INTRODUCTION
1.0: INTRODUCTION

The word 'Atharva' is derived from the root 'ā̄̄hārv' which means to move or to hurt. So 'A-tharv' refers to that which does not move, that is constant or which does not hurt. Though the name 'Atharvaveda' is the only name that is in use now, there are many names by which the AV is mentioned in our ancient literature. All the Manuscripts of the Atharvaveda Saunakiya Samhita bear the title Atharvāṅgirasah, which seems to be the oldest name of the AV. (Also the verse, AV.X.7.20, mentions the same title). Here Ātharvaṇa and Āṅgirasas represent the two very ancient names of the Rśi families. Ātharvaṇa refers to the magic formulas, magic spells and Āṅgirasas deals with a class of fire-priests of the pre-historic times. Both Ātharvaṇa and Āṅgirasas denote two different types of magic formulas. Ātharvaṇa is sacred auspicious magic, that is to say, those parts of the Atharvaveda, which are recognised by the Atharvanic ritual and the orthodox Brāhmanical writings as śanta 'holy',

Foot notes: (1) The Mahābhārata also mentions the name of the Atharvāṅgirarsa. See, Sukthankar, V.S., 1954: Vol.-16, P.1824 (12,322,37).


(2) Gop Br,1.2.22, 1.5.10; Vide: AV. 11.6.13.
'pauṣṭika', auspicious, and bheṣaja, whereas the term - Aṅgirasa stands for the hostile sorcery or black-magic which is known as the yātu (Satapatha Brāhmaṇa, X.5.2.20), abhicāra and ghora. Thus, Atharvāṅgirasa is the veda having both kinds of magic formulas.

Another name of the AV that we find mentioned Bhṛgvaṅgirasaḥ' (e.g. in the Gop Br, 1.2.22). It might signify the importance of the seer Bhṛgu. The Bhṛgus and Aṅgirasas were the foremost among the composers of the AV. The term Bhṛgvaṅgirasaḥ, as far as is known, occurs only in Atharvanic texts, though Bhṛgu in this compound takes place of Atharvan, the term bhṛgavaḥ or bhṛguveda though do not occur. We find, however, in the Cūlikā Upaniṣad-II, mentions the Atharvaveda Saṁhitā by the name Bhṛguvistara. In Gop. Br 1.2.28 and in Vaitāna Sūtra, 1.5, the name 'Bhṛgvaṅgira' is mentioned. The term bhṛgvaṅgirasa, almost always in the compound bhṛgvaṅgiroid is the favourite designation of the AV in the Atharvanic ritual texts.

The name 'Brahmaveda' occurs in the contexts of the Atharvanic ritual. This name did not originally occur.

(3) Gop Br. 1.1.3, 1.2.22, Vide: RV.8.43.13; X.14.6
(4) Bloomfield, M., 1964: Vol.- XLII, P.xxvi
(5) Vaitāna Sūtra 1.1, Vide: The Gop Br 1.1.26 & 37, also see, Atharvaveda Parisīṣṭa 23.1.2, also see Kauśika Sūtra 94.3-4, Vide: RV X.90.9
in the AV, but was applied to it later. It is mentioned in the Atharvaveda Parisista (23.1.2) and in the Gop Br (1.1.26), and also in Vajíana Sūtra (1.1) etc. The Gop Br 1.1.1, makes it clear that Brahman, the universal cause, is the originator of the universe, and the 'Brahmaveda' is said to be directly originated from the brahman itself. The Gop Br 1.3.4, praises the AV as the most important religious manifestation: etad vai bhūyistam brahma yad bhrṛvaṅgirasah.

'Kṣatra' is another name's of the AV.6 It seems that the fourth-veda is the veda of the ksatriyas where is occur the characteristic rites of the ksatriyas (through or with the aid of his purohita). The text of the Saṁhitā abounds in rājakarmani, 'royal practices', and Weber thinks that the name of kauśika, the author of the great Atharvan -Sūtra, points to a ksatriya connection, since Kauśika is identical with Viśvāmitra, and the latter, as is well known, stands forth among the ancient vedic heroes as the representative of royalty.7

Among the above names, it seems

(6) Satapatha Brāhmaṇa. XIV.8.14.1-4, Vide: Praṇopaniṣad 2.6

vide: Brhadāranyakopaniṣad. 5.13.4.

that 'Athravaṅgirasah' might have been the original and the oldest name of this veda, which ultimately was replaced by the convenient one, namely the Atharva-veda', by dropping the aṅgirasa from it.

The Atharvaveda Saṁhitā has two versions, i.e., the Saunakiya and the Paippalāda, but the Paippalāda is very imperfectly known. The Saunakiya recension of the AV consists of twenty kāṇḍas or chapters. It contains more than 700 hymns, and approximately 6000 verses. This Saṁhitā contains many verses which occur in the RV. According to the ancient Indian tradition, there are nine branches or Sākhās or Charanas or Bhedas of the AV. They are: the Paippalāda, Tauda, Mauda, Saunaka, Jalada, Jājala, Brahmadeva, Devadarśin and Charanavaidya.

The Atharvaveda Saṁhitā occupies a unique position among the four vedic Saṁhitās on account of its subject matter which encompasses: Bhaiṣajyāṇi-charms to cure

(8) Karambelkar, V.W., 1959: p. 3.
* We know the Atharvan Sākhās from four sources: (a) the charanavyuhas (5th Parisiṣṭṭa of the Vaiṣṇavī samhitā and the 49 Parisiṣṭṭa of the AV), (b) references in Pāṇini, Mahabhaṣya and other grammatical works, (c) reports of the Purāṇas and (d) The references from the Atharvan literature and the introduction to this veda by Sańyaṇa (Ibid: p. 3).
diseases; Ābhicārikāṇi and Kṛtyāpratiharāṇāṇi the
imprecations against demons, sorcerers and enemies;
Strīkarmāṇi-charms pertaining to women; Rājakarmāṇi-
charms pertaining to royalty; Sāmmanasyāṇi charms to
secure harmony; Paustikāṇi-charms of prosperity,
prāyaścittāṇi-charms in expiation of sin and
defilement; Imprecations in the interest of Brāhmīṇs;
Cosmogonic and Theosophic hymns; Ritualistic hymns;
Hymns dealing with individual themes; Kuntāpā
Sūktāni (9) etc.

Let us discuss the above mentioned contents of the
AV, in brief. Bhaiṣajyāṇi: The AV contains many hymns
describing various medicinal herbs for various
ailments. Many diseases like kāmala, Jaundice (1.22),
Kuśtha, Leprosy (1.23), Takman or fever (1.25) etc. and
medicinal plants like Prśniparni, panamani, khadira
are mentioned here. The bhaiṣajyāṇi or medicinal plants
are praised to heal diseases and to be free from
enemies. See for example:

Tr: The Goddess Prśniparni hath blest us, troubled
Nirṛti, Fierce crusher of the kāṇvas is She: her have I
gained, the mighty one.

note: Here the medicinal plant Prśniparni is deified

and praised for her favour of removal of the disease. -

Another verse as the following one mentions another herbal remedy for some ailments:

आयमणि पूण्यमिथिष्ठालिन यज्ञान प्रमुणसत्तलनान
ओजो देवानां पयो ओषधीनां कर्न्ति मा जिन्तितुक्रयावकृ

(AV. 3.5.1.)

Tr: This Pāraṇa amulet hath come strong and destroying with its strength my rivals. The power of the Gods, the plants sweet essence, may it incite me ceaselessly with vigor.

**Abhicāra** is of two types, one is against human enemies (Yātudhāna) and another is against in human powers (Rākṣasas, kīmīdīns, piśāchas etc.) eg:

दित्यो गन्धर्वो भुवनस्य अशपतिरेक एव नमस्योतिविरोधः
ते त्वा कौमिष्ठ श्रद्धमिण्डि दित्य देव नमस्ते अस्तु दिवी साभायम

(AV. II. 2.1.)

Tr: Lord of the world, divine Gandharva, only he should be honoured in the tribes and worshipped. Fast with my spell, celestial God, I hold thee, Homage to thee, Thy home is in the heavens.

Note: In this hymn, divine Gandharva is regarded as the lord of universe and again requested to receive homage.

In the hymn V.32 also has the similar topic:

रुद्रो वो ग्रीवा अशाधन विशाचा: प्रस्तोतिविरोध श्रुणानु यानुधानो: वीरस्वर वो विष्णुवीयं यथेन समज्जगमन

(AV. VI. 32.2.)

Tr: Let Rudra break your necks, O ye Piśāchas and split your ribs as under, Yātudhānas, your herb of universal