

[An introduction to Hindu Scriptures](#)

By: Khurshid Imam

Introduction

Hinduism is the misnomer of *Sanatan* dharma that is professed by more than 80 million people in India. It actually refers to set of belief and customs. In this article we will throw light over sacred scriptures of Hinduism. When it is asked to a Muslim about their holy book then answer is – Quran; similarly our Christian brethren answer – Bible. But when same question is asked to hindus then there is different answers; some may say – *bhagwad geeta*, some will say *ramayan* and a very few *Vedas*. Let's have brief idea about the scriptures of Hinduism in order to understand each other better.

Scriptures of Hinduism

1. Vedas
2. Upnishad
3. Darshan
4. Puranas
5. Itihaas
6. Smriti

The precise time of origin of each of these is not known. What people say about time is nothing but speculation. In fact – in terms of remembering the time of origin of any of hindu scriptures we have no information at all. No proof for whatever people say about the time of origin of any books. However the only thing guaranteed is the order in which they came into existence. For example – there is no difference of opinion that *Vedas* are the earliest, then *upnishad* were authored, then *puranas* came.

A. VEDAS

Vedas are the earliest scripture of Hinduism. They are held most sacred by knowledgeable people of Hinduism. Vedas are considered *ISH-WANI* or God's word. Vedas are said to be *APAUISHAY* meaning "Not from human being" or "divine". There is no precise information available about the time of origin of Vedas. Regarding Vedas being God's word or Not from Islamic perspective – is beyond the scope of the article. However I will only mention that though majority of Muslims are silent or negate Vedas being God's word – we have several proofs based on which we say that Vedas too were word of God like *torah, zabor, injeel*. This discussion can be taken separately in other article.

Vedas are divided into 4 books. These 4 books are further divided with various terminologies. I will mention the latest rule of division for each ved.

1. Rigved: It is considered to be most sacred and oldest Vedas. Rigved is divided into 10 mandal. Each mandal is divided into sukt and each sukt is divided into mantr. It is similar to the division of Quran: 30 para, each para has several ruku and each ruku has several ayah.

For example: “*The Only Lord of all created beings. He fixed and holdeth up this earth and heavens. What gods besides Him shall we adore with our oblation?*” – Rigved 10:121:1 means this statement is given in rigved 10th mandal, 121st sukt and 1st mantr. Remember there is no *shlokas* in Vedas. Vedas contain only *mantr*.

2. Samved: As per the latest division samved is divided into 1875 mantr.

3. Yajurved: It is divided into 40 *adhyay* and each *adhyay* is divided into mantr.

For example: “*Those who worship natural things enter into darkness of hell, those who worship man made things enter more into darkness of hell*” - Yajurved 40:9 - means 40th *adhyay* and 9th mantr.

4. Atharvaved: It is divided into 20 kand, and each kand is divided into sukt and each sukt into mantr.

For example: “*He (God) does not die, nor grows old*” – atharvaved 10:8:32 - means Atharvaved 10th kand, 8th sukt and 32nd mantr.

Vedas are full of monotheism. It is absent from idol worship. If someone does not misinterpret then it is free from multiple god concept. It will require a separate book to elaborate these points.

B. UPNISHAD

Primarily 108 upnishad are accepted. They were authored by scholars. They are not claimed to be God’s word. Upnishad contain word of wisdom, about monotheism about social life etc. They too are free from any concept of idol worship.

Probably chandogya upnishad was the starting point of the concept of birth-re birth cycle. Also through upnishad caste system got force. The status of Brahmin was raised. “*A man who steals the gold of a brahmin, he (i.e. a brahmin) who drinks liquor, he who dishonours his teacher’s bed and he who kills a brahmin—these four fall, as also a fifth who associates with them*”- Chandogya Upnishad: Part 5, chapter 10, verse 9

However with the upnishad playing with the God’s word (Vedas) has started. Before upnishad only Ved was there – which was considered God’s word. But human interference in God’s word started with the writing of Illopnishad. All hindu scholars agree that illopnishad was the first upnishad – and to your surprise it contains word by word last chapter of Yajurved i.e. 40th Chapter of yajurved was written separately as a book in the form of illopnishad.

C. DARSHAN

Darshan means philosophy. There are 6 books of darshan. They contain philosophy, word of wisdom and monotheistic talk. Again they too free from idol worship concept. Out of these 6 darshan the most famous and popular is uttar-mimansa-darshan which is also called Vedant. It was written by badrayan.

D. PURANAS

Primarily 18 puranas are accepted. Puarans are the work of much later time than Vedas or upnishad. Some of the famous puranas are: shrimad bhagwad puran, shiv puran, Vishnu puran, kalki puran, bhawishy puran, matasya puran, garud puran etc. Puarans does contain the concept of idol worship, the concept of multiple gods, gods like human beings, marriage of gods, fights of gods etc. In fact what is practiced today in Hinduism is not vedic religion rather puranic religion. In shrimadbhagwad puran Krishan is projected as superior god, in Vishnu puran Vishnu is projected as superior, in shiv puran shiva is projected as superior.

The story of Prophet Adam, eve, Prophet Noah and the great flood is mentioned in detailed in puranas. Also puranas contain detailed description of paradise and hell as described in Islam.

E. ITIHAAS

Itihas means history. Two most famous books of itihās are : Ramayan and Mahabharat

1. RAMAYAN

Ramayan is the great epic written by valmiki ji. However the ramayan that we know today and that is read in temples is NOT the valmiki ramayan but *tulsidas* written ramcharitmanas. *Ramcharitmanas* was written during the time of Akbar and its mostly read, preached and telecasted through TV Serial. While valmiki ramayan projected ram only as a human being or an obedient son – ramcharitmanas projects ram as God.

Valmiki ramayan speaks about king dashrath having more than 360 wives – ramcharitmanas speaks about he having only 3 wives. Similarly as per valmiki ramayan Ram had several wives. (For more information: [click here](#) -)

2. MAHABHARAT

This is also one of the greatest literary works in Sanskrit. This epic was written originally by Ved vyas. However what ved vyas wrote was a book called *jay*. It contained 8000 shlokas. After him *Vaishampayan* and other added *shlokas* in the book and named it *bharat*. Number of shlokas was increased from 8000 to 24,000. And today *mahabharat* contains more than 1,00,000 or 1 lakh shlokas and it is now called mahabhārata. So the book that was originally written with 8000 shlokas – today contain more than 1 lakh

shlokas. So on an average out of every 13 shlokas in mahabharat 12 are adulteration and only 1 is as per original book.

BHAGWAD GEETA

Practically it is considered most sacred by hindus. Bhagwad Geeta is nothing but a small part of Mahabharat. It is from the *bhism parv* of mahabharat. Geeta contains conversation between arjuna and Krishna. In the battlefield when arjuna refused to take arms against his relatives then Krishna encouraged him to fight for truth and justice. Now as I already mentioned that today's mahabharat contains every 12 shlokas out of 13 as adulteration or interpolation. So whatever krihna / arjuna say in geeta there is only 1/13 chance (on an average) that they have said as per original mahabharat.

F. SMRITI

Most popular book under this category is manusmriti. This is the book of Hindu law. Hindu laws are derived from this book. It emphasizes lot on caste system. However I would like to add that one should not get confused by the name that MANU was the author of this book. . It is of very later origin. Manu was not the author rather it was in his remembrance that book was written and attributed to him.

These are very brief information about Hindu scriptures. One should know it in order to have better understanding of Hinduism.

If you don't agree with the mail then instead of giving fatwa of deviation /kufr /shirk/biddat - have faith in Allah and leave it to him to judge

Author: Khurshid Imam is software engineer at Bangalore. For any criticism / feedback / suggestion feel free to mail – serviceforhumanity@gmail.com

Source: <http://khurshidimam.blogspot.com/2011/10/introduction-to-hindu-scriptures.html>