

Vedic Literature UPSC Notes

Hinduism's ancient and sacred texts were written in Sanskrit of the initial era; traditionally thought to include the Samhitas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, and Upanishads.

The Vedas represent India's rich cultural and religious traditions, as a whole. They have established the cultural exuberance of our country because of their rich language, comprehension, and insight. The Vedic literature offers us detailed information about ancient India's socio-cultural origins, way of life, rituals and ceremonies, societal rules, and ancient Indian learnings.

Types of Vedic Literature

There are two main types of Vedic literature, namely, Shruti literature and Smriti literature. They are the oldest Hindu writings as well as the earliest Sanskrit literature. The Vedas are said to have been passed down from generation to generation through oral transmission. These are discussed in detail, in the upcoming section:

Shruti Vedic Literature

The Shruti literature is the Vedic literature that includes writings that are fundamental to Hinduism. Also, it is noted that these manuscripts are well-renowned for their findings and indisputable truths. All of the Aranyakas, Vedas, Upanishads, and Brahmanas are considered classic Shruti literature.

Smriti Vedic Literature

Smriti literature, as opposed to Shruti literature, is literature written post the Vedic period. Smriti literature refers to remembered literature. The Puranas, Upangas, Tantras, Upveda, and Itihasa are examples of classic Smriti literature.

The Vedic Texts

The Vedic literature comprises Samhitas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, and Upanishads. The Vedic literature or texts can be categorised as, Rig veda, Sama veda, Yajur veda and Atharva veda. These are discussed in detail in the upcoming section:

Rig Veda

The Rig Veda, also recognised as the earliest testament of civilization, is among the world's oldest religious literature.

- The Rig Veda is one of the ancient Vedic literature that was recorded around 1700 BC.
- The Rig Veda contains 1028 hymns.
- Suktas is another name given to these hymns.

- The Rig Veda is an accumulation of ten books, each of which is referred to as a Mandala.
- The Rig Veda contains a sum total of 10,600 verses, which are divided into ten booklets.
- The Rig Veda isn't a historical reference, but rather a collection of hymns to be chanted during ritual practices.
- Mandalas, from second to seventh, are the shortest and the oldest books, respectively.

Sama Veda

One other example of an early Vedic text is the Sama Veda. The Sama Veda, which had 1549 verses, was written around 1200 to 800 BCE.

- Sama Veda has a strong influence on classical Indian music and our ancient dance forms.
- As a result, the Sama Veda is regarded as a repository of melodic chants.
- The Sama Veda contains two Upanishads, Kena Upanishad and the Chandogya Upanishad.
- Whilst Sama Veda texts being longer than the Rig Veda, on the contrary the verses are shorter.
- The Sama Veda is split into two sections. Part 1 contains 'Gana' melodies, whereas Part 2 contains three 'Archika' verse booklets.

Yajur Veda

Between 1100 BCE and 800 BCE, the Yajur Veda was written. Yajur Veda literally means "Book of Worship Knowledge."

- Yajur Veda is a collection of mantras and chants used by priests during ritual practices.
- It is a work of older Vedic literature.
- There are 2 kinds of Yajur Veda: Shukla Yajur Veda, Krishna Yajur Veda.
- The Krishna Yajur Veda verses aren't really planned, while the Shukla Yajur Veda verses do seem to be.
- Maitri, Taittiriya, Brihadaranyaka, Isha, Katha, and the Shvetashvatara Upanishad comprise the Yajur Veda's youngest lining.

Atharva Veda

The Atharva Veda is a later Vedic text composed between 1000 BCE and 800 BCE. The book lists the routines of daily life. It also includes 20 books and 730 hymns. The quantity of hymns in the text of Atharva Veda is small, each one is exceptional. Atharva Veda contains three Upanishads: Mandukya, Mundaka, and Prashna.

Importance of Vedic Literature

Veda is a Sanskrit word that means "Knowledge." The literature developed over many hundreds of years and was passed down from generation to generation through word of mouth, also known as shruti. It has been demonstrated that modern discoveries, innovations, theories, and concepts are primarily based on Vedic knowledge. Many researchers have studied Vedic writings to gain in-depth knowledge of science, spirituality, psychology, and human behaviour. The ancient Gurukul system of education was revered throughout the world for its multi-dimensional, existence and scientific management outlook and approach, as well as the varied skills and knowledge imbibed from early life.

Development of leadership capabilities, management concepts and principles, cooperation, problem-solving methodologies, comprehending mind and its depth, refined intellect and memory, behaviour management, spiritual and scientific understanding of the soul, development and research and also environmental management, these were all component of our old Gurukul system, in addition to science, social science, mathematics, and grammar.

Facts About Vedangs

The Vedanga are the six ancient Hindu auxiliary disciplines that are connected to the process of studying the Vedas. They, like the appendages of the body, perform many different assisting and amplifying operations in the research, restoration, and protection of the Vedas and traditions related to them.

Vedangas have existed since the classical era. The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad does include them as a portion of the Brahmanas layer of Vedic literature. Several ancillary areas of research emerged with the collection of the Vedas in the Iron Age of India. It is unknown when the collection of the six Vedangas was first constructed.

The Vedangas most likely appeared near the end of the Vedic period, approximately close to the mid of the first millennium BCE. Yaska's 'Nighantu', is an early text in the genre written somewhere near the 5th century BCE. Since the language of the ancient Vedic manuscripts had become too outdated for the people at the time, and numerous supplementary sections of Vedic research arose.

The names of the six Vedangas are Chhanda, Siksha, Nirukta, Vyakarana, Jyotisha and Kalpa.

VEDANGA	RELATED LIMB
Chhanda	Legs
Siksha	Nose
Nirukta	Ears
Vyakarana	Face
Jyotisha	Eyes
Kalpa	Hands

