

# Veda Vidyā

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Our tradition is based on the eternal teachings of the spiritual and scriptural literature called the *Vedas*, which are considered *apauruṣeya* – of non-human origin and *anādi* – without beginning. *Vedas* are also called *śruti* or *śruti granthas*. The spiritual knowledge contained in the compendium of the Vedas, known as the *Veda Vidyā*, is categorized into two parts – *Parā Vidyā* and *Aparā Vidyā*.

*Parā Vidyā* is also known as *Ātma Vidyā*, *Brahma Vidyā* or *Mokṣa Vidyā*, and is considered as the epitome of human learning. It bestows upon a qualified seeker, the ultimate human achievements of unbound freedom and eternal happiness.

This *Parā Vidyā* is enshrined in the Vedas, in the teachings of special sections called the *Upaniṣads*. *Parā Vidyā* is also known as *Jñāna Kāṇḍa* (knowledge section). It places emphasis on *Jñāna sādhana* or vedantic teaching and learning. A seeker who attained the maturity to imbibe and experience this profound knowledge takes this course under the guidance of a competent Acharya to attain the result.

The result of this *Jñāna sādhana* is everlasting peace, liberty and happiness, which is also called *Mokṣa*.

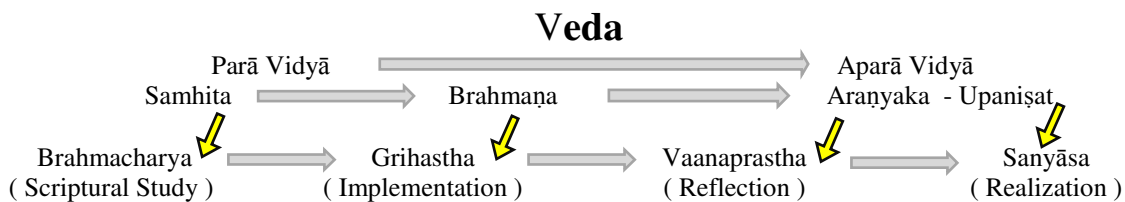
The rest of the Vedic knowledge is considered as *Aparā Vidyā*, the preparatory knowledge that enables and empowers a

beginner seeker in a progressive, step-by-step fashion, and equips him with the qualities of intense discipline, dispassion, discrimination and desire for liberation that propel him into the realm of *Parā Vidyā* / *Jnana Sadhana* with the grace of Guru's teachings.

The *Aparā Vidyā*, also known as *Karma Kāṇḍa* and *Upāsanā Kāṇḍa*, is embedded in the portions of the Vedas called the *Samhitas*, *Brahmaṇās* and *Aranyakas*. These sections contain the instructions and *mantras* for various rituals, austerities, *yajñas*, *samskaras* and activities geared toward refining the qualities of a seeker.

Based on this concept, our *ṛṣis* created a methodical and systematic structure of scriptural learning, rules of conduct, ways of action, methods of worship and modes of evolution, eventually aimed at making all human beings qualified for *mokṣa*, the ultimate goal of human life.

However, they created this common system keeping in mind the differences in tendencies and pace of evolution between individuals and between societies. This systematic structure is called the *Varna-Āshrama Dharma*. The following diagram shows an example of how, the seeker progresses gradually from initial scriptural study to final realization as one passes through the various stages of *āshrama dharma* (From *brahmacharya* to *sannyasa*)



In addition, the *ṛṣis* also authored many auxiliary and supporting texts to *śruti*, called the *Smṛiti granthas*. Their aim is to aid the understanding and implementation of the Vedic truths based on the above structural

approach. There are innumerable *Smṛiti granthas* that are categorized variously. The following table gives a glimpse of both the *Śruti* and *Smṛiti* literature as well as their broad categorization:

<b>Vedangas Vedas</b>	Rig	Yajur ( Shukla, Krishna)	Saama	Atharva		
	Samhita		Braahmana	Aaranyaka / Upanishat		
<b>Veda Upangas</b>	Siksha e.g: Narada	Vyakarana e.g: Panini	Chandas e.g: Pingala	Nirukta e.g: Yaska	Jyotisha e.g: Bhaskara	Kalpa { See Sutras }
	Purva Mimamsa Jaimini	Nyaya/Tarka Goutama Visheshika Kanada	Puranas 18 Main 18 Sub Vyasa	Dharma Shastram		
				Smritis	Sutras	
	Uttara Mimamsa (Brahmasutras) Vyasa	Sankhya Kapila Yoga Patanjali	Itihasas ( 2 ) Ramayana Valmiki Mahabharata (Bhagavadgita) Vyasa	Manu Parashara Goutama Yajnavalkya etc.	Shrouta Sutras	
Grihya Sutras						
				Dharma Sutras		
				Shulba Sutras		
<b>Upa Vedas</b>	Aayurveda Charaka, Sushruta		Dhanurveda Vishvamitra etc.		Gaandharva Veda ( Fine arts ) Bharata, Dandi	Artha Shaastra Koutilya Sthaapatya Veda
	<b>Bhashyas</b>	Bhashyas	Vartikas	Tikas	Tatparyas	Prakaranas
Commentaries Adi- Shankaracharya Ramanujacharya Madhvacharya etc.		Sub- Commentaries	Sub-sub- Commentaries	Sub-sub-sub- Commentaries	Independent explanatory texts ( e.g Viveka Chudamani, Tattva Bodha, Vedanta Sara)	
<b>Other Vidyas</b>	Tantra / Agama		KaLa		Regional Literature	
	Vaishnava, Shaiva		64 Art forms		e.g : Divya Prabandham Bhajans, Stotras, Shatakas	
	Soura, Shakteya		Kaavyas		Periya Puranam	
	Ganapatya		Commentaries on Kaavyas		Kritis / Kirtanas	

Our tradition has been blessed with such an immense and profound system of knowledge passed on from the Lord Himself, and that which has been nurtured, expanded and elaborated by many illustrious *Acharyās*, *mahātmās*, scholars, and seekers through generations for the welfare of all humanity.

As recipients and inheritors of this glorious legacy, it is our foremost duty to sustain this wealth and pass it on meticulously to the future generations by learning, following, and teaching this knowledge and supporting the practitioners of this *Vidyā* to the best of our capacity.

**Dedication:** With Profound namaskarams at the lotus feet of Their Holinesses Śrī Śrī Bhārati Tīrtha Mahā Sannidhānam, Śrī Śrī Vidhusekhara Bhārati Sannidhānam and my Guru Dharmātmā Dr. Yegnasubramanian.

**References:** “Vedas” by Śrī Śrī Chandrasekharendra Saraswatī Mahaswamigal, Lectures of Sri Paramārthānanda Saraswatī, “Nomenclature of the Vedas” by Swāminī Ātmaprajnānanda Saraswatī, Lectures of Dharmātmā Dr. Yegnasubramanian.