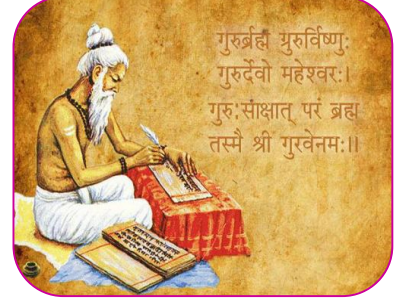




A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS ON THE VEDIC LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT

The word Veda (वेद) means 'knowledge.' It is the store house of all kind of knowledge. To begin with the Vedas were recited and not written. Over the millenary the Vedas has been handed down by oral tradition and hence it is called Śruti (heard) literature, distinguishing them from other religious texts, which are called Smṛti (which is memorized). But later on were reduced to writing after the invention of scripts. The word Veda has come from the root 'vid' to 'know' (in Avestan Veda 'I know' Latine Vedere- 'to see'). According to the tradition the Vedas to be Apauruseya, which means 'not of a man, superhuman' and Veda is an authorless. In this paper I want to discuss about the historical analysis on the Vedic Literature.

KEY WORDS: Veda, Śruti, Smṛti, Scripts, Apauruṣeya, Superhuman, Vedic.

INTRODUCTION:

The Vedas are a large body or holy books of religious texts originating in ancient India. The texts constitute the oldest tier of Sanskrit literature and the ancient Scriptures of Hinduism. The word Veda (वेद) means 'knowledge.' It is the store house of all kind of knowledge. To begin with the Vedas were recited and not written. Over the millenary the Vedas has been handed down by oral tradition and hence it is called Śruti (heard) literature, distinguishing them from other religious texts, which are called Smṛti (which is memorized). But later on were reduced to writing after the invention of scripts. The word Veda has come from the root 'vid' to 'know' (in Avestan Veda 'I know' Latine Vedere- 'to see'). According to the tradition the Vedas to be Apauruseya, which means 'not of a man, superhuman' and Veda is an authorless. Veda is a Sanskrit word which it means 'knowledge.' There were four Vedas:

1. The Ṛgveda
2. The Yajurveda
3. The Sāmaveda and
4. The Atharvaveda.

Every Veda has been divided into two main parts- Mantra and Brāhmaṇas. A collection of Mantra is called a Saṃhitā. The Brāhmaṇas are the theological treatises of the Vedas. Many Brāhmaṇas contain texts with a more occult content called the 'Āraṇyakas.' In laid in these Āraṇyakas or in their final chapters are deeply spiritual treaties called the 'Upaniṣads.' From several centuries now Upaniṣads are the mainstay of Hindu spiritual tradition and are held in the highest esteem. All the Vedic writings are divided into two great divisions- the Karmakāṇḍa, 'department of works' and the Jñānakāṇḍa, 'department of knowledge.' The hymns and the prayers of the mantras come under the first and the philosophical speculation of the

Bhāhmaṇas and especially the Upaniṣads under the second division. In the past, the mantra and Brāhmaṇa collections are separate from each other. In the latter the mantra and Brāhmaṇa portion are inter mixed. Thus, the Taittirīya Saṃhitā belonging to the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda has mantras interspersed with Brāhmaṇa parts. Even the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa has both of the Mantras and Brāhmaṇas passages mixed with each other.

The mantras are basically hymned to the god- the devotional outpouring of the poets and their personal realization with deep states of meditation. The hymns or Suktas from the Saṃhitās of the four Vedas were later adopted for use in yajñas or sacrifice. The Brāhmaṇas contain formulas for rituals, rules and regulations for rites and sacrifices and also utilized for other religious duties. The duties of people of various occupations, popular customs, cosmology, historical details, stories of ancient heroes and some other subjects are dealt with in the Brāhmaṇa. The symbolic spiritual aspects of sacrificial rites are meditated upon in the Āraṇyakas while philosophical issues are viewed in the Upaniṣads.

The Ṛgveda is the first Veda from which the Yajur and Sāman are almost monopolistic derived. It was structured in 1017 Suktas or hymns or with eleven additional hymns called Vālkhilya an unauthentic characters of 1028. These are arranged in eight Aṣṭakas (i.e. octaves); section (i.e. khaṇḍas) which one again subdivided into as many chapters 2006 Vargas or classes and 153, 826 Padas or words. There are another division in ten Maṇḍalas, classes and 85 Anuvākas.

The Ṛgveda: Ṛgveda is the earliest and the largest of the Vedic literature of ancient India. On the whole, the Ṛgveda mostly consists of hymns; there are more than thousands of hymns, divided into ten mondalas to be sung to the various gods as manifestation of the one supreme God-hood. Varuṇa, Mitra, Surya, Sāvitrī, Viṣṇu, Pūṣan, the Aśvins, Agni, Soma, Yama, Indra, Parjanya, Rudra, Viśvakarman, Prajāpati, Uṣas, Aditi and many other gods encountered in the Ṛgveda. Varuṇa the God of sky, Indra the God of rain and also the king of the Gods, and Agni the God of the fire, Uṣas and Aditi are Goddesses. The quarter of the hymns which are addressed to Agni and Indra. Maṇḍala ten (X) has several hymns regarding to the more popular topics; the spiritual topics cosmology and other various events.

Yajurveda: The second Veda is Yajurveda composed almost solely of hymns taken from the Ṛgveda, but it is consists of prose mantras which are new. The earliest and most ancient layer of Yajurveda Samhita includes about 1,875 verses, which are distinct yet borrow and build upon the foundation of verses in Ṛgveda. Yajurveda has two Saṃhitās one called the Taittirīya Saṃhitā, and another Vājasaneyī Saṃhitā. It was commonly known as the Black (Krishna) and white (Shukla) Yajurveda. The term "black" equal "the unarranged, motley collection" of verses in Yajurveda, in contrast to the "white" (well arranged) Yajurveda. The Black Yajurveda is more ancient from the White Yajurveda. The White Yajurveda is more orderly and systematic and it contains some text which is not in the Black Yajurveda. The Yajurveda speaks of the different types of Yajña or religious sacrifices.

The Taittirīya Saṃhitā or Black Yajurveda is arranged in seven books or Kāṇḍas, 44 Adhyāyas or Praśṇas, 651 Anuvākas or sections and 2198 Kaṇḍikās or pieces. The Saṃhitā of the Vājasaneyī or white Yajurveda is in 40 Adhyāyas or chapters, 303 Anuvākas and 1975 Kaṇḍikās.

Sāmaveda: The Sāmaveda Saṃhitā is a famous for its lyrics and music. It contains 1549 verses, only seventy-eight of which has not been traced to the Ṛgveda. The verses of the Sāmaveda have been selected and arranged for the purpose of being chanted at the sacrifices or offerings of Soma. The mantra or metrical part of the Sāmaveda is poor in the literary and historical interest.

There were different sets of priests among the three Vedas. Those whose duty was to recite the Ṛgveda were called Hotṛs and they were required to know the whole Veda. The priests of the Yajur are called Adhvaryu and of the Sāma were called Udgātṛs. There are two parts in Sama Veda; first part includes four melody collections song (gāna) and the second part three verse 'books' (ārcika).

Atharvaveda: The Atharvaveda is contains numerous of information of material world as well as spiritual world. The Atharvaveda is sometimes called the "Veda of magical formulas."¹ It has about 760 hymns and of the verses about 6000. Most of the hymns are metrical, but some sections are in prose. The most prominent characteristic feature of the Atharvaveda is the multitude of incantations which is contains, these are pronounced either by the person who is himself to be benefited or more often by the sorcerer for him and are directed to the procuring of the greatest variety of desirable ends, most frequently perhaps long life or new vary from grievous sickness. In very numerous cases some plants endowed with marvellous virtues to be the immediate external means of the care, the attainment of wealth or power, the downfall of enemies, success in love is found in this text. The Atharvaveda also commits important part of the text asking the meaning of a ritual.

Although the two different versions of the text 'Paippalāda and Śaunakīya' have survived in the present time. The Atharvaveda was not considered as a Veda in the Vedic era and also it was accepted as a Veda in the late first millennium BCE. It was compiled last 900 BCE. But, although some of its materials may go back during the time of the Rig Veda.

Thus from the historical analysis on the Vedic Literature I want to say that the Veda was not written forms or in any text in ancient period. In the ancient period Vedas has been handed down by oral tradition and hence it is called Śruti (heard) literature, distinguishing them from other the religious texts, which are called Smṛti (memorized). After the invention of scripts; it was gradually developed in the Sanskrit script which is forms to the language. The Veda is a Sanskrit word which it means 'knowledge" and it was divided on four parts.

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¹ Laurie Patton (2004), Veda and Upanishad in the Hindu world Laurie Patton (2004), (Sushil Mittal and Gene Thursby), Routledge,P. 38