

epistemology is the corner-stone of all philosophical systems. The method of *avasthatraya* takes us right to the heart of the problem: *All relative knowledge is born from a contrast*, and the knowledge that we have of this world *is* always relative. We are being struck by contrasts and, immediately, complementary notions are springing up in our mind: light-darkness, heat-cold, etc. The same holds good for the Reality: Because we preserve the memory of the *un-real*, we are conscious of the *Real*. Thus we will not be able to acquire the *total* knowledge of the relative (*vyakta*) as long as we do not have an experience of a different order, where all relative knowledge is *absent*. Well then, every day everybody is passing through the state of deep sleep, in other words, through the state of non-manifestation (*avyakta*).

Is there a means to bring about the latter state *consciously*? Are we capable, of our own accord, of 're-creating' the content of deep sleep? To this question Vedanta replies: Yes, such a means exists. Practise Yoga! Control, by an act of will-power, all activity of the mind!

In India numerous sages have accomplished this feat of strength. They returned to the waking state with the knowledge that all that exists is but the one and only Reality of which they had the experience during samadhi (total concentration) in its pure and homogeneous state. Properly speaking, Atman (or Brahman) is the only Reality, and all appearances, whether internal or external, are nothing but this Atman—the Self.

The supreme Consciousness of the Self, then, is not *derived* from the experience of the manifested: *It precedes it—It is an intuition 'a priori'*, and this Consciousness is absolutely *un-conditioned* (*akhanda*). The conditioning in time-space-causality is but a simple appearance and, for empirical life, this appearance possesses a value that is *relatively* real. On the other hand, from the point of view of the Absolute the empirical reality (*vyavaharika satta*) and the illusory reality (*pratibhasika satta*) are brought into equilibrium on the scales of the same balance: The one has exactly the same weight as the other. □

(Concluded.)

Mother and I

'One day when I went to see Sri Ramakrishna, there were many other visitors. Among them was a great Vedantic scholar. The Master said to him, "Let us hear some Vedanta from you." The scholar with great deference expounded on Vedanta for more than an hour. Sri Ramakrishna was very pleased. The people around were surprised at this, but after eulogizing the scholar, the Master said: "As far as I am concerned, I do not like all those details. There is nothing but my Mother and I. To you, knowledge, knower, and known—the one who meditates, meditation, and the object of meditation—this sort of triple division is very good. But for me, 'Mother and I'—that is all and nothing else." These words, "Mother and I," were said in such a way that it made a very deep impression on all present. At that moment all ideas of Vedanta paled into insignificance. The Master's "Mother and I" seemed easier, simpler, and more pleasing to the mind than the three divisions of Vedanta. I realized then that "Mother and I" was the ideal attitude to be adopted.'

—Swami Turiyananda, *Spiritual Treasures*, Pp. 110-111

Sāmaveda—an Introductory Note

SWAMI HARSHANANDA

Considered as the source book of the Indian classical music and a rich storehouse of mystic outpourings of the Vedic Rishis, the Samaveda is perhaps one of the oldest records of man's quest for mysticism and music. The following article details the various aspects of the Samaveda and also provides an insight into how the Indian classical music is a by-product of spiritual quest. The author is an erudite scholar whose numerous books include Hindu Gods and Goddesses, All about Hindu Temples, An Introduction to Indian Culture among others. He is the President of Ramakrishna Math, Basavangudi, Bangalore and is actively engaged in giving a final shape to his two volume book, Encyclopaedia of Hinduism.

What is Sāmaveda?

The Sāmaveda or the Sāmaveda Samhitā is the third in the traditional list of the four Vedas. It comprises mostly the Ṛgvedic mantras (or ṛks)—1504 to be more specific—set to the saptasvara system (the seven basic notes of Indian music), to be sung at appropriate places in a sacrifice. It is the udgātṛ (the third of the four major priests) along with his three assistants (prastotṛ, pratihartṛ and subrahmaṇya) that does this.

It should be noted that this Veda has been highly eulogized in other Vedas also. Kṛṣṇa, while describing his special aspects, says in the *Bhagavadgītā* (10.22) that he is the Sāmaveda among the Vedas.

Commentators of the Sāmaveda

The Vedas are difficult to comprehend not only because of their archaic Sanskrit but also because of their close association with the system of yajña or sacrifice. Hence, the help of bhāṣyas or commentaries by those scholars who also have an intimate knowledge of the Vedic traditions is invaluable.

The following are the commentators on the Sāmaveda whose works are available even

now, though some of these are still in the form of manuscripts:

- ❖ Mādharma Paṇḍita (A.D.630)
- ❖ Guṇaviṣṇu (12th century A.D.)
- ❖ Bharatasvāmin (A.D.1300)
- ❖ Mahāsvāmin (13th century A.D.)
- ❖ Sāyaṇa (A.D.1315-1387)
- ❖ Śobhākara Bhaṭṭa (circa A.D.1400)
- ❖ Sūryadaivajña (circa A.D.1502)

Meaning of Sāma

The etymological meaning of the word *sama* is 'that which destroys sorrow by its sweetness; a song.'

The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* defines the sāma as a ṛk (Ṛgvedic mantra) set to various tunes of music (*Vide* 1.3.25; 1.3.22).

Thus, sāmās are those mantras of the *Ṛgveda* which had been set to tunes as prescribed by the special treatises like the *Nāradyaśikṣā*.

However, the same ṛk can be sung in different tunes thus producing different sāmās. The number of such sāmās can vary from one to eighteen! According to one tradition there are 1875 ṛks and 2639 sāmās in the Sāmaveda texts available now.

Śākhās of the Sāmaveda

As in the case of the other three Vedas, *Sāmaveda* also has several śākhās (branches or recensions). Though some traditional works like the *Caranavyūha* (an appendix to the *Atharvaveda*) mention that there are a thousand śākhās in the *Sāmaveda*, only thirteen names have been discovered so far. They are the names of the teachers who were responsible for re-editing the text and starting their own śākhās.

Nevertheless, only three such śākhās are extant now. They are: *Jaiminīyaśākhā*, *Kauthumaśākhā* and *Rāṇāyanīyaśākhā*. The last two have many similarities like equal number of mantras. The first one has 182 mantras less than the other two.

Internal Divisions

The *Sāmaveda* has two sections called *Pūrvārcikā* and *Uttarārcikā*. (*Arcikā* means a group of ṛks.) The *Pūrvārcikā* has several prapāṭhakas or chapters containing a few daśatis (decads, though sometimes the number of ṛks is either more or less than ten). The daśatis, again, comprise of ṛks.

The *Uttarārcikā* has nine prapāṭhakas. These are divided into khaṇḍas, each of which consists of a large number of ṛks.

In the *Pūrvārcikā*, the mantras taken from the *Rgveda* have been regrouped according to the devatā or deity praised. The first prapāṭhaka contains mantras connected with Agni and hence called *Āgneyakāṇḍa*. Prapāṭhakas 2 to 4 are known as *Aindrakāṇḍa* since they are devoted to Indra, the king of gods. The fifth prapāṭhaka contains mantras dedicated to the god Soma-Pavamāna and hence called *Pavamānaparva*. Most of these mantras have been taken from the ninth maṇḍala of the *Rgveda* which itself is entirely devoted to that deity.

The ṛks of these five prapāṭhakas are known as veyagāna or grāmagāna (or grāme geya), because they are to be sung in grāmas or villages and towns. The other terms by which they are known are: chandārcikā, prakṛti, prakṛtisamhitā and ṛk.

These mantras are used more in Brahmajajña (reciting and teaching the Vedas), upākarma and certain other rituals. Their use in Vedic sacrifices is limited.

The sixth prapāṭhaka is called *Aranyakāṇḍa* or *Āranyakaparva*. These mantras have to be chanted in an aranya or forest, since they are conducive to contemplation.

The ten ṛks appearing at the end of this section are known as *Mahānāmnī*. They are like an appendix to the *Pūrvārcikā*. Known also as *Śakoaryaḥ*—their deity is Indra—they are generally used on the fifth day of the sacrifice.

Since these mantras are addressed to Indra as God, the mahān (supreme or great), they have come to be known as *Mahānāmnī*.

In the *Uttarārcikā*, there are nine prapāṭhakas. Each prapāṭhaka has several khaṇḍas (like the daśatis of the *Pūrvārcikā*) which contain the ṛks.

The chanting or singing of these ṛks is divided into two groups: ūhagāna and ūhyagāna or rahasyagāna. The basic models for these two are, respectively, the grāmagāna and the aranyagāna.

Methods of Sāmagāna

As already stated, there are four groups of sāmās: grāmageya, āranyaka, ūha and ūhya.

The first two are the prakṛtis (basics) and the last two, the vikṛtis (derivatives).

The seven notes of sāmagāna are the equivalents of the seven notes (sapta svara) of the Indian music as shown in the following table:

	Sāmasvara	Saṅgīta-svara	
1	prathama	madhyama	ma
2	dvitīya	gāndhāra	ga
3	ṭṭīya	ṛṣabha	ri
4	caturtha	ṣaḍja	sa
5	pañcama	niṣāda	ni
6	ṣaṣṭha	daivata	da
7	saptama	pañcama	pa

While singing the ṛks as sāma (set to music), certain changes are effected in the letters of the text to facilitate singing.

There are five fundamental steps in the singing of every sāma. They are:

1. **Prastāva:** This is the beginning of the mantra. The prastotṛ priest begins with the sound 'hum'.

2. **Udgīta:** The main priest udgātṛ sings this, beginning it with 'om'.

3. **Pratihāra:** Sung by the main pratihartṛ, this part generally expresses a sense of dedication to the deity to whom it is addressed.

4. **Upadrava:** This is sung by the udgātṛ priest himself.

5. **Nidhana:** Comprising the last part of the mantra—sometimes including the Om also—this is sung by all the three priests mentioned above, bringing it to a close.

Some more information may now be adduced here about the sāmas for further elucidation.

The mantras of the *Pūrvārcikā* are prakṛtis or basic role models. Each of the ṛks generally has only one sāma, though there are exceptions where the number of sāmas can go up to 18. All the sāmas on the ṛks are already fixed by tradition. Some ṛks may not have any sāma at all. Again, the ṛks sung as sāma may be in any of the well-known metres like gāyatrī, anuṣṭubh, triṣṭubh and jagatī.

Sometimes, the same ṛk can be sung as a sāma in all the four groups beginning with veyagāna.

Some ṛks like *punānaḥ soma dhārayā* (Sāmaveda 511) have as many as 61 sāmagānas!

The sāmas (mantras of the *Sāmaveda*) have been grouped in different ways and have been given different nomenclatures.

The prakṛti (the first two sections of *Pūrvārcikā*) has seven types of gānas. They are :

1) Gāyatrāgāna (based on the famous Gāyatrīmantra);

2) Āgneyagāna (containing ṛks pertaining to Agni);

3) Aindragāna (with ṛks on Indra in several metres);

4) Pavamānagāna (with ṛks on Somapavamāna);

5) Parvatrayagāna (containing ṛks on Arka (here, Agni) couplets called dvandva and vratas);

6) Śukriyagāna (with ṛks on Sukra or sun); and,

7) *Mahānāmnī* (explained already).

The names of some of the other sāmas are: Anṛtasamhitā, Ariṣṭavarga, Pavitravarga, Skandasamhitā, Vināyakasamhitā and so on.

R̥ṣis, Chandas and Devatās

Anyone wishing to study the Vedic mantras or even recite them must know three things about them. They are: ṛṣi (the sage to whom it was revealed), chandas (the metre in which it is composed) and devatā (the deity to whom it is addressed.)

Since the mantras of the *Sāmaveda* have been taken mostly from the *R̥gveda*, it can be presumed that the ṛṣi is the first sage to whom the sāma-pattern was originally revealed.

The following are some of the ṛṣis and the number of sāma-mantras revealed to them given in terms of daśatis: Bhāradvāja (29); Gotama (20); Jamadagni (13); Kaṇva (29); Medhāntithi (29) Praskaṇva (13); Saubhari (18)

Śunaśsepha (17); Vāmadeva (36); Vasiṣṭha (43); Viśvāmītra (29).

Though chandas mean the metre, etymologically speaking, it is interpreted as something that covers and hence protects, as also gives joy. A knowledge of the chandas is necessary for the knowledge of the padapāṭha (breaking the words of the sentences and the compound words) which is very important in this Veda.

The following are the Vedic metres used here: anuṣṭubh, bṛhatī, jagatī, pañkti, triṣṭubh and uṣṇik.

Subsidiaries of the Sāmaveda

Apart from the Samhitā, every Veda has three more parts: Brāhmaṇa, Āraṇyaka and Upaniṣad.

To facilitate its study, the help of the Vedāngas is also necessary. A list of these, belonging to the *Sāmaveda* may now be given:

Brāhmaṇas—

1. *Ārseya Brāhmaṇa*;
2. *Devatādhyāya Brāhmaṇa*
3. *Praudha Brāhmaṇa*, also known as *Tāṇḍya Mahābrāhmaṇa* and *Pañcaviṃśa Brāhmaṇa*;
4. *Ṣaḍviṃśa Brāhmaṇa*,
5. *Sāmavidhāna Brāhmaṇa*;
6. *Samhitopaniṣad Brāhmaṇa*;
7. *Talavakāra Brāhmaṇa*;
8. *Upaniṣad Brāhmaṇa* ;
9. *Vaiṃśa Brāhmaṇa*.

Āraṇyakas—

There is only one Āraṇyaka available called Talavakāra Āraṇyaka. It is a part of the *Talavakāra Brāhmaṇa*.

Upaniṣads—

The *Chāndogya* and the *Kena* or the *Talavakāra Upaniṣads* are the major Upaniṣads of the *Sāmaveda*.

Other Upaniṣads—considered as minor ones—are: *Aruṇopaniṣad*; *Jābāladarśanopaniṣad*; *Jābālyupaniṣad*; *Mahopaniṣad*; *Vāsudevopaniṣad*.

Vedāngas—

The Vedāngas dealing exclusively with the *Sāmaveda* can be listed as follows:

Pāṇinīya Śikṣā; Nārādīya Śikṣā; Gautama Śikṣā; Lomaśa Śikṣā; Puṣpasūtras; Ṛktantra.

Nidānasūtra of Patañjali and *Anupadasūtra* of Gārgya deal with the chandas or metres of the Sāmavedic mantras.

The Śrautasūtras of Sāmaveda are: *Drāhyāyana Śrautasūtras*; *Jaiminīya Śrautasūtras*; *Lātyāyana Śrautasūtras*.

Gobhila Gṛhyasūtras and *Jaiminīya Gṛhyasūtras* belong to the gṛhyasūtra group of the *Sāmaveda*.

As regards the dharmasūtras of the *Sāmaveda*, the *Gautama Dharmasūtras* is the only ancient work that is available now.

Quite a few ancient and medieval works dealing with the subjects of the *Sāmaveda* are also available.

The Philosophy of the Sāmaveda

Since the *Sāmaveda* contains only the mantras of the *Ṛgveda* set to music, it has no philosophy of its own, but that of the *Ṛgveda* itself. However, quite a few of the sāmā bespeak of a high kind of bhakti or devotion. Some of these sentiments may be summarised as follows:

- ❖ God is brilliant light. May he light up our hearts. (Sāmaveda, 1)
- ❖ You are our dear friend, respected guest. You take us in the path of bliss and auspiciousness. I pray to you. (3)
- ❖ May the spiritual aspirant think of the Supreme Lord, the being of light, in his own heart, thereby gaining in faith and strength to do good deeds. (19)
- ❖ God as Agni destroys our sins and ignorance and enlightens us. (4)

- ❖ O God as Agni! The yogi realises your greatness through divine wisdom. (9)
- ❖ O Singers of the sāmās! Praise the all-powerful God, the destroyer of all sins! We too will eulogise him, the omniscient Lord, the dear friend of all! (35)
- ❖ O effulgent God! The ever-youthful, the brilliant, the compassionate one! Please shine in our hearts! (37)
- ❖ O Supreme Lord! You have two forms, one of brilliant splendour and the other of great peace, fit for contemplation... You are the gracious protector of the universe. (75)
- ❖ We have infinite faith in that creator of the world, who is the dispeller of all sorrow, the best of leaders, the eternal, the all-pervading, the giver of light and the great protector as also the omniscient. (91)
- ❖ None can vanquish that devotee of God who has surrendered himself to him. (104)

❖ O God! Give us all that we need for our welfare here and destroy all fear brought about by our wrong decisions. (141)

❖ May the all-knowing God, the destroyer of our troubles, the indweller in the hearts of all, the all-merciful one, lead us in the straight path! (218)

Epilogue

Though the *Sāmaveda* is, comparatively speaking, a smaller work than the other Vedas, it has endeared itself to all by its sweet music, high literary value (as excellent poetry) and noble sentiments of devotion.

It is undoubtedly the origin of hoary Indian classical music, though very difficult to master.

It definitely needs more effective propagation, and the sāmāgas—singers of the sāmās—greater encouragement. □

True Ahimsa

That Ahimsa (Non-injury) is the supremest virtue is no doubt true. But merely professing it by word of mouth is worse than useless; merely refraining from killing animals, as for example, not taking fish or meat, is not Ahimsa. True non-injury can only be practiced when God is seen in all beings, that is, when the Self is realized. The very nature of living necessarily involves at every moment, whether knowingly or unknowingly, destruction of or injury to the lives of countless beings, visible and invisible. The Yogis practise austerities by living upon milk, because it is a purely Sattvic food. But to obtain that milk the calf which has its birthright to the whole of its mother's milk, has to be deprived of a part of its natural food. Is this not an act of injury or cruelty? But the more one can live without consciously injuring or harming others, so much the better. However, by the habitual practice of real non-injury, one develops love for all beings, the little ego or selfishness disappears, and no distinction is felt between friend and foe. Consequently the heart is purified, and in the pure heart, God is fully reflected.'

—Swami Virajananda, 6th President of the Ramakrishna Order, in *Towards the Goal Supreme*, p.134-135

