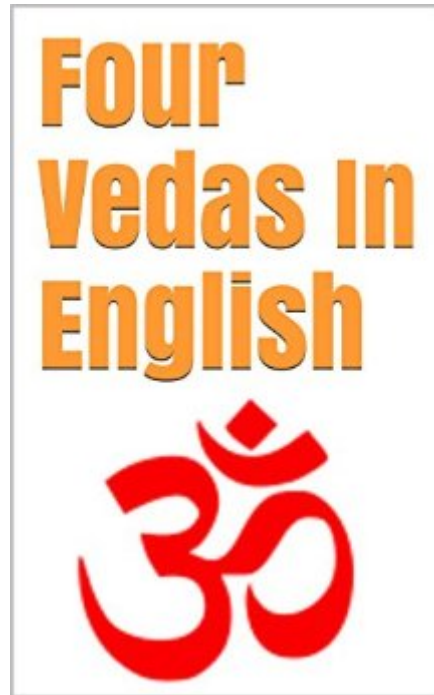


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Four Vedas In English



Synopsis

The Vedas are a large body of texts originating in ancient India. Composed in Vedic Sanskrit, the texts constitute the oldest layer of Sanskrit literature and the oldest scriptures of Hinduism. Hindus consider the Vedas to be *apauruṣeya*, which means "not of a man, superhuman" and "impersonal, authorless". Vedas are also called *Śruti* ("what is heard") literature, distinguishing them from other religious texts, which are called *smṛiti* ("what is remembered"). The Vedas, for orthodox Indian theologians, are considered revelations seen by ancient sages after intense meditation, and texts that have been more carefully preserved since ancient times. In the Hindu Epic the Mahabharata, the creation of Vedas is credited to Brahma. The Vedic hymns themselves assert that they were skillfully created by Rishis (sages), after inspired creativity, just as a carpenter builds a chariot. There are four Vedas: the Rigveda, the Yajurveda, the Samaveda and the Atharvaveda. Each Veda has been subclassified into four major text types – the Samhitas (mantras and benedictions), the Aranyakas (text on rituals, ceremonies, sacrifices and symbolic-sacrifices), the Brahmanas (commentaries on rituals, ceremonies and sacrifices), and the Upanishads (text discussing meditation, philosophy and spiritual knowledge). Some scholars add a fifth category – the Upanishads (worship). The various Indian philosophies and denominations have taken differing positions on the Vedas. Schools of Indian philosophy which cite the Vedas as their scriptural authority are classified as "orthodox" (*Āstika*). [note 1] Other *Śramaṇa* traditions, such as Lokayata, Carvaka, Ajivika, Buddhism and Jainism, which did not regard the Vedas as authorities are referred to as "heterodox" or "non-orthodox" (*nāstika*) schools. Despite their differences, just like *Śramaṇa* traditions, various Hindu traditions dwell on, express and teach similar ideas such as karma (retributive action) and moksha (liberation) in the fourth layer of the Vedas – the Upanishads.

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