

# Vedic and Upanishadic Aesthetics



**Dr. Shakuntala Gawde**  
**Department of Sanskrit**  
**University of Mumbai**  
[www.shakuntalagawde.com](http://www.shakuntalagawde.com)  
[shakuntala.gawde@gmail.com](mailto:shakuntala.gawde@gmail.com)

# Vedic Literature



- ❧ *Vedas / Shrutis*- revealed knowledge
- ❧ Four Vedas- different divisions
- ❧ *Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda*
- ❧ *Samhita*
- ❧ *Brahmana*
- ❧ *Aranyaka*
- ❧ *Upanishad*



# *Rigveda*



- ∞ Different hymns to deities
- ∞ Divided into ten *Mandalas*
- ∞ Collection of *Suktas*
- ∞ Indra, Ushas, Agni, Maruts, Ashvina, Parjanya
- ∞ Different schools of interpretation



# Indra



- ❧ Warrior and conqueror
- ❧ Macdonell- National god of Vedic Indians
- ❧ Thunder god / Sun god (destroyer of demons of drought and darkness) / warrior god
- ❧ *Vrtrahan*- Killed Vrtrasura, releases cows and waters
- ❧ Killed Shambara, Vala who live on mountain
  
- ❧ **Anthropomorphism-**
  - ❧ With body, hands and arms (RV II.16.2)
  - ❧ Suhipra (fair-liped)
  - ❧ Tawny haired and tawny bearded (RV X.23.4)
  - ❧ His arms as wielding the thunderbolt, golden armed, iron-like
  - ❧ Whole appearance as tawny, ruddy, golden (RV VII.34.4)



# Agni



- ∞ 200 hymns
- ∞ Sacrificial fire is personified
- ∞ Butter backed, flame-haired, tawny haired, tawny beard
- ∞ Sharp or burning jaws, golden teeth
- ∞ Compared to many animals
- ∞ Calf when born and roaring bull when grows (RV X.8.1)



☞ Looks like god-carrying horse  
(RV III.27.14)

☞ Divine bird (RV I.164.52)

☞ Son of ten mothers (RV I.95.2)



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# Ushas



- ☞ Beautiful young damsel
- ☞ Like a dancer she comes (*RV I.92.4*)
- ☞ Like a maiden decked by her mother she shows her beautified form (*RV I.123.11*)
- ☞ Clothed with light, she appears in the east (*RV.I.124.3*)





विश्ववारा, चित्रमघा, मघोनी, नेत्री, हिरण्यवर्णा

देवानां चक्षुः सुभगा वहन्ती श्वेतं नयन्ती सुदृशीकमश्वम् । (RV VII.75.6)



- ❧ Rising resplendent as from bath, showing her charms she comes with light (V.80.5,6)
- ❧ She is ever young, being born again and again though ancient (RV I.92.10)
- ❧ Surya follows her as a young man a maiden (RV I.115.2)
- ❧ Wife of Sun / mother of Sun
- ❧ Elder sister of Night
- ❧ She comes in chariot with ruddy and lovely horses (RV.VII.75.6)



# Surya



- Collective lustre of all gods
- Gem of the sky (दिवोरुक्म)
- Golden swift rays ----horses



- Personification of Ratri and Surya –**
- Ratri is weaving a widely spread beautiful garments, embroidering with design of stars
- Bold and daring lady
- Doesn't care though Sun has yoked his horses
- Withdraws garment immediately when sun steps



# Varuna



- ∞ Full-fledged anthropomorphism
- ∞ *Samrat* – sovereign king
- ∞ Face of Varuna is Agni
- ∞ Eye is sun– observe mankind
- ∞ Far sighted and thousand eyed (*RV VII.34.10*)
- ∞ Varuna's abode- golden, situated in heaven.
- ∞ Mansion with thousand doors
- ∞ His spies are moving in mortal world
- ∞ Upholder of physical and moral order



# Vaisiṣṭha-Varuṇa

(RV VII.86)



- ❧ Vasistha has fearful respect for Varuna
- ❧ Afraid of his wrath and asks for mercy
- ❧ Asking to forgive sins done knowingly or unknowingly
- ❧ Considers himself as servant of the Lord

अरं दासो न मीळहुषे कराण्यहम् ..।



# Rudra



- ❧ Rudra wears a braided hair
- ❧ He shines like a brilliant sun, like gold
- ❧ Wears golden ornaments, glorious multiform necklace (*nishka*)
- ❧ Malevolent deity
- ❧ Frequently prayed for not to injure or slay out of wrath
- ❧ Asked for favour with mercy



# Vishvamitra nadi



❧ Rivers Vipat and Shutudri

❧ प्र पवर्तानामुशती उपस्थादश्वे इव विषिते हासमाने ।

❧ गावेव शुभ्रे मातरा रिहाणे विपाट्छुतुद्री पयसा जवेते ॥

❧ Rival mares let loose

❧ Lovely Mother cows eager to meet their calf

❧ Visvamitra requests them to bend down, seeks their favour

❧ ओ षु स्वसारः कारवे शृणोत ययौ वो दूरादनसा रथेन ।

❧ नि षू नमध्वं भवता सुपारा अधोअक्षाः सिन्धवः स्रोत्याभिः ॥



# Rivers personified



- ∞ We are moving along our common bed prepared for us by gods; our rapid course cannot be checked.
- ∞ Vishvamitra praises Indra and assures them to keep them in his prayers forever
- ∞ Rivers- accepted the request to bend
- ∞ like a breast feeding mother
- ∞ Like a maiden to her lover

# *Aksha Sukta*



***RV X.34.5***

***Kavasha Ailusha***



# Monologue of Gambler



- ❧ Miseries brought by gambling
- ❧ Gambler repents-
- ❧ 'My wife was always kind to me and my friends. But for the sake of the dice, I have turned away my loyal wife.' (RV X.34.2)
- ❧ Mother in law hates me, wife drives me away..
- ❧ Other people harass my wife, family members say- we don't know him and take him away in chains



- ❧ When I resolve 'I shall not play with these', I keep back from my fiends who are going to the gambling hall.
- ❧ As soon as these dices make sound, I am attracted them like a lustful woman
- ❧ 'I would win' thinking thus a gambler goes to the gambling hall but get frustrated when his rival wins





# Family of gambler



जाया तप्यते कितवस्य हीना माता पुत्रस्य चरतः क्व  
स्वित्।

Wife of a gambler is troubled by others. His mother grieves, his son aimlessly wanders, fearful gambler goes to the house of others for want of money

His heart pains when he sees others' wife well adorned with ornaments



# Dices



- ❧ Dices are like armed with hook and a goad
- ❧ Harass and torment a gambler and make him torment others
- ❧ Allow to win and immediately ruin
- ❧ मध्वा संपृक्ताः -- coated with honey in the form of wealth



Even furious warrior or king has to bend before them.

They don't have hands but overpower gambler having hands

दिव्या अङ्गाराः इरिणे न्यप्ताः शीताः सन्तो हृदयं निर्देहन्ति ।

(Divine coals- though cold, burn heart of the gambler)

नीचाः वर्तन्ते उपरि स्फुरन्ति अहस्तासः हस्तवन्तं सहन्ते ।

मित्रं कृणुध्वं खलु मृळता नो..।



# Prayer to *akshas*



- ☞ I hold out my ten fingers in front of your king and I tell the truth that I don't hold back any money.
- ☞ Be friends with us, show your mercy, do not conjure us with your inimical wrath, may someone else be in the snares of you now.



# *Brahmanas*



- œ Revolved around sacrifices and sacrificial details
- œ Narration of stories for *arthavada*
- œ *Arthavada*- Glory of act to be done and condemning prohibited acts
- œ Purpose of the sacrifice is made clear through stories
- œ Stories – characters, emotions, Rasas



# *Shunahshepa*

*Aitareya Brāhmaṇā VII.13.8*



- ❧ Harishchandra- hundred wives, issueless
- ❧ Prayed to Varuna for progeny and committed that if son is born will give to Varuna
- ❧ Son (Rohit) was born with the grace of Varuna
- ❧ Varuna reminded him of his promise
- ❧ Ten days baby cannot be offered
- ❧ Rohit became young and went to forest
- ❧ Harishchandra became seek due to wrath of Varuna
- ❧ Rohit met one sage named Ajigarta with his family



- ❧ Ajigarta was distressed with thirst and hunger
- ❧ Three sons- Shunahpuccha, Shunahshepa, Shunahlangula
- ❧ Rohit offered him hundred cows instead of his one son as *bali*
- ❧ Ajigarta was not ready to give eldest son , his wife disagreed to give youngest, Shunahshepa got ready
- ❧ Nobody was ready to bind Shunahshepa to sacrificial post
- ❧ Ajigarta became ready on the offer of additional hundred cows
- ❧ Nobody was ready to kill Shunahshepa
- ❧ Ajigarta became ready to kill his own son for more hundred cows



- ∞ Shunahshepa started praying Varuna
  - ∞ Gradually his chains loosened
  - ∞ Harishchandra recovered
  - ∞ Shunahshepa was revered by all sages
  - ∞ Vishvamitra considered him the eldest among all his sons
- ∞ (One who desires to conquer the kingdom or desires for a son should listen to this story)



# Metaphor of Lute

Ait. A. III.2.5



अथ खल्वियं दैवी वीणा भवति  
तदनुकृतिरसौ मानुषी वीणा भवति ।

- Metaphor on human body as divine lute
- Head- Kaddu (gourd)
- Stomach-Tumba
- Toung- Strings







# Upanishadic Aesthetics

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# *Upanishads*



- ∞ Upanishads – *Jnanakanda*
- ∞ Aim the Highest goal of Moksha
- ∞ Philosophical foundation
- ∞ Discourses on Ultimate Reality
- ∞ Micro-macro cosmic unity
- ∞ Different stories
- ∞ Dialogues- stories, dramatic, emotions, end in peace
- ∞ Metaphors or allegories



# *Kathopanishad*



- ❧ Dialogue of Yama and Naciketas
- ❧ Characters of the story –
- ❧ Vajashravas, Nachiketas, Yama
- ❧ Donation given by Vajashravas
- ❧ Nachiketas -young boy gives advises his father
- ❧ Wrath of father – I'll give you in donation – to death
- ❧ Nachiketas- fearlessly, courageously and patiently faces death
- ❧ Went to Yamaloka



∞ Yamaloka is described

∞ Character of Yama has different shades

∞ Yama -was not in the house..

∞ Nachiketas waited for three nights

∞ Yama felt bad- offered three boons

∞ Nachiketas requested for *atmajnana*



# Atmajnana



œ Depiction of *Shanta Rasa* with *Nirveda* as *Sthayi*

œ Detachment (*Vairagya*)

œ Nachiketa's denial of all material pleasures

œ Answer of Nachiketas-

œ All material pleasures are temporary...rejected courageously

œ शतायुषः पुत्रपौत्रान्वृणीष्व

œ बहून्पशून् हस्तिहिरण्यमश्वान् ।

œ भूमेर्महादायतनं वृणीष्व

œ स्वयं च जीव शरदो  
यावदिच्छसि॥

œ ये ये कामा दुर्लभा मर्त्यलोके

œ सर्वान् कामाश्छन्दतः प्रार्थयस्व ।



# Allegory of chariot



- आत्मानं रथिनं विद्धि शरीरं रथमेव तु ।
- बुद्धिं तु सारथिं विद्धि मनः प्रग्रहमेव च॥
- इन्द्रियाणि हयान्याहुर्विषयास्तेषु गोचरान्।





# Emancipation



œ Achievement of Highest goal:

यस्त्वविज्ञानवान्भवत्यमनस्कः सदाऽशुचिः।  
न स तत्पदमाप्नोति संसारं चाधिगच्छति ॥

œ Annihilation of all bondages

यदा सर्वे प्रभिद्यन्ते हृदयस्येह ग्रन्थयः ।  
अथ मर्त्योऽमृतो भवत्येतावध्द्यनुशासनम् ॥ II.3.15

*Shanta rasa- Peace*



# Metaphor



- ८२ द्वा सुपर्णा सयुजा सखाया समानं वृक्षं परिषस्वजाते ।
- ८२ तयोरेकः पिप्पलं स्वाद्वत्तनश्नन्नन्यो अभिचाकशीति ॥

८२ Metaphor on *Jiva* and *Brahman*

८२ *Mandukya upanishad- Turiya state*





# *Mahavakyas*



❧ *Prajnanam Brahma (consciousness is Brahman)*

❧ *Tattvamasi (That you are)*

❧ *Aham Brahmasmi (I'm Brahman)*

❧ *Ayamatma Brahma (This is Brahman)*