

Vedic Culture

Free study notes · 3 notes · 25 Oct 2026

Free study material from Medha AI. For notes, practice, mock tests and previous papers for your exam, start free at **app.medhaai.in**.

1. The four Vedas: Samhitas, Shakhas, Brahmanas and ritviks
2. Upanishads, Upavedas, Vedangas and the 14 vidyas
3. Yagnas, ashramas, purusharthas and samskaras

1 The four Vedas: Samhitas, Shakhas, Brahmanas and ritviks

The Vedas are Shruti ("what was heard"): four collections, Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva, each with Shakhas (recensions) and four layers (Samhita, Brahmana, Aranyaka, Upanishad), and each served at the yagna by its own priest, the Hota, Adhvaryu, Udgata and Brahma.

Core facts

- **Veda** comes from the Sanskrit root **vid**, "to know": the Veda is knowledge itself.
- **Vedas = Shruti** (heard): handed down only by hearing and memorising in the **guru-shishya parampara**. Itihasa, Puranas and Dharmashastras are **Smriti** (remembered).
- Vedas are **apaurusheya** (not composed by any person). The rishis are **mantra-drashtas**: they "saw" the mantras, they did not write them.
- **Trayi = Rig, Yajur and Sama** Vedas, grouped because all three serve the yagna. The **Atharvaveda** was long kept out of the Trayi.
- **Vedic periods: Early (Rigvedic) c. 1500–1000 BCE**, known only from the **Rigveda**; **Later Vedic c. 1000–600 BCE**, when the Sama, Yajur and Atharva Vedas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads took shape.
- **Vyasa** (Krishna Dvaipayana) got his name for **dividing (vyasa) the Veda** into four. His parents: **Parashara and Satyawati**.
- **Vyasa's four pupils: Paila** (Rigveda), **Vaishampayana** (Yajurveda), **Jaimini** (Samaveda), **Sumantu** (Atharvaveda); **Romaharshana** (Suta) got the Itihasa-Purana.
- **Four layers, in order: Samhita** (collection of mantras) → **Brahmana** (prose on ritual) → **Aranyaka** (forest texts) → **Upanishad** (philosophy).
- **Two kandas: Samhita + Brahmana = Karma kanda** (rites); **Aranyaka + Upanishad = Jnana kanda** (knowledge). The Upanishads are also called **Vedanta**.
- **The four Vedas at a glance:**

Veda	Main content	Ritvik (priest)	Vyasa's pupil
Rigveda	Hymns of praise to deities	Hota	Paila
Yajurveda	Formulas for conducting yagnas	Adhvaryu	Vaishampayana
Samaveda	Rigvedic verses set to music	Udgata	Jaimini
Atharvaveda	Medicine, charms, daily life	Brahma	Sumantu

- **Veda → Shakhas → Brahmana → Aranyaka and Upanishads:**

Veda	Main Shakhas	Brahmana(s)	Aranyaka; principal Upanishads
Rigveda	Shakala , Bashkala	Aitareya , Kaushitaki	Aitareya, Kaushitaki; Aitareya

Veda	Main Shakhas	Brahmana(s)	Aranyaka; principal Upanishads
Shukla Yajurveda	Madhyandina, Kanva	Shatapatha	Brihadaranyaka; Isha, Brihadaranyaka
Krishna Yajurveda	Taittiriya, Maitrayani, Kathaka	Taittiriya	Taittiriya; Katha, Taittiriya
Samaveda	Kauthuma, Ranayaniya, Jaiminiya	Tandya, Jaiminiya, Chandogya	Talavakara; Kena, Chandogya
Atharvaveda	Shaunaka, Paippalada	Gopatha (the only one)	None; Prashna, Mundaka, Mandukya

- **Shakhas (traditional count, Patanjali):** Rigveda **21**, Yajurveda **101**, Samaveda **1,000**, Atharvaveda **9**.
- **Kanva Shakha** and **Madhyandina Shakha** belong to the **Shukla Yajurveda** (Vajasaneyi Samhita). **Taittiriya** belongs to the **Krishna Yajurveda**, which is also called the **Taittiriya Samhita**.
- **Rigveda: 10 Mandalas, 1,028 Suktas** (including 11 Valakhilya hymns), about 10,550 mantras. Its mantras are **Riks** (*rik* = a hymn of praise, *stotra*). It is the **first literature of the Indo-European languages**.
- **9th Mandala = Pavamana Mandala** (all to Soma *Pavamana*, "self-purifying"). **Valakhilya** hymns are in the **8th Mandala**. **Purusha Sukta** is in the **10th Mandala**.
- **Gayatri mantra: 24 syllables** (3 lines of 8), Rigveda **3rd Mandala** (3.62.10), seer **Vishvamitra**, addressed to **Savitr** (the Sun); a prayer for **wisdom** (an enlightened intellect).
- **Atharvaveda's other names: Brahaveda** (it holds Brahma-jnana) and **Atharvangirasa** (after the rishis **Atharvan** and **Angiras**).

Explained

What each Veda mainly contains (asked as "understand" items in 2026).

- **Rigveda:** hymns (*riks*) of praise and prayer to Agni, Indra, Varuna, Soma, the Ashvins, Ushas and others. It is the oldest and the source of most Samaveda verses. Its first hymn praises **Agni** as the purohita.
- **Yajurveda:** the *yajus*, a formula that states the duty or procedure of each act of the yagna, largely in **prose**. It is the priest's working manual, from building the altar (*vedi*) to offering havis; it also shows the rise of great rites such as the Rajasuya and Ashvamedha.
- **Samaveda:** *Sama* means **song**. Its *samans* are verses (almost all from the Rigveda, mostly Mandalas 8 and 9) set to fixed notes for singing at the **Somayaga**. It is taken as the **origin of Indian classical music**; in the Gita (10.22) Krishna says "among Vedas I am the Samaveda".
- **Atharvaveda:** **medicine and herbs**, charms for long life, protection, harmony at home, agriculture and kingship; mantras against bhuta, preta and pishacha, **vashikarana** (enchantment) and **abhichara** (black magic); the customs of **non-Aryan tribes**; and philosophical hymns such as the **Prithvi (Bhumi) Sukta**. It widened the Veda from the priestly yagna to the common person's daily life.

The Rigvedic world.

- **Sapta Sindhu** ("land of seven rivers"), roughly today's **Punjab and Sindh**, was the first home of the Rigvedic Aryans: the Indus, its five Punjab tributaries and the Saraswati.
- Society was pastoral and tribal (Bharata, Puru, Yadu, Turvasa; the **Bharatas** were the leading tribe). Cows were wealth. There were **no temples and no idols**: worship was by hymns and fire offerings.

Deity	Role	Note
Indra	Thunder, rain, war	Most hymns (about 250)
Agni	Fire; carries offerings to the gods	"Priest of the gods"; about 200 hymns
Varuna	Guardian of Rta , the cosmic and moral order	
Soma	Sacred drink and its god	Whole 9th Mandala
Ushas	Goddess of the dawn	
Aditi	Mother of the gods	
Ashvins	Divine physicians	Ashvini Sukta : cures and surgery

- **Purusha Sukta** (10.90): the world and the four varnas come from the sacrifice of the **Virat Purusha**: the Brahmana was his **mouth**, the Rajanya (Kshatriya) his **arms**, the Vaishya his **thighs**, the Shudra came from his **feet**.
- **Later Vedic changes**: iron, settled farming in the Ganga plain, kingdoms (*janapadas*), a rigid hereditary **varna** order and the **gotra**; Indra and Agni lost ground to Prajapati, Vishnu and Rudra, and costly royal yagas grew.

Rigveda in detail.

- **Divisions**: Mandala → Anuvaka → Sukta → Rik (also an older Ashtaka → Adhyaya → Varga system: 8 Ashtakas, 64 Adhyayas). The exam answer to "Rigveda is divided into ten ___" is **Mandalas**.
- **Family books (Mandalas 2–7)**, the oldest core of the Rigveda, each tied to one rishi family:

Mandala	Rishi family	Note
2	Gritsamada	
3	Vishvamitra	Gayatri mantra
4	Vamadeva	
5	Atri	
6	Bharadvaja	
7	Vasishtha	

- **Mandala 8**: Kanva and Angirasa families; contains the **Valakhilya** hymns (8.49 to 8.59).
- **Mandala 9**: the **Pavamana Mandala**, all hymns to Soma being purified as it flows through the strainer.
- **Mandalas 1 and 10** are the later books. Mandala 10 has the **Purusha Sukta** (10.90), the **Nasadiya Sukta** (10.129, creation), the **Hiranyagarbha Sukta** (10.121) and the wedding hymn (10.85).

- **Shakhas surviving: Shakala** is the only complete one (the printed text); the **Bashkala** recension is known mainly by name and is largely lost.

Yajurveda: Shukla and Krishna.

- **Shukla (White) Yajurveda:** mantras kept apart from their explanation, which sits in the **Shatapatha Brahmana**. Samhita = **Vajasaneyi Samhita** (40 adhyayas), received by **Yajnavalkya** from the Sun. Shakhas **Madhyandina** and **Kanva**. It names yagas such as the Vajapeya, Purushamedha and Ashvamedha. The **Isha Upanishad** is its 40th adhyaya; the **Brihadaranyaka** closes the Shatapatha.
- **Krishna (Black) Yajurveda:** mantras and prose explanation mixed together, hence "black". Samhitas: **Taittiriya** (the best known, so the Krishna Yajurveda is also called the Taittiriya Samhita), **Maitrayani**, **Kathaka**, Kapishtala. Brahmana = **Taittiriya Brahmana**; Aranyaka = Taittiriya Aranyaka.
- **Story of the name Taittiriya:** Yajnavalkya, quarrelling with his guru Vaishampayana, gave back (vomited) the Yajus he had learnt; the other pupils took the form of partridges (*tittiri*) and picked it up. Yajnavalkya then prayed to Surya and received the Shukla Yajus.
- Yajurveda branches are the most asked number: **101**.

Samaveda.

- Two parts: **Purvarchika** and **Uttararchika**; about 1,875 verses in the Kauthuma text, only about 75 not found in the Rigveda.
- Song books (*ganās*): Gramageya, Aranyageya, Uha, Uhya.
- Surviving Shakhas: **Kauthuma**, **Ranayaniya**, **Jaiminiya** (Talavakara).
- The Samaveda's priest is the **Udgata**, who sings the samans at the right moment of the Somayaga.

Atharvaveda.

- **20 Kandas**, about 730 hymns, about 6,000 mantras.
- Shakhas: **Shaunaka** (the printed text) and **Paippalada**.
- Brahmana: **Gopatha**, the only one. Upanishads: **Mundaka**, **Mandukya**, **Prashna**. It has no Aranyaka.

The Brahmanas: what each is known for. Brahmanas are prose commentaries on the Samhitas that set out how and why each yagna is done; they are the bridge from the hymns to the Upanishads.

Brahmana	Veda	Remember it for
Aitareya	Rigveda	Rajasuya ; story of Shunahshepa
Kaushitaki (Shankhayana)	Rigveda	Supplement to the Aitareya
Tandya (Panchavimsha, 25 books)	Samaveda	Rites of the Somayaga
Jaiminiya	Samaveda	Philosophical discussions, stories
Chandogya	Samaveda	Its last part is the Chandogya Upanishad
Taittiriya	Krishna Yajur	Mentions the Varaha (boar) avatara
Shatapatha (100 adhyayas)	Shukla Yajur	Largest ; encyclopaedic: farming, money-lending , Manu's flood

Brahmana	Veda	Remember it for
Gopatha	Atharvaveda	The only Atharva Brahmana

The four ritviks. A ritvik is a priest chosen by the *yajamana* (sponsor) to perform a Shrouta yagna.

Ritvik	Veda	Role at the yagna
Hota (Hotr)	Rigveda	Recites hymns, invites the gods
Adhvaryu	Yajurveda	Does the acts: altar, fire, offerings
Udgata (Udgatr)	Samaveda	Sings the samans
Brahma	Atharvaveda	Supervises in silence, corrects errors

- In a full Soma yagna each chief has three assistants, making **16 ritviks**: Hota's group (Maitravaruna, Achhavaka, Gravastut), Adhvaryu's (Pratiprasthata, Neshta, Unneta), Udgata's (Prastota, Pratiharta, Subrahmanya) and Brahma's (Brahmanachhamsi, **Agnidhra**, Pota). See HC-VD-03 for the yagna itself.

The four layers explained.

- Samhita**: the basic mantra text, the "seed" of the Veda, used in worship.
- Brahmana**: prose manuals telling how and why each rite is done, with stories.
- Aranyaka**: "forest books" for **vanaprasthas** who had finished household life; they turn from doing the ritual to its inner meaning, a **bridge** between the Brahmanas (Karma kanda) and the Upanishads (Jnana kanda).
- Upanishad**: the end of the Veda (*Vedanta*), on Brahman, Atman and liberation. Philosophy and mystical knowledge are found **mainly in the Upanishads** (asked 2026). See HC-VD-02.
- Sutras are not one of the four layers**: they are later Vedanga literature.

AP angle

- Krishna Yajurveda, Taittiriya Shakha** is the Veda most Telugu Vedic families follow, with the **Apastamba** Kalpa sutras; Shukla Yajurveda (Kanva and Madhyandina) and Rigveda families are fewer.
- Tirumala**: the **Vaikhanasa** archakas follow the Vaikhanasa Kalpa sutra, a Krishna Yajurveda (Taittiriya) tradition. Veda parayanam of all four Vedas is part of daily worship, and TTD runs **Sri Venkateswara Vedic University** (Tirupati, 2006) and the SV Veda Vijnana Peetham pathashala at Dharmagiri, Tirumala.
- Konaseema** (Godavari delta) is known for Ghanapathis and Vedic recitation families.
- Telugu forms**: Rugvedamu, Yajurvedamu, Samavedamu, Atharvanavedamu; ritviks are *Rutvikkulu* (Hota, Adhvaryudu, Udgata, Brahma).

Common traps

✗ "Vedas are Smriti." ✓ They are **Shruti**; Itihasa and Puranas are Smriti.

✗ "The Udgata belongs to the Rigveda." ✓ Udgata = **Samaveda**; Hota = Rigveda; Adhvaryu = Yajurveda; Brahma = Atharvaveda.

✗ "Taittiriya Brahmana is Shukla Yajurveda." ✓ It is **Krishna** Yajurveda; **Shatapatha** is Shukla.

✗ "Kanva Shakha is of the Rigveda" (the Kanva rishis are in Mandala 8). ✓ The **Kanva Shakha** is of the **Shukla Yajurveda**.

✗ "The Pavamana Mandala is the 10th." ✓ It is the **9th**; the 10th has the Purusha and Nasadiya Suktas.

✗ "Gayatri has 32 syllables." ✓ **24**; 32 is the Anushtubh.

✗ "Order: Samhita, Upanishad, Brahmana, Aranyaka." ✓ **Samhita** → **Brahmana** → **Aranyaka** → **Upanishad**.

✗ "Trayi means Rig, Sama and Atharva." ✓ **Rig, Yajur, Sama**; the Atharvaveda was left out.

✗ "Yajurveda has 21 Shakhas." ✓ **101**; 21 is the Rigveda's count.

✗ "The Shatapatha is the oldest Brahmana" (the course book's wording). ✓ It is the **largest and most comprehensive**; the Aitareya and Tandya are older.

✗ "Tat Tvam Asi is in the Chandogya Brahmana" (the course book's wording). ✓ The exam answer is the **Chandogya Upanishad**, which forms the last part of that Brahmana.

✗ "The Sapta Sindhu rivers are the Ganga, Yamuna and Sarayu" (the course book lists these Rigvedic rivers). ✓ Sapta Sindhu = the **Indus, its Punjab tributaries and the Saraswati**.

✗ "The Shukla Yajurveda is entirely in verse" (the course book's wording). ✓ It also has prose yajus; what makes it "white" is that the mantras are **kept apart from the explanation**.

Quick revision

- Veda from root vid (to know); Shruti, apaurusheya; Trayi = Rig, Yajur, Sama.
- Early Vedic c. 1500–1000 BCE (Rigveda only); Later Vedic c. 1000–600 BCE.
- Paila–Rig, Vaishampayana–Yajur, Jaimini–Sama, Sumantu–Atharva.
- Samhita → Brahmana → Aranyaka → Upanishad; Karma kanda = Samhita + Brahmana; Jnana kanda = Aranyaka + Upanishad.
- Hota–Rig, Adhvaryu–Yajur, Udgata–Sama, Brahma–Atharva.
- Aitareya (Rajasuya), Kaushitaki–Rig; Shatapatha–Shukla Yajur; Taittiriya (Varaha)–Krishna Yajur; Tandya (Somayaga)–Sama; Gopatha–Atharva.
- Kanva, Madhyandina = Shukla Yajur; Taittiriya = Krishna Yajur; Shakala = Rig; Kauthuma, Ranayaniya = Sama.

- Shakhas: Rig 21, Yajur 101, Sama 1,000, Atharva 9.
- Rigveda: 10 Mandalas, 1,028 Suktas; 9th = Pavamana; Valakhilya in 8th; Purusha Sukta in 10th.
- Gayatri: 24 syllables, 3.62.10, Vishvamitra, Savitr; Atharva = Brahmaveda, Atharvangirasa.

2 Upanishads, Upavedas, Vedangas and the 14 vidyas

The Upanishads are the philosophical end of the Veda (Vedanta), ten of them principal and each tied to one Veda; the Upavedas are four applied sciences, the six Vedangas are the auxiliary sciences needed to read and use the Veda, and Vedas + Vedangas + four more make the 14 vidyas.

Core facts

- **Upanishad** = "knowledge got by **sitting near the guru**" (*upa-ni-shad*); the last layer of each Veda and its **Jnana kanda**.
- **Vedanta** has two senses: the **end** of the Vedas and the **essence** of the Vedas. Philosophy and mystical knowledge of the Vedas are mainly in the Upanishads.
- **Number:** by tradition **1,180** (one per Shakha); the **Muktika Upanishad** (Rama teaching Hanuman) lists **108**; the **principal Upanishads are 10** (the **Dashopanishads**), sometimes counted as 10 to 12.
- **Muktika's 108 by Veda:**

Veda	Upanishads in the Muktika
Rigveda	10 (fewest)
Shukla Yajurveda	19
Krishna Yajurveda	32 (most)
Samaveda	16
Atharvaveda	31

- **The ten principal Upanishads and their Vedas:**

Upanishad	Veda	Remember it for
Isha (Isavasya)	Shukla Yajur	40th adhyaya of Vajasaneyi Samhita
Kena	Sama	"By whom?"; Uma Haimavati
Katha	Krishna Yajur	Nachiketa and Yama
Prashna	Atharva	Six questions to Pippalada
Mundaka	Atharva	<i>Satyameva jayate</i>
Mandukya	Atharva	Om; shortest (12 verses)
Taittiriya	Krishna Yajur	Pancha kosha; <i>Matru devo bhava</i>
Aitareya	Rig	<i>Prajnanam Brahma</i>
Chandogya	Sama	<i>Tat Tvam Asi</i>
Brihadaranyaka	Shukla Yajur	Largest; Yajnavalkya

- **Four Mahavakyas** (one per Veda):

Mahavakya	Meaning	Upanishad	Veda
Prajanam Brahma	Consciousness is Brahman	Aitareya	Rig
Aham Brahmasmi	I am Brahman	Brihadaranyaka	Shukla Yajur
Tat Tvam Asi	That thou art	Chandogya	Sama
Ayam Atma Brahma	This Self is Brahman	Mandukya	Atharva

- **Other famous sayings:**

Saying	Meaning	Upanishad
Satyameva jayate	Truth alone triumphs (India's motto)	Mundaka
Asato ma sad gamaya ... tamaso ma jyotir gamaya ... mrityor ma amritam gamaya	Lead me from untruth to truth, darkness to light, death to immortality	Brihadaranyaka
Neti neti	"Not this, not this" (Yajnavalkya on Brahman)	Brihadaranyaka
Satyam vada, dharmam chara	Speak the truth, practise dharma	Taittiriya
Matru devo bhava, Pitru devo bhava, Acharya devo bhava, Atithi devo bhava	Treat mother, father, teacher, guest as god	Taittiriya
Tena tyaktena bhunjithah	Enjoy by renouncing	Isha

- **Shruti and Smriti:** the Vedas are Shruti; knowledge remembered and handed down by human tradition is **Smriti**. The Upavedas, Vedangas, Sutras and **Smritis (Dharmashastras)** belong to Smriti literature.
- **Upavedas:** the **Vishnu Purana** names **Ayurveda, Dhanurveda, Gandharvaveda and Arthashastra**; the **Charanavyuha** takes **Sthapatya (Shilpa) Veda** as the fourth instead of Arthashastra.

Upaveda	Subject	Veda (APPSC key)	Founder / classic texts
Ayurveda	Medicine, science of life	Rigveda	Dhanvantari ; Charaka, Sushruta
Dhanurveda	Science of war	Yajurveda	Dhanurvedhi, Drona Vidya, Kodanda Mandana
Gandharvaveda	Music, poetry, dance	Samaveda	Bharata's Natyashastra
Sthapatya Veda / Arthashastra	Architecture, sculpture; polity	Atharvaveda	Vishwakarma ; today Vastu

- **Ayurveda** has **8 branches (Ashtanga)**. **Brihat-trayi** ("great three") = **Charaka Samhita, Sushruta Samhita** and **Ashtanga Hridayam** (Vagbhata).

- **Six Vedangas** ("limbs of the Veda"): **Shiksha** (phonetics), **Kalpa** (ritual), **Vyakarana** (grammar), **Nirukta** (etymology), **Chandas** (metre), **Jyotisha** (astronomy and time).
- **Nirukta** (the Vedic dictionary of word meanings) was written by **Yaska**, as a commentary on the **Nighantu**.
- **Pratishakhya**: the manual of each Shakha that sets out its words, accents and their joining (sandhi) in recitation.
- **Kalpa sutras** are of four kinds: **Shrauta**, **Grihya**, **Dharma** and **Sulba** (altar building; **geometry** appears here first).
- **14 vidyas**:

Group	Count	Members
Vedas	4	Rig, Yajur, Sama, Atharva
Vedangas	6	Shiksha, Kalpa, Vyakarana, Nirukta, Chandas, Jyotisha
Upangas	4	Purana, Nyaya, Mimamsa, Dharmashastra
Total	14	Add the 4 Upavedas → 18 vidyas

- **Fifth Veda**: the APPSC key (2023) is the **Puranas** (Itihasa-Purana, as the Chandogya calls it).

Explained

What the Upanishads teach. They turn away from outer rites and sacrifices and hold that **moksha** comes through inner knowledge, meditation and **self-enquiry** (*atma-vichara*). Their theme is Brahman (Paramatma), Atman (jivatma) and the relation between the two. Because **Adi Shankaracharya** wrote bhashyas on the ten principal ones, they gained lasting authority. The Upanishads, the **Bhagavad Gita** and Badarayana's **Brahma Sutras** form the **Prasthan Traya**, the three sources every Vedanta acharya comments on (Shankara, Ramanuja, Madhva).

The ten Upanishads, one story or idea each.

- **Isha (Isavasya)**: 18 verses; opens "all this is pervaded by the Lord", so "enjoy by renouncing; do not covet anyone's wealth" (*tena tyaktena bhunjithah*); teaches doing one's work without attachment. First in the Muktika list.
- **Kena**: named from its first word, "by whom?" are the mind, breath, speech, eye and ear moved. The gods, proud of a victory, fail to know a Yaksha; **Uma Haimavati** tells Indra it was Brahman. It is part of the **Talavakara (Jaiminiya) Brahmana** of the Samaveda, so it is also called the Talavakara Upanishad.
- **Katha (Kathopanishad)**: **Vajashravasa** (Uddalaka Aruni, called Auddalaki) performs the **Vishvajit yagna**, giving away all he owns. His son **Nachiketa** is "given to Death", waits **three nights** unfed at **Yama's** door and gets **three boons**: his father's peace of mind, knowledge of the fire sacrifice (named **Nachiketa agni** after him), and the secret of what lies after death. Image of the **chariot**: the Self is the master, the body the chariot, the **intellect the charioteer**, the **mind the reins**, the senses the horses.
- **Prashna**: six seekers (including Sukesha and Kabandhi Katyayana) come to sage **Pippalada**, who makes them live **one year** with him in austerity before they ask their **six questions** on prana, Om and the self.

- **Mundaka:** Angiras teaches **Shaunaka** the **higher (para)** and **lower (apara) vidya**; the lower includes the four Vedas and the six Vedangas. Image of **two birds** on one tree (3.1.1): one eats the fruit, the other only watches. India's motto **Satyameva jayate** comes from it.
- **Mandukya:** the **shortest** (12 verses). **Om** (A-U-M) and the four states: waking (*jagrat*), dream (*svapna*), deep sleep (*sushupti*) and the fourth (*turiya*). **Gaudapada**, Shankara's grand-guru, wrote the *Karika* on it.
- **Taittiriya:** part of the Taittiriya Aranyaka; three vallis: **Shiksha**, **Brahmananda (Ananda)** and **Bhrigu**. In the Shiksha Valli the **teacher gives pupils finishing their study** the parting advice *Satyam vada, dharmam chara* and *Matru devo bhava, Pitru devo bhava, Acharya devo bhava, Atithi devo bhava*. The **five koshas** (annamaya, pranamaya, manomaya, vijnanamaya, anandamaya). **Bhrigu** learns from his father **Varuna** that Brahman is bliss.
- **Aitareya:** the Self alone existed and **created the worlds and man**; ends with *Prajnanam Brahma*.
- **Chandogya:** **Uddalaka Aruni** teaches his son **Shvetaketu** *Tat Tvam Asi* (chapter 6, nine times, with the salt-in-water and the **banyan-seed** examples). Also the **Udgitha** (Om in the saman); **Satyakama Jabala**, accepted as a pupil by sage Gautama because he told the truth about not knowing his father; and Narada learning from Sanatkumara.
- **Brihadaranyaka:** the largest; the closing part of the **Shatapatha Brahmana**, so it is both an Aranyaka and an Upanishad. **Yajnavalkya** in **Janaka's** court, his dialogues with **Gargi** and his wife **Maitreyi**, *neti neti*, and the prayer *Asato ma sad gamaya*.
- Two more often added: **Shvetashvatara** (Krishna Yajur, devoted to Rudra-Shiva) and **Kaushitaki** (Rig).
- **Veda count among the ten:** **Atharva 3** (Prashna, Mundaka, Mandukya), **Krishna Yajur 2** (Katha, Taittiriya), **Shukla Yajur 2** (Isha, Brihadaranyaka), **Sama 2** (Kena, Chandogya), **Rig 1** (Aitareya).

Upavedas: Vedic knowledge put to practical use. The Upavedas apply the Veda to worldly life (health, war, music, building); the Vedangas are tools to preserve, pronounce and use the Veda itself.

- **Ayurveda** ("science of life"): two aims, **prevention** (*svasthasya svasthya-rakshanam*, keeping the healthy healthy) and **cure** (*vyadhi-parimoksha*, freeing the sick from disease). **Dhanvantari**, who rose from the churning of the ocean with the pot of amrita and is counted an avatar of **Vishnu**, is its originator. **Punarvasu Atreya** taught **Agnivesha**, whose treatise **Charaka** revised into the Charaka Samhita; Kashyapa is another early sage.
- **Brihat-trayi and their fields:**

Text	Author	Field
Charaka Samhita	Charaka	Kaya chikitsa (internal medicine)
Sushruta Samhita	Sushruta	Shalya (surgery)
Ashtanga Hridayam	Vagbhata	Digest of both

- The later **Laghu-trayi** ("lesser three"): **Madhava Nidana** (diagnosis), Sharngadhara Samhita and Bhavaprakasha.
- **Ashtanga Ayurveda (8 branches):** kaya (general medicine), bala (children), graha (mental illness), urdhvanga or shalakyas (eye, ear, nose, throat), shalya (surgery), damshtra or **agada** (poisons and antidotes), jara or **rasayana** (rejuvenation, longevity), vrisha or vajikarana (virility).

- **Dhanurveda** is the whole science of war, not only archery: civil and military defence, battle formations and statecraft. Vedic texts already name weapons such as **Ashti, Vajri and Shataghni**. The old texts are lost; known later works are **Dhanurvedhi, Drona Vidya, Kodanda Mandana** and **Dhanurveda Samhita**.
- **Gandharvaveda** (music, poetry, dance) grew from the **Samaveda**, because Samaveda mantras are sung. The Yamalashtaka Tantra speaks of a Gandharvaveda of **36,000 shlokas**, now lost; today it is studied as part of the **64 arts**. It is the root of Bharata's **Natyashastra**, itself called the *Natyaveda*.
- **Sthapatya (Shilpa) Veda**: architecture and sculpture; it plans **temples, aramas** (rest houses, gardens) and **tatakas** (tanks, reservoirs). Founded by **Vishwakarma**; today known as **Vastu**. Classic texts: Mayamata, Manasara.

Vedangas: the six limbs. They arose to **preserve** the Vedic text, **pronounce** it correctly and **use** it properly in the yagna. The Paniniya Shiksha pictures the Veda as a person (Veda Purusha):

Vedanga	Subject	Limb of the Veda	Classic text / author
Shiksha	Phonetics, accent	Nose	Paniniya Shiksha ; Pratishakhyas
Kalpa	Ritual rules	Hands	Shrauta, Grihya, Dharma, Sulba sutras
Vyakarana	Grammar	Mouth	Panini's Ashtadhyayi
Nirukta	Word meaning	Ears	Yaska's Nirukta
Chandas	Metre	Feet	Pingala's Chandahsutra
Jyotisha	Time for rites	Eyes	Lagadha's Vedanga Jyotisha ; Garga

- **Shiksha** holds the first place in preserving the Veda: a mantra's power depends on pronouncing it with the right svara and without a slip. The **Paniniya Shiksha** is a Shiksha work even though Panini is best known for grammar.
- **Jyotisha** fixes the **muhurta**; a rite at the wrong time is held to be fruitless.
- **Pratishakhyas**, one per Shakha: Rik Pratishakhya (attributed to **Shaunaka**), Vajasaneyi Pratishakhya (**Katyayana**), Taittiriya Pratishakhya, Atharva Pratishakhya. They belong to the Shiksha discipline.
- **Vyakarana's three sages* (Trimuni):* **Panini** (Ashtadhyayi), **Katyayana** (Vartikas), **Patanjali** (Mahabhashya).

Sutra literature. Sutras put long rules into very brief prose so they could be learnt by heart and taught orally. The **Kalpa sutras** were the most used:

Kalpa sutra	Subject
Shrauta	Great yagnas with three fires, such as the Ashvamedha and Rajasuya
Grihya	Home rites: samskaras (birth, marriage, funeral) and the pancha mahayajnas
Dharma	Duties of varnas and ashramas, raja dharma , partition of property, crimes and punishments
Sulba	Measuring and building yagna altars; first Indian geometry

- **Baudhayana's Sulba Sutra** is the oldest; it states the rule now called the Pythagorean theorem. Apastamba, Katyayana and Manava Sulba sutras came later.

Smritis and the 14 vidyas.

- **Smritis** are man-made codes based on the Veda, ranking next after Shruti. Because their aim is to set out dharma (duties and prohibitions), they are also called **Dharmashastras**; **Manusmriti** is the best known.
- **14 vidyas** (*Chaturdasha vidya*): 4 Vedas + 6 Vedangas + Purana, Nyaya, Mimamsa, Dharmashastra. With the four Upavedas they become the **18 vidyas** (*Ashtadasha vidya*), as the Vishnu Purana lists them. **Ayurveda is an Upaveda**, so it is in the 18, not the 14.
- **Mimamsa Sutras** are by **Jaimini**: they interpret the Vedic injunctions on ritual action (Karma kanda). **Nyaya Sutras** are by **Gautama**.

AP angle

- **Mantrapushpam**, recited at the end of puja in Andhra temples and homes, comes from the **Taittiriya Aranyaka** (Krishna Yajurveda), the same Aranyaka that holds the Taittiriya and Mahanarayana Upanishads. The Taittiriya Upanishad is the one most Telugu Vedic students learn first.
- **Jyotisha in daily life**: the **Panchanga shravanam** at **Ugadi** and the Telugu panchangam (tithi, vara, nakshatra, yoga, karana) carry on the Jyotisha anga, which fixes the time (*muhurta*) for every temple rite.
- **Sri Venkateswara Vedic University**, Tirupati (TTD, 2006), teaches the Vedas, Vedangas, Agamas and the Upavedas side by side.
- **Telugu forms**: Upanishattulu, Vedangamulu, Upavedamulu; *Chaturdasha vidyalu* for the 14 vidyas.

Common traps

✗ "Tat Tvam Asi is in the Kena or Isha Upanishad." ✓ It is in the **Chandogya** (Samaveda).

✗ "Mundaka Upanishad belongs to the Krishna Yajurveda." ✓ To the **Atharvaveda**; Katha and Taittiriya are Krishna Yajur.

✗ "Chandogya belongs to the Rigveda." ✓ To the **Samaveda**; Aitareya is the Rigveda's.

✗ "There are 18 (or 108) principal Upanishads." ✓ **10** principal; 108 in the Muktika list; 1,180 by tradition; 18 is the Puranas' count.

✗ "The Atharvaveda has the most Upanishads in the Muktika." ✓ The **Krishna Yajurveda** (32; Atharva 31). Among the **ten** principal ones the Atharvaveda leads (3).

✗ "Satyameva jayate is one of the four Mahavakyas." ✓ It is India's **motto**, from the Mundaka; the Mahavakyas are Prajnanam Brahma, Aham Brahmasmi, Tat Tvam Asi, Ayam Atma Brahma.

✗ "Dhanurveda is the science of architecture." ✓ Dhanurveda = **war**; architecture is **Sthapatya Veda** (Vishwakarma).

✗ "Gandharvaveda goes with the Yajurveda." ✓ With the **Samaveda**; Dhanurveda goes with the Yajurveda.

✗ "Panini wrote the Nirukta." ✓ **Yaska** did; Panini wrote the Ashtadhyayi (Vyakarana).

✗ "Ayurveda is one of the 14 vidyas." ✓ It is an **Upaveda**; it comes in only in the **18**.

✗ "Ayurveda has 6 branches." ✓ **8** (Ashtanga Ayurveda).

✗ "Aitareya was an early Ayurveda sage" (the course book's spelling). ✓ The sage is **Atreya** (Punarvasu Atreya), teacher of Agnivesha.

✗ "Jaimini developed the Gandharvaveda" (the course book's statement). ✓ Standard sources tie it to **Bharata** and Narada; Jaimini is the author of the **Mimamsa Sutras**.

✗ "Nachiketa met Yama in the Taittiriya." ✓ In the **Katha** Upanishad.

Quick revision

- Upanishad = sitting near the guru; Vedanta = end and essence of the Veda.
- 1,180 by tradition; 108 in the Muktika (Krishna Yajur 32 most, Rig 10 fewest); 10 principal (Dashopanishads).
- Atharva: Prashna, Mundaka, Mandukya. Krishna Yajur: Katha, Taittiriya. Shukla Yajur: Isha, Brihadaranyaka. Sama: Kena, Chandogya. Rig: Aitareya.
- Prajnanam Brahma (Aitareya), Aham Brahmasmi (Brihadaranyaka), Tat Tvam Asi (Chandogya), Ayam Atma Brahma (Mandukya).
- Satyameva jayate: Mundaka. Asato ma, neti neti: Brihadaranyaka. Satyam vada, Matru devo bhava: Taittiriya.
- Upavedas: Ayurveda–Rig, Dhanur–Yajur, Gandharva–Sama, Sthapatya/Artha–Atharva; Vishnu Purana lists Arthashastra.
- Brihat-trayi: Charaka, Sushruta, Ashtanga Hridayam (Vagbhata); Dhanvantari founded Ayurveda; Vishwakarma Sthapatya.
- Vedangas: Shiksha, Kalpa, Vyakarana, Nirukta (Yaska), Chandas (Pingala), Jyotisha (Lagadha; the eyes).
- Kalpa sutras: Shrouta, Grihya, Dharma, Sulba (geometry, Baudhayana).
- 14 vidyas = 4 Vedas + 6 Vedangas + Purana, Nyaya, Mimamsa, Dharmashastra; +4 Upavedas = 18.

3 Yagnas, ashramas, purusharthas and samskaras

Vedic life is organised around sacrifice (yajna), four stages of life (ashramas), four aims (purusharthas) and the sixteen sacraments (samskaras) that mark a person from conception to cremation.

Core facts

- **Yajna** comes from the root **yaj**, "to worship": an offering into the sacred fire with mantras. The giver of the sacrifice is the **yajamana**, the fee to priests is **dakshina**.
- "**Yajno vai Vishnuh**": the yajna is **Vishnu** himself. Yajna was believed to uphold **Rta**, the cosmic and moral order.
- **Agni** carries the offerings (*havis*) from the yajna-kunda to the gods, so he is the **priest of the gods**.
- **Yajna materials**:
 - **Charu**: havis of cooked **rice**.
 - **Purodasha**: rice-flour cake baked on a **potsherd**.
 - **Ajya**: cow's **ghee**, the chief liquid offering.
 - **Samidhas**: sacred sticks that feed the fire.
 - **Darbhas**: sacred grasses, **10 kinds** (kusha, kasha, yava, durva and others).
- **Pancha mahayajnas** (five daily great sacrifices of every **grihastha**):
 - **Brahma yajna**: study and teaching of the Veda (repays the rishis).
 - **Deva yajna**: oblations (homa) into fire for the gods.
 - **Pitru yajna**: tarpana and pinda for the ancestors.
 - **Bhuta yajna** (Bali yajna): food set out for animals, birds and other beings.
 - **Manushya yajna** (also Nri, Atithi or Purusha yajna): hospitality to guests (*atithi satkara*).
- **Three debts (rinās)** every person is born with: to the **rishis** (paid by Veda study), to the **devas** (paid by yajna), to the **pitrus** (paid by having children).
- **Two kinds of Vedic rite**: **Grihya** (domestic, one household fire, taught in the Grihya Sutras) and **Shrauta** (great public rites, three fires, priests, taught in the Shrauta Sutras).
- **Three Shrauta fires**: **Garhapatya** (west, round, the household fire from which the others are lit), **Ahavaniya** (east, square, oblations to gods), **Dakshinagni** (south, half-moon, for the pitrus).
- **Chief priests (ritviks)**:

Priest	Veda	Job
Hotr (Hota)	Rigveda	Recites hymns to invite the gods
Adhvaryu	Yajurveda	Builds the altar and performs the acts
Udgatr (Udgata)	Samaveda	Sings the Saman chants
Brahman (Brahma)	Atharvaveda	Silent overseer; corrects errors

Priest	Veda	Job
Agnidhra	(Brahma's group)	Assistant of the Brahma ; prepares the havis

- A full soma sacrifice has **16 ritviks** (each chief priest with three helpers).
- **Famous yagas and their purpose:**

Yaga	Purpose	Who performed it
Ashvamedha	Political supremacy, expanding the kingdom	Dasharatha, Rama, Yudhishtira, Sagara
Rajasuya	Consecrating a king; confirming sovereignty	Yudhishtira (Shishupala killed there)
Vajapeya	Power and wealth	Kings raised to <i>samrat</i>
Putrakameshti	Getting a son	Rishyashringa for Dasharatha
Vishvajit	The only yaga where the yajamana gives away everything	Vajashravas / Uddalaka (Katha Upanishad)
Sarpa yaga	Destroying the serpents	Janamejaya , to avenge Parikshit

- **Avabhritha snana:** the closing purificatory bath at the **end** of a sacrifice or festival (Chakrasnanam ends the Brahmotsavam).
- **Svaha** is said when offering to gods; **Svadha** when offering to pitrus.
- **Four ashramas** (about 25 years each): 1 **Brahmacharya** (student, to about 25), 2 **Grihastha** (householder, to about 50), 3 **Vanaprastha** (forest dweller, to about 75), 4 **Sannyasa** (renunciant, after 75). **Grihastha** is the **foundation** of the other three.
- **Four purusharthas:** **Dharma** (right conduct, duty), **Artha** (wealth and means of life), **Kama** (desire and pleasure within dharma), **Moksha** (release from rebirth). The first three = **trivarga**; all four = **chaturvarga**.
- **Sixteen samskaras** (*shodasha samskaras*): 3 before birth, then childhood, education, marriage and death (table below). **Garbhadhana** is the first, **Jatakarma** the first after birth, **Antyeshti** the last. Gautama Dharmasutra counts **40** samskaras.
- **Saptapadi** (seven steps around the fire) belongs to **marriage (Vivaha)**.
- **Eight forms of marriage:** Brahma, Daiva, Arsha, Prajapatya (approved); Asura, Gandharva, Rakshasa, Paishacha (disapproved).
- **Shakuntala and Dushyanta** = **Gandharva** marriage (mutual love, no rites).

The sixteen samskaras

No.	Samskara	When	What
1	Garbhadhana	Before conception	Prayer for a child
2	Pumsavana	3rd month of pregnancy	For a healthy (male) child
3	Simantonnayana	4th–8th month	Parting the mother's hair; protection

No.	Samskara	When	What
4	Jatakarma	At birth	Honey and ghee on the tongue; mantras
5	Namakarana	10th-12th day (often the 11th)	Naming
6	Nishkramana	4th month	First outing; shown the sun
7	Annaprashana	6th month	First solid food (rice)
8	Chudakarana (Chaula)	1st or 3rd year	First tonsure (<i>Puttuventrukalu</i>)
9	Karnavedha	3rd-5th year	Ear piercing
10	Vidyarambha (Aksharabhyasa)	About 5th year	Learning the alphabet
11	Upanayana	8 / 11 / 12 years	Sacred thread, Gayatri; "second birth"
12	Vedarambha	After Upanayana	Start of Veda study
13	Keshanta (Godana)	About 16 years	First shave
14	Samavartana	End of study	Gurudakshina, ritual bath; becomes a snataka
15	Vivaha	Marriage	Kanyadana, Panigrahana, Saptapadi
16	Antyeshti	Death	Cremation; the "last sacrifice"

Lists differ between texts (some add Vivaha-related or drop Karnavedha); the 16 above is the common one.

Explained

Why yajna. The yajna links people and gods. Its aims: **divine grace**, **worldly gains** (wealth, health, sons, long life), **heaven** (*svarga*), and, when done without desire for reward, **loka kalyana** (welfare of the world). A rite done expecting a fruit is *phalapekshita karma*.

Stages of a yajna (in order).

Stage	What happens
Vratagrahana	Day before : yajamana and wife prepare the fire and take vows (truthfulness)
Varana	Next day: the ritviks take their assigned seats
Pranita	Sacred water set beside the Ahavaniya ; keeps the asuras away (Shatapatha Brahmana)
Devatahvana	The Hota invites the gods with Rigveda mantras
Prayaja	Five ghee offerings: Samit, Tanunapat, Ida, Barhis, Svahakara
Ajyabhaga	Ghee portion to Agni and Soma

Stage	What happens
Upamshu yaga	The main offerings, such as the purodasha
Svishtakrit	Offering to Agni-Svishtakrit
Anuyaja	Closing offering to three : Barhis, Narashamsa , Agni-Svishtakrit
Havirbhakshana	Yajamana and ritviks eat the remaining purodasha as prasada; no yajna is complete without it
Samishti homa	Final homa that satisfies all the gods and bids them farewell

Why five daily sacrifices. Manus says a householder unknowingly harms small life at five places in daily work (hearth, grinding stone, broom, mortar and pestle, water pot: the *pancha suna*). The five great sacrifices make amends and keep the householder in balance with gods, sages, ancestors, other beings and fellow humans. They are small, daily and done at home; they are not Shrouta rites.

Nitya, naimittika, kamya. Duties done every day without fail are **nitya karma** (Sandhyavandana, the pancha mahayajnas); rites on special occasions are **naimittika**; rites for a desired result are **kamya**.

Sandhyavandana, the prayer at dawn and dusk with Gayatri japa and **arghya** (water) to the Sun, is a daily nitya karma, **not** one of the sixteen samskaras. The Puranas tell that the **Mandeha** asuras attack the Sun at each sandhya and the arghya of the twice-born drives them back.

The 21 Vedic sacrifices: three groups of seven.

Group	Fire	The seven (course book's list)
7 Paka yajnas	Grihya, one fire	Aupasana , Sthalipaka, Vaishvadeva, Ashtaka, Masashraddha, Sarpabali , Ishanabali
7 Havir yagas	Shrouta, three fires	Agnihotra , Darsha-Purnamasa , Agrayana, Chaturmasya, Pinda pitru yajna, Nirudha pashubandha, Sautramani
7 Soma samsthas	Shrouta, soma	Agnishtoma , Atyagnishtoma, Ukthya, Atiratra, Aptoryama, Vajapeya , Paundarika

- Lists vary: Gautama gives the Paka yajnas as Ashtaka, Parvana, Shraddha, Shravani, Agrahayani, Chaitri, Ashvayuji; many Havir lists begin with **Agniyadheya** (setting up the three fires) instead of the Pinda pitru yajna; the usual Soma list has **Shodashi** where the book has Paundarika.
- **Agnihotra**: daily milk oblation, morning and evening; one who keeps the three fires is an *ahitagni*.
- **Darsha-Purnamasa**: new-moon and full-moon offerings, the model for all ishtis. **Chaturmasya**: seasonal offerings every four months.
- **Agnichayana**: building a great brick fire altar, often in the shape of a falcon (*shyena*), with a soma sacrifice.

The great royal yagas.

- **Rajasuya**: consecration of a king, with a game of dice and the anointing (*abhisheka*). Yudhishtira's Rajasuya led to the dice game and exile.
- **Vajapeya**: a soma sacrifice with a chariot race that the yajamana wins; raises a king to *samrat*.

- **Ashvamedha:** a horse roams for a year with guards; kings whose land it crosses must submit or fight. Sagara's horse was stolen by **Indra** and hidden near Kapila's ashram. Historical kings: Pushyamitra Shunga, Samudragupta, Pulakeshin I.
- **Sarpa yaga: Janamejaya**, son of Parikshit, resolved to destroy all serpents because Takshaka had killed his father; **Astika** stopped it.
- **Daksha's yajna** (the *Brihaspatisava* of the Bhagavata): Shiva and Sati not invited; Sati gives up her body; Virabhadra destroys the yajna.

Ashramas: what each stage owes.

- **Brahmacharya** begins with **Upanayana**. The student lives with the guru (*gurukula*), studies the Veda, serves the guru (**guru shushrusha**), controls the senses (**indriya-nigraha**), begs food (*bhiksha*) and respects elders. A *naishthika* brahmachari stays a student for life; an *upakurvana* returns home to marry. It ends with **Samavartana**.
- **Grihastha** begins with **Vivaha**. It supports the other three, as all creatures live by air (Manu). Duties: **ekapatni vratam** (one wife), serving parents, **atithi satkaram** (honouring guests), **dharma santanam** (raising children in dharma), helping the poor; earning artha and enjoying kama within dharma; paying the debts and keeping the five great sacrifices.
- **Vanaprastha** is the **transition**: the householder hands duties to the next generation, starts withdrawing from **artha and kama**, lives in the forest with or without his wife on **roots and tubers** (*kandamula*), and practises **japa, tapas and dhyana**, preparing for sannyasa and moksha.
- **Sannyasa** is **sarvasanga parityaga**, giving up home, fire, property and ritual: the sannyasi conquers desire and anger, leaves his wife in the care of the children, teaches dharma and works for the good of the world while seeking **moksha**. He carries a staff (*danda*) and water pot. Some Puranas (Agni, Garuda) call the fourth stage **Yati**.
- The **Jabala Upanishad** lists all four and allows a person with strong detachment to take sannyasa from any stage.

Purusharthas and karma.

Aim	Meaning	Classic text
Dharma	Right conduct, duty	Dharmashastras (Manusmriti)
Artha	Wealth, fame, livelihood, statecraft	Kautilya's Arthashastra
Kama	Desire, pleasure, arts	Vatsyayana's Kamasutra (64 arts)
Moksha	Liberation from rebirth	Upanishads, darshanas

- Dharma guides the other two: wealth and pleasure are good when earned and enjoyed within dharma. The student learns dharma, the householder pursues artha and kama within dharma, the forest dweller and renunciant turn to moksha.
- **Karma theory:** the **punya** and **papa** of one's own deeds yield karma-phalas that decide one's future and next births; each person shapes his own destiny.

Debts: the classical three and the course book's six.

Debt	Repaid by
Pitru rina	Shraddha and pitru karmas (classically, by having children)
Matru rina	Never fully repaid; one stays indebted to the mother
Daiva rina	Yajnas and homas
Guru rina	Using the knowledge well and passing it to a worthy disciple
Rishi rina	Book: honouring sannyasis and rishis (classically, Veda study)
Manushya rina	Serving society

- The book adds **Bhuta rina**, repaid by Bhuta yajna.

Key samskaras in detail.

- **Pumsavana** is in the early months of pregnancy; **Simantonnayana** in the middle or late months.
- **Jatakarma** is the **first samskara after birth**. **Chudakarana** (Chaula; Telugu *Puttuventrukalu*) is the first hair removal, in the 1st or 3rd year.
- **Upanayana** ("leading near" the teacher): the boy receives the sacred thread (*yajnopavita*) and the **Gayatri (Savitri) mantra**, becomes a **dvija** (twice-born) and enters **brahmacharya**. Manu's ages: Brahmana **8**, Kshatriya **11**, Vaishya **12** (counted from conception). **Vedarambha** follows it.
- **Samavartana**: with the guru's leave the student offers **gurudakshina** and returns home, like a graduation.
- **Vivaha** takes one from brahmacharya into **grihastha**: Kanyadana (father gives the bride), **Panigrahana** (holding the hand), **Agni pradakshina**, **Saptapadi** (seven steps; marriage is complete with the seventh), Dhruva and Arundhati darshana (the pole star and the star of the faithful wife).
- **Antyeshti**: cremation with the household fire; then the days of impurity (*ashaucha*), **Sapindikarana** (joining the dead to the ancestors, usually the 12th day), monthly and yearly **shraddha**.

Eight forms of marriage.

Form	How	Approved?
Brahma	Daughter given to a learned man of good conduct, no payment	Best
Daiva	Given to the priest officiating at a sacrifice	Approved
Arsha	Given for a cow and a bull	Approved
Prajapatya	Given with the blessing "practise dharma together"	Approved
Asura	Bride price paid to her family	Disapproved
Gandharva	Mutual love and consent (Shakuntala–Dushyanta)	Disapproved for priests; allowed for Kshatriyas
Rakshasa	Capture by force (Krishna–Rukmini is often cited)	Disapproved
Paishacha	Taking a sleeping or intoxicated girl	Worst

AP angle

- **Telugu wedding rites** follow the Vivaha samskara: **Kanyadanam**, **Jeelakarra-bellam** (cumin and jaggery placed on each other's head), **Mangalya dharana** (tying the mangalasutram), **Talambralu** (pouring rice with turmeric), **Saptapadi** and **Arundhati darshanam**.
- **Aksharabhyasam** (Vidyarambha) is commonly done on Vasanta Panchami or Vijayadashami in temples, after worship of Saraswati and Vinayaka; **Annaprashana** and the first tonsure (*Puttuventrukalu*) are often done as vows at temples. At **Tirumala** hair is offered at **Kalyana Katta**.
- Telugu Vedic families carry titles from rites and learning: **Somayajulu / Somayaji** (performed a soma sacrifice), **Vajapeyayajulu** (performed a Vajapeya), **Avadhani** and **Ghanapathi** (masters of Veda recitation), **Dikshitulu** (initiated for a sacrifice). The Konaseema region of the Godavari delta is known for this tradition.
- **Sri Venkateswara Vedic University**, Tirupati (run with TTD support) and TTD's Veda pathashalas teach Veda and Shrauta and Agama rites.

Common traps

✗ "The third ashrama is Sannyasa." ✓ The third is **Vanaprastha**; Sannyasa is the fourth.

✗ "Saptapadi is part of Upanayana." ✓ Saptapadi belongs to **Vivaha** (marriage).

✗ "Vasishtha performed Dasharatha's Putrakameshti." ✓ **Rishyashringa** performed it (Vasishtha was the family priest).

✗ "Parikshit performed the Sarpa yaga." ✓ His son **Janamejaya** did; Parikshit died of Takshaka's bite.

✗ "The Vishvajit yaga is for victory over enemies." ✓ In it the yajamana **gives away everything** he owns; it opens the **Katha Upanishad**.

✗ "The Hotr belongs to the Samaveda." ✓ Hotr = **Rigveda**; Udgatr = Samaveda; Adhvaryu = Yajurveda; Brahman = Atharvaveda; Agnidhra assists the Brahman.

✗ "Oblations to gods go into the Garhapatya." ✓ Into the **Ahavaniya** (east); the Pranita water is also set beside it.

✗ "Darsha-Purnamasa is a Paka yajna." ✓ It is a **Havir yaga**; Aupasana, Sarpabali and Ishanabali are Paka yajnas.

✗ "Manushya yajna means practising martial arts." ✓ It is **hospitality to guests**; feeding animals and birds is **Bhuta** yajna.

✗ "Sandhyavandana is one of the sixteen samskaras." ✓ It is a daily **nitya karma**.

✗ "Vanaprastha / Sannyasa is the 15th samskara" (the course book's list). ✓ They are **ashramas**; standard lists of sixteen have **Keshanta** and count **Vivaha** and **Antyeshti**.

✗ "Rishi rina is repaid by serving sannyasis" (the course book). ✓ Classically the **three** debts are to rishis (Veda study), devas (yajna) and pitrus (children).

✗ "Shakuntala–Dushyanta was a Daiva marriage." ✓ It was **Gandharva**; Daiva is giving the daughter to the sacrificial priest.

✗ "The 64 arts are described in the Arthashastra." ✓ In Vatsyayana's **Kamasutra**.

Quick revision

- Yajna from yaj (to worship); Yajno vai Vishnuh; Agni = priest of the gods; charu (rice), purodasha (cake), ajya (ghee).
- Pancha mahayajnas: Brahma (study), Deva (homa), Pitru (tarpana), Bhuta (bali), Manushya (guests).
- Three debts: rishis, devas, pitrus. Fires: Garhapatya (west), Ahavaniya (east), Dakshinagni (south).
- Hotr–Rig, Adhvaryu–Yajur, Udgatr–Sama, Brahman–Atharva; Agnidhra assists Brahman; 16 ritviks.
- Vratagrahana → Varana → Devatahvana → Prayaja (5) → Agyabhaga → Upamshu → Svishtakrit → Anuyaja.
- Paka: Aupasana; Havir: Agnihotra, Darsha–Purnamasa, Sautramani; Soma: Agnishtoma, Vajapeya.
- Putrakameshti: Rishyashringa; Sarpa yaga: Janamejaya; Vishvajit: give away all (Katha Upanishad).
- Ashramas 25/50/75: Brahmacharya, Grihastha (foundation), Vanaprastha (3rd), Sannyasa.
- Purusharthas: Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha; trivarga = first three.
- 16 samskaras: Garbhadhana first, Jatakarma first after birth, Upanayana 11th, Antyeshti last; Saptapadi in Vivaha.