

Āryans, collected and compiled were called the Vedas.

2) *The origin and importance of the Vedas.* It is said that Brahmā was the creator of the Vedas. Many say that, for the performance of sacrifices Brahmā created from Agni (fire), Vāyu (Wind) and Ravi (the Sun), the three Vedas Ṛg, Yajus and Sāman which are eternal and in accordance with regulations.

The Vedas have two sides, the spiritual and the mundane. Moreover all the explanations of the Vedas from the Brāhmaṇas to the Bhāṣya of Sāyaṇa, pertain to sacrifices. The literary meaning of Veda is mundane. Considering these two points and the facts that they are religious books and that they reveal the mental and social outlooks of the early Āryans, and as the origin of all the thoughts of Indians, all the Vedas, especially Ṛgveda, hold a lofty place.

3) *Parts of the Vedas.* Mahāviṣṇu incarnated as Vyāsa in Dvāpara Yuga and divided the Vedas. The first Veda consisted of four pādas and a hundred thousand granthas. Vyāsa divided it into four parts known as, Ṛgveda, Yajurveda, Sāmaveda and Atharvaveda. The sage and seer Vyāsa thus created by Ṛg, "Hautra" (a collection of lyrics in praise of different Gods, to be recited by the priest styled the 'hotṛ'), by Yajus "Ādhvaryava", (a book of sacrificial prayer, of prose formulas to be uttered by the 'Adhvaryu' priest, who performed the manual work involved in a sacrifice), by Sāman, "Audgātra", (Songs meant to be sung at the Soma sacrifice by a special class of priests 'Udgātṛ') and by Atharva "Brahmatva", (a collection of songs, spells and incantations, for the healing of disease, the restoration of harmony, the exorcism of evil spirits and to celebrate the power and omniscience of God) and established them separately. Paila, a scholar in Ṛgveda, and a disciple of Vyāsa, gave the original Veda to Indrapramiti and its Samhitā (collections) to Bāṣkala as gifts. Bāṣkala divided the Samhitā into four, and gave each of them to Baudhya and others. Yajurveda was divided into twentyfour branches. They were composed by Vaiśampāyana of extraordinary intelligence, a disciple of Vyāsa. Kāṇḍas (Chapters) such as Vājasaneyā etc. were composed later by hermits such as Yājñavalkya and others in the form of Smṛtis (tradition, as handing down only the tradition derived from ancient sages, to whom the Vedas were 'revealed'). Jaimini the disciple of Vyāsa, divided Sāmaveda into different branches. Sumantu and Sukarmā compiled separate Samhitās (collections) from them. Sukarmā composed thousand Samhitās. Sumantu the disciple of Vyāsa took the Atharvaveda and taught it to thousands of Paippalāda disciples. By the blessings of Vyāsa, Sūta made the Purāṇa Samhitā (the collection of Purāṇas). (Agni Purāṇa, Chapter 150).

4) *Branches of the Vedas.* It has already been mentioned that the Vedas are four in number called Ṛg, Yajus, Sāma and Atharva. Each of these Vedas has branches called Samhitās (collections) and Brāhmaṇas (treatises relating to prayer and sacrificial ceremony). Āraṇyakas are appendices to the Brāhmaṇas. Upaniṣads (secret or esoteric doctrines) are appendices of the Āraṇyakas. Thus each of the Vedas has Samhitās, Brāhmaṇas, Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads. All these are, in a way, expositions of the Vedas. In all these expositions there are numberless Sūktas. All these taken together are called Vedic literature.

In the Samhitās there are lyrics in praise of different gods. All these are spells and incantations (mantras) in the form of songs. The under-currents of all these spells are Vedas and stories from the Vedas. Generally speaking the Brāhmaṇas contain prose texts giving practical observations on sacrifice which are mentioned in the songs of praise. Here and there stories from Purāṇas and epics occur. The Āraṇyakas (forest-texts) got that name, because they are books of instruction to be given in the forest or writings meant for wood-dwelling hermits. As they contained esoteric spells and incantations which might cause injury even to those who were not concerned with them instruction in them was not given in towns or villages. The contents of the Āraṇyakas are the allegorical signification of the rites and sacrifices and the mystic meaning of the Vedas.

It has been mentioned that the Upaniṣads are appendices of the Āraṇyakas. Still there is not much difference between the two and hence they cannot be separated from one another so easily. The Upaniṣads are called Vedāntas, (The aim and completion of the Vedas), because they are the end of the Vedas. The Vedāntas belong to the later period of the Vedic age. Instruction in Vedāntas was given only after completing the study of the mantras (Vedas) and the Brāhmaṇas.

The Upaniṣads contain philosophical speculations about the conception of Brahman and the Vedas. The word Veda includes the Vedāṅgas also. Vedāṅgas (Ancillaries of the Vedas) are Śikṣā (phonetics), Vyākaraṇa (grammar), Chandas (metrics), Nirukta (etymology), Joytiṣa (astronomy), and Kalpa (ritual). At first instruction is given in the study of Brahman and the study of Vedas. When more discussions and expositions on them are needed, the study of Brāhmaṇas and Āraṇyakas are resorted to. In course of time the Brāhmaṇas and Āraṇyakas, which contain discussions and expositions of the Vedas became independent branches of study under these names. That is why they contain mainly prose texts.

There are one lakh of mantras or spells and incantations in all the four Vedas taken together. They are for blessing everybody and to make the four objects of life easily attainable. Sāṅkhyāyana and Āśvalāyana sorted and grouped the mantras. Accordingly there are two thousand one hundred and ten mantras known as Brāhmaṇas. Dvaipāyana and other hermits have stated the number of granthas (verses) in Ṛgveda. It is said that there are one thousand nine hundred and ninety nine mantras in Yajurveda. There are one thousand eightysix branches also. The branches in Yajus are known by the names Kāṇvī, Mādhyandini, Kāthī, Madhyakāthī, Maitrāyaṇī, Taittirīya, Vaiśampāyanikā and so on.

In Sāma Veda there are branches such as Kauthumī, Atharvaṇāyini and so on; and songs such as Āraṇyakam, Uktham, Ūham and so on. The number of Sāmavedic verses are nine thousand four hundred and twenty-five.

Sumantu, Jañjali, Ślokāyani, Śaunaka, Pippalāda, Muñjakeśa and such others were responsible for the sorting and grouping of the mantras in the Atharvaveda. Altogether there are one thousand six hundred Upaniṣads. (Agni Purāṇa, Chapter 271).

5) *Expositions of the Vedas.* The religion of the Āryans became an established one when Vyāsa had created the