

History of Hindu Dharma

Lecture 3*

Lecture 3 Title: The Vedic Period

- *All 12 lectures are listed in Appendix*

Vedic Period

Topics:

1. Guru-Sishya Parampara
 - Dr. C.S. Pitchumoni
2. Rishis of Vedic Period
 - Kishin Kripalani
3. The Vedas
 - Satish Talekar

Rishis Classified

- *Sakshath-krutha-Rishi*
 - the seer who has the direct intuitional perception
- *Shrutha-Rishi*
 - the one who heard it from the seers and remembered what he heard

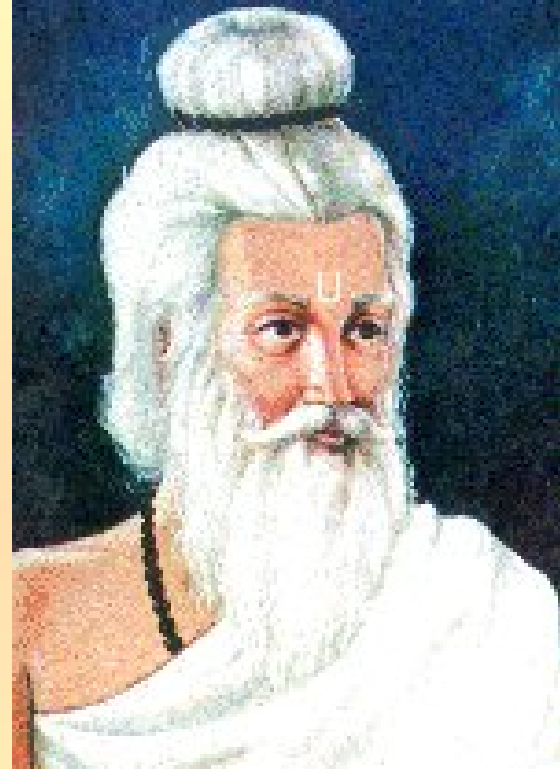
Rishis of Rig Veda

- Rig Veda mentions about four hundred Rishis
- About thirty of them are women

Portrayal of Rishis



Rishi Vasishtha



Rishi Yajnavalkya

Women Rishis (Rishika)

Women rishis of the Vedic period:

- Highly intellectual
- Spiritually advanced
- Mostly from rishi families

Famous Women Rishis

- Ghosha Kakshivati
- Dakshina Prajapathya
- Vishvavara Atreyi,
- Godha,
- Apala
- Maitreyi
- Yami Vivasvathi
- Lopamudra
- Romasha Svanya,
- Aditi Dakshayani,
- Ratri Bharadwaja
- Vasukra Pathni
- Surya Savitri
- Indrani
- Sarma Devasuni
- Urvashi
- Shashwati
- Angirasi
- Sri Laksha
- Gargi

Saptarishi

- Seven rishis
- Regarded as patriarchs of the Vedic religion

Saptarishis (seven famous rishis)

Multiple lists exist*

Sandyavandanam List

- Atri
- Bhrigu
- Kutsa
- Vasishtha
- Gautama
- Kashyapa
- Angirasa

Others among Sapta Rishis

- Bharadvāja
- Jamadagni
- Gotama
- Viśvāmitra
- Agastya
- Pulaha
- Pulastya
- Marichi

* Reason: Alternating 7 rishis govern the functioning of the Cosmos at a given time

Rishis of Six Darshana's

- Gautama Nyaya ~300 bce
- Kanada Vaisheshika ~300 bce
- Kapila Sankhya ~500 bce
- Patanjali Yoga ~200 bce
- Jaimini Mimamsa ~200 bce
- Badarayana Vedanta ~400 bce

Rishi Yajnavalkya

- Lived in Mithila in King Janaka's time
- Son of rishi Devaraata
- Disciple of Vaishampayana (also his uncle)
- Recognized for writing:
 - Shatapatha Brahmana
 - Shukla Yajurveda
 - Brhadaranyaka Upanishad
 - The doctrine of “neti neti” (“neither this nor that”)
 - Famous shloka: “Asato ma sad gamaya---”

Rishi Yajnavalkya

A Legend

Getting Shukla Yajur Veda from Surya Devata

- The angry teacher:"
"O proud one, you are very conceited. You get away from me. Enough of you who is disposed to despise wise Brahmins. Give back to me immediately whatever you have learnt from me".
- Yajnavalkya follows the order and vomits out the knowledge

Rishi Yajnavalkya Legend cont'd

- He propitiates Surya Devata
 - Sun-God assumes the form of a horse
 - Teaches previously unknown Vedic knowledge
 - Known as Shukla Yajur Veda
 - Also known as Vajasaneya Yajur Veda

Evolved rapidly by Sun in the form of horse

Rishi Yajnavalkya Janaka's Contest

- Contest: Who is the greatest Brahmanishta?
- Prize: 1000 cows decked with gold
- Janaka: "Whosoever is the best Brahmana amongst you may drive these cows home"
- Amidst the ensuing silence, Yajnavalkya gets up and tells his disciple: "Saasravas, drive the cows home"
- Other contestants: "How dare he?"
- A great debate ensues and Yajnavalkya defeats all other contestants

Rishi Maitreyi

A Vedic Philosopher

- Second wife of Yajnavalkya
the first being Katyayani.
- Well-versed in Vedas : *A brahmavadini*
one who speaks like God
- About ten hymns in Rig Veda are accredited
to Maitrey
- Contributed to flowering of her husband's
spiritual thoughts

Rishi Maitreyi

According to a legend:

- Maitreyi really did not want to marry
- Wanted to live with Yajnavalkya as his disciple and a spiritual companion
- With Katayayani's consent, she became Yajnavalkya's companion



When Yajnavalkya distributes his wealth among his two wives and is ready to take sanyasa

Maitreyi: "Can I be come immortal through wealth?"

Yajnavalkya: "No! You would only become one among the many who are well-to-do on earth."

Maitreyi: "Then teach me what you consider the best!"

A Farewell !

- Then Yajnavalkya described to her the greatness of the Absolute Self, and immortality

The dialog is the central theme of Brhadaranyaka Upanishad

- “Maitreyi, I have told you everything, I am now departing from this place”

Yajnavalkya's Sanyasa

Vidvat Sannyasa:

Renunciation after having already known everything

versus

Vividisha Sannyasa

Renunciation to pursue knowledge

Rishi Gargi

- Gargi Vachaknavi was a well known rishi (brahmavadini) and a formidable debater
- Born in the family of Garga ~ 800 BCE
- Daughter of Rishi Vachaknu
- Invitee to world's first conference on philosophy convened by King Janaka

Rishi Gargi

- Challenged Yajnavalkya to a public debate:
 - *"The layer that is above the sky and below the earth, which is described as being situated between the earth and the sky and which is indicated as the symbol of the past, present and future, where is that situated?"*
- Yajnavalkya satisfies all her answers

Rishi Lopamudra

- A great rishika in her own right
- Wife of Rishi Agastya
- A “creation” of Agastya
- Given as daughter to the King of Vadarbha
- Brought up as a princess
- At a marriagable age, Agastya asks her hand in marriage and Lopamudra consents
- Faithfully served husband for a long time of austerity

Rishi Lopamudra

- Grew tired of his austere practices
- Wrote a short hymn pleading for his attention and love.
- Agastya realized his duties towards his wife
- Performed both his domestic and ascetic life with equal zeal
- Blessed with a son who became a great poet.

List of Lectures

Appendix

List of 12 Lectures-Segment 1

History of Hindu Religion

1. Ancient Civilization
2. Origin of Aryans
3. Vedic Period
4. Vedas (Content)

List of 12 Lectures-Segment 1

History of Hindu Religion

5. Period of Epics and Puranas
6. Buddhism and Jainism
7. Shankara and his Vedantic teachings
8. Ramanuja, Madhva, and their teachings

List of 12 Lectures-Segment 1

History of Hindu Religion

9. Bhakti Movement
10. Saints of India
15-16th Century
11. Influential religious leaders
17-18th Century
12. Contemporary religious leaders
19th C to present