

## Vedanta

(By Late Prof. Krishnaswamy Rao Boray)

The Vedas, the scripture of the Hindus are regarded as revealed. They have been handed over by mouth from one generation to another in precisely the same manner as regards the sequence of words and their intonations. Therefore some of the schools of Indian philosophy regard them as ‘*apaurusheya*’ not composed by any author human or divine.

### The Vedas

The sameness of the sequence and of the words is regarded as natural and uncomposed. Since defect in words are caused only by human agency, a body of words not due to any agency human or divine must be necessarily defectless and therefore authoritative.

The Vedas have been transmitted from teacher to pupil from time immemorial as a body of words uncomposed by any author up to the present day.

The Indian systems of philosophy which accept the authority of the Vedas are considered *astika* (orthodox) schools viz, *Sankhya-Yoga*, *Nyaya Vaisesika*, *Purva Mimamsa* and *Uttara Mimamsa*.

### Astika Schools

Among them the *Nyaya Vaisesika* School ascribes the authority of the Vedas to *Isvara* whose existence is sought to be established by an inference such as - The world being an effect like a pot has a creator.

Such a creator must be all-knowing (*Sarvagna*) and such an all-knowing Being (*Isvara*) is the author of the Vedas.

Although the Vedas are authoritative and eternal, the meanings of Vedic passages have to be derived from a process of rationalization – *Mimamsa* as it is called. The Vedic passages might at first appear to be mutually contradictory and to maintain their validity, the passages have to be examined, scrutinized and interpreted according to acceptable canons of interpretation.

### Necessity for Mimamsa

The Vedas are generally regarded as comprising of Brahmanas, Mantras and Upanishads. The apparent contrast between the Brahmanas and Mantras on one side and the Upanishads on the other, the seeming ambiguity in the Upanishads themselves led to attempts to systematize the teachings of the Vedas, since the orthodox view was that the Vedas inculcate a central non contradicted meaning which has to be derived from the process of *Mimamsa*.

Among such attempts, the *Purva Mimamsa* of Jaimini and the *Uttara Mimamsa* of Badarayana stand foremost. The *Mimamsa Shastra* is regarded as consisting of three parts by different authors, viz. *Brahma Mimamsa*, *Daivi Mimamsa* and *Karma Mimamsa* by Badarayana, Sesa & Paila jointly and Jaimini respectively, the latter being the disciple of Badarayana.

The *Purva Mimamsa* purports to enunciate principles of interpretation for procedures and modes of performing sacrifices. The *Purva Mimamsa* is distinguished by its adherence to

Vedas as infallible authority. It attaches greater importance to Brahmanas dealing with Karma and sacrifices than to Mantras which are glorification of Devas.

**Purva  
Mimamsa**

It places highest value on Karma and speaks of the self as only the agent in the performance of Karmas or rites. According to it, Karma is the sole theme of the Vedas and, the Upanishads which are part of the Vedas cannot be taken to point to Brahmanas or any other principle as the highest entity where realization constitutes the end aim of man.

Occupying itself mostly with the earlier part of the Vedas, viz. the Brahmanas, this Mimamsa is hence called Purva Mimamsa. There are two schools of thought in the Purva Mimamsa School, viz, Kumarila Bhatta School and Prabhakara School.

Badarayana or Vedavyasa is regarded as the author of the *Uttara Mimamsa* in which greater emphasis is placed on the latter part of the Vedas, viz. Upanishads. Badarayana is regarded as a great seer by some schools and as Parabrahman Himself by Sri Madhwacharya. Madhwacharya justifies his stand on the basis of a sutra, viz. *Gati Samanyat* in the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter (Adhayaya), 1<sup>st</sup> quadrant (Pada) of the Brahmasutras.

**Uttara  
Mimamsa**

This sutra is in answer to a question viz., if we determine the import of the Vedas by examination of the extant Vedic passages, may it not be in conflict with Vedic passages not extant now since it is said that the Vedas are infinite in extent – *Ananta Vai Vedaha*. To this question, the answer is that the import of one set of Vedic passages as determined by Mimamsa is common, i.e., non-contradictory with respect to all sets of Vedic passages however infinite they are.

Now Madhwacharya says how can the author of the Brahmasutras include such a sutra unless He knows the infinite Vedas, i.e., unless He is an All-Knowing Being or Parabrahman — *Ko Nama Gatisamanyam anantagama Sampadaha, Gnanasuryamrutay brooyat tamekam Badarayanam* - as he says in his magnificent work *Anuvyakhyana* (3<sup>rd</sup> Chapter, 3<sup>rd</sup> Quadrant).

The Vedanta systems are based on the Brahma Sutras. The peculiar nature of the Sutras is responsible for the emergence of different systems of Vedanta. The sutras are very concise and pithy. Besides, the work is not divided by the author into chapters and subdivisions.

**Different  
Schools of  
Vedanta**

Different commentators divide the work into different subdivisions called Adhikaranas, and the total number of sutras itself is not quite certain. According to Shankara, there are 192 Adhikaranas and 555 sutras, according to Ramanuja there are 156 Adhikaranas and 545 sutras, while according to Madhwacharya, the number of Adhikaranas is 223 and of sutras 564.

Again some sutras are regarded as Purvapaksha view (objection raised to expound truth) and others as Siddantha (Doctrine), which sutras belong to which group is anybody's guess. Madhwacharya, however, regards all the sutras as Siddantha sutras; in fact each sutra has the status of a sastra itself. The extreme brevity and the laconic nature of the sutras render them liable to different interpretations. The earliest commentaries on the

Brahma sutras are called *Vrittis*, none of which are extant now (*Vrittis* are short explanations of the sutras, while *Bhashyas* are more elaborate explanations). Shankara and Ramanuja, in their commentaries on Brahmasutras have referred to the *Vrittis* of Bodhayana etc. Madhwacharya makes no reference at all to the early *Vrittis* or their authors. There are said to be more than 21 commentaries (*Bhashyas*) on the Brahmasutras, and most of them are not extant now. Among the extant ones, the most prominent are the commentaries of Shankara, Ramanuja and Madhwa. While Shankara and Ramanuja take the Brahmasutras as referring to the Upanishads only, Madhwa takes it as referring to whole Vedic lore, including the Puranas and allied literature. The Brahmasutras, according to Madhwacharya purport to interpret and determine the import of the whole gamut of the sacred Vedic lore. However divergent the Vedanta schools may be in their views, they are all agreed that Brahmasutras deal with the following aspects of Vedantic thought, viz. (1) Doctrine of Karma; (2) Doctrine of soul and supreme; (3) Transmigration; (4) Creation of the world; (5) Moksha or final emancipation. But there are, however, fundamental differences as to the significance of these aspects as conceived in the different systems of Vedanta.