस्मभ्यं यंसत् । (ऋ.वे. 1.114.5)

Compare the names शर्मा, वर्मा and श्रेष्ठी (सेठी) used by us.

15 ऋग्भ्यो जातं वैश्ववर्णमाहुः

यजुर्वेदं क्षत्रियस्याहुर्वोनिम् ।

सामवेदो ब्राह्मणानां प्रसूतिः

पूर्वं पूर्वभ्यो वच एतद्वचः ॥ (तै.ब्रा.3.12.9)

To conclude we can precisely define Vedas in the following way:

1. They are the processes in Nature involving *manas*, *prāṇa* and *vāk* in a planned manner leading to the creation and sustenance of various objects in the universe.
2. They represent *agni-soma* interactions and their ramifications as found in Nature.

When Vedas are defined in the above way we have no difficulty at all in accepting that they are *apauruṣeya* (not of human origin).

At this stage it is worthwhile to mention that the creation and sustenance processes described by the Vedic seers through the medium of *ṛk*, *yajus* and *sāman*, though looks simple, really implies a fairly complicated model of the creation and sustenance process involving the parameters, *manas*, *prāṇa*, *vāk*, *ṛk*, *yajus*, *sāman*, *agni* and *soma*. By this model, the Vedic seers covered the creation and sustenance processes of all objects of the universe, irrespective of whether they pertain to the *ādhipaivika* plane, or *ādhibhautika* plane or *ādhyātmika* plane. Looked at, from that angle, the Vedic seers were extremely clever people and their capacity to generalise observations is really very commendable.

The above definition of Vedas will not satisfy us unless we know what the relation is between the Vedas we have described above and the *mantras* we have inherited from our ancients as Vedas. In other words, what is the relation between the *Śabdaveda* as we have in the texts and the Vedas we have described above? This we shall examine in the next chapter.

V. THE EVOLUTION OF ŚABDAVEDA

We have already seen that the universe is a manifestation of the three Vedas *Ṛk*, *Yajus* and *Sāman*. The primary constituent of every object is *vāk* (matter) and this *vāk* in subtle form occupies the entire space (*atha vāgevedam sarvam - Ait Brāh*). We may also say that it is *agni* that pervades the entire space since according to the *Brāhmaṇas*, *agni* is also a form of *vāk* only (*tasya vā etasyāgneḥ vagevopaniṣat*). It is in this ocean of primordial matter *manas* and *prāṇa* play their parts and creation takes place with the help of *ṛk*, *yajus* and *sāman*. The *atharva* also plays its role in the sense that it brings into being the primordial fluid containing *soma* as one of its constituents and this *soma* interacts with *agni* in various ways in all creative processes.

We have been so far using the word *vāk* to represent matter in a subtle form and as one of the important components of *Prajāpati* or *Brahman* or *Ātman* who is nothing but the combined existence and coordinated functioning of *manas*, *prāṇa* and *vāk*. It is not only interesting but rather intriguing at the first thought that the same word *vāk* is also used to mean speech and it is this meaning of the *vāk* that we are more familiar with. The Vedic seers were extremely clever thinkers and developed interesting concepts about the functioning of Nature. One instance of such attempts is the way they analysed the origin of the sound we produce through our mouth and finally developed the concept of *Śabdabrahman* through which the *Parabrahman* or *Paramātman* can be reached or realised.

At a very early stage the Vedic seers realised that

sound (*śabda*) constitutes an important means of communication of knowledge. The creative processes may be conceived as revealing themselves in the form of sound and if these sounds can be interpreted in terms of the knowledge about the processes, then they form the basis of *Śabdaveda*. According to our definition of Veda the sounds themselves constitute the *Śabdaveda* since they represent the processes which result in the creation of an object. For example take thunderstorm. From an intelligent analysis of the sounds produced by thunder, the Vedic seers were able to infer the nature and intensity of the oncoming rainfall. Here thunder is the process and creation achieved is rain. Here we get a clear clue as to how the *Śabdaveda* evolved. It will be interesting to the reader to note that several rainfall forecasting rules exist in post-Vedic literature based merely on the sounds emanating from thunder. In this respect the sound produced by thunder is *Vedavāk* (ie. *Śabdaveda*). It is now easy to understand why so much importance is given to the proper intonation of the letters while the Vedas are recited. However every creative process is not accompanied by sounds (in the audible range) which can be identified with the process and therefore the best that is possible is the use of choice sounds or expressions which will have a direct relation with the object that will result from the process involved. This would imply that the Vedic compositions (ie. *Śabdaveda*) requires exceptional skill on the part of the composer and it was believed that the Vedic seers alone had this capacity. It was even said that *ākāśa* (ie. space) is filled with sounds which when deciphered properly will reveal to us the Vedic expressions. That is why *śabda* is considered as the rudimentary substance (*tanmātra*) of *ākāśa*. In other words the *Śabdaveda* is the oral expression of the seers to whom the creative processes revealed themselves while they were in deep meditation. They passed on their direct knowledge orally as *mantras* or expressions of extremely special character to others who did not have the capacity to acquire it themselves. Since hearing plays an

important role in communication, the Śabdaveda is also called Śruti.

The post-Vedic scholars have analysed the origin and nature of the Śabdaveda from various angles and have given us so much information on this subject that a sincere unbiassed student going through all this literature gets thoroughly confused at the complexity of the problem. The complexity arises mainly because some hold Śabdaveda is *apauruṣeya* (not of human origin) while some others are of the view that it is *pauruṣeya* (of human origin). Madhusūdan Ojha lists as many as forty two views on the *pauruṣeya - apauruṣeya* question of the Śabdaveda. While we shall briefly refer to it later, we shall now confine ourselves to the analysis of Śabdavāk as understood by the Vedic seers and its relation to the *vāk* pertaining to the world of matter (*arthaprapanca*).

We have already seen that *Svayambhūprajāpati* (*Prajāpati* made up of *prāṇas*) produced the Vedas first (*Brahmaniśvasita Veda*) and with these Vedas, he operated on *vāk* and produced the primordial waters.¹ The region of these primordial waters is called *Paramēsthī* (*Paramēsthī vā āpah*) and is located above the *Sauramandala* (region of the sun). We have already seen that these waters contain two principles viz. *bhṛgu* (*sneha*) and *angiras* (*tejas*) and these two together go under the name *atharvā*. Now these waters are only a form of *vāk*. Above these waters is the *vāk* region of *Svāyambhu*. This *Svāyambhuvī vāk* is called *gaurī vāk*. It is also called *Paramā vāk*, *Satyā vāk*, *Brāhmī vāk*, *Veda vāk* etc. It is this *vāk* only which after reaching the *Paramēsthī* region gives rise to two streams one associated with *Śabdaprapanca* and another associated with *arthaprapanca*. In this way *śabda* (sound) and *artha* (matter) have the same

1 तस्यां प्रतिष्ठायां प्रतिष्ठितोऽतप्यत। सोऽपोऽसृजत वाच एव लोकान्। वागेव सासृज्यत। सेदं सर्वमिदमाप्नोत् यदिदं किं च। यदाप्नोत् तस्मादापः। (श.ब्रा. 6.1.1.8,9)

origin and are intimately related. The Vedic seers sincerely believed that they can reach *Parabrahman* (ie. *arthabrahman*) through *Śabdabrahman*. Knowledge of one leads to the knowledge of the other. This is what the Upaniṣad says.

'*Brahman* has two forms. One is *Śabdabrahman* and the other is *Parabrahman* (*arthabrahman*). If we establish ourselves on the *Śabdabrahman* ie. if we realise *Śabdabrahman* we are led to the realisation of *Parabrahman*.²

This genetic relation (*autpattika sambandha*) between *śabda* and *artha* (matter) led the Vedic seers to believe that there is nothing in the world which is not associated with sound. The *ākāśa* is filled with sound. Rain is associated with sound of the thunder. Running water produces sound (whenever there is friction). Blowing wind produces sound (when it is obstructed by material objects). Burning fire produces sound. Thinking on these lines the Vedic seers were led to believe that matter can be produced through sounds and sounds can be created by matter. The Aitareya Upaniṣad says,

'Agni became *vāk* (speech) and entered the mouth.'³

It is interesting to note that *śabda* and *artha* are closely related in another way since every word (*śabda*) has a specific meaning (*artha*).

Now if the relation between *śabda* and *artha* is total, then every *śabda* (sound) need not necessarily be associated with a particular object (*artha*). In the absence of clear cut guide lines, all sounds as *śabdabrahman* can pervade all objects and all objects as *arthabrahman* can pervade all sounds. This is the basis of the statement '*Brahma vidyayā hi sarvam bhaviṣyanto manyante*' ie. *Brahmavidya* can achieve

- 2 ऽ वाव ब्रह्मणो रूपे शब्दब्रह्म परं च यत्
शब्दे ब्रह्मणि निष्णातः परं ब्रह्माधिगच्छति॥ (मै.उप.)
- 3 अग्निर्वाग्मृत्वा मुखं प्राविशत् (ऐ.उप.1.2)

anything. But this is not to be. Therefore we have specific sounds or names conveyed by sounds, relating to specific objects and the knowledge of this relation is what we have acquired from our elders. In the case of Vedic processes this relation assumes a very special character and Śabdaveda composed by the Vedic seers becomes the only source of our knowledge of this relation. They therefore acquire an authoritative status.

The above reasoning gives us lot of clues regarding the composition of the Śabdaveda. The Vedic seers subjected it to special rules. In fact we recognise three types of languages. One is used for the *mantra* portion, another belonged to the Brāhmaṇas and a third was used in the *sūtras*. The Vedic seers saw to it that the language of the *mantra* portion of the R̥gveda exhibits all the characteristics of the *ṛks* of the *arthaprapanca*. It should provide the support base for the *mantras* of the Yajurveda and should also exhibit the *mahaduktha* characteristic. That is, it should be condensed and should be subjected to finitisation by *chandas*. The Yajurveda *mantras* should not be limited by *chandas* and should run like prose, indicating free movement. The Sāmaveda *mantras* should exhibit the *mahimā* character and therefore should be sung as *gāna*. The language was perfected in every way (*samskṛta*). Words like *prajāpati*, *puruṣa*, *agni*, *soma*, *yajña*, *vāk*, *brahman*, *ātman*, *rasa*, *bala* etc. were very comprehensive terms pregnant with meaning. When *mantrās* were recited, the letters were subjected to intonations (*svaras*) for which there were prescribed rules. Any mistake in the sounds or intonations or use of letters in the recitations, were said to produce disastrous results.⁴ The *mantra* language was considered as the language of the *Devas*. The language of the Brāhmaṇas was supposed to contain both

4 दुष्टः शब्दः स्वरतो वर्णतो वा मिथ्याप्रयुक्तो न तदर्थमिति।

स वान्वज्रो यजमानं हिनस्ति यथेन्द्रशत्रुः स्वरतोऽपराधात् । (महाभाष्य)

the language of the *Devas* and that of the *manuṣyas* (human beings). There are many references in the *Brāhmaṇas* where a distinction is made between these two languages. The *ṛtviks* were supposed to know both the languages and used them in a carefully planned manner according to requirements in the *yajña karma*.

The *R̥gveda* says that the words have been planned by learned men and only the learned knows their meanings. Just as a dutiful wife exposes herself fully to her husband only, the *mantras* reveal themselves fully only to the learned. The others who are not well equipped cannot get at the real sense of the *mantras*. The learned men who know their meanings and also their applications in *yajña karma* is respected by all and is sought after by others who seek real knowledge of the *mantras*. On the other hand the person who merely recites the *mantras* without knowing their meanings roams about like a sterile cow which cannot produce calves or milk. Those who neglect the study of the *Vedas* and indulge in worldly activities involving hearing and talking neither achieve anything nor get to know the right way of living.⁵ In this way the *ṛṣi* cautions us against interpreting the *mantras* according to our whims and fancies.

Sometimes the *mantras* contain words which do not occur at all anywhere else. For example the 106th *Sūkta* of tenth *Mandala* is full of such words. The words when

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- 5 सक्तुमिव तितउना पुनन्तो यत्र धीरा मनसा वाचमक्रत ।
 अत्रा सखायः सख्यानि जानते भद्रेषां लक्ष्मीर्निहिताधि वाचि ॥
 यज्ञेन वाचः पदवीयमायन् तामन्वविन्दन्नुषिषु प्रविष्टाम् ।
 तामाभूत्या व्यदधुः पुरुत्रा तां सप्त रेफा अभि सं नवन्ते ॥
 उत त्वः पश्यन् न ददर्श वाचमुत त्वः शृण्वन्न शृणोत्येनाम् ।
 उतो त्वस्मै तन्वं विससे जायेव पत्य उशती सुवासाः ॥
 उत त्वं सख्ये स्थिरपीतमाहुर्ननं हिन्वन्त्यपि वाजिनेषु ।
 अधेन्वा चरति माययेष वाचं शुश्रुवां अफलामपुष्पाम् ।
 यस्तित्याज सचिविदं सखायं न तस्य वाच्यपि भागोऽस्ति ।
 यदी शृणोत्यलकं शृणोति न हि प्रवेद सुकृतस्य पन्थाम् ॥ (ऋ.वे. 10.71.2-6)

pronounced impresses us in some way. Except first and last *ṛks* all the other *ṛks* exhibit structural peculiarities indicating that some special language has been used here. Words like *maderū*, *sanerū*, *uṣṭārā cacarā*, *patarā*, *ārangarā*, *kinārā*, *phārivā*, *kharamajrā* etc. do not occur anywhere else. They were probably believed to be of divine origin. For the benefit of the readers, selected *ṛks* of this *sūkta* are given in the foot note below⁶ and interested readers may refer to Sāyaṇa's commentary for the meaning conveyed by them.

The Vedic seers sincerely believed that the *Vedavāk* pertaining to the *Śabdaprapanca* is divine *vāk* and therefore whatever the Veda says it will be achieved.⁷ The *yajñas* performed using the *Trayī Vidyā* can give us anything we want, because the *Devas* speak truth and used *yajñas* to achieve what they wanted. It is said Uddālaka Āruni told Vājasaneyā Yājñavalkya who was his student that if a dry twig is sprinkled with water reciting proper *mantras* in the *yajña* it will get life and grow branches and leaves.⁸ Such was the efficacy of *mantras* and *yajña karma*.

- 6 उष्टारेव फवरिषु श्रयेये प्रायोगेव श्वात्र्या शासुरेयः ।
दूतेव हि द्यो यशसा जनेषु माप स्यातं महिषेवावपानात् ॥
वंसगेव पूषर्या शिम्बाता मित्रेव क्रता शतरा शातपन्ता ।
वाजेदोच्चा वयसा घर्म्येष्टा मेघेवेषा सपर्या पुरीषा ॥
सृण्येव जर्भरी तुर्भरीतू नैतोशेव तुर्फरी पर्फरीका ।
उदन्यजेव जेमना मदेरू ता मे जराय्वजरं मरायु ॥
पञ्चैव चर्चरं जारं मरायु क्षत्रेवार्थेषु तर्तरीथ उग्रा ।
ऋभूनापत्स्वरमज्जा खरञ्जुर्वायुर्न पर्फरत्क्षयद्रयीणाम् ॥
घर्मैव मधुजठरे सनेरू भगेविता तुर्फरी फारिवारम् ।
पतरेव चचरा चन्द्रनिर्णिङ्मन ऋङ्गा मनन्या न जग्मी ॥
आरङ्गरेव मध्वेरयेये सारघेव गवि नीचीनवारे ।
कीनारेव स्वेदमासिष्विदाना क्षामेवोर्जा सूर्यवसात् सचेये ॥ (ऋ.वे. 10.106.2,5-8,10)

- 7 सा वै देवी वाक् यथा यद्यदेव वदति तत्तद्भवति । (श.ब्रा. 14.4.3.27)

- 8 तं ह्येतमुद्दालक आरुणिर्वाजसनेयाय याज्ञवल्क्यायान्तेवासिने उक्त्वोवाच 'य एतं शुष्कं स्थाणौ निषिञ्चेत् - जायेरन् शाखाः प्ररोहेयुः पलाशानीति । (श.ब्रा. 14.9.3.15)

Let us now get back to *Śabdabrahman* and see some more details pertaining to its structure and its relation to *Arthabrahman*. We have already seen that in the *Paramesthi* region two streams of *vāk* coexist. One is responsible for the creation of *arthaprapanca* and another for the creation of *śabdaprapanca*. Actually there is no such clear cut demarcation of the *vāk* streams. The demarcation exists only in our mind. That is, we can talk of *śabdaprapanca* only at one time and *arthaprapanca* only at other time. As far as the *vāk* is concerned it gives rise to both these worlds. For example Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa while dealing with the all pervasive character of *vāk* clearly brings out its dual character viz. it brings into existence the *śabdaprapanca* as well as *arthaprapanca*. It says,

'All the Devas have their support on *vāk* only. The gandharvas the animals and man are all supported by *vāk* only. (This means that *prāṇās* require a material support for their operations and *vāk* provides it:) The entire universe is of matter only. The same *vāk* is responsible for the coming into existence of *śabdaprapanca*. Let this *vāk* (goddess of speech) who is Indra's wife accept our offerings.⁹

N.B. The speech characterised by letters (*varṇas*) is called *Indrapatnī* because Indra perfected the *vāk* (*vyākṛta*) which was originally imperfect (*avyākṛta*).

Similarly the R̥gveda deals with the nature and functioning of the all powerful and all pervading *āmbhrnī vāk*. One of the *ṛks* in the *sūkta* says,

'I pervade space like the wind while I am engaged in the creation of all the worlds. My greatness pervades the earth as well as the heavenly regions.¹⁰

9 वाचं देवा उपजीवन्ति विश्वे वाचं गन्धर्वाः पशवो मनुष्याः ।

वाचीमा विश्वा भुवनान्यर्पिता सा नो हव्यं जुषतामिन्द्रपत्नी ॥ (ते.ब्रा.2.8.8.4)

10 अहमेव वात हव प्रवाम्यारभमाणा भुवनानि विश्वा ।

परो दिवा पर एना पृथिव्यै तावती महिना संवभूव ॥ (ऋ.वे.10.125.8)

The same Ṛgveda says elsewhere, that *vāk* pervades wherever *Brahman* pervades (*yavad brahma viṣṭhitam tāvati vāk*). It would therefore appear that the Vedic seers have purposely used the word *vāk* both for speech and matter in order to achieve oneness of *śabda* and *artha* (*śabdārthatādātmya*).

The Ṛgveda in a ṛk describes how the *gaurī vāk* undergoes sizing as it gets associated with various regions. In the *Parameṣṭhi* region it splits into two streams, one is associated with waters and is called *āpyā vāk*. It is this *vāk* that gives rise to the all pervasive *ambhṛnī vāk*. The other stream is associated with *soma* and therefore is called *soumyā vāk*. It gives rise to *subrahmanyā vāk*. When this stream gets associated with the sun, it gives rise to *bṛhatī vāk*. This *bṛhatī vāk* is nine syllabled. When this *bṛhatī vāk* gets associated with the earth, it gives rise to *anuṣṭup vāk* which is eight syllabled. In the solar region it becomes thousand syllabled through the rays of the sun (who is called *sahasrāmśu*). Thus *gaurī vāk* which was single in the beginning becomes, at first, two footed then four footed, then eight footed and nine footed and in space it splits into thousand (a large number) syllables.¹¹

While *bṛhatī vāk* is presided over by *Indra*, *Agni* presides over the *anuṣṭup vāk* of the earth. The *anuṣṭup vāk* of the earth requires the support of the *bṛhatī vāk* of the sun. While the first three *vāks* (viz *gaurī vāk*, *subrahmanyā vāk* and *bṛhatī vāk*) are of divine origin and therefore are everlasting (*nitya*), the last one is of the earth and therefore ephemeral (*anitya*). That is why the Ṛgveda says

‘There are four stages of *vāk* which are measured ones. These the, wise brāhmins know. Three of these are hidden in secret places (and therefore not

11 गौरीर्मिमाय सलिलानि तक्षत्येकपदी द्विपदी सा चतुष्पदी।

अष्टापदी नवपदी बभूवुषी सहस्राक्षरा परमे व्योमन् ॥ (ऋ.वे.1.164.41)

accessible to us). It is the fourth one that the human beings speak.¹²

The above *ṛk* has been annotated in many ways. Madhusūdan Ojha deals with this in detail in his work entitled *Pathyāsvastī*. Motilal Shastri gives many interpretations to this *ṛk* in his writings. We give below some salient points found in their analysis.

1. The four stages of *vāk* referred to here are *parā*, *paśyanti*, *madhyamā* and *vaikhari*. *Parā* is associated with pure consciousness (*prajñā*) part of the mind. When *prāṇa* acts on *prajñā*, the *vāk* produced is *paśyanti*. The sound associated with wind like breathing is called *madhyamā* and *vāk* which produces sound is called *vaikhari*. All these pertain to the *adhyātma* system.
2. There are four types of *vāk*. They are *vācaspatyā*, *bṛhmanaspatyā*, *aindra*, and *bhauma*. They are also called *vekurā*, *subrahmanyā*, *gaurivītā* and *āmbhṛnī*. It is *āmbhṛnī* *vāk* that pervades the entire earth. The rest are not accessible to us.

The *vāk* of the Vedas consisting of *ṛk*, *yajus* and *sāman*, though apparently accessible to us is actually kept away from us (*guhayām nihitā*). In other words, we do not understand it fully (*na samyaktaya pariñāyate*).¹³

3. The created *vāk* is fourfold. On the earth it was placed in *Agni* and *Rathantara sāma*. In the middle region it was placed in the wind and *Vāmadevya sāma*. In the heavens it was placed in *bṛhat sāma* and in the thunder. The fourth one was placed in the living beings here. Whatever was left was placed in the *brāhmaṇas*. Therefore *brāhmaṇas* speak what is known and what is not

12 चत्वारि वाक् परिमिता पदानि तानि विदुर्ब्राह्मणा ये मनीषिणः।

गुहा त्रीणि निहिता नेज्जयन्ति तुरीयं वाचं मनुष्या वदन्ति॥ (ऋ.वे.1.164.45)

13 बृहस्पते प्रथमं वाचो अग्रं यत्प्रेरत नामधेयं वधानः।

यदेषां श्रेष्ठं यदरिप्रमासीत्प्रेम्णा तदेषां निहितं गुहाविः॥ (ऋ.वे.10.71.1)

known. They have access to the unknown through the *sāmans* in rituals.¹⁴

4. The four components of *vāk* are *amṛta*, *divyā*, *vāyavyā* and *aindrī*. The *amṛtā vāk* is embedded in *manas* and *prāṇa* and is called *satyā*. It is the *vāk* of *ṛk*, *yajus* and *sāman*. This *vāk* is the seat of everything. It is also the origin of everything. It is also called *ākāśa*. It is actually *agni* pervading space. *Agni* is its *brahma* (supporter). It is therefore called *agneyī vāk*. The *divyā vāk* is *Atharvaveda*. It is the origin of all divine beings and beings on the earth. This *vāk* is also called *Paramesthinī vāk* or *sasrasvān*. *Soma* is its *brahma* (supporter). It is therefore called *saumyā vāk*. Both the above types of *vāks* do not produce sound (*dhvani*). Therefore we cannot hear them. The third one is *vāyavyā*. It is embedded in *vāyu* (wind). It produces sounds like *nāda*, breathing (which are associated with wind only). These sounds do not convey any sense (*anarthakāh*). It is also called *Sarasvatī* and it supports us all. From this only *Indra* (who is essentially *prāṇa*) produced the decipherable sounds consisting of letters and which is called *vyākṛtā vāk*. This is the fourth one called *aindrī vāk*.

Madhusūdan Ojha discusses various aspects of *vāk* in his excellent book called *Pathyāsvasti*. *Pathyāsvasti* is another name for *vāk* (*vāgvai pathyāsvastih* (*Brāhmaṇa*))

The *mīmāṃsakas* took great pains to prove that the *Śabdaveda* is *apauruṣeya* (not of human origin). All that the *mīmāṃsaka sūtras* of *Jaimini* could establish was that *śabda* and *artha* (matter) have the same origin and therefore they

14 वाग्धि वाजस्य प्रसवः । सा वै वाक् सृष्टा चतुर्धा व्यभवत् ।

एषु लोकेषु त्रीणि तुरीयाणि । पशुषु तुरीयम् । या पृथिव्यां, साऽग्नी सा रथन्तरे ।
याऽन्तरिक्षे सा वाते सा वामदेव्ये । या दिवि सा बृहति सा स्तनयित्नी । अथ पशुषु ।
ततो या वागत्यरिच्यत तां ब्राह्मणे न्यदधुः । तस्माद् ब्राह्मण उभयीं वाचं वदति -
यश्च वेद, यश्च न । या बृहदथन्तरयोः - यज्ञादेनं (वाजं) तथा गच्छति । या पशुषु तथा
ऋते यज्ञम् ॥ (मैत्रा.ब्रा.1.11.4)

have genetic relation (*autpattika sambandha*). It is easy for us to see that as long as we identify *śabda* with a process in Nature it is clearly *apauruseya*. But when human effort is involved in the production of sounds which are of course decipherable it loses its *apauruseya* status. In other words *Śabdaveda* should really mean a creative process like the sound produced by thunder which is certainly *apauruseya*. But when the process is described or interpreted through expressions of human origin it should be called *Śabdavidyā*. When we go to the root cause of *Śabda* and identify it as *Brahman* it can be called *Śabdabrahman* just like we have *Arthabrahman* or *Parabrahman*. Thus we have no difficulty in resolving the *pauruseya* - *apauruseya* question of the *Śabdaveda*.

The Vedic seers did everything to achieve one to one relation between *arthaprapanca* and *śabdaprapanca*. They discovered the *Prāṇava* ie *Omkāra* which consists of three letters अ, उ, and म्. The letter अ denotes detachment (*asanga*). While pronouncing this letter we keep the concerned organs of speech open. In the case of *Arthabrahman* we have a stage *Avyaya* which is detached (*asanga*) and does not take part in creation. When we pronounce the letter उ, we bring the concerned organs of speech closer but we do not close them. This corresponds to the *Akṣara* stage of the *Arthabrahman* and when we pronounce म् we close them and this corresponds to the *Kṣara* stage of the *Arthabrahman* which represents attachment (*saṅga*). We can also strike the similarity between *Arthabrahman* and *Śabdabrahman* by establishing one to one correspondence between *Avyaya*, *Akṣara* and *Kṣara* on one side and *dhvani*, *svara* and *varṇa* on the other other side.

The Aitareya Āranyaka strikes many similarities between *Arthabrahman* and *Śabdabrahman*.¹⁵

The following statement found in Vedic literature clearly brings out what *śabda* can achieve.

'The *śabda* principle is *Brahman* without beginning or end. It assumes the form of matter by which the *Jagat* is created.'¹⁶

Based on the above belief the Vedic seers planned their *yajñas*, which in a way constitute experimentation of their beliefs. We may also say that they constituted the demonstration of their belief that *śabda* and *artha* have genetic relation (*autpattika sambandha*) and therefore, it is possible to achieve things in *arthaprapanca* through the medium of *śabdaprapanca*. The *mīmamsakas* believe that Vedas were produced only for performing the rituals and achieving material ends (*Vedāḥ hi yajñarthamabhipravṛttāḥ*). Everything is planned in the rituals as it occurs in Nature and the forces of Nature are urged through the *mantras* to produce beneficial effects like rain, food and prosperity. That *agni-soma* interactions play the major role in creation is fully demonstrated in the *yajña*. The following passage of Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa clearly shows their expectations from the performance of the *yajñas*.

'The *Devas* produced the easterly winds by uttering 'O *śrāvaya*'. They brought the clouds by uttering 'astu *śrouṣat*'. They produced lightning by uttering

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- 15 पृथिव्यारूपं स्पर्शाः अन्तरिक्षस्योष्माणः दिवः स्वराः
 अग्निरूपं स्पर्शाः वायोरुष्माणः आदित्यस्य स्वराः
 ऋग्वेदस्य रूपं स्पर्शाः यजुर्वेदस्योष्माणः सामवेदस्य स्वराः
 चक्षुरूपं स्पर्शाः श्रोत्रस्योष्माणः मनसः स्वराः
 प्राणस्य रूपं स्पर्शाः अपानस्योष्माणः व्यानस्य स्वराः ॥ (ऐ.आ.3.2.5)
- 16 अनादिनिधनं ब्रह्म शब्दतत्त्वं प्रवर्तते
 विवर्तते अर्थभावेन प्रक्रिया जगतो यतः ॥ (उपनिषद्वाक्य?)

yaja. They produced thunder by uttering 'ye yajamahe' when they said 'vouṣat' the rains fell.¹⁷

The Vedic seers believed that by performing the various Vedic rituals like *Agnihotra* (day and night) *Darśapūrnāmāsa* (fortnightly), the *Cāturmasyeṣṭis* (seasonal) and the annual *Soma yāga*, they can become *bhūsuras* (Devas on earth) capable of achieving everything they wanted while living on the earth and attain a blissful life after death. They believed in some sort of unity in the structure of the universe at the three levels viz. *ādihidaivika*, *ādhibhautika* and *ādhyātmika* levels and built up their concepts and ideas at the *ādihidaivika* level based on what they observed at the *ādhibhautika* and *ādhyātmika* levels. Sometimes they stretched their imagination so much that it led to highly artificial concepts.

At this stage it is useful to recapitulate the salient points that have emerged out of our analysis.

1. The *apauruṣeya* Veda has its origin in *Svayambhūprajāpati* who is nothing but *prāṇas* operating on *Brahmāgni* (*parā vāk*). The *Vedas* produced by this *Prajāpati* is called *Brahmanīśvasitaveda*.
2. This Veda acts on *vāk* and produces the primordial waters of the *Paramēṣṭhī* region. It is here that the two streams of *vāk* are formed. One (*āpyā vāk*) is responsible for the creation of *arthaprapanca* and the other (*saumyā vāk*) is responsible for the *śabdaprapanca*.
3. The *Brahman* theory that is applicable to *arthaprapanca* is also applicable to *śabdaprapanca*. That is, just like we have four stages of *Arthabrahman* viz. *Parātpara*, *Avyaya*, *Akṣara* and *Kṣara* and *manas prāṇa* and *vāk* play their parts, we have also four stages of *Śabdabrahman*.

17 "ओ आवय" इति देवाः पुरोवातं ससृजिरे। "अस्तु श्रोषद्" इति अग्नाणि समप्लावयन्। "यज" इति विद्युतम्। "ये यजामहे" इति स्तनयित्नुम्। वष्टकारेणैव प्रावर्षन्। (श.बा.1.5.2)

viz. *Svāyambhuvi vāk*, *Parameṣṭhī vāk*, *Brhatī vāk* and *Anuṣṭup vāk* or *amṛta vāk*, *divyā vāk*, *vāyavyā vāk* and *aindrī vāk*.

4. Just like three parts of the *Puruṣa* are above and only one part has come down and has become *viśva* (as mentioned in the *Puruṣasūkta*),¹⁸ in the case of *Śabdabrahman* also, three parts are above and only one has come down to the earth.¹⁹
5. Just like we have *ṛk*, *yajus* and *sāman* in the *Arthaprapanca*, we have in the *Śabdaprapanca*, *Ṛgveda* which is subjected to *chandas*, *Yajurveda* which is not subjected to *chandas* and *Sāmaveda* which is sung as *gāna*. In fact every possible thing is done to match the *Śabdaveda* with the *Arthaveda*. Now to bring the *arthaprapanca* into existence, the *manas prāna* and *vāk* of *Prajāpati*, the *ṛks*, *yajus* and *sāmans* and the *agni-soma* interactions play their part. After having created the *viśva*, *Prajapati* enters into it as *viśvātmā*. If there is perfect equation (*tādātmya*) between *Śabdabrahman* and *Arthabrahman* ie. if *śabda* can lead to the creation of *artha* (matter) and *arthavāk* can lead to the creation of *śabda*, then for the *Śabdabrahman* to be effective in the creation of *arthaprapanca* we require the *manas*, *prāna* and *vāk* of the *ātman* (ie. the *amṛta* part) of *Śabdabrahman* to play their effective roles in the creation of *arthaprapanca*. The Vedic seers were quite aware of this necessity and that is why in the Vedic ritual, they employed special type of *brahmins* (*ṛtviks*) who during the ritual, work on the *ātman* of the *yajamāna* (the person who performs the ritual) with the help of *Śabdaveda* and try to link it with the *ātman* of *Prajāpati* (*Devātman*). Whatever he does in the ritual

18 त्रिपादूर्ध्व उदैत् पुरुषः पादोऽस्येहाभवत्पुनः। (ऋ.वे.10.90.7)

19 चत्वारि वाक् परिमिता पदानि तानि विदुर्ब्राह्मणा ये मनीषिणः।

गुहा त्रीणि निहिता नेङ्गयन्ति तुरीयं वाचं मनुष्या वदन्ति॥ (ऋ.वे.1.164.45)

he says that he is doing what the Devas did (*Devah yadakurvan tadaham karavāṇi*). It is this linking, he thinks, that enables him to achieve what he wants in the material world (*arthaprapanca*) ie. wealth, prosperity, long life etc.

In actual practice how far the *yajñas* were successful in realising the objective, it is extremely difficult to say. Madhusūdan Ojha mentions that the Vedic seers were adepts in several *vidyās* and he names them in his works. Many of these pertain to the rituals. Therefore in the absence of sufficient observational data, it will not be correct to pass any judgment on them. Today we are far removed from Vedic tradition and therefore we are totally incompetent to assess the skills of our Vedic seers. However from our point of view their approach is extremely interesting. It is quite possible that the philosophy of the Upaniṣads is the direct outcome of such ideas. Many of us really do not understand what is meant by realisation of the *ātman* or self as is taught in the Upaniṣads. In our opinion it has a direct relation to the *yajamāna* in a Vedic ritual trying to link his *ātman* ie. the coordinated functioning of his *manas*, *prāṇa* and *vāk* with the functioning of *manas*, *vāk* and *prāṇa* of *Prajāpati* or *Devas*, so that he functions on the earth as a human being of a higher order.

At this stage it is pertinent to point out that a scientist engaged in fundamental research in subjects like earth sciences or astronomical sciences is as much involved with the forces of Nature as another who wants to link his *ātman* with that of the Devas in a Vedic ritual. It is because of this linking of his *ātman* with that of the forces of Nature he is able to hit at his invention or discovery through which he is able to achieve material ends for the good of the people. He certainly makes use of the Vedas in the truest sense of the term whether they are of the *arthaprapanca* or *śabdaprapanca*. In this respect the ideas of the Vedic seers have very wide application.

They sincerely believed that material prosperity should go hand in hand with spiritual prosperity. According to Madhusūdan Ojha²⁰ there was a very learned person of divine qualities called Brahmā among the *sādhyas* who lived in the early R̥gvedic period. He composed the first Śabdaveda. *Sādhyas* were experts in *yajñavidyā*,²¹ *prāṇavidyā* and *adhyātmavidyā*. Brahmā expanded their knowledge by making observations on the sun and other heavenly bodies and also studied the phenomena on the earth. Thus he extended their knowledge to *ādihidaivika* and *ādhibhautika* spheres. He was the first to reject the various theories of creation prevalent at that time²² and to propound the *Brahman* theory of creation. Thus the Veda composed by Brahmā contained many branches of knowledge prevalent at that time. His Veda contained four lakh verses. This Veda was lost in course of time and the Vedas we now have, have been composed by some *ṛsis* after deep study of Nature. The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa says that the *ṛsis* recovered the lost Vedas from the ocean after digging with sharp weapons (ie. they recovered the lost Vedas with great effort).²³ They went on adding to their collection as and when they composed new ones. According to Purāṇas, Vyāsa later arranged them into four saṃhitas. During the early period of Vedic composition there were *ślokas* and *gathās* which in course of time were lost. Whatever survived are available here and there.

Satapatha Brāhmaṇa while dealing with the creation of Vedas says that *Prajāpati* created twelve *br̥hati* thousands

20 vide जगद्रूपवैभवम् - by Madhusudan Ojha, published by Rajasthan Patrika Jaipur 1990

21 यजेन यजमयजन्त देवास्तानि धर्माणि प्रथमान्यासन् तेह नाकं महिमानस्सचन्त यत्र पूर्वे साध्याः सन्ति देवाः ॥ (ऋ.वे.1.164.50)

22 नासदीयसूक्त, ऋग्वेद (10.87)

23 ये समुद्राग्निरखनन् देवास्तीक्ष्णाभिराग्निभिः सुदेवोऽय तद्विषाद् यत्र निर्वपणं दधुः। (श.ब्रा.7.5.2.52)

(*bṛhatīśahasra*) of *ṛks*. *Bṛhatī* consists of 36 syllables and therefore he created $12 \times 36 \times 1000 = 432000$ syllables of *ṛks*. When he arranged them in the *panktī chandas*, there were 10800 *panktīs* of *ṛks*. *Panktī chandas* consists of forty syllables. ($10800 \times 40 = 432000$) He also created eight *bṛhatī* thousands of *yajus'* and four *bṛhatī* thousands of *sāmans*. That is the syllables of *yajus'* and *sāmans* put together were as many as what *ṛks* had viz. 432000. The total of all the three is, 864000 syllables. One year has got 10800 *muhūrtas* in it and it is seen that the *R̥gveda* as we have today has 10580 *ṛks* and 432000 syllables, which shows some similarity to the *R̥gveda* created by *Prajāpati*.²⁴

It is not our intention to deal with the contents of each Veda in this book. These details are already available to the reader in a number of books which have already been published. Our aim in writing this book has been mainly to highlight those aspects which have not been dealt with by any other author. In the light of what we have said about the *Śabdaveda*, there seems to be vast scope for research on Vedic texts and the sounds produced when they are recited. It is very unfortunate that scientific research on Vedic texts and traditional methods of reciting the Vedas is almost nil. There are many *mantras* in the Vedas whose

24 स ऋचो व्यौहत् द्वादश बृहती सहस्राणि। एतावत्यो हर्चः। याः प्रजापतिसृष्टाः।
तास्त्रिंशत्तमे व्यूहे पङ्क्तिष्वतिष्ठन्त ताः यत्त्रिंशत्तमे व्यूहेऽतिष्ठन्त
तस्मात्त्रिंशन्मासस्य रात्रयः। अथ यत्पङ्क्तिषु, तस्मात् पाङ्क्तः प्रजापतिः। ता
अष्टाशतं शतानि पङ्क्तयोऽभवन्।
अथेतरी वेदो व्यौहत्। द्वादशैव बृहतीसहस्राण्यष्टौ यजुषां चत्वारि साम्नाम्।
एतावद्वैतयो र्यत्प्रजापतिसृष्टम्। तौ त्रिंशत्तमे व्यूहे पङ्क्तिष्वतिष्ठेताम्।

तौ यत्त्रिंशत्तमे व्यूहे अतिष्ठेतां तस्मात् त्रिंशन्मासस्य रात्रयः। अथ यत्पङ्क्तिषु
तस्मात्पाङ्क्तः प्रजापतिः। ता अष्टाशतमेव शतानि पङ्क्तयोऽभवन्। ते सर्वे त्रयो
वेदाः दशसहस्राण्यष्टौ शतानि अशीतीनामभवन्। स मुहूर्तेन मुहूर्तेनाशीतिमाप्नोत्
मुहूर्तेन मुहूर्तेनाशीतिः सम्पद्यत। (श.ब्रा.10.4.2.23-25)

meanings have not been understood at all by us. In any case interpreting the Vedic passages, according to one's own whims and fancies should stop since we have shown that *Śabdaveda* can convey only one meaning which has to be found by intensive study of the literature, especially the *Brāhmaṇas* which throw light on the meanings of many Vedic passages. Incidentally it may be said that mere recitation of the Vedas without understanding their meanings leads us nowhere.

With the above remarks we now pass on to define Vedic religion.

VI. DEFINITION OF VEDIC RELIGION

We have seen in the last four chapters what Vedas is. The next question we have to address ourselves is, what is Vedic religion? Can we define it? The answer is yes, we can define it. To put it in one sentence we can define it thus: Vedic religion aims at understanding Nature and its relation to the individual and the society and recommends a way of life to every individual in the light of such understanding. The Vedic seers were intellectuals of a high order and therefore their statements carry a certain amount of authority with them.

The Vedic seers sincerely believed as we have already said that the coming into existence of the human being marked a distinct stage of perfection in the creation process. We have also seen how they discovered the three *vīryas*, *brahma*, *kṣatra* and *vit* in tune with the three Vedas and these three correspond to predominance of *jñānaśakti*, predominance of *kriyāśakti* and predominance of *arthaśakti* respectively. In their opinion the division of men according to their qualities and potentialities was extremely beneficial for a healthy society in which everybody has an allotted role and by playing that role he contributes to the well being of the society as a whole. It is most unfortunate that the true spirit underlying the division of men into classes was lost in course of time. Complexes developed and exploitation became the bane of society. If only we had understood the true value of the *vīryas* as per Vedic tradition, we would have nurtured them and today we would have amongst us a large number of scientists and philosophers (*jñānaśaktipradhānāḥ*), an equally large number of technolo-

gists, artists, administrators, commanders and leaders who exhibit skill, valour and courage (*kriyāśaktipradhānāḥ*) and also a large number of businessmen, bankers, and economists who amass wealth only to help others (*tyāgāya sambhṛtārthāḥ*) (*arthaśaktipradhānāḥ*). We would be the enjoyers (*bhoktārah*) of the material and spiritual prosperity of the land for which the above three categories would toil continuously. Such is the ideal society in which we ought to have lived if only we had understood the true value of Vedic tradition. The achievement of human excellence on a large scale would have been a distinct possibility only in such surroundings.

As scientist - philosophers the Vedic seers argued that since the observed universe is the outcome of a divine intelligent process it follows that the qualities and activities of the created objects are also the product of some intelligent process. While they named the process as Vedas, they named the qualities and activities of the created objects as 'dharma'. This is the meaning of the statement,

'Vedaddharmo hi nirbabhau'

'From Veda, dharma came into existence'

The living habits, the eating habits the degree of intelligence, physical power, behaviour etc. are all covered by *dharma*. Because man alone has got the capacity to change his *dharma* on account of his thinking power (*kevalam manuṣya eva atikrāmati*), certain regulations of his mental and physical activities become necessary in the interests of society (the well being of the surroundings) as well as the individual himself. This regulation is possible only when we understand what *dharma* is. The source from which we can understand the same is naturally the *Śabdaveda*. That is why Manu said,

*'To those who want to know dharma Veda is the supreme authority'*¹

1 धर्मं जिज्ञासमानानां प्रमाणं परमं श्रुतिः। (मनुस्मृति)

In other words it is possible to get a correct picture of *dharma* only when we study and understand Nature in all its entirety which is very difficult for a normal human being. The Vedic seers alone had this capacity and therefore they were called '*sakṣātkṛtadharmāṇah*' and their interpretation of *dharma* becomes automatically authoritative.

Since action (*karma*) is related to *dharma*, it becomes necessary to analyse action (*karma*). A thoughtful action that benefits the individual as well as his surroundings is called *karma*. It also goes under the name *punya*, *sukṛta* as well as *dharma*. When action ends in unwanted results it is called *vikarma*, *pāpa*, *duṣkṛta* etc. When it neither does good nor bad to the individual or surroundings it is called *akarma*. *Karma* brings happiness and prosperity while *vikarma* brings misery, disease etc.

In all actions *karmendriyas* (organs of action) and *jñānendriyas* (organs of knowledge) do not play equal role. In some the former dominate and in some the latter. The qualities of men directly related to *dharma* and *karma* can be classified as follows.

1. Inherited by birth.
2. Developed by training in an atmosphere in which the natural qualities are enriched and all impediments to such enrichment are removed.
3. Acquired by force.

The above analysis led the *mahaṛṣis* to conclude that only *karma* that conforms to one's own *dharma* leads to prosperity of the individual and of the society as a whole. Since they had already identified three main types among men viz. 1) with predominant capacity to acquire knowledge (*jñānaśaktipradhānāh*) with predominant capacity for action, exhibition of valour, spirit of sacrifice etc. (*kriyāśaktipradhānāh*) and 3) with predominant capacity to acquire wealth (*arthaśaktipradhānāh*) pertaining to the three *vīryas* or

varṇas it was easy for them to declare that for prosperity, each has to direct his activity (*karma*) towards the enrichment of the above natural qualities and regulate it according to place, time and society (*deśa, kāla, pātra*). In this process they discovered three types of *karma* viz. *yajña, tãpas* and *dãna*.

We have already said that *yajña* is closely related to creative processes in Nature. We shall examine it here in association with *tapas* and *dãna*. *Tapas* is that activity through which the man acquires from outside such of the qualities which are absent in him and which are required for the enrichment of his natural qualities. *Dãna* is to part with superfluous portions of one's own qualities or possessions for the sake of others who need them. If we cast off some of our possessions without naming the individual or society benefitting by it, it is called *tyãga*. Fruit bearing trees rainfall etc. are the best examples of this. There is thus a give and take activity that sustains the universe and the prosperity of the whole society depends on this activity. This principle of constructive feeding of this universe (*jagadãpyãyana*) is carried out by the *yajña* process which is essentially *anna-annãda bhãva* or donor-enjoyer principle or *agni-soma* interaction. Because *yajña* applies to the entire universe it becomes a universal *dharma* and therefore the most sacred act of the individual (*yajño hi śreṣṭhatamam karma*).

It would therefore be clear from the above analysis that the prosperity of mankind lies in his capacity to live in tune with Nature. Veda helps him to understand Nature and *dharma* helps him to live in tune with her.

The above account in short constitutes Vedic religion. It is needless to point out that this covers the entire mankind and therefore is universal in nature. It assures every individual both spiritual and material prosperity. It provides the right atmosphere for the emergence of human

species of a higher order if at all it is possible in the future. If only we had understood this message of the Vedas properly we would have been able to unite the entire mankind into a single unit following certain codes of conduct which are universal in character. Then why did we not do it? Where did it go wrong? Well, there are some valid reasons for our not being able to convey the message of the Vedas effectively to mankind. A careful study of the Vedic literature and the available commentaries on them would suggest that there should have been some gaps of knowledge between the original composers of Vedas and planners of rituals and the subsequent priests who inherited their knowledge. It is quite likely that the missing links both in the interpretation of Vedic passages as well as in the proper *mantras* to be used in the rituals were filled up by later priests according to their capacity. Many times the *śāstra mantras* in the rituals do not have direct relation to the particular *karma* for which the *mantras* are recited. Further a convincing explanation is required why the Vedic compositions such as the *ṛks* and *yajus* abruptly ended somewhere. If we accept that the Vedic passages should contain mostly statements of creative processes in Nature and associated phenomena pertaining to *ādhidāivika*, *ādhyātmika* and *ādhibhautika* spheres, the discoveries should have gone on continuously and therefore the composition of *mantras* should have gone on continuously. It is quite possible that the composers of *mantras* were victims of natural calamity like earth-quakes avalanches, advancement of glaciers, land slides etc. and the group which survived started with whatever knowledge they had inherited from their ancestors and carried on their priestly activities to the best of their abilities. From that time onwards the message of the Vedas started taking diverse directions. The systems of philosophy like Vaiśeṣika, Sāṅkhya and Vedānta which were inseparable components of a single Vedic tradition became the breeding ground for the division of society, some people swearing by *Karmakānda* and some others swearing by *Jñānakānda*. Even

among those who believed in the supremacy of *Jñānakānda* there were so many factions with the result the real message of the Vedas was completely lost.

We have had kings and kingdoms and great kings ruled over different parts of this country at different times. There were many great scholars in their courts or in the land they ruled. Scholars like Kālidāsa, Bīṇa, Bhāṛavi, Kṣemendra, Mīgha, Bhatti have lived and flourished in this country. But they never made any serious study of Vedas and Vedic literature and did nothing to unite the people by pointing out that the message of the Vedas cannot take diverse paths. They were more interested in glorifying kings and kingdoms.² The result has been that there have been very few individuals who made a deep study of the Vedas and Vedic tradition during the past thousand years and fewer people understood the real message of the Vedas. We will show in one of our books how and why these people have differed from each other though all of them based their conclusions on the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas and Upaniṣads. Even a simple beautiful text like Bhagavad Gītā has been interpreted differently by different people according to their whims and fancies. The impact of foreign invasion and then foreign rule did have their own effect on the propagation of Vedic message. By the time we were free we were already in a mess. But with all these negative forces, if at all the country has remained intact as a single unit, it is because of Veda and Vedic tradition only, whatsoever may be the manner in which it has influenced the people.

Above all the greatest drawback has been that no scientist worth the name has ever made a deep study of Vedic literature and made a scientific assessment of their contributions to our understanding of Nature. Many of them have been repelled by the language problem and others have just not cared to find out what these people were talking.

2 We are here reminded of the old saying "येदं हि वाऽकथयन्ति"

Moreover an encyclopaedic knowledge of many branches of science is really required to tackle many *mantras* because the Vedic seers covered the *ādhidāivika* *ādhibhautika* and *ādhyātmika* spheres in their *mantras*. For example it is not possible for a physicist to say whether a plant which grows and decays according to the phases of the moon is possible at all in Nature. Can a physicist develop a model of the creation and sustenance of an object based on the Vedic concepts of *ṛk*, *yajus* and *sāman*? Can we parameterise and incorporate *manas* in our evolution models? These are thought provoking problems for the scientists. Vedic literature if studied in the right way is a fascinating subject. The author would appeal to the scientific community to come forward and spare some time to study this literature and bring out the true message of the Vedas for the sake of the entire mankind. It is quite possible that the future *Vedavits* (knowers of Vedas) will be scientists only.

VII. CONCLUSION

We have come to the end of our small thesis. If this can draw more people especially the scientists into this field, the writing of this thesis is more than justified. Of course the mental equipment that is required to study the Vedic literature is of a fairly high order and only a few fortunate people can enter this field. It is only to them the *mantras* will reveal their meanings as the *rk* says¹

उत त्वः पश्यन्न ददर्श वाचमुत त्वः शृण्वन्न शृणोत्येनाम् ।
उतो त्वस्मै तन्वं विससे जायेव पत्य उशती सुवासाः ॥

At the same time intensive research is called for on the sounds produced while reciting the Vedas. We have to understand the effect of sounds on the individual and on the environment, if at all such an effect exists or can be detected.

Before we conclude, let us recall the advice of the Vedic seer who said,²

संगच्छध्वं संवदध्वं सं वो मनांसि जानताम् ।
देवा भागं यथा पूर्वं संजानाना उपासते ॥
समानी व आकृतिः समाना हृदयानि वः ॥
समानमस्तु वो मनो यथा वः सुसहसति ॥

'Let us go together, speak together and understand together. Just like the Devas, share the offerings together, we shall also share our fortunes together.'

'Let your thoughts be alike, let your hearts and minds be alike and let your thoughts bring prosperity to all.'

1 ऋ.वे.10.71.5

2 ऋ.वे.10.191.2,4