

# Types of Vedas - Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda & Atharvaveda

There are four types of Vedas - Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, and Atharvaveda. One of the best sources of Ancient Indian History is Vedic literature. Vedas have formed the Indian scripture. The ideas and practices of Vedic religion are codified by the Vedas and they also form the basis of classical Hinduism.

The topic, 'Types of Vedas' is important for the IAS Exam, keeping in mind the syllabus of history subject. Questions might be asked from any type of Vedas in the Prelims or Mains stage. Hence, this article will mention the relevant facts about four Vedas for the civil services examination. Aspirants can also download the notes PDF from the link provided on the page.

## Four Vedas Name and Features

The four Vedas and their features, in brief, are given in the table below:

Types of Vedas	
Name of the Veda	Key Features of the Veda
Rig Veda	It is the earliest form of Veda
Samaveda	Earliest reference for singing
Yajurveda	It is also called the book of prayers
Atharvaveda	The book of magic and charms

## Vedas in Detail

### Rigveda:

The oldest Veda is the Rigveda. It has 1028 hymns called 'Suktas' and is a collection of 10 books called 'Mandalas.' The features of Rigveda are given in the table below:

### Features of Rigveda

It is the oldest form of Veda and oldest known Vedic Sanskrit text(1800 – 1100 BCE)

The meaning of the word 'Rigveda' is Praise Knowledge

It has 10600 verses

Out of 10 books or mandalas, book number 1 and 10 are the youngest ones as they were written later than books 2 to 9

Rigvedic books 2-9 deal with cosmology and deities

Rigvedic books 1 and 10 deal with philosophical questions and also talk about various virtues including a charity in the society

Rigvedic books 2-7 are the oldest and shortest also called family books

Rigvedic books 1 & 10 are the youngest and longest

1028 hymns deal with deities including Agni, Indra and are attributed and dedicated to a sage rishi

The ninth Rigvedic book/mandala is solely dedicated to Soma

The meters used to form hymns are Gayatri, Anushtubh, Trishtubh and Jagati (Trishtubh and Gayatri are most important)

### **Samaveda:**

Known as the Veda of melodies and chants, Samaveda dates back to 1200-800 BCE. This Veda is related to public worship. The key features of Samaveda are given in the table below:

#### **Features of Samaveda**

There are 1549 verses (except 75 verses, all have been taken from Rigveda)

There are two Upanishads embedded in Samaveda - Chandogya Upanishad and Kena Upanishad

The Samaveda is considered as the root of the Indian classical music and dance

It is considered as the storehouse of the melodious chants

Though it has lesser verses than Rigveda, however, its texts are larger

There are three recensions of the text of the Samaveda - Kauthuma, Raṇayaniya and Jaiminiya

Samaveda is categorised into two parts - Part-I includes melodies called Gana & Part-II includes three verses book called Archika.

Samaveda Samhita is not meant to be read as a text, it is like a musical score sheet that must be heard

### **Yajurveda:**

Stands to mean 'Worship Knowledge', Yajurveda dates back to 1100-800 BCE; corresponding with Samaveda. It compiles ritual-offering mantras/chants. These chants were offered by the priest alongside a person who used to perform a ritual (in most cases yajna fire.) The key features of Yajurveda are given below:

#### **Features of Yajurveda**

It has two types - Krishna (Black/Dark) & Shukla (White/Bright)

Krishna Yajurveda has an un-arranged, unclear, motley collection of verses

Shukla Yajurveda has arranged and clear verses

The oldest layer of Yajurveda has 1875 verses mostly taken up from Rigveda

The middle layer of the Veda has Satapatha Brahmana which is a commentary of Shukla Yajurveda

The youngest layer of Yajurveda consists of various Upanishads - Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, the Isha Upanishad, the Taittiriya Upanishad, the Katha Upanishad, the Shvetashvatara Upanishad and the Maitri Upanishad

Vajasaneyi Samhita is the Samhita in the Shukla Yajurveda

There are four surviving recensions of the Krishna Yajurveda – Taittiriya samhita, Maitrayani samhita, Kaṭha samhita, and Kapisthala samhita

### **Atharvaveda:**

Stands to mean a tatpurusha compound of Atharvan, an ancient sage, and knowledge (atharvan+knowledge), it dates back to 1000-800 BCE. The key features of Atharvaveda are given the table below:

#### **Features of Atharvaveda**

The daily procedures of life are very well enumerated in this Veda

It has 730 hymns/suktas, 6000 mantras, and 20 books

Paippalada and the Saunakiya are two recensions of Atharvaveda

Called a Veda of magical formulas, it includes three primary Upanishads - Mundaka Upanishad, the Mandukya Upanishad, and the Prashna Upanishad

The 20 books are arranged by the length of hymns they contain

Unlike Samaveda where hymns are borrowed from Rigveda, hymns of Atharvaveda are unique except a few

This Veda contains hymns many of which were charms and magic spells which are meant to be pronounced by the person who seeks some benefit, or more often by a sorcerer who would say it on his or her behalf

