

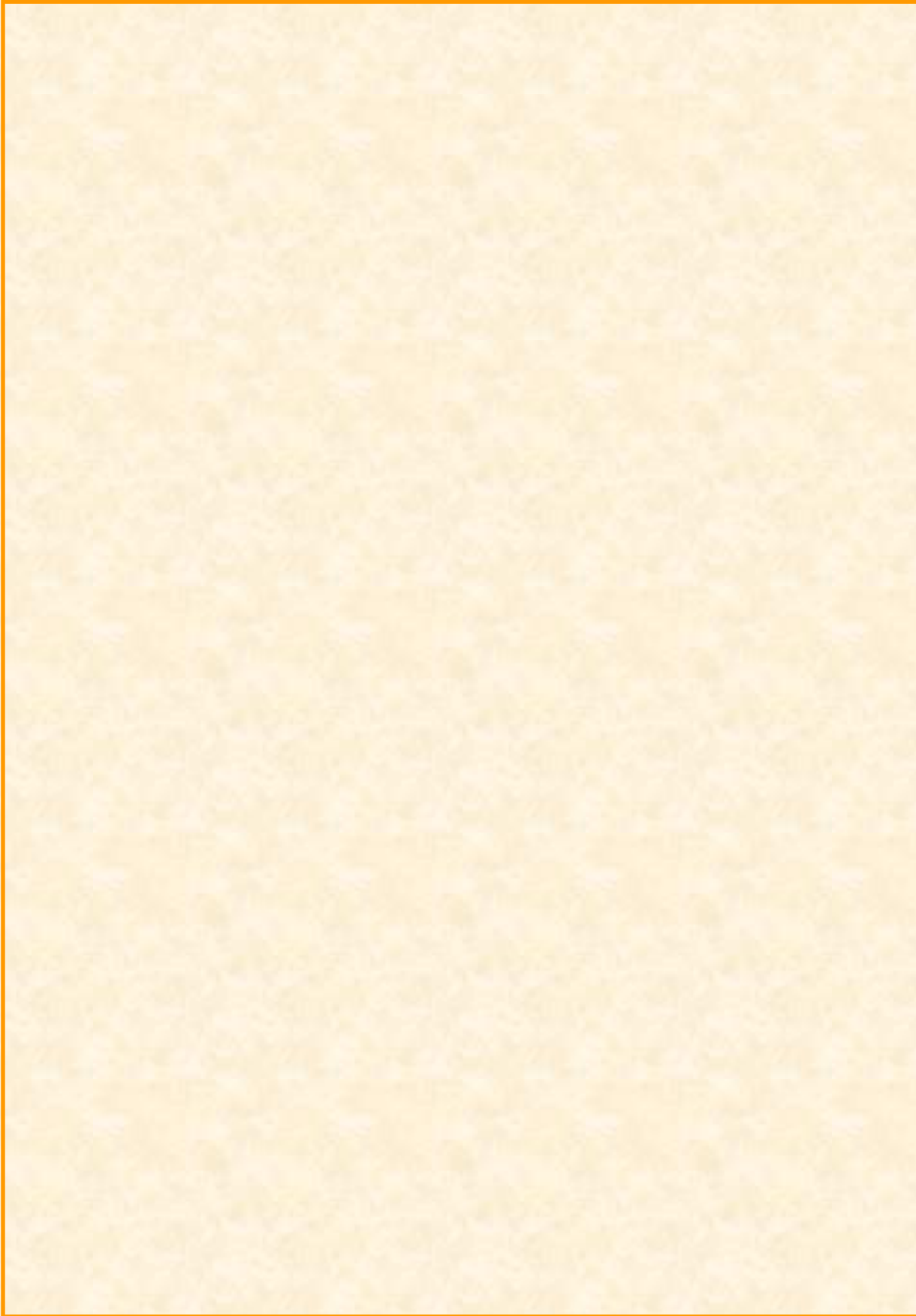
# VEDAMS & UPANISHADS



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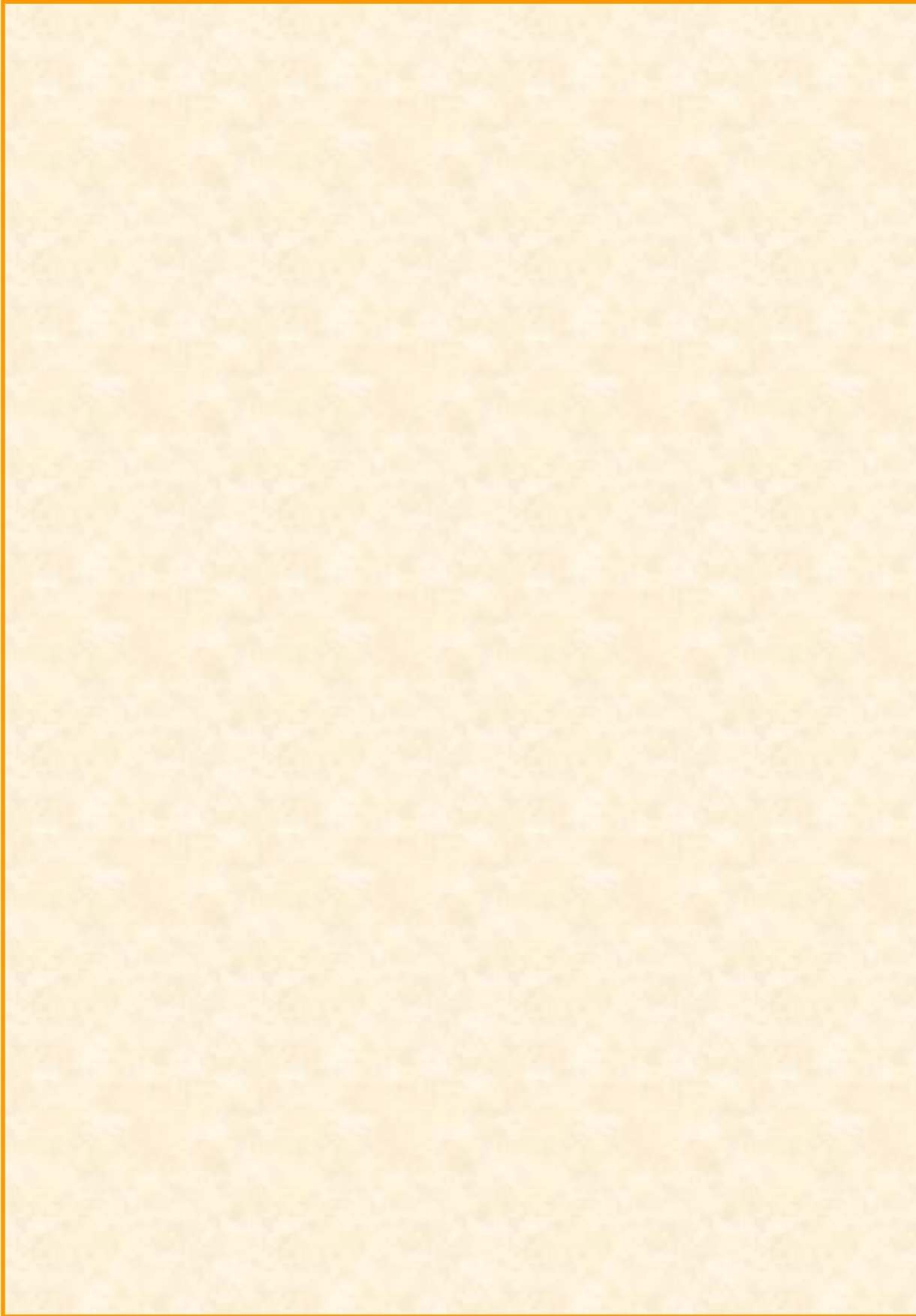
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## VEDAMS & UPANISHADS

### The two kinds of Knowledge: Para and Aparavidhyas

The great tradition of the transmission of knowledge thru Acharya Mukham is recorded in Mundaka Upanishad as a conversation between Brahma, the creator and his eldest son, Atharva about the knowledge of BRAHMAN, the corner stone of ALL knowledge. Atharva taught what he had learned from his father to Angira, who in turn taught it to Satyavaaha belonging to the clan of Bharadvaja. Satyavaaha passed that supreme knowledge in succession to Sage Angiras .

Saunaka, the celebrated grahastha approached Sage Angiras and asked humbly: "O Illustrious sage! kasminnu Bhagavo vig~nyathE sarvamidham vig~natham bhavathee ? (What is that by the knowing of which all this becomes known?)

Sage Angiras replied: "two kinds of knowledge needs to be known according to the knowers of Brahman. They are the higher knowledge (para) and the lower knowledge (apara)"

Sage Angiras explained further that the lower knowledge is the Rig Veda, the Yajur Veda, the Sama Veda and Atharva Veda, Siksha (phonetics), kalpa (rituals), vyakarNam (grammar), Niruktha (etymology), chandas (metre) and JyOthisham (astronomy); and the higher knowledge is that by which the imperishable Brahman is attained.

Sage Angiras said: "dhvE vidhyE vEdhithavyE ithi ha sma yadh BrahmavidhO vadanthi ParA chaivAparA cha". AparA are the four VedAs and their six angAs to understand the nature of DharmA and the ParA is the knowledge about the imperishable (akshaya) Brahman, which is the embodiment of DharmA. That omniscient, Omnipotent, all merciful Brahman has been defined as the source/ origin, sustenance and dissolution of this multifaceted world according to the





second Brahma sUthrA (*JanmAdhyasya yatha:*). That Brahman is cognized only through the scriptures, the sources of authoritative knowledge about Brahman (*Saasthra yOnithvAth:* Brahma-sUthram 1.3). The next Brahma sUtram goes on to point out that Brahman is the main purport of all Vedic and upanishadic texts (*tatthu samanvayAth*). Thus one cannot dismiss the VedAs quickly as *apara vidhyA* and jump on to *Para vidhyA*. Rigorous study of the VedAs reveals to us the approach to Brahman, the *para VidhyA*, the ultimate goal for us all.

### ***The four categories of Knowledge in the VedAs***

The four VedAs contain four important categories of knowledge related to DharmA:

1. Injunctions and Prohibitions
2. Valedictory (praise) and deprecatory passages
3. MantrAs and
4. Names

All these four are necessary to understand true DharmA or righteous duty from different angles. Thus an inquiry in to them through the study of the VedAs becomes an essential pre-requisite in one's journey towards the comprehension of Brahman (*para VidhyA*). The authority of the VedAs for us is supreme and final and hence a proper understanding of them with the help of a qualified AchAryA sets us on a safe footing to comprehend Brahman and achieve the *parama purushArtham* of Moksham. Our tradition is therefore called *Vaidhikam* or the one based on the authoritativeness of the VedAs.





## The four kinds of Veda SamhithAs

### **Atharva SamhithA**

Rig, Yajur, Saama and Atharva samhithAs constitute the four VedA samhithAs. Each of them have more than one branch (SaakA). The oldest VedA is recognized as Rig Vedam and the youngest is the Atharva Vedam. Latter has nine branches or rescensions (**navadhAatharvaNO veda:**).

These nine branches are:

(1) PaippalAda	(4) SaunakIya	(7) BrAhmaveda
(2) Tauda	(5) Jaajala	(8) Devadarsa and
(3) MuNda	(6) Jalada	(9) ChAraNavaidya.

Today, only two of the nine branches of Atharva Vedam (Saunakha and PaippalAda) are available to us. The Delhi Vedic trust has recorded the Saunakha sAKA .

The Atharva Veda samhithA has 5977 verses spread over 20 KhAndams (books/chapters). The khAndams are further subdivided into hymns and they in turn house a group of manthrAs. Some prefer to catalogue the Atharva Veda Text (SamhithA) into prapaathakAs (Lessons or lectures). Under this classification, there are 34 prapAthakAs that house the 5977 verses. Among NammAzhwar's four Tamil Prabhandhams, Periya ThiruvanthAdhi is considered as the essence of Atharva Vedam.

The Delhi Vedic trust has recorded the 20 KhAndhams of Atharva Vedam in 14 audiotapes.

### **Rg Veda SamhithA**

This ancient Vedam has 1,028 sUkthams (hymns) and contains in all 10,589 verses. These are grouped into either 8 KhAndAs or 10 MandalAs with 85 anuvAkAs (subsections). There used to be 21 sakAs (redactions) of the Rig VedAs. There is only one available today. That is Saakala SaakA. IythrEya







Upanishad belongs to Rig Veda SamhithA. NammAzhwAr's Thiruviruttham is considered as the Veda SaarArtham of Rig Vedam.

The Delhi Vedic Trust has recorded Saakala sAKA in 27 ninety minute tapes.

### **Yajur Veda SamhithA**

This Vedam has 1975 verses grouped under 40 chapters known as adhyAyAs. The longest chapter has 117 "verses" and the shortest chapter has 13 "verses". There are two Yajur samhithAs: Sukla and KrishNa (White and Black) samhithAs. The White Yajur Veda samhithA is also known as VajasanEyi - MadhyAndina Sukla Yajur vedam to distinguish it from KrishNa Yajur Veda or Taittiriya SamhithA, which is generally considered to be more close to a BrahmaNA rather than to a Sruthi. Most of the people in AndhrA and Tamil Naadu are KrishNa Yajur Vedins.

The two samhithAs have number of recession in view of their wide popularity. These variations arose from a variety of textual differences and their applications in Vedic rituals. The two popular recensions of the Sukla Yajur Vedam are: MaadhyAndhina and KaaNva; the KrishNa Yajur Vedam has three recensions: kAtaka, Kapishtala-Kata and MaithrAyaNee.

### **Saama samhithA**

In its importance in YaagAs and sacredness, Saama Veda SamhithAs rank next to Rig VedaA. The Lord of GeethA however has put this Saama samhithA on the top of all four SamhithAs with His declaration that He is Saama Veda among the VedAs. This samhithA consists of hymns chanted by udhgAtri priests at the Soma YaagAs. Many of the hymns originate from Rig Vedam and have been rearranged without reference to the original order in the Rig Vedam and set to music. Only 75 verses of the total of 1,875 verses of Saama Vedam are not to be found in Rig Vedam. The remaining 1,800 verses are essentially the repetitions of Rig Vedic verses. The important distinction however is that they are sung instead of being recited. The Rig Vedam deals with knowledge and Saama Vedam deals with UpAsanA, Worship and DhyAnam.

According to one classification, the Saama samhithA is catalogued under two







sections:

PurvArchika and UttarArchika

Each archika is subdivided into prapaathakAs and adhyAyAs. In another classification, the 1875 verses are grouped under FOUR categories:

1. PurvArchika: 585 verses (1-585 )
2. AraNya KhAndam : 55 verses ( 586-640 )
3. MahAnAmnyArchika : 10 verses( 641-650 )
4. UttarArchika: 1225 verses ( 651-1875)

In singing, the priests of the Yaj~nams follow specific styles through alteration of prolongation, repetition, modulation, rests et al. These become the various styles of Saama GhAnams: congregational (GrAma gEya GhAnam), AraNya ghAnam (Forest song style), Uha ghAnam and Uhya GhAnam.

Saama Vedam had originally 1001 branches. We have very few left now. NammAzhwAr's celebrated Thiruvaimozhi is recognized as the Saama Veda SaarArtham.





## 108 Upanishads and their classification

### **Upanishads and Veda Saakaas**

Upanishads are found in the concluding sections of the Veda Saakaas and hence are known as Vedanta or the end of the Vedas. There are four Veda Samhitas (Rg, Yajur, Sama and Atharva). The Yajur Vedam has two Samhitas known as the Krishna and Sukla Yajur Vedas. Hence, One can say that there are 5 Veda Samhitas, if we take into account the 2 Samhitas of Yajur Veda. Each of the 4 Samhitas referred to above has several branches or Saakaas. Each Saaka has a Karma Khanda dealing with the actions to be performed and is made up of Mantras and Brahmanaas. Latter deals with Upasana or meditation and has Aranyakas inside them for the benefit of those who have resorted to the quiet habitat of the forest to pursue their spiritual Quest. The Upanishads are found mostly in the Aranyaka section of the Vedas. The traditional view is that Vysa Bhagavan has classified the four Vedas into 1180 Saakaas and each of these Saakaa is associated with an Upanishad. Hence, One anticipates 1180 Upanishads. According to this view, there must have been 21 Upanishads for the 21 Rg Saakaas, 109 for Yajurveda, 1000 for Sama Veda and 50 for the Atharva Veda. Most of these Saakaas have been lost with the passage of time and we are left with 108 Upanishads today.

The breakdown among the 108 Upanishads according to the 5 Veda Samhitas are as follows:

1. Rg Veda: 10
2. Sama Veda :16
3. Atharva Veda: 31
4. Krishna Yajur Veda: 32
5. Sukla Yajur Veda: 19





The 10 Upanishads belonging to the Rg Veda are the following:

1. Aitareya*	6. Mudgala
2. Kaushitaki	7. Akshamala
3. Nadabindu	8. Tripura
4. Atmabodha	9. Subhagyalakshmi and
5. Nirvana	10. Bahvrichi.

The 16 associated with the Sama Samhita are:

1. Kena*	6. Vajrasuchi	11. Avyakta
2. Chhandogya*	7. Yogachudamani	12. Kundika
3. Arunika	8. Vasudeva	13. Savitri
4. Maitrayani	9. Mahat	14. Rudrakshajabala
5. Maitreyi	10. Sanyasa	15. Jabaladarsana
		16. Jabali

The 19 Upanishads belonging to Sukla Yajur Veda are:

1. Isavasya*	7. Mantrika	13. Bhikshuka
2. Brahadaranyaka*	8. Niralamba	14. Turiyatita
3. Jabala	9. Trisikhibrahmana	15. Adhyatma
4. Hamsa	10. Mandalabrahmana	16. Yajnavalkya
5. ParamaHamsa	11. Advayataraka	17. Satyayani
6. Subala	12. Paingala	18. Tarasara
		19. Muktika







The 32 Upanishads belonging to the Krishna Yajur Veda Samhita are:

1. Katha*	9. Amritanada	17. Yogatattva	25. Katharudra
2. Taittiriya*	10. Kalagnirudra	18. Dakshinamurti	26. Rudrahrudhaya
3. Brahma	11. Kshurika	19. Skanda	27. Yogakundalini
4. Kaivalya	12. Sarvasara	20. Sariraka	28. Panchabrahma
5. Svetasvatara	13. Sukharahasya	21. Yogasikha	29. Pranaagnihotra
6. Garbha	14. Tejobindhu	22. Ekakshara	30. Varaha
7. Narayana	15. Dhyanaabindhu	23. Akshi	31. Kalisantaranaand
8. Amritabindhu	16. Brahmavidya	24. Avadhuta	32. Sarasvatirahasya

Some of the 31 Upanishads belonging to the Atharva samhita are :

1. Prasna*	9. Sita	17. Surya	25. Ganapati
2. Mundaka*	10. Sarabha	18. Atma	26. Mahavakhya
3. Maandukya*	11. Tribadvibhuti mahanarayana	19. Pasupatabrahma	27. Gopalatapini
4. Atharvasira	12. Ramarahasya	20. Parabrahma	28. Krishna
5. Atharvasikha	13. Ramatapini	21. Tripuratapini	29. Hayagriva
6. Brahajjabala	14. Sandilya	22. Devi	30. Dattatreya
7. Nrsimhatapini	15. Paramahamsa parivrajaka	23. Bhavana	31. Garuda
8. Narada	16. Annapurna	24. Bhasmajabala	

In the above list of 108, those marked with the Asterik (\*) sign are the ten Major Upanishads commented on by AchAryAs.

Besides the major Upanishads, there are 27 Upanishads known as Samaanya Upanishads, because they deal with teachings of general (Samaanya) interest to all. There are 14 Saiva Upanishads dealing with Siva; 8 Sakta Upanishads dealing with Sakti or Devi; 14 dealing primarily with Vishnu and hence known as





Vaishnavopanisads; 20 Yoga Upanishads dealing with different aspects of Yoga and 17 Sanyasa Upanishads dealing with the rules and different aspects of Sanyasa or Renunciation.

Some of the 27 Samaanya Upanishads are:

1. Svetasvatara(KY)	10. Vajrasuchi(S)	19. Surya(A)
2. Garbha(KY)	11. Atmabodha(R)	20. Akshi (KY)
3. Maitrayani(S)	12. Skanda(KY)	21. Adhyatma(SY)
4. Kaushitaki(R)	13. Mudgala(R)	22. Savitri(S)
5. Subala(SY)	14. Paingala(SY)	23. Atma(A)
6. Mantrika(SY)	15. Mahat(S)	24. Pranaagnihotra(KY)
7. Sarvasara(KY)	16. Sariraka(KY)	25. Muktika (SY)
8. Niralamba(SY)	17. Ekakshara(KY)	
9. Sukarahasya(KY)	18. Annapurna(A)	

Thus 15 out of the 27 belong to the two Samhitas of Yajur Vedam.

The 14 Saiva Upanishads are:

1. Kaivalya(KY)	6. Dakshinamurthi(KY)	11. Rudrakshajabala(S)
2. Atharvasira(A)	7. Sarabha(A)	12. Ganapati(A)
3. Atharvasikha(A)	8. Akshamaala(R)	13. Panchabrahma(KY)
4. Brahajjabala(A)	9. Rudrahrudaya(S)	14. Jabali(S)
5. Kaalagnirudra(KY)	10. Bhasmajabala(A)	

The 8 Sakta Upanishads are:

1. Sita(A)	2. TripuratapiniAnnapurna(A)	3. Devi(A)	4. Tripura(R)
5. Bhavana(A)	6. Saubhgyalakshmi (R)	7. Sarasvatirahasya(KY)	8. Bahvrichi (R)





The Dominance of Rg Vedic connection indicates the ancient nature of Sakti Worship. The 14 Vishnava Upanishads are:

1. Narayana (KY)	6. Vasudeva(S)	11. Hayagriva(A)
2. Nrsimhatapini (A)	7. Avyakta(S)	12. Dattatreya (A)
3. Tripadvibhutimahanarayana (A)	8. Tarasara(SY)	13. Garuda (A)
4. Ramarahasya(A)	9. Gopalatapini (A)	14. Kalisantarana (KY)
5. Ramatapini (A)	10. Krishna(A)	

It is interesting to see 9 out of 14 belong to the Atharva Samhita.

Yoga Upanishads and Sanyasa Upanishads constitute 37 of the 108. The seventeen Sanyasa Upanishads among the 37 are:

1. Brahma(KY)	7. Narada Parivrajaka(A),	13.Parabrahma(A),
2. Jabala(SY),	8. Bhikshuka(SY),	14. Avadhuta(KY),
3. Arunika(S),	9. Turiyatita(SY),	15. Katharudra(KY)
4. Paramahamsa(SY),	10.Sanyasa(S)	16. Yajnavalkya(SY)
5. Maitreyi(S),	11. Paramahamsaparivrajaka(A),	17. Satyayani (SY)
6. Nirvana(R)	12. Kundika(S),	

The remaining 20 belong to the Yoga Upanishads. Fifteen of these 20 Upanishads belong to the two Samhitas of the Yajur Vedam. Three belong to Atharva, two to Sama and one to Rg Veda Samhita. Yoga has been defined as Karmasu Kowsalam. One wonders about the dominance of Yajur Veda Samhita among the Yoga Upanishads.

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