

**The Vedas –  
What are they?  
What do they  
contain?**

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## The Rigvedadi – Bhashya Bhumika

### Introductory

The Rigvedadi-bhashya-bhumika (RVBB), which is an introduction to the commentary on the four Vedas, embodies Dayananda's fundamental ideas as regards various points related to the Veda. It constitutes his work on shruti-prasthanas, and chronologically comes third among the principal works making up his Brihat-trayi. It was first published in several fascicules, the first one in 1877, and unlike the Satyarth Prakash and the Sanskar Vidhi has not been revised by the author.

### The Veda and its importance

Almost all Indologists who have researched into the origin of philosophy in India contend that knowledge can be traced to the very beginning of the human creation, and consequently should find a place in the earliest records of the human thought<sup>1</sup>. And it has been admitted that the Vedas are the earliest and most authentic documents of human thought and culture. Max Muller, the celebrated European Indologist posits that "as long as man continues to take an interest in the history of his race, and as long as we collect in libraries and museums the relics of former ages, the first place in that long row of books which contains the records of the Aryan branch of mankind will belong forever to the Rigveda."<sup>2</sup> At the same time that Max Muller came forward with this bold statement, Dayananda Saraswati was also carrying out his vigorous researches and studies in the Vedas. While Max Muller chose to perceive the importance of the Vedas more from a historical and anthropological point of view,<sup>3</sup> Dayananda came forward with an even more bold thesis than that of Max Muller, saying that the Veda was revealed by God in the earliest state of human creation, to man who was at that time born through the process of asexual creation and who was considered fit to receive divine inspiration. The Veda became the fountain-head of the subsequent knowledge that followed and it continued to exercise an influence on the course that literature took for thousands of years.

The term 'Veda', literally means knowledge, is the name given to the four Samhita texts – the Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva, and as Dayananda points out, they are regarded to be of divine origin and, consequently, to have existed from all eternity. The Rishis or seers to whom the hymns of the Vedas are ascribed were those of inner vision to whom the deepest imports of the hymns were revealed, these sacred texts have been preserved and handed down with the most reverential care through an elaborate oral tradition consciously designed to prevent any distortion. Even today, observes Jean Le Mee, had we no written record available, it would still be possible to have access to the Veda as it existed when the text was fixed thousands of years ago.<sup>4</sup> The mantras have thus come

<sup>1</sup> Mishra U., A History of Indian Philosophy, Vol I, Tirabhukti Publications, Allahabad, 1957, p.35

<sup>2</sup> Muller M., History of ancient Sanskrit Literature, Allahabad, 1912, pp.32-33

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Satya Prakash, Rig Veda Samhita, Vol. I, Veda Pratishthana, New Delhi, 1977, p.3

down from age to age in the same form without the slightest possible change in their contents, or words or even syllables.

Since the Veda is the original sound emanating from God, it is not of human authorship (apaurusheya) and regarded as Shabda Brahman, and it enjoys an immortal relation with God on the basis of it being His own wisdom. Anyone who realizes the deepest imports of this Shabda Brahman realizes the essence of Parabrahman.<sup>5</sup> For this realization, however, of the deepest imports of the Shabda Brahman, one needs to become a Rishi, i.e. to possess the capacity of inner vision in order to have inner visualization of the meanings of the mantras. These words of the Vedas are regarded as identical with the very Eternal Light from which they have sprung. Such light only those who have attained to Rishihood can perceive on the basis of austere penance.<sup>6</sup>

#### The need for interpreting the Vedas

In the earliest period of the human history, the sages understood the Vedas in a most natural way, because it was knowledge revealed unto them. As Griffith points out, these Rishis were “inspired seers who saw or received them by sight directly from the creator.”<sup>7</sup> Even Yaska testified that the sages had directly intuitive insight and by oral instruction handed down the hymns and their purports to the later generations who were destitute of this direct intuitive insight that they had possessed.<sup>8</sup> It is safe to deduce, therefore, that in that period, there was no need for exegetical literature of human authorship, since in the Samhita Period, the Vedic terminology was popularly known and the spoken language was not very different from it.<sup>9</sup> However, with the passage of time, Yaska further testifies, when the later generations began declining in their capacity to understand the imports of the Vedas through oral communication, the Rishis had to resort to compiling works of interpretation so as to preserve intact for humanity the texts and their meanings. One should note also that, as the linguists like Max Muller point out, no society remains static, as a result of which the language the society uses does not remain unchanged.<sup>10</sup> One can naturally expect, therefore, that one reason for people declining in their capacity to understand the Vedic mantras in the post-Samhita period, was the fact that the language of their times moved further and further away from the Vedic Sanskrit, as a result of which they could not retain the capacity in themselves to understand an older language which was “highly developed, polished and often figurative”<sup>11</sup>, and which

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<sup>5</sup> Shadbabrahmani nishnatah parabrahmadhigacchati (Brahmabinduparishad) 17

<sup>6</sup> RVBB, p.114

<sup>7</sup> Griffith R.T.H., The Hymns of Rigveda, Motilal Banarshidass, Delhi, 1976, Introduction. p.V

<sup>8</sup> Nirukta 1:20 (translated by L.Sarup)

<sup>9</sup> Paramanand, Rigvedadi-Bhashya-Bhumika, Meharchand Lachhamandas, New Delhi, Introduction p.xi

<sup>10</sup> Max Muller, The Vedas, p.18

<sup>11</sup> Ram Gopal, The History and Principles of the Vedic Interpretation, Concept Publishing company, New Delhi, 1983, p.12

was “distinguished by refinement and beauty of thought.”<sup>12</sup> Hence the need for the exegetical literature.

#### Various schools of Vedic interpretation

From a cursory reading of the Nirukta, it can be gathered that the science of Vedic exegesis had exercised the minds of scholars not only in the time of Yaska, but even in the period prior him. It seems that the Vedas were read with the greatest care, and scholars, involved in deciphering their meanings, started to be at variance with each other when it came to decide in favor of one definite meaning and sense of a particular word of verse. Even though modern scholars are not in possession of records of the efforts made by scholars of the pre-Yaska era in the field of Vedic interpretation, yet we can arrive at some definite conclusions regarding various schools of interpretation from the information provided by Yaska in his Nirukta. The following are the major schools of Vedic interpretation:-

#### **Yajnika:**

This school seeks to interpret the mantras of the Vedas on the basis of the liturgical applications of the mantras concerned. It is the most ancient and predominant among the other schools, since it enjoys a long and uninterrupted tradition. It has been a tradition since ancient times to commit the Vedas to memory and recite them as a form of worship. At a very early stage in the development of Vedic religion, the performance of the fire-ritual for the purification of the atmosphere was accompanied by the recitation of Vedic verses. In fact, so important was the recitation of Vedic verse that the Gopatha and Aitareya Brahmanas express the belief that if a sacrificial act is accompanied with the recitation of a Vedic verse, the sacrifice is led to fulfillment. (GB 2:2:6 – AB 1:4:9). Ram Gopal observes that “the tendency to employ Vedic mantras in the performance of all sorts of rituals unconnected with them reached its culmination in the time of the Kalpa sutras.”<sup>13</sup> The authors of these Kalpa sutras, manuals on rituals, invariably prescribed mantras to be recited in rituals without exercising care to determine whether the primary meaning of the verse had any connection with the particular act. This was the cause for “a biased and incorrect interpretation of the Vedic mantras.”<sup>14</sup> Several commentators conformed to the standards of the Yajnika school, among whom Sayana Mahidhara, Uvvata and Wilson are worthy of mention.

#### **The Aitihasika:**

This school insists in believing each Vedic hymn to be related to an Itihasa, i.e. a traditional account of ancient events, and in interpreting the hymn accordingly.

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<sup>12</sup> Macdonnel A.A., A History of Sanskrit Literature, 5<sup>th</sup> edition, p.29

<sup>13</sup> Op. cit., p.24

<sup>14</sup> Op. cit., p.25

Bhuvananda Saraswati observes that the name of great men and kings of India have, from the earliest times, conformed to Vedic words, as a result of which, it was simple for Vedic expounders of the Aitihasik school to refer to events in the lives of such historical personages to explain away the sense of certain names occurring in the Vedic hymns.<sup>15</sup> An example of the historical approach adopted by the Aitihasikas in their interpretation of a hymn is recorded by Yaska who relates one of their legends before attempting to comment on the fifth mantra on the thirty-third Sukta, first Mandal of the Rigveda. The legend says: The seer Vishvamitra was the domestic priest of Sudas, the son of Pijavans. Having gathered his wealth, the priest came to the confluence of the Sutlej and the Bias rivers. Others followed him. He, i.e. Vishvamitra implored the rivers to become fordable, while pronouncing following mantra :

Stop your course for a moment, ye great floods, at my friendly bidding. I, the son of Kushika, and desirous of protection, invoke the giver with a sublime hymn.<sup>16</sup>

In Vedic and post-Vedic literature, one comes across many such legends which come together to make up the basis of the Aitihasika school of Vedic Interpretation, among which most worthy of mention are the legends of Indra and Vritra, Agastya and Lopamudra, Vishvamitra and Shakti, Yama and Yami, Sarama and Pani, Urvashi and Pururavas, Nahusha and Saraswati, Devapi and Shantanu, Prajapati and his daughter, Sudasa Pajavana and Apala. The Brahmanas, the Krishna Yajurveda Samhita, the Brihad-devata and the Sarvanukramani abound in the free use of these Akhyanas (legends). Ram Gopal does feel that the Aitihasika school has not made such a contribution to Vedic exegesis worthy of much emulation. On the contrary, he feels, if the historical method were to be blindly followed, “it is likely to deflect an interpreter from making an unbiased and correct approach to the Vedas.”<sup>17</sup> As Bhuvananda observes the Aitihasika school lost its influence in the course of time, since people were more led into attaching greater importance to the historical illustration than to the Vedic truth itself.<sup>18</sup>

### **The Nairukta:**

The Nairuktas are credited with having made the first systematic attempt to interpret the Vedas. Their method was pre-eminently philological and etymological, as in their attempt to explain Vedic words, they insisted upon enquiring into the origins of speech. The beginnings of this etymological approach may be traced to the Brahmanas in which the derivation of certain word has been attempted. It has come down to us in the Nirukta of Yaska, who is generally regarded as the last and the best representative of the Nirukta

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<sup>15</sup> Saraswati Bhuvananda, Ecclessia Divina, Arya Samaj, New Delhi, 1936, p.cxlx

<sup>16</sup>Nirukta 2:24-25

<sup>17</sup> Ram Gopal, p.58

<sup>18</sup> B. Saraswati, p.c1



school of Vedic interpretation. Yaska himself declares that this science of etymology is the complement of grammar. On the basis of this statement, scholars are undivided in the view that several generations of grammarians, lexicographers and etymologists must have existed in the long period extending from the age of the Brahmanas to the time just before Yaska appeared. Yaska mentions the names of several proponents of the science of etymology, some of which are Aupamanyava, Shakapuni, Galava, Maudgalya, Agrayana, Katthakya, Kraushtuki, Aurnavabha, Gargya, and Shakatayana. It is worthy to note that the Nairukta school enjoys greater credit than the other schools mentioned so far because etymology has not survived, over the several ages as an isolated branch of study, but has acquired a status of one of the angas (limbs) of Vedic study.

The fundamental notion propounded by the Nairuktas about language is that all words can be reduced to their primordial elements which are called roots.<sup>19</sup> With this idea, Yaska lays great emphasis on the point that, as every word can be traced to an original root; an interpreter should never give up a word as un-derivable. This establishes for the etymological school of Vedic interpretation an intrinsic merit. The Vedic language, as seen by all scholars, is highly developed, and many words are used metaphorically. The correct etymology of a word in Vedas, therefore, would prove a major help in distinguishing the original radical meaning of a word from its conventional meaning. It is on the basis of this intrinsic value that Bhumananda classifies the etymological approach to Vedic interpretation as the only one yielding intelligible meanings.<sup>20</sup>

The foregoing three are the major schools of Vedic interpretation. However, there are some other minor systems which existed in ancient India that deserve mention. First among these is the Parivrajaka or Mystic school, mentioned by Yaska in his Nirukta (2:8), which regards all the mantras of the Veda to convey ideas related to philosophy and mysticism. This school has a long history and a traditional base. After this, Yaska mentions also the Naidana school (6:9, 7:12). The Nidanas are those who are well versed in the Vedic meters, according to Laxman Sarup who translates Yaska's text as contained in the Nirukta (7:12). The mythological school resembles the historical school. As it was not possible to find historical examples to explain the whole body of statements, scholars started to resort to folklore and to invent stories to exemplify Vedic truths. Like the historical, it was very attractive and appealing.<sup>21</sup> There is also the scientific method of interpretation which seeks to identify Vedic truths with natural phenomena and explaining them as physical-scientific truths. This method, though difficult and abstruse, is very frequently resorted to by all scholars, as in many cases, it is only process that yields the right meaning.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Nirukta 1:11

<sup>20</sup> B. Saraswati, p.cxlx

<sup>21</sup> Ibid p.c1

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

## A brief history of Vedic interpretation

### The Arsh commentaries:

The first attempt to preserve intact the originally intended meanings of the Vedic words was made by the authors of the various pathas or word-texts. In these, the Rishis sought to separate each word of the Samhita-texts, breaking up the euphonic combinations. For this task, the authors had to be proficient in the use of grammar and etymology. In actual fact, they were trained in these two disciplines, since once can see that the text of the verses are presented in a complete grammatical analysis.<sup>23</sup> These word-texts were aimed not only at preserving the sanctity of the Vedic texts but also at making the text clear and lucid by explaining the compounds or by showing the position of the accent on individual words and by inserting the avagraha sign in compound words. These texts (word) were of eleven types called Samhita, pada, karma, jata, mala, shikha, lekha, dhvaja, danda, ratha and ghana. Macdonnel observes that in preparing these word-texts, the Rishis displayed a faithfulness unique in the history of the world.<sup>24</sup>

After the patha-texts came the various diverging recensions (shakhas) of the Vedas. Rishi Dayananda submits that there are 1127 such recensions and that these are explanatory of the Vedic Imports.<sup>25</sup> They explain obscure words of the Samhitas by substituting simpler words in different recensions differently. For instance, sachividam sakhayam (RV 10:71:6) has been modified as sakhividam sakhayam in the Taittiriya Aranyaka (1:3:1). Again, bhratrivasya vadhaya (YV 1:18) has been explained as dvishato vadhaya in the kanva recension (1:6:2:3). Several such instances can be pointed out where the Shakhas are explanatory of the difficult parts of the Samhita texts.

The Brahmana-texts come third in the enumeration of exegetical Vedic literature written by the ancient Rishis. Winternitz understands the Brahmanas to be explanations or utterances of learned priests (Brahmanas), who were doctors of the science of sacrifice, upon points of ritual.<sup>26</sup> Dayananda gives another explanation, saying that these Brahmanas were texts whose chief function was to expound the contents of the Veda, otherwise called Brahma.<sup>27</sup> Their object is to connect the mantras with the sacrificial rites by pointing out, on one hand, their direct mutual relation; and, on the other, their symbolical connection with each other.<sup>28</sup> In fulfilling this two-fold objective, they describe several rituals, and speculate as to the meaning and effect of reciting particular mantras and metres<sup>29</sup>. They abound in synonymous references and etymological

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<sup>23</sup> Winternitz M., History of Indian Literature, vol.I,p.283

<sup>24</sup> Quoted by Paramanand, p.xli

<sup>25</sup> RVBB, p.352

<sup>26</sup> Winternitz, p.188

<sup>27</sup> SP II p.239

<sup>28</sup> Weber, p.12

<sup>29</sup> Williams Monier, Hinduism, p.33

explanations of seemingly abstruse, ambiguous and multi-significant words of the Vedic Texts. The huge mass of explanatory material found in the Brahmanas has proven to be of tremendous help in the field of Vedic Exegesis.

One can indeed make a passing reference to the Pratishakhyas, and the Anukramanis for the purpose they served in preserving the correct text and orthography of the Vedas. They relate less to the question of regular interpretation. More exegetical in nature are the Nighantu and the Nirukta, The Nighantu is a lexicon, a traditional list made up of five books, of which the first three contain synonyms; the fourth a list of specially difficult Vedic words; and the fifth, a classification of the various devatas that figure in Veda. The Nirukta, of which Yaska is said to be the author, is a commentary on it. It consists of fourteen chapters and is reckoned among the Vedangas, together with the text and Phonetics, Prosody, Astronomy, Ritual and Grammar - these six being regarded as fundamental to a thorough study of the Vedas. By writing his commentary, Yaska embodied the etymological lexicography of Vedic terms in one separate work, and this represented the first distinct attempt to interpret the Vedic texts. For explanations of old Vedic words, for etymologies and synonymous expressions, the Nirukta occupies a position of importance second only to the Brahmanas.<sup>30</sup>

#### PRE-SAYANA COMMENTATORS

Yaska's Nirukta, placed at approximately 500 B.C.,<sup>31</sup> represents the last available work by the Arsha School in the name of Vedic exegesis. After Yaska, and before the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> century came a host of commentators on the Vedas among whom the principal ones were Skandaswami, Udgitha, Uvvata and Venkatamadhava. Skandaswami wrote a commentary on the Rigveda while following the methods of interpretation delineated by Yaska. Only some parts of this are available. This work is placed by Bhagavaddutta at 6.30 A.D.<sup>32</sup> Udgitha also followed the Yaskiya school of Vedic interpretation and penned a commentary on the Rigveda, the whole of which is not available. Uvvata wrote a commentary on the Shukla Yajurveda, describing fully the ceremonials belonging to each verse. His exact date is not known. Venkatamadhava followed the school of liturgical applications, and wrote a complete commentary on the Rigveda. Lakshman Swarup has placed Madhava in the tenth century.<sup>33</sup>

#### SAYANA:

The most important contribution made in the field of Vedic interpretation, after the time of Yaska, came from the pen of Acharya Sayana, of the fourteenth century. A great scholiast and Prime Minister in the court of the King of Vijayanagar, Sayana wrote, or perhaps directed the writing of commentaries on the four Vedas and many other works of Vedic literature. And for each of the Vedas, before writing the commentary, he wrote a Bhashya Bhumika (Introduction to the commentary) in which he outlined the principles that would guide his commentary. In his works, the commentator has paraphrased each

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<sup>30</sup> Max Muller, HASL, p.78

<sup>31</sup> L. Sarup, p.54

<sup>32</sup> Bhagavaddutta, Vaidik Vangmai ka Itihas, Vol. I p.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted by Satya Prakash, p.92

and every word of the text, providing numerous grammatical explanations and etymological derivations of obscure words. In dealing with each aantra, he has, like Uvvata, described at length the liturgical connections thereof. In fact, he openly declared that the Vedas have no purpose other than sacrifice, and this has caused his commentary, huge as it is, to suffer from several limitations.

#### EUROPEAN COMMENTATORS:

As far as information is made available, the first ever attempt by Europeans to understand something about the Vedas was made in 1805 by Henry Thomas Colebrooke who had entered the Court at fort William in Calcutta in 1782. His essay "On the Vedas" was the first to give definite and reliable information about the sacred books of the Indians. It was not until the year 1838 when Friedrich Rosen published in London the first Ashtaka of the Rigveda that the actual investigation of the contents of the Vedas began. This study, however, was one connected with Philology. Sometime later, a French Orientalist, Eugene Burnouf, gathered round him a group of his own pupils and laid the foundation for the One of those pupils was Rudolph Von Roth who published his book systematic study of Vedic literature. "Zur Litteratur und Geschichte des Weda" (On the Literature and History of the Vedas) in 1846. Another such pupil was Friedrich Max Muller who, after much labour, published a six-volume edition of the hymns of the Rigveda with Sayana's commentary. It appeared in the period 1849-1875. However, before this was completed, Theodore Aufrecht had rendered invaluable help to the task of investigating the Vedas by publishing a handy edition of the complete text of the hymns of the Rigveda (1861-1863). The great St. Petersburg Lexicon, called the "Sanskrit Worterbuch" (Sanskrit Dictionary) compiled by Otto Bohtlingk and Rudolph Roth and published in seven volumes between the years 1852 and 1875, represented not only a brilliant monument to German industry in the field of Vedic interpretation but also a powerful lever for progress in this field. The following works on the Vedas resulting from European Indological scholarship are some most worthy of mention:-

H.H. Wilson - A translation of the Hymns of the Rigveda, being a paraphrase of Sayana's Sanskrit Commentary.

R.T.H.Griffith - Translation of the Hymns of the four Vedas, with popular notes.

W.D. Whitney - Translation of the Atharva Veda.

Max Muller and Hermann Oldenburg- Vedic Hymns.

Rudolph Roth - Vedic portion of the Sanskrit Worterbuch.

Bloomfield - Vedic Concordance.

Monier Williams - Sanskrit Dictionary (Including Vedic words).

#### THE PROBLEM OF VEDIC INTERPRETATION PRIOR TO DAYANANDA'S ADVENT

Before the coming of the Europeans to India, the method of Vedic interpretation adopted by Sayana in his elaborate commentaries held sway on the minds of Native Sanskrit scholars. For them, the ritualistic interpretation of the Veda was authoritative and final. With the arrival of the Europeans in the field, one saw for the first time the industry and discipline of people of an alien culture busy with the task of deciphering thoughts couched in an ancient language not fully known either to them or even to those who lived in India. The ancient scripture was delivered over to a scholarship laborious, bold in

speculation, ingenious in its flights of fancy, conscientious according to its own lights, but ill-fitted to understand the methods of the mystic poets. And while looking around for help to at ad these hymns, some of these Indologists came to the strong conclusion that “Sayana must have been in possession of the interpretations which had been perpetuated by traditional teaching from the earliest times,”<sup>34</sup> and that without this information that Sayana possessed, without his method of explaining the obscurest text, they would have still been standing at the outer doors of Vedic interpretation.<sup>35</sup> The ritualism, therefore, which Sayana certified as being part of divine knowledge and as endowed with miraculous efficacy provided European scholarship the base for them to see in the Vedic verses, among other things, elaborations of old, savage propitiatory sacrifices which the Vedic Aryans performed to appease imaginary superhuman personalities who might be benevolent or malevolent according as they were worshipped or neglected. These scholars were encouraged to understand the Vedas as a “hymnal of an early, primitive and largely barbaric society, crude in its moral and religious conceptions, and rude in its outlook upon the world that environed it.”<sup>36</sup> Max Muller is representative of European Indological scholarship, and his views on the Vedas are, in the main, identical with the views entertained by that foreign scholarship. Reacting to the Indian traditional view that the Veda is a revelation, Max Muller argues that there is nothing of substance in the hymns themselves to warrant such an extravagant theory,<sup>37</sup> since “large numbers of the Vedic hymns are childish in the extreme: tedious, low, commonplace - all making up much “rubbish”.”<sup>38</sup> The only Veda he would care to recognise is the Rigveda, “which in the eyes of the historical student is the Veda par excellence”,<sup>39</sup> while the “the other so-called Vedas, which deserve the name of Veda no more than the Talmud deserves the name of Bible, contain chiefly extracts from the Rigveda.....”<sup>40</sup> He, however, admits that the Veda fills a gap in the history of the human mind, and that it promises to bring historians nearer than any other work to the first beginnings of Aryan language and Aryan thought.<sup>41</sup> He sees the hymns of the Veda as supplying vital information that will explain “how the Persians came to worship Ormuzd, how the Buddhists came to protest against temples and sacrifices, how Zeus and the Olympian gods came to be what they are in the mind of Homer, or how such beings as Jupiter and Mars came to be worshipped by the Italian peasant.....”<sup>42</sup> Without any fear of being contradicted, Max Muller ventures to say that there exists no literary relic other than the Veda that carried historians back to a more primitive and more child-like state in the history of man.<sup>43</sup> Such a text providing vital clues related to history and anthropology cannot find justice in the hands of man devoid of historical intuitions, - a reference that Rudolph Roth uses in relation to the native Vedic commentators.<sup>44</sup> The Brahmana-texts, he feels, though

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<sup>34</sup> Griffith, p.VII

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, p.VIII-IX

<sup>36</sup> Max Muller, Vedas, p.22

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, p.26

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, p.17

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p.16

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, p.14

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p.26

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, p.13

<sup>44</sup> Quoted by Griffith, p.VII

nearest in time to the hymns of the Rigveda, indulge in the most frivolous and ill-judged interpretations. The authors of these Brahmanas were blinded by theology, while those of the Niruktas were deceived by theological fictions, and “both conspired to mislead by their authority later and more sensible commentators such as Sayana.”<sup>45</sup> Max Muller credits Sayana as being the most sober among the native commentators, but “his scholastic notions would never allow him to accept the free interpretation which a comparative study of these venerable documents forces upon an unprejudiced scholar.”

Unlike Max Muller and H.H. Wilson, Rudolph Roth, the author of the Vedic portion of the St. Petersburg Sanskrit Lexicon, did not sustain much sympathy and regard for the work of medieval Vedic commentators. While accepting them as being the best guides for the branches of Vedic literature dealing with theology and worship, he argues that the task of interpreting the ancient collection of Vedic hymns demands of one to have a greater breadth of view and of historical intuitions - something which the native commentators did not possess, since, in India, no one has ever had any conception of historical development. “The very qualities which have made those commentators excellent guides to an understanding of the theological treatises render them unsuitable conductors on that far older and quite differently circumstanced domain.”<sup>46</sup> Roth found out, and very rightly too, that the native commentators knew only the classical Sanskrit and they “sought its ordinary idiom in the Vedic hymns also”, as a result of which European scholarship could not seek to arrive at an understanding of the Veda that was current in India in the middle ages. The task of European scholars should be to “search out the sense which the poets themselves have put into their hymns and utterances.”

How far the Europeans considered successful their own efforts and those of Sayana at translating the Vedas is another aspect of the problem worth considering. We are not in possession of definite material whereby we can attempt to assess Sayana's view about his own commentaries. And before the advent of Dayananda in the field of Vedic interpretation, the only tangible effort after Sayana towards understanding the Veda came from the pen of the Europeans. Griffith, in the Preface to his translation of the Rigveda, comments: “It must not be supposed that European students and interpreters of the Veda claim anything like infallibility, completeness, or finality for the results to which their researches have led them..... In the explanation of the Veda complete success, if ever attainable, can be attained only by the labours of generations of scholars.”<sup>47</sup> Roth, despite the volume of his lexical labours, was honest to admit that a real translation of the Veda belonged to the next generation of Sanskrit scholars, and to the next century.<sup>48</sup> Max Muller, even though he showed much sympathy and appreciation for Sayana's translations, admits that at times, it is quite impossible to follow him, since his translation is absurd.<sup>49</sup> Even Wilson, who paraphrased Sayana, points out in his notes that he “occasionally failed to find Sayana a perfectly satisfactory guide”, and at other times found that “the scholiast is evidently puzzled.” Even Griffith talks about “Sayana's absolutely worthless paraphrase.”<sup>50</sup> About his own efforts and these of his

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<sup>45</sup> Max Muller, Vedas, p.9

<sup>46</sup> Vide Preface to the Petersburg Dictionary

<sup>47</sup> Griffith, p.ix

<sup>48</sup> Quoted by Max Muller, p.51

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p.51

<sup>50</sup> Griffith, p.305 (Note 5)

contemporaries, Max Muller admits that with the exception of a few hymns, "the whole world of Vedic ideas is so entirely beyond our own intellectual horizon, that instead of translating, we can as yet only guess and combine....."<sup>51</sup>

The ideas contained in the foregoing paragraphs reveal that, prior to Dayananda's advent, the problem of Vedic interpretation had indeed assumed serious proportions. All attempts to translate and interpret the Vedas had met with several insoluble difficulties, more so since the Vedic language abounds in ancient forms and words which do not appear in the later Sanskrit, and also because there is present in it a mass of words, found also in Classical Sanskrit, which admit of significances other than those admissible in the later tongue. Despite their methods of scientific analysis, the efforts of the Europeans have not measured up to popular expectations. Aurobindo testifies that both Sayana and the European Commentator "present one characteristic in common - the extraordinary incoherence and poverty of sense which their results stamp upon the ancient hymns." In dealing with the text, they were "obliged to substitute for interpretation a process almost of fabrication." He further feels that they were "not so much revealing the sense as hammering and forging rebellious material into some sort of shape and consistence."<sup>52</sup>

#### DAYANANDA AND HIS PRE-SUPPOSITIONS : HIS PROJECTED COMMENTARY

Dayananda's entry into the field of Vedic Interpretation, amidst the atmosphere of utter confusion and loss of clear insight, caused him to develop a completely different approach to the problem. First of all, unlike the Europeans, Dayananda was of the firm conviction that the Veda is indeed revelatory in character, and in such an understanding, he was consistently uncompromising. And revealed knowledge, in the Swami's conception, must of necessity be reflective of the sum-total of knowledge. In other words, if one accepts that the Veda is indeed knowledge revealed by God for the benefit of all humankind, then one has to accept also that it contains, at least in germinal form, all true knowledge comprehending the various arts and sciences necessary for mankind to achieve its goal of comfort and happiness. In holding such a view Dayananda establishes himself as radically different from Sayana who, despite accepting the Vedas as being revealed, declared that they have no purpose other than that of being recited at sacrifices.<sup>53</sup>

In the matter of tackling the words of the Vedic language, Dayananda concurs with the approach adopted by the Nairukta school ably represented by Yaska, and has vigorously attacked Max Muller and all like him who had ridiculed the Niruktakaras and Brahmanakaras. No Vedic hymn can be studded with historical data, considering the fact that the process revelation took place before the he beginnings of human history. This very fact of Divine revelation would throw overboard the concept of the Rishis being the composers of the Vedic mantras. These Rishis to whom the mantras are ascribed are only those seers who contemplated upon and thereafter realised the profoundest imports of these verses, subsequent to the time they were revealed. Further, the devata of a hymn is nothing more than the actual subject-matter thereof, and does not refer to any god, fetish or deity praised therein. It follows, then, that Max Muller's claim of the Veda affirming

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<sup>51</sup> Op.Cit p.8

<sup>52</sup> Aurobindo, X, p.3

<sup>53</sup> Adhvaryavasya yajneshu pradhanyat vyakritah pura yajurvedo'tha hotrartham rigvedo vyakarishyate. (Sayana RVBS, p.1)



Polytheism or Kathenotheism loses validity.

The foregoing pre-suppositions were unheard of in his times, at least as far as his critics were concerned, but Dayananda himself saw nothing new in them since they were propounded by the ancient Rishis and was firmly decided in his mind that these would guide him while writing his commentary on the Veda. "I have to bring to light only what was written by the ancient scholars, i.e. by the learned men of great antiquity," thought the revolutionary thinker,<sup>54</sup> and he listed the works he would rely on while deciphering obscure Vedic words as follows: the Brahmanas and other such works of the Rishis ranging from Brahma to Jaimini, the Angas written by Panini and others, the six Darshanas and the Upavedas. It was Dayananda's considered opinion that a true interpretation of the Vedas could be possible only on the basis of the principles collectively described in these texts, and anything outside their scope immediately becomes arbitrary and subject to question. It becomes obligatory, therefore, for a potential commentator to either make an in-depth study of these texts or have himself instructed by one who is knowledgeable in them.<sup>55</sup>

A study of the commentaries penned by medieval Indian and modern European scholars convinced Dayananda of the "disastrous mischief"<sup>56</sup> caused, since these were written with "unrestricted self-interest." As a result, Dayananda thought it his "sacred duty to bring to light in his Bhashya the errors of these other commentators, so that their commentaries might be conclusively rejected by all those who could honestly and intelligently compare his commentary with that penned by his predecessors."<sup>57</sup> The Swami honestly felt the need for a critical evaluation of the work of Sayana and others to ascertain the "miserable condition and false position" reflected therein. And with a study of his Bhashya, people would be convinced that the Vedas do contain all sciences and that there is nothing naive, tedious and low in them. Dayananda's approach to the Vedas is summarised by Aurobindo in the following words: "Dayananda's interpretation of the hymns is governed by the ideas that the Vedas are a plenary revelation of religious, ethical and scientific truth ..... By a true understanding of the sense of the Vedas, we could arrive at all the scientific truths which have been discovered by modern research."<sup>58</sup> Dayananda's pre-suppositions respecting the Vedas have been clearly outlined in his Rigvedadibhashyabhumika, which is an Introduction to his Commentary on the Rig and other Vedas. The name of this text resembles very much the name of the Introduction which Sayana wrote as a prelude to his Vedabhashaya, the Rigvedabhashyabhumika. Sayana wrote a separate Introduction to the commentary on each of the four Vedas, while Dayananda wrote one text incorporating the general principles that would guide him in his commentary on the four Vedas.

#### THE HISTORY OF THE RIGVEDADIBHASHYABHUMIKA

At the time he had commenced writing of the Rigvedadibhashyabhumika (RVBB), Maharshi Dayananda Saraswati was in Ayodhya, having arrived there on August 18, 1876. He stayed in a place called Sarayubag, and started writing the work two days later

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<sup>54</sup> RVBB, p.405

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, p.404

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p.422

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, p.420

<sup>58</sup> Aurobindo, X, pp.29-31



(August 20, 1876).<sup>59</sup> For this task, the Swami had to arrange for his books and scribes to be by his side. Pandit Bhimsena was invited to come from Farukhabad to help the author in the collection of relevant books. There is no internal evidence to prove exactly when the RVBB was completed, but Bhagavaddutta examines the contents of an advertisement published by Dayananda and feels that, taking all the facts into consideration, the first rough draft of the text must have been completed in mid-November, 1876, in other words, about eleven weeks after it was started.<sup>60</sup> This draft was revised and enlarged at least six times before a final press copy was thoroughly prepared, as is evident from the six different manuscripts preserved in the office of the Paropkarini Sabha in Ajmer. The final version appears to have been fully prepared on Saturday, sixth day of the dark fortnight of Phalgun, V.S. 1933. This is corroborated from internal evidence.<sup>61</sup>

The text was written in Sanskrit and Hindi, with the Sanskrit portions dictated by the Swami and the Hindi portions written by the scribes, since at that time even Dayananda had not yet developed a mastery over Hindi. However, as both Yudhishtir Mimansaka and Paramanand have discovered, there is much to be desired in the Hindi translations. Several lines do not concur with their Sanskrit counterparts. This points very much to the inefficiency of these scribes - something Dayananda himself was aware of.

The printing of the text commenced in Phalgun, V.S. 1933. The text was not printed in one single volume, but in fascicules, with the first sixteen printed by the Lazarus Press, and the last two by the Nirayasagar Press, Bombay, in 1878.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF THE RIGVEDADIBHASHYABHUMIKA

That Dayananda's Vedabhashya would have been revolutionary in nature and that naturally it would have caused convulsion-like reactions from contemporary scholars was evident from the fact that before attempting the Bhashya proper, Dayananda had prepared two Specimens of his Vedabhashya and had them sent to various scholars in Benares, Calcutta and elsewhere, and also to Growse and Griffith, for their comments. Among the reactions that surfaced, that of Pandit Maheshchandra Nyayaratna, Principal of the Sanskrit College of Calcutta, was most notable. He had made several objections against the bases of Dayananda's Bhashya.<sup>62</sup> Even Max Muller seriously felt that Dayananda was overvaluing the Veda and "interpreting it as it was never meant to be interpreted", that the Swami's "labour on the Veda" is nothing but "a painful instance" of such overvaluing. He chided Dayananda for attempting to discover in the mantras "steam-engines and electricity and European philosophy and morality", that in doing so, he was only depriving the text of its true character and destroying its real value.<sup>63</sup> Faced with such vigorous and even hostile criticisms against the two specimens of his Vedabhashya, Dayananda considered it indispensably necessary to set out in the clearest possible terms the fundamental pre-suppositions and principles of interpretation that would guide him while penning his commentary. These ideas are spelt out in his RVBB, which made an attempt to explain the traditional Indian view originated by the Rishis in respect of the Vedas. In this Bhumika, almost all Vedic works and other scriptural and

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<sup>59</sup> P.V., p.40

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, p.46

<sup>61</sup> RVBB (Ramlall Kapoor Trust Edition, V.S. 2004) p.28

<sup>62</sup> Vide Yudhishtir Mimansaka, Rigvedadibhashyabhumika Parishisht, Ramlall Kapoor Trust, Amritsar, 1967

<sup>63</sup> Chaudhuri N.G., Life of F. Max Muller, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1974, p. 358; Also Bhumanand p.xcvii

philosophical treatises in Sanskrit have been quoted. It contains more than one thousand citations culled from a vast range of Sanskrit literature, including approximately three hundred verses from the Vedas themselves.

Dayananda's Vedabhashya is regarded by scholars as brihattama - the most important among his publications, while his Bhumika embodies the fundamental principles on which his Vedabhashya is based. If these principles are proven correct, authentic and logical, and if they are thought by scholars to be indeed supported by valid proofs, then the whole of the Swami's Vedabhashya automatically withstands the test of credibility, thereby establishing its own authenticity. On the other hand, if these very principles are not vindicated and are thought not to be valid, "then not only his entire Vedabhashya is inadmissible, but the whole structure of his entire mission and work would also be deemed baseless and would crumble down like a house of cards."<sup>64</sup>

The foregoing observation provides the criterion whereby the importance of the RVBB can be measured. In fact, Paramananda prefers to credit the Bhumika as occupying the uppermost place among the Swami's works. Even Max Muller, despite having remained unsumpathetic towards Dayananda's Vedic commentary, establishes the importance of the Bhumika in the following words:-

We may divide the whole of Sanskrit Literature beginning with the Rigveda and ending with Dayananda's Introduction to his edition of the Rigveda, his by no means uninteresting Rigveda Bhumika, into two great periods: that preceding the great Turanian invasion, and that following it."<sup>65</sup>

Dayananda, too, understood the importance of this work of his. It was the Introduction not only to his commentary on the Rigveda alone, but also to the commentary on the Yajurveda and even to that on the other two Vedas which he certainly had contemplated writing. Hence the inclusion of the term 'adi' in the title of the Introduction - Rigvedadibhashyabhunika. His own testimony bears further evidence of this fact:-

"aur sab vishai bhumika mein prakat kar diya, wahaan dekh lenaa. kyoki ukt bhumika chaaron vedon ki hai.

i.e. For all these topics the reader may refer to the said Bhumika because it is an introduction to all the four Vedas."

It is said that Dayananda forbade the sale of his revolutionary Vedabhashya to persons who wanted to purchase it alone without having first purchased the Bhumika, while; on the other hand, he allowed the sale of the Bhumika alone without the actual Veda Bhashya.<sup>66</sup> This testifies further to the feeling of the Swami about the Bhumika - that it was a text of fundamental and essential importance for an understanding of his Vedabhashya.

### THE BHUMIKAS OF SAYANA and DAYANANDA : A Brief Comparison

As it has been previously observed in this dissertation, both Sayana and Dayananda wrote their own Bhumikas (Introductions) to their respective commentaries on the Vedas. There is, however, a fundamental difference between the two Bhumikas which comes to one's notice almost immediately. Whereas Sayana wrote a separate Bhumika as a prelude to the

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<sup>64</sup> Paramanand, p.iii

<sup>65</sup> Max Muller, India - What It can Teach Us?, Munshiram Manoharlall, 2nd edition 1961, p.77

<sup>66</sup> jo koi bhumika ke bina ved hi keval liya, so nahi mil a sakte. Kintu Bhumika panch Rupaye dene se prithak mil sakti hai. (Advertisement published on the 3rd and 4th pages of the title cover of the Rig and Yajurveda Bhashyas).

commentary on each of the Veda, Dayananda wrote a common Introduction to the commentary on all four vedas. Hence, Sayana's Introduction is entitled "Rigveda-bhashyabhumika", while that of Dayananda is called "Rigvedadibhashyabhumika". Before the advent of Dayananda, Sayana's Vedabhashya was regarded by all as the standard one; even the Europeans regarded it, on the whole, as the one sole guide in instances of deciphering obscure words. While this fourteenth century Vedic interpret represents a major school of Vedic interpretation, the rituastic school, Dayananda of the nineteenth century, represents another school, the etymological, equally major in importance, and revolutionary in concepts. It is but need, therefore, that the fundamental principles guiding their respective theses on the Veda, embodied in their respective Bhumikas, should be comparatively studied. But before undertaking such a comparison, it is necessary for one to examine the times in which both commentators wrote their respective texts.

There is a vast difference in the times in which the two scholars lived. In Sayana's time, Sanskrit was much more prevalent than in the time that Dayanmda lived. There were many more people knowledgeable in the Shastras and in texts considered useful for a more thorough understanding of the Vedas. Even so, the people in Sayana's time knew more of, and had more reverence for the Vedas as a scripture than those of Dayananda's time. In the former period, Aryan/Hindu culture did not suffer from the attacks of a foreign power as it suffered from the presence of the British in the latter period. One can say, for sure, that in the Southern parts of India where Sayana's commentary was written, one had seen the ascendancy of Hindu culture.<sup>67</sup> Dayananda's age was preceded by several decades of subjection to British political power, a practically ruined economy, Christian proselytizing activities, English education and the demoralizing effects it had on indigenous education, and all the other effects of foreign rule. This resulted in a lack of interest and sympathy for everything ancient and Indian. Hence, the commentary that Dayananda wrote on the Vedas did not arise out of a positive demand coming from the people of India, whereas that written by Sayana was a result of the desire of the king of Vijayanagar, Bukka Raja, who lived in the fourteenth century. The king provided Sayana with all facilities for his work which royal patronage would envisage.<sup>68</sup> Dayananda, on the other hand wrote his Bhumika and his Bhashya amidst pitiable circumstances. He could have hardly expected any form of governmental patronage in his task of removing centuries of dust gathered on the Veda and its contents.<sup>69</sup> His Bhumika and his Bhashya constituted a rejection of everything foreign and an advocacy in favour of everything originally Indian. Hence, there was no question of any form of patronage from the foreign government of the day.

In addition to all these points of dissimilarity in the conditions preceding the writing of the two Bhumikas, one needs to give a place of special importance to the motivation and influence behind the two commentators which guided them in their respective Bhumikas. Whereas Sayana did not care to justify the tenets of any particular school of doctrine, Dayanada thought it to be the mission of his life to justify his understanding of the Vedic religion through the publication of both his Bhumika and his Veda Bhashya. The admissibility of his ideas contained in his Bhumika would naturally go a far way in

<sup>67</sup> Upadhyaya G.P., Sayana Aur Dayananda, Kala Press, Allahabad, p.6

<sup>68</sup> Bhumananda, p.xxxix

<sup>69</sup> Jordens, p.178

establishing the authenticity of his Veda commentary, which would in turn prove the correctness of his ideas on Vedic religion. The failure of his Bhumika would automatically spell doom for his brand of the Vedic religion.

#### THE ORIGIN OF THE VEDA:

Indian tradition propounds that the Veda is apaurusheya – of non-human, divine authorship. Both Sayana and Dayananda uphold this doctrine by quoting the mantra “Tasmat yajnat sarvahutah”, the former acknowledging it from the Rigveda, and the latter from the Yajurveda. Sayana explains the word “yajnat” as “yajaneeyaat parameshvarat (from the worshippable lord)”, while Dayananda explains it as “sacchidanandadilakshanat” (from the Lord possessed of the qualities of existence, consciousness and bliss).<sup>70</sup> Both make use of the mantra to prove that the four Vedas were produced from the Lord. Sayana, in an opening shloka, refers to the Veda as “nihshvasita” i.e. having issued forth as breath from the Lord. Dayananda, too, quoting a statement of Yajnavalkya, refers to the Veda as “nihshvasita”, i.e. as having come out from the Lord naturally as breath.<sup>71</sup>

Now the Veda was revealed is a question on which both scholars share a common opinion. Sayana's opinion is found in his commentary on the Aitareya Brahmana (5:32). There he states that the Rigveda, Yajurveda, and Samaveda were brought forth through the instrumentality of the Rishis Agni, Vayu and Aditya respectively. Dayananda too observes that these four texts were revealed in the consciousness of Agni, Vayu, Aditya and Angiras. (p.18).

#### THE SELF-AUTHORITATIVE CHARACTER OF THE VEDA

Both commentators are of the common view that the Veda is self- authoritative, i.e. it is not in need of the authority of other texts to establish the credibility of its views. Sayana comments that just as a jar or a piece of cloth cannot make itself seen without the light of the sun, while the sun is itself self-luminous, similarly all the texts other than the Veda are in need of the authority of the Veda, while the Veda itself is self-authoritative in character.<sup>72</sup> Dayananda advances a similar argument: “The four Vedas, being the word of God, have an independent and inherent authority ..... The Vedas should be taken as their own authority like the sun and the lamp.”

#### THE ETERNITY OF THE VEDA:

The subject of the eternity of sound has exercised the minds of almost all philosophers in India, especially those of the six Brahmanical schools (Yoga-Sankhya etc.), and even Yaska, Patanjali etc. Intricately tied up with the question of the eternity of sound is that of the eternity of the Veda. Both Sayana and Dayananda have had cause to offer their opinion on the subject, in an effort to refute the ideas of those who propose that the Veda is not eternal. Sayana analyses the proponent's view that just as the books of Kalidasa and those written by Valmiki and Vyasa are non-eternal primarily because they contain the names of historical personages and were written by men, similarly the various recensions of the Veda are known to be written by men like Katha etc. Hence, the Veda cannot be

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<sup>70</sup> Vide both Bhumikas

<sup>71</sup> RVBB, p.15

<sup>72</sup> Sayana RVBB, p.5: Dayananda RVBB, p.352

classified as being of divine authorship, and hence is not eternal, Sayana totally refutes the foregoing arguments and quotes from the Purva Mimansa (1:1:29) to prove that indeed the Veda is of non-human authorship (apaurusheya); from the Purva Mimansa again (1:1:5) to prove the eternity of the relationship between the Vedic words and their meanings; and still again from the same text (1:1:31) to prove that names supposedly of historical personages, like Babara etc., are only words yielding their original derivative meanings.<sup>73</sup> Discussing the question, Dayananda accepts that there are two types of sounds - eternal and non-eternal. The former are words which dwell in the consciousness of the Supreme, and have an eternal relationship with their meanings. The latter are those which dwell in human consciousness and are effects, and therefore non-eternal. Since God's powers are eternal, so his knowledge and actions are eternal and beginningless. Since the Veda constitutes the knowledge of such a Being its non-eternality is tantamount to being untenable. The relations of words, letters and meanings in the Vedas in this cycle of creation are the same as they were in past cycles. Hence, we can see that both Sayana and Dayananda are on common ground in respect of the eternity of the Veda.

#### THE VEDA AND THE BRAHMANA:

The question of which books constitute the Veda is one of tremendous controversy. The majority of scholars are of the opinion that the term "Veda" is to be applied to a number of texts, like the Samhitas (Mantras), the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas and the Upanishads. Apastamba also submits that the Veda is made up of the Mantras and the Brahmanas (Mantra- brahmanayor-veda-nama-dheyam) . Sayana fully submits to the line of reasoning adopted by Apastamba and the others.<sup>74</sup> Dayananda disagrees very-forcefully with Sayana on this question. He denies any status of Veda-hood for the Brahmanas, since "they have been given the title of Purana (mythology) and Itihasa (History). They are Vedic glosses and are not the words of God, but merely the works of Seers, and thus the creation of human intellect."

#### THE PURPOSE OF THE VEDA:

Sayana expressly states that the purpose of the Veda becomes fulfilled in being recited while the performances of various sacrifices are in progress.<sup>75</sup> The Rigveda serves the purpose of brahmajaya and japa, while the Yajurveda serves the purpose of being recited in the various rituals. Dayananda affirms a completely different purpose of the Veda. The Veda contains the germs of all true sciences and God has established the utility of his knowledge by revealing it to all mankind in the form of the Veda. The purpose of the Veda is not its recital in rituals, but to provide man the basis whereby he can research into the existence and purpose of the things of the world, in addition to his own self and God.

#### THE EQUAL IMPORTANCE OF EACH OF THE FOUR VEDAS:

Sayana posits that the Yajurveda enjoys a position of importance and superiority over the Rigveda, for which reason he saw the necessity of writing a commentary first on the

<sup>73</sup> SRVBB, pp.25-26, DRVBB p.39,40

<sup>74</sup> SRVBB, pp.28, DRVBB p.119

<sup>75</sup> Paramananda, p.lvii; DRVBB, p.14, 17, 25, 26

Yajurveda.<sup>76</sup> In his estimation, the Yajurveda has its connection with the Adhvaryu priest (one of the four priests appointed for the performance and successful completion of a sacrifice), and the Adhvaryu is comparable to being the body of the sacrifice, hence he is the most important among the four. The Rig and Sama Vedas are to be made use of principally for recital and singing, both of which form important and integral parts of the sum-totality of the sacrifice. Again, Dayananda's assertions are in complete contradistinction to those propounded by Sayana. Dayananda states emphatically that God revealed the knowledge of the relation between things and their qualities in the Rigveda, while in the Yajurveda, one finds explained the applications of that knowledge. From a point of view of logical reasoning, one needs to be introduced first to the complete body of ideas, after which one can start thinking of applying those ideas. Hence, one can safely assume that the process of knowledge and its applications would require one to place the Rigveda first in the list of enumeration. Any task implemented on the basis of knowledge yields the best result, emphasises Dayananda. Hence sayana's idea of the Yajurveda enjoying a position of greater importance than the Rigveda is untenable.

#### FURTHER COMMENTS:

Because Sayana understood the Vedas to be of purpose only in respect of rituals, he did not find much scope to further introduce the Rigveda in his Bhumika other than in refuting the arguments of opponents who raised several questions on the admissibility of the Vedas as texts worth commenting on, in addition to their nature and contents, their purpose and their liturgical applications. Dayananda deals with almost all of these questions, in addition to proving that the Vedas are the repository of all true science. He devotes several chapters to discuss various branches of scientific, spiritual and secular learning found therein. He also explains the grammatical principles that he would be following while commenting on the mantras of the Vedas, and attempts to clear several doubts in respect of the commentary he had in mind. He also does not fail to add a chapter to review the various authoritative and unauthoritative texts, and another one in which he suggests methods of studying and teaching the Vedas. On the whole, Dayananda's Bhumika is much wider in scope and serves a greater purpose than Sayana's.

#### THESES DISCUSSED IN THE RIGVEDADIBASHYABHUMIKA:

##### **VEDA - ITS DEFINITION, NATURE & SCOPE**

###### **Definition:**

Several scholars have, in their own way, tried to define the term 'Veda'. Winternitz writes that the term 'Veda' is synonymous with knowledge, the knowledge par excellence,<sup>77</sup> while Monier Williams characterizes it as the divine, unwritten knowledge, imagined to have issued forth like breath from the Self-Existent.<sup>78</sup> Sayana classifies the Veda as that which divulges the secret of true knowledge unattainable either by perception or by inference.<sup>79</sup> Dayananda, while supporting the foregoing definitions, resorts to etymology to provide a definition uniquely his own. Derived from four verbal roots, he asserts that

<sup>76</sup> SRVBB, p.3; DRVBB, p.425

<sup>77</sup> Winternitz, p.52

<sup>78</sup> Monier Williams, Indian Wisdom, p.7

<sup>79</sup> SRVBB, p.



the Vedas are so called “as all men know all sciences in or through them, or as all sciences exist in them, or as men become learned by studying them.”<sup>80</sup> Dayananda's employment of four separate verbal roots in defining the term 'Veda' assumes importance when juxtaposed with Max Muller's etymological derivation of the term. The latter scholar, making use of only one verbal root (Vid to know) says that “the Veda is the same word which appears in the Greek oida, I know, and in the English wise, wisdom, to wit.”<sup>81</sup>

#### Other Names:

The Veda is also known by a host of other designations. Almost all scholars are agreed that the Vedic knowledge is called 'Shruti' because for a long time it was only spoken and heard.<sup>82</sup> Monier Williams aptly explains the concept of 'shruti' by saying that “this divine knowledge was also connected with shabda or articulate sound (thought to be eternal) and hence regarded as an eternal voice (vac) heard by certain holy men called Rishis; or, again, as eternal words actually seen by them as well as heard.”<sup>83</sup> Dayananda, again in his unique style, affirms that the Veda is called Shruti because “from the beginning of creation upto this day, Brahma and others have learnt all true sciences through them by oral transmission.”<sup>84</sup> The term, as Max Muller points out, distinguishes the Vedic hymns from the later Smriti works, which however sacred and authoritative are admitted to have been composed by human authors.<sup>85</sup> The term 'Shruti' also testifies to the fact that the Veda was revealed, and that no human person has been its author. The author of texts like the Ramayana and Mahabharata have their names recorded and preserved by tradition, but “no one in this world has seen the Vedas being composed by anybody in his corporeal body.” (26..27)

Western scholars acknowledge that the Vedic verses are also called Mantra and Chhandas, but as Prof. Max Muller points out, there is a subtle difference between Mantra and Chhandas, each of the two belonging to a different period in the history of Vedic literature. The Vedic age, he asserts from his own researches, can be divided into four distinct periods - the Chhandas, the Mantra, the Brahmana and the Sutra – “according to the general form of the literary productions which give to each of them its peculiar historical character.”<sup>86</sup> As if to distinguish between the supposedly older Chhandas and the later Mantra, Ragozin testifies that the Aryas used to strenuously keep away from the barbarous Dasyu natives with the aim of avoiding contamination of association with them precisely in matters of worship and religion; and “this spirit of fastidious exclusiveness was the occasion of their collecting and ordering into one body the hymns and sacred songs embodying the religion they brought with them, and which probably had not yet at that early period assumed the finished poetic form under which it had at last descended to us.”<sup>87</sup>

In an effort to establish the synonymous relationship between Mantra and Chhandas,

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<sup>80</sup> DRVBB, p.25-26

<sup>81</sup> Max Muller, Vedas, p.15

<sup>82</sup> Winternitz, p.55

<sup>83</sup> Monier Williams, Hinduism, p.17

<sup>84</sup> RVBB, p.26

<sup>85</sup> Vedas, p.21

<sup>86</sup> Max Muller, History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature (HASL), p.36

<sup>87</sup> Ragozin Z.A., History of Vedic India, Mittal Publishers, Delhi, 1984, p. 113

Dayananda first quotes Max Muller's definition of Chhandas as "a type of composition which contains a common-place theme, bereft of originality, and which is only a rhapsody flowing spontaneously from the mouth of an idiot." Dayananda asserts that the learned German Professor could have propagated such a theory only because he could not have understood the true meaning of words like Hiranyagarbha etc. It is on the basis of his crude understanding of such words that Max Muller of assertive is assertive of the modernity of the Mantra period.<sup>88</sup> The truth of the matter is, Dayananda affirms further, that the words Chhandas, Veda, Nigama, Mantra and Shruti are synonymous terms.<sup>89</sup> Mantras are so called because they are meditated upon (from the root "man" to think). Man can think about and contemplate on abstract and abstruse concepts on the basis of the Mantras of the Veda, and thereby attain to the knowledge of reality. Mantra, therefore, means the Veda and refers to each verse. While Mantra refers to the Veda being studied with the full application of the mental powers, Chhandas too is used to designate the Veda because it covers (chhad to cover) all branches of learning. And to prove his thesis on Mantra and Chhandas, Dayananda quotes profusely from texts like Shatapath Brahmana, the Ashtadhyayi, and the Manusariti.

#### Texts Constituting the Veda:

The question of what books do make up the Veda has never been one of controversy until the advent of Maharshi Dayananda. Since the time of Katyayana, the generally accepted feeling was that the Mantras and Brahmanas together constitute the Veda (Mantre-brahmanayor veda-nama-dheyam).<sup>90</sup> Sayana corroborated and advocated the implications of the Sutra, thus giving it a stamp of increased credibility. Winternitz writes that "the tems 'Veda' does not mean one single literary work ..... but a whole great literature, which arose in the course of many centuries, and through centuries has been handed down from generation to generation by verbal transmission ....."<sup>91</sup> He further says that what is now called 'Veda' consists of (1) the Saahitas - collections of hymns, (2) the Brahmanas - voluminous prose texts containing theological matter, and (3) Aranyakas and Upanishads - containing meditations of forest-hermits and ascetics on God and the world. In expressing such a view, Winternitz finds himself supported by scholars like Max Muller and Monier Williaas. In fact, it is the generally accepted view of European Indological - scholarship.

Dayananda puts himself at complete variance with the foregoing contention. He peremptorily dismisses the plea to have the Shakhas, Brahmanas, Upnishads and Aranyakas included within the scope of the Vedas. Mantras are distinguishable from Brahmanas since the latter includes in the body of its texts worldly narratives containing the names of human beings, while the Mantra portion is not studded with the slightest trace of history. The names of Jamadagni and Kashyapa mentioned in the Mantras (YV 3:62) are not the names of historical personages, but, as the evidence from the Shatapath Brahmana (8:1:2:3) would prove, they both refer respectively to the eye (as a seer) and the vital airs. Names in the Vedas must be taken not in their historical but in their etymological sense - they are suggestive and indicate the general sense only. References

<sup>88</sup> RVBS, p.113

<sup>89</sup> Ibid, p.116,117

<sup>90</sup> Katyayana Parishisht Pratijna Sutra 1:1

<sup>91</sup> Winternitz, p. 53, Vedas, p. 15, Hinduism, p.18



to history established by commentators like Sayana are founded on an ignorance of the true etymological meanings of the words.<sup>92</sup>

Since they contain descriptions of history, these Brahmanas have been truly called the Itihasas and Puranas. It is incorrect to assign to the Shrimad Bhagavata and the Brahma Vaivart the names of Itihasa and Purana. Between the Brahmanas and such names (Itihasa, Purana) exists a samjni-samjna (object-name) relationship. In the statement "brahmanani itihasan puranani kalpan gatha narashansih iti" (Taitt.A. - 2:9), one must not understand that the words Itihasa, Purana, Kalpa, Gatha and Narashansa refer to titles of historical works other than the Brahmanas; actually, these are words which qualify the Brahmanas in the sentence - they throw further light on the contents of the Brahmana texts, and do not refer to Books like the Shrimad Bhagvata etc.

Dayananda's thesis with regards to the Brahmanas can be summed up as follows: They are not a part of the Veda, but related to the Veda in the form of commentaries - Brahmana is a commentary on Brahma (Veda).<sup>93</sup> To prove the authenticity of this thesis, Dayananda quotes Panini who himself makes a distinction between the two in his aphorisms (2:3:60 - 2:3:62 - 4:3:105). And since the Brahmanas cannot be regarded as being at par with the Vedas, the two sets of texts cannot be regarded as possessed of parallel authority; the Brahmanas can be credited with only an authority that is secondary to that of the Vedas.

Dayananda expresses a sincere doubt as to whether Katyayana could have really been the author of the Sutra that affirms a status of Veda-hood for the Brahmanas, since, as far as he is concerned, no other Rishi is credited for having propounded such a doctrine. One may feel that Katyayans should not be blamed for assigning to the Brahmanas the name of 'Veda' since the two texts both enjoy an inseparable relation (the former being the commentary of the latter). This is, in Dayananda's review, mere speculation, because one does not meet with such a clarification coming from the Sutrakara.

Dayananda asserts that while the Brahmanas have laid special emphasis on the Karmakanda of the Veda, the Upanishads have laid equal emphasis on the Jnanakanda.<sup>94</sup> Hence, the Upanishads, like the Brahmanas, are not a part of the Vedas, but only commentaries. Some of the Atrnyakas are parts of the Brahmanas, as can be seen in the case of the Jaiminiya Aranyaka (it being a part of the Jaiminiya Brahmana). Similarly, some Upanishads are parts of the Aranyakas; e.g. the Aitareya Upanishad is a part of the Aitareya Aranyaka. Hence, the whole of the Brahmana-Aranyaka-Upanishad literature is exegetical in nature, aimed at explaining the mantras of Samhitas.

#### OBSERVATIONS:

It seems that Dayananda was not in the least shadow of doubt as regards the question of whether the Brahaanas are a part of the Veda or not. A text as authoritative as the Mahabhashya fully substantiates what Dayananda posits. Therein, Patanjali depicts clearly that the Brahmanas were composed by the Rishis with an aim to explain the Vedas (5:1:1). The same view is upheld by the Brihat-Parashari Smriti (3:44) and by Shankara in his commentary on the Chhandogya Upanishad (8:14:1). One is somewhat perplexed that even though Sayana is known for having propagated the concept of the

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<sup>92</sup> RVBB, p. 119, 120, 121

<sup>93</sup> RVBB, p. 129, SP 11 p. 239

<sup>94</sup> RVBB, p. 421

Mantra and Brahmana being the same, still in his Brihadaranyaka-Vartika-Sara, he explicitly states that the Mantra should be known as being four-fold, whereas the Brahmana, of the form of history, is eight-fold (2:4).<sup>95</sup> And again in his Introduction to the commentary on the Taittiriya Samhita he clearly admits that the Brahmanas are explanatory of the Mantras, and that the Mantras were compiled much before the exegetical Brahmanas.

#### The Four Samhitas:

Max Muller observes that “the name of Veda is commonly given to four collections of hymns, which are respectively known by the names of Rigveda, Yajurveda, Sama-veda, and Atharva-veda.”<sup>96</sup> After this, however, Max Muller makes a very curious statement, that of these four Vedas, only one is important and real - the Rig Veda - while the others are so-called Vedas, and they hardly deserve the name, since they contain chiefly extracts from the Rigveda, along with sacrificial formulas, charms and incantations, many of which would interest only the Sanskrit scholar by profession.<sup>97</sup> Weber does not differ from Max Muller when he says that the ‘richas’ of the Yajus and the Sama are only an alteration in part of the Rig Samhita.<sup>98</sup> It is with this latter contention of European scholars that Dayananda registers a very vehement objection, asserting that there are indeed four Vedas, each possessing its own purpose and function. The qualities and properties of objects have been defined and brought to light in the Rigveda, while the Yajurveda embodies the rules whereby one can practically make use of the knowledge of the qualities of objects. The Sama Veda provides the basis whereby one can establish the mutual relationship between knowledge and application (action) , while the Atharvaveda gives due fulfilment to the final results of knowledge as imparted in the three Vedas. Thus the preservation and development of the sciences (culled from the three Vedas) are the functions of the Atharvaveda. This is one way whereby we can rationalise the existence of the four Vedas. One other purpose of the four Samhitas is to have the Mantras which deal with various branches of learning arranged in an order which is in consonance with their contextual reference and their relation with the preceding and succeeding stanzas so that the sciences may be described cohesively. And the purpose of having each Veda further divided into ashtakas, mandalas, adhyayas, suktas etc. is only to facilitate quick reference for purposes of studying and teaching.<sup>99</sup>

The order in which the Vedas have been traditionally enumerated also finds justification from Dayananda. He theorizes that there can be no clear understanding of, and appreciation to an object unless a direct knowledge of the relation between the object and its qualities is achieved. Without such a knowledge, one is not motivated to act in relation to the object, resulting in the consequent non-attainment of the bliss one should have from the object. The Rigveda deserves first place in the order of enumeration since it deals with the first step in the process of having bliss - that of knowledge. After attaining

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<sup>95</sup> Mantrashchaturvidha jneya rigvedadigiroditah, Brahmanam eetihasadi-rupam-ashtavidham (B.V.S.2-4) Yadyapi mantra-brahmanatmakam vedam Tathapi Brahmanasya mantravyakhyana-rupatvat Mantra evadau samamnatah. (Taittiriya Samhita Bhashya Bhumika)

<sup>96</sup> Vedas, p. 15

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, p.16

<sup>98</sup> Weber, p.9

<sup>99</sup> RVBB, p. 424, 425

knowledge, one naturally thinks of applying that knowledge; hence the need of the Yajurveda being second in order. Then comes the question of reconciling knowledge and its application, and communing with the result of such a reconciliation - all of which is provided for by the Samaveda. Again, the Atharveda seeks to preserve and develop what has been achieved by the Samaveda, thus coming fourth in the enumeration of the four Vedas.<sup>100</sup> Faced with such arguments from Dayananda, one tends to reflect on the reason offered by Max Muller for regarding the Rigveda as the only Veda, the Veda par excellence; it is the Rigveda, he says, that provides the lone base whereby one can trace the earliest growth of religious ideas in India.<sup>101</sup> Apparently, in making such a statement, Max Muller has shown scanty regard, if any, for the tradition that has been built around the Vedas over the centuries, and for the testimonies penned by the various Rishis in their respective treatises. Dayananda, in the foregoing arguments, has shown the highest regard both for tradition and for the writings of the Rishis.

#### The Contents of the Vedas:

About the Rigveda, Prof. Weber writes: “The samhita of the Rik is purely a lyrical collection, comprising the store of song which the Hindus brought with them from their ancient homes on the banks of the Indus and which they had there used for invoking prosperity on themselves and their flocks, in their adoration of the dawn, in celebration of the struggle between the god who wields the lightning and the power of darkness, and in rendering thanks to the heavenly beings for preservation in battle.”<sup>102</sup> In coming to such a conclusion, Weber admits having borrowed some of the ideas of Prof. Von Roth. Further, Monier Williams thinks that these compositions “are unequal in poetical merit” and contain “many tedious repetitions and puerilities”, though at the same time, they are highly interesting and important as embodying some of the earliest religious conceptions, as well as some of the earliest known forms, of the primitive language of that primeval Aryan race-stock from which Greeks, Romans, Kelts, Teutons, Russians and Poles are off-shoots.”<sup>103</sup> Max Muller, too, feels that many of these Vedic hymns “are childish in the extreme, tedious, low and common place; ..... But hidden in this rubbish there are precious stones, (since) the Veda, by its language and thoughts, supplies that distant background in the history of all the religions of the Aryan race, which was adssed indeed by every careful observer .....”<sup>104</sup>

The foregoing observations by three principal European Indologists find no mention, not even the slightest, in Dayananda's interpretation of the contents of the Vedas. The Vedas are neither the store of song brought by the Aryans from the Indus, nor are the verses childish, low and tedious. Rather, they are texts containing various branches of learning which can be broadly classified into Jnana (knowledge), Karma (action, application of knowledge), Upasana (worship & communion with the result of the application of knowledge), and Vijnana (realised knowledge). Among these, Vijnana is the most important since it refers to the realised knowledge of the range of things extending from

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid, p. 425

<sup>101</sup> Vedas, p.18

<sup>102</sup> Weber, p. 8

<sup>103</sup> Indian Wisdom, p.9

<sup>104</sup> Vedas, p.26

the vastest magnitude (God) to the most infinitesimal existence (a blade of grass).<sup>105</sup> In such Vedic hymns, God is the principal theme. To prove this latter point, Dayananda quotes from the Kathopanishad (2:15), the Yoga Darshana (1:1:27), the Yajurveda (40:17), and the Taittiriya Aranyaka (7:8). The Vedic verses, Dayananda asserts further, can be further classified into two types of learning - Aparā (mundane) and parā (Supra-mundane). The Aparā Vidya comprises all the sciences like Phonetics, Etymology, Astronomy etc. that ensure a well-coordinated life yielding material happiness, whereas the Parā Vidya is the spiritual science whereby the Supreme Imperishable One is realised. One reason for Max Muller and others not having been capacitated to read such ideas of sciences and various branches of learning in the mantras of the Vedas is the fact that they cherished as their source of inspiration the commentaries of Sayana and other medieval commentators like Mahidhara, whose approach to the Veda has its base in false and erroneous pre-conceptions; hence the deficiency in the commentaries written by European scholars who followed the medieval Indian commentators.<sup>106</sup> Dayananda exhorts his countrymen not to pay much attention to such commentaries, since the Veda and its contents do not find its true expression in them. Even Aurobindo, reviewing the European view that the Veda abounds in puerilities, writes: “We are aware how modern scholars twist away from the evidence .... Western scholars minimise (the psychological and ethical value of the Vedic hymns) because they feel uneasy whenever ideas that are not primitive seem to insist on their presence in these primeval utterances; they do not hesitate openly to abandon in certain passages interpretations which they adopt in others and which are admittedly necessitated by their own philological and critical reasoning.”<sup>107</sup>

Hence, we can see that both Dayananda and Aurobindo share the same view - that the European Indologists were not in a position to decipher the true contents of the Vedic verses because of two principal factors: (1) their own inner prejudices<sup>108</sup> and (2) their invalid principles of Vedic interpretation.

### **THE VEDA AND ITS ORIGIN**

#### The Revelatory Character of the Veda:

Max Muller discusses the question of the apaurusheyatva (non-human authorship) of the Veda by first recording the substance of the “orthodox views of the Indian theologians” which propound that “not a single line of the Veda was the work of human authors. The whole of the Veda is in some way or other the work of the Deity; and even those who received the revelation, or, as they express it, those who saw it, were not supposed to be ordinary mortals, but beings raised above the level of common humanity, and less liable therefore to error in the reception of revealed truth..... The human element called paurusheyatva in Sanskrit, is or driven out of every corner or hiding place, and as the

<sup>105</sup> RVBB, p.56

<sup>106</sup> Ibid, p.420

<sup>107</sup> Quoted by Paramanand, p. xc

<sup>108</sup> That the Europeans came to India to pursue studies in Sanskrit and the Vedas primarily to aid the process of converting the whole of India to Christianity is no longer a secret, as one can see from several letters which Max Muller had written to a number of people, some of which have been reproduced by Bhumananda Saraswati (p. XCVI ff.). Monier Williams, too, in the Preface to his Sanskrit-English Dictionary (p.ix) writes that the translation of the scriptures into Sanskrit was promoted so as to enable Englishmen to proceed in the conversion of the natives of India to the Christian Religion.

Veda is held to have existed in the mind of the Deity before the beginning of time, every allusion to historical events, of which there are not a few, is explained away with the zeal and ingenuity worthy of a better cause.”<sup>109</sup> To such a view Max Muller somewhat peremptorily, reacts: “But let me state at once that there is nothing in the hymns themselves to warrant such extravagant theories.”

In respect of the foregoing views, the position adopted by Dayananda constitutes a refutation of what Max Muller posits and an advocacy of the traditional orthodox view. In his “Aryoddeshyaratnamala”, he emphatically states that the Rig and other Vedas contain the true learnings inspired by God; it is from these that humanity extracts knowledge distinguishing truth from untruth. (Article of Faith No.95). Again in his Statement of Beliefs he credits the Veda as being the word of God, and at the same time the respository of knowledge and Religious truths.<sup>110</sup> He establishes the following criteria whereby a text can be duly established as being revelatory in character:

God should be described exactly as He is.

Nothing should be recorded as being opposed to (a) the laws of nature, reason, the evidence of pratyaksha pramana (direct cogizance) etc., (b) the teachings of the highly learned, altruistic teachers of humanity, and (c) the intuition of pure souls.

The laws, nature and properties of matter and the individual soul are to be propounded as they are to be inferred from the order of nature as fixed by God.

In his opinion, the Vedas alone satisfy the above criteria; and so they alone qualify for being classified as revealed knowledge.<sup>111</sup> And in an effort to prove himself as being fully in line with age-old tradition, he says: “The Aryas have, since the earliest times, been regarding the Vedas as being divinely inspired and revealed.”<sup>112</sup>

Dayananda does not refrain from invoking internal evidence to prove the revelatory character of the Veda. In his Rigvedadibhashyabhumika, he quotes two mantras, one from the Yajurveda (31:7) and the other from the Atharvaveda (10:7:20) which attest to the fact of Divine Revelation. The Yajurvedic mantra says that the Richas, Samans, Chhandas and the Yajus were all born from the all-worshippable Yajna (tasmāt yajnat sarva-hutah). Dayananda has full support from Sayana when he translates the word ‘yajna’ to mean Vishnu, the Lord. External evidence attesting to the Veda being revelatory in character is also quoted by Dayananda from the Shatapatha Brahmana (14:5:4:11).<sup>113</sup>

### The Process of Revelation:

Dayananda makes use of information taken from the Shatapatha Brahmana (10:4:2:3) to establish that God revealed the four Vedas - Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva - in the consciousness of the four Rishis respectively - Agni, Vayu, Aditya and Angiras.<sup>114</sup> This act of revelation does not smack of favouritism because these four were at the time the purest among all men.<sup>115</sup> The text of the four Vedas was revealed in Sanskrit language,

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<sup>109</sup> Vedas, p.22

<sup>110</sup> SPII, p.725

<sup>111</sup> Ibid, p.237

<sup>112</sup> Yudhishtir Mimansaka, Dayananda Laghu Granth Sangraha p.199

<sup>113</sup> RVBB, p.15

<sup>114</sup> Ibid, p.18

<sup>115</sup> SPII, p.237

which at that time belonged to no country, and from which later languages have had their origin. The Rishis understood the meanings of the Vedic verses through the graces of God after having entered the superior condition called Samadhi in which they contemplated on the Deity. These Yogis were imbued with piety and with a desire to understand the meanings of certain mantras; for this, their minds possessed the power of perfect concentration. God made known unto such Rishis the meanings of the desired mantras from time to time. When the Vedas were thus revealed to many Rishis, they wrote expositions of the mantras, making ample use of historical illustrations; these were called Brahmanas.<sup>116</sup>

#### The Purpose and Necessity of Revelation:

A person who possesses knowledge makes use of it in two major ways: first, he serves his own personal interest (svārtha), and then passes on that knowledge onto others for their own benefit (para-hita). Knowledge made use of in ways other than these two bears no fruit. This is a universal doctrine, applicable not only to men but to God too. God establishes the utility of his knowledge by imparting it to souls.<sup>117</sup> Since He has no self-interest, it is but natural for Him to fulfil the only next legitimate purpose of knowledge - that of serving the interest of others. Should God fail to divulge the eternal knowledge of His, then eternal gross ignorance (andha-parampara) would be the order of the day, and thus men, being unable to fulfil their mundane requirements, would be resultantly unable to enjoy the fruits of the fulfilment of their final purpose in life. While it is natural for Him to create the bounties of nature for man to enjoy, it is, at the same time, natural for Him - nay, an act of deep mercy and compassion on his part - to impart His eternal and purposeful knowledge for souls to apply their energies to harness these very bounties of nature in their effort to enjoy comforts and bliss.

In offering the foregoing explanations about the purpose of Divine Revelation, Dayananda opposes the theory of evolution which states, inter alia, that man has progressively increased his knowledge through the intuitive process, completely on his own. Why cannot the process of progressive increase in intuitive knowledge be repeated once more, he asks. In his chapter on “The Origin of the Vedas”, he challenges the evolutionist to experiment with the case of a human child who is to be kept all his life in seclusion, completely withdrawn from any contact with human society. If the theory of evolution is true, then the process whereby man increases his knowledge through the intuitive process, all on his own without the help of any superhuman agency, should be repeated as it occurred with the first set of human beings in the earliest times. But, affirms Dayananda, such will not be the case. The child would not achieve the smallest trace of knowledge worth the name, and would consequently behave just as the wild human beings of the great forests; thus would be its behaviour until it can receive some form of methodical instruction from knowledgeable and civilised human beings that would awaken his dormant intellectual powers. The same is the case with any other human being, or any group of human beings. Had human society not received revealed knowledge in the beginning of human creation, then all men would have behaved like the wild human beings of the great forests.<sup>118</sup> The mere capacity to investigate and

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid, p.239

<sup>117</sup> RVBB, p.17

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, p.16



recognise, the capacity for innate knowledge is not of much avail to man in the absence of instruction and self-study, since he is not independent in developing empirical knowledge. Even today, as our personal experience would prove, people do not become informed until they pass through a process of being taught through systematic methods of teaching, at times with the help of teaching aids. And in the process of being taught, the researches of scholars in the particular field of learning, proves to be of immense help. With these arguments, Dayananda comes to the only conclusion he considers logical that in the beginning, the act of Divine Revelation as of absolute necessity, that it was the only natural course of action which an Intelligent Creator would have resorted to, and that men have become able to compose books and further expand upon knowledge only after having studied the contents of Divine authorship.

#### Instruments of Divine Revelation:

In the process of being revealed, the Vedic sounds have been pronounced only through the help of physical vocal organs. Since God is incorporeal, and thus organ-less, how can one reasonably conclude that it was He who revealed the Vedas in the earliest times? Dayananda replies that such an objection would have been tenable only in the case of one person imparting information to someone else, both of them being physically separate from each other. In the earliest times, when the Veda was about to be revealed, God, the Revealer, was not physically separate from the four Rishis. Through His capacity of being Omnipresent, He was already present in their hearts before the actual act of revelation. In such a circumstance, any act of revelation would not require of the Revealer, Omnipresent and Incorporeal as He is, to possess and make use of the organ of speech. It was necessary for the Supreme Lord only to inspire the content of His knowledge in the hearts of the four Rishis - something which was effected with practically no effort on His part, and with the help of no instrument. Such a process of acquiring information without the use of bodily organs is seen to occur every minute of the day in the minds of all human beings.<sup>119</sup> People carry on mental processes and expand their mental capacities without the least participation of speech and its organ. Hence, the concept of Divine Revelation without the use of vocal organs in the beginning of human creation is not a fantasy. The whole process was a practical necessity.

One needs to bear in mind also, Dayananda continues, that originally the Vedic wisdom was not revealed in the form of books, but in the form of knowledge subsisting in articulate sound, inspired in the consciousness of the four Rishis, Agni, Vayu, Aditya and Angiras. These are not names of fire, air, sun and light respectively, because these, themselves inanimate and devoid of consciousness, cannot participate in any act of intelligence.<sup>120</sup>

#### OBSERVATIONS:

The question of the origin of the Veda is one that has exercised the minds of scholars, moreso with the entry of the Europeans in the field of Vedic research. It is, indeed, one of tremendous importance, because there is a host of related questions that seek their answers from the outcome of researches respecting this major question of the origin of the Veda, For example, if it is proven as an indisputable truth that the Veda is indeed

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<sup>119</sup> RVBB, p.15; SPII, p.236

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, p.18

revelationary in character, then other questions respecting the contents, the eternality, the Rishi and the Devata, the authoritativeness etc. automatically find their indisputable answers. It is primarily because of this that the question of the Origin of the Veda assumes a significance superior to other related questions.

It is an admitted fact there is no document available at present, or was available at any time, which directly or indirectly provides any information concerning the time, place and human authorship of the Vedas. Not only no one knows anything about the authorship of the Vedas, but the researcher is confronted with a long-standing reliable and positive tradition which flatly denies the character of a human work for the Vedas and depicts them as eternal and self-revealed. The European scholar, before he begins the task of ascertaining the date of the composition of the Vedas assumes that the Vedas are historical records, that these voluminous texts, as they contain apparently conflicting passages must have been composed by various authors, and as they are alleged to cover a very long period of history, must have been composed over a great length of time. But the European never takes the trouble to examine the validity or otherwise of the long-standing tradition surrounding the text, and to prove its worthlessness. Hence, this assumption becomes for him nothing short of a prejudice, and how far his conclusions on the Origin of the Vedas can withstand the test of legitimacy, only he can tell. Dayananda has, indeed, paid due homage to this long-standing tradition, and indeed asks the most pertinent question whether anyone in history is recorded as having seen the Vedas being composed by an embodied being.<sup>121</sup>

Jainism and Buddhism were protestant creeds that arose as a reaction to the corruption that had consequently taken birth in Vedic practices. The Jain and Buddhist scholars saw it as an indispensable need to demolish the concept of the eternal and self-revealed character of the Vedas, something they considered to be only a theological dogma of the Vedic scholars. And it is certainly not too much to assume that in the early days the Jains and Buddhists must have laboured continually to discover the real author of the Vedas. It is an inexplicable phenomenon that these Jains and Buddhists, whose main aim was to discard the authority of the Vedas and revolt against the tyranny of Brahmanism, did not, in their attack on the Vedas, publish the names of the Vedic authors and thus demolish what they considered as an utterly baseless dogma. But even the Jain and Buddhist sects might be put aside as of later origin. There are several other sects which claim their origin even previous to the age of these two. The Charvakas are indeed credited as being earlier in point of time than the Jains and Buddhists. These were atheists who did not believe in the authority of the Vedas and one of their main aims was to falsify the dogma of orthodox Hinduism. Still, their original authors and professors could not discover the true Vedic authors, and recognising the futility of their researches, they satisfied themselves in depicting the Vedic authors as (1) Dhurta (cunning), (2) Bhanda (buffoons) and (3) Nishachara (fiends). Thus, it is beyond any doubt that no-one, whether in the Vedic or non-Vedic age, has ever been able to discover the names of the authors of the Vedas.

It is not that Indians of the ancient times were devoid of a sense of historical motivation. Vedic Hindus traditionally remember the names of very ancient authors like Yaska, Pingala, Panini and a host of others, who themselves, in their writings, reflect a deep sense of being historically motivated. They have, in their own way, preserved the history of their own disciplines, all of which were geared towards preserving the Vedic tradition.

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid, pp.26-27



And important as the Vedic utterances are, and although they have exclusively regulated the lives of millions of people for ages, it is surprising to an extreme degree that neither the so-called authors of the Vedas, nor those of the subsequent exegetical literature saw the need to preserve intact the names of the composers of the Vedas for the benefit of the coming generations.

### **THE ETERNITY OF THE VEDA**

We have shown in preceding sections of this dissertation that European Indologists like Max Muller and Weber do not accept the revelatory character of the Veda. Even Radhakrishnan, throwing light on the origin of the Vedas, writes:

“The inspired songs which the Aryans brought with them from their earlier home into India as their most precious possession were collected, it is generally held, in response to a prompting to treasure them up which arose when the Aryans met with large numbers of other gods in their new country. The Rig Veda is that collection. The Sama Veda is a purely liturgical collection. Much of it is found in the Rigveda, and even those hymns peculiar to it have no distinctive lessons of their own. They are all arranged for being sung at sacrifices. The Yajurveda, like the Sama, also serves a liturgical purpose. This collection was made to meet the demands of a ceremonial religion ..... The Atharvaveda for a long time was without the prestige of a Veda .....; it is an historical collection of independent contents..... (it) is the production of a later era of thought. It shows the result of the compromising spirit adopted by the Vedic Aryans in view of the new gods and goblins worshipped by the original peoples of the country whom they were slowly subduing.”<sup>122</sup>

The foregoing view represents largely what Westerners have thought about the Vedas. For them all, these texts throw light on some aspects of the life of people of the period, and even of subsequent periods. Beyond, this, there is no further importance that one can attach to these texts.

In contradistinction to these views, Maharshi Dayananda proffered that not only are the Vedas the inspired word of God, but also, in consequence of being such inspired knowledge, it is eternal, and that such eternity of the Veda becomes established and self-evident because everything that belongs to an eternal source is naturally eternal.<sup>123</sup> This concept of eternity of the Veda is explained by Dayananda in the following words: The relations of words, letters and meanings of the Vedic verses in this cycle of creation are the same as they were in the past cycles of creation and remain exactly the same in future cycles.<sup>124</sup> An immediate, natural reaction to this concept of eternity of the Vedic verses manifests itself in the form of a pertinent question: How can the concept of eternity of the Veda be reconciled with the fact that the Veda originated at some point in time, a fact which Dayananda himself accepts? Anything which is subject to birth and origination cannot itself be eternal and deathless. In answering this question, Dayananda propounds a theory on the Veda unread and unheard of in the pages of medieval and modern writings. He says that by the term ‘Vedotpatti’, one should not understand that the Veda is created for the first time the way a jar is created. Rather, the Veda, eternally preexisting in the consciousness of God, becomes manifest in the beginning of human creation for the benefit of souls. The act of manifesting the Veda is comparable to human

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<sup>122</sup> Radhakrishnan, Vol.I, pp. 64-65

<sup>123</sup> RVBB, p.53

<sup>124</sup> Ibid, p.40

beings exhaling or emitting their own breath in a very natural manner, without much exertion. At the end of the creation, the Veda ceases to be manifest and is withdrawn by God the way humans inhale their own breath.<sup>125</sup> The Veda, therefore, being eternal, does not suffer from dissolution the way a jar does; neither is it re-created. This process of *pradurbhava* (evolution) and *tirobhava* (involution) of the Veda does not interfere in any way with the rigid fixity of the letters, words and hemistiches and the sequential order of the verses.<sup>126</sup> They remain the same in all cycles of creation. These letters, words, and metres were all created by God, and they exist eternally fixed and uniform in His consciousness. In trying to demonstrate the truth about the unchanging character of the Veda in each cycle of creation, Dayananda quotes the Rigveda (10:190:3) which states that the Creator created the Sun and Moon in this creation exactly the way He had created them in the previous creation. In this quotation, the words “sun and moon” are used elliptically and in a generic sense, referring also to the whole creation and everything that is found therein. This would logically include the knowledge also which was revealed in the beginning of the creation.

#### The Eternality of Sound:

Intricately tied up with the concept of the eternality of the Veda is the concept of the eternality or otherwise of sound, since the former (Veda) subsists in the latter (sound). The quality of sound seemed to have been hotly debated in the Middle Ages, because we see nearly all the theistic schools of Indian Philosophy making it a major subject of philosophical speculation. And the conclusion they all come to is that sound is non-eternal since it is subject to the process of origination and dissolution. The argument then goes a step further - that the Veda subsists in sound which is non-eternal; how can one therefore establish the eternality of the Veda when it subsists in a non-eternal base? Dayananda again displays his capacity of being unique by affirming that sound is of two types - eternal and non-eternal. Sounds which exist in human consciousness are non-eternal due to their being produced and finally destroyed. The same is not the case with sounds existing in Divine Consciousness. In the latter case, there is an eternally constant relationship between sound and its import, while in the former case sound-import (*shabdarth*) relationship is subject to constant production, change and dissolution, all being innate in human life and daily experience. In an effort to impress on the human mind the need to accept the notion of the Veda being eternal, Dayananda finally invokes the authority of the *Mahabhashya* of Patanjali to prove that the Veda is eternal on the basis of the eternality of sound; that it is the action of speech, and not sound itself that is non-eternal; that sound, like space, pre-exists, but in absence of means remains unmanifested.

#### The Age of the Vedas:

The question of the Age of the Vedas assumes great importance for all Vedic scholars. For the Europeans, a correct and fruitful study of anthropology and the history of the language, culture and religion of the Aryan race-stock and its European off-shoots depends largely on the correct calculation and ascertainment of the Age of the Veda. For Maharshi Dayananda, the calculations respecting the Age of the Veda assume importance

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<sup>125</sup> Ibid, p.15

<sup>126</sup> Ibid, p.49,22,40

in-so-far as the age of creation is concerned. An eternal Veda, of revelatory character, must be as old as the universe itself. Therefore, determining the age of the Veda is at the same time determining the age of the universe.

Among those scholars who have adopted the method of comparative philology to calculate the age of the Vedas, Max Muller is notable. He decided that the earliest portions of the Vedas must have been composed at about 1200 B.C. He assumed for this purpose one rule. He held on to the arbitrary supposition that each stage in the change of the internal structure in the language as exhibited in the Samhitas, Brahmanas, Upanishads and Sutras, would require a period of 200 years to be completed. The Sutra period was generally held to be pre-Buddhist. So, giving 200 years to each preceding period, he arrived at the conclusion that the Vedic Samhitas must have been composed by 1200 B.C.<sup>127</sup> In the opinion of Dr. V.S. Ghatge, however, "the unsatisfactory character of this view is easily seen."<sup>128</sup> In his opinion, arguments based on the nature of language and thought are not, generally speaking, conclusive in themselves, unless they are supported by other independent proofs. Secondly, there is not sufficient reason shown why only 200 years in particular should be assigned to each of the four periods of Vedic Literature. This estimate "is ridiculously low even from the point of view of the progress of language and thought. The difference of character between the Vedic Sanskrit and the Classical Sanskrit is so great that it must have required a very long period. indeed for the language to progress from one step of development to another....." Even Max Muller himself suspected that the estimate was too low, and the dates for the composition of the Vedas are very uncertain and can be no more than conjecture.<sup>129</sup>

Among those scholars who have made copious use of astronomical references and geological data as guides towards solving the problem, the contribution of Lokmanya Tilak is the most important. In his first work on the antiquity of the Vedas (Orion, 1893), he showed that the estimates of his predecessors were conjectural, vague and uncertain. In his opinion, astronomical data taken from the Vedas themselves (Rik 10:86) unmistakably point out that the Vernal equinox was in the constellation of Mriga or Orion at the time the eighty-sixth Sukta of the tenth Mandala of the Rigveda was composed. This proves, according to him, that the Vedic hymns were composed about the period 4,500 B.C. Dr. Jacobi arrived at the same conclusions as Tilak independently, while Dixit and Ketkar substantially strengthened Tilak's conclusions subsequently. But, as V.V. Deshpande points out, these conclusions did not remain unchallenged in the course of time. He quotes the opinion of other scholars who point out that there are references in other Rigvedic hymns of the Vernal equinox taking place in the constellations of Pushya and Chitra as well.<sup>130</sup> Thus, if we base the age of the Vedas on astronomical calculations, the reference to the Chitra constellation in connection with the Vernal equinox would take the same to twelve or thirteen thousand years B.C. The application of this method for the solution of the problem is, therefore, not safe.

Quite unlike Max Muller and Lokmanya Tilak, Maharshi Dayananda preferred to follow the lead supplied by native Indian chroniclers. The Veda was revealed in the beginning of creation, and according to his own calculations, 1,960,852,977 years have elapsed since

<sup>127</sup> Max Muller, HASL, p.295

<sup>128</sup> Sukthankar V.S., Ghatge's Lectures on the Rigveda, 3rd ed Oriental Book Agency, Poona, 1959, pp. 194-195

<sup>129</sup> Max Muller, Vedas, p. 53

<sup>130</sup> Deshpande V.V.,-The Vedas and the Vedic Learning (Publisher, City and Year of Publication Unknown) p.4

the Vedas have been revealed.<sup>131</sup> Both Yudhishtir Mimansaka and Paramanand have offered a correction to this calculation, by saying that the Swami inadvertently omitted the inclusion of seven Sandhis to the foregoing number, and that the number of years is really 1,972,948,976. Of course, this number has been calculated by the author in the year 1877 when he wrote the RVBB. To prove the correctness of these calculations, Maharshi falls back on the authority supplied by the long-standing tradition of the Aryas who upto the present day recite the famous Samkalpa in the beginning of their special ceremonies. This samkalpa is as follows:

“Om Tat Sat. I hereby perform this religious act in this second quarter of the Day of Brahman, in this first quarter of the twenty-eighth Kaliyuga, of the Vaivasvata Manvantara, in this particular this day, and under this particular constellation, and at such and at such soment of the sun's entry into the zodiacal sign, and at this particular hour.”

The above Samkalpa has been in vogue in India over since ancient times, and the Jyotisha scholars have exercised the most reverential care to ensure the exactness of the information contained therein. The science is so meticulously exact that there is hardly anyone who would dare to doubt the implications involved in the recitation. According to this Samkalpa, we are in the first quarter of the twenty-eighth Kaliyuga of the Vaivasvata Manvantara. Fourteen Manvantaras make up one creation, and the Vaivasvata is the seventh.

A modern scholar is likely to react in disbelief at the “fantastically high” number of years recorded by Dayananda in his RVBB, doubting that the present universe could be as old as Dayananda would like his readers to believe. However, research carried out by geologists would disprove the contention of some scholars that the universe is only approximately six thousand years old. In this regard, the news-item reported in the Indian newspaper ‘Tribune’ (July 13, 1975) is worth taking note of:

“Scientists (Prof. Nagi and Prof. Zumberge of the University of Arizona) have found traces of ancient life and matter dating back to 2,300 million years. The discovery was made in rocks in the Transvaal area of South Africa, 320 Kilometres north of 135 Johannesburg.”<sup>132</sup>

Though one is not bound to accept the above mentioned observation as completely true, still the fact stands out pellucidly clear that the universe is much older than what Westerners would have people believe. And considering the fact that Indian tradition teaches that the Veda is as old as the universe, it follows, therefore, that contrary to the conjectual calculations of Max Muller and Tilak, the Veda is approximately one billion years old. Dayananda was convinced of the mistake that Westerners were committing in believing the Veda to be composed as early as 3,000 B.C.<sup>133</sup>

### [The Veda - A work with a Single Purpose?](#)

Radhakrishnan writes that the Atharvaveda was for a long time without the prestige of a Veda.<sup>134</sup> It is “a comparatively late addition to the three ancient Vedas - the Rik, Yajur and Saman.”<sup>135</sup> Other scholars feel that some Mandalas of the Rigveda were composed

<sup>131</sup> RVBB, p.28

<sup>132</sup> Quoted by Lakshmidutta, Veda Mimansa, Eastern Book Linkers, Delhi, 1980, p. xviii

<sup>133</sup> RVBB, p.38

<sup>134</sup> Radhakrishnan, Vol.I, pp. 64-65

<sup>135</sup> Griffith R.T.H., Preface to the Translation of the Atharvaveda.

earlier than other Mandalas, and this can be proved to be so when one examines the language-forms contained in the verses.<sup>136</sup> For this reason, one can refer to the 'older' verses and the 'newer' verses of the Vedas. The Vedas, therefore, were not composed with a singleness of purpose.

Maharshi Dayananda has not devoted pages of his RVBB to deal separately with this contention of European scholars and their Indian pupils. But a careful study of his views contained therein would help dispel the concept of the Vedas being a disharmonious conglomeration of literary pieces that have no sort of inter-connection. Internal evidence quoted by Dayananda would never give credence to this view. There is a verse in the Yajurveda (31:7) which refers to the whole body of Vedic verses divided into four parts - the Richas, the Samans, the Chhandas and the Yajus. Griffith arbitrarily translates the word 'Chhandaansi' in the verse as 'spells and charms'. Incorrect as it is, at least in the opinion of Dayananda, one is prompted to ask a very pertinent question: Which set of hymns do these 'spells and charms' qualify? It certainly cannot be the Yajus, the Richas or the Samans. Whichever is the fourth is indeed the Atharvan, which is recognised not only by tradition but also by the later exegetical literature. In Dayananda's opinion, 'Chhandaansi' in the Yajur- Vedic verse refers to the fourth Veda, the Atharvaveda.<sup>137</sup> It is only but logical to accept it as so. These four parts come together to present a single, harmonious and co-ordinated knowledge of its contents, or in other words, the contents have one single shape of an organic structure. The Rigveda implies the existence and knowledge of the other three Vedas. This view of Dayananda has been presented in this dissertation while discussing the theme of 'The Four Samhitas'. With regards to the concept of the four Vedas possessing a single purpose, the comments of V.V. Deshpande lend substantial support to Dayananda's thesis. He writes:

“Throughout the ages known to history, all the Vedas are known to have given us knowledge having the same general characteristics. They have never varied; nor are they known to have contradicted themselves ..... (they) have been continuously treated as a single entity by the Vedic Hindus, and there is no evidence available to contradict this fact about them.”<sup>138</sup>

### **THE AUTHORITATIVENESS OF THE VEDA**

#### **Introduction:**

Exegetical in nature, the Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads accept the authoritativeness of the Veda resolutely, on the basis that it represents the original word of God. The six Vedangas, being the limbs of the Veda and considered indispensable for a study of the Samhitas, also submit totally to the authority of the Veda. The complete range of Smriti literature, foremost among which is the Manusariti, also vigorously attests to the Veda being the source of all authority.<sup>139</sup> The Epics, the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, the eighteen Puranas, the medical treatises - Charaka and Sushruta -, the Nirukta, and the Natyashastra, all in their own way glorify the Veda as being the source

<sup>136</sup> Winternitz (p.57) writes: "That the collection of (Vedic hymns is the oldest ..... is proved indisputably by the language of the hymns. But the language proves also that the collection is not a single work, but consists of older and later elements ..... The majority of the oldest hymns are to found in Books (Mandalas) II to VII ....."

<sup>137</sup> RVBB, p.12

<sup>138</sup> Deshpande, pp. 28-29

<sup>139</sup> Manusmriti, 2:6

of final authority. These are all texts which make up the range of literature expounding the Vedika Darshan (philosophy of the Vedas).

With the rise of the non-Vedic schools of philosophical thought, one began witnessing the rejection of the Veda as the source of final authority in all matters pertaining to human and divine matters. Famous among these non-Vedic schools are the Charvakas, the Buddhists and the Jainas. When Vedic sacrifices became degenerate, and when Vedic ideas, after years of implementation, started to decline due to a lack of true understanding, Brihaspati, Buddha and Mahavira, inspired with the idea of reform, gave birth to their own protestant movements, revolting against the unethical practices and their established sources, the Vedas. Yaska records even the name of a school, represented by Kautsa, that was famous for classifying the Vedas as a set of meaningless texts (anarthaka hi mantrah).<sup>140</sup> In an effort to rebutt the charges of invalidity of doctrine laid at the door of the Vedas by these heterodox schools, and to reestablish Vedic doctrines on more tested foundations, the six Darshanakaras (Patanjali, Kapila, Gautama, Kanada, Jaimini and Badarayana) aimed at rebuilding the lost prestige of the Vedas.<sup>141</sup> However, with the coming of the Europeans to India, and with their advent into the field of Vedic interpretation, the status of the Veda as being possessed of final authority once again lapsed into a position of uncertainty, since these scholars, like the Indian atheists, denied the Veda the quality of non-human authorship.

#### The Authoritativeness of the Veda and Dayananda :

Dayananda explains his ideas in relation to the authoritativeness of the Veda by quoting from the Darshanakaras. Explaining Kanada's sutra (1:13), he says that the authenticity of the Veda is worthy of being accepted because it enjoins the performances of Dharma and also because it is the word of God, thus being eternal. With Gautama's sutra, Dayananda's ideas become clearer. Commenting on the Nyaya Sutra (2:1:68) he draws a parallel between the Veda on one hand and the Mantras and Ayurveda on the other. The validity of the Ayurveda consists in its veracity, i.e. in the absence of any opposition to facts. When the recommendations of medical science are resolutely followed, the promised results actually take place. Similarly, mantras explain certain facts of science; these are consequently proven to be true and authoritative when experimentally established. In both cases, it is through the instrumentality of creditable and trustworthy persons that one gets access to the recommendations of medical science and to the ideas explaining facts of science. This is a universal principle. The validity of any utterance is established by the trustworthiness of the person uttering it. A trustworthy person is a speaker who has direct knowledge of an object and is motivated by the desire of communicating the object as directly known by him. It is on this ground that Dayananda seeks to establish the authenticity and authoritativeness of the Veda. Just as one discovers by oneself the efficacy of medical prescriptions described in one part of the medical text, and subsequently experiences no hesitation in accepting the validity of the whole text, similarly one should accept the authoritativeness of all of the Veda after establishing the validity of any one part of it. And as the utterance of a trustworthy mortal is accepted without any doubt, similarly the Veda, being the Word of the Most perfectly Trustworthy

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<sup>140</sup> Nirukta 1:15

<sup>141</sup> Radhakrishnan, Vol. 2, p.17

Lord, should be admitted as true unhesitatingly.<sup>142</sup>

Elucidating his ideas further on the notion of authoritativeness, Dayananda affirms that books which are established as being the Word of God, should be credited as possessing an inherent self-authoritativeness of their own, since there can be no error or any such defects in the word of an Omnipresent and Omnipotent Lord, Himself the reservoir of all learning. Such knowledge of the Lord should be comparable to a lamp, or the sun - both, illumined by their own light also illumine other objects. The Vedas, shining with its own light, cause other books to shine. Hence, it should be classified as Svatah Pramana (self-authoritative) while the other texts should be regarded as Paratah Paramana (of dependent authority).

#### Criterion of Authoritativeness:

Once, when Pandit Maheshchandra Nyayaratna, Principal of the Calcutta Sanskrit College, accused Maharshi Dayananda of being very partial in establishing such criterion of authoritativeness, that results in an arbitrary selection of the Veda and an undesirable exclusion of several texts held to be holy by the Hindus, the Swami gave an answer that throws light on a very important question: Why should one accept the Veda, to the exclusion of other texts, as authoritative? “After several years of investigation, (pariksha ke anusar)”, writes the Swami, “I have discovered not the slightest defect nor the least opposition to the dictates of reason in the Vedas, for which reason my faith rests on them.”<sup>143</sup> It means therefore, that apart from establishing the authoritativeness of the Veda on the grounds of scriptural proof, Dayananda does not fail to search his own reason and intellect and to make use of his capacity to investigate and find out for himself. At the same time, he did not allow fanaticism to bind him only to the Veda; he made place for books other than the Veda to find a place among the list of authoritative books. In this respect he writes, “According to my own investigation and definite conclusion, I accept as authoritative a range of approximately three thousand texts extending from the Rigveda to the Purva Mimansa.”<sup>144</sup> These books other than the Veda, should however be accepted to be authoritative only in-so-far as they concur with the dictates of the Veda. No one should accept the authority of other works composed by persons lacking credibility, which are opposed to what the Veda teaches and which, exhibiting poor knowledge, are bereft of the support of reason and evidence.<sup>145</sup> In the list of spurious works, Dayananda includes the Tantra-works, the eighteen Puranas and their sub-Puranas, the interpolated parts of the Manu and other Smritis, grammars other than that of Panini, several glosses on the Mimansa and other Darshanas, books dealing with Astrology, unauthorised works opposed to the Shrauta Sutras, and books which teach methods of acquiring salvation not advocated by the Yoga and other Shastras; in other words, books written by hypocrites and sectarian people who advocate atheism.

#### **THE RISHI OF THE VEDIC VERSES**

##### Introductory:

The Vedas, as we possess them, are four systematically arranged collections of hymns

<sup>142</sup> RVBB, pp. 44-47

<sup>143</sup> Shranti Nivarana, Dayanand Laghu Granth Sangraha, p.199

<sup>144</sup> Ibid, p.198

<sup>145</sup> RVBB, p.354



and verses, and the 'Veda' is often used in the sense of these four Vedas taken together. The Rigveda contains 1,028 Suktas (hymns) divide into ten Mandalas. Each Sukta is made up of a number of mantras (verses) all of which are addressed to different Devatas. The person or object to whom or to which the content of a mantra is addressed is regarded as the Devata of that mantra while there is a poet whose name is appended to every mantra. This poet is the Rishi (the seer). The Chhandas are the metres in which the particular mantras are composed, and these are strictly regulated. Each mantra, therefore, has a Rishi, Devata and Chhanda ascribed to it.

#### Definitions of the term 'Rishi':

There are two schools of thought which are at variance in understanding the term 'Rishi'! The first school advocates that the Rishi is he who, in the deepest state of Samadhi has realised the deepest imports of the Vedic mantra (Rishayo mantra-drashtarah). Supporting this definition, Yaska, the famous author of the Nirukta, posits that the word Rishi is derived from the Sanskrit verbal root 'rish' to see, and that a rishi is so called from his having vision. 'He saw the hymns', Yaska quotes his predecessor Aupamanyava. This is a known fact, he continues saying, because the self-born Brahma manifested himself to them (the Rishis) while practising austerities, and so they became seers; that is the characteristic (Rishitva) of the Rishis. (2:11). Earlier in his Nirukta, Yaska again defines the Rishis as seers who had direct intuitive insight into the imports of the Vedic verses (Sakshat- krita-dharmanah rishayo babhuvuh,1:20)

The second school differs from the first by defining the 'Rishi' as "he to whom the mantra belongs" (yasya vakyam sa rishih). In other words, the Rishi is he who is the author of the mantra; he composed it to address it in praise of a particular deity. The thesis of this latter school is that the Veda, like the Ramayana and Mahabharata, is of human authorship; the only difference is that while the latter two texts were composed, in the main, by one author each, the Veda is not a single work, but consists of older and later elements. The Vedic mantras, composed at widely separated periods of time, were later brought together at some time in one collection. These composers of the mantras were, in later literature, called Rishis who had visions of the imports of the mantras (mantra-drashtarah). The following quotations would prove the thesis of this school:-

namah rishibhyo mantra-kridbhyo mantra-patibyah (Taith. Aranyaka 4:1:1)

namah rishibhyo mantrakridbhyo mantrapatibyah (Shankhayana Aranyaka 7:1)

yavanto va mantrakritah (Katyayana Shrautasuta 3:2:9)

shraddhaya duhita tapaso 'dhijata svasarshinam mantrakritam babhuva (Kathaka GS 4:1:13)

Kutsa rishir bhavati kartta stomanam ity-aupaman yavah (Nirukta 3:11)

In the above quotations, the Rishis have been qualified as 'Mantrakarta', the composers of the Mantras. It means, therefore, that on the basis of the famous sutra of the Sarvanukramani of Katyayana as (yasya vakyam sa rishih), the Rishi to whom a mantra has been ascribed is to be regarded as the composer of the mantra.

#### Dayananda and the term 'Rishi'

Dayananda dismisses the propositions of the school supported by Katyayana by saying that these Rishis whose names are ascribed to the mantras are those who discovered the real imports of the verses subsequent to their revelation by God. The fact that they practised deep austerities and endured much toil and effort to bring to light the deepest



meanings of the verse after having meditated upon God and obtained his favour, is worthy of being remembered by all. So that generations to come may be aware of the contribution of these seers towards keeping alive the tradition of the Veda, it is but meet and just that their names be appended to each mantra.<sup>146</sup> This must, however, not be construed to mean that the Rishis are the authors of the mantras. No one Rishi, not even Brahma, could have been the composer of the Vedas. Such a concept does not stand the test of truth – in fact it is a false notion, since it is contradicted by internal and external evidence. Even the tradition that attests to Vyasa as being the composer of the Vedas is equally false.<sup>147</sup> The truth of it all is that Brahma and Vyasa learnt the Vedas from the Rishis senior to them.

### OBSERVATIONS :

If one were to assume that the Rishis were indeed the composers of the mantras, how can one then explain the apparent mystery of one mantra having more than one Rishi-composer? In the Rigveda, there are several hymns and mantras, each of which has more than one Rishi ascribed to it.<sup>148</sup> Is it to be assumed that more than one composer ended up composing words of the same sequential order? This sounds impossible and absurd.

The Aitareya Brahmana (6:18) and Gopatha (6:1) provide evidence to show that it was Vishvamitra who had first visualised the mantras of Rigveda 4:19, after which Vamadeva taught them among the people of his time. The Sarvanukramani records Vamadeva as the Rishi of the Sukta mentioned. It means, therefore, according to the evidence of Katyayana's Sarvanukramani, that the Sukta was in existence prior to Vamadeva's association with it; thus Vamadeva, the Rishi to whom the hymn is ascribed, is not the composer of the verses contained therein. In the same way, the Kaushitaki Brahmana (12:1) records Kavasha as one who had re-seen the Rig sukta 10:30 (kavashasyaisha mahima suktasya chanuvedita). It means therefore, through the use of the word 'anuvedita', that some Rishi before Kavash had already realised the hymn, a fact which points to the existence of the hymn before Kavasha had actually realised it. These are two of so many available facts collected together by Yudhishtir Mimansaka<sup>149</sup> and Bhagavaddatta<sup>150</sup> that prove the existence of the mantras prior to those who had realised their imports.

One now needs to investigate the meaning of the word 'mantra-krit', because it is on the basis of this word and its supposed meaning of 'mantra-composer' that the Katyayana school finds support for its hypothesis that propounds that the Rishis are not the seers but the actual composers of the mantras. Mantra, besides technically referring to the verse of the Vedic Samhita, literally means 'thought' when derived from the verbal root 'man' to think. 'Karta' comes from the root 'kri' which ordinarily yields the sense of 'to do, or to make'. Monier Williams however makes a significant observation, saying:

“The senses of 'kri' may be variously modified or almost infinitely extended according to the noun with which this root is connected. Examples are:

sakhyam kri - to contract friendship

<sup>146</sup> RVBB, p.426

<sup>147</sup> Ibid, p.23

<sup>148</sup> For example, RV 1:100; 1:165; 4:18

<sup>149</sup> Mimansak Y., Vaidik Siddhanta Mimansa, p. 312 ff

<sup>150</sup> Bhagavaddutta, Vaidik Vangmai ka Itihas Vol.I, pp.207-71

kshanam kri - to wait a moment  
ardham kri - to take to one's side  
matim kri - to resolve  
(Sanskrit Dictionary, p.301)

In the same way, one is not expected to be bound to translate the term 'mantram kri' to mean only 'to compose a mantra', but to yield other notions in relation to the mantra. And in the case of Aupamanyaya referring to the Rishi Kutsa as being the karta of the mantra, (Nirukta 3:11) we are fortunate to have Aupamanyava himself throwing light on what he intended by the use of the term. Explaining the word 'Rishi', he is quoted by Yasya as saying that the Rishi saw the hymns (stoman adadarsha 2:11). Comparing these two statements of Aupamanyava would reveal that the etymologist felt that 'kri' would yield the subordinate sense of 'to see' in addition to its principal meanings. Mantrakrit would, therefore, also mean a seer of the mantra. Even Sayana, himself commenting on the words 'rishir-mantrakrit' as used in the Aitareya Brahmana 6:1, accepts that 'krit' can mean also 'to see'. He says:

Rishir atindriyarthadrashhtamantrakrit. Karotidhatus tatra darshanarthah.<sup>151</sup>

Bhattachabaskara, too, like Sayana, accepts that 'krit' yields the sense of 'to see'; he says:  
Atha nama rishibhyo mantra-kridbhyo mantranam drashtribbhyah darshanam  
kartritvam.<sup>152</sup>

A student of Sanskrit Language and Literature would also know that an ornament maker, (a goldsmith) and a smoulder of iron, (an iron-smith) are respectively called Suvarnakara and Lohakara in Sanskrit. In case of both these words, the meaning of 'kara' suffixed to 'suvarna' and 'loha' denotes an artist who makes an operation on gold or iron so as to manufacture other things from them. But he is not a maker of either gold or iron simply because he is designated by the terms 'Suvarnakara' and 'Lohakara'. In the same way, the 'makers of the Vedic verses' were those who had made certain operations on such verses - i.e. contemplated deeply on the contents of these verses and discovered the secrets therein - and not made the verse anew by themselves.

Finally, the words of M.P. Pandit will help to add considerable weight to Dayananda's thesis. After quoting Sayana's statement that: the Rishis "are not creators of the Veda but seers (na hi vedasya kartaro drashtarah sarva eva hi)", the learned author comments: "In the course of their Tapasya, the Rishis came across truths in an un-ideaed form which pressed upon them and through them for expression. From the depths and heights of the soul where they perceived the spiritual truths of Divine import the Rishis dug them out ..... they carved them out..... to the best of their capacity and clothed them with human speech..... This is the explanation of the traditional ascription of non-human character to the mantras."<sup>153</sup>

## **THE DEVATA OF THE VEDIC VERSES**

### **'Devata' and Western Scholars:**

Before the coming of Swami Dayananda, Western Vedic Scholars understood the Vedic devata to refer to a god, a deity or a fetish. A mantra of the Vedic Samhitas was addressed to a particular deity. These deities were worshipped by the ancient Aryans, and

<sup>151</sup> Quoted by Y.Mimamsaka, Op.cit., p.334

<sup>152</sup> Quoted by Y.Mimamsaka, Op.cit., p.334

<sup>153</sup> Pandit H.P., Mystic Approach to the Vedas and Upanishads, Shri Aurobindo Library, Madras, p.31

such deity-worship was one of the principal characteristics of the religion represented in the Vedas and the primitive creed of the Indo-Aryans about twelve or thirteen centuries before Christ. Explaining the concept of this worship, Monier Williams says: "o our Aryan forefathers in their Asiatic Home, God's power was exhibited in the forces of nature even more evidently than to ourselves. Lands, houses, flocks, herd, men and animals were more frequently than in Western climates at the mercy of winds, fire and water, and the sun's rays appeared to be endowed with a potency quite beyond the experience of any European country. We cannot be surprised, then, that these forces were regarded by our Eastern progenitors as actual manifestations, either of one deity in different moods or of separate rival deities contending for supremacy. Nor is it wonderful that these mighty agencies should have been at first poetically personified, and afterwards, when invested with forms, attributes, and individuality, worshipped as different gods."<sup>154</sup> Explaining "the process of god-making in the factory of man's mind" as is seen in the Rigveda, Radhakrishnan writes: "The feeling of the incompleteness of the world, the weakness of man, the need felt for a higher spirit, a guide, a friend, a support on which man could rest, to whom he could appeal in distress, is natural to the sick heart of man. At that early age nothing could answer to this feeling for the infinite so well as the boundless and brilliant firmament of heaven. The sun and the moon and the stars may change, storms break and clouds roll away, but the sky abides forever."<sup>155</sup> Hence, the sky or heaven was duly deified as the "Heavenly Father", and the mantra-composing Rishi started addressing his Hymns to the deity, seeking its protection and blessings. The earth, too, was duly deified as the "Infinite Expanse - Aditi, the Mother of all the gods". The earliest composers of hymns delighted in these forces-turned-deities which duly became suffused with souls, and thereby possessed with a living presence with which the poets of the Vedas could hold communion.

Observing that the Rigveda recognises the number of deities as thirty-three, Arthur Berriedale Keith points out that all these gods are conceived of as anthropomorphic, since mention is made, in connection with many of them, of the head, face, mouth, hair, arms, hands, feet and other limbs. "They wear garments, that of Dhanu being marked out by its brilliance, and the gods often are represented as wearing coats of mail, and bearing weapons such as bow, the spear, the battle-axe..... All the gods too have luminous chariots..... They live together in the highest heaven, and together they come when invoked to the offering strew in their chariots, or remaining in heaven, they receive the oblations which are brought to them by the god Agni, the messenger between men and gods. Their food is the same, milk, butter, barley, oxen, goats, sheep..... They enjoy together the Soma drink, by which they won immortality."<sup>156</sup>

In their further analyses of the concept of the Vedic devata in relation to the hymns, Westerners affirm that only a few of the hymns appear to contain the simple conception of one divine self-existent omnipresent Being, and even in these, the idea of one God present in all nature is somewhat nebulous and undefined. And this has caused Max Muller to declare himself unable to decide whether the Vedic religion was monotheistic or not. Side by side of such passages as affirm the unity of the Godhead, which are few in number, "there are thousands in which ever so many beings are praised and prayed to.

<sup>154</sup> Williams H., Indian Wisdom, pp. 10-11

<sup>155</sup> Radhakrishnan, Vol.I, pp. 75-76, 73

<sup>156</sup> Keith A.B., Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and Upanishads, Harvard Oriental Series, (31),p.87

Their number is sometimes given as ‘thrice eleven’ or thirty-three ....”, but still “there are not wanting passages in which the poet is carried away into exaggerations, till he proclaims the number of his gods to be, not only thirty-three, but three thousand three hundred and thirty-nine.”<sup>157</sup> Whenever invoked, one god is not thought of as limited by the powers of another god, or as superior or inferior in rank. Each god is to the mind of the supplicant as good as all other gods. At the time that one god is invoked, all the rest disappear for a moment from the vision of the poet, and he alone who is to fulfil their desires stands in full light before those who worship. Such a mode of worship is definitely not Monotheism, nor Polytheism, affirms Max Muller. “If we must have a name for it, I should call it Kathenotheism.”<sup>158</sup> This name signifies the worship of single gods, each occupying for a time a supreme position. The learned Professor calls such a worship by yet another name, Henotheism.<sup>159</sup>

#### 'Devata', Dayananda and Monotheism:

Reacting to the foregoing concepts regarding Devata, Maharshi Dayananda seriously felt that the foreign Vedic commentators misunderstood the true concept of the Vedic devata, and a faulty conception led them to perceptions that cannot be substantiated. Devata is not a god, or a deity or a fetish. Neither does the term exclusively refer to God. “Whatsoever or whosoever possesses useful and brilliant qualities is called a devata.”<sup>160</sup> Anyone or anything that satisfies the foregoing definition can be classified as a devata - be it God, learned men, and human beings (mother, father, instructor, guest), sun and other luminaries.<sup>161</sup> When using the word 'devata' the attributive connotation of the term is uppermost in the mind of the speaker. Radhakrishnan supports Dayananda for propounding such a theory.<sup>162</sup> And much before Dayananda, Yaska also understood the term the same way, Devata is the same as deva, says the etymologist; and deva is so called because he makes gifts, or because he shines (with brilliance and radiance), or because his sphere is heaven. (Nirukta 7:15). Learned men are devatas because they keep giving to the world, says Dayananda. The sun and other luminaries are devatas because they shine with brilliance and radiance; even parents, the teacher and the holy guest shine in their own way. And God, the Illuminator of all illuminators, is also a Devata as He lives in the solar or other rays or in the sun itself, or in the vital airs. Even the sense organs and the mind can be classified as devatas since they throw light on both the true and the untrue, thereby helping man to distinguish between them; in addition to this, these sense organs convey to man the sense of sound, touch, smell, taste and hearing. There are thirty-three such devatas mentioned in the Vedas,<sup>163</sup> and an enumeration of their names can be found in the Shatapatha Brahmana.<sup>164</sup> Dayananda quotes from this source naming them as:

The eight Vasus which are (a) heated cosmic bodies, (b) planets, (c) the atmosphere, (d) super-terrestrial space, (e) rays of etherial space, (f) suns, (g) satellites, and (h) stars.

<sup>157</sup> Vedas, p.84

<sup>158</sup> Ibid, p. 27

<sup>159</sup> Ibid, p. 85

<sup>160</sup> SPII, p. 203

<sup>161</sup> RVBB, p. 83

<sup>162</sup> Radhakrishnan, vol.I, pp. 72-73

<sup>163</sup> Vide R.V. 8:28:1; Y.V. 14:31; A.V. 10:7:23

<sup>164</sup> Shatapatha Brahmana, 14:5

These are called Vasus because they are the abode of all that moves, lives and exists.

The eleven Rudras which are the ten pranas - nervauric forces-enlivening the human body, and the eleventh being the human spirit. They are called Rudras because when they leave the body, they cause other relatives to weep.

The twelve Adityas - the twelve months of the year. These are called Adityas because they encompass the whole creation from all sides; with the passing of each moment, they bring each creature nearer to the end of life; revolving like a wheel they bring with them decay and death for any created object.

Electricity called Indra from being possessed of mighty powers.

Yajna called Prajapati from causing benefit to mankind.<sup>165</sup>

These thirty-three aforesaid entities are called devatas by virtue of possessing useful qualities and properties. God is called the thirty-fourth devata since He is the Lord of all Devatas, the Mahadeva.

Reacting sharply to Max Muller's concept of Henotheism in the Vedas, which says that each of the thirty-three devatas is worshipped separately, and furthermore, that they are worshipped in the place of 'Dayananda's thirty-fourth Devata', the Swami comes forward very boldly with innovative thinking that is aimed at creating new dimensions in the definition of the term 'worship'. Puja, the Sanskrit equivalent for the English term 'worship', contains in it several shades of meaning. In addition to the sense of reverencing with supreme respect and veneration, 'Puja' also yields the senses of treating properly or desirably, behaving agreeably with, or acting in conformity with the nature of a person or a thing.<sup>166</sup> Hence, when one is exhorted to worship the eye, one has to first understand the form of worship that would be suitable to the eye. The nature and function of the eye is to see. To make proper use of the eye, and to protect it from being harmed, so that it can function effectively is the most commendable form of worship one can perform for the eye. And so it is with the other Devatas. A different form of worship is peculiar to and characteristic of each of the thirty-three Devatas. God is no exception to this principle. The worship due to Him, the thirty-fourth Devata, is characteristically different from that due to the thirty-three other devatas. God, Brahman, is alone to be communed with, invoked for help, adored and honoured as the "Creator of the universe, Almighty, the object of all worship and adoration, All-sustainer, Omnipresent, the Origin of all, Eternal, All-consciousness, All-bliss, Unborn, Just etc. He alone, the Supreme Lord, is to be worshipped by all men. He alone is the ultimate goal of all the Vedas."<sup>167</sup> This is the ideal as represented in the Vedas, as can be evidenced from the various verses attesting to the unity of God.<sup>168</sup> The ancient Aryas, avers Dayananda, were monotheistic worshippers, and any form of worship other than monotheism is characteristically un-Aryan. History as recorded in the Shatapatha Brahmana stands as irrefutable evidence of the truth of this fact.<sup>169</sup>

The question of being sentient, non-sentient, bodied or bodiless has nothing to do with devata-hood. To be classified as a devata depends on a thing or person being possessed of shining and useful qualities. The authoritativeness of the Veda does not become vitiated

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<sup>165</sup> RVBB, pp. 89-90

<sup>166</sup> Ibid, p.92

<sup>167</sup> Ibid, p.91

<sup>168</sup> R.V. 1:164:46; Y.V. 32:1; A.V. 10:7:12

<sup>169</sup> RVBB, p.94

if it ordains the worship of both sentient and non-sentient beings as devatas. One has to understand the concept of worship as it applies to the thirty-three devatas on one hand, and to the thirty-fourth on the other. Whenever in the Vedas is ordained the worship of the Devata in the sense of honouring, communing and praising, such worship is due to God alone.

The claims by Europeans and their Indian followers of pantheistic ideas found in the Vedas have been cherished only because they could not understand the true definition of the term Devata and the concept of devata-worship. Their view that the Aryans were worshippers of material gods, and only with the passage of several ages could they have gradually conceived of monotheistic notions is also one that is erroneous. In spearheading such a refutation of the principal hypotheses originated by European Indologists, Dayananda is extended full support by Aurobindo when he writes:

"One Existent, the sages - not the ignorant, mind you, but the seers, the men of knowledge - speak of in many ways, as Indra, as Yama, as Matarishwan, as Agni. The Vedic Rishis ought to have known something about their own religion more, let us hope, than Roth or Max Muller, and this is what they knew ..... Dayananda's view is quite clear, its foundation is inexpugnable. The Vedic hymns are chanted to the One Deity under many names, names which are used and even designated to express His qualities and powers....."<sup>170</sup>

Like Aurobindo, Dvijadas Dutta supports Dayananda in refuting Max Muller in the following words:

"As to Max Muller's charge of Henotheism or worship of many single gods or a number of independent deities, it represents the Rishis as flattering sycophants or cowardly liars who could call each single god as the One Supreme Being, only to avert the wrath of that god, knowing at the same time that he was not telling the truth."

Dvijadas then asks the reader to evaluate Max Muller's charge in the light of the several passages in the Rigveda propounding the worship of One God.<sup>171</sup>

#### The Devata in the Vedic mantra:

Defining a Devata as is related to a mantra, Yaska writes; "A particular mantra is said to belong to a Devata to whom a Rishi addresses his panegyrics with a particular desire and from whom he wishes to obtain his object." (Nirukta 7:1). In other words, as Uvvata and Shadgurushishya point out, the devata is that which is described, explained or presented by the mantra.<sup>172</sup> Dayananda also provides his definition of a devata in the following words:

"The subject matter dealt with in a mantra is styled as its Devata."<sup>173</sup>

The names of substances occurring in a mantra serve as an indication of a devata. For instance, in the following mantra of the Yajurveda, the word Agni occurs:

"I set Agni, the envoy, in front. I praise Him as the bearer of the oblations. May he cause the learned men to sit here." (YV. 22:17)

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<sup>170</sup> Aurobindo, Dayananda and the Veda, p.17

<sup>171</sup> Dvijadas Dutt, Rig veda Unveiled, pp. 140-141

<sup>172</sup> (1) Atha Devata Mattra-vakya-abhidheyah (commencement of Uvvata's Yajurveda Commentary).

(2) Tena Vakyaena yet pratipadyam vastu sa devata.  
(Saravanukramani):2:5)

<sup>173</sup> RVBB, p.428

The word 'Agni' used is an indication of the devata of the stanza. In an effort to ascertain the devata of a mantra in which there is no definite indication of the same, Dayananda adopts the method suggested by Yaska in the seventh chapter of the Nirukta.<sup>174</sup>

## **SCIENCE IN THE VEDAS**

### **Introductory:**

As if to point to the contents of the Vedas, Prof. H.H.Wilson, in an Introduction to his translation of the Rigveda writes:

"When the texts of the Rig and Yajurveda are completed, we shall be in the possession of materials sufficient for the safe appreciation of the results to be derived from them, and of the actual conditions of the Hindus, both political and religious, at a date co-eval with that of the yet earliest known records of social organisation.....; the Vedas give us abundant information respecting all that is most interesting in the contemplation of antiquity."<sup>175</sup>

In other words, Wilson feels that the Vedas are important as they provide a body of facts dealing with the age of the earliest times. Winternitz also believes that "these songs are of incalculable value to us as evidence of the oldest religious faith of the Aryan Indians."<sup>176</sup>

And this religious faith represented in the Rigveda, says Radhakrishnan, is that of an unsophisticated age. "The great mass of the hymns are simple and naive, expressing the religious consciousness of a mind yet free from the later sophistication."<sup>177</sup> Such hymns of an unsophisticated people can only be primaeval, child-like and naive, as Pfeleiderer claims, or making up "rubbish" as Max Muller observes.

Dayananda forcefully disagrees with the foregoing contentions. In his considered opinion which finds support in all the testimonies of the Rishis, the Vedas are not texts written to record the happenings of any particular age, nor written for or by people of any age concerned. The contents are not historical in nature; they are eternally instructive. Europeans have failed to suggest convincingly any date for the Vedas, whereas the internal and external evidences are crystal clear on this one point - that the Vedas are revelatory in character, and were thus given in the very beginning of human creation. And for them to be justified as texts revealed for human society to be endowed with the necessary capacity to harness the bounties of nature for the common good of all humankind, it is of absolute necessity that they contain in themselves at least the seed of all branches of learning. Dayananda's hypothesis is that the Vedas do contain descriptions of the basic principles of all sciences - spiritual, physical and social - and before starting the commentary proper on the Vedas in which these sciences are described, he sets out in his RVBB to prove and lay bare for the scrutiny of scholars the truth of this revolutionary theory of his. In his own time, Max Muller and others did not take him too seriously when he claimed that the Vedas contain the germs of all true science. In fact, Max Muller deemed his labour to prove such a hypothesis "a painful instance". However, many years later, Aurobindo figured first among renowned scholars to commend Dayananda for being "the first discoverer of the right clues" leading to a knowledge of the theories of science in the Vedas. Actually, "there is nothing fantastic in Dayananda's idea that the

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid, p.82 ff

<sup>175</sup> Quoted by Radhakrishnan, Vol.I, pp.63-64

<sup>176</sup> Winternitz, p.79

<sup>177</sup> Op.cit., p.69



Veda contains truths of science as well as truths of religion. I will add my own conviction that the Veda contains truths of a science the modern world does not at all possess, and in that case Dayananda has rather understated than overstated the depth and range of the Vedic wisdom".<sup>178</sup>

### Spiritual Sciences:

The science of the self (Brahma Vidya) is foremost among the sciences described in the Vedas,<sup>179</sup> since it is the knowledge whereby one realises the nature and bliss of God. Such a science is accorded the foremost status because the Supreme Lord is the chief-most and highest among all entities. Quoting from the Rigveda (1:22:30), Dayananda points out that the learned men always keep within their focus the thought of the bliss of Emancipation, the source of which is Vishnu, the Pervader of the entire universe. Such an experience of bliss called paramam padam is not restricted by space, time or any other extraneous force, and can be had anywhere, as the source (God) is everywhere at all times. Emancipation from pain and the resultant experience of divine bliss is the purpose of all human activity; for this reason, Dayananda says, the knowledge related to it, the Science of the Self, is appropriately and justifiably awarded the highest honour in the Veda, the book of all eternal wisdom.

In emancipation, the individual soul becomes eternally happy by attaining to the Supreme Being - the ultimate goal of all the released souls - who is liberation itself, and who is defined as All-existence, All-consciousness and All-bliss.<sup>180</sup> Such a state is the result of purging oneself of delusion and sinful conduct and of development through righteous deeds. The delusion which militates against the soul attaining to a state of bliss is the result of the process wherein one understands the non-eternal as eternal, impure as pure, painful as pleasant, and the non-self as the self. This delusion or ignorance is furthermore the field in which the afflictions of egoism (asmita), attachment (raga), aversion (dvesha), and clinging-to-life (abhinivesha) germinate and grow. With the destruction of such ignorance is brought about the absence of the junction of the seer (soul) and the seen (matter), thereby resulting in the Absolute independence of the soul.

Snapping asunder such bonds of delusion for the realisation of the bliss of Kaivalya requires of the aspirant to submit himself to a process of intense meditation, worship and communion which is called Upasana in the Rigvedadibhashya- bhumika. Explaining the mantras from the Rigveda (5:81:1), and the Yajurveda (11:1-5), Dayananda points out that the Yogis fix their minds on and commune with God, thinking of Him as the Creator of the universe who witnesses all deeds - good and bad - and surveys all creatures. His presence in the universe causes light to be present therein. Unto such a One all men desirous of snapping asunder the chains of bondage and ignorance should offer their meditations. He, the Inspirer very graciously becomes pleased to direct unto Himself the minds and intellects of all those who strive to realise the reality of Divine Existence. The Yogi in his meditations, becoming aware of the all-illuminating nature of God, gives Him a place of the highest honour in his heart. This distinguishes the Yogi from the ordinary mortal who is oblivious of his own bondage.<sup>181</sup> When he will have acquired clear

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<sup>178</sup> Quoted by Paramanand, p. xci

<sup>179</sup> RVBB, p.130, 55,58

<sup>180</sup> Ibid, p.252, 245-246

<sup>181</sup> Ibid, p.213, 214, 221

perception (kranta-darshana), a pure and placid intellect and the power of concentration of mind, the Yogi then tries to subdue the functions of the arteries and veins through Yogic exercises so that he can gradually become aware of the Divine existence within him. Dayananda, on the strength of the purport of the Yajurvedic mantra (12:68), explains that the arteries are the seat of the vital airs, and in these the Yogi meditates on God. For such exercises of meditation, an aspirant should seek out a place which is clean, neat, pleasant and solitary, and then purging his mind of all impurities, becoming self-composed, subduing and concentrating all the senses and the mind, and contemplating upon the Supreme Being, offering adoration and prayer unto Him, he should again, and again fix his mind and soul thereon.

To provide a detailed explanation of how the mind works, how the powers of the mind become vitiated or enhanced through the operations of the mental operations, and how the mind is to be trained for the practice of meditation, Dayananda quotes fifty-one Sutras from Patanjali's Yoga Darshana, appending his own unique commentary. At times, he digresses from the contents of Vyas' commentary on the Yoga Philosophy.<sup>182</sup>

Dayananda writes a commentary on the Atharvavedic mantra (5:1:2) and affirms that failure to achieve emancipation in the current life-time results in a soul having to be born again and again until he attains to complete liberation from pain. A man who has performed righteous deeds in his previous life assumes good bodies in his successive birth on the strength of those virtuous deeds. Evil deeds can never ensure for him a human body. He has to suffer afflictions commensurate with his evil deeds, and so is condemned to be born in the body of a lower specie. After leaving the current body at the time of death, the soul enters substances like air, water, medicinal herbs etc., and then through them enters into a new body in accordance with the fruits of its former good or bad deeds.<sup>183</sup>

Quoting Yajurveda (19:47) Dayananda explains that there are two separate paths in this world for experiencing the fruits of righteous and evil deeds, the path of the Pitara and that of the Devas, called Pitriyana and Devayana respectively. When a soul assumes human form through the instrumentality of mother and father and experiences pleasure and pain as per his good and bad deeds, such a soul is said to be travelling on the path called Pitriyana. On the other hand, the soul travelling on the Devayana path attains to the state of Nirvana or Moksha and is liberated from the ever revolving cycle of birth and death. Through these two paths all souls pass and repass.<sup>184</sup>

### Social Sciences:

In previous sections of this dissertation, we have presented and discussed Dayananda's ideas on human society - the contribution expected of each human being towards building a composite and morally strong society, and the responsibility that society has to fulfil in respect of each constituent member. When a soul comes into contact with the vast multiform world after having assumed a body, his immediate needs are taken care of by the family unit in which he has his birth. A stranger as he is, he is given all the love and attention needed to make him capable to perform in his later life. Such a family unit has its beginnings in married life - the life in which one witnesses two people, previously

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid, pp.221-249

<sup>183</sup> Ibid, p.186

<sup>184</sup> Ibid, p.273

unknown to each other, coming together to pool their resources in togetherness and establish a form of unity based on metaphysical lines. This earthly whole establishes itself as a part of the cosmic whole, and eternal laws governing the universe can be manifestly seen in operation in this marital whole. In other words, marriage is a divinely-ordained institution. The primary function of this marital unity is to lend sustenance to the world order - in which one can find the presence of millions of living creatures, those who live on earth, in the atmosphere and in water. The two married people supplement each other to serve not only themselves, but creatures living around them. And to provide them the framework whereby they carry out this sacred duty with utmost devotion and in an efficacious manner, the Rishis have ordained the rule of the Pancha Maha Yajnas (the five great daily duties), and the socio-religious organisation called the varnashrama dharma - by which a person chooses the particular stage of life and vocation suited to him most. And side by side with this, comes the political apparatus so much necessary for the maintenance of law and order. All these foregoing ingredients come together to ensure a well-ordered society made up of responsible constituent-members, each of whom can finally achieve the very end of all human endeavours. This final end is Moksha or Nirvana. To arrive at the truth about the foregoing doctrine of the human being in relation to society, Dayananda has taken much inspiration from the contents of the mantras of the Vedas. In his Rigvedadibhashyabhumika, he proves that thoughts related to psychology, sociology, politics and social aspects of religion can be found in the Vedas. For this reason, he dedicates pages of his text to deal with Marriage and Niyoga (277-87). Five daily duties (322-51), Varnas and Ashramas (305-12), and Politics (287-304).

#### Physical Sciences:

Dayananda makes a very bold claim of ideas dealing with physical sciences being present in the Vedas. It is on this question that Europeans like Max Muller and Indians like Pandit Maheshchandra Nyayaratna have expressed disappointment at what they felt was Dayananda's virtual misrepresentation of the contents of the Vedas. One topic related to physical sciences treated in the Rigvedadibhashyabhumika, and perhaps the most controversial in the eyes of his opponents is that of "The Art of Building Ships and Aerial Cars". The first mantra he quotes in his chapter is from the Rigveda (1:116:3):

Tugro ha bhujyum ashvinodameghe

Rayim na kashchin mamrivan avaha.

Tam uhathurnaubhir atmanvartibhir - antarikshaprudbhir apodakabhih.

This mantra Griffith translated as follows:

Yea, Ashwins, as a dead man leaves his riches, Tugra left Bhujyu in the cloud of waters.

Ye brought him back in animated vessels, traversing air, unwetted by the billows.

All scholars prior to Dayananda have established references to historical events on the basis of the word Tugra and Bhujyu. In Sayana's opinion, Tugra was a King and his son was Bhujyu. Tugra was a great friend of the Ashwins. Troubled by enemies residing on a different island, he sent his son against them with an army on board ship. After sailing some distance, the ship encountered a storm and ended up being lost. Bhujyu invoked the help of the Ashwins who, with their own ships helped to bring together again his army. Such meanings in Dayananda's estimation are invalid because the Vedas existed much before the time when the Bhujyu and Tugra had existed. Such criticisms against Sayana and Griffith are indeed valid; this being so, it becomes interesting to see how Dayananda applies his etymological method to arrive at his own understanding of the mantra.

Tugru is not the name of a historical personage but refers to a man possessing a specific desire. He being desirous of riches (reyim) and things of enjoyment (bhujyu) should accomplish his desires with the aid of material and physical sciences. He, by constructing ships of wood, iron etc., and by using fire and water (Ashvina) (for producing steam) may make voyages in the ocean for export and import and thus amass riches. By adopting this practice, none can die of starvation and without assets, for he will have laboured much. Hence, ships should be launched in the ocean for trafficking from one country to another. How are ships to be constructed? Ships are to be constructed with metals like iron, copper and silver, or with wood, and with the use of heat and light- producing energy. These substances (ashvins) when rightly used, enable men to travel from one country to the next in all comfort. These ships must be firm and steady. (atmanvati- bhih). Similar to sea-ships can be constructed air-ships traversing the upper regions (antarikshaprudbhih), both of which should be water-proof (apodaka). In this way, people should construct means of communication like vehicles, ships and aerial cars. These should be swift to cross the sea-space air-space and land-space in record time, as if they are equipped with countless feet (shata-padbhih). They should be constructed with several mechanical fittings, fastenings and regulating apparatus so that they can remain firm and steady. Steam is the form of energy to be used to propel them into motion. This steam is obtained from a conjunction of air, fire and water.<sup>185</sup>

In the commentary on the Rigveda mantra (1:34:2), Dayananda further explains that for the creation of smooth (and graceful) motion in a car, and for the speediest locomotion, there should be attached three Vajra-like solid sets of wheels mechanically prepared. Constructors should erect three supports to keep the car firm and steady and to preserve the various mechanical devices firm in their respective places. Dayananda talks of even a fly-wheel, the function of which is to keep the machinery in rotation, and those mechanisms to put the ship into and out of motion.

The Rigveda (1:119:10) bears a reference to Telegraphy also. A pure white metal which is a good conductor of electricity should be charged with electric current and made use of in the construction of a telegraphic apparatus. Being repeatedly punched (literally, struck) it transmits. Such an apparatus proves useful in military operations, because with it an army can transmit its messages to various places.<sup>186</sup>

In the realm of philosophical speculation, there has always been the persistent question, who created the universe? Did the creator fashion the universe completely out of His own nature or through His power acting on an eternally pre-existent material cause? Dayananda, in his chapter on 'Cosmogony', quotes the famous Purusha Sukta found in both the Rig and Yajur Vedas, explaining that "all this universe that we see was duly created by God." He preserves it, and at the time of dissolution He disintegrates it, making it disappear. The action is repeated again and again for ever. In this hymn, and in the commentary he appends, Dayananda represents the most advanced theory of creation.<sup>187</sup>

In the beginning, there was not Asat, thiswozid as is presently observed; even space was not before the creation, because there could be no such thing designated. Nor was there Sat, the invisible causal matter called Prakriti, nor the atoms, nor ether. At that time there

<sup>185</sup> Ibid, p.256-263;

<sup>186</sup> Ibid, p.265

<sup>187</sup> Ibid, p.159 ff

was present only the Samarthya of God, - His Divine Energy which is the subtlest, supreme and ultimate cause of all the world.<sup>188</sup> From Him was produced virat - the sum-totally of all bodies taken together, resplendent with various objects - which is metaphorically described as one whose body is the universe, Whose eyes are the Sun and the Moon, Whose breath is the wind and Whose feet are the earth. Thereafter were formed the individual bodies of all living creatures from the various elements of the universe. The bodies have their growth from the elements and are absorbed back into them after death. God, however, remains constantly distinct from all these created things. He first created the earth and gave it support, after which the souls, through His might, supported their corporeal frames on it. God is distinct from the souls also. He produced all things worth eating, in addition to the beasts of the air, of the forest and those of the villages. The Moon was produced from the mind, i.e. from the reflective element of the Super Power. The Sun was produced from the eye, the refulgent portion. The sky was produced from the ears, i.e. from the Akashiya portion, while the atmosphere, the vital air and all the senses were produced from the atmospheric portion. The inter-stellar space was produced from the navel, the earth and waters from the feet, i.e. the terrestrial elements of the Super Power.

The universe has seven circumferences. The imaginary line which passes round the outer surface of a sphere is called its circumference. There are seven concentric circles round the universe (1) the ocean (2) the atmosphere together with the small particles called motes (3) the region of the clouds and the air thereof (4) the rain-water (5) the air above it (6) the air extreme subtle called Dhananjaya, and (7) the ubiquitous electricity.

The constituent elements of the universe are twenty-one in number enumerated as follows: Prakriti (made up of the three gunas), Mahat (Intelligence), the ten organs of sensation and action, the five subtle elements (sound, touch, sight, taste and smell), the five gross elements (earth, water, fire, air and ether). These are to be considered the chief ingredients in the construction of the universe, though there are many more sub-ingredients derived from them.

Explaining the imports of Yajurveda (31:17), Dayananda summarises the theory of creation as follows: "The Supreme Being made the attenuated matter (Apah) solid and thus fashioned the earth. This Apah was produced from igneous matter, the igneous from the gaseous, the gaseous from ether, and ether from Primordial Matter (Prakriti). Prakriti, the Original Material Cause of the universe was acted upon and given motion through the Eternal Potentiality of the Lord (Svasamarthyam). Thus, the Lord is the first efficient cause of the Universe. (nimitta karana).

Dayananda's researches<sup>189</sup> prove also that the theory of rotation of the earth and other bodies can be traced to the Vedic mantras. In this regard, he quotes from the Yajurveda (3:6)

ayam gauh prishnir akramit sasdan mataram purah pitaram cha prayantsvah.

Griffith translates the mantra as follows:-

This spotted Bull hath come and sat before the Mother and before the Father, mounting

<sup>188</sup> From this explanation, one is not to surmise that Dayananda is propagating the ideals of monism which postulates Brahma as the Sole Existence. Paramanand Observes that following the trend of thought conveyed in the mantras, Dayananda aims only at emphasising the Supremacy of God among the Main causes of the universe. (Paramanand, p, 163-footnote V)

<sup>189</sup> RVBB, p. 188 ff

up to heaven.

Paramanand infers Dayananda's translation as follows:-

This earth (i.e. this globe) revolves (a+akramit) in this space (prishni iti akash) and it has (waters of oceans) as mother as it were. The Sun (Svah) also moves along with air as father as it were.

In his commentary on the verse, Dayananda quotes the authority of Yaska to prove that gauh would mean 'the earth', among other things, because it keeps revolving every minute. In the Upanishad it is stated that the earth was produced from the waters. Hence the waters are the mother of the earth. The mantra states that svah (the sun) is the father of the earth. The words 'duram gata' used by Yaska (2:14) in the sentence 'atha dyaur yat prithivyaa adhi duram gata bhavati' (Now the sky is called gauh because it has gone very far from the earth) prove that the earth does move around the sun at a particular distance. In the same way, all the other spheres, supported by God's power in the form of the force of gravitation, revolve in their orbits, To prove the theory in clearer words, Dayananda quotes the Rigveda (10:65:6)

Griffith translates the mantra as follows:-

The cow who yielding milk goes her appointed way hither to us as leader of holy rites, Speaking aloud to Varuna and the worshipper, shall with oblation serve Vivasvan and the Gods.

Paramanand, on the basis of Dayananda's commentary, translates thus:

The earth revolves (pari eti) round the sun (vivasvan) in her prescribed orbit ceaselessly (a varatah) without violating this law (vrata) yielding (duhana) juices to all living beings. She being the cause of all speech gives to the noble (varunah) donor and the learned (all comforts) by oblations (havih).

About the moon, Dayananda presents, on the basis of the Rig- vedic mantra (8:48:13), the fact that the moon moves round the earth and sometimes appear between the sun and the earth.

Griffith translates the Rigvedic mantra (8:12:28) as follows:

When the two beautiful Bay steeds grew great and greater day by day, Even then all creatures that had life bowed down to thee.

This same mantra Dayananda translates differently.<sup>190</sup> 'What Griffith translates as 'two beautiful hay steeds' is nothing but gravitation and attraction, or illumination and motion. Most likely Dayananda derives the word 'hari' from the verbal root 'hri' to attract.

In mantra 29 of the same Sukta is recorded the fact that "all spheres move in their own orbits.", and in another mantra "the earth and all other spheres are kept firm by the sun's attraction."

The fact that all regions like the earth and the moon are illuminated by the sun is also traceable to the Vedic mantras. On the basis of these mantras, Dayananda establishes that the regions which appear shining deduce their light from the sun; even the moon is established in solar light (V 14:1:1). The solar rays coming into contact with the lunar globe are reflected on the earth and become invigorative by acquiring strength-inspiring qualities when the region of space, having lost its contact with solar -rays on account of the interception by the earth, loses its heat and becomes very cold. Because of the absence of solar heat and light, the lunar rays attain vigour. The earth also becomes

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid, p. 192

strong and invigorated.<sup>191</sup>

On the subject of medicine, there are very important theses.<sup>192</sup> Medicines, as a rule, cure the diseases of those who follow a precise regimen and are of no benefit to those persons who fail to follow any precise rule. Bhumananda Saraswati observes that the twelfth hymn of the fourth Kanda of the Atharvaveda treats of the Rohini herb and says that it can join fractured bones. The identity of this herb seems to have been lost to the modern Ayurveda. Its other name seems to be Arundhati.<sup>193</sup> The 17th., 18th and 19th hymns of the fourth book of the Atharva Veda give a long account of the wonderful herb apaamaarga - otherwise called Achyranthes Aspera. It is said to be the greatest of all medicinal herbs, fit to cure piles and many other related diseases. In the Atharvaveda, the sun's rays, moonlight, and water are also included as very potent curative agents.<sup>194</sup>

The twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth mantras of the 18th chapter of the Yajurveda give clear indications of principles of mathematics also treated of in the Vedas. One finds mentioned in these two verses the odd and even numbers, and definite pointers to the concepts of multiplication and addition. This is Arithmetic, observes Dayananda.<sup>195</sup> While Arithmetic deals with the known, Algebra deals with the unknown. The first mantra of the Samveda has annotations of musical notes (1, 2, 3) appended to the text. This is a definite trace of Algebra. The measurements for the construction of the fire-altars (Vedis) in various shapes for triangular, quadrilateral, circular, or in the shape of a hawk point to a knowledge of Geometry. In relation to the Geometry of the Vedas, one finds a mention of the word Paridhi in Rigveda (10:130:3). Griffith translates this word as 'the wooden fender'. Dayananda translates it as a line running round a spherical object, and says that it refers to the mainstay of the world.

#### OBSERVATIONS:

The student of the Veda who is still influenced by the commentaries of Sayana would really want to feel that Dayananda's claim of sciences in the Vedas is really a fantastic one. But research-specialists of the Space-Age are rapidly coming to the definite conclusion that indeed the Vedic mantras are deeply reflective of positive sciences. In this regard the research carried out by Dr. Satya Prakash of Allahabad University, Dr. D.D. Mehta, founder Director of the Academy of Vedic Researches, Delhi and various other scientists would help to prove the fundamental notion which Dayananda propounded more than a century ago, a time when the considered opinion was that the Veda was suited towards only fulfilling the needs of a ceremonial religion. Dayananda has really demonstrated the usefulness of the etymological approach to Vedic language, and at the same time has caused the other schools of Vedic interpretation to really pale into insignificance.

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<sup>191</sup> Ibid, p. 199

<sup>192</sup> Ibid, p. 267

<sup>193</sup> Bhumananda Saraswati, p. XI, XIII

<sup>194</sup> Paramanand, p. ixvii

<sup>195</sup> RVBB, p. 201, 203



## REVIEWING OTHER COMMENTATORS

### Introductory:

Because he could have dared to be at variance with the main under-currents in the stream of Vedic interpretation, Dayananda could have afforded to be positively conscious of the fact that his projected commentary would have been qualitatively different from that written by medieval Indian and modern European scholars. There was a fundamental difference in approach between him and the others. While the latter did not care much to honour fully the demands of the etymologic school, Dayananda made it the cornerstone of his doctrine to resort fully to the norms of etymology adopted and propounded by the professors of the Nairukta school. The result was that while the commentaries of Sayana, Mahidhar, Wilson and others ended up being obscure at several places, Dayananda stated a firm claim that his commentary would not be replete with such defects as found in the others. In his Rigvedadi- bhashyabhumika, the Swami evaluates the principles of Sayana and Mahidhara, so as to serve as an indication to scholars of the type of criticism he would be offering in his projected commentary. His evaluation is brief, owing to a lack of much space, and he hopes that, brief as it is, it will serve to understand the whole of what Sayana and Mahidhara incorporated in their respective works.

The fundamental mistake that Sayana committed was in believing that the Veda, instead of being the store-house of the germs of all science, is pertinent and applicable only to ritual - that the Veda serves the purpose of being recited in various rituals. For this reason, all the interpretations and explanations that Sayana offers are bound only to one theme, thus making the whole text a mere manual of liturgical applications. Most likely, it is primarily for this reason, that the Europeans, despite being armed with the most modern methods of scientific and methodical research, could come to no conclusion other than the notion that the Vedic hymns are replete with puerilities and rubbish, that they are low tedious and commonplace. It is worthy to note here that Sayana, in his Rigvedabhashyabhumika, accepts the fact that the Veda is a holy book - a storehouse of wisdom, secular and philosophical, whose authority was not to be questioned. Every word of it is sacred and consequently, it was not possible for him to apply the rules of modern criticism to it. Still, Sayana in his commentary proper, contradicts this expressed doctrine of his by deliberately relegating the Veda to the status of being a manual of ritualistic applications, thereby denying it the status of being a reservoir of various branches of secular religious and philosophical knowledge.<sup>196</sup>

There are also certain basic flaws committed by Sayana in his connecting of words in various mantras. In the mantra of the Rigveda (1:164:46), Sayana regards the word 'Indra' as a noun qualified by other words like 'Mitra', 'Agni' etc.<sup>197</sup> This is, asserts Dayananda, a very subtle mistake. The noun is actually 'Agni', qualified by all other epithets in the mantra, and this Agni, being associated with all other adjectives, qualifies the eternal Brahman. According to the rule, a substantive is understood to be united again and again with all adjectives respectively, whereas adjectives are not repeated likewise. In this way, where there are a hundred or thousand adjectives which qualify a substantive, only the substantive is repeated again and again, whereas adjectives are stated only once. Hence the word 'Agni' stated twice in this verse, is to be understood to be the noun, referring to

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<sup>196</sup> RVBB, p. 406

<sup>197</sup> Sayana Rigvedabhashyam

God. "Sayana, the commentator, did not know this, and consequently fell into error." In cherishing such a concept of the Rigvedic mantra, Dayananda has full support from Yaska who translates the mantra as follows:-

imam eva agnim aahantam bahudha medhavino vadanti indram mitraa varunam ityadi.

The wise describe this Agni, the one Great Universal Soul, in various ways as Indra, Mitra and Varuna.

(Nirukta 7:18)

Dayananda seeks to prove that Sayana suffers from self-contradiction. At one time, the medieval commentator states that God alone is invoked everywhere, as a priest of a king keeps the interests of his master always in focus whenever undertaking various actions. But he states somewhere else that in the forepart of a sacrifice, God is represented by Agni, which has been kindled in the Vedi - fire altar. This, claims Dayananda, is self-contradictory, "because if God alone is invoked by all names, why does he take Agni in the sense of the terrestrial fire which has been kindled for sacrifice?" If one were to assume that the terrestrial fire is one of the various forms in which God is manifested, as a result of which Sayana does in fact refer to God by the term 'Agni', then such an assumption would be untenable since it contradicts the nature of God who has been described in the Atharva-veda as 'unborn and changeless' (19:11:3). This is one of the so many errors found in the Bhashya of Acharya Sayana.<sup>198</sup>

Like Sayana, Mahidhara has grossly misinterpreted the import of the Vedas - nay, he has seriously calumniated them, claims Dayananda. The commentary that Mahidhara appends to the 19th mantra of the 23rd chapter of the Yajurveda is a classic example of the slander he has made out of the imports of the Veda. Mahidhara writes in connection with this mantra as follows:

"In this stanza, the word ganapati should be taken in the sense of a horse. Thus, the chief queen the wife of the Royal sacrificer, lying with the horse in the sacrificial hall, in the presence of priests, says: 'O horse, I take semen which would make me pregnant from thee, and thou pourest unto me thy semen'."<sup>199</sup>

Influenced by commentators like Mahidhara and others like him, even Weber, commenting on the mantra, writes thus:

"The mahishi, or the principal wife of the king, performing this (horse) sacrifice, must, in order to obtain a son, pass the night by the side of the horse that has been immolated, placing its sisna (penis) on her upastha (uterus); with her fellow wives, who are forced to accompany her, she pours forth her sorrow in this lament: 'O Amba, O Ambika, O Ambalika, no one takes me (by force to the horse; but if I go not of myself), the (spiteful) horse will lie with (another as) the (wicked) Subhadra who dwells in Kampila."<sup>200</sup>

Dayananda falls back on the exegetical notes provided in the Shatapath Brahmana to work out a much more rational meaning, far removed from the obscenity reflected in Mahidhara's notes. Dayananda quotes ten mantras more of the same chapter of the Yajurveda to point to the incorrectness, and thus unacceptability, of the interpretations penned by Mahidhara. He hopes that this will be sufficient to establish the unworthiness of the 'Vedadipa' - the commentary on the Yajurveda written by the medieval scholar.

EXPLAINING MYTHOLOGICAL REFERENCES

<sup>198</sup> RVBB, p. 407

<sup>199</sup> Translated by Paramanand, p. 407

<sup>200</sup> Weber, p. 114

### Introductory:

It is recorded in the life of Maharshi Dayananda that in early 1880 there appeared for sale a small booklet entitled 'Gotama Ahalya ki katha' in which the Swami had presented his interpretation of the ancient Vedic myths of Gotama and Ahalya and of Indra and Vritra. This has so far, unfortunately, not been recovered. Jordens observes that this booklet would have helped to clarify an important aspect of Dayananda's method of Vedic interpretation: the way he gave meaning to mythological stories.<sup>201</sup> However, in the Rigvedadibhashya- bhumika Dayananda gives the reader an insight into how he understands the various myths found either in the Veda Samhita itself or in Vedic literature. Below are presented a few examples.

### The Coition of Prajapati with his daughter:

The Aitareya Brahmana (3:33-34) contains the following text :

Prajapati verily ran after his daughter..... (See Keith's translation)

Griffith translates the last hemistich of the Rigveda mantra (1:164:33) as follows:

The Father laid the daughter's germ within it.

Griffith again translates Rigveda mantra (3:31:1) as follows:

Wise, teaching, following the thought of order, the sonless gained a grandson from his daughter. Fain, as a sire, to see his child prolific, he sped to meet her with an eager spirit.

The above translations by Westerners, and even by sayana, establish beyond doubt the idea of the Veda and its literature containing mythological references in which a father has sexual relationship with his daughter.

The concept is totally unacceptable to Dayananda, because the translations, as far as he is concerned, of abstruse words have been incorrect, yielding undesirable senses. The use of language in the above texts, claims the Swami, is metaphorical, and one has to grasp the trend of thought hidden therein. The terms 'Father' and 'Daughter' cannot be understood in their superficial sense. Anyone brought to life by someone else is regarded as offspring, whereas the begetter will be regarded as the father. The Sun generates the state of dawn, hence the former is the father, and the latter the daughter. The father (sun) chases fast with his rays his daughter dawn (Who is of a lightly reddish complexion - Rohita). Having captured her, he generates or begets upon her the light of day. In other words, light is the son of the sun. The Dawn is like the mother, and the sun is like the father, because with its rays (comparable to semen) he begets the day (comparable to his son). In the same way, the rain-cloud and the earth enjoy a father- daughter relationship. The birth of the earth is from the waters, i.e. from the clouds. This rain-cloud, by sprinkling rain-water, semen as it were, upon the earth, makes her pregnant. This pregnancy brings forth vegetables as offspring. All this is tantamount to metaphorical use of language. This fact is borne out by the Shatapatha Brahmana (vide 10:2:7:4) and the Nirukta. Yaska specifically states that the terms 'the father impregnates his daughter' means that 'the cloud impregnates the earth' (4:21). In spite of such metaphorical use of language being fully explained in the Nirukta and the Brahmanas, the Brahma Vaivarta and other Puranas have persisted in propounding myths with no meanings, only adding confusion among people. For this reason Dayananda feels, people should pay no attention to them.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Jordens, p. 247

<sup>202</sup> RVBB, p. 360

### **The Tale of Gotam and Ahalya:**

There is a tale in popular Hinduism which relates that Indra, the king of the gods once committed adultery with Ahalya, the wife of Rishi Gotama. Gotama first cursed Indra, and then his wife, telling her that she would become a stone. The tale further relates that she did become a stone, and remained that way until Shri Rama liberated her from the effect of the curse with the dust of his feet. This tale has its origin in the Shatapatha Brahmana (3:3:4:18). Unless one understands the allegorical nature of the tale, and the true significances of technical terms like Indra, Ahalya and Gotama, the tale remains just a tale, without anything of substance. Indra is the sun. Ahalya is the night. Gotama is the moon. Both the night and the moon live together, as it were, like wife and husband. Indra is a jaara, a fornicator, in relation to Ahalya. He commits, as it were, illicit sexual congress with her. 'Jaara' comes from the verbal root 'jri' to grow old. The jaara, the fornicator causes the night to grow old and wane in her beauty. Ahalya, the night, from the etymological derivation of word is that in which day (aha) becomes absorbed (liyate). When the sun comes into contact with the night, committing adultery, as it were, with her, then he gets absorbed in her, thereby causing her to grow old, to wane and lose her nature, her beauty. These so-called myths are allegorical, affirms Dayananda, and they serve the primary function of representing factual phenomena of nature. These allegories suffer from degeneration when the factual and philosophical sense is lost sight of due to the less of definition of terms.

### **The tale of Indra and Vritra:**

Like the story of Gotama and Ahalya, there is another popular tale perpetuated by popular Hinduism which states that Indra, the king of the gods had to fight a war with Vritra, the demon-son of Tvashta. Vritra ended up swallowing Indra, thereby causing panic among the gods; these approached Vishnu who comforted them, saying, “Vritra will be destroyed with the sea-foam when I enter into it.” This is a corruption of an allegory found in the Indra Sukta of the Rigveda (1:32). Indra, the Thunder-wielder, slew Ahi, who was lying on the mountain, with his great and deadly thunder (vajra) because Ahi, other wise called Vritra, had, like a mad weak warrior, challenged Indra to battle. Previous to this, Vritra had taken hold of the waters which stayed like kine held by the warrior. By slaying Vritra, Indra released the waters. In this, allegory, unless one has correct definitions of the terms like Indra, Vritra, Vajra etc. then it all remains a mere tale. Dayananda provides the necessary definitions. Indra is the sun, Vritra or Ahi the cloud, Vajra the bright lightning. The meaning of the allegory is that the sun hit the rain-cloud with lightning and broke it into pieces, i.e. dissipated it into rain-drops, thus causing the rivers to flow rapidly, so much as to break their banks. Vritra lies on top of mountain, and when Indra broke its body into pieces, it glided down the mountain onto the earth - the rain cloud when dissipated into drops of rain glided down the mountain onto the earth, gushing forth as if released from detention.

### **OBSERVATIONS:**

At this point, the observations made by Prof. H.H. Wilson in respect of this allegory are worthy to take note of. He says “In this and subsequent Suktas, we have an elucidation of the original purport of the legend of Indra's slaying Vritra, converted by the Pauranik writers into a literal contest between Indra and an Asura, or chief of the Asuras, from what in the Vedas is merely an allegorical narrative of the production of rain. Vritra,

sometimes also named Ahi, is nothing more than the accumulation of vapour condensed or figuratively shut up in, or obstructed by, a cloud. Indra, with his thunderbolt, or atmospheric or electrical influence, divides the aggregated mass, and vent is given to the rain which descends upon the earth.”<sup>203</sup> This is indeed a strange comment coming from a commentator who expressly believes that the Vedas contain historical data. Indra and Vritra should, by standards of judgement accepted by the Aitihasika school of Vedic interpretation, be accepted to refer to historical personages. However, this statement of Wison helps to add much weight to the fundamental thesis adopted by Dayananda - that the so-called myths found described in the Vedic verses are allegorical in nature, that they have innate in them philosophical and scientific truths, that without proper definitions of technical terms, the allegories remain mere tales worth mere recitation minus deep speculation.

## STUDYING THE VEDA

### Introductory:

An ideal life in Dayananda's estimation is one in which is reflected the true conduct of life, since such a conduct is the means towards the attainment of the final aim of human existence. The ingredients of such a true conduct of life are determined by what is sanctioned in the Vedas and the books of the Rishis, by the conduct of holy men, and by what is approved by one's own inner self.<sup>204</sup> It is imperative that man should undertake only those actions in his life as are not productive of the feelings of fear, distrust and shame. Anyone, continues Dayananda, who follows the rule of law laid down by the Veda "shall acquire fame in this life and the highest bliss in the next." For this reason, therefore, the study of the Veda is absolutely indispensable for every human person, since it is only with the help of what is contained therein that one can distinguish between what is desirable and undesirable in respect of conduct. So convinced was Dayananda about the necessity of regular study of the Veda that he had it included as one of the ten principles of the society he founded in his life - the Arya Samaj. He fully supports Manu in suggesting that anyone entering the stage of married life should be proficient in at least one of the four Vedas.<sup>205</sup> Even those who are holders of political, executive and military power should be read in the Vedas and be thereby conversant with all sciences and doctrines.<sup>206</sup> Anyone who is ignorant of the contents of the Vedas can never know the reality of God - nay, ignorance of the Veda renders him incompetent and unprepared for the task of Divine Realisation, affirms Dayananda. All that pertains to the practice of Dharma, all sciences, have had their origin from the Vedas, because they were all enshrined in them by the Lord. Understanding the imports of the Vedas is fundamental to any process of realisation.<sup>207</sup> Anyone, therefore, who holds the Vedas in contempt should be excluded from all good society, and should be regarded as an atheist, he being a slanderer of the Veda.<sup>208</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> quoted by Griffith, p.20

<sup>204</sup> SPII, p. 309

<sup>205</sup> Ibid, p. 82

<sup>206</sup> Ibid, p. 166

<sup>207</sup> RVBB, p. 404

<sup>208</sup> SPII, p. 310

### Eligibility for Vedic Study:

The question of eligibility for Vedic study was one that exercised Dayananda's mind while he was involved in his missionary crusade. In his time, there was much to be desired in respect of the law laid down for Vedic study. The Veda had become, as it were, the birth-right of the priestly class which prohibited certain other classes of people from having anything to do with the holy text. On authority supplied from the Gotama Dharma Sutra (2:3:4), the Brahmins made it a law that women and Shudras should never be allowed either to chant the verses of the Veda, or to even listen to them being chanted (strishudrau nadhiyatam). The mockery of it all, observes Shri Nivas Shastri,<sup>209</sup> was that these very guardians of the prestige of the Veda were, on the whole, unread in the texts themselves. They cared not to study themselves, nor would they let go of the right to such study so that others can make the effort. The credit goes to Maharshi Dayananda Saraswati for having thrown open the doors for all human beings to be admitted to such study, with the simple argument that the Veda is the word of God meant for the common benefit of all humankind; and as a sanction for such a view, he quotes the authority of God Himself addressing mankind in the Yajurveda:

yathemam vacham kalyanim avadani janebhyah. (26:2)

I address this propitious (Vedic) speech to all people - to priest, and nobleman, Shudra and Arya.<sup>210</sup>

And furthermore, a priest and a noble, a shudra and an Arya do not attain to their respective status on the more accident of birth, explains the swami, but on the basis of their respective guna, karma and svabhava.<sup>211</sup> Anyone can have his class (or caste) changed if there should occur any qualitative change in his guna, karma and svabhava.

The Shudra can be prohibited from studying the Veda only if such study would prove useless due to his own incapacity for such a discipline. What moral right does any one have, asks Dayananda, to prohibit a man whether Shudra or not, from taking advantage of what is contained in a text revealed by the Creator primarily for the common benefit of all mankind, especially so if the Shudra is capacitated for such a study? Had God meant the Shudras not to study the Veda or listening to them being chanted, he would have certainly deprived them of the senses of hearing and speech. Furthermore, any law prohibiting women from studying the Veda lacks moral sanction, as it does in the case of the Shudra. Dayananda quotes the Shrauta Sutra to prove that women should recite the Vedic verses as well. In India, he emphasises, women were well read, and Gargi of the Upanishad and Kaikeyi of the Ramayana fame are classic examples of this historical fact. And furthermore, should women remain ignorant, then the ill-effect of this ignorance would have its tell not only on the family and household, but in the running of girls' schools and administration of the state.<sup>212</sup>

### The Importance of Correct Pronunciation in Vedic study:

Dayananda quotes the Mahabhashya to impress on his readers the importance of proper pronunciation of words in the process of studying the Vedas. Words should be pronounced with due regard to their Sthana (place of pronunciation) and Prayatna (articulative effort).

<sup>209</sup> Shastri Shri Nivas, Veda Tatha Rishi Dayananda, p.121

<sup>210</sup> RVBB, p. 390

<sup>211</sup> Ibid, p. 396

<sup>212</sup> SPII, pp.78-79; RVBB, pp.396-97



Words incorrectly pronounced fail to convey their desired meanings and like a thunderbolt they injure the speaker, bringing him returns undesired. Due care should also be exercised in relation to the accent on each syllable making up the word. An unauthorised change in the accent on a particular syllable can cause a change in meaning. For example, the word 'Indra-shatru', pronounced twice each time with a different accent, yields two different meanings. Taken as a Tat-purusha compound with the accent on the final syllable, the term would mean 'the enemy of Indra'. On the other hand, taking it as a Bahuvrihi compound with the accent on the first syllable, the term would mean 'having Indra as an enemy'. From this, it can be seen that a lack of due care causes undesirable changes in meanings.<sup>213</sup>

### Studying the Veda with meanings:

Dayananda makes himself highly vocal in emphasising the need to understand the meanings of the words of the Vedic verses while studying them. Supreme benefit from any study is derived only with a knowledge of the sense inherent in the content read. Of course, lacking the capacity to understand the meanings of the words should not provide a man the excuse for not reciting the Veda. He who merely recites the Veda without understanding the sense is certainly to be preferred to the man who cares not to recite or study. However, he who reads and understands the relative position of words and their imports is, in Dayananda's estimation, superior to a mere reciter. But best of them all, the Swami continues, is who, after having studied the text and grasped the imports, acquires meritorious qualities and thereby makes the world a better place in which to live. Such a man has given expression to the purpose of the Vedic revelation. (Ibid). To support such a contention, Dayananda quotes the Rigveda (1:164:39):

yas tanna veda kim richa karishyati?

What will he do with the Veda who does not understand its meaning?

Yaska quotes the Samhita-Upanishad to prove that a man who, having studied the Veda and does not understand the meaning is but a blockhead hearing a useless burden. Whatever is learnt without it being understood is called mere cramming; like dry logs of wood on an extinguished fire, it can never illuminate. (1:18).

### Supplementary Exegetical literature and Vedic study:

On several occasions during the time he was spelling out his creed, Dayananda was confronted with the question of the authoritativeness or otherwise of the wide range of texts written in sanskrit - what books are truly representative of the Vedas and what are spurious in character. It became increasingly pressing for him to give his views on the matter. On the eve of one of his visits to Banares, while he was in Kanpur, he issued a very important declaration on the subject, known as the Kanpur Declaration. Jordens calls it a 'signal document'.<sup>214</sup> Dayananda repeats the contents of this declaration in his Rigvedadibhasnyabhumi, affirming that the four Samhitas constitute the Vedas, and that they enjoy self or primary authority, while the following texts, exegetical in nature, enjoy secondary authority: the Brahmanas, the Upa-Vedas the 1127 Shakhas, the six Angas - Phonetics, Ritual, Grammar, Etymology, Prosody, and Astronomy -, the six Upangas - Yoga, Sankhya, Nyaya. Vaisheshika, Purva and Uttara Mimamsa Darshanas -,

<sup>213</sup> RVBB, p. 398 ff

<sup>214</sup> Jordens's, p.55



and their respective Rishi-written commentaries. These are all authoritative in-so-far as they concur with what is contained in the Sambitas.<sup>215</sup> These are all texts which should be studiously consulted, for in doing so, a man becomes highly learned; and should one not be capacitated to study these texts on one's own, then one should study the meanings of the Vedic words from the exegetical notes penned by those who are adept in the above-mentioned supplementary exegetical literature.<sup>216</sup>

### Major points to Note in Vedic Study:

Following what is contained in the Nirukta, Dayananda submits that there are some mantras which describe objects perceivable by the senses, and others which describe objects not perceivable by the senses, while still, there are mantras which describe both God and the soul. The first set of mantras called Pratyaksha-kritas, contain verbs used in the second person and the personal pronoun 'thou', whereas the second set of mantras, the Paroksha-kritas, are associated with nouns in all cases and with verbs only in the third person. The third set, called the Adhyatmikas, are those that contain verbs only in the first person, with the personal pronoun 'I'; these mantras are used principally for invoking.<sup>217</sup>

There are several rules pertaining to Grammar which one needs to bear in mind when attempting to establish the meanings of the Vedic words. The comments of the Mahabhasya are of special importance. For example, Patanjali feels that the sense of a word is to be given more importance than the ordinary meaning yielded by the case ending. Again, one should be knowledgeable in the synonyms and homonyms, and the regular interchangeability of the case-endings, i.e. one case-ending yielding the sense of another. Such and other rules can be studiously consulted in the Ashtadhyayi of Panini.<sup>218</sup>

A knowledge of the Svaras is also important for the study of the Veda. These Svaras - udatta, anudatta and svarita - help in giving different tones to the vowels. Any word pronounced with the Svaras placed incorrectly can yield a meaning far removed from what has been intended. The word 'Indra- shatru' is a notable example.<sup>219</sup>

Side by side with the Svaras, one should pay special attention to the Alankaras, the figures of speech used in the verses of the Veda. All of these assist a student of the Veda to understand the deepest imports contained therein.<sup>220</sup>

### OBSERVATIONS:

That the Veda is, at least for the modern student, an abstruse text is a fact well recognised by Eastern and Western Vedic scholars alike. Not only is it abstruse, but practically sealed when it comes to unravel the profound imports couched in such an archaic form of Vedic Sanskrit. For this reason, it is only but natural that a student of the Veda should depend on the interpretations penned by those nearest to the people who had understood the texts in the most natural way. Hence, the absolute necessity of perusing and studiously consulting Arsha literature. There are, however, some scholars who would prefer to depend more on the efforts made by Sayana and other medieval commentators.

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<sup>215</sup> RVBB, p. 352 ff

<sup>216</sup> Ibid, p. 404

<sup>217</sup> Ibid, p. 431

<sup>218</sup> Ibid, p. 435, 436

<sup>219</sup> Ibid, p. 433

<sup>220</sup> Ibid, p. 455

But, researches have proved that there was no strict continuity of the tradition of Vedic interpretation reaching upto the time of Sayana.<sup>221</sup> As Ghate observes, Sayana scarcely waits to ask himself whether the meaning which he proposes for a particular word is justified by the occurrences of the word in other passages. In the Bhashya of this fourteenth century scholar, the spirit of inquiring is seriously wanting, for one sees many dogmatic assertions being made without any qualification.

Europeans tried to move cautiously in their methods of studying the Veda, but in the end, the school of conservative Sanskritists, headed by Prof. H.H. Wilson, upheld the view that Sayana's Bhashya was the only safe guide through the intricacies and obscurities of the text. Against these, there stepped forth Prof. Von Roth, Who, in his method of studying the Veda, collected together the several passages wherein a certain word occurs, classified them, and fixed upon the stages through which the word has passed, and thus gave, as it were, a historical description of the meaning of the word. Hence, while the conservatives represented one extreme in prejudice, Roth represented quite the opposite extreme, while in his zeal to combat the conservatives. "Many of Roth's conjectures are thus now found to be unsustainable, if not totally wrong....."<sup>222</sup>

It goes to Dayananda's credit for not evolving, as the Europeans did, a method of studying the Veda completely along arbitrary lines. He seriously felt that the Rishis were in possession of the tradition of Vedic interpretation - it being unbroken, and having had its origin from the earlier Rishis who has known and realised the Vedas in their deep meditations. And taking his cue from the texts he deemed to be authoritative, Dayananda has indeed penned a completely revolutionary commentary on the Vedas, so different from that of his predecessors.

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<sup>221</sup> Ghate,p. 102

<sup>222</sup> Ibid, p. 103