

Six Keys for Decoding the Vedas – Six Darśanas

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It is a well known fact that there is a vast Vedic literature which is ‘apauruṣeya’, and embedded in the same are Jñānam and Vijñānam.

As the time passed, the Vedas have lost their role as the treasure-trove of Vijñāna, due to many reasons.

Of late, there has been a propensity, among some scholars and scientists, across the globe, to fish out the scientific realities that are hidden in the Vedic literature and make them usable for the welfare of the mankind.

While some ignorant and biased lot advocated that Vedas are nonsense some others with wisdom thought that such a vast literature could have not survived for such a long time had there not been anything meaningful.

This paper gives a panorama of the popular six systems of Indian Philosophy, called Darśanas and shows as to how are they useful as keys in decoding the terse Vedic texts:

Mīmāṃsā, Vedānta, Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika are the six Darśanas, and without the knowledge of these systems it is impossible to crack the Vedic literature.

पूर्वमीमांसादर्शनम्

It is also called - Pūrvatantram, Mīmāṃsā, Vākyaśāstram, Karmamīmāṃsā, Dvādaśalakṣaṇī etc. If Veda is divided into two parts then the Mantrabrāhmaṇabhāga is dealt with by Mimāṃsā whereas the Upaniṣadbhāga is analysed by Uttaramīmāṃsā or Vedānta.

Twelve subjects, that are useful in analyzing the meaning of a sentence or a discourse (Vākyaṃ or Mahāvākyaṃ), are exhibited in twelve Adhyāyas by Jaimini.

प्रमाणभेदशेषत्वप्रयुक्तिक्रमसंज्ञिकाः !

अधिकारो'तिदेशश्च सामान्येन विशेषतः !!

ऊहो बाधश्च तन्त्रं च प्रसङ्गश्चोदिताः क्रमात् !

In KṛṣṇayajurVeda, the yajus are read in clusters - iṣetvorjetvā etc. Then it is difficult to decide the length of a yajus or vākya. Jaimini offers a Sūtra for this purpose and Kumārila says it is a definition useful in Mantra, Brāhmaṇa and Loka –

अर्थैकत्वादेकं वाक्यं साकांक्षं चेद्विभागे स्यात् (2-1-14-46)

If a single meaning /thing is proposed and when separated if the parts are found to be wanting then it is a Vākya / Mahāvākya.

Since, Jaimini did not insert the word 'padam' in the Sūtra it is applicable to both a Vākya and a Mahāvākya.

A group of words with arthaikatvam / ekavākyatā is a Vākya and a group of sub-sentences (अवांतरवाक्यम्) with the same is Mahāvākya.

The ekavākyatā in vākya is called padaikavākyatā and the same in a Mahāvākya is vākyaikavākyatā. Rāmayaṇa, Mahābhārata etc. are called Mahāvākyas. This concept is useful in building śāstras.

Tattvamasi etc. are called Mahāvākyas following 'arthagaurava' rather than śabdagaurava.

Since Jaimini rules – 'āmnāyasya kriyārthatvāt', every sentence in Veda should end up in some activity or the other. There are some sentences in Veda which are eulogistic in nature –

वायव्यं श्वेतमालभेत भूतिकामः (विधिवाक्यम्)

वायुर्वै क्षेपिष्ठा देवता , वायुमेव स्वेन भागधेयेनोपधावति , स एवैनं भूतिं गमयति (अर्थवादः)

So what is the fate of such sentences?

Here is Jaimini –

विधिना त्वेकवाक्यत्वात् स्तुत्यर्थेन विधीनां स्युः (1-2-1-7)

Such sentences have to be construed along with the Vidhivākya as they are the śeṣa of vidhi and śeṣaśeṣibhāva is the device –

स्तुत्यः वायवीयः यागः कर्तव्यः - इति महावाक्यम् संपद्यते !

Jaimini also rules that both wife and husband, i.e. dampatī, have got 'sahādhikāra' in all karmas –

स्ववतोस्तु वचनादैककर्म्यं स्यात् (6-1-17)

धर्मं चार्थं च कामे च नातिचरितव्या पाणिग्रहणं तु सहत्वं कर्मसु तथा पुण्यफलेषु द्रव्यपरिग्रहेषु च !

वेदांतदर्शनम्

Vedānta deals with the Upaniṣads, that are useful in attaining Jñānam and consequently Mokṣa, i.e. relief from the worldly bindings or the cycle of birth and death.

In Taittirīyopaniṣat (2-2) the following passage is there –

तस्माद्वा एतस्मादात्मन आकाशस्संभूतः , आकाशाद्वायुः , वायोरग्निः , अग्नेः पृथिवी , पृथिव्या ओषधयः , ओषधीभ्यो'न्नम् , अन्नात् पुरुषः !

In Chāndogya, a different order is said –

तत्तेजो'सृजत , तदैक्षत बहु स्यां प्रजायेय (6-2-3)

Here Bādarāyaṇa rules that Brahman is both Nimittakāraṇa and Upādānakāraṇa of the entire universe –

तदभिध्यानादेव तु तल्लिङ्गात् (2-3-13) अंतर्यामी , अधिदैवादिषु तद्धर्मव्यपदेशात् (1-2-18)

In fact, at the outset of Brahmasūtras itself, Bādarāyaṇa clearly states that the cause of Sṛṣṭi, Sthiti and Laya is Brahman only and Veda is the authority in this regard –

जन्माद्यस्य यतः (1-1-2) , शास्त्रयोनित्वात् (1-1-3)

As an answer to the question as to how to decide that Upaniṣads propose Brahman only, Bādarāyaṇa offers the following Sūtra –

तत्तु समन्वयात् (1-1-4)

Samanvaya of vedāntavākya would lead to Brahman. Six Tātparyalingas useful in Samanvaya are offered in Bṛhatsamhitā -

उपक्रमोपसंहारावभ्यासो'पूर्वता फलम् !

अर्थवादोपपत्ती च लिङ्गं तात्पर्यनिर्णये !!

Following these signs an entire Upaniṣad such as Chāndogya is taken as a Mahāvākya. Rather, sentences, that are pregnant with meaning such as 'tattvamasi' are styled 'Mahāvākya'.

Vedānta follows 'Satkāryavāda' and it is logical too. Rather we come across some sentences in Upaniṣads, which go against the theory –

असन्नेव स भवति , असद्ब्रह्मेति वेद चेत् , ... इदं सर्वमसृजत , .. सच्च त्यच्चाभवत् ...असद्वा इदमग्र आसीत् , ततो वै सदजायत (तैत्तिरीयोपनिषत्)

In such cases it is difficult to defend Satkāryavāda and the job is done by Vedānta – Brahman has got both the forms – sat and asat. Since it is illogical to argue that 'something' would emerge from 'nothing' or 'bhāva' from 'abhāva', one should accept Satkāryavāda.

Further the following Mantra from Muṇḍaka (3-1-11), Śvetāśvatara (4-6) and Kaṭha (3-1) Upaniṣads is interpreted as applicable to Jīvātmā and Paramātmā -

द्वा सुपर्णा सयुजा सखाया समानं वृक्षं परिषस्वजाते !

तयोरन्यः पिप्पलं स्वाद्वत्ति अनश्नन्नन्यो'भिचाकशीति !!

सांख्यदर्शनम्

Just like the other Darśana, Sāmkhya, propounded by Kapilamuni, also, had had its roots in Veda, viz. Śvetāśvataropaniṣat (4-5) –

अजामेकां लोहितशुक्लकृष्णां बह्वीः प्रजाः सृजमानां सरूपाः !

अजो ह्येको जुषमाणो'नुशेते जहात्येनां भुक्तभोगामजो'न्यः !!

A he-goat enjoys serving a she-goat, which has got red, white and black colors and produces many offsprings of even form while another he-goat leaves it behind after enjoyment.

Here, according to Sāmkhya - ajā is mūlaprakṛti and lohitaśuklakṛṣṇa are the Guṇas – sattva, rajas and tamas. The second 'aja' refers to puruṣa.

The Prakṛti, that is triguṇātmikā, is kartṛī, puruṣārtha is the casue of her behaviour, her duty is bhoga and apavarga of Puruṣa. On the other hand, Puruṣa is originally detached, but due to the

association with Prakṛti, looks to be influenced with the three Guṇas and bounden. Due to vivekakhyāti, the Puruṣa dissociates himself with all kinds of bindings and gets apavarga – this is the essence of Sāmkhyadarśanam.

Prakṛti is also called Pradhānam and Puruṣa is considered as Jīvātmā.

The term Sāmkhyā has got the two meanings - Jñānam and number. Since one gets the Jñānam out of this Darśanam it is called Sāmkhyadarśanam. On the other hand, since the number of Tattvas, i.e. 25, is important here in this Darśanam, it is called so.

Śvetāśvataropaniṣat (6-13) says that the very cause of the universe can be known thru Yoga and Sāmkhya –

तत्कारणं सांख्ययोगाधिगम्यं ज्ञात्वा देवं मुच्यते सर्वपापैः !

Sāmkhyas advocate that the Prakṛti or Pradhānam is a conglomeration of three Guṇas, viz. Sattva, Rajas and Tamas and explain the nature of each of them – sattvam laghu etc. This is nothing but decoding the Vedic Mantras in Śvetāśvataropaniṣad –

तं ध्यानयोगानुगता अपश्यन्

देवात्मशक्तिं स्वगुणैर्निगूढां !(1-3)

तमेकनेमिं त्रिवृतं षोडशांतं

शतार्धारं विंशतिप्रत्यराभिः !(1-4)

सर्वमेतद्विश्वमधितिष्ठत्येको

गुणांश्च सर्वान्विनियोजयेद्यः !(5-5)

The words - svagunaiḥ, trivṛtam and guṇāmśca – in the above three Mantras, respectively, refers to Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, according to Śāmkarabhāṣyam. The first leg of the first verse in Sāmkhyakārikā of Íśvarakṛṣṇa, i.e.

दुःखत्रयाभिघाताज् जिज्ञासा तदपघातके हेतौ !

Which denotes the three kinds of दुःख , i.e. आधिःत्मकम् , आधिभौतिकम् and आधिदैविकम् ,

was a decoded message of ओं शान्तिः शान्तिः शान्तिः that is seen at the beginning and at the end

of every Upanisat and at the end of every Vedic chapter .

This aspect is clearly mentioned by Śamkaracarya .

The rest of the things described by in Sāmkhya, like buddhi, mahān, pañcabhūtāni, indriyāṇi, pramāṇāni etc. also had had their origin in Vedas.

असंगोह्यं पुरुषः (Br4-3-16) etc. are also explained by Sāmkhya .

योगदर्शनम्

In Vedic literature there are thousands of passages related to Yoga –

श्रोतव्यो मन्तव्यो निदिध्यासितव्यः (बृह उप 2-4-5)

त्रिरुन्नतं स्थाप्यसमं शरीरं

हृदीन्द्रियाणि मनसा संनिवेश्य 1

ब्रह्मोडुपेन प्रतरेत विद्वान्

स्रोतांसि सर्वाणि भयावहानि 11 (श्वेताश्वतर (2-8)

पृथिव्यसेजो'निलखे स्मुत्थिते

पञ्चात्मके योगगुणे प्रवृत्ते !

न तस्य रोगो न जरा न मृत्युः

प्राप्तस्य योगाग्निमयं शरीरम् !! (2-12)

लघुत्वमारोग्यमलोलुपत्वं

वर्णप्रसादं स्वरसौष्ठवं च

गन्धः शुभो मूत्रपुरीषमल्पं

योगप्रवृत्तिं प्रथमां वदन्ति !! (2-13)

The term Yoga, that occurs frequently in Vedas is explained by Patañjali in Yogānuśāsanam –

योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोधः (1-1)

‘Regulating the mind’ – is called Yoga. It can be achieved thru the combination of अभ्यास and

वैराग्य.-

अभ्यास्वैराग्याभ्यां तन्निरोधः (1-12)

Just like in Cikitsāsāstra, there are eight Aṅgas in Yogadarśanam also –

यमनियमासनप्राणायामप्रत्याहारधारणाध्यानसमाधयो’ष्टाङ्गानि (2-29)

According to the tradition, Patañjali authored three treatises, viz. Mahābhāṣyam, Carakasūtram and Yogānuśāsanam, in order to obviate three kinds of defects / doṣas related to Vāk, Kāya and Manas, that are associated with human beings. It may be noted that although Yogānuśāsanam is meant to cleanse the mind, as is evident today, it is useful in prevention and cure of many physical disorders.

It was due to sheer Yogaśakti, that Pāṇini, Patañjali, Suśruta etc. could do marvelous things.

Vyāsa, a commentator, who authored Bhāṣyam in Yogasūtras of Patañjali draws analogy between Cikitsāsāstram and Yogaśāstram in terms of number of aspects to be dealt with –

यथा चिकित्साशास्त्रं चतुर्व्यूहं - रोगो रोगहेतुः आरोग्यं भैषज्यमिति एवमिदमपि शास्त्रं चतुर्व्यूहमेव !

तद्यथा - संसारः संसारहेतुः मोक्षः मोक्षोपाय इति !

It may be interesting to note that Yoga is not a merely spiritualistic branch of ancient Indian knowledge. Rather there are devices embedded within that are very useful in digging into various mundane scientific matters such as – to attain the capacity to perceive things that are beyond the senses and time, to count / study stars in the sky, to understand the languages of different birds and animals etc.. Patañjali, for example, compiles a Sūtra that shows the path to understand the languages of birds and animals –

शब्दार्थप्रत्ययानाम् इतरेतराध्यासात् संकरः तत्प्रविभागसंयमात् सर्वभूतरुतज्ञानम् (3-17)

While Sāmkhya and Yoga hold that the Universe is built on Tanmatras, Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika believe in Paramanus as the base of. universe .

न्यायवैशेषिकदर्शने

In Vedic literature, we come across certain passages like this –

तस्माद्वा एतस्मादात्मन आकाशस्संभूतः , आकाशाद्वायुः , वायोरग्निः , अग्नेः पृथिवी , पृथिव्या ओषधयः
, ओषधीभ्यो'न्नम् (तैत्तिरीयोपनिषत्)

यदेव विद्यया करोति (चान्दोग्योपनिषत्)

Both Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika flowered from such concepts. Vaiśeṣika is considered to be older than Nyāya. Both the Darśanas are different from the rest - Sāṃkhya and Yoga discuss mind and related matters (mānasika) while both Mīmāṃsas deal with things that are ādhyātmika. On the other hand, Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika aim at sthūlavīśva or the physical matters.

Kaṇāda, the author of Vaiśeṣikasūtras, which run into ten chapters, divides the Padārthas into seven (including Abhāva) and further rules that there are only nine Dravyas –

पृथिव्यापस्तेजो वायुराकाशं कलो दिगात्मा मन इति द्रव्याणि (1-5)

Kaṇādas believe that there is a thing called 'aṇu' / 'paramāṇu' which is eternal, partless and is the cause of a 'thing' and this applies even to Mahābhūtas –

सदकारणवन्नित्यम्(4-1-1) , तस्य कार्यं लिंगम् (4-1-2) , कारणबहुत्वात् कारणमहत्त्वात्
प्रचयविशेषाच्च महत् (7-1-9)

The above Sūtras explain Upaniṣadic sentences like –

अणोरणीयान् महतो महीयान् (तैत्तिरीयोपनिषत्)

Vaiśeṣikas opine that Kāla is also a Dravya and it is the cause of non-eternal things only. Earlier, equal, slow movement, fast movement etc. are Guṇas of Kāla. Since these are all pervading Kāla is also all-pervading –

अपरस्मिन्नपं युगपत्चिरं क्षिप्रमिति काललिंगानि (2-2-6) , द्रव्यत्वन्नित्यत्वे वायुब्ना व्याख्याते (2-2-7)
, कारणे कलः (7-1-25)

Dik is also considered as a Dravya by Kaṇāda and commented that although it is one, due to Sun's association and the time, i.e. Bhūta, Bhaviṣyat and Vartamāna, the names of directions

have emerged –

इत इदमिति यतस्तद्विषयं लिंगम् (2-2-10) , द्रव्यत्वनित्यत्वे वायुना व्याख्याते (2-2-11) , तत्त्वं भावेन (2-2-12) , आदित्यसंयोगात् भूतपूर्वाभविष्यतो भूताच्च प्राची (2-2-14)

Ātmā is there according to Vaiśeṣikas – the sense organs and the things are known, then there should be something that manages the process and that is Ātmā -

इन्द्रियार्थप्रसिधिरिन्द्रियार्थेभ्यो'र्थान्तरस्य हेतुः (3-1-2)

So far as the Manas is concerned, Kaṇāda rules that, when the ātmā and indriyas come into contact with things, there will be bhāva and abhāva of jñānam and this is a sign of Manas –

आत्मेन्द्रियार्थसन्निकर्षे ज्ञानस्य भावो'भावश्च मनसो लिंगम् (3-2-1), तदाभावादणु मनः(7-1-23) –

since 'sarvavyāpakatva' is not there, Manas is of the size of an atom

An important aspect that was explained by Kaṇāda is 'gurutva' (gravity). Things thrown fall on earth due to 'gurutva', which is a Guṇa –

गुरुत्वप्रयत्नसंयोगानाम् उत्क्षेपणम् (1-1-29) , संयोगाभावे गुरुत्वात् पतनम् (5-1-7) , संस्काराभावे

गुरुत्वात् पतनम् (5-1-18) , अपां संयोगाभावे गुरुत्वात् पतनम् (5-2-3)

The term वाकोवाक्यम् (चान्दोग्य7-1-2) is commented by Śamkarācārya as तर्कशास्त्रम् !

In Taittirīyāranyaka the following Mantras are seen –

स्मृतिः प्रत्यक्षमैतिह्यम् , अनुमानश्चतुष्टयम् , एतैरादित्यमण्डलम् , सर्वैरेव विधास्यते (तैत्तिरीयारण्यकम् - अरुणम्)

Nyāyadarśanam, also meant for पदार्थतत्त्वनिर्णय , chiefly discusses the Pramāṇas (means of knowledge) –

प्रमाणैरर्थपरीक्षणम् न्यायः (न्यायभाष्यम् (1-1-3) , प्रत्यक्षानुमानोपमानशब्दाः प्रमाणानि (1-1-3) ,

प्रतिज्ञाहेतूदाहरणोपनयनिगमनानि अवयवाः (1-1-32)

Pratyakṣa, Anumāna, Upamāna and Śabda – are accepted as Pramāṇas by Nyāya. These Pramāṇas are useful to know a thing, that was not known earlier, authoritatively. Among the four, Anumāna is considered to be very important and deeply analyzed. Here the

Parārthānumānamahāvākya consists of five avāntaravākya, viz. Pratijñā etc.

Vaiśeṣikas accept first two Pramāṇas only.

The above Pramāṇas are taken as useful instruments in diagnosis and prognosis of diseases, by ĀyurVeda, viz. Caraka and Suśruta.

The three types of arguments, viz. Vāda, Jalpa and Vitaṇḍā, are useful in making and analyzing logical statements.

The Jāti – Vyakti concept related to Padārtha is useful in deciding the meaning of a sentence and discourse –

जात्याकृतिव्यक्तयस्तु पदार्थः (2-2-67)

By and large we may conclude that the six Darśanas are like six keys to the Vedic literature and hence they are essential for any student, who wants to do serious research in decoding Vedas.

List of Books:

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5. Pātañjalayogasūtrāni, Govt. Press, Bombay, 1917.
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