

On Ancient Indian Scriptures

Sri Shyam Sundar Goswami

Unrevised by its author Sri S.S.Goswami, the following account on ancient Hindu scriptures, so far unpublished, has been reviewed and drafted with a few exceptions regarding the transliteration system used by Author in his classic book *Layayoga* (Inner Traditions).

Basile Catoméris

The ancient scriptures are considered under the following heads:

Weda¹⁾

According to the Indian tradition going on from time immemorial the Veda has no human author, and all ancient scriptures are based on it. But this has been challenged by modern thoughts that proceed from a form of intellectualization influenced by ingenious speculations and inferences, a fanciful interpretation of the Waidika texts for which there are no sympathy, attraction and regards, and a total lack of any inner sight and experience, and consequently no understanding of the spiritual and technical sense of the Weda which remains hidden. The Weda is called *shruti* because it has been "heard" by the inner ear opened in concentration. It is also "seen" by the Yoga-sight developed in *dhyâna* and *samâdhi*, and therefore it has not been composed by the intellect.

Any truth existing in nature may be revealed to a gifted person. This does not mean that that person has created it. Take the example of gravitation. It was revealed to Newton who thus was not the maker but the discoverer of gravitation. It is the failure of understanding of the Brahmanic interpretation of the Weda, which has given rise to discordant and senseless interpretations. Also, the Brahmanic interpretation is not to be equated with the ritualistic explanation.

Supreme Consciousness – Brahman in its indefinite and immutable phase – has an aspect in which the quiescent power as being and consciousness is in stress and is in the nature of infinitesimal supreme sound, termed *parashabda* though still latent. When this power, being dynamic, becomes effective, the principle of sound in power is transformed into the radiant sound energy, termed *pashyanti*, which, constitutes the *pranava*²⁾, the first *mantra* – the first manifested energy endowed with creativity. Then the radiant sound is transformed into the potent sound energy called *madhyama*, which causes the emergence of a number of power units, capable of producing specific force-motions associated with diversiform sound elements. These units combine with each other in many different manners and form primary "germs", which are only known by their sound patterns, and therefore they are designated as *bija* (germ)-mantras, and a part of which becomes gross and functions in the material field. This is called *vaikhari*. The operating dynamism there radiates energy causing the emission of sounds. The germs of life, mind and matter lie in the supreme sound power. There slumber all knowledge and control power. This entire dynamism in its sound forms is Weda. In the Weda lies the whole knowledge system. It consists of the following levels:

- 1) Supreme knowledge of the supreme being realizable in mind – transcendent *asamprajñâta samâdhi*.
- 2) Superconscious knowledge of the supreme being and objects at different levels in *samprajñâta samâdhi*.
- 3) Supersensory realizations in *dhyâna*.
- 4 Higher intellectual knowledge comprising spiritual and material sciences.
- 5) Perceptual knowledge.

In a perfect experience of the Weda, the entire knowledge system is revealed. This high-est form of experience is the Brahmâ experience. It is

the primary experience. But there are also secondary experiences of the Weda. These are the experiences of the *rishis*. In the *rishi's* experiences a segment of the Weda or knowledge system, is revealed. The *rishis* mentioned in relation to the *mantras* in the Sanghitas are not the writers of the mantras but they are seers of the *mantras* in *samâdhi*. The samâdhi experiences are given highly rarefied thought-forms and expressed in the highly technical sound forms constituting the waidika language. The segmented knowledge presented in waidika language stands for the Mantrasanghita of the Weda.

Many truths and laws embedded in nature were revealed to the rishis in their segmental experiences of the Weda. In this way they acquired a high order of knowledge of life, mind and matter. They attained direct knowledge of Yoga in its entire form. They also acquired scientific knowledge. Thus, scientific truths as well as spiritual truths, both in essence, lie in the Weda. The motion of the earth around the sun, gravitation, tissue transplantation, circulation of blood are some examples of scientific knowledge embedded in the Weda. These types of root-knowledge were elaborated by the rishis by studies and experiments and then presented as separate sciences. Thus they formulated a science of mind, medicine (*âyurwedâ*), physics (*bhoutikâtibhoutika shastra*), chemistry (*wedam*), electricity and magnetism (*soudâmini*), mathematics (*râshi*), astrology and astronomy (*jyotisha*) etc. Most of their original works are lost; there are only fragments of these scattered in the Purânas.

The primary Veda is one, that is an undivided whole; it consists of four forms mantras –*riz*, *yajus*, *sâma* and *atharwa*, and it contains 100,000 thousand mantras.

The first *rishi* (seer) Brahmâ "saw" the entire Veda with his Yogic vision, and expressed it. This is the primary Weda. It is also called *prâjâpatya shruti*, that is, what has been "heard" by Brahmâ in *samâdhi*. This amounts to the highest experience of the Weda.

In the secondary rishi experience of the Weda, *rik-mantra* were first revealed to rishi Agni, *yâjus* to rishi Wayu, *sâma* to rishi Surya and *atharwa* to rishi Angira. But the whole Weda remained undivided.

In the 28th Dwâpara age (about 4 to 5 thousand years ago), the great rishi Krishna Dwipâyana abridged the primary Weda and divided it into four books. For this rearrangement of the original Weda, he was given the title *Wedawyâsa*. The four books edited by *Wyâsa* are called *Rigweda-sanghita*, *Yajurweda-sanghita*, *Samaweda-sanghita* and *Atharwaweda-sanghita*.

The *Yajurweda* was finally divided into the *Shuklayayurweda-sanghita* and *Krishnayayurweda-sanghita*.

The present *Rigweda*, *Yajurweda*, *Sâmanaweda* and *Atharwaweda-sanghitas* are, most probably, the same as *Wyasa's* *sanghitas*. An established belief is the sanctity of the *Waidika* text, the unique mode of teachings which have been handed down from guru to guru, the gurus' determination to maintain the purity of the text, and the prodigious memory of the pupils which kept the text exact – all these contributed to preserve *Wyasa's* *Sanghitas* accurate, without interpolations or any modifications.

Brâhmanas

From the *mantras* of the primary Weda, the Brahmanic words were constructed by the ancient rishis with a view to understand their respective meaning. Thus, the original *Brâhmanas* came into being. As the primary Weda was immense in size, so the original *Brâmana* was expected to be vast. It is difficult to say whether it was in one massive book as the primary Weda was, or if it was in four books made according to the four types of

mantras of the primary Weda. However, after the primary Weda was rearranged by Wyâsa into four Sanghitas, the ancient Brâhmanas were also altered. They were perhaps divided into many parts.

There were many different schools (*shâkhâ*) belonging to the four Sanghitas. These schools arose to ease the study of the Weda. According to the Muktikopanishad the number of schools were 1180 but according to Patanjali, the author of the Mahâbhâshya and the well-known commentary of Panini's grammar, the number were 1130. It has been stated that each school had a separate Brâhmana. So, there were many Brâhmanas. At present, many schools have disappeared and most of the Brâhmanas are lost.

Now, the Aitareya and Koushitaki Brâhmanas of the Rigweda, the Shatapatha Brâhmana of the Shuklayayurveda, the Taittiriya Brâhmana of the Krishnayajurveda, the Tandya, Jaiminiya, Daiwata and Shadwinghsa Brâhmanas of the Sâmaweda, and the Gopatha Brâhmana of Atharwaveda, are among the Brâhmanas which are still extant.

However, the Brâhmanas were so close to the *mantra* part, that the Weda was defined in the Yajnaribhâshasutra by Apastambha as words both of the *mantra* and Brâhmana; and *mantras* and Brâhmanas are the Weda (ibid).

Upanishads

The Upanishads are parts of the Brâhmanas. Only a few Upanishads belong to the Sanghitas. There are many Upanishads. Out of what remains today there 108 Upanishads are generally known with their names indicated in the Muktikopanishad. Besides these 108 Upanishads, other Upanishads have been recently found out in manuscript form. Under the heading "Un-

published Upanishads" The Adyar Library, Madras, has published 71 such Upanishads. In the *Upanishad Wākya-Mahākoshā*" the titles of 225 Upanishads are being mentioned of which 115 Upanishads are adding to the known 108 Upanishads.

The Upanishads specially expound Yoga and the attainment of the supreme conscious state in which Brahman is directly realized. The mind, pranic forces and *nâdis* (subtle force-motion lines) are also explained there.

Tantras

The original Tantras are nearly as ancient as the Weda. The Tantras came from the mouth of Shiwa as the Weda came from the mouth of Brahmâ. It has also been stated that the Wedas and Tantras are the two arms of the Divine power and the entire universe is held by these two arms. This indicates that Tantra is a fundamental aspect of the whole knowledge system, which is in the Weda. This is why the Tantra has been regarded in the Purâna Wedanga – an essential part of the Weda. The name of the Tantra has been mentioned in the Ashwalâyana Shroutrasutra. Kullukabhata, the famous commentator on the Manusanghita has said that the *shruti* is of two kinds, *waidiki* and *tantriki*.

Shruti is what is received as divine words through inner hearing in deep concentration and has been imparted to others directly by transforming those silent words into *waikhâri* (what is audible) forms. Both the Weda and the Tantra were revealed in this way. The first rishi of the Weda *Shruti* is Brahmâ, and of the Tantra *Shruti* is Shiwa.

Yoga and mantras are in the Wedas as essence. They have been partly disclosed in the Upanishads, but they are fully treated in the Tantras. *Bija* (germ)-mantras are hidden in an extremely complex waidika mantra-

language of the Sanghitâs, except for *pranawa*. Only a very small part has been disclosed in the Upanishads, but in the Tantras all the *bija*-mantras have been fully isolated and presented in actual forms along with their deities and the modes of practice. In some of the Upanishads there are mantras and abridged associated concentration processes. They are fully elaborated in the Tantras. There are short and incomplete accounts of many processes in the Vedas which have been fully dealt with in the Tantras. The importance of the waidika spiritual processes and practices has been accepted in the Tantras. There is an intermingling between the waidika and tantrika processes. All this indicates their close relation.

The accounts of the chakras and the *nâdi* system of the Upanishads have been elaborated and clearly explained in the Tantras. In fact without the help of the Tantras these subjects are incomplete.

Not only the name of Tantra has been mentioned in the Purânas, but many *bija*-mantras and associated deities mentioned there turn to be quite similar to those of the Tantras. Both waidika and tantrika forms of worship have been recommended to the spiritual practitioners in the Purânas; spiritual practices in some of the Purânas are quite similar to those of the Tantras. Many Tantrika *bija*-mantras have been adopted in the Purânas. The tantrika influence is clearly seen in the Smritisanghitâ, ayurweda (medicine) and jyotisha (astrology and astronomy).

From Yoga point of view, the germ of Yoga lying in the Sanghitâs of the Weda has been sprouted in the Upanishads and fully blossomed out in the Tantras.

The Tantras have two great divisions: *agama* and *nigama*. Those Tantras, which were issued from the mouth of Shiva and heard by Pârwati, are *agama*. Those Tantras, which were uttered by Pârwati to Shiva, are *nigama*. Both the *agama* and the *nigama* were approved by Vishnu. These are the original Tantras. These Tantras were many in number, but now most of them

are lost. There are also important tantrika compilations by great tantrika writers in later times.

Puranas

The Purâna was first expressed by Brahmâ. This is the original Purâna. Its title was Brahamandapurâna and contained one billion verses. Then Wyâsa abridged the original Purâna and rearranged it into 18 parts. Each part became a separate book with its own title. There are 18 Purânas now available that together contain 400,000 verses.

Purâna means what is very ancient, what existed before. That means that many facts presented in the Purânas are very ancient. The Purânas are a valuable help in understanding the real meaning of the Weda. In the Purânas there are accounts on Yoga, religion and many useful things in everyday life. The Itihâsas are actually a part of the Purânas. At present there are only two books belonging to the Itihâsas: the Râmâyana by Walmika, and the Mahâbhârata by Wyasa.

In brief, the Purânas and Itihâsas constitute, generally speaking, the social, political and religious history of ancient India. Fundamentally, the Brahmanic thoughts in relation to spiritual, religious, philosophical and material fields are recorded there. They also present Ancient India's records of achievements in various fields.

Darshanas

The well-known six Darshana are:

Waisheshikadarshana of Kanâda, Nyâyadarshana of Gotama, Sankhyadarshana of Kapila, Yogadarshana of Patanjali, Purwamimangsadarshana of Jainini and Wedanta-darshana of Wedawyasa. The Shankyadarshana of

Kapila is extinct. There is a very small work entitled Tattwasamasa with only 22 aphorisms. Many consider that Kapila is its author. There is another short work of 70 verses entitled Sankhyakârikâ, which is considered as ancient. There is also a large book entitled Shankhya-prawachanasutra, which is generally considered as Sankhyadarshana. There were additional Yoga-darshana works but all these are thus leaving only Pantanjali's Yogadarshana extant.

Besides the six well-known darshana systems, there is still another path called bhakti (divine love). Angirâ's Daiwimangsadarshana is presently considered the main work on the subject. But there are also two other small works such as Shandilya's Bhakti sutras and of Nârada. Yoga has been mentioned in the respective Darshanas: Waisheshika, Nyâya, Sankya, Wedanta and Daiwimangsa, and in the afore-mentioned Bhakti sutras of Shandilya and Nârada.

The use of the word philosophy for *darshana* is not appropriate. The literal meaning of *darshana* is seeing, sight, eye. *Darshana* is a direct experience in the material, mental or spiritual field. *Darshana* is a particular system of knowledge acquired through the investigation, study and experiments, e.g as by developing yogic sight in mental concentration and presented in a highly technical language in a concise form and tuned philosophically.

Smritisanghitâ

There are many works on the Smritisanghitâ, viz. Manusanghitâ, Wishnu-sanghitâ, etc. They deal with law, customs and manners, rules of conduct and so on. There is also an account of Yoga in some Smritisanghitâs.

On The Veracity of the Scriptures

It may be pointed out that the basic Yoga is concealed in a highly technical and complex spiritual language of the Veda Sanghitâs. The word-form contained in this unique language are reducible to *bija* and other real mantra-forms, In other words, the spiritual meaning disclosing Yoga and mantra is clothed in a form-sounds which were not created by man but actually "heard" through the inner ear of the *rishis* who attained this power through Yoga. This has served the two-fold purpose. First, the essence was thereby protected from the profane, and, second, the real substance will be revealed only to the initiated with the help of a guru. This is why it is so difficult to understand the inner meaning, and consequently, so misunderstood by those who have no spiritual experience.

The basic Yoga hidden in the mantra-language of the Weda was first expounded in the Upanishads. But there are certain aspects of yoga mentioned in the Upanishads which cannot be traced in the Sanghitâs. This indicates that either Wyasa's collections have been partly lost or we have failed to understand certain parts of the Sanghitâs. The Upanishadic exposition of Yoga is also incomplete. It indicates that many Upanishads dealing with Yoga are lost. There is no evidence to support the idea that only the widely known 11 Upanishads are genuine and ancient and the others were introduced later. It has also been said that during Shankara's time other Upanishads (except the 11) were nonexistent. This is mainly based on the ground that other Upanishads have not been commented upon by Shankaracharya. This is in fact no sound reasoning, considering the fact that the great *rishi* did not comment on other Veda Sanghitâs. Are we then allowed to conclude that these Sanghitâs did not exist during his lifetime? Nothing can be more absurd than this. Shankara has quoted many mantras from the Sanghitâs as well as from the other Upanishads. He has commented upon the Nrisinghatapiny-upanishad, which are beside the 11 Upanishads. His commentaries upon other Upanishads might have been lost.

We also cannot draw any definite conclusion by merely observing the different types of language used in the Upanishads. We find here Brâhmanic language, Tantrika language, and a highly technical form of language characteristic to the very Upanishads, which is extremely difficult to understand. We also find in the Upanishads that certain yogic processes, unavailable in any other scriptures, have been presented in a highly complex type of language. Differences in the types of language are the characteristic feature of the Upanishads. The theory of later introduction is a myth. However, the picture of Yoga presented in the 108 is incomplete, and it indicates that many Upanishads dealing with Yoga have been lost.

About the Tantras, there are much delusion, misunderstandings and controversies in relation to these scriptures. It is mainly due to an attempt by persons who are no yogi(ni)s and who have no spiritual experiences to deal with the Tantras and evaluate them with merely superficial linguistic knowledge. It is not possible in this way to decipher the spiritual Tantrika language. In the Tantras, Yoga and its various forms and practices are presented in a spiritual language, and without Guru's instruction, it is not understandable. There is a mixture of different languages in the Tantras – technical, spiritual, philosophical and common. Various aspects of religion, customs and many useful things necessary in everyday life are presented in common language. There are also certain words used in the Tantras, which have hidden uncommon meanings. All this should be very carefully considered in the study of the Tantras.

The most important point about those scriptures is that they give Waidika Yoga a more complete form. Various practices of Yoga are only understandable with the help of the Tantras. So, the Tantras are indispensable for the study of Yoga.

About the Purânas. First of all, a loud cry is heard: the Purânas are only fantastic stories and full of superstition; they are recent and full of interpolations.

I only wonder whether these critics have carefully studied the Purânas? There are of course, easy common languages in which religion in its simple forms is presented for those who are unable to understand its spiritual aspect on a higher level but need something for making their headway in this field. In the Purânas one may also find a highly technical and difficult language. Indeed, the stories of the Purânas are very useful. Some are plain, easy to understand and beautiful, they serve the purpose of leaving durable religious impressions on the minds of those who cannot grasp it otherwise. But there are also other stories which are extremely difficult to understand, such as when conveying technical aspects on Yoga, or spirituality and religion.

From yogic viewpoint, the Purânas give a detailed technical descriptions and invaluable information on that vast subject of Yoga.

¹⁾ Also spelled Veda or The Vedas (translator's note)

²⁾ Phonetically identified as the primary sound *Aum*, *Om* or *Ong* (translator's note)