The Vedas (ˈvɛdəz, 'viːdəz;[1] Sanskrit: वेद veda, “knowledge”) are a large body of religious texts originating in ancient India. Composed in Vedic Sanskrit, the texts constitute the oldest layer of Sanskrit literature and the oldest scriptures of Hinduism.[2][3] Hindus consider the Vedas to be apauruṣeya, which means "not of a man, superhuman"[4] and "impersonal, authorless".[5][6][7]

Vedas are also called śruti ("what is heard") literature,[8] distinguishing them from other religious texts, which are called smṛti ("what is remembered"). The Veda, for orthodox Indian theologians, are considered revelations seen by ancient sages after intense meditation, and texts that have been more carefully preserved since ancient times.[9][10] In the Hindu Epic the Mahabharata, the creation of Vedas is credited to Brahma.[11] The Vedic hymns themselves assert that they were skillfully created by Rishis (sages), after inspired creativity, just as a carpenter builds a chariot.[10][note 1]

According to tradition, Vyasa is the compiler of the Vedas, who arranged the four kinds of mantras into four Samhitas (Collections).[13][14] There are four Vedas: the Rigveda, the Yajurveda, the Samaveda and the Atharvaveda.[15][16] Each Veda has been subclassified into four major text types – the Samhitas (mantras and benedictions), the Aranyakas (text on rituals, ceremonies, sacrifices and symbolic-sacrifices), the Brahmanas (commentaries on rituals, ceremonies and sacrifices), and the Upanishads (texts discussing meditation, philosophy and spiritual knowledge).[15][17][18] Some scholars add a fifth category – the Upasanas (worship).[19][20]

The various Indian philosophies and denominations have taken differing positions on the Vedas. Schools of Indian philosophy which cite the Vedas as their scriptural authority are classified as "orthodox" (āstika).[note 2] Other śramaṇa traditions, such as Lokayata, Carvaka, Ajivika, Buddhism and Jainism, which did not regard the Vedas as authorities, are referred to as "heterodox" or "non-orthodox" (nāstika) schools.[22][23] Despite their differences, just like the texts of the śramaṇa traditions, the layers of texts in the Vedas discuss similar ideas and concepts.[22]
Etymology and usage

The Sanskrit word vēda “knowledge, wisdom” is derived from the root vid- “to know”. This is reconstructed as being derived from the Proto-Indo-European root *u̯eiden-, meaning “see” or “know”,[24] cognate to Greek (ϝ)εἶδος "aspect", "form". This is not to be confused is the homonymous 1st and 3rd person singular perfect tense vēda, cognate to Greek (ϝ)οίδα (w)oida "I know". Root cognates are Greek ἴδεα, English wit, etc., Latin videō "I see", etc.[25]

The Sanskrit term veda as a common noun means "knowledge".[26] The term in some contexts, such as hymn 10.93.11 of the Rigveda, means "obtaining or finding wealth, property",[27] while in some others it means "a bunch of grass together" as in a broom or for ritual fire.[28]

A related word Vedena appears in hymn 8.19.5 of the Rigveda.[29] It was translated by Ralph T. H. Griffith as "ritual lore",[30] as "studying the Veda" by the 14th-century Indian scholar Sayana, as "bundle of grass" by Max Müller, and as "with the Veda" by H.H. Wilson.[31]

Vedas are called Maiṭai or Vāyamoli in parts of South India. Marai literally means "hidden, a secret, mystery". But the Tamil Naan Marai mentioned in Tholkappiam isn't Sanskrit Vedas.[32][33] In some parts of south India (e.g. the Iyengar communities), the word veda is used in the Tamil writings of the Alvar saints. Such writings include the Divya Prabandham (aka Tiruvaymoli).[34]

Chronology

The Vedas are among the oldest sacred texts.[35][36] The Samhitas date to roughly 1700–1100 BCE,[37] and the "circum-Vedic" texts, as well as the redaction of the Samhitas, date to c. 1000–500 BCE, resulting in a Vedic period, spanning the mid 2nd to mid 1st millennium BCE, or the Late Bronze Age and the Iron Age.[38] The Vedic period reaches its peak only after the composition of the mantra texts, with the establishment of the various shakhas all over Northern India which annotated the mantra samhitas with Brahmana discussions of their meaning, and reaches its end in the age of Buddha and Panini and the rise of the Mahajanapadas (archaeologically, Northern Black Polished Ware). Michael Witzel gives a time span of c. 1500 to c. 500–400 BCE.
BCE. Witzel makes special reference to the Near Eastern Mitanni material of the 14th century BCE, the only epigraphic record of Indo-Aryan contemporary to the Rigvedic period. He gives 150 BCE (Patañjali) as a terminus ante quem for all Vedic Sanskrit literature, and 1200 BCE (the early Iron Age) as terminus post quem for the Atharvaveda.[39]

Transmission of texts in the Vedic period was by oral tradition, preserved with precision with the help of elaborate mnemonic techniques. A literary tradition is traceable in post-Vedic times, after the rise of Buddhism in the Maurya period,[note 3] perhaps earliest in the Kana recension of the Yajurveda about the 1st century BCE; however oral tradition of transmission remained active. Witzel suggests the possibility of written Vedic texts towards the end of 1st millennium BCE.[41] Some scholars such as Jack Goody state that "the Vedas are not the product of an oral society", basing this view by comparing inconsistencies in the transmitted versions of literature from various oral societies such as the Greek, Serbia and other cultures, then noting that the Vedic literature is too consistent and vast to have been composed and transmitted orally across generations, without being written down.[42] However, adds Goody, the Vedic texts likely involved both a written and oral tradition, calling it a "parallel products of a literate society".[40][42]

Due to the ephemeral nature of the manuscript material (birch bark or palm leaves), surviving manuscripts rarely surpass an age of a few hundred years.[43] The Sampurnanand Sanskrit University has a Rigveda manuscript from the 14th century,[44] however, there are a number of older Veda manuscripts in Nepal that are dated from the 11th century onwards.[45]

Ancient universities

The Vedas, Vedic rituals and its ancillary sciences called the Vedangas, were part of the curriculum at ancient universities such as at Taxila, Nalanda and Vikramashila.[46][47][48][49]

Categories of Vedic texts

The term "Vedic texts" is used in two distinct meanings:

1. Texts composed in Vedic Sanskrit during the Vedic period (Iron Age India)
2. Any text considered as "connected to the Vedas" or a "corollary of the Vedas"[50]

Vedic Sanskrit corpus

The corpus of Vedic Sanskrit texts includes:

- The Samhitas (Sanskrit saṃhitā, "collection"), are collections of metric texts ("mantras"). There are four "Vedic" Samhitas: the Rig-Veda, Sama-Veda, Yajur-Veda, and Atharva-Veda, most of which are available in several recensions (śākhā). In some contexts, the term Veda is used to refer to these Samhitas. This is the oldest layer of Vedic texts, apart from the Rigvedic hymns, which were probably essentially complete by 1200 BCE, dating to c. the 12th to 10th centuries BCE. The complete corpus of Vedic mantras as collected in Bloomfield's Vedic Concordance (1907) consists of some 89,000 padas (metrical feet), of which 72,000 occur in the four Samhitas.[51]
- The Brahmanas are prose texts that comment and explain the solemn rituals as well as expound on their meaning and many connected themes. Each of the Brahmanas is associated with one of the Samhitas or its recensions.[52][53] The Brahmanas may either form separate texts or can be partly integrated into the text of the Samhitas. They may also include the Aranyakas and Upanishads.
- The Aranyakas, "wilderness texts" or "forest treaties", were composed by people who meditated in the woods as recluses and are the third part of the Vedas. The texts contain discussions and interpretations of ceremonies,
from ritualistic to symbolic meta-ritualistic points of view. It is frequently read in secondary literature.

- Older Mukhya Upanishads (Brhadāraṇyaka, Chandogya, Kaṭha, Kena, Aitareya, and others).

The Vedas (sruti) are different from Vedic era texts such as Shrāvaka Sutras and Gṛhya Sutras, which are smṛiti texts. Together, the Vedas and these Sutras form part of the Vedic Sanskrit corpus.

While production of Brahmanas and Aranyakas ceased with the end of the Vedic period, additional Upanishads were composed after the end of the Vedic period.

The Brahmanas, Aranyakas, and Upanishads, among other things, interpret and discuss the Samhitas in philosophical and metaphorical ways to explore abstract concepts such as the Absolute (Brahman), and the soul or the self (Atman), introducing Veda philosophy, one of the major trends of later Hinduism. In other parts, they show evolution of ideas, such as from actual sacrifice to symbolic sacrifice, and of spirituality in the Upanishads. This has inspired later Hindu scholars such as Adi Shankara to classify each Veda into karma-kanda (कर्म खण्ड, action/ritual-related sections) and jnana-kanda (ज्ञान खण्ड, knowledge/spirituality-related sections).

**Shruti literature**

The texts considered "Vedic" in the sense of "corollaries of the Vedas" is less clearly defined, and may include numerous post-Vedic texts such as the later Upanishads and the Sutra literature. Texts not considered to be shruti are known as smṛiti (Sanskrit: smṛti; "the remembered"), or texts of remembered traditions. This indigenous system of categorization was adopted by Max Müller and, while it is subject to some debate, it is still widely used. As Axel Michaels explains:

> These classifications are often not tenable for linguistic and formal reasons: There is not only one collection at any one time, but rather several handed down in separate Vedic schools; Upaniṣads ... are sometimes not to be distinguished from Āraṇyakas...; Brahmaṇas contain older strata of language attributed to the Sāmkhya; there are various dialects and locally prominent traditions of the Vedic schools. Nevertheless, it is advisable to stick to the division adopted by Max Müller because it follows the Indian tradition, conveys the historical sequence fairly accurately, and underlies the current editions, translations, and monographs on Vedic literature.

The Upanishads are largely philosophical works, some in dialogue form. They are the foundation of Hindu philosophical thought and its diverse traditions. Of the Vedic corpus, they alone are widely known, and the central ideas of the Upanishads are at the spiritual core of Hindus.

**Vedic schools or recensions**

The four Vedas were transmitted in various sākhas (branches, schools). Each school likely represented an ancient community of a particular area, or kingdom. Each school followed its own canon. Multiple recensions are known for each of the Vedas. Thus, states Witzel as well as Renou, in the 2nd millennium BCE, there was likely no canon of one broadly accepted Vedic texts, no Vedic “Scripture”, but only a canon of various texts accepted by each school. Some of these texts have survived, most lost or yet to be found. Rigveda that survives in modern times, for example, is in only one extremely well preserved school of Śākalya, from a region called Videha, in modern north Bihar, south of Nepal. The Vedic canon in its entirety consists of texts from all the various Vedic schools taken together.

Each of the four Vedas were shared by the numerous schools, but revised, interpolated and adapted locally, in and after the Vedic period, giving rise to various recensions of the text. Some texts were revised into the modern era, raising significant debate on parts of the text which are believed to have been corrupted at a later date. The Vedas each have an Index or Anukramani, the principal work of this kind being the general Index or Sarvānukramāṇī.
Prodigious energy was expended by ancient Indian culture in ensuring that these texts were transmitted from generation to

genation with inordinate fidelity.[71] For example, memorization of the sacred Vedas included up to eleven forms of recitation of the

same text. The texts were subsequently "proof-read" by comparing the different recited versions. Forms of recitation included the jaṭā-pāṭha (literally "mesh recitation") in which every two adjacent words in the text were first recited in their original order, then repeated in the reverse order, and finally repeated in the original order.[72] That these methods have been effective, is attested to by the preservation of the most ancient Indian religious text, the Rigveda, as redacted into a single text during the Brahmana period, without any variant readings within that school.[72]

The Vedas were likely written down for the first time around 500 BCE.[73] However, all printed editions of the Vedas that survive in the modern times are likely the version existing in about the 16th century AD.[74]

### Four Vedas

The canonical division of the Vedas is fourfold (turīya) viz.,[75]

1. Rigveda (RV)
2. Yajurveda (YV, with the main division TS vs. VS)
3. Samaveda (SV)
4. Atharvaveda (AV)

Of these, the first three were the principal original division, also called "trayī vidyā"; that is, "the triple science" of reciting hymns (Rigveda), performing sacrifices (Yajurveda), and chanting songs (Samaveda).[76][77] The Rigveda is the oldest work, which Witzel states are probably from the period of 1900 to 1100 BCE. Witzel, also notes that it is the Vedic period itself, where incipient lists divide the Vedic texts into three (trayī) or four branches: Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva.[65]

Each Veda has been subclassified into four major text types – the Samhitas (mantras and benedictions), the Aranyakas (text on rituals, ceremonies such as newborn baby's rites of passage, coming of age, marriages, retirement and cremation, sacrifices and symbolic sacrifices), the Brahmanas (commentaries on rituals, ceremonies and sacrifices), and the Upanishads (text discussing meditation, philosophy and spiritual knowledge).[15][17][18] The Upasanas (short ritual worship-related sections) are considered by some scholars[19][20] as the fifth part. Witzel notes that the rituals, rites and ceremonies described in these ancient texts reconstruct to a large degree the Indo-European marriage rituals observed in a region spanning the Indian subcontinent, Persia and the European area, and some greater details are found in the Vedic era texts such as the Grhya Sūtras.[78]

Only one version of the Rigveda is known to have survived into the modern era.[66] Several different versions of the Sama Veda and the Atharva Veda are known, and many different versions of the Yajur Veda have been found in different parts of South Asia.[79]

### Rigveda

The Rigveda Samhita is the oldest extant Indic text.[81] It is a collection of 1,028 Vedic Sanskrit hymns and 10,600 verses in all, organized into ten books (Sanskrit: mandalas).[82] The hymns are dedicated to Rigvedic deities.[83]

The books were composed by poets from different priestly groups over a period of several centuries from roughly the second half of the 2nd millennium BCE (the early Vedic period), starting with the Punjab (Sapta Sindhu) region of the northwest Indian

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| Nasadiya Sukta (Hymn of non-Eternity): |
| Who really knows? |
| Who can here proclaim it? |
| Whence, whence this creation sprang? |
| Gods came later, after the creation of this universe. |

Who then knows whence it has arisen?  
Whether God's will created it, or whether He was mute;  
Only He who is its overseer in highest heaven knows,  
He only knows, or perhaps He does not know.
subcontinent. The Rigveda is structured based on clear principles – the Veda begins with a small book addressed to Agni, Indra, Soma and other gods, all arranged according to decreasing total number of hymns in each deity collection; for each deity series, the hymns progress from longer to shorter ones, but the number of hymns per book increases. Finally, the meter too is systematically arranged from jagati and tristubh to anustubh and gayatri as the text progresses. In terms of substance, the nature of hymns shift from praise of deities in early books to Nasadiya Sukta with questions such as, "what is the origin of the universe?, do even gods know the answer?", the virtue of Dāna (charity) in society, and other metaphysical issues in its hymns.

There are similarities between the mythology, rituals and linguistics in Rigveda and those found in ancient central Asia, Iranian and Hindukush (Afghanistan) regions.

**Samaveda**

The Samaveda Samhita consists of 1549 stanzas, taken almost entirely (except for 75 mantras) from the Rigveda. The Samaveda samhita has two major parts. The first part includes four melody collections (gāna, गान) and the second part three verse “books” (ārcika, आर्चिक). A melody in the song books corresponds to a verse in the arcika books. Just as in the Rigveda, the early sections of Samaveda typically begin with hymns to Agni and Indra but shift to the abstract. Their meters shift also in a descending order. The songs in the later sections of the Samaveda have the least deviation from the hymns derived from the Rigveda.

In the Samaveda, some of the Rigvedic verses are repeated. Including repetitions, there are a total of 1875 verses numbered in the Samaveda recension translated by Griffith. Two major recensions have survived, the Kauthuma/Ranayaniya and the Jaiminiya. Its purpose was liturgical, and they were the repertoire of the udgātṛ or “singer” priests.

**Yajurveda**

The Yajurveda Samhita consists of prose mantras. It is a compilation of ritual offering formulas that were said by a priest while an individual performed ritual actions such as those before the yajna fire. The earliest and most ancient layer of Yajurveda samhita includes about 1,875 verses, that are distinct yet borrow and build upon the foundation of verses in Rigveda. Unlike the Samaveda which is almost entirely based on Rigveda mantras and structured as songs, the Yajurveda samhitas are in prose and linguistically, they are different from earlier Vedic texts. The Yajur Veda has been the primary source of information about sacrifices during Vedic times and associated rituals.

There are two major groups of texts in this Veda: the "Black" (Krishna) and the "White" (Shukla). The term "black" implies "the un-arranged, motley collection" of verses in Yajurveda, in contrast to the "white" (well arranged) Yajurveda. The White Yajurveda separates the Samhita from its Brahmana (the Shatapatha Brahmana), the Black Yajurveda intersperses the Samhita with Brahmana commentary. Of the Black Yajurveda, texts from four major schools have survived (Maitrayani, Katha, Kapisthala-Katha, Taittiriya), while of the White Yajurveda, two (Kanva and Madhyandina). The youngest layer of Yajurveda text is not related to rituals nor sacrifice, it includes the largest collection of primary Upanishads, influential to various schools of Hindu philosophy.

**Atharvaveda**
The Artharvaveda Samhita is the text belonging to the Atharvan and Angirasa poets. It has about 760 hymns, and about 160 of the hymns are in common with the Rigveda.[102] Most of the verses are metrical, but some sections are in prose.[102] Two different versions of the text – the Paippalāda and the Śaunakīya – have survived into the modern times.[102][103] The Atharvaveda was not considered as a Veda in the Vedic era, and was accepted as a Veda in late 1st millennium BCE.[104][105] It was compiled last,[106] probably around 900 BCE, although some of its material may go back to the time of the Rigveda,[107] or earlier.[102]

The Atharvaveda is sometimes called the "Veda of magical formulas",[108] an epithet declared to be incorrect by other scholars.[109] The Samhita layer of the text likely represents a developing 2nd millennium BCE tradition of magico-religious rites to address superstitious anxiety, spells to remove maladies believed to be caused by demons, and herbs- and nature-derived potions as medicine.[110][111] The text, states Kenneth Zysk, is one of oldest surviving record of the evolutionary practices in religious medicine and reveals the "earliest forms of folk healing of Indo-European antiquity".[112] Many books of the Atharvaveda Samhita are dedicated to rituals without magic, such as to philosophical speculations and to theosophy.[109]

The Atharva veda has been a primary source for information about Vedic culture, the customs and beliefs, the aspirations and frustrations of everyday Vedic life, as well as those associated with kings and governance. The text also includes hymns dealing with the two major rituals of passage – marriage and cremation. The Atharva Veda also dedicates significant portion of the text asking the meaning of a ritual.[113]

**Embedded Vedic texts**

Manuscripts of the Vedas are in the Sanskrit language, but in many regional scripts in addition to the Devanagari. Top: Grantha script (Tamil Nadu), Below: Malayalam script (Kerala).

**Brahmanas**

The Brahmanas are commentaries, explanation of proper methods and meaning of Vedic Samhita rituals in the four Vedas.[114] They also incorporate myths, legends and in some cases philosophy.[114][53] Each regional Vedic shakha (school) has its own operating manual-like Brahmana text, most of which have been lost.[115] A total of 19 Brahmana texts have survived into modern times: two associated with the Rigveda, six with the Yajurveda, ten with the Samaveda and one with the Atharvaveda. The oldest dated to about 900 BCE, while the youngest Brahmanas (such as the Shatapatha Brahmana), were complete by about 700 BCE.[116][117] According to Jan Gonda, the final codification of the Brahmanas took place in pre-Buddhist times (ca. 600 BCE).[118]
The substance of the Brahmana text varies with each Veda. For example, the first chapter of the Chandogya Brahmana, one of the oldest Brahmanas, includes eight ritual suktas (hymns) for the ceremony of marriage and rituals at the birth of a child.[119][120] The first hymn is a recitation that accompanies offering a Yajna oblation to Agni (fire) on the occasion of a marriage, and the hymn prays for prosperity of the couple getting married.[119][121] The second hymn wishes for their long life, kind relatives, and a numerous progeny.[119] The third hymn is a mutual marriage pledge, between the bride and groom, by which the two bind themselves to each other. The sixth through last hymns of the first chapter in Chandogya Brahmana are ritual celebrations on the birth of a child and wishes for health, wealth, and prosperity with a profusion of cows and artha.[119] However, these verses are incomplete expositions, and their complete context emerges only with the Samhita layer of text.[122]

**Aranyakas and Upanishads**

The Aranyakas layer of the Vedas include rituals, discussion of symbolic meta-rituals, as well as philosophical speculations.[20][54]

Aranyakas, however, neither are homogeneous in content nor in structure.[54] They are a medley of instructions and ideas, and some include chapters of Upanishads within them. Two theories have been proposed on the origin of the word Aranyakas. One theory holds that these texts were meant to be studied in a forest, while the other holds that the name came from these being the manuals of allegorical interpretation of sacrifices, for those in Vanaprastha (retired, forest-dwelling) stage of their life, according to the historic age-based Ashrama system of human life.[123]

The Upanishads reflect the last composed layer of texts in the Vedas. They are commonly referred to as Vedānta, variously interpreted to mean either the "last chapters, parts of the Vedas" or "the object, the highest purpose of the Veda".[124] The concepts of Brahman (Ultimate Reality) and Ātman (Soul, Self) are central ideas in all the Upanishads,[125][126] and "Know your Ātman" their thematic focus.[126][127] The Upanishads are the foundation of Hindu philosophical thought and its diverse traditions.[61][128] Of the Vedic corpus, they alone are widely known, and the central ideas of the Upanishads have influenced the diverse traditions of Hinduism.[61][129]

Aranyakas are sometimes identified as karma-kanda (ritualistic section), while the Upanishads are identified as jnana-kanda (spirituality section).[19][130] In an alternate classification, the early part of Vedas are called Samhitas and the commentary are called the Brahmanas which together are identified as the ceremonial karma-kanda, while Aranyakas and Upanishads are referred to as the jnana-kanda.[131]

**Post-Vedic literature**

**Vedanga**

The Vedangas developed towards the end of the vedic period, around or after the middle of the 1st millennium BCE. These auxiliary fields of Vedic studies emerged because the language of the Vedas, composed centuries earlier, became too archaic to the people of that time.[132] The Vedangas were sciences that focused on helping understand and interpret the Vedas that had been composed many centuries earlier.[132]

The six subjects of Vedanga are phonetics (Śikṣā), poetic meter (Chandas), grammar (Vyākaraṇa), etymology and linguistics (Nirukta), rituals and rites of passage (Kalpa), time keeping and astronomy (Jyotiṣa).[133][134][135]

Vedangas developed as ancillary studies for the Vedas, but its insights into meters, structure of sound and language, grammar, linguistic analysis and other subjects influenced post-Vedic studies, arts, culture and various schools of Hindu philosophy.[136][137][138] The Kalpa Vedanga studies, for example, gave rise to the Dharma-sutras, which later expanded into Dharma-shastras.[132][139]
Paríṣiṣṭa

"supplement, appendix" is the term applied to various ancillary works of Vedic literature, dealing mainly with details of ritual and elaborations of the texts logically and chronologically prior to them: the Samhitas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Sutras. Naturally classified with the Veda to which each pertains, Parisista works exist for each of the four Vedas. However, only the literature associated with the Atharvaveda is extensive.

- The Āśvalāyana Gṛhya Parisiṣṭa is a very late text associated with the Rigveda canon.
- The Gobhila Gṛhya Parisiṣṭa is a short metrical text of two chapters, with 113 and 95 verses respectively.
- The Kāṭiya Parisiṣṭas, ascribed to Kāṭyāyana, consist of 18 works enumerated self-referentially in the fifth of the series (the Cararanyāyōha) and the Kāṭyāyana Śrauta Sūtra Parisiṣṭa.
- The Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda has 3 parisistas The Āpastamba Hautra Parisiṣṭa, which is also found as the second prāṇa of the Śātyasāḍha Śrauta Sūtra', the Vārāha Śrauta Sūtra Parisiṣṭa.
- For the Atharvaveda, there are 79 works, collected as 72 distinctly named parisistas.\(^{[140]}\)

Upaveda

The term upaveda ("applied knowledge") is used in traditional literature to designate the subjects of certain technical works.\(^{[141][142]}\) Lists of what subjects are included in this class differ among sources. The Charanavyuha mentions four Upavedas.\(^{[143]}\)

- Archery (Dhanurveda), associated with the Yajurveda
- Architecture (Sthapatyaveda), associated with the Atharvaveda.
- Music and sacred dance (Gāndharvaveda), associated with the Samaveda
- Medicine (Āyurveda), associated with either the Rigveda or the Atharvaveda.\(^{[144][145]}\)

"Fifth" and other Vedas

Some post-Vedic texts, including the Mahabharata, the Natyasastra\(^{[146]}\) and certain Puranas, refer to themselves as the "fifth Veda".\(^{[147]}\) The earliest reference to such a "fifth Veda" is found in the Chandogya Upanishad in hymn 7.1.2.\(^{[148]}\)

Let drama and dance (Nātya, नाट्य) be the fifth vedic scripture. Combined with an epic story, tending to virtue, wealth, joy and spiritual freedom, it must contain the significance of every scripture, and forward every art. Thus, from all the Vedas, Brahma framed the Nātya Veda. From the Rig Veda he drew forth the words, from the Sama Veda the melody, from the Yajur Veda gesture, and from the Atharva Veda the sentiment.

— First chapter of Nātyaśāstra, Abhinaya Darpana\(^{[149][150]}\)

"Divya Prabandha", for example Tiruvaymoli, is a term for canonical Tamil texts considered as Vemacular Veda by some South Indian Hindus.\(^{[33][34]}\)

Other texts such as the Bhagavat Gita or the Vedanta Sutras are considered shruti or "Vedic" by some Hindu denominations but not universally within Hinduism. The Bhakti movement, and Gaudiya Vaishnavism in particular extended the term veda to include the Sanskrit Epics and Vaishnavite devotional texts such as the Pancaratra.\(^{[151]}\)

Puranas

The Puranas is a vast genre of encyclopedic Indian literature about a wide range of topics particularly myths, legends and other traditional lore.\(^{[152]}\) Several of these texts are named after major Hindu deities such as Vishnu, Shiva and Devi.\(^{[153][154]}\) There are 18 Maha Puranas (Great Puranas) and 18 Upa Puranas (Minor Puranas), with over 400,000 verses.\(^{[152]}\)
The Puranas have been influential in the Hindu culture.[155][156] They are considered Vaidika (congruent with Vedic literature).[157] The Bhagavata Purana has been among the most celebrated and popular text in the Puranic genre, and is of non-dualistic tenor.[158][159] The Puranic literature wove with the Bhakti movement in India, and both Dvaita and Advaita scholars have commented on the underlying Vedanta themes in the Maha Puranas.[160]

### Western Indology

The study of Sanskrit in the West began in the 17th century. In the early 19th century, Arthur Schopenhauer drew attention to Vedic texts, specifically the Upanishads. The importance of Vedic Sanskrit for Indo-European studies was also recognized in the early 19th century. English translations of the Samhitas were published in the later 19th century, in the Sacred Books of the East series edited by Müller between 1879 and 1910.[161] Ralph T. H. Griffith also presented English translations of the four Samhitas, published 1889 to 1899.

Voltaire regarded Vedas to be exceptional, he remarked that:

> The Veda was the most precious gift for which the West had ever been indebted to the East.[162][163]

Rigveda manuscripts were selected for inscription in UNESCO's Memory of the World Register in 2007.[164]

### See also

- Hindu philosophy
- Historical Vedic religion
- Pyramid Texts
- Shakha
- Vedic chant

### Notes

1. "As a skilled craftsman makes a car, a singer I, Mighty One! this hymn for thee have fashioned. If thou, O Agni, God, accept it gladly, may we obtain thereby the heavenly Waters". – *Rigveda* 5.2.11, Translated by Ralph T.H. Griffith[12]

2. Elisa Freschi (2012): The Vedas are not *deontic* authorities in absolute sense and may be disobeyed, but are recognized as an *epistemic* authority by a Hindu orthodox school.[21] (Note: This differentiation between epistemic and deontic authority is true for all Indian religions)

3. The early Buddhist texts are also generally believed to be of oral tradition, with the first Pali Canon written many centuries after the death of the Buddha.[40]

### References

5. D Sharma, Classical Indian Philosophy: A Reader, Columbia University Press, pp. 196–197


38. Gavin Flood sums up mainstream estimates, according to which the Rigveda was compiled from as early as 1500 BCE over a period of several centuries. Flood 1996, p. 37


41. Witzel, Michael, “Vedas and Upaniṣads”, in: Flood 2003, p. 69; For oral composition and oral transmission for "many hundreds of years" before being written down, see: Avari 2007, p. 76.


50. according to ISKCON, Hindu Sacred Texts (http://hinduism.iskcon.com/tradition/1105.htm). "Hindus themselves often use the term to describe anything connected to the Vedas and their corollaries (e.g. Vedic culture)".

51. 37,575 are Rigvedic. Of the remaining, 34,857 appear in the other three Samhitas, and 16,405 are known only from Brahmanas, Upanishads or Sutras


57. For a table of all Vedic texts see Witzel, Michael, "Vedas and Upaniṣads", in: Flood 2003, pp. 100–101.
59. Flood 2003, pp. 100–101
60. Edward Roer (Translator), Shankara’s Introduction (https://books.google.com/books?id=3uwDAAAAMAAJ) at Google Books to Brihad Aranyakak Upanishad at pp. 1–5; Quote: “The Vedas are divided in two parts, the first is the karma-kanda, the ceremonial part, also (called) purva-kanda, and treats on ceremonies; the second part is the jnana kanda, the part which contains knowledge, also named uttara-kanda or posterior part, and unfolds the knowledge of Brahma or the universal soul.”
61. Wendy Doniger (1990), Textual Sources for the Study of Hinduism, 1st Edition, University of Chicago Press, ISBN 978-0226618470, pp. 2–3; Quote: “The Upanishads supply the basis of later Hindu philosophy; they alone of the Vedic corpus are widely known and quoted by most well-educated Hindus, and their central ideas have also become a part of the spiritual arsenal of rank-and-file Hindus.”
63. Patrick Olivelle (2014), The Early Upanisads, Oxford University Press, ISBN 978-0195352429, p. 3; Quote: “Even though theoretically the whole of vedic corpus is accepted as revealed truth [shruti], in reality it is the Upanishads that have continued to influence the life and thought of the various religious traditions that we have come to call Hindu. Upanishads are the scriptures par excellence of Hinduism”.
69. For an example, see SarvaＮukramaṇi Vivaraṇa (http://hdl.library.upenn.edu/1017/d/medren/3178027) Univ of Pennsylvania rare texts collection
70. Rgveda-saROWukramaṇi ŠaunakaKṛtānuvāKramaṇi ca, Maharṣi-Kātyayāna-viracitā, OCLC 11549595 (http s://www.worldcat.org/oclc/11549595)
71. (Staal 1986)
72. (Filliozat 2004, p. 139)
73. Avari 2007, pp. 69–70
74. Michael Witzel, "Vedas and Upaniṣads", in: Flood 2003, p. 69, Quote: “... almost all printed editions depend on the late manuscripts that are hardly older than 500 years”
75. Radhakrishnan & Moore 1957, p. 3; Witzel, Michael, "Vedas and Upaniṣads", in: Flood 2003, p. 68

77. MacDonell 2004, pp. 29–39

78. Jamison and Witzel (1992), Vedic Hinduism (http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~witzel/vedica.pdf), Harvard University, p. 21


81. see e.g. Avari 2007, p. 77.

82. For 1,028 hymns and 10,600 verses and division into ten mandalas, see: Avari 2007, p. 77.

83. For characterization of content and mentions of deities including Agni, Indra, Varuna, Soma, Surya, etc. see: Avari 2007, p. 77.

84. see e.g. Avari 2007, p. 77 Max Müller gave 1700–1100 BCE, Michael Witzel gives 1450–1350 BCE as terminus ad quem.

85. Original text translated in English: The Rig Veda, Mandala 10, Hymn 117, Ralph T.H. Griffith (Translator);

86. For example, Hymn 1.164.34, "What is the ultimate limit of the earth?", "What is the center of the universe?", "What is the semen of the cosmic horse?", "What is the ultimate source of human speech?"
   Hymn 1.164.34, "Who gave blood, soul, spirit to the earth?", "How could the unstructured universe give origin to this structured world?"
   Hymn 1.164.5, "Where does the sun hide in the night?", "Where do gods live?"
   Hymn 1.164.6, "What, where is the unborn support for the born universe?";
   Hymn 1.164.20 (a hymn that is widely cited in the Upanishads as the parable of the Body and the Soul): “Two birds with fair wings, inseparable companions; Have found refuge in the same sheltering tree. One incessantly eats from the fig tree; the other, not eating, just looks on.”;
   Sources: (a) Antonio de Nicholas (2003), Meditations Through the Rig Veda: Four-Dimensional Man, ISBN 978-0595269259, pp. 64–69;
   Rigveda Book 1, Hymn 164 Wikisource


88. (from sāman, the term for a melody applied to a metrical hymn or a song of praise, Apte 1965, p. 981.


91. For 1875 total verses, see the numbering given in Ralph T. H. Griffith. Griffith's introduction mentions the recension history for his text. Repetitions may be found by consulting the cross-index in Griffith pp. 491–499.


98. Michaels 2004, p. 52 Table 3


106. “The latest of the four Vedas, the Atharvaveda, is, as we have seen, largely composed of magical texts and charms, but here and there we find cosmological hymns which anticipate the Upanishads, – hymns to Skambha, the ‘Support’, who is seen as the first principle which is both the material and efficient cause of the universe, to Prāṇa, the ‘Breath of Life’, to Vāc, the ‘Word’, and so on.” Zaehner 1966, p. vii.


111. On magic spells and charms, such as those to gain better health: Atharva Veda 2.32 Bhaishagykni, Charm to secure perfect health (http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe42/av064.htm) Maurice Bloomfield (Translator), Sacred Books of the East, Vol. 42, Oxford University Press; see also chapters 3.11, 3.31, 4.10, 5.30, 19.26; On finding a good husband: Atharva Veda 4.2.36 Strijaratani (http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe42/av102.htm) Maurice Bloomfield (Translator), Sacred Books of the East, Vol. 42, Oxford University Press; Atharvaveda dedicates over 30 chapters to love relationships, sexuality and for conceiving a child, see e.g. chapters 1.14, 2.30, 3.25, 6.60, 6.78, 6.82, 6.130–6.132; On peaceful social and family relationships: Atharva Veda 6.3.30 (ht tp://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/sbe42/av153.htm) Maurice Bloomfield (Translator), Sacred Books of the East, Vol. 42, Oxford University Press;


119. Max Müller, Chandogya Upanishad (https://archive.org/stream/upanishads01milpage/n93/mode/2up), The Upanishads, Part I, Oxford University Press, p. lxxxvii with footnote 2


124. Max Müller, The Upanishads (https://archive.org/stream/upanishads01milpage/n93/mode/2up), Part 1, Oxford University Press, p. lxxxvi footnote 1


129. Patrick Olivelle (2014), The Early Upanisads, Oxford University Press, ISBN 978-0195352429, p. 3; Quote: “Even though theoretically the whole of vedic corpus is accepted as revealed truth [shruti], in reality it is the Upanishads that have continued to influence the life and thought of the various religious traditions that we have come to call Hindu. Upanishads are the scriptures par excellence of Hinduism”.

130. See Shankara's Introduction (https://books.google.com/books?id=3uwDAAAAYAAJ) at Google Books to Brihad Aranyaka Upanishad at pp. 1–5; Quote: “The Vedas are divided in two parts, the first is the karma-kanda, the ceremonial part, also (called) purva-kanda, and treats on ceremonies; the second part is the jnana kanda, the part which contains knowledge, also named uttara-kanda or posterior part, and unfolds the knowledge of Brahma or the universal soul.” (Translator: Edward Roer)


Filliozat, Pierre-Sylvain (2004), "Ancient Sanskrit Mathematics: An Oral Tradition and a Written Literature" (http://www.springerlink.com/content/x0000784897q4858/), in Chemla, Karine; Cohen, Robert S.; Renn, Jürgen; et al. (eds.), *History of Science, History of Text* (Boston Series in the Philosophy of Science), Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, ISBN 9781402023200


**Further reading**

**Overviews**


**Concordances**

- M. Bloomfield, *A Vedic Concordance* (1907)

Conference proceedings


External links

- GRETIL etexts (http://www.sub.uni-goettingen.de/ebene_1/fiindolo/gretil.htm#Veda)
- A Vedic Concordance (https://archive.org/stream/vedicconcordance00bloouoft/page/n7/mode/2up), Maurice Bloomfield, Harvard University (an alphabetic index to every line, every stanza of the Vedas published before 1906)
- An Enlarged Electronic Version of Bloomfield's A Vedic Concordance (http://www.people.fas.harvard.edu/~witzel/VedicConcordance/ReadmeEng.html), Harvard University
- The Vedas at sacred-texts.com (http://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/index.htm#vedas)


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