Vedangas and Upvedas
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Vedanganas and Upavedas

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Introduction

The Agamas, Vedic literature and sciences, Upavedas and Sutra literature form an important part of the corpus of Hindu shastras. The Agamas are a class of Hindu religious literature which practically form the basis of almost all Hindu religious practices of the post Vedic era. The name Agama means "that which teaches the Truth from all aspects", and so its followers hold the Agamas in equal importance to the Vedas or any sacred book. In practice, they deal with deities like Shiva, Shakti and Vishnu, and also their respective mandirs and worship rituals. The three groups of Agamas are Shaiva Agamas, Shakta Agamas and Vaishnava Agamas. They deal mainly with philosophical subjects, yogic practices, mandir architecture, science of murti consecration, rituals and code of conduct. The Agamas are treated by their respective followers as equal in importance to the Vedas.

The Vedic literature and sciences include the Vedangas or "limbs of the Veda", Upavedas (Tesser' or 'complementary' Vedas) and Surra literature (short formulaic statements). The Vedangas are texts of the subsidiary sciences of phonetics, prosody, grammar, etymology, astronomy, geometry and sacrificial rituals that help one understand and study the Vedas in their proper context. The four Upavedas include Ayurveda (science of medicine), Gandharvaveda (science of music and dance), Dhanurveda (science of archery and warfare) and Srhapatyaveda (science of architecture). Some scholars also include Arthaveda or Arthashastra within the Upavedas. The Sutra literature consists of short formulaic statements or aphorisms, expressing a general truth. They had to be memorized by students and commented upon and explained by teachers. It includes the Kalpasurras, Bhaktisutras, Brahrnasurras, Sankhyasutras. We will examine in detail each of these types of literary forms, beginning with the Agamas.

The Agamas

The Agamas, like the Vedas (also called Nigamas), are another class of very sacred Hindu texts. The Agamas deal with beliefs and practices related to Vishnu, Shiva and Shakti. It is difficult to fix their time of origin, however it can be stated that some of the Agamas of the early Vishnu sects were in existence by the time of the Mahabharata. The development of the Agamas of the other schools might have continued till 800 CEo The Agamas are considered to be revealed (shruti) like the Vedas and are thus held in equal importance and authority by their devout followers. I They deal with God, sacred living, mode of worship, building of mandirs, consecration

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of images, yoga, creation and philosophy. The three main groups of Hindu Agamas are: Vaishnava, Shaiva and Shakta. There are also the Buddhist and Jain Agamas. Of the Hindu Agamas, there are 108 main Vaishnava Agamas, 92 main Shaiva Agamas and 77 main Shakta Agamas. Though each of the three groups has different doctrines and regards itself as superior, they share common elements in prescribed spiritual practice (sadhana) and ritual practice. The Agamas consist of four parts called padas, each having many Sanskrit verses in metrical form: (1) the contents of the charya pada deal with observance of religious injunctions, right conduct, the guru-shishya relationship, community life and town planning - with focus on the mandir as its centre, (2) the kriya pada describes and defines worship rituals and mandir - from site selection for construction of mandir, architectural design, construction methods, iconography (murti sculpture), rules for pujaris, festivals and home-shrine rituals; (3) the yoga pada reveals meditation and yogic discipline to purify body and mind and awaken the kundalini shakti and (4) the jnana pada elaborates on philosophical topics like the doctrine and nature of Bhagwan, jivas, maya and the means to attain moksha.

A brief description of the three groups of Agamas follows:

1. Vishnava Agama

The Vaishnava Agamas, also called Samhitas, consist of the Pancharatra Agamas and the Vaikhanasa Agamas. Both teach that Vishnu is the "Supreme Truth" and the highest deity, and emphasize the various types of worship in mandirs. This worship involves murtis of several deities and devotees known as nitya muktas. The Pancharatra Agamas were revealed by Bhagwan Narayana to five disciples in five nights. They consider Bhagwan Vishnu and Lakshmiji as the principal deities or divine couple (divya dampati) and deal extensively with rituals of murti-puja, rules of mandir architecture, and the path of bhakti. The Pancharatra Agamas also prescribe a devotional way of life for followers that include five fundamental practices: (1) going to the mandir and concentrating on God with mind, body and speech (abhigama); (2) collecting materials for the worship of God (upadana); (3) actual worshipping God (ijya); (4) studying shastras (swadhyaya) and (5) meditating on the murti of God (yoga). The Vaikhanasa Agamas claims to have their roots in the Vedas. They deal with daily rituals of making Vedic offerings into fire and the daily worship of Bhagwan Vishnu's murti in the inner sanctum of a mandir. The daily worship rituals include welcoming Bhagwan Vishnu as a royal guest and offering him food with the chanting of Vedic mantras. The votaries of Vaikhanasa came to function as chief pujaris in many south Indian mandirs. Even today this is true, particularly at the Tirupati Venkateshwara (Balaji) Mandir, the most famous Vaishnava pilgrimage centre in Andhra Pradesh, South India. The Vaikhanasa sect clearly insists upon its purely orthodox or Vedic status.The Catalogue of Pancbardtra,' with about 460 Vaishnava Agamas, was recently researched and compiled by two BAPS Swaminarayan saint-scholars.

2. Shaiva Agamas

The Shaiva Agamas are the sacred texts of the Shaiva Sarnpradaya in which Bhagwan Shiva is the presiding deity. They contain information on the Shaiva philosophical doctrine, rituals, worship, religious practices, architecture of Shiva mandirs, sculpture of the murtis and art in general. The Shaiva Agamas say that souls are in bondage, and moksha is attained through an

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understanding of the nature of six principles: (1) Lord (Pati); (2) knowledge (vidya); (3) false knowledge (avidya),- (4) individual soul (pashu); (5) noose of imputities (pasha) and (6) worship of Shiva (moksha-karana). They emphasize on the worship of Shiva (Pat i) for removing the noose of impurities (pasha) from the individual soul (pashu). Only through Shiva's grace do the souls (pasbus) attain liberation. The Shaiva Agamas principally prescribe murti-puja and rituals, and propagate the realization of Shiva as the ultimate goal.

3. Shakta Agamas

In the Shaiva Agamas one finds dialogues between Bhagwan Shiva and Parvati, in which the former is the master and the latter his disciple. However in the Shakta Agamas, also known as Tantras, the opposite can be seen, where Parvati (also known as Sari, Devi, Uma and Kali) is the guru and Bhagwan Shiva is her disciple. So it is Shiva who asks questions to her and Parvati answers.

There are two main groups of Shakta Agamas or Tantras:

The Dakshinachara Tantras or the "right-hand path" and the Vamachara Tantras or the "left-hand path". The Dakshinachara teaches the worship of the deity Dakshina Kalika according to Vedic modes of worship and sadhana for ultimate realization. And the Vamachara promotes the ritual use of "five Ms" (panchamakaras), namely, wine (madya), fish (matsya), meat (maansa), parched grains and gestures (mudra) and extra-marital sexual union (maithuna) for spiritual realization. The Shakra Agamas teach about the worship of Shakri or the Universal Mother - the female principle of Shiva - namely, Parvati and her other forms, such as, Durga, Amba, Kali and others. The objective is to attain material power, prosperity and finally liberation.

Vedic Literature and Sciences

There are other shastras which have their ongm 10 the Vedas and were later developed by different rishis. They are known as Vedic literature and sciences and are classified as Smruti shastras. These texts are, (i) Vedangas (limbs of Vedas), (ii) Upavedas (Tesser' or 'complementary' Vedas), (iii) Sutras (short formulaic statements or aphorisms) which include the Brahmasutras. A brief description of each is as follows:

Vedangnas

To make the spiritual and ritual concepts of the Vedas easily understandable, the rishis developed the Vedangas - "limbs of the Vedas". These are subsidiary works of Vedic knowledge that help one to study, understand and practice the teachings of the Vedas. The six Vedangas are Shiksha (phonetics), Chandas (prosody), Vyakarana (grammar), Nirukta (etymology), Jyotisha (Astronomy, Astrology, Mathematics, and Geometry) and Kalpa (Science of sacrificial rites and rituals). Shiksha and Chandas are aids for pronouncing and reciting Vedic mantras correctly, Vyakarana and Nirukta are for understanding their meaning, and Jyotisha and Kalpa provide appropriate times and methods for performing the Vedic sacrificial rites and rituals. The origins of these six auxiliary 'sciences' are found in the Vedas. A brief description of each of them follows.

1. Shiksha

This branch teaches the science of phonetics or pronunciation and recitation of the Vedic mantras. Any deviation in the pronunciation can change the meaning and thus mar the desired

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effect or purpose for which the mantras are chanted and applied in sacrifices. Some outstanding examples of Shiksha texts include the Paniniya Shiksha by the great grammarian Sage Panini and the Chandas Chandas is the science of prosody. It deals with versification, or the rules for the metres in which Vedic mantras and poems were composed. There are eleven major and minor metres like, Gayatri, Anushrup, Ushnik, Trishtup, Jagati, etc. Pingala is the earliest known author of the Chanda shastra written in sutra form, which became popularly known as Pingala shastra. According to tradition, before reciting any Vedic mantra the reciter has to pay respect to the respective rishi, devata and chandas of the mantra

Vyakarana

Vyakarana is the science of grammar, which helps to make language clearer. It is called the 'mouth' of the Vedas. Without it, the Vedas and all other Shruti works would be impossible to understand correctly. The earliest available text on Sanskrit grammar today is the Ashtadhyayi of Panini (e. 500 BeE). Panini wrote his work for the understanding of the Vedic and mainly the classical Sanskrit language, and especially for the style of Sanskrit spoken in his day. Though the Vedas were revealed and chanted many millennia before him, a systematic grammar for both Vedic and classical Sanskrit was first given by Panini. The Ashtadhyayi is considered to be the most basic and standard work in Sanskrit grammar today. It has been recognized as one of the greatest intellectual achievements of all time. Panini, however, mentions several scholars who were grammarians and lexicographers before him. It is worth noting that some ancient grammarians like Patanjali (200 BCE) and Bhartruhari (between 450 and 500 CE) developed a spiritual philosophy out of grammar. They identified the eternal aspect of sound with Brahman (shabda Brahman) of Vedanta by writing the Mahabhashya and Vakyapadiya respectively. Vyakarana also includes dictionaries like Amarakosha, Halayudhakosha and others.

Nirukra

There was a Sanskrit work called Nighantu, now extinct, which was a dictionary of difficult Vedic words. The work is attributed to Yaska by some scholars, but it is not certain who the real author was. According to Yaska, the difficult words were collected and classified by the descendants of ancient sages. The Nirukta is the oldest Indian treatise on etymology, philology and semantics, also ascribed to Yaska. The work is available today, and it is a commentary on the Nighantu. It thus enables one to understand the Vedas. Sage Yaska was the last of the commentators on Nighantu. His work on Nirukta is the best known work available. It is considered to be the earliest Vedabhashya or commentary on the Vedas. It consists of three partS: (1) a list of synonyms called Naighantuka Kanda, (2) a list of words used only in the Vedas called Naigama Kanda, and (3) a list of words relating to deities and rituals known as Daivata Kanda. In the Daivata Kanda, Yaska gives the etymological explanation of the names of the deities. Finally, Nirukta ends with instructions, teachings and eulogies of the Vedic devas.

Jyotisha

Jyotisha is the Vedic science of astrology that includes astronomy, geometry and mathematics. Movements of the sun, moon, planets and constellations are observed and recorded in order to fix suitable days and auspicious times for the commencement and conclusion of sacred rites and yajnas for various purposes. The influence of the movement of celestial bodies on human life

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was also studied (astrology). References to eclipses are found in the Rig Veda. Two Jyotisha books available from the early Vedic period are Archajyotisha of the Rig Veda with 36 verses and Yajusjyotisha of the Yajur Veda with 43 verses, and from the later period we have the Atharvajyotisha with 162 verses. Later, the astronomy section ofjyotisha science was gradually advanced by the works of Aryabhatta I (476 CE), Varahamihira (580 CE), Brahmagupta (628 CE), Bhaskaracharya I (700 CE), Aryabhatta II (c. 950 CE) and Bhaskaracharya II (1114 CE). These rishi-scientists helped in the development of Hindu astronomy and astrology.

Kalpa

Kalpa is one of the Vedangas which lays down the rules for the correct performance of rituals, ceremonial and sacrificial acts. Kalpa means prayoga or practical method to conduct Vedic sacrifices correctly. We will deal with Kalpa in detail in the Sutra literature section, following the section on Upavedas.

Upavedas

In addition to the four Vedas and Upanishads there are four Upavedas or subsidiary Vedas. These deal mainly with 'secular' sciences such as Ayurveda (science of medicine), Gandharvaveda (science of music and dance), Dhanurveda (science of archery and warfare) and Sthapatyaveda (science of architecture). Some scholars consider Arthaveda or Arthashastra instead of Sthapatyaveda as one of the four Upavedas. The four Upavedas are important because they deal with worldly subjects, namely, man, matter and society. They are considered to be very important for their contribution in the development of Indian civilization and culture. We shall deal briefly with each of them.

Ayurveda

Ayurveda IS a science that deals with 'knowledge of life' and longevity. The main texts of this life science are Sushruta Samhita and Charaka Samhita. Ayurveda deals with medicine and health. A long and healthy physical and mental life is necessary for a prolonged spiritual practice and experience. The source of this science, according to sage Sushruta (600 BeE), lies in the Atharva Veda which is aptly called Bhaishajya Veda (the Veda of medicine and treatment of diseases). Ayurveda includes methods of diagnoses and treatment for physiological and psychological illness. It deals with embryology, hygiene, anatomy, surgery, ere. Dominik Wujastyk, a Senior Research Fellow at the world- famous Wellcome Centre for the History of Medicine at the University College of London and the author of The Roots of Ayurveda, writes in his article 'The Science of Medicine', "Indian medicine, as a systematic and scholarly tradition, begins historically with the appearance of the great medical encyclopedias of Charaka, Sushruta and Bhela about two thousand years ago. Just as Panini's famous linguistic study of Sanskrit leaps into the historical record fully formed, like the Buddha from Queen
Maya's side, so the medical encyclopedias too emerge with a learned medical tradition in an almost fully articulated form.' Obviously from this one can infer that medical science must have developed fully in ancient India before the emergence of the Sushruta Samhita and Charaka Samhita.

According to Ayurveda, the material bodies of human beings are composed of kala (protective layer), dhatu (component matter), mala (eliminations), three doshas (humours), agni (digestive

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fire) and kriya (movement or activity). Among these six the most important is the principle of three constitutional elements called humours in the human body, namely, vata (air), pitta (bile) and kapha (phlegm). Vata (air in body) includes all phenomena of motion and its essential components are ether and air. Kapha deals with cooling and preservation, and production of various secretions like mucus and cough. Its essential components are earth and ether. Pitta (bile) is made of fire and ether. It deals with metabolism, energy production, process of digestion, etc. A person may be constitutionally brisk (with vata dominating) or fiery (with pitta in dominance) or phlegmatic (with kapha being the prevalent element). But, according to Ayurveda, only when all three elements are in equilibrium in the human body a person is said to be healthy. An ayurvedic doctor diagnoses a patient with reference to the relative levels of his or her vata, pitta and kapha. The ancient Indian rishis, Charaka and Sushruta, practised ayurveda and surgery respectively. Acharya Charaka (e.100 CE), who wrote the Char aka Sambita, is known as the 'Father of Indian medicine'. Through his intuitive powers he had realized the medicinal qualities of 100,000 plants and herbs. Since the medications are herbal with least side-effects, they are becoming increasingly popular throughout the world. According to Charaka a long and healthy life is not possible if a person does not live morally. Morality gives rise to prajna or wisdom, which gives peace of mind and leads to longevity and happiness. When this prajna is abused, it causes all types of sickness. Acharya Sushruta (600 BCE) is popularly known as the 'Father of Surgery in India'. In the Sushruta Samhita, a unique encyclopaedia of surgery, he details 300 types of operations he performed, along with 125 types of surgical instruments that he used. He is lauded as an early pioneer of plastic surgery and anaesthesia. Ayurvedic science is divided into eight major topics:

1. Shalya-rantra: surgery and midwifery
2. Shalakya-tantra: study of diseases of head, eyes, nose, throat, etc.
3. Kayachikitsa: therapeutics
4. Bhutavidya: mental diseases (psychiatry)
5. Kaurnarabhrurya-rantra : paediatrics and obstetrics
6. Agada-tantra: toxicology
7. Rasayana-tantra : remedies for venoms

Ayurveda also deals with the treatment of plants and animals. Texts of Ayurveda prescribe a strict code of conduct for the physician.

Gandharvaveda

According to tradition gandharvas are expert musicians of swarga (the abode of the devas). It is believed that there used to be a work called Gandharvaveda with 30,000 verses on music, which is not available now. Gandharvaveda dealt with the science of music and the sacred performing arts. It derived its origin in the Sarna Veda. It included vocal and instrumental music, dance and drama. There are seven svaras (notes) from which ragas are produced, corresponding to the appropriate time of day and season. The ragas create astonishingly powerful physical, psychological and spiritual effects. While Western music has only two modes - major and minor scales - Indian music uses dozens of different modes. Bhararamuni's Ndtyasbastra, available today, is an extraordinary text on music, dance and drama.

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Dhanurveda

Dhanurveda IS the science of archery, martial arts and weaponry. It is a military science, which is mentioned in the Rig Veda and Aitareya Brahmana. It is also known as shastravidya and it originates from the Yajur Veda. It deals with shastra and astra Shastra" means weapons which are used with one's hands in war, such as swords and maces, and astra means weapons that are shot like arrows. Dhanurveda also deals with the manufacturing of and training with weapons. Although there is no ancient scientific work by the name of Dhanurveda, a text called Dhanurveda Sarnhira, belonging to a later period, is still extent.

Sthapatyaveda or Vastushastra

Some scholars consider Sthapatyaveda or Vastushastra as one of the Upavedas. It deals with the Hindu science of sacred architecture and the sthapati or architect. Traditionally, there are 18 teachers of architecture to whom Srhaptyaveda is ascribed. The two most well known among them are Vishvakarrna (the architect of the devas) and Maya (the architect of the asuras).

This important science has its origin in the Yajur Veda, wherein the sacrificial altar or yajna vedi was constructed with utmost precision and care in different geometrical patterns. Similarly, Hindu mandirs were built in different styles like Nagata, Dravida and Vesara with painstaking perfection by the master builders-cum-architects. It is remarkable that thousands of mandirs of ancient India, in locations as varied as mountains, caves and seashores, still stand today as majestic reminders of this ancient science. The continuing discovery of various sites of the Indus Valley civilization in the 20th and 21st century conclusively proves that India of remote antiquity had great architects and town planners.

Some of the ancient books on architecture include Abbilesbitsrtbacbintsmani, Brihatsamhita, Manasara, Sama- ranganasutradhara, and Mayamatashilpashastra. The A rthashastra of Kaurilya and some Puranas, like the Agni Purana, Matsya Purana and Padma Purana, also contain much information about architecture.

Arthaveda or Arthashastra

In ancient India, Arthaveda meant the book contairung knowledge of material wealth and the means of acquiring it. The best available work of Arthaveda is the Arthashastra of Kautilya (c. 372 BCE). Kautilya was also known as Chanakya and Vishnugupta. He was the main adviser to King Chandragupta Maurya (340 BCE). Kautilya's Arthashastra has its roots in the Atharva Veda. Shaunaka rishi, in his work Charanavyuha, lists Arthashastra as an Upaveda. This work has 6,000 shlokas that deal with 180 different topics like politics, law and economics. It is one of the most ancient and brilliant works in the world. In addition to economics it also covers such subjects as relations with enemy states, preparation of army for all types of combat, espionage system, and revenue collection, formation of the judiciary and discharging of justice.

Sutra Literature

The Surra literature is a part of ancient Sanskrit literature, having a unique style of expressing an idea, concept or view in brief through very short statements, formulas or aphorisms. They were introduced because memorizing the increasingly voluminous Smruti literature became impossible. The sutras were required in order to carryon the oral tradition, and there are thus a large number of different Sutra works on nearly every traditional subject. Much as a thread in a

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garland binds everything together, a sutra, which literally means 'thread', binds together all aspects of the topics in each work. The sutras succinctly deal with the essential ideas or concepts of subjects like religion, philosophy, grammar, and law. Nearly all systems of Indian philosophy and all subjects of traditional learning in ancient India have their own sutra works. In the realm of religion there are Kalpasutras (which has four sections) like the Bhaktisutras of Narada and Shandilya. In philosophy there are the Brahmasutras (also known as Vyasasutras or Vedanrasutras), Mimansasutras, Sankhyasutras, Yogasutras, Nyayasutras and Vaisheshikasutras. Panini wrote the Ashtadhayi, a work of Sanskrit grammar, in the sutra style.

Kalpasutras of Kalpa

Kalpasutras deal with social and religious ceremonies and rituals. The Kalpasutras belong to a period later than that of the major ancient thirteen Upanishads. They are divided into four sections:

1. The Shrautasutras are concerned with correct performance of Vedic yajnas in public. In them, 'social and spiritual' ceremonies and rituals are described. The authors of the Shrautasutras are Ashwalayana, Shankhayana and others.
2. The Ghruhyasutras give an exposmon of domestic ceremonies and rituals related to householders, such as the sixteen samskaras, duties of teachers, pupils, kings and others. They were also employed for home building, cattle breeding and other activities. The Gruhyasutras of Bodhayana and Apasramba are well known.
3. The Dharmasutras explain law, religion, customs, usage and duties of varna and ashram a in life. The well known Dharmasutras are of Sage Gautama and Bodhayana.
4. The Sulvasutras or Sulbasutras are concerned with rules for measuring and building fire altars for yajnas. They were concerned with a subject called lekha ganita - the mathematics of measurement. Their preoccupation with this subject yielded extensive knowledge of elementary geometry. Thus the origin of geometry is believed to be in the Sulvasutras.

Brahmsutra ans Vedantasutras

The Brahmasutras by Badarayana or Veda Vyasa are also known as Vedantasutras or Vyasasutras. They are the sacred philosophical book of sutras or aphorisms that summarize the teachings of the Upanishads. The Brahmasurras have 550 sutras arranged in four parts, dealing with the Ultimate Reality or Brahman, atman, jagat, maya and mukti or moksha. The sutras are very short statements, sometimes consisting of only two or three words. They cannot be understood properly without a profound teacher of a living tradition or a commentary (bhashya) of the great, erudite acharya. The Brahmasutras are one of the three most important works of Indian philosophy, called the Prasthanatrayi. The Upanishads are called Shrutiprasthana, the Brahmasutras are Nyayaprasthana and the Bhagavad Gita is Smrutiprasthana, Prastbdna means a treatise. The Brahmasutras are a work of philosophy based on logic or Nyaya, whereas the other two are based on Shruti and Smruti traditions respectively. It seems that the Brahmasutras were a part of the ancient oral tradition of the Vedanta system. Their sutras were memorized by students and the meanings were explained by authorized teachers. The Brahmasutras begin with the sutra, "Athato Brahma jignasa", which means, "Now then [let us have} an enquiry about Brahman," and concludes with the sutra, Anavruttihi sabdat, Anavruttihi

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sabdat, which means, "Not returning back in sarnsara, in the mundane world - which means the attainment of mukti."

In the first chapter (or pada) there is a discussion on Brahman as the sole and supreme cause of all things and rejection of other philosophical systems (i.e., Sankhya, etc.) that do not accept Brahman to be the Supreme Reality. In the second chapter, arguments for the rejection of Sankhya continue from the first chapter. The Bhagavara system is mentioned at the end. The third chapter deals with jivatma. There is also a discussion on the state of dreams, dreamless sleep, meditation and types of knowledge of Brahman. The fourth chapter continues discussing the topic of meditation and it ends with the description of conditions of a knower of Brahman after his death. The Brahmasutras say that Vedic authority is the highest in matters of moksha. The Brahmasutras became so popular that almost all the renowned acharyas wrote their commentaries on them. The first commentary available to us is that of Adi Shankaracharya who wrote the Shankarabhashya to establish his own school of Kevaladvaita Vedanta. Some of the acharyas who have written commentaries on the Brahmasutras are:

1. Adi Shankaracharya Kevaladvaita Shankarabhashya
2. Bhaskaracharya Bhedabheda Brahmasutra bhashya
3. Rarnanujacharya Vishishtadvaita Shribhashya
4. Nirnbarkacharya Dvairadvaita Vedantaparijata-saurabha
5. Madhvacharya Dvaita Brahmasutra bhashya
6. Vallabhacharya Shuddhadvaita Anubhashya
7. Baldevacharya Achintyabhedabheda Govindabhashya
8. Shripati Dvaitadvaita Shrikarabhashya

The above mentioned eight well-known schools of Vedanta are but a few of the many important ones. Each of the acharyas explained the most diverse philosophical and theological views in their interpretation of the very same aphorisms. They have the liberty to interpret, because the sutras are brief, containing mostly two, three or four Sanskrit words which have more than two or three meanings. Undoubtedly the Brahmasutras have influenced all important aspects of Hindu philosophy, religion and culture, including the modern Hindu movements.

Summary

1. The Agamas are believed by some to match the Vedic texts in spiritual and religious authority. They prescribe the mode of worship of deities in mandirs and prescribe a way of life in relation to the systems of devotion and worship.
2. The other shastras include the Vedangas or limbs of the Vedas and the Upavedas or 'complementary' Vedas. The Vedangas include Shiksha (phonetics), Chandas (prosody), Vyakarana (grammar), Nirukta (etymology), Jyotisha (astronomy, astrology, mathematics and geometry), and Kalpa (science of sacrificial rites and rituals).
3. The Upavedas or subsidiary Vedas, derived from the Vedas, are Ayurveda (science of health), Gandharvaveda (science of music), Dhanurveda (military science) and Srhapatyaveda or Vastuveda (the science of sacred and 'secular' architecture).
4. The Brahmasutras or the Vedantasutras are a systematization of the teachings of the ancient Upanishads by Badarayana Veda Vyasa. They are one of the three shastras that form the

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Prasthanatrayi. The other two are the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita. Almost all the great acharyas have written commentaries on them to establish their own independent Vedanta philosophies.

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