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Physics is the New Bhashya of Vedanta

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VEDAS are four in number: the Rig Veda, the Sama Veda, the Yajur Veda and the Atharva Veda. Each of these four Vedas has four parts: the Samhita, the Brahmana, the Aranyaka, and a number of Upanishads. The first three parts of all the Vedas are collectively called the Vedas, and the fourth and the last, the Upanishads, are collectively called Vedanta.

These four parts of the Vedas represent the historical order of their development over millennia. The Samhitas are the most ancient, and of them, the Rig Veda Samhita is the earliest. The Samhitas are considered the Vedas proper; the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas and the Upanishads are periodic additions, made by way of growing with the changing times.

The Samhitas are hymns addressed to gods representing the forces of nature, followed by rites and sacrifices to propitiate those gods. The famous Nasadiya Sukta occurs in the Rig Samhita. The Brahmanas were added to the Samhitas by way of updating. The Satapatha Brahmana and the Aitareya Brahmana are well known.

The Aranyakas are so called because they were composed in the forests. During

this period the sages and seers took to the practice of retiring into the forests to contemplate 'the cream of all and what takes place'.

In the fourth and the last stage, the Upanishads appeared. There are 10-12 principal Upanishads: the Chandogya, the Brihadaranyaka, the Aitareya and the Kaushitaki, forming the end part of the Rig Veda. The Kena concludes the Sama Veda, with the Taittiriya, Isha, Katha and Shwetashwatara topping off the Yajur Veda, and the Mundaka, Mandukya and Prashna signing off the Atharva Veda. These terminals of the Vedas are generally called Vedanta or Shruti.

The Brahma Sutras and the *Bhagavad Gita* make post-Vedic literature, and are called Smriti as opposite to Shruti. Together, Shruti and Smriti (the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras and the Gita) are called Prastana Traya meaning the 'Threefold Movement', and this Prastana Traya is said to be the scripture of the Hindus.

The Prastana Traya has a self-perpetuating spirit and mechanism by which it adapts itself to periodic

reinterpretations in order to fit in with the changing times. These periodic reinterpretations are called Bhashyas. The latest Bhashyas to the Prastana Traya are by Shankara, Ramanuja and Madhwa. These Bhashyas have now lost their edge because of the passage of time. The Prastana Traya needs a new Bhashya to be in tune with the present age. The Prastana Traya looks for a new Shankara for a new Bhashya.

In the Samhitas, the Vedic literature starts with a passion for the truth — 'truth in clay, truth in iron'. It grows in search of this truth through the Brahmanas and the Aranyakas and ultimately in the Upanishads, that truth is arrived at and declared to the world.

What is that truth? The ultimate essence of the universe is space (*akasha ha vy brahma*). Consciousness is but a condition of space (*prajnanam brahma*). The content of the world is the distortion, *vikara*, of its container, consciousness-space. The distorted 3-D space is Saguna Brahman and space minus its *vikara* or distortion, that is the unified field, is Nirguna Brahman. Brahman-space

is the ultimate reality underlying all existence: it is the biggest 'I' that contains all our small 'I's.

Our small 'I's can be merged in the Big 'I' through contemplation or tapas and that is salvation or moksha.

Modern physics takes us to the same conclusion. Physics is the study of how and why the Nirguna distorts to become Saguna. Shruti lives in Smriti which is the progressive knowledge and understanding of Shruti over ages. Physics is the new Smriti; Physics is the new Bhashya of Vedanta.

There is talk in the air of introducing Vedic studies in schools and colleges. However, what should be taught there is not the traditional Vedic studies, but Vedanta as the *anta* (omega) of not only the Vedas but also of modern science, and as an intellectual and spiritual force capable of enlightening, inspiring and bettering the modern global village. Introducing mere traditional Vedic studies will further only narrow agendas, and will not serve the meaning or purpose of modern public education. We need to widen our vision by looking beyond the written word; and for this, it is essential that we rise above mere dogma.



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