

**Contents**

- 4.0 Objectives
- 4.1 Introduction
- 4.2 Structure of the *Rigveda*
- 4.3 Structure of the *Yajurveda*
- 4.4 Structure of the *Samaveda*
- 4.5 Structure of the *Atharvaveda*
- 4.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 4.7 Key Words
- 4.8 Further Readings and References
- 4.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

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**4.0 OBJECTIVES**

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With the help of this unit, you will be in a position:

- to discover the intricacies of the *Vedic* literature
- to understand the path in which the *Vedas* evolved over several centuries
- to understand several changes, which took place not only in the text but also in the attitude of the ancient Indians
- to be exposed to the complexity in the content of the *Vedic* thought
- to compare and evaluate various stages of development against sociological and psychological backgrounds

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**4.1 INTRODUCTION**

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It is claimed that the *Rigveda* is the foundation of all other *Vedas*. Directly or indirectly the remaining *Vedas*, with the exception of the *Atharvaveda*, borrowed material from this particular *Veda*. Therefore it is desirable to become familiar with the structure of this *Veda*. Earlier (in unit 3), we came to know that the dates of composition and collection are different. It is unlikely that before the *Mantras* were collected there was anything like structure. In other words, within the limits of ‘oral tradition’ there might not have been any possibility of systematizing the literature. This particular study takes us farther from the age of composition towards the later period. While doing so, care should be taken to separate legend or myth from history. Since no records are available except quotations here and there, we should only restrict ourselves to

reasonable conjectures. If it is true that one of the authors of the *Mahabharata* (the *Mahabharata* was not composed by any one individual within limited period of time) systematized the *Vedas*, then except the *Atharvaveda*, other *Vedas* were put in order by him. This is so because the *Atharvaveda* belongs to the post-*Mahabharata* age. There were twenty-one schools of the *Rigveda* according to *Patanjali*. However, only a few schools remain out of which *Ashwalayana* and *Shankhayana* are very significant because they are also sources of *Shrauta* and *Grihya sutras* respectively.

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#### 4.2 STRUCTURE OF THE RIGVEDA

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The *Rigveda* consists of approximately 10,600 *Mantras* ('*Mantras*' roughly mean the same as stanzas). This *Veda* is systematized in two ways. One method is to divide the entire *Veda* into eight parts, called *ashtakas* and each *ashtaka*, in turn, is divided into eight chapters. Therefore it can be said that this method of division is on 'mode – 8'. Each chapter has several sections and the number of these sections varies from 221 to 331. Finally, each section has *Mantras* ranging from 1147 to 1730. In the second method, the *Veda* is divided into 10 divisions (*Mandalas*). Each division consists of subdivisions (*Anuvaaka*) ranging from 4 to 24. Each subdivision consists of a number of *suktas* ranging from 43 to 191. Finally, each *sukta* is nothing but a collection of *Mantras*. There is an advantage in the latter method of organization. Each *Mandala* is associated with definite *Rishis* (who can be regarded as programmers). For example, the first *Mandala* consists of works of fifteen different authors. Their works do not appear in any other *Mandala*. Hence, the *Mandalas* are author-oriented. It only means that this sort of organization is very close, in purpose, to modern day technique of arranging and classifying books. Further, the arrangement of *suktas* also follows a different order. The first *sukta* addresses *Agni*, followed by *Indra* and so on. On the whole, the method of organization is either author- oriented or god- oriented. This type of organization has distinct advantage even from the point of view of tradition.

Since *Mandala* is *Rishi*-oriented (or author-oriented) and *sukta* is god-oriented, any particular *sukta* is conditioned by these two features. Every *sukta* is attributed to the one who addresses and the god who is addressed and this god is the presiding deity of that *sukta*. Third dimension is meter to which the *sukta* is set. With meter is associated intonation. Intonation is something, which can be picked up surely not by reading, but by listening and practice. In this respect, chanting of the *Vedic* hymns resembles music. (Later we will learn that the *Samaveda* is the source of music and is itself highly musical). Apart from intonation, priority was given to method. There are six methods of chanting. The same *Mantra* is chanted in six different ways. These methods with some sort of formula are mentioned below. Here a, b & c represent words which are required to be chanted.

		Formula				
1	<i>Samhita Paatha</i> (Method)	A	Bc		D	E
2	<i>Krama Paatha</i>	A	B	Bc		c
3	<i>Jataa Paatha</i>	A	B	Ba		b
			Bc	Cb		bc
4	<i>Shikhaa Paatha</i>	A	B	Ba		ab
		C	Bc		cb	Bc
5	<i>Pada Paatha</i>	A		B		c

6 *Ghana Paatha*                      A      B      ba      A      b  
    C      C      ba      A      bc

In the formula, gap indicates pause in chanting. It is sufficient to note that different methods are meant for different purposes. In the *Rigveda*, these aspects are significant because this *Veda* is composed only in verse. Same judgment applies to the *Samaveda* also.

The *Rigveda* consists of *suktas*, which were specially meant to be chanted only when *yagas* were performed. There are ten such *suktas*, which are called ‘*Apree sukta*’. While performing *yaga*, there was one more specification. It was not the job of any one person to chant all the *Mantras*. It was always a team consisting of four members who had a definite role to play. Members are called *ritwijas*. Their designation and responsibilities are mentioned below.

Order	Name	Responsibility
1	<b>Hotru</b>	Initiating the programme and invoking respective gods to accept <i>HAVIS</i> (which is dedicated to a particular god)
2	<b>Adhvar yu</b>	One who utters <i>Swaaha</i> and simultaneously adds sacred material to the sacred fire ( <i>Agni Kunda</i> )
3	<b>Udgatr u</b>	Chants <i>Mantras</i> in high pitch
4	<b>Brahm a</b>	The presiding officer who ensures smooth running of the programme

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### **SAMHITAS**

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There is no need to refer to every god. Let us concentrate on a few without omitting any stratum; again, *Prithivi* and *Nadi* (river) from *Prithivi* stratum; *Indra*, *Vayu*, *Parjanya*, *Apaha* and *Apamnapat* from *Antariksha* Stratum and *Varuna*, *Surya* and *Savitru* from *Dyu* stratum. No god enjoyed the same status throughout. The numbers of *suktas* actually determine their ranks at any given time. From this angle, among gods of *Prithivi* stratum, *Agni* is supreme. There are two hundred *suktas* dedicated to this one god. *Agni* is all pervasive in wood, *Jatharagni* in animals, etc. These forms are confined to the earth. In mid-air (*Anthariksha*) *Agni* is present in the form of lightning and in *Dyuloka* (deep space) *Agni* is in the form of *Surya*. These descriptions perfectly agree with common sense. The third form of *Agni* is supposed to be superior to the rest. Here first identification is achieved. In his third form *Agni* is the same as *Surya*. If *Agni* is equated with energy, and it is perfect to equate so, then he becomes the Lord of the Universe. This is a poetic usage. In fact, the *Rigveda* is full of such usages. Hence it is very important to extract what appears to be a sound measure according to science and philosophy. Accordingly, Lord of the Universe is to be understood as the prime source, i.e., energy, which is all-pervasive as far as physics is concerned. He is identified not only with *Surya* but also with *Varuna*, *Rudra*, *Maruta*, etc.

There is only one *sukta*, which is dedicated to *Prithivi* alone. But if we consider the spirit with which *Prithivi* is propitiated, then we will understand that its significance is by no means undermined. There are other *suktas* in which *Prithivi* is propitiated in conjunction with another god, viz, *Dyuhu*. Though this association, there is an unconscious attempt to depict the origin of life. There was, and is, no other way to explain the origin of life. It shows that the *Rigveda* attempted to discover not only the origin of the Universe but also life. The association between *Dyuhu* and *Prithivi* is so strong, according to the *Rigveda*, that they are treated as pair always. This point becomes clear when we learn that these two gods are addressed as *dyavaaprithivi*. *Sayana* puts it in a slightly different manner. He calls it *dviroopaa prithivi*, i.e., two forms of *Prithivi*.

A significant aspect of the *Rigveda* is the importance of rivers recognized by the *Veda*. The rivers which find places in the *Veda* are very few; *Saraswati*, *Sarayu*, *Sindhu*, *Ganga*, *Yamuna*, *Shutudri*, *Parushri*, *Mardvridhe* and *Arjikiye*. The river *Saraswati* is not only the principal source of life but also of knowledge.

*Agni* is the most sought after among the gods of *Prithivi* and *Indra* corresponds to *Agni* among the gods of mid-air. There are two hundred and fifty *suktas* in praise of *Indra*. If we put together the *suktas* dedicated to *Agni* and *Indra*, then they will occupy a little less than half of the *Rigveda*. *Indra* is essentially a war-god. The importance given to him indicates that there were frequent battles between *Aryans* and their enemies. They had every reason to protect themselves. It is true that the *Aryans* migrated from some other part of the world (it is conjectured that *Aryans* originated from north pole region), then, surely, they are to be regarded as invaders. If so, did they have any moral right to disturb and dislodge the original inhabitants? It may amount to anachronism to judge their attitude on this basis. Going in search of food and shelter was a common place phenomenon in those days among human beings and even now among animals. In this respect, there is no difference between men and animals. In fact, migration among human beings is still there, but in a different manner. Perhaps ethical aspect involved in such activities was totally unknown in distant past.

In all *suktas* one description of *Indra* dominates. Only valour is distinctly noticeable in these *suktas*. It only speaks of turbulent atmosphere prevalent in those days. Valour cannot be described without legend. An enemy, *Vritra*, was created. What is important here is the way in which *Vritra* is killed. It is a never-ending process. The *Veda* proclaims that the destruction of *Vritra* takes place in future also. There are two ways in which it can be understood. Fight with enemy is never ending. This is one meaning. Another possibility is that the destruction of *Vritra* may be a symbol of eradication of recurring natural phenomena, which are inimical to men's well being. The *suktas* mention resurgence of helpful natural phenomenon, which are the results of *Vritra's* destruction. Again, there is ambiguity here. Another example substantiates this ambiguity. There is one *sukta*, which describes how *Indra* facilitated the Sunrise when he destroyed the chariot of *Ushas*. As long as twilight (here *ushas*) persists there is no sunrise. In saying so, it is true that the *Veda* is putting the cart in front of the horse. But then, let us remember that the *Veda* has resorted to poetic language, which accounts not only for beauty but also ambiguity in expression. Obviously, this is not what is expected in any philosophical enterprise. However, at this stage, the *Veda* had not yet matured to become philosophical.

Let us consider *Vayu* (air), *Parjanya* (cloud) and *Apaha* (water) together because the very possibility of life depends partially on these natural things. In some places instead of *Vayu*, the *Veda* uses another name *vata*. In *Nasadiya sukta*, it is hinted that *Vata* is another name for *Vayu*. There are three *suktas* in *Rigveda*, which exclusively propitiate *Vayu*; elsewhere *Vayu* is propitiated in conjunction with other gods. Two attributes of *Vayu* puzzled the *Aryans*; motion and all pervasiveness. Whenever they experienced puzzle they say divinity. This is (*Vayu*) one example. One *sukta* addressed to *Parjanya* is interesting. The *suktas* which address *Parjanya* contain references to a cow which gives milk and a cow which does not. *Parjanya* is glorified by comparison with cow which gives milk. Milk indicates rainfall and cow symbolizes *Parjanya*. After all, there could be no rains without clouds. So this takes us to *Apaha* (water). In one sense *Parjanya*, *Apaha* and *Nadi* gods are related. How can clouds shower rainfall? This phenomenon explains partly in straight language and partly in poetic language. Due to the Sun's heat water gets evaporated and the cloud is filled with water vapour, which returns as rains. This explanation is factual. This is followed by poetic description; *Indra* used sword (*vajrauidha*) to dissect the clouds to release water imprisoned inside. Such poetic expressions on many occasions have given rise to difficulties.

*Apaamnapat* is a unique god. It is an instance of two gods merging into one god. *Apaamnapat* is *Agni* present in water while many gods can be directly related to nature and some indirectly; in some other cases (like the present one) it is not possible to find any correlation.

Among the gods of *Dyuhu* stratum *Varuna*, *Surya* and *Savitru* are important. *Varuna's* function is to maintain *rita* a point mentioned in the previous unit. Twelve *suktas* praise *Varuna*. The distinction in functions which *Indra* and *Varuna* discharge is rather subtle in expression when expressed in *Sanskrit* destruction of '*vritra*' and protection of '*RITA*'. It should be noted that in pronunciation there is very subtle difference. Like any other god, *Varuna* also is omnipresent and substratum of all. Surprisingly, *Varuna* was dislodged from his coveted place during later stage. It was *Indra* who replaced *Varuna*. The sequence of events points to priority. Self-preservation is primary. Morality is meaningless when my own existence is at stake. This simple psychological truth does not defend tendency to sideline morality. An empirical approach neither defends nor criticizes. Any attempt to the contrary is only an over-reaction. A human being is always a human being.

*Surya* and *Mitra* do not denote separate gods. Not only *Mitra*, but also *Varuna* and *Agni* are regarded as one god by the *Rigveda*. If we regard function as the parameter, then even that difference cannot be traced between *Surya* and *Mitra*. For one reason, *Surya* supersedes all other gods. All other gods need not be propitiated every day. But then *Surya* is propitiated every day. Identity with anything brings with it sentiments or emotions. It is the origin of poetry. This is what happens in *Vedic* literature. *Surya* is regarded as the eye of the gods. *Ushas* symbolizes twilight. Day begins only when *Surya* followed twilight. Hence, the imagination that *Ushas* brings *Surya*. Perhaps, whole of the *Rigveda* is in the poem-style for this reason. When poetry reigns, philosophy takes back seat.

Eleven *suktas* are reserved for propitiating *Savitru*. Again, distinction between *Surya* and *Savitru* is blurred. *Savitru* not only lights the world but also enlightens the inner world of man.

*Savitru* is one god, which stimulates intellect. In these respects, *Surya* is treated on par with *Savitru*.

One more aspect with respect to gods has to be mentioned. There are male gods and also female gods. *Ushas*, *Saraswati*, *Prithivi* are a few among them. While male gods are characterized by activity, valour and exercise of authority, female gods are characterized by grace, mercy, sustenance, nursing and so on. It is likely that even during those days woman was adept at nursing both body and mind. It is perfectly understandable that man imagines god in his own mould because he cannot imagine god in any other mould.

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### **THE LESSER GODS OF THE *RIGVEDA* AND SECULAR *SUKTAS***

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All gods propitiated in the *Rigveda* are not necessarily of high reputation. Generally it is believed that references to witch craft are found only in *Atharvaveda*. However, it is not so. The tenth division of the *Rigveda* also includes such *suktas*. They are called '*Abhichaaraka suktas*'. They are very few in number. But it is not a reason to ignore these *suktas*. In fact, among noble gods a few have still less number of *suktas* in their favour than these lesser gods. The aim here is to wish for nullifying what one does not want. Destruction of enemy is one among them. This is one evil, which anybody wants to destroy. Another evil is extramarital relation. In this case the husband is guilty and his wife prays god to harm her rival. In the text, the word '*Sapatni*' is used to refer to her rival. It should be noted that though *Indra* and *Agni* are propitiated here also, their functions remain unaffected.

Secular *suktas* refer to day-to-day life. Three aspects deserve to be mentioned. One *sukta* mentions that a widow can marry her husband's brother. For reasons unknown, it never was in practice, at least, after lapse of the *Vedic* period. Second aspect refers to one *sukta* which says '*pancha jaata vardhayantee !* Considering the fact that in *purusha sukta* there is reference to *Chaturvarnya*, the word '*Panchajaata*' may refer to the birth or lower *Varna* according to one theory. In the said *sukta*, the word *Varna* does not appear. Can we interpret '*Jaata*' as *Varna*? It is very difficult to answer this question. There is no explicit or implicit reference to untouchability either.

Among secular *suktas* '*akshasukta*' describes the fate of gambler. It shows that gambling is as old as human civilization. *suryaasukta*, which has laid down the proceedings of marriage, shows that among *Rishis*, there were women. They are not necessarily wives of *Rishis*. *Surye*, the daughter of *Savitru* is the *Rishi* of *Surya sukta*.

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### ***BRAHMANAS***

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The word '*Brahmana*' is used here in neuter gender. This word refers a class of literature called liturgical literature. These works are essentially prosaic contrary to *Mantras* found in *Samhitas*. The main content of the *Brahmanas* is to specify prescriptions (*Vidhi*) and proscriptions (*Nishedha*) while performing *yagas*. All *Vedas*, in course of time gave rise to *Brahmanas*. This particular class of literature is also very vast. These works required a few centuries to develop. It is surmised that the age of the *Brahmanas* ranges from 200 B.C. to 3000 B.C.

Two *Brahmanas* originated from the *Rigveda*. One *Mahidasa Aitareya* composed ‘*aitareya brahmana*’. ‘*kaushitaki brahmana*’ is another. The authorship of the latter is not known. Some scholars say that *Kaushitaki Brahmana* is the same as *Shankhayana Brahmana*. According to *Aitareya Brahmana*, one *yaga* called *agnishtoma* is primary and all other *yagas* are its different forms, sometimes distorted also. Therefore, the description of this *yaga* is given in detail. However, *Aitareya Brahmana* is neither spiritual nor philosophical. Indeed, this criticism applies to all *Brahmanas*. From this *Brahmana* another aspect becomes clear. *Chaturvarnya* got transformed to caste system at that point of time only. For example, some *Brahmanas* clearly mention that *shudra* can only be a labourer and *vaishya* can only be an agriculturist.

*Kaushitaki* glorifies another *yaga* called *Soma-yaga*. Another *Vedic* god *Somapavamana* is the presiding deity of this *yaga*. The drink *Soma* is also associated with this deity. It marks deviation from the *Rigveda* of *Mantra* age in replacing *Agni* by *Vishnu*. Another aspect worth mentioning in this regard is resistance to the sacrifice of animals and meat eating.

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## ARANYAKAS

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Two *Aranyakas* are associated with the *Rigveda*; *Aitareya* and *Shankhayana*. Though the names of the *Brahmanas* and the *Aranyakas* are same, content of one differs from that of the other. An important aspect of *Shankhayana Aranyaka* is that one chapter is dedicated to the discussion on some aspects of grammar. Last two chapters of this *Aranyaka* constitute the basis of *Aitareya Upanishad*. *Shankhayana Aranyaka* has fifteen chapters of which 3<sup>rd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> chapters constitute the basis for *Kaushitaki Upanishad*.

### Check Your Progress I

Note : a) use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

1) Define *Suktas* in the *Rgveda*

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2) Write a short note on *Brahmanas*

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## 4.3 STRUCTURE OF THE YAJURVEDA

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The *Yajurveda* is in two forms, *Krishna Yajurveda* and *Shukla Yajurveda*. While *Shukla Yajurveda* is in verse style, the former is prosaic and also poetic. Perhaps *Krishna Yajurveda* is so called because of this admixture. However, the reason is not very significant. Both forms have a common goal. This *Veda* gave utmost prominence to the performance of *yaga*. In this respect, the *Brahmanas* of the *Rigveda* are more in common with the *Yajur veda*. It is said that *Krishna Yajurveda* had eighty-five schools out of which only four are extant. They are called (a). *Taittiriya* (b). *Maitrayaneeya* (c). *Katha* and (d) *Kapisthala*.

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## **SUBJECT MATTER**

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Since *Yajurveda* gives prominence to *yagas*, there is description of several *yagas*. It is sufficient to just name them; *paurodasha*, *yajamana*, *vajapeya*, *rajasuya*, *somayaga* are some of them. Authoritative commentary on this *Veda* is written by *Sayana*, which helps us to understand the significance of *yaga*. *Taittiriya* School described these *yagas*. In addition to this description, it also consists of *Ghana paatha* just as the *Rigveda* consists; this was designated in order to simplify the *Vedic* language, which was complicated at that point of time. *Maitrayaneeya* School describes *ashwamedha yaga* in addition to the above mentioned *yagas*. But for this addition there is no other difference as far as *yagas* are concerned. This school has borrowed nearly 1700 *Mantras* from the *Rigveda*. *Katha* School describes *agnishtoma*, *agnihotra yagas* in addition to *yagas* already mentioned. In terms of number *katha* is more voluminous with eighteen thousand *Mantras* and *Brahmanas*. Not much is known about the fourth school since the concerned literature is available in patches. One *Rishi* by name *Kapisthala* is the founder of this school. The *Krishna Yajurveda* was founded by *Vaishampayana* while his student *Yajnavalkya* founded *Shukla Yajurveda*. In Indian tradition, we hardly come across a student who finds defects in his teacher and provides a different system. As per records, *Yajnavalkya* belongs to this category. The form of this text resembles the *Rigveda*.

The *Shukla* form also describes all *yagas* mentioned earlier. In addition, it gives a detailed description of the construction of altar; number of bricks required and shape of the altar. From this *Veda*, we can understand that everyone is not eligible to perform any and every *yaga*. There are three chapters, which are devoted to one *yaga* known as *sautramani* can be performed by a dethroned king, or a lover of cattle or a person who does not have access to *Soma* drink. The specification also says that after the *yaga* is completed, he should drink *Somarasa*.

Significance is attached to the description of the killing of *Purusha*. There are conflicting versions about this description. According to one version, the description is only symbolic. By *Purusha* if we understand man, then it does not really mean that man was sacrificed. According to another version, human sacrifice was not something uncommon because there is a reference to human sacrifice in *Aitareya Brahmana*. An interesting and incredible corollary is that in those days human sacrifice was not necessarily a taboo. This conclusion substantiates what was said earlier (Unit 3, 3.2) that the *Vedic* thought is to a large extent an extension of tribal culture. Therefore even if it is possible to prove that *Purushamedha* is only symbolic, it is not sufficient to prove that human sacrifice was not unknown.

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## **BRAHMANAS**

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The *Brahmanas* which belong to the *Yajurveda* are extant; *Taittiriya* belongs to *Krishna Yajurveda* and *Shatapatha* belongs to *Shukla Yajurveda*. References are made to another *Brahmana* called *Kaathaka* which is extinct. These *Brahmanas* are extensions of respective *samhitas*. Hence the content remains more or less the same but for a few additions. It is sufficient to mention these additions. Among *yagas* 'nakshatreshthi' is an addition. It includes the description of twenty-eight stars. Among them fourteen are called *deva* and the remaining *Yama*. The second aspect is the specification of *Mantras*, which have to be chanted during ceremonies like coronation, chariot ascending, etc. Two conclusions can be drawn; one, monarchy was held to be very important and second, performing *yagas* was sacred. This was in tune with the spirit of the *Yajurveda*. In fact, the number of *yagas* mentioned in the *Brahmana* is quite big. The most interesting *yaga*, however, is *Vishwasruja*, which was performed, purportedly, for one thousand years by the gods. As the name itself indicates the universe came into existence thanks to the performance of the *yaga*. We find here an attempt to explain the birth of the universe. This particular aspect needs attention. Religion and mythology assert that the whole universe was created instantly, which is, surely, incredible. The Bible takes one step ahead and says that the god required six days to create the universe. When compared with the former, the latter is several thousand times slower. However, *Vishwasruja yaga* outsmarts Bible in saying that the process of creation of universe took one thousand years. Science discloses that several billions of years were required for the universe to evolve. Therefore the *Taittiriya* is closer to science than any other work in this respect.

*Shukla Yajurveda* has two schools; *kaanva* and *madhyandina*. *Shatapatha Brahmana* belongs to both these systems. First reference to *Pitru yajna* can be discerned in this *Brahmana*. *Pitru yajna* is regarded as one of the *pancha yajnas*, the other four being *deva*, *atithi*, *brahma yajnas* and *bhootabali*. Study of the *Vedas* is called *Brahma yajna*. *Bhootabali* is offer of food to all creatures. *Shatapatha Brahmana* is so called because it has one hundred chapters. It is said to be the most exhaustive work in this field. Hence it provides more information than any other *Brahmana*. This particular *Brahmana* gives a very different description of *yaga*. According to this interpretation, any *yaga* has two faces; physical or external (*bahiryaga*) and psychological or internal (*antaryaga*). It is difficult to decide whether the latter can also be called spiritual. Accordingly, sacrifice has to be made twice, one for will power or determination and the other for speech because in the absence of any one of them, it is impossible to perform *yaga*. To maintain independence and hence co-operation of 'will' and 'speech' it is necessary to use separate instruments for two acts of sacrifice. *sruva* is the equipment used to offer sacrifice, which represents will power. Likewise, *srak* is meant for speech. There is difference in posture also. Sacrifice, which is associated with will power, should be made while sitting and the second one has to be made while standing. Lastly, this particular *Brahmana* contains words like *arhat*, *shramana*, *pratibuddha*, etc., which were later, used by *Jainism* and *Buddhism*.

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## ARANYAKAS

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*Brihadaranyaka* and *Taittiriya Aranyakas* are two *Aranyakas*, which belong to this *Veda*. The first one is also an *Upanishad*. Since it will be taken up for discussion later, it can be omitted for the time being. The *Aranyakas* do not constitute distinct texts. Any *Aranyaka*, for that matter, is restricted only to discussions often on matters pertaining to inner significance of *yagas*, and this discussion matured later in the *Upanishads*. *Taittiriya Aranyaka* is important only for one

reason. Two *pramanas* (ways of knowing), which become prominent later, viz., ‘*Pratyaksha*’ and ‘*Anumana*’ are use for the first time here. Otherwise, there is nothing new in this *Aranyaka* worthy of any serious study.

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#### 4.4 STRUCTURE OF THE SAMAVEDA

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This *Veda* has two parts; *purvaarchika* and *uttaraarchika*. *Aarchika* means collection of *Riks* or *Mantras*. Instead of *Samhita*, the word *Aarchika* is used here. First part has six hundred and fifty *Mantras* and second part has one thousand two hundred *Mantras*. However, some *Mantras* of *Purvaarchika* (Prior collection) have been repeated in *Uttaraarchika* (Posterior collection). If repetition is ignored, then we find approximately one thousand six hundred *Mantras*. Out of them, only about one hundred are original. The rest of the *Mantras* have been lifted from the *Rigveda*. Out of supposed thirteen schools of this *Veda*, only three are extant; *ranaayaneeya*, *kauthuma* and *jaimini*. Even though this *Veda*, to a very great extent, is not original with reference to *Mantras*, it enjoys unique position for two reasons; this was organized for the sake of *Udgatru*, who has a definite role to play in the proceedings of *yaga* (see unit 4.1). Secondly, it set definite tone and style to the chanting of *Mantras*. It shows that these three *Vedas* do not compete with each other, but they are mutually complementary. *Mantras* from the *Rigveda*, method of execution from the *Yajurveda* and a definite style of chanting from the *Sama* may complete the process.

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#### SUBJECT MATTER

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The subject matter is unique in the sense that the style of chanting itself is its theme. The emphasis upon style is so great that it became the source of classical music in India. The *Sama Gana* is of four types (a). *graamageya* or chanting in society, (b). *Aranyaka Gana* or chanting in forests, (c). *Ooha Gana*, chanting during *Soma yaga* and (d). *Oohya Gana* or secret chanting. Perhaps there was no difference between chanting and singing during this period. In each category there are several types and again, this number differs from one school to another. If we put together all varieties, we arrive at a staggering figure; it adds up to more than six thousand types. Philosophically, it does not have any importance. It is not even necessary for our purpose to correlate the notes of *Sama* with the ‘Seven Notes (*Sapta Swara*)’ of classical music. So we shall only restrict to mere mention of some aspects. Here the *Mantras* undergo change in six different ways. The changes occur to suit ‘*Sama music*’.

*Samagana* itself has five parts: (a). *Prastaava* (initiating) one who initiates is called *Prastotru*, (b), *Udgeetha* sung by *udgathru*, (c). *Pratihaara* sung by *Pratiharta* , (d). *Upadrava* sung by *udgatru* and (e). *Nidhana* sung by the entire team at the end.

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#### BRAHMANAS

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There are nine *Brahmanas*, which belong to the *Sama veda*, of which only three have survived. Instead of explaining the method of performing *yagas*, *Sama veda* explains the structure of ‘*Gana*’ with reference to *yaga*. It shows that the *Brahmanas* of the *Samaveda* also are directly related to *yagas*. In addition, this *Veda* describes in detail the function of *Udgatru*, which is not found in other *Brahmanas*. *Tandya Brahmana*, which has explained this aspect, has given to us

denotation of large numbers. For example, *niuta* is one million; *nyarbuda* is for one billion and so on. Another *Brahmana* called *shadvimsha* refers to idols and protective measures to be followed at the time of natural calamities. Reference to idols indicates the beginning of idol worship. *Samavidhana* is third one which serves as reference work to *Smrutis* and *Kalpa Sutras*.

### Check Your Progress II

Note : a) use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of the unit.

3) Explain the structure of the *Yajurveda*?

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.....  
.....

4) What are the five parts of *Samagana* ?

.....  
.....  
.....

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#### 4.5 STRUCTURE OF THE *ATHARVAVEDA*

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Even though the *Puranas* claim that this *Veda* was composed by *Veda Vyasa*, there is no reason to accept this theory if the same *Veda Vyasa* wrote the *Mahabharata*. It is a well known fact that this *Veda* belongs to the post-Mahabharata age. *Pippalda*, a *Rishi*, is said to be the founder of this *Veda*. This particular aspect contradicts the belief that the *Vedas* are *Apaurusheya* because this belief does not exclude the *Atharvaveda*. Surely, it is not possible to hold both *Apaurusheya* theory and authorship of any *Veda*, without getting trapped in contradiction. It is said that this *Veda* had nine schools out of which only two schools viz. *Pippalada* and *Shaunaka* have survived.

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#### SUBJECT MATTER AND THE *BRAHMANA*

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This particular *Veda* is wholly independent of liturgy. Hence, nowhere do we find any reference to *yaga* or reference to gods. However, we cannot conclude that this *Veda* is wholly secular. There are nearly ten issues described out of which one refers to atonement and another to ultimate truth. In this respect, it comes close to the *Upanishads*. There are descriptions pertaining to therapy, longevity, routine life, etc. There are references to several diseases like jaundice, tuberculosis, etc. Since therapy included herbal medicines, this *Veda* must be the source from which *Ayurveda* developed.

*Gopatha Brahmana* is the only *Brahmana*, which has survived. This is an exceptional *Brahmana* because it has nothing to do with *yagas*, even though there are references to *yaga*.

This *Brahmana* makes a strange claim that the *Atharvaveda* is a precondition to the study of other *Vedas*.

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#### 4.6 LET US SUM UP

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All *Vedas* developed from initial stages of *Mantras* to the *Upanishads*. In the case of *Atharvaveda* alone there is quantum jump from '*Brahmana*' to '*Upanishad*'. The *Mantras* of the *Rigveda* mainly aimed at propitiating gods, whereas the *Yajurveda* systematized the performance of *yaga*. Thereby such performance became institutionalized. Thanks to qualifications ascribed to such performance, *chaturvarnya* became powerful; but women had far more respectable place. Remarriage of widow was permissible. Performing *yaga* was a way of life. At least one *Brahmana* has the distinction of discussing cosmology. Human Sacrifice is a debatable issue. The *Samaveda* is unique because it is said to be the source of music. The *Atharvaveda* is more secular than any other *Veda*. While the *Samaveda* is the source of music, the *Atharvaveda* is the source of Indian system of medicine, viz., *Ayurveda*. Hence, all these *Vedas* put together complete the requirement of human life.

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#### 4.7 KEY WORDS

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**Anachronism:** An anachronism (from the Greek “ana” = “against” and “chronos” = “time”) is an error in chronology, especially a chronological misplacing of persons, events, objects, or customs in regard to each other.

**Ayurveda:** Ayurveda (the science of life) is a system of traditional medicine native to India, and practiced in other parts of the world as a form of alternative medicine. In Sanskrit, the word Ayurveda comprises the words *āyus*, meaning ‘life’ and *veda*, meaning ‘science.’

**Liturgy:** A liturgy is the customary public worship done by a specific religious group, according to its particular tradition.

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#### 4.8 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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#### 4.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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##### Answers to Check Your Progress I

1. The *Rigveda* consists of *suktas*, which were specially meant to be chanted only when *yagas* were performed. There are ten such *suktas*, which are called '*Apree sukta*'.

2. The word '*Brahmana*' is used here in neuter gender. This word refers a class of literature called liturgical literature. These works are essentially prosaic contrary to *Mantras* found in *Samhitas*. The main content of the *Brahmanas* is to specify prescriptions (*Vidhi*) and proscriptions (*Nishedha*) while performing *yagas*. All *Vedas*, in course of time gave rise to *Brahmanas*. This particular class of literature is also very vast. These works required a few centuries to develop. It is surmised that the age of the *Brahmanas* ranges from 200 B.C. to 3000 B.C.

### Answers to Check Your Progress II

1. The *Yajurveda* is in two forms, *Krishna Yajurveda* and *Shukla Yajurveda*. While *Shukla Yajurveda* is in verse style, the former is prosaic and also poetic. Perhaps *Krishna Yajurveda* is so called because of this admixture. However, the reason is not very significant. Both forms have a common goal. This *Veda* gave utmost prominence to the performance of *yaga*. In this respect, the *Brahmanas* of the *Rigveda* are more in common with the *Yajurveda*. It is said that *Krishna Yajurveda* had eighty-five schools out of which only four are extant. They are called (a). *Taittiriya* (b). *Maitrayaneeya* (c). *Katha* and (d) *Kapisthala*.

2. *Samagana* itself has five parts: (a). *Prastaava* (initiating) one who initiates is called *Prastotru*, (b), *Udgeetha* sung by *udgathru*, (c). *Pratihaara* sung by *Pratiharta* , (d). *Upadrava* sung by *udgatru* and (e). *Nidhana* sung by the entire team at the end.

