CHAPTER 2
VEDIC LITERATURE

At the core of Vedic literature are the Mantra samhitas, Brähmanaśas, the Āranyakas and the Upaniṣads. Among the Vedas, the Rgveda occupies a prominent place. Rgveda consists of 10 Books or Maṇḍalas and 1017 hymns or Sūktas. The total number of verses in the Rgveda is 10,580. Even the words and the letters of the Veda have been counted, numbering 1,53,826 and 4,32,000 respectively. Some of the names of the great seer-poets who have received the mantras through inspiration and revelation include Vaśiṣṭha, Viśvāmitra, Vāmadeva, Bharadvāja, Atri, and Madhuchhanda. Six of the maṇḍalas are devoted to the hymns composed by a single Rṣi or the family of the Rṣi. Thus the second maṇḍala is devoted chiefly to the sūktas of the Rṣi Grītsamada, the third and seventh similarly to the great names of Viśvāmitra and Vaśiṣṭha respectively, the fourth to Vāmadeva, and the sixth to Bharadvāja. The fifth maṇḍala contains the hymns of the house of Atri. In each of these maṇḍalas the sūtras addressed to Agni are first collected together, followed by those of which Indra is the deity, and finally the invocations of other Gods, Brhaspati, Sūrya, Rbhus, Uṣā etc, close the maṇḍalas. A whole book, the ninth, is devoted to a single God, Soma. The first, eighth and tenth maṇḍalas are collections of sūtras by various Rṣis, but the hymns of each seer are ordinarily placed together in the order of the deities to whom they are addressed, Agni leading, followed by Indra and then the other Gods.

According to the Matsyapurāṇa, the vañurveda was the only Veda in the beginning. The same view is held in Vāyupurāṇa and Viṣṇupurāṇa. It was Vedaṃvyāsa who arranged four Samhitās according to the requirements of the processes of symbolic sacrifice, and he transmitted the Rgveda to Paila, the
Yajurveda to Vaiśampāyana, the Sāmaveda to Jaimini and the Atharvaveda to Sumantu. In due course they transmitted them to their pupils, and in this fashion of transmission from teacher to disciple the tradition of oral transmission was developed. In the Bhāgavata and in several Purāṇas there is a detailed description of the various Śākhās of the Veda. There is a similar description in Śāntiparva of the Mahābhārata and there is an organized information on the śākhās of the Vedas in the Caranavyūha. There are three notable books of Caranavyūha attributed, respectively to Śaunak, Kātyāyana and Vyāsa. The total number of śākhās is believed to be 1131, but at present only 10 śākhās remain. As far as the Ṛgveda is concerned only one śākhā remains out of the original 21, which existed at one time. There is a claim that the Śāṅkhāyana śākhā is still known to a few Vedapāthins in Uttarpradesh and Gujarat, but this is not certain. As far as the Yajurveda is concerned, Patanjali had declared in his great Vyākaraṇa Mahābhāṣya that it had 101 śākhā. But today only 5 śākhā are known. In fact, the Yajurveda is classified broadly into the Śukla Yajurveda and the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda. The Śukla Yajurveda is also known as Vājasaneyi. The Vājasaneyi Samhitā has 30 Adhyāyas or chapters, 303 Anuvāks, 1975 Kāṇḍikas, 29625 words and 88875 letters. There are two extant śākhās of the śukla or Vājasaneyi Yajurveda, namely, Kāṇva and Mādhyaṇḍinī. The Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda has 5 extant śākhā namely Apastamba (taittiriya), Hiranyakesi (kapiṣṭhala), Kaṭha, Kaṭhaka, and Kalōpa or Maitrāyaṇi. Maitrāyaṇi samhitā has 4 kāṇḍas which are sub-divided into Prapāṭhakas. In this samhitā there are 3144 mantras of which 1701 are Rks from the Ṛgveda. In this samhitā there are mantras and rituals of the important sacrifices like those of Caturmāṣya, Vājapeya, Āsvamedha, Rājasūya, Sautrāmaṇi etc. The Taittirīya samhitā has 7 kāṇḍas, 44 Prapāṭhakas and 631 Anuvāks. In this samhitā there is a description of sacrifices like the
Rājasūya, Yajamāna, Paurodāsa etc. Apart from the Adhvaryu, there is also the Udgātā in a sacrifice, who chants certain specific mantras. The collection of mantras meant for the Udgātā has been called the Sāmaveda. Both in the Caranavyūha and in the Patañjali Mahābhāṣya it is indicated that the Sāmaveda had a thousand śākhā. Sāmaveda is musical in character and it contains only those Rks which can be set to music. There are 1549 Rks in the Sāmaveda, and only 75 of them are independent of the Rgveda. At present, the Sāmaveda has only 3 existing śākhā, namely Kauthuma, Rāṇāyaṇiya and Jaimīnya.

The Rks are transformed into songs of Sāma by the appropriate addition of words or stobhas, such as ha, u, ho, i, o, ho, oh, ou, ha etc. Apart from ‘hotā’ connected with the Rgveda, ‘Adbharyu’ connected with the Yajurveda. Udgātā connected with the Sāmaveda there is a fourth priest called Brahmā who is supposed to be a specialist of all the four Vedas, including the Atharvaveda, Rgveda, Yajurveda and Sāmaveda are collectively called Vedatrayi, and the Atharvaveda is not included in the Vedatrayi, although it has a significant place in the Karmakāṇḍa of the Vedas. The Atharvaveda is also known as Atharvāṅgirasa Atharvaveda and has two kinds of mantras—those relating to the cure of diseases and destruction of wild animals, piśācas and enemies and those relating to establishment of peace in the family and village as also those relating to health, wealth, protection and friendship with enemies. The origin of Āyurveda is to be found in the Atharvaveda.

The sanhitā of the Atharvaveda has 20 kāṇḍas which have 34 prapāṭhakas, 111 anuvāks, 739 sūktas and 5849 mantras. About 1200 mantras are common with those of the Rgveda. One sixth of the Atharvaveda is in prose.
while the rest is poetic. Patañjali has indicated that the Atharvaveda has 9 śākhā, but now only 2 remain namely, Paippalāda and Śaunaka.

Apart from the four Vedas and their numerous śākhā, there is the vast literature of the Brāhmaṇas. The appendices of the Brāhmaṇas, which are partly in prose and partly in verse, are called the Āranyakas. Āranyakas are so called because the tradition was to study them in forests. Some of the Upaniṣads are also included in Āranyakas; hence it is almost impossible to draw a definite boundary line between Āranyakas and Upaniṣads.

According to many ancient scholars hymns of the four Vedas and their explanations in the Brāhmaṇas both together constitute the Veda. The Brāhmaṇas have been throughout respected as the Veda itself. The rituals have been performed considering the Brāhmaṇas as equal to the Vedas. In the 19th century Maharishi Dayānanda Sarasvati expressed the view that the Brāhmaṇas are not the Veda itself. According to him, while the Vedas are revelations, the Brāhmaṇas are not, although expressed by seers.

The most important Āranyaka is the Aitareya Āranyaka of Rgveda. This Āranyaka consists of 18 chapters and each chapter is divided into a number of khaṇḍas. As mentioned earlier the Āranyaka deals with the inner meaning of the sacrifices, observances and rituals. Īśa, Kena, Kaṭha, Muṇḍaka, Śvetāśvatara and Mahānārāyanā are poetic compositions and they have great literary merit. The Atharvaveda has many Upaniṣads, and among these Upaniṣads there are some which are even non-Vedic, in the sense that they have connections with Puranas and Tantra. If the entire Upaniṣadic literature is taken into account, there are at least 250 Upaniṣads.
According to the different levels of conditioned consciousness embodied by human beings there are instructions in the Vedas for worship of different controllers, with the aim of reaching different destinations and enjoying different standards of sense enjoyment. Āgamas (emanated scriptures) are books which are classified into five for this purpose:

Energy - Śakti - Śākta Āgamas
Visible source (Sun) - Sūrya - Soura Āgamas
Controller - Gaṇapati - Gāṇapatya Āgamas
Destroyer - Śiva - Śaiva Āgamas
Ultimate source - Viṣṇu - Vaikhānasa Āgamas

For those who are below the standard for the Vedic purificatory process, Lord Śiva gave the Tantra Śāstras.¹ These have two general classifications, right and left. While the right aspect contains regulations for purification for those who are grossly engaged in meat eating, intoxication and illicit sex, the left aspect contains low class activities like black magic etc.

From the point of view of common human activity sense gratification is the basis of material life. To cater to this aim, there are three paths mentioned in the Vedas.

The Karma-Kāṇḍa path involves frutitive activities to gain promotion to better planets. Using the methodology from the first five Vedāngas, the Kalpa-sūtras explain this path. The Upāsanā-kāṇḍa involves worshiping different controllers for promotion to their planets. The Āgamas explain this path. Jñāna-kāṇḍa involves realizing the Absolute truth in its impersonal aspect for the
purpose of becoming one with it. The Upaniṣads explain this path. Though
these paths are all from the Veda, and the Veda do expound on them, one
should not think that that is all the Veda have. The real purpose of the Veda
is to gradually push one in the path of self-realization to the point of surrender
in devotional service to the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

There are three different sources of Vedic knowledge, called prasthāna-traya.
The Upaniṣads are known as śrutī-prasthāna. The scriptures following the
principles of the six limbs vedic knowledge (Vedāṅgas) as well as the
Mahābhārata, the Bhagavad-gītā, and the Purāṇas are known as smṛti-
prasthāna. The Vedānta-sūtras which present the vedic knowledge on the
basis of logic and arguments it is known as nyāya-prasthāna. All scientific
knowledge of transcendence must be supported by śrutī, smṛti and a sound
logical basis (nyāya). Smṛti and nyāya always confirm that which is said in
the śrutī.

Vedic injunctions are known as śrutī. All the spiritual literature from the origi-
nal Veda samhitās up to the Upaniṣads are classified as śrutī. The additional
supplementary presentations of these principles as given by the great sages
are known as smṛti. They are considered as evidence for the Vedic principles.
Understanding the ultimate goal of life is ascertained in the Vedānta—sūtras
and argument concerning cause and effect.

There are six aspects of knowledge in the Vedas known as Vedāṅgas:
Śikṣā - phonetic science
Vyākaraṇa - grammar
Nirukti - context (conclusive meaning)
Chandas - meter

Jyotiṣ - time science (astronomy & astrology)

Kalpa - rituals

The seers who have realized these aspects of knowledge from the Veda, have composed sūtras (short but potent phrases which convey a lot of meaning) on each Veda Gaṇa Kalpa-sūtras are of four categories, viz., śrouta (collective sacrifices), grhya (family rituals), dharma (occupational duties) and śulba (building of sacrificial fireplaces, altars etc.).

The Aitareya Upaniṣad belongs to the Rgveda and is found incorporated within the Aranyaka of that name. The Aranyaka consists of five books in all and the Upaniṣad forms chapters IV to VI of Book 11. There are other diminutive passages in the Aranyaka which claim to be the Upaniṣads of the saṃhitā. The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa and Aranyaka are supposed to have been written by Mahidāsa Aitareya, whose name has thus been bestowed upon them but the Upaniṣads part is attributed to purely human authors like Śvalāyana and Śaunaka. This Upaniṣad starts on a cosmogonical note. In the beginning Atmā alone existed. It created the worlds and their presiding deities. They were pervaded by hunger and thirst and hence were allotted their respective places in the human body so that they could appease their hunger and thirst by partaking of food. Food could only be grasped by the Apāna breath. Atman then entered the human body and made the heart its abode. The second book contains the ideas of Vāmadeva that when a man is conceived that is his first birth, when he is born that moment is his second birth and when after reaching a ripe old age he leaves for the other world that is his third birth. The third book contains a specific definition of Atman and Brahman.
The *Upaniṣad* does not offer much cultural information, but on the basis of the thought content, the presentation, as also its position of being embedded in *situ*, it is considered to be a fairly old *Upaniṣad*. The *Kauśitaki Upaniṣad* also belongs to the *Ṛgveda*. A *Sākhā* of that name is mentioned but is not to be found. The *Kauśitaki Brāhmaṇa* comprising thirty chapters and the *Kauśitaki Āranyaka* consisting of fifteen chapters are extant. The *Upaniṣad* forms chapters III to VI of the *Āranyaka*. Šaṅkaracārya’s commentary on this *Upaniṣad* is not to be found but he gives extracts from it in his commentary on the *Brahma Sūtras*. Šaṅkaracārya has written his *Dīpikā* on it.³ The first chapter gives details about the twofold path of the dead — one, which leads to the moon and back to the earth in the form of insects or beasts or men, the second, *Devayāna*, leads the departed through the worlds of gods to *Brahmaloka*. The second chapter deals with a mixture of different topics. It meditates on the life breath as *Brahman* and at the same time describes some rituals and sacraments. The third chapter establishes the life - breath as the *sumnum bonum* of all existence. It shows that all the creatures rest on intelligence, which, in its turn, rests on the life - breath. The fourth chapter narrates the story of King *Ajātaśatru* of *Kāśi* and the proud *Brāhmaṇa Balaki* and in which is also found the famous Sleep Doctrine in a lesser developed form than in the *Brhadāranyaka* and the *Māṇḍukya*. This *Upaniṣad* is rich in cultural material. The *dramatis personae* include *Indra*, *Pratardana*, *Citrā Gāngyāyani*, *Uddālaka Ārunī* and his son *Śvetaketu*, *Ajātaśatru Kāśya* and *Gārgya Balaki*. Many places of interest are mentioned. This *Upaniṣad* is generally taken to be an early one. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* which belongs to the *Kauthuma Sākhā* of the *Sāmaveda*, shares along with the *Brhadāranyaka*, the honour of being the oldest and the bulkiest text. The *Brāhmaṇa* of this school comprises forty chapters. The first 25 chapters are
called the *Pañcavimśa Brāhmaṇa* and the next five chapters the *Saḍvimśa Brāhmaṇa*. The next two chapters are known as the *Mantra Brāhmaṇa* and the last eight the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*. The last two sections mentioned, together form the text of the *Chāndogya Brāhmaṇa*. The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* has a commentary by Śaṅkarācārya and a glossary by Ānandagiri. It was translated into Persian by Darā Shikoh and his *pundits* and into French by Duperron. It appeared in the Bibliotheca Indica with a translation by Rajendralal Mitra. It has also been translated into German by Hamm, into Italian by Papesso and into Russian by Syrkin. Morgemoth published a dissertation on it from the Jena University and Syrkin and Yutaka Yuda some papers in Russian and Japanese, respectively. It has eight chapters and, apart from a few verses here and there is entirely in prose. The first two chapters glorify the *Udgīthā*. The third chapter shows Āditya as the honey of the gods which has been brought forward by the Vedas and the Brahma-knowledge. It meditates on man as sacrifice and Āditya as Brahman. The fourth chapter narrates the stories of Janaśruti-Raikva and of Satyakāma jābāla as a student of Brahma-knowledge at his teacher’s place and later as a teacher himself. The fifth chapter starts with a fable proclaiming the superiority of life breath over other senses and goes on to tell the tale of Pravahaṇa and Śvetaketu which shows a developed version of the *Citra* story of the Kauśitaki. The identity of Vaisvānara Ātman is made clear in the Āsvapati episode. The sixth chapter gives a consolidated lecture on all the current trends of philosophy as delivered to Śvetaketu by his father Uddālaka Āruṇī. The famous formula ‘Tattvamasi Śvetaketu!’ (That thou art, 0’ Śvetaketu!) showing the ultimate unity of the individual soul with the universal soul, also occurs in this chapter. The seventh chapter gives progressive definitions of the Brahman as rendered to Nārada by Sanatkumāra. The last chapter describes the
importance of the knowledge of Atman and Brahman and shows how the 
Asuras came to accept the wrong doctrine as the truth about Atman and how 
Indra by his perseverance ultimately attained the true Brahma-knowledge. 
The Upaniṣad is a veritable storehouse of invaluable information about the 
cultural life of the times.

The Kena Upaniṣad is attached to the Talavakāra recension of the 
Sāmaveda. The Jaiminiya saṁhitā and the Jaiminiya Talavakāra Brāhmaṇa 
have been published. The ninth chapter of this Brāhmaṇa goes under the 
name Kena Upaniṣad, which is derived from the first word of the text. 
Commentaries on it by Saṅkara and Nārāyaṇa and a glossary by Ānandajñāna 
are available. It was included in the translations of Dara Shikoh and Duperron. 
An English translation by Sri Aurobindo along with Bengali and Marathi 
translations are among the more notable ones. Sengaku Mayeda has published 
articles on Saṅkara’s authorship of the Padabhāṣya and the 
Vākyabhāṣya and on Nārāyaṇa’s authorship of the Kenopaniṣad Dipikā in 
Japanese. The Upaniṣad has four sections, the first two in verse and the other 
two in prose. Deussen, for this reason, takes it as belonging to the transitional 
phase between the ancient prose Upaniṣads and the later metrical 
one. It shows the gods puzzled by an unknown Yakṣa. They are told by Umā 
Haimavati that it was Brahman. The first half of the Upaniṣad establishes 
the identity of the Brahman as that which is the ear of the ear, the mind of the 
mind, the speech of the speech, the breath of the breath, and the eye of the 
eye. The Isa Upaniṣad also named after the first word forms an integral part 
of the Mādhyanandini saṁhitā of the Śukla Yajurveda. Being directly at- 
tached to the saṁhitā, it might claim a very early origin but the Śukla 
Yajurveda saṁhitās are considered to be later than the Krṣṇa. Therefore, this
Upaniṣad should be treated as having a later origin. The style in which Brahman is described in the eighteen verses also hints at a later origin. Max Muller has pointed out that the Yajurveda is the liturgical Veda par excellence whereas the Upaniṣads in a way negate the Karmakāṇḍa, by emphasizing penance austerity and meditation. Therefore, the inclusion of an Upaniṣad within close proximity of the Yajurveda saṁhitā shows a discrepancy. Be that as it may, there is no doubt as to the importance of this Upaniṣad as a source of philosophy. The Upaniṣad has been translated into English, Hindi, Bengali, Gujarati, Marathi and Telugu. Among the notable commentaries mention might be made of the commentaries of Sri Aurobindo and Vinoba Bhave. It consists of only eighteen verses some of which are addressed to Puṣan, some to Agni and some to Kratu. But the rest of the verses describe Brahman in a well-developed manner. The ethical code of conduct is spelled out.

The Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣads is one of the oldest and largest Upaniṣads. The Śukla Yajurveda, to which it belongs, has two extant recensions — the Mādhyandina and the Kanva. Both have their own Śatapatha Brāhmaṇas showing minor variations of the text. The Brhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad forms the last six chapters of the fourteenth Kāṇḍa of the śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. There is a commentary by Śaṅkara and a glossary by Anandatirtha on this Upaniṣad. It has been translated into French by Senart and into Russian by Syrkin. This Upaniṣad is divided into six chapters and three kāṇḍas. Each pair of chapters is followed by a genealogical list of teachers, who trace their line from Brahman or Āditya. This is significant, since the śukla Yajurveda is said to have been revealed to Yājñavalkya by Āditya. Yājñavalkya figures as a very important person in the third and fourth chapters. The first chapter
describes the universe as a cosmic horse and proceeds to give a detailed account of the creation of the world by Brahma. The importance of the life-breath is established. Prajapati is also credited with the creation of the worlds, the creatures and food. A triad of nāma, rūpa and karma is also mentioned. The second chapter starts with the story of Ajātaśatru and Gārgya. It brings out the twofold character of Brahma, the formed and the formless; explains the nature of Ātman and Brahma in the Yājñavalkya-Maitreyi dialogue; describes the Madhu-Vīdīyā and ends with the line of tradition. The third chapter is set in the court of Janaka Vaideha and gives a detailed account of the discussion held between the Brāhmaṇas of Kuru-Pāṇcāla and Yājñavalkya, synthesizing all the Upaniṣadic thinking. The fourth chapter also consists of Yājñavalkya’s lectures on philosophy delivered to Janaka and to Maitreyi. Part of the discourses shows a very developed phraseology and even quotes verses from the Ṛṣa and the Kaṭha. The fifth chapter opens with Prajātapatī’s advice to his threefold offspring and goes on to identify Brahma with Satya. Diminutive passages on varied topics follow it. The sixth chapter again relates the fable of the quarrelling senses and the victory of the life-breath. Pravahana’s views of life after death occur next. Ritualistic formulas are recorded and a matrilineal list of the teachers concludes the Upaniṣad. The text abounds in rich cultural material. The dialogues bring long-forgotten names within close contact and we have a glimpse of the relationship between the king and the sages, between husband and wife, between the ritualistic priests and the thinkers. The kingdoms of Kāśi and Vīdeha seem to be gaining popularity as centres of new philosophical thinking. The Taittiriya Upaniṣad belongs to the Taittiriya samhitā of the Kṛṣṇ Yajurveda. There are Brāhmaṇa and Āranyaka texts of that name as well. The Taittiriya Āranyaka has ten chapters, of which chapters VII, VIII and IX are known as
the Taittirya Upaniṣad and the tenth chapter as the Mahānārāyana Upaniṣad. But the latter is a late supplementary work showing definite signs of being a sectarian Upaniṣad. Saṅkarācārya has commented on the Taittirya Upaniṣad and Saṅyaṇa on the Brāhmaṇa and Āranyaka as well. Sureśvara's Vārttika and Ānandagiri's Ṭikā on Saṅkara Bhāṣya are also found. Father Goncalo Fernandez had translated the Bhṛgu Valli into Portuguese in the Hindu Ceremonial. The first chapter, Śikṣa Valli deals with the art of pronunciation and the relationship between the teacher and the taught, followed by an explanation to departing students to contemplate on Brahman and Om. Brāhmaṇāṇanda Valli, outlines progressive definitions of Brāhman as food as life-breath, as bliss and traces various forms of bliss. The third chapter, Bhṛgu Valli contains the dialogue between Bhṛgu and Varuṇa in which again Brahman is known by progressive stages as food, breath, mind, intelligence and bliss. The last part illumines the importance of food. The Kaṭha Upaniṣads is easily one of the most popular Upaniṣads. The legend of Yama-Naciketā is a byword for Upaniṣadic thought. It is attributed to the Kaṭha Sākhā of the Kṛṣṇ Yajurveda, although another opinion holds it as an Atharvanic Upaniṣad. It has two chapters with three Vallis each and is entirely in verse. Saṅkara has written a commentary and Gopalayogin and Ānandagiri have written Glossaries on it. It has been translated into English, Hindi, Bengali, Kannada and Tamil. Two scholars have published articles on whether there is Buddhist influence on the Kaṭha or not. An article has also been published on the - Kaṭhopaniṣad Saṅkara bhāṣya in Japanese. The story goes that Vaiśravas Gautama, while performing a sacrifice, was giving away barren and useless cows to the priests as fees. Seeing this, his son Naciketā was aggrieved and asked him “for whom shall you give me?” The father irritably said “For Yama”. The son took him literally and went willingly to the abode of Yama. He stayed there for three
nights without food or drink as Yama was away from home. As a conse-
quence of his wait Yama offered him three boons - one that his father be
happy to see him again; second knowledge of the fire sacrifice through
which people gain heaven; and third the truth about life and death. The
philosophy that is expounded by Yama is no longer in course of develop-
ment. The phraseology is well-formed and many images are reminiscent of
the Bhagavadgītā. It seems to come before the Muṇḍaka, the Śvetāśvetara
and the Maitrāyaṇi but later than the others. The Śvetāśvetara Upaniṣad is
handed down as one of the thirty-three Upaniṣads of the Taittiriya school of
the Kṛṣṇa Yajurveda, though it could have been connected with the non
extant Śvetāśvetara samhitā. It has been commented upon by Śaṅkara,
Vijñānātman and Śaṅkarāṇanda among others. A translation in English by
Rājagopalachari and in German by Wilhelm Rau are noteworthy. There
are six chapters all composed in verse. The first chapter analyses the causes
of birth and death, pleasure and pain and brings out the point that knowledge
and austerity make one realize the self. The second chapter commences with
a prayer to Śāvitrī and goes on to detail the practice and profit of Yoga. The
third chapter establishes the superiority of Rudra Siva over all others by
identifying him with Brahman. The fourth chapter keeps up the description
of the universal and individual souls. Many verses are common to the Īśa the
Kaṭha and the Muṇḍaka. The phraseology and the descriptions of the indi-
vidual soul and the universal soul is very well developed. Details about
Yoga and Rudra's almost sectarian character have led scholars to set a later
date to this Upaniṣad. The Maitri or Maitrāyaṇi Upaniṣad belongs to the
Maitrāyaṇi Śākhā of the Black Yajurveda, though some texts attribute it to
the Śāmaveda. Śaṅkara has not written any commentary on it. This Upaniṣad
opens in a dramatic manner Brhadratha, a king of the Ikṣvāku line having
renounced his kingdom, goes to the forest for meditation. The sage 
Sānkayanya arrives on the scene and instructs him as to the BrahmaVidyā 
in order to liberate him from the birth-cycle; the same vidyā that was given 
to him by the revered Maitri and to the Vālikhilyas by Prajāpati. The dialogue is supposed to have continued till the end of the seventh chapter but most people are of the opinion that the older part of the Upaniṣad ends with the fourth chapter and the later three chapters were added at a considerably later time. The general picture of society emerging from the Maitrāyaṇī Upaniṣad seems to be of a later time than that of the Brhadāranyaka or the Chāndogya. The thought content also, as shown by several scholars, stem from a later date. This, then, can be taken as the lower terminal of the Upaniṣadic culture. There are scholarly discussions on whether or not this Upaniṣad comes before the Buddha.

The Praśna Upaniṣad belongs to the Paippalāda Śākhā of the Atharva Veda. Neither the Brāhmaṇa, Āranyaka Kalpa Sūtras of this Śākhā have been found. The Upaniṣad has commentaries by Śaṅkara and by Ānandagiri. It is written mostly in prose with occasional verses. Six learned men, all desirous of more knowledge visit the sage Pippalāda. Their questions are recorded in the six sections and also give the Upaniṣad its name. These questions concern the creation of the universe, its basis, the origin of life-breath, the sleep doctrine, the superiority of Om. The answers show a well developed Upaniṣadic philosophy. The layout shows a pre-meditated plan and not the spontaneity of the earlier texts. Another pointer to its later origin is that the dialogue is entirely between the Brāhmaṇas. This according to Deussen, is a sure sign that the Brāhmaṇas had assimilated the new guhya doctrines of the kṣatriyas and were preaching them as their own. Two names among the questioners are worthy of attention:
Kauśalyā and Vaidarbhi. Kośala, along with Kāśi and Videha seems to have been the hub of the Upaniṣadic culture but Vidarbha is the only word in the Upaniṣads referring to the region south of the Vindhya. The Munḍaka Upaniṣad is related to the Śaunaka Sākhā of the, Atharva Veda but its relation to any Brāhmaṇa or Āranyaka has not been established. It has a commentary by Śaṅkara and a glossary by Ānandajñāna. There are three chapters with two sections each, written in verse. It shows the clear influence of the Kaṭha and the Śvetāśveta Upaniṣads. All the other Upaniṣads also declare that sacrifices are insufficient for attaining permanent bliss but this is the only Upaniṣad which clearly states that sacrifices are like frail boats, unable to carry one ashore. The word Munḍaka, derived from the root Munḍ, ‘to Shave’, might have meant that the Upaniṣad was addressed to the shaved ones, the Sanātana-sins - or that it was inspired by the shavelings, the Buddhist monks, or that it shaved away ignorance. The first chapter distinguishes between the knowledge and false and emphasizes the permanent nature of the bliss obtainable as a result of austerity and penance and not sacrifices. The second chapter describes Brahma as the universal soul from which this universe finds expression and which can be realized with the true Upaniṣadic knowledge and meditation on Om. The third chapter shows that the World Soul can be realized by the individual and that this realization is the ultimate aim of all religious practices. The Munḍukya Upaniṣad consists of twelve verses and is believed to be an Atharvanic Upaniṣad. It identifies Om with the fourfold Brahma and equates the three syllables a-u-m with the three states of waking, dream and dreamless sleep. Gauḍapāda (Śaṅkarācārya’s teacher’s teacher) wrote his famous Kārika on it and Śaṅkara has commented on the Upaniṣad as well as the Kārika. Scholars have pointed out that the Upaniṣad presents the very ideas preached by the Advaita philosophy and
that it was probably written by a teacher, once or twice removed from Gauḍapāda. The *Upaniṣad* is of no help whatsoever regarding cultural life. It only shows a logical development of the sleep Doctrine of *Ajātaśatru* as described in the *Kauśitaki* and the *Brhadāranyaka*. 