

Study of the Vedic Period

Philosophy and Religion

Vrittamani Ramapriya

Philosophy

Nature of Requests

Nature of Inquiries

The revelations

The role of Deities

Complementary literature

Philosophy

Nature of Requests

- इमा रुद्राय तवसे कपर्दिने क्षयद्वीराय प्र भरामहे मतीः ।
यथा शमसद्विपदे चतुष्पदे विश्वं पुष्टं ग्रामे अस्मिन्ननातुरम् ॥

To the strong Rudra bring we these our songs of praise, to him the Lord of Heros with the braided hair, that it be well with all our cattle and our men, that in this village all he healthy and well-fed

(RV 1.114.1, translation by R Griffith)

- इदमापः यत्किंच दुरितम् मयि । यद्वाहमभिदुद्रोह यद्वा शेष उतान्तम् ॥
- Whatever sin is found in me, whatever evil I have wrought, if I have lied or falsely sworn, Waters, remove it far from me.
- (RV 1.23.22 – Translation by R. Griffith)

Philosophy

Nature of Requests

देवाः कपोतं इषितो यदिच्छन्दुतो निर्रहत्या इदमाजगाम ।
तस्मा अर्चाम कृणवाम निष्कृतिं शं नो अस्तु द्विपदे शं चतुष्पदे ॥ 1 ॥
शिवः कपोतं इषितो नो अस्त्वनागा देवाः शकुनो गृहेषु ।
अग्निर्हि विप्रो जुषतां हविर्नः परि हेतिः पक्षिणी नो वृणक्तु ॥ 2 ॥

1. GODS, whatsoe'er the Dove came hither seeking, sent to us as the envoy of Destruction, For that let us sing hymns and make atonement. Well be it with our quadrupeds and bipeds.

2 Auspicious be the Dove that hath been sent us, a harmless bird, ye Gods, within our dwelling. May Agni, Sage, be pleased with our oblation, and may the Missile borne on wings avoid us.

RV 10. 165

Translation by R Griffith

Philosophy

Philosophical Inquiry

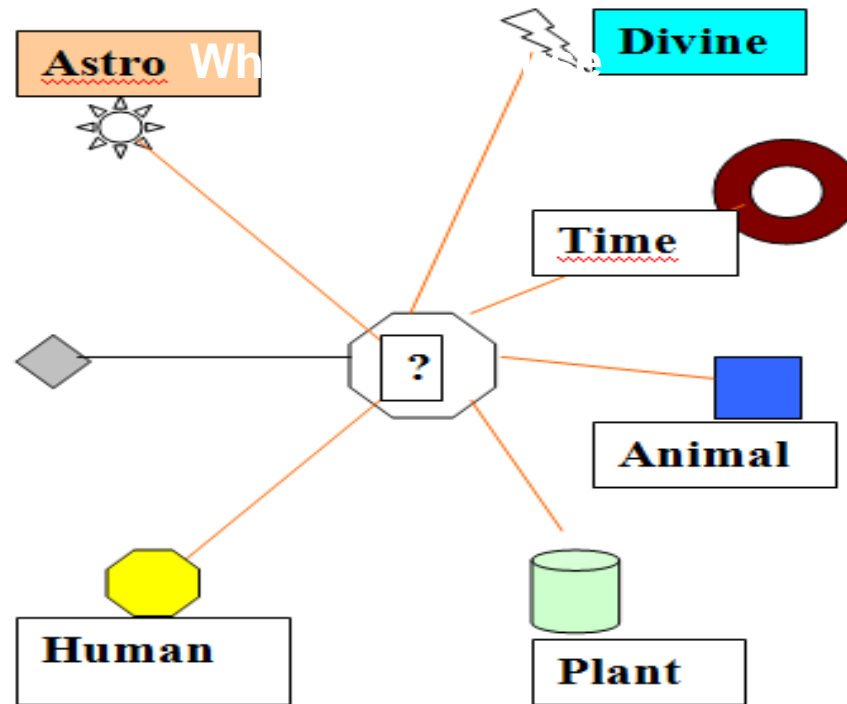
- Philosophical thought begins with an inquiry, as can be seen in (RV 1.164.4)
- As revealed to ऋषिदीर्घतमः (Dirghatama), a descendant of ऋषि उचीति (Uchiti)
- Who has embodied the universe?
- Who supports That One?
- How has the body - cumulative of organic flesh and blood – is endowed with consciousness?
- Whom shall I approach to get clarity?

को ददर्श प्रथमं जायमानमस्थन्वन्तं यदनस्था बिबर्धि ।
भूम्या असुरसुगात्मा क्व स्विक्तो विद्वांसमुप गात्प्रष्टुमेतत् ॥

Philosophy

Inquiry in Contemplation

Inanimate
objects



Philosophy

Vedic Philosophy

(16)

90

(म.10, अनु.7)

ऋषिः नारायणः

छन्दः अनुष्टुप् 1-15, त्रिष्टुप् 16

देवता पुरुषः

सहस्रशीर्षा पुरुषः सहस्राक्षः सहस्रपात् । स भूमिं विश्वतो वृत्वात्यतिष्ठदशाङ्गुलम् ॥ 1 ॥

पुरुष एवेदं सर्वं यद्भूतं यच्च भव्यम् । उतामृतत्वस्येशानो यदन्नैनातिरोहति ॥ 2 ॥

एतावानस्य महिमातो ज्यायाँश्च पूरुषः । पादोऽस्य विश्वा भूतानि त्रिपादस्यामृतं दिवि ॥ 3 ॥

- 1. A Thousand heads hath Purusa, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet. On every side pervading earth he fills a space ten fingers wide.
- 2 This Purusa is all that yet hath been and all that is to be; The Lord of Immortality which waxes greater still by food.
- 3 So mighty is his greatness; yea, greater than this is Purusa. All creatures are one-fourth of him, three-fourths eternal life in heaven.

(Translation by R Griffith)

Philosophy

Inquiry and its Answer

पृच्छामि त्वा परमन्तं पृथिव्याः पृच्छामि यत्र भुवनस्य नाभिः ।

पृच्छामि त्वा वृष्णो अश्वस्य रेतः पृच्छामि वाचः परमं व्योम ॥ ३४ ॥

34 I ask thee of the earth's extremest limit, where is the centre of the world, I ask thee. I ask thee of the Stallion's seed prolific, I ask of highest heaven where Speech abideth.

(RV 1.164.34 – Translation by R Griffith)

इयं वेदिः परो अन्तः पृथिव्या अयं यज्ञो भुवनस्य नाभिः ।

अयं सोमो वृष्णो अश्वस्य रेतो ब्रह्मायं वाचः परमं व्योम ॥ ३५ ॥

35 This altar is the earth's extremest limit; this sacrifice of ours is the world's centre. The Stallion's seed prolific is the Soma; this Brahman (in) highest heaven (is) where Speech abideth.

(RV 1.164.35 Translation by Griffith)

Philosophy

Detailed Explanation

•शतपथ ब्राह्मण (Shatapatha Brahmana) , declares in more detailed terms, that :

- The वेदि (the platform), and परब्रह्म (Parabrahma) are one and the same
- The one who knows this relationship will rule over the entire Earth
- This platform is a representation of the Earth and the Atmospheric space
- The Platform is the place of Union of Earth and Space (धौः)
- One who understands this principle will achieve oneness with अग्निः (Agni) etc..

Reference: SB 10-5; as stated in Venkata Rao's translation of Sayana Bhashya in Kannada.

Philosophy

Further Explanations

- These queries are the focal points of a number of उपबिषद्स that describe the Vedic Philosophy
- Rituals described in the ब्राह्मणाs further empower the inquirer to pursue the quest.
- आरण्यक(Aranyakas), The philosophical thoughts that was emulated by ऋषि s and hermits, during their contemplations (as they continued to practice in the forest surroundings) expand on the formulaic statements of the Vedas.
- उपबिषद्स, ब्राह्मणाs , आरण्यक s, and सूत्रs elaborate on explaining the formulaic statements of the Vedic संहिता s. These works together with the Vedas are termed श्रुति s .

Philosophy

Formulae of Vedic Philosophy

A Universal Brotherhood is observed

Ritual practices are harmonious and co-operative

अव नो वृजिना शिशीहिः ऋचा वनेमानृचः । ना ब्रह्म यज्ञ ऋधग्जोषति त्वे ॥

(RV 10.105.8)

Grind off our sins; with song will we conquer the men who sing no hymns.

शतं वा यदसुर्य प्रति त्वा सुमित्र इत्यास्थौदुमित्र इत्यास्थौत् ।
आवो यद्दस्युहत्ये कुत्सपुत्रं प्रावो यद्दस्युहत्ये कुत्सवत्सम् ॥ (RV 10.105.11)

As hundreds, O Immortal God, have sung to thee, so hath Sumitra, yea, Durmitra praised thee here, What time thou helpst Kutsa's son, when Dasyus fell, yea, helpst Kutsa's darling when the Dasyus died.

(Translations by R Griffith)

Philosophy

- Expressed Philosophy is in vogue even today –
- Generally it is Expressed as the Eternal Religion – Sanatana Dharma
- Religion and Philosophy are Interdependent

Religion

Vedic Ritual

Priests

Mantras and Hymns

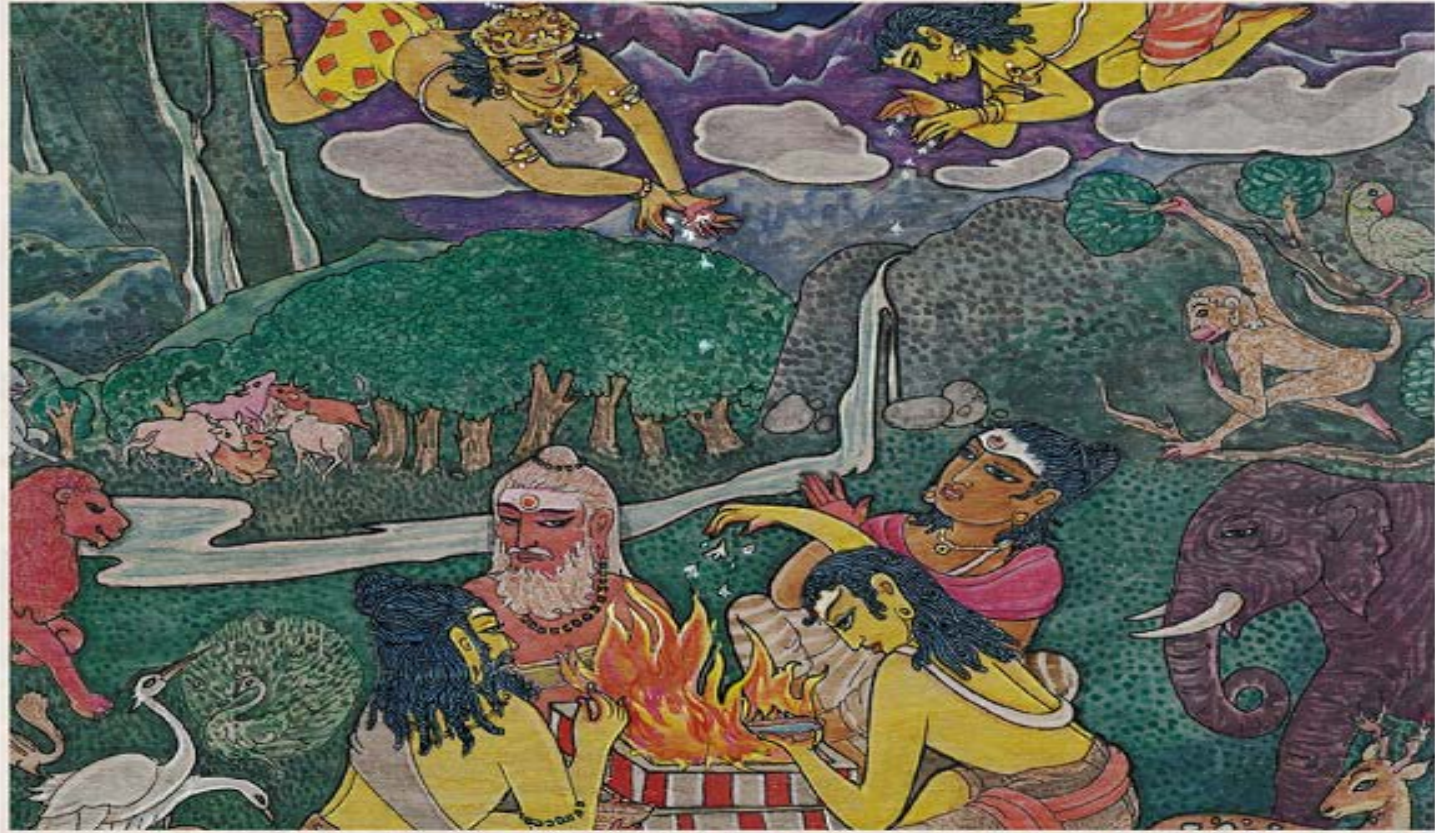
The Deities

The Prayers

Desired Results and Atonement

Religion

Typical Ancient Ritual



Religion

Typical Ancient Ritual

- Mantras from ऋग्वेद (*Rgveda*) यजुर्वेद (*yajurveda*) सामवेद (*samaveda*) are chanted or Sung
- ***Yajurveda*** defines the procedure
- ***यजमान (yajamana)***, the individual for whom the rite is conducted, is guided and supported by होतृ (hotru), अध्वर्यु (adhvaryu) and उद्गातृ (udgatru) priests. यजमान (Yajamana), represents the entire community
- ***ब्रह्म (Brahma)***, the presiding priest of the यज्ञ (yajnya), monitors the entire ritual
- ऋत्विक् (Holy men) who chant are trained in schools run by ऋषि (Rishi(s)) akin to गुरुकुल (gurkula(s))
- Gurukulas and ऋषि (Rishi(s)) आश्रम (ashramas) are located in forest surroundings

Religion

Vedic Revelations / Compositions

- Mantras are believed to have been “seen” –by ऋषि (Rishi(s)) in contemplation
- ऋषि belonged to all sections of the society
- Female ऋषि and ऋषि (s) of many generations contributed
- The ऋषि (s) are ब्रह्मज्ञानी (brahmajñānī) – who have realized the Self
- The Mantras were composed over many centuries, could be over millennia
- In addition to seeking grace, mantras praised the Deities, reaffirmed the faith in them, called for atonement for past deeds and sought protection from mishaps and calamities

Religion

Attributes of Deities

- Deification of unseen Forces of Nature
- Tiers of divinity – Terrestrial, Atmosphere, Space and Beyond
- अग्निः (Agni) वायुः (Vayu) मरुत (maruts) are considered Terrestrial divinity
- इन्द्र आदित्य अश्विनौ पर्जन्य (Indra, Aditya, Ashvins, Parjanya) are Divinities attributed to अंतरिक्ष (space)
- रुद्र विष्णु (Rudra, Vishnu) – आकाश (beyond space)
- देवत्व or Divinity is defined as follows:
 - based on their ability to grant the requested result;
 - self luminous;
 - habitation outside the earth
- (RV 1.6.1 and 1.164.46) suggests that Indra is the cumulative personification of अग्निः (Agni), वायुः (vAyu), आदित्य (Aditya), नक्षत्र (Nakshatra), et all.

Religion

The Prayer

•इदम् मित्रं वरुणमग्निमाहुरथो दिव्यः स सुपर्णो गरुत्मान् ।
एकम् सद्विप्रा बहुधा वदन्त्यग्निं यमं मातरिश्वानमाहुः ॥

•They call him Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni, and he is heavenly nobly-winged Garutman. To what is One, sages give him many a title- they call it Agni, Yama, Matarisvan.

•(RV 1.164.46 Translation by RGriffith)

Religion

Typical contents in सूक्त (Hymns)

- Some सूक्त (Sukta(s)-collection of Mantras) are descriptions of the prowess and functions of divinities
- Some are addressed to multiple divinities
- Some are realized by multiple ऋषि (Rishi) and are attributed accordingly
- Some are composed on behalf of the Divinity
- Material in some सूक्त (Sukta(s)) relate to popular legends and folk-tales
 - ऋभु (Rbhu), शुनःशेप (Shunashepa) , त्रिविक्रम (Trivikrama) etc. are some examples

Religion

The Prayer

- The compositions display highly devotional dependence on the Divinities that are invoked during the यज्ञ (yajna).
- There is a sense of relationship - as dutiful son to Father, as the sincere servant to the Master, as the child to the Mother – is expressed
- There are prayers that address plants for their ability to remedy ills and diseases as well to nourish all beings.

(RV 10.97)

- There are prayers for harmony between couples and to mitigate the pangs of separation

(RV 10.95)

Religion

The Prayer

प्रसूतो भक्ष्मकरं चरावपि स्तोमं चेमं प्रथमः सूरिरुन्मृजे
सुते सातेन यद्यागमं वां प्रति विश्वामित्रजमदग्नी दमे

I too, urged on have had my portion, in the bowl, and as first Prince I drew forth this my hymn of praise. When with the prize I came unto the flowing Juice, O Visvamitra, Jamadagni to your home.

•(Translation by R Griffith – RV 10.167.4)

Religion

The Prayer

- सूक्त (RV 10.125) illustrates the ability of Mortals to achieve the Deification.
- The ऋषि, वाक् आम्भृणी (Vak Ambhruni) , realizing this सूक्त, dedicates it to herself, since she has achieved oneness with रुद्र (Rudra), वसवः (Vasus) , आदित्य (Aditya), मित्र (Mitra), वरुण (Varuna), अश्विनौ (Ashvins), भग (Bhaga), पूषण (Pushana)
- She declares that she is the donor of wealth and possessions to the Yajamana.

Religion

The Prayer

अ॒हं रु॒द्रेभि॒र्वसु॑भिश्चराम्य॒हमादि॒त्यैरु॒त वि॒श्वदे॑वैः

अ॒हं मि॒त्रावरु॑णो॒भा वि॑भर्म्य॒हमिन्द्रा॑ग्नी अ॒हम॒श्विनो॑भा

॥ 1 ॥

अ॒हं सोम॑मा॒हनसं॑ वि॒भर्म्य॒हं त्वष्टा॑रमु॒त पू॒षणं॑ भ॒गम्

अ॒हं द॑धामि॒ द्रवि॑णं ह॒विष्म॑ते सु॒प्राव्ये॑ऽ यज॑मानाय सु॒न्वते

॥ 2 ॥

Hymn (RV 10.125) – Vak (ऋषि : Vak Ambhrni)

1. I Travel with the Rudras and the Vasus, with the Adityas and All-Gods I wander. I hold aloft both Varuna and Mitra, Indra and Agni, and the Pair of Asvins.
2. I cherish and sustain high-swelling Soma, and Tvastar I support, Pusan, and Bhaga. I load with wealth the zealous **sdcrificer** who pours the juice and offers his oblation sacrificer

(Translation by R Griffith)

Vedic Studies – Philosophy & Religion

Thank you!