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Paper : **Vedic, Epic and Puranic Culture of India**  
Module : **Pancha Suktas and its importance**

ज्ञान-विज्ञान विमुक्तये



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## Component-I (B) – Description of module:

Subject Name	Indian Culture
Paper Name	Vedic, Epic and Puranic culture of India
Module Name/Title	Pancha Suktas and its importance
Module Id	IC / VEPC / 06
Pre requisites	Vedic Culture and Suktam
Objectives	To know about Suktam, its meaning, various Suktas of Vedic Age and its significance
Keywords	Suktam / Purusha Sukta / Pancha Suktas

### E-text (Quadrant-I):

#### 1. Introduction to Suktam

A Suktam is a hymn in praise of the deity intended. It praises the deity by mentioning its various attributes and paraphernalia. Rigveda is a Vedain form of Sukti's, which mean 'beautiful statements'. A collection of very beautifully composed incantations itself is a Sukta. The Sukta is a hymn and is composed of a set of Riks. 'Rik' means - an incantation that contains praises and Veda means knowledge. The knowledge of the Suktas itself is the literal meaning of Rigveda.

The Rigveda Richas comprises mainly of the praises of God. Other than this it also has incantations containing thoughts which are evolved by the sages through their minute observation, contemplation and analysis. Every element of nature was an issue to contemplate upon for the sages. In this process they have spoken about the mysteries of the universe, which are for practical usage.

#### 2. Meaning of Suktam

सूक्त sUkta n. Vedic hymn

सूक्त sUkta n. song of praise

सूक्त sUkta adj. well or properly said or recited

सूक्त sUkta adj. well said

सूक्त sUkta n. wise saying

#### 3. Vedas and Suktams

Hindu religious sources are classified as ``Sruti" or ``smRti". Sruti -- that which is heard -- is of the nature of divine revelation. We believe that the Vedas, hymns composed by seers and sages beginning as best were sung under divine inspiration. This is why they are Sruti. These sages ``heard" them as the voice of the Divine.

**Vedic Suktas:** A Suktam is a part or portion of Vedic verses in praise of a deity or group of deities to please accordingly, and to get a Kamyā Phala. (This definition belongs to the answerer and it is not final) Pavamana Suktam (Punyahavachanam), Ayushya Suktam, Vivaha Suktam etc, are in praise of group of deities.

### List of Vedic Suktas:

List of Vedic Suktas	
Vishwakarma Sūktam	Devi Sūktam
Aksha Kitana Ninda Sūktam	Hiranyagarbha Sūktam
Manyu Sūktam	Medha Sūktam
Nadistuti Sūktam	Narayana Sūktam
Nasadiya Sūktam	Prithvī Sūktam
Purusha Sūktam	Sri Sūktam
Aghamarshana Sūktam	Agni Sūktam
Ayushya Sūktam	Balitha Sūktam
Bhagya Sūktam	Bhu Sūktam
Durga Sūktam	Dūrva Sūktam
Ganesha Sūktam	Mrittika Sūktam
Nakshatra Suktam	Nasadiya Sūktam
Navagraha Sūktam	Neela Sūktam
Parjanya Sūktam	Pavamana Sūktam
Ratri Sūktam	Roga Nivarana Sūktam
Rudra Sūktam	Sanyasa Sūktam
Saraswati Sūktam	Saura Sūktam
Shanna Sūktam	Vishnu Sūktam

### Pancha Suktams

The Pancha Suktams of Sri Vaishnava sampradaya or tradition are Purusha Suktam, Narayana Suktam, Sri Suktam, Bhu Suktam, and the Nila Suktam.

In South India, the Purusha Suktam, Vishnu Suktam, Sri Suktam, and Narayana Suktam are generally chanted together in paarayanam.

The Sri Rudram, Purusha Suktam, Upanishads, the Gita, and the Vishnu Sahasra Naamam are also recommended for daily paarayanam - chanting.

Since the Purusha Suktam is seen in all Vedas, it is cited as the essence of all Srutis by Veda Vyasa in the Mahabharata. Saunaka, Apastamba, and Bodhayana have also written concerning the use of the Purusha Suktam.

## **Pancha Sukta Tradition**

How to go about choosing to chant the Pancha Sukta's based on which tradition you belong to. If one is a Smartha Brahmin, then he will be following the Smartha Pancha Suktas but that should not prevent him to learn the other Suktas

One thing interesting is that all of sects chant Sri Suktam, and the Sri Suktam is chanted to be blessed with wealth and prosperity and so when it comes to being blessed with wealth and prosperity there is no difference in various traditions

## **The Shiva Pancha Sukta Tradition**

In every tradition of Sanatana Dharma, that accepts and uses the Vedas, five (pancha) Vedic hymns (suktas) are selected and considered the most important. The five hymns are recited especially in temple usually during the ablution ceremony (abhishekha).

### **The Shaiva Pancha Suktas are:**

1. Rudra Sukta (Sri Rudram/Chamakam)
2. Purusha Sukta
3. Durga Sukta
4. Sri Sukta
5. Bhū Sukta

### **The Vaishnava Pancha Suktas are:**

1. Purusha Sukta
2. Narayana Sukta
3. Sri Sukta
4. Bhū Sukta
5. Nīla Sukta

### **The Smarta Pancha Suktas are:**

1. Purusha Sukta
2. Narayana Sukta
3. Rudra Sukta (Sri Rudram/Chamakam)
4. Sri Sukta
5. Durga Sukta

### **The Shakta Pancha Suktas are**

1. Devi Sukta
2. Durga Sukta
3. Sri Sukta
4. Bhū Sukta
5. Nīla Sukta

### **Some salient points from the above traditions**

- All branches share the Sri Sukta.
- Shaivas, Vaishnavas and Shaktas share the Bhū Sukta

- Shaivas, Vaishnavas and Smartas share the Purusha Sukta
- Shaivas, Vaishnavas and Smartas use suktas for both Deva and Devi
- Shaktas use only suktas for Devi, and omit suktas for Deva
- Shaktas are unique in using the Devi Sukta
- Vaishnavas do not use the Rudra Sukta (Rudram/Chamakam)
- Shaivas do not use the Narayana Sukta
- Smartas use both Rudra Sukta and Narayana Sukta

#### **4. Importance and overview of Satarudriya, Purusha, Sri, Narayana Suktams**

The Satarudriya, Purusha Sukta, Narayana Sukta and Sri Sukta are generally recited in a series in most of the temples of worship, especially during the performance of the holy ritual of abhisheka. These hymns, which are from the original Vedas, represent in quintessence an invocation of the Almighty manifest as Rudra-Siva, Narayana as the Virat-Purusha, and Lakshmi as the Goddess of Prosperity. The Satarudriya, which is also known as the Rudra Adhyaya, occurs in the Yajurveda and is a magnificent vision of the Creator of the universe, designated here as Siva or Rudra, in His aspects as an awe-inspiring immanence in everything that can be found or even conceived of in creation. Here the ordinary notions of religion and even of God are lifted from the limitations of human thinking and made to cover the vast variety which God has revealed as all this manifestation. In this comprehensive attitude of devotion to God, the Satarudriya resembles the description found in the Purusha Sukta.

The Purusha Sukta is a hymn dedicated to the Cosmic Person—we may call this Divine Person as Narayana, or Virat-Purusha, as we like—and here is also to be found the cosmological suggestion that God pervades all things, not merely as a sort of enveloping or as entering into everything, but even forming the very stuff and substance of creation as a whole. All that was, is, and will be is hallowed and adored as the one Supreme Purusha. The great Indian tradition that all life is yajna, or sacrifice, has its origin in this sublime hymn of the Veda, where the act of 5 creation by God is regarded as the First Sacrifice performed by God Himself, as it were, by way of a Self-alienation of Himself into this objective universe. Thus, every form of self-alienation which is involved in any sacrifice or service rendered by the human being is indwelt, even in its lowest form, by this highest spirit of the original Divine Sacrifice. A sacrifice is the way by which one becomes another; the subject sees himself in the object and looks upon the object as one would look upon one's own self. This is the beginning of dharma—tani dharmani prathamanyasan. These original principles of creation became the primary roots of all dharma, virtue, or righteousness in this world. The Purusha Sukta, also, for the first time, makes mention of the fourfold classification of human society into Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra, representing the spiritual, political, economic and working aspects of human society. What a wonderful inclusiveness of contemplation we find in this small hymn, which embodies in itself the mightiest seeds of philosophic, spiritual and social values!

The Narayana Sukta, again, is a hymn on the Supreme Being as the Father of creation, inconceivably transcendent and yet hiddenly present in the heart of everyone, being nearer than even the nearest of things. This is a tiny but incisive form of meditation by which the human spirit endeavours to commune with the Supreme Spirit.

The Sri Sukta is an invocation to Mahalakshmi as the Divinity presiding over all prosperity in every form— material and social, as well as spiritual. Intriguingly, the feminine gender is used in addressing Lakshmi as the Goddess of Fortune, in keeping with the tradition in human thought that the universe is the Glory of God, the Power of God, conceived almost as the Consort of God, for purpose of popular adoration and worship. This would explain the mystery behind the gender. In fact, God and His Powers are beyond the range of human

evaluation or values, and thus above the ideas of male and female. These hymns are presented here in their original Sanskrit with the transliteration and English translation for the benefit of the public which, we hope will be of immense utility in people's daily prayers.

#### **4.1 The Purusha Suktam**

The Purusha Suktam, the 'Hymn to the Transcendental Oversoul', is widely used in most vedic ceremonies. In the Mahabharata, Sage Veda Vyasa stated that "This Purusha Sukta is more important than all other suktas of all the vedas"

Namadeva taught the 16 verse Purusha Suktam found in the Rig Veda. While some other authors make reference to a Purusha Suktam "long version" implying just two versions, The Purusha Suktam is seen earliest in the Rg Veda, as the 90th Suktam of its 10th mandalam, with 16 mantrams. Later, it is seen in the Vajasaneyi Samhita of the Shukla Yajur Vedam, the Taittiriya Aranyaka of the Krishna Yajur Vedam, the Sama Veda, and the Atharvana Veda, with some modifications and redactions.

Purusha sukta/sookta (purusa sūkta) is hymn 10.90 of the Rigveda, dedicated to the Purusha, the "Cosmic Being". The hymn finds place in various Vedic texts such as the Atharvaveda (19.6), the Samaveda (6.4), the Yajurveda (VS 31.1-6), the Taittiriya Aranyaka (3.12,13), and it is commented upon in the Shatapatha Brahmana, the Taittiriya Brahmana, the Shvetashvatara Upanishad and the Mudgala Upanishad.

The Purusha Sukta is also mentioned with explanations and interpretations in the Vajasaneyi Samhita (31.1-6), the Sama veda Samhita (6.4), and the Atharva veda Samhita (19.6). Among Puranic texts, the Sukta has also been elaborated in the Bhagavata Purana (2.5.35 to 2.6.1-29) and in the Mahabharata (Moksha dharma Parva 351 and 352).

Some perspective on this multiple version issue is offered in the following quote, from "The Concept of Upasana: Worship in Sanskrit Literature" by Rajani Pataki:

Purusha Sukta is included in all the four Vedas. In the Rgveda it comes in the 9th sukta of the Tenth Mandala, it has sixteen stanzas. It finds its place in the 31st adhyaya of the Yajurveda with additional six stanzas. It is placed in the sixth sukta of 19th kanda of the Atharvaveda, it has sixteen stanzas similar to the Rgveda with some differences in the order of stanzas and with change in some words. In the Samaveda it appears with five stanzas. It is also seen in the Taittiriya Samhita with eighteen stanzas.

The widely respected Swami Harshananda of the Ramakrishna-Vivekananda lineage offers a similar list of sources for versions of the Purusha Suktam in his booklet titled "The Purushasukta, An Exegesis" and he also states that there are differences in the order of the verses in many of these versions. Swami Harshananda, writes that the Purusha Suktam "...text as is now commonly used has 24 mantras or stanzas", and that even though the additional verses included in the 24 verse version "... do not seem to have any coherence with the 16 mantras of the Rgveda Samhita, tradition has somehow clubbed them together".

#### **4.2 The Sri Suktam**

This popular hymn honors Lakshmi as Vishnu's spouse and source of power. This hymn also invokes powerful healing energy in the solar plexus (manipura chakra).

Namadeva and Sant Keshavadas taught the Sri Suktam as a 16 verse hymn from the Saubhagya Upanishad. Although Namadeva also taught an additional "less commonly available" 23 verses of a "Sri Suktam Supplemental Verses", he was clear that these optional verses were distinct from what most traditions refer to as the Sri Suktam hymn.

So we have a 16 verse Sri Suktam based upon the Saubhagya Upanishad. There is an 11 verse version based upon the Padma Purana. I've seen another version similar to the 16 verse version, which has small word changes throughout, plus several additional verses inserted into it. There is also a 32 verse version on various respected internet sites.

One reference that presents an explanation for the multiple versions of the Sri Suktam is the following quote from the Wikipedia internet site.

The Sri Sukta forms part of the khilanis or appendixes to the Rigveda. These were late additions to the Rigveda, found only in the Bānkala shakha, and the hymn themselves exist in several strata that differ both in content and period of composition. For instance, according to J. Scheftelowitz, strata 1 consists of verses 1-19 ... while the second strata has verses 16-29 (i.e., the second version deletes verses 16-19 of the first). The third strata, with verses beginning from number 23, similarly overlaps with the second version.

The first strata is the most commonly attested and is usually appended to the fifth mandala of Rigveda. Most of its verses were probably composed during the period of the Brahmanas, with a few added in the Upanishadic times. The second strata post-dates the first; while the third is attested in a single, more recent, text.

### 4.3 The Narayana Suktam

The Narayana Suktam provides a fascinating description of the relationship of our inner bio-spiritual physiology with the divine creative forces of the universe.

Namadeva and Sant Keshavadas taught the Narayana Suktam as a 12 verse hymn from the Maha Narayana Upanishad of the Atharva Veda, section XIII, verses 1 to 12. I've confirmed these 12 verses in several texts of the Maha Narayana Upanishad. I've also confirmed the same 12 verses in the tenth chapter of the Taittiriya Aranyaka (this tenth chapter is also known as the Narayana Upanishad). However, on several respected websites, I've seen a different version which has some variation in verse sequence from what is in the Maha Narayana Upanishad.

### 4.4 The RudraSuktam / Rudra Prasnam

*Chamakam Namakam chaiva purusha sooktam tathaiva cha |*

*Nityam trayam prayunjano Brahmaloke maheeyate ||*

"He, who ever recites *Namakam* and *Chamakam* along with *Purusa Sooktam* daily, will be honoured in *Brahmaloka*"

'Rudra' is one form of Lord the other being 'Shiva' which is "shaanti svaroop"

Meaning of Rudra denotes a terrifying aspect and the meaning of Rudra is 'one who makes others cry'. What it means is- he makes the evil doers cry for their deeds. For the good he makes them by cry by their love, happiness in chanting the Lord's names and gunas.

Ways of Chanting Rudra Suktam

- (a) One can either just do chanting of Rudra Suktam
- (b) Or one can do havan with it and offer as an oblation is offered in fire
- (c) Or one can know the meaning and chant.

All of the above comprises of 'karma' aspect- and by chanting he enters into upasana when his mind is concentrated. With the mind purified he comes to get to know the real nature of the Lord.

In Upanasadic statements like 'tat tvam asi' one cannot do karma or upasana. But in Rudra Suktam mantra one can do all 3 - karma, upasana and obtain knowledge by understanding his real nature. By knowing the meaning of Rudra Suktam we come to know that

- (a) The Lord is 'sarva karan' the cause of all
- (b) Therefore (since he is cause of all) he is 'sarva vyapak'- all pervading. He pervades the effect too as gold pervades all ornaments

- (c) He is also 'sarva roop' - he is only appearing in many forms
- (d) He is also 'sarva athit' - ie beyond all that is known or he is transcendental.

#### **4.5 Durga Suktam**

Among the Hindu pantheon of Goddesses, Durga literally meaning the invincible is the most popular incarnation of Goddess Shakti. Durga is revered for her courage and strength and the ability to remove the greatest of dark forces. The trinity of Gods, Brahma, Vishnu and Siva created her combining their energies and bestowed her with their weapons and requested other gods to do the same. Thus Durga become a potent force and was ever ready to serve the Gods in their battles against the demons. The Durga Suktam is a chant in her honor and is recited to bring vitality and valor to the chanter and dispel even their intimate fears.

#### **4.6 Other Suktams**

Bhu Suktam is on the Goddess Earth, it occurs in Thaitriya Samhita

Neela Suktam is on the Goddess Neela, it occurs in Thaitriya Brahmana

Devi Suktam also known as Ambhrani Sukta, is a hymn of the Rigvda (RV 10.125), it consists of 8 verses and is dedicated to Vak (Speech)

#### **5. Purpose of Suktams**

Purusha Suktam - To keep devas under Control

Sri Suktam – To become Wealthy

Bhu Suktam - To obtain food

Narayana Suktam – To Meditate/Concentrate

Rudra Suktam – For Aspiciousness

Durga Suktam – To Destroy Enemies

Neela Suktam – To fulfill desire

Devi Suktam – To become eloquent

#### **Quote Notes**

Count Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949) was a Belgian writer of poetry, a wide variety of essays. He won the 1911 Nobel Prize for literature. In his book Mountain Paths, says:

"He falls back upon the earliest and greatest of Revelations, those of the Sacred Books of India with a Cosmogony which no European conception has ever surpassed."

This is about Nasadiya Suktam

#### **6. Conclusion:**

Sukta is the invocation of God Himself as the great glory of His creation, His lordliness, sovereignty and supreme suzerainty. The Creator in all His glory manifests Himself in the variety in creation. Narayana, Shiva represent God, and Lakshmi, Durga represent the magnificence, abundance, plentifulness and grandeur of Narayana/Siva. The Sukta of the Veda is recited with benefit together with formal worship of the God and Goddess, for peace, plenty, and all-round prosperity. The emotions of man, when they are religiously roused, have a tendency to consider the world as an evil and God as a goal of life.