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Atharvana Veda

Atharva means a Purohit. The mantras in the Atharva Veda were brought to light by Rishi Atharvan. This Veda contains many types of mantras designed to ward off evil and hardship and to destroy enemies. Other names of this veda are Brahma Veda, Angiro Veda, Arthaavangiro Veda, Bhaishajya Veda. The Atharva mantras are in prose as well as in verse. In Atharva Veda are found mantras, which pertain to Gods not mentioned in the other Vedas. It is said "Yaatho Rudraassivaathanoraghora Paapa naashinee". That is to say, God is described as having two distinguishable forms - the serene and the terrible. Well, even nature, the concretization of the will power of God, has these two aspects, the mild and the fearful.

The Rishis Atharva and Angiras who visualized the mantras of this Veda have recognized this twin nature of both God and Creation. They appear mild and terrible, in accordance with the credentials of those who experience. But in total effect and in a deeper sense, these mantras are intended to reveal the atma and promote the peace and prosperity of humanity.

Ayam Atma Brahma is the holy declaration of the Atharva veda. It means, "**This Atma is Brahman**". It implies that the individual self is the untarnished, unaffected witness of the activities of the body-mind complex. Atharva Veda also contains many hymns dealing with creation. The hymn which extols the wonder of creation called the "**Prithvi Sooktam**" appears in this Veda. The pride of this Veda is that Brahma who supervises the conduct of yagna is representative of Atharva Veda. **Prasna, Mundaka and Maandukya Upanishads** are part of this Veda.

The Atharva Veda is the first Indic text dealing with medicine. It identifies the causes of disease as living causative agents such as the yatudhana, the kimidin, the krimi or k?mi and the dur?ama. The Atharvans seek to kill them with a variety of incantations or plant based drugs in order to counter the disease. The hymn Atharva Veda I.23-24 describes the disease leprosy and recommends the rajani au?adhi for its treatment. From the description of the au?adhi as black branching entity with dusky patches, it is very likely that it is a lichen with antibiotic properties. Thus this veda may be one of the earliest texts to record the uses of the **antibiotic** agents.

The Atharvaveda also informs about **warfare**. A variety of devices such as an arrow with a duct for poison (apaskambha) and castor bean poison, poisoned net and hook traps, use of disease spreading insects and smoke screens find a place in the Atharvaveda sa?hita. Several regular and special rituals of the Aryans are a major concern of the Atharva veda, just as in the three other Vedas. The major rituals covered by the AV are marriage in ka??a - XIV and the funeral in ka??a - XVIII.

Philosophical excursions are found in books 8-12. One of the most spectacular expressions of philosophical thought is seen in the hymn XII.1, the Hymn to goddess Earth or the P?thivi Sukta used in the Agrayana rite. The foundations of Vai?esika Darsana is expressed in the mantra XII.1.26 in which the 'atoms' (Pa?su) are described forming the stone, the stones agglutinating to form the rocks and the rocks held together to form the Earth. Early pantheistic thought is seen in the hymn X.7 that describes the common thread running through all manifest and non-manifest existence as the ska?bha. This ska?bha is described as what poured out of the Hira?yagarbha that was the precursor of the complex world in a very simple form (X.7.28). (Hira?yagarba = " The golden embryo, from which the Universe was formed.") This Skambha is Indra and Indra is the Skambha which describes all existence.

The hymn also describes a pantheistic nature of the Vedic gods (X.7.38): ska?bha is the heat (tapa?) that spreads through the universe (Bhuvana) as waves of water; the units of this spreading entity are the gods even as branches of one tree. This theme is repeatedly presented in various interpretations in later Hindu philosophies.

The **Cara?avyuha** (attributed to Shaunaka) lists **nine shakhas**, or schools, of the Atharva veda:

1. Paippalada
2. Stauda
3. Mauda
4. Saunakiya
5. Jajala
6. Jalada
7. Kuntap
8. Brahmavada
9. Devadarsa
10. Cara?avaidya

Of these, only the Saunakiya (AVS) and the Paippalada (AVP) recensions have survived. Both have some later additions, but the core Paippalada text is considered earlier than the Saunakiya. Often in corresponding hymns, the two recensions have different verse orders, or each has additional verses not in the other. Sa? hitavidhi, Santikalpa and Nak?atralpa are some of the five kalpa texts adduced to the Saunakiya tradition and not separate schools of their own.

Two main post-Samhita texts associated with the AV are the Vaitana Sutra and the Kausika Sutra. The Vaitanasutra deals with the participation of the Atharva veda priest (brahmán) in the Shrauta ritual while the Kausikasutra contains many applications of Atharva veda mantras in healing and magic. This serves the same purpose as the vidhana of the Rigveda and is of great value in studying the application of the Atharva

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Veda text in Vedic times. Several Upanishads also are associated with the Atharva Veda, but appear to be relatively late additions to the tradition. The most important of these are the mu??aka and the prasna Upanishads. The former contains an important reference to Saunaka, the founder of the Shaunakiya shakha, while the latter is associated with the Paippalada shakha.



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