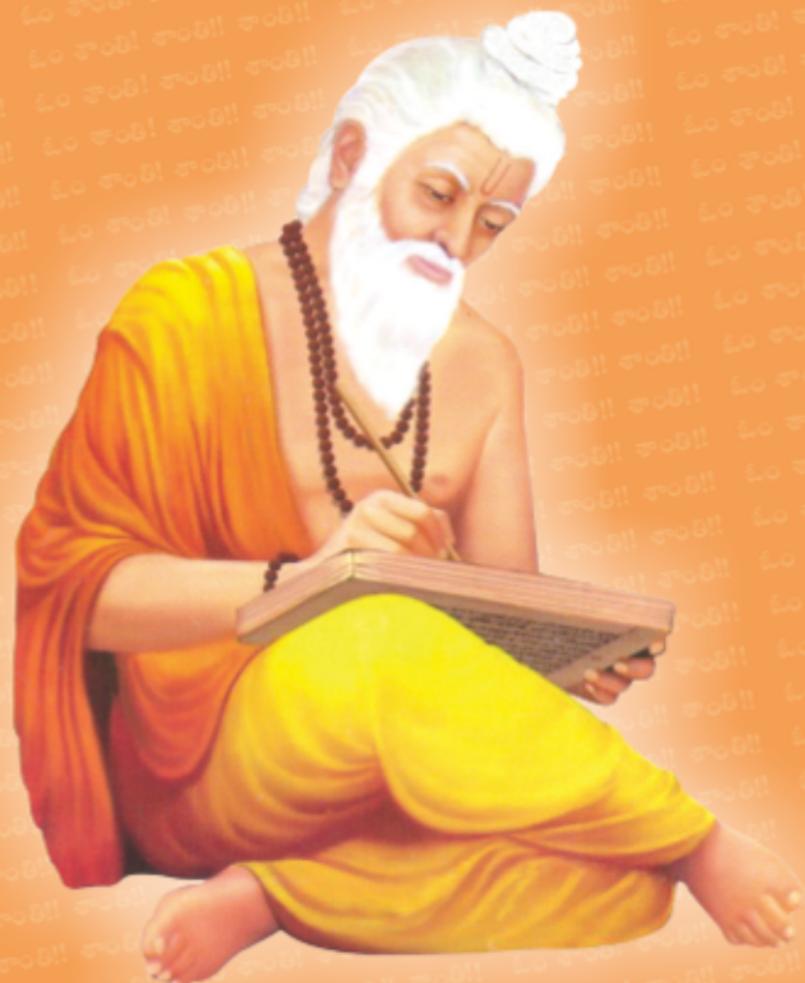


A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO VEDAS AND SASTRAS



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1. Vedas - Technical Terms

1Q. **What is meant by the word 'Veda'?**

Ans. 'Veda' means wit or knowledge.

Examples: *Rigveda, Yajurveda etc*

2Q. **What is meant by 'Sastra'?**

Ans. i. *Sastra* means that which commands and protects.

ii. It also means any treatise that expounds sacred knowledge.

Examples: *Vedanta sastra, Vyakarana sastra, Jyotisha sastra etc.*

3Q. **What is meant by 'Purana'?**

Ans. i. *Purana* means that which is ancient in age but eternally modern in outlook. It means that which is relevant for all ages. This meaning is derived from the saying '***pura apinavam***' ancient, yet modern.

ii. *Purana* is defined as a treatise having five characteristics.

*Sargascha prathisargascha vamsa
manvantaranichal*

*Vamsanucharitam cheti puranam
panchalakshanam ||*

The five characteristics are: *sarga* (creation), *pratisargascha* (intermediate creation), *vamsa*

2. Vedas - Their need for us

12Q. Why do we need Vedas ?

Ans. Just as water and air are essential for survival of our body, Vedas are essential for leading our lives happily. They are indispensable to shape our life along righteous, purposeful, fruitful and blissful lines.

13Q. What do the Vedas contain?

Ans. They contain:

1. A number of tips necessary to obtain happiness and joy in the mundane life.
2. A number of spiritual practices (*upasanas*) to obtain the grace of Gods.
3. A number of great sentences which if understood and lived would lead to the goal of life - *moksha*- liberation from the cycle of birth and death.
4. A number of interesting theories and concepts which are close to the modern science and technology.
5. And many more!

14Q. In what way the Vedas are useful to satisfy our desires?

3. Vedas - Elevating thoughts

17Q. Does the Veda counsel the people to live together in a spirit of unity?

Ans. Yes. There are several referances where it counsels such spirit of unity among people.

Examples:

1. "Walk together.

Meet each other and exchange views.

Understand each other."

Quote:

*"sangacchadhvam I samvadadhvam I
samvo manamsi jayatam I"*

2. "Let all your resolve be the same! Let all your minds turned to achieve a cause, have oneness of purpose! Let there be unity of minds among you!"

Quote: *"samaaneeva akootih I
samaana hrudayani vah
samânamastu vo manah " II*

3. "Let this holy earth in which men speaking diverse languages, following diverse traditions give me immense wealth like a cow yielding a copious flow of milk."

Quote:

*"janam bibhrati bahudha vivachasam
nanadharmanam prithvi yayaukasam I*

4. Sages and Teachers

20Q. Who is a *rishi* (sage)?

Ans. The person for whom the Vedas are revealed when he is in a state of *Samadhi*, i.e., state of concentration, is called a *Rishi*.

In a general sense *rishi* is one who with his exceptional devotion and conceptualization attained deep knowledge in any subject. However, in a restricted and particular context of Indian tradition, a person who has absolute self control, attained spiritual wisdom and liberated himself from *samsara*, the eternal cycle of birth and death, is called a *rishi*.

Rishis are classified into four groups, namely (1) *Deva rishis* (Narada etc) (2) *Brahma rishis* - Vasista etc (3) *Raja rishis* - King Janaka etc (4) *Maharshis* - any great *rishis*. However, seven exceptionally great *rishis* are known as *sapta rishis* and they are : Viswamitra, Jamadagni, Bharadwaja, Gautama, Atri, Vasistha and Kasyapa.

21Q. What is that sentence which speaks about the prominence of sage Vasistha?

Ans. "*Vasisthah samananam bhavati*" - "Among equals, may you be Vasistha", or, "may you be first

5. Eternal Values

30Q. What is meant by ‘Sanatana Dharma’?

Ans. The set of values eternally valid, is called ‘*sanatana dharma*’. It also means a way of life in which Truth and righteousness forms the strong foundation.

31Q. What is meant by ‘dharma’?

Ans. 1. That which supports or sustains the worlds is *dharma*.

Etymology: *dharati lokaniti dharmah*

2. That which is followed steadfastly by people.

Etymology: *dhriyate janairiti dharmah*

32Q. What did Mahabharata say about *Dharma*?

Ans. Mahabharata is all about *dharma*. There are several sayings in it eulogizing the greatness of *dharma* and some oft-quoted among them are,—

1. *dharma eva hato hanti dharmo rakshati rakshitah*

“If *dharma* is attacked, it destroys us. If *dharma* is protected, it protects us.”

2. *yato dharmastato jayah*

“Where there is *dharma*, there is success.”

6. Prasthanā Trayam

50Q. What is meant by 'prasthanā'?

Ans. *Prasthanā* means journey, or progress.

51Q. What treatises together are called 'prasthanā trayam'?

- Ans. 1. Upanishads
2. Brahmasutras
3. Bhagavadgita

These three together are known as *prasthanā traya*. They form the foundation to *advaita*, *visistadvaita* and *dvaita* systems of philosophy in the main.

52Q. What is called 'Vedānta'?

Ans. With some exceptions, Upanishads are generally at the end (*anta*) of Vedas. So they are called Vedānta.

53Q. What is meant by Upanishads?

- Ans. 1. The mass of scriptural literature, which if studied and lived, will lead to liberation from the cycle of birth and death - *moksha*, is called *Upanishads*. This imparts spiritual knowledge of unrivalled authority.
2. It has more meanings than one. In one sense it is the knowledge of the Self. In etymological terms

End of Preview.

Rest of the book can be read @

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