Reading Vedic Literature: A Doctoral Dissertation Proposal

to the

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March 18, 2008
Introduction

The research I am about to embark upon and the doctoral dissertation that will follow represent the culmination of my educational experience at Maharishi University of Management. MUM’s unique offering to the field of education is a holistic approach to knowledge that seeks to develop the inner full potential of the student while he or she is satisfying the traditional academic requirements of higher education. As I will explore in this paper, one’s inner potential unfolds naturally through the development of consciousness. Several technologies of consciousness including Transcendental Meditation have been well documented for their many benefits to both the individual and society.

The subject of my dissertation proposal is a relatively new technology of consciousness – reading Vedic Literature – that, while still in its exploratory phase, holds great promise as a subject for continued research. The Vedic Literature is a written account of the Veda, the field of knowledge. Veda, according to Maharishi, represents the impulses of consciousness, the most fundamental level of life, that were cognized by the ancient seers and eventually transcribed into a vast body of literature. These impulses of consciousness are vibrations that were first heard as sounds. It is Maharishi’s contention that the essence of the Veda is contained in the structuring mechanics that constitute those sounds. Reading the Vedic Literature and reciting the texts aloud would therefore be a means to subjectively explore the fundamental basis of the Veda on the level of one’s own inner consciousness. This is the aim of the scientific research proposal described in this paper – to study the Vedic Literature based on the vibrations of consciousness rather than the meaning of the text.
The outline of the proposal includes a discussion of the evolution of modern science and a comparative view of Maharishi Vedic Science, the combination of which represents a new paradigm for the advancement of scientific knowledge. Research in consciousness is discussed from several points of view and also includes a connection with the physiology. The structure of the Veda and Vedic Literature is discussed at length with examples of the text included. Finally, the details of my proposed research are put forth in a systematic way that describes the overall intent of the study.

Modern Science

Science is a systematic means of gaining valid knowledge. Its validity is derived from the scientific method of observation, hypothesis and experimentation, the effectiveness of which stems from the logic and consistency on which it is based. If the hypothesis can be confirmed by repeated experiments a scientific theory may be derived. It is the predictive power of the theory that is paramount to science since it is that which creates the intellectual framework that generates testable predictions. However, even if there is intersubjective agreement on the validity of the theory, one must always hold open the possibility for new evidence that could conflict with and even strike down previously accepted notions.

Sir Francis Bacon, often credited as the father of inductive reasoning, was an advocate for constructive dialogue between experiment and theory. In *Novum Organum*, his treatise on logic, Bacon (1620) writes, “We have a good ground of hope, from the close and strict union of the experimental and rational faculty, which have not hitherto been united” (p. 86). Among current philosophers of science, Jahn (et al., 1987) states in
an essay *Science of the Subjective* that the scientific method, in particular, “maintains a profound respect for demonstrable experimental and theoretical anomalies and their crucial role within the scientific dialogue of experiment and theory.”

Science in the first half of this century held firmly to the conviction that reliable knowledge can only be gained from sensory perception. It was generally accepted that the scientific method must be strictly objective in order to eliminate variability and bias. As a result, the subjective means of gaining knowledge – feeling, intuition and judgment – was excluded from the standard model in order to ensure reliability and a broad base of intersubjective consensus. In addition, as Yates (1978) points out, there was a “need to insulate scientific inquiry from the prevailing theological dogma that engendered progressively more objective interpretation of this ‘scientific method’.” It was long believed that science should be considered on its own merits, protected from and unencumbered by the changing whims of individual, social or religious ideology.

The absence of subjectivity caused science to move forward in strict adherence to a rigid model based solely on sensory-based observation. While this satisfied the classical empiricists, a new generation of philosophers of science came to see the so-called ‘received view’ as not only limited in scope, but they also challenged the very reliability on which it was based.

Hanson, Kuhn and others argued that science is essentially a subjective endeavor that begins with ideas. Freud (1938) too, pointed out that, “Every science is based on observations and experiences arrived at through the medium of our psychical apparatus” (4.5). Everything we ‘see’ is filtered by our own preconceptions and past experiences. How we interpret those observations is also based to some extent on our expectations and
beliefs. According to Hanson (1958), “There is a sense, then, in which seeing is a ‘theory laden’ undertaking. Observation of $x$ is shaped by prior knowledge of $x$” (p. 19).

Observational evidence can never be entirely neutral so long as there is a gap between the subject and the object – the knower and the known. Similarly, the observation of phenomena is not necessarily the same for all observers. The same image falling on the retinas of a group of people could be interpreted in different ways, leading to innumerable explanations for the same observation. As Hanson famously noted, “There is more to seeing than meets the eyeball” (p. 7).

The interpretation and reporting of data is also subject to the means of communication – namely the language and vocabulary – that is available and understood by the observer. Even subtle nuances in expression can convey different and possibly unintended meanings. It could be reasoned then, that to some degree the strength of a theory rests in the language and explanatory power of the argument that supports it.

Today, orthodox empiricism has given way to a more progressive understanding that acknowledges the role of subjectivity in science. Observation is an intelligent phenomenon. One has to exercise critical thinking in order to interpret objective data. Subjective factors such as intuition, creativity and judgment are variables that cannot (and should not) be eliminated from this process. In fact, many significant contributions to science, including those by Newton and Einstein, began as an intuitive insight into the laws of nature and their functioning. Openness of mind and the willingness to entertain new ideas and approaches is not necessarily in conflict with a scientific model that follows the accepted criteria for valid knowledge.
The history of modern science is the history of fragmented knowledge. By limiting its approach solely to sensory-based observation, modern science is capable of revealing only partial knowledge and is therefore fundamentally incomplete. In its application, partial knowledge derived from isolated areas of experimentation is disconnected and prone to side effects that could be life damaging. Even in consideration of the numerous advancements of science, it would not be prudent to ignore the adverse effects of fragmented knowledge. Healthcare, nuclear physics and high technology have each confronted society with major challenges due to the unintended consequences of knowledge deprived of its wholeness.

**Vedic Science**

Vedic Science – the study of consciousness – which was first expounded upon by the ancient seers, was restored in this generation by Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, the founder of the Transcendental Meditation program and Maharishi University of Management. Maharishi, himself a member of the Vedic tradition, reestablished the simple techniques that make the subjective exploration of consciousness possible for any individual regardless of background or belief. By removing many of the misconceptions long associated with consciousness and meditation, Maharishi (1976a) has artfully taken Vedic Science out of the realm of mysticism and placed it squarely on the ground of science where it is fully accessible to the modern means of both subjective and objective research.

The ancient Veda provides formulas for the full development of consciousness, and modern science provides means for measuring and validating this development in an objective way. The Veda and science are both reliable for their authenticity and practicality. The technique of Transcendental Meditation, coming
from the Vedic tradition, and its validation through scientific experiments have brought the Veda and science together, and this has provided a common ground for all the nations of ancient culture and modern civilization to create an ideal society. (p. 94)

Maharishi always emphasized experience as a critical component for gaining knowledge. However, his definition of experience goes far beyond the limited confines of knowledge derived from sensory experience as previously put forth by empiricists. From the standpoint of Maharishi Vedic Science, in order for knowledge to be complete it must be verified not only on the level of the senses, but on all levels including the environment, body, mind, intellect, emotions, ego and Being (universal ego). Even more important in Maharishi’s view is the need to develop a non-variable state of consciousness in which the knowledge that is gained will be authentic and reliable.

At the basis of Maharishi’s teaching is Transcendental Meditation – a technology for quieting down the active nature of the mind so it may open to a resolute, non-variant and universal field of inner self-awareness. By transcending the subtle layers of thought and perception, the mind is able to experience the fundamental structure of knowledge in a state of pure knowingness. On this level the Self is fully awake within itself. It is aware, but left with nothing to be aware of except its own existence. It simultaneously becomes both the knower (subject) and the known (object). Through the process of knowing, it becomes self-aware. It knows itself as the source of everything. The source of knowledge and everything in its range is known – not individually – but in a single state of collective wholeness. In the *Mūdaka Upanishad* it is said, *Kasmīn na bhagavo vīgyate sarvam idam vīgyātām bhavatīti* (know that by knowing which everything is known, 1.1.3) Maharishi (1986) describes the experience and understanding of this level of reality as the basis of his Vedic Science.
This state of consciousness is completely self-sufficient. How it emerges from within its own self-referral performance, which is going on eternally at the basis of all creation, is Vedic Science. How this happens, how the creation comes out – how consciousness becomes matter and how matter in nature behaves with utmost orderliness, absolutely following the laws of nature – this is Vedic Science. Vedic Science is this state of knowledge, and it includes the procedures for gaining this knowledge of the ultimate self-referral unity, which underlies the whole creation and expresses itself in innumerable divergent ways. (p. 26)

Transcendental Meditation, which has been taught around the world for more than fifty years, offers a systematic means of experiencing the Self at the source of thought. This, as Maharishi (1972) explains, is an essential step in establishing its scientific character.

The procedure we have adopted to experience this field is a very natural procedure. The impulse of the mind, the activity of the mind, settles down automatically; and that state of unbounded awareness is produced. Stresses are released and restful alertness is gained by the body and mind. This experience is gained in a systematic, natural manner and is therefore repeatable. (p. 6-4)

The simplicity and universality of the technique of Transcendental Meditation has led to a systematic, scientific methodology that is open to intersubjective testing. This meets a further criterion for science, as noted by Maharishi (1972).

The systematic procedure of gaining knowledge through repeatable experiments insures that knowledge is universally reliable. What we observe and experience we can call knowledge; but in order to be certain of truth, we want others to verify our observations and experiences. If they reach the same conclusions, we feel confident that the knowledge we have gained is universally true. (p. 6-4)

In time, according to Maharishi, the regular exposure of the mind to its settled state causes the subjective reality of self-referral consciousness to become infused in the objective reality of sensory perception. Maharishi refers to this integrated state of ‘total knowledge’ as unity consciousness. It is described in the Vedic literature as Brāhmī Chetanā, the consciousness of totality. Everything is self-contained. The reality of objects is perceived in terms of the reality of the subject. Differences remain, but they are
secondary to the underlying harmony that unites them. Maharishi (1972) describes the experience in terms of the growth of knowledge.

This is a beautiful and crucial point of comparison. The subjective means of gaining knowledge on that level of consciousness which never changes – on the seventh level of consciousness\(^1\) – opens to direct cognition the infinite value that abides in every object. With that infinite, unbounded value of the object opening to awareness, knowledge is complete. There is nothing more to be known. Knowledge will be self-sufficient on that level, and fulfilling. (p. 24-7)

While the both the objective and subjective knowledge of the waking state of consciousness must conform to the standard model of deductive logic and predicted observation, according to Maharishi (1972), the knowledge of unity consciousness is completely self-evident and not dependent on anything logically prior to it.

This is the field of pure knowledge, supreme knowledge, which is its own verification. This is the supreme climax of knowledge being scientific, where knowledge is its own fulfillment, its own proof, its own validity. Supreme knowledge is that knowledge which does not have to translate itself into action and achievement in order to bring fulfillment. It is self-fulfilling. It needs no other proof. This experience is the supreme level of the scientific value of the knowledge of creative intelligence. (p. 6-8)

Knowledge in this state is complete and satisfying. Intuition, which in waking state was sometimes undependable, is now distinct, unfailing and free from all doubt. The superficial aspect of knowledge through intellectual understanding is enhanced by the true nature of knowledge in a state of knowingness. Knowledge then, has its culmination

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\(^1\) Maharishi described the evolution of human life in seven states of consciousness. The first three are waking, sleeping and dreaming. The fourth state is Transcendental Consciousness, the experience of the inner Self. The fifth state is Cosmic Consciousness, in which the experience of Transcendental Consciousness is inclusive with waking, sleeping and dreaming. The sixth state is God Consciousness, which is characterized by extreme refinement of the physical faculties of perception and the growth of unbounded love and devotion. The seventh state is Unity Consciousness. This is the supreme state of human development where every object is perceived as an extension of one’s own Self. The subject and object are fully united as one inseparable reality.
not as an end in itself, but in the higher purpose for which it was always intended – life in fulfillment.

**Research in Consciousness**

Although illusive in its nature and difficult for researchers to quantify, the phenomenon of consciousness has been discussed for centuries. The first modern usage is attributed to John Locke (1690) who connected consciousness with personal identity when he stated in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, “… consciousness which is inseparable from thinking, and, as it seems to me, essential to it: it being impossible for any one to perceive without perceiving that he does perceive.”

In order to more closely analyze the nature of the thought process, psychologists of the late 19th century experimented with introspection. This is essentially a self-study in which one examines one’s own thoughts and feelings as a means of gaining self-knowledge. One of the leading advocates of introspection was Edward Titchener. Buoyed by advancements in the physical sciences that analyzed the fundamental elements (e.g. molecules and atoms) that made up complex structures, Titchener sought to probe into the ‘mental elements’ that form the more complex structure of conscious experience. Just as hydrogen and oxygen were the elements of a chemical compound, thoughts and feelings were the elements of the mind.

While Titchener (1896) generally agreed with psychologists of his era who viewed the mind as “the sum total of mental processes experienced during a lifetime” (p. 339), he also thought the mind “means something ‘immaterial’ or ‘spiritual,’ which shows itself in ideas and feelings, but is really more than those ideas and feelings …” (p. 9). Titchener explained the relationship between the mind and consciousness by saying,
“My ‘consciousness’ is the sum of mental processes which make up my experience now; it is the mind of any given ‘present’ time” (p. 11). This was his experience. For Titchener, consciousness represented the fluctuations of his conscious mind.

We enter a scientific lecture room with a science-consciousness … we lay down the day’s work with a rest-consciousness. These are the natural divisions in the mind … sufficiently independent of one another for us to recognize their existence in our everyday experience.” (p. 11)

Titchener could find no evidence, within himself or elsewhere, of a concept of mind or consciousness that was not actively engaged in mental processes. In his view, just as the mind owes its existence to the thoughts, ideas and feelings it has, consciousness owes its existence to the collectedness of those experiences at any given point in time. In other words, consciousness must always be identified with something and can never be isolated onto itself. Therefore, he concluded that, “introspection is the final and only court of appeal, that psychological evidence cannot be other than introspective evidence” (p. 341).

One of Titchener’s contemporaries, William James (1890), who coined the phrase ‘stream of consciousness,’ was a noted critic. “The attempt at introspective analysis in these cases is in fact like seizing a spinning top to catch its motion, or trying to turn up the gas quickly enough to see how the darkness looks” (p. 244). In James’ analysis, the substantive element of inquiry – consciousness – is always unattainable. It’s close enough for one to have a notion of its presence, but when any attempt is made to capture it, it is always just out of reach – like trying to capture the motion of a spinning top. James (1892) made the following observation in his essay Stream of Consciousness.

Let anyone try to cut a thought across in the middle and get a look at its section, and he will see how difficult the introspective observation of the transitive tracts is. The rush of a thought is so headlong that it almost always brings up the conclusion before we can arrest it. Or if our purpose is nimble enough and we do arrest it, it ceases to be itself.
Behaviorists and cognitive psychologists, who represented the other two schools of 20th century experimental psychology, claimed that introspection was ultimately unreliable because it was based entirely on subjective self-observation. Still, among modern philosophers there are those who see relevant applications for introspection, such as in the doctor-patient relationship. Asking a patient to focus on the sensation of pain could be a basis for better understanding its location, its relationship to other pains and perhaps even its cause. As Nahmias (2002) noted in his *Verbal Reports on the Contents of Consciousness*, “Introspection is observation of mental phenomena just as inspection is observation of physical phenomena, and for scientific purposes, each type of observation, if practiced reliably, can produce a report of the relevant data.”

This view notwithstanding, the study of consciousness through the technique of introspection fell out of popularity as scientific psychology shifted toward a more objective and measurable model. While empiricists may claim vindication in this change to a physical focus for understanding consciousness, it has come with a price as noted by Bridgeman (1992), “By rejecting consciousness as a legitimate object of study, psychology made great advances in the study of perceptual, motor and control processes but lost sight of the issue of the role of consciousness in mental life” (p. 15).

**Consciousness and the Physiology**

Following in the footsteps of Titchener, it has been argued that consciousness cannot be extracted from the conscious experience of an object. More recently, John Searle has written extensively about consciousness as “the central mental notion” in the mind. For Searle (1992a), consciousness is defined by its content. “One can never just be
Maharishi describes this concept of object attachment as identification. One experiences an object of perception and is unable to distinguish it from one’s Self. This creates a notion of self-association with the object. One’s Self becomes ‘lost’ in the experience of the object. This is the binding influence of action that takes one outside of one’s Self. This, Maharishi (1967) explains, is remedied when the mind transcends its own activity and experiences the Self in its singular state.

Once the mind reaches transcendental consciousness it no longer remains a conscious mind; it gains the status of absolute Being. This state of transcendental pure consciousness, also known as Self-consciousness, Self-awareness, *samādhi*, represents the complete infusion of cosmic Being into the individual mind. (p. 144)

Object identification is characteristic of the waking state of consciousness. Without the experience of transcendental consciousness as a point of reference, one becomes identified with the subjective experience of thoughts and objects during wakefulness. Since the knowledge of reality is structured in the state of consciousness available to oneself, one is lead to the further notion that it is the wakefulness of brain activity that produces consciousness.

Some researchers have ascertained that consciousness is a product of neurological functioning, particularly that of the prefrontal cortex. This has resulted in a search for the cause of consciousness in the human brain. Following the neurophysiology model, researchers have sought to isolate consciousness (or at least conscious experience) to the parts of the brain responsible for the performance of specific tasks. Bridgeman (1992), among them believes that consciousness emerges from the neurological processes related
to the planning and execution of a particular task. Due to an apparent cause and effect relationship, he concludes that consciousness cannot be isolated because, “...it has no separate existence of its own. Because it is an effect, not a cause, there is no sense in looking for its functions” (p. 15).

In the case of Bridgeman and others, the notion of ‘cause’ may be too broadly applied. According to Titchener, who strongly objected to the notion that bodily states are the cause of mental states, “The word ‘cause’ has a very definite meaning, – a meaning which we have no right to read into the phenomena of parallelism, – and a definitely restricted sphere of application” (p. 343). Searle (1992b), in his essay on *The Problem of Consciousness*, prefers a *cause* and *feature* analysis that locates consciousness not in any part of the brain, but rather that, “Conscious states are caused by lower level neurobiological processes in the brain and are themselves higher level features of the brain.” This model understands consciousness in terms of its identification with the subjective experience of wakefulness – inevitably bound by individual perception, thoughts and feelings – because it is grounded in the materialistic notion that consciousness is created by the physiology.

Presuming for a moment that there is a physiological cause for consciousness, locating it is problematical because as Raichle (2000) has concluded, “…in the brain, no one region (system) necessarily specifies the content for consciousness under all circumstances. Rather it is a distributed process with changing participants allocated by need” (p. 1316). The ‘problem of consciousness,’ then, is in connecting the objectivity of electrochemical processes in the brain with the subjectivity of consciousness. There is, at least presently, a limit as to what can be measured. Consider the following
Transcendental Meditation experience (1976b) and then try to imagine how a physiological basis (even if one exists) could be located.

During meditation the experiences of being the whole universe started to occur more and more often. It reached its climax in one meditation when I had the overpowering realization that I was so unbounded and unlimited that anything I wanted could easily be obtained. I kept feeling more and more expanded, and the feeling of bliss kept growing and becoming more powerful within me. (p. 79)

Consciousness, as distinct from conscious experience, is not typically described as a sensory experience. It is not bound by individual perception, thoughts and emotions. It is more of an abstract feeling or a state of knowingness. The conscious mind has the ability to know intuitively that transcendental consciousness exists even if words may not accurately or completely convey the full meaning of the experience, as in the description of the following practitioner (1976b) of Transcendental Meditation.

My meditations are characterized by the experience of ‘no experience’. What I mean by this is that I just remain in the Absolute for the entire sitting and nothing else seems to happen, other than the feeling of bliss permeating me completely. (p. 80)

Velmans (1995), in an essay on *The Limits of Neurophysiological Models of Consciousness*, noted the difficulty in pinpointing a physiological cause for human consciousness and suggested an alternative approach.

My suggestion is that we should stop trying to reduce consciousness to a physical or functional state of the brain and start to take consciousness *in the form that we normally experience it* seriously. That is, we need to reincorporate the first-person perspective into psychological science in order that we may properly come to understand its relation to traditional third-person perspective science.

While consciousness can and should be considered without cause or dependence, every state of consciousness does have a corresponding state of physiology. Mental experiences are absorbed by the body and emerge as an observable physiological response. The intensity of these experiences cause a change in the way electricity passes
through the body. For example, experiences of emotional intensity such as trauma or impending danger can trigger the sympathetic nervous system to produce heightened electrodermal activity (EDA) that aids the body’s response to the situation. By monitoring physiological parameters one can see how the body responds to the way in which one thinks, feels and acts. The sympathetic nervous system provides the link between unconscious autonomic processing and conscious experience. As a result, consciousness and the physiology function together as a meaningful whole.

All of our thinking, feeling and activity depend upon the condition of the nervous system. When we wake up in the morning, the brain makes a transition from sleep consciousness to waking consciousness. This transition is fueled by the reticular activating system responsible for arousal. Arousal is important for maintaining conscious experience. The RAS stimulates the thalamus and gradually we begin to wake up. As the evening hours advance, arousal levels decline and the thalamus begins to shut down. Less information is output to the cortical areas and it becomes more difficult to focus on complex mental tasks. As we become drowsy, the gateway of the thalamus slowly closes and sleep consciousness takes over. In this way we see that even in the transition between states of consciousness, the mind and body are interdependent.

Wallace’s (1971) pioneering research on the physiology of meditation identified a “wakeful hypometabolic state” in which the body was very rested while the mind remained alert. This finding led to a proposed fourth major state of consciousness – transcendental consciousness – that was physiologically distinct from waking, sleeping and dreaming. While saints, mystics and others throughout history have reported transcendental experiences; this was the first time that such experiences had been
correlated with a measurable change in the physiology. Although Wallace was able to locate an objective reference point in the body, transcendental consciousness is essentially a subjective experience. If not for numerous personal accounts of transcendental experiences outside the realm of waking, sleeping and dreaming, it is unlikely there would have been any objective research attempt to locate a fourth state of consciousness. As Searle (1992b) has noted, “The characteristic mistake in the study of consciousness is to ignore its essential subjectivity and to try to treat it as if it were an objective third person phenomenon.”

**Maharishi Vedic Science and Consciousness**

Maharishi Vedic Science views consciousness as the essential constituent of creation. It is the total potential of Natural Law\(^2\) that underlies not only all subjective experiences (thoughts, feelings, etc.), but also all objects of sensory experience present in the material world. Modern science has a remarkably parallel view to the structure of the universe through recent advancements in quantum field theory. Building on the discoveries of Einstein, theoretical physics has gone so far as to glimpse a unified field that underlies all the diversity that makes up the known universe. By introducing the concept of a field – an abstract construct that includes ‘virtual’ particles and forces – physics has traveled to the farthest reaches of modern scientific investigation. However, despite this discovery and the mathematical formulas that verify its existence, physics is restricted in its ability to provide objective experimental validation of the unified field.

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\(^2\) Natural Law refers to the orderly and holistic functioning of the underlying principles (the laws of nature) that govern the infinite diversity of the material universe. Unlike national laws created by individuals, Natural Law is uncreated in the sense that it has automatically been established and set in motion by nature.
due to the limits of present particle accelerator technology. Consequently, for modern physicists, the unified field remains only a mathematical reality, still somewhat illusive and outside the realm of direct experience.

According to Maharishi Vedic Science, there exists a qualitative connection between the unified field of modern science and the field of pure consciousness described in the Vedic Literature. Just as the unified field of quantum physics contains pure potentiality, the liveliness of which is apparent on the basis of its ‘virtual’ particles, pure consciousness contains the total potential of Natural Law and the vibrations of the field represent the Veda. Understood in this way, modern science and Maharishi Vedic Science can be seen as two diverse yet complementary approaches to the same underlying reality. The connection between the most modern and the most ancient represents a new paradigm for the advancement of scientific knowledge.

**Vedic Literature**

The earliest records that describe human consciousness are found in the Vedic Literature of ancient India. These texts contain many references to an inner dimension of life that is beyond the realm of the senses, but still open to direct experience. As the *Katha Upanishad* says, “Deep inside the person … that is the innermost of one’s Self, of one’s consciousness” (2.3.17). According to Maharishi Vedic Science, pure consciousness, the basis and source of all knowledge, flows through the structure and sequence of the Veda and Vedic Literature. Reading Vedic Literature, therefore, is the study of self-referral consciousness as it moves. The theme of self-referral means that the knowledge always refers to its source, which is itself. In this way it is never outside of itself. There are numerous expressions in the Vedic Literature that describe this self-
referral nature, such as the following from the *Yoga Sūtras* of Maharishi Patañjali: *Vritti sārūpyam itah atra* (reverberations of the Self emerge from here [the self-referral state] and remain here [within the self-referral state], 1.4)

Maharishi has organized the 40 main aspects of Vedic Literature in such a way as to preserve each aspect’s interconnectedness with every other aspect (see chart below). The principal aspect of Vedic Literature is *k Veda*. According to Maharishi, the entire Vedic Literature is contained in seed form in *k Veda*. It is like the trunk of the tree from which all the various branches extend. Just as the branches, although they go in different directions, are always connected to the tree, all the branches of Vedic Literature are connected to *k Veda*. Maharishi (1998a) has described how the various branches of Vedic Literature represent specific qualities of the non-specific wholeness that constitutes the field of consciousness.

Different aspects of the Vedic Literature categorize different qualities of consciousness in terms of vibrations or frequencies that are inherent in the holistic value of consciousness. These frequencies of consciousness are the expression of the intelligence that firstly gives rise to the Vedic structure, the structure of *k Veda*, and continues to evolve into particles of matter and different forms of material creation. (pp. 327-8)

In terms of structure, we can envision it as a circle with every part always connected to the whole. This is the form of a *mandala*. Its circular shape is a symbolic representation of the interconnecting wholeness of consciousness, the Self. Within the overall structure of a *mandala*, each branch of Vedic Literature is also found to be part of a smaller grouping of six branches. Together, based on the qualities they represent, they form a connecting loop. For example, one such grouping is known as *Vedāṅga* (limbs of Veda), which consists of *Shikṣā, Kalp, Vyākaran, Nirukt, Chhand* and *Jyotish*. 
According to Maharishi (1980), the Vedangas describe the mechanics by which consciousness (the unmanifest nature of reality) becomes manifest.

The Vedangas study how the structure of the knowledge of nature is contained within the field of consciousness, how this structure of pure knowledge is cognized as the Veda, and how the Veda is then expressed as speech. (p. 24)

*Shikshā* is the science of speech and, as such, Maharishi has given it the quality of ‘expressing.’ *Kalp* describes the performance of traditional Vedic rituals or ceremonies and has a quality of ‘transforming.’ Transformation is a process. It takes the quality of expression found in *Shikshā* and creates a further elaboration by transforming point values of speech into expanded values of performance. *Vyākaran* is Vedic grammar. It has a quality of ‘expanding.’ The expansion of syllables into words and sentences is based on rules of grammar. As a system expands outward it is important to maintain internal balance and control. Therefore, the expanding quality of *Vyākaran* is followed in the *Vedānga* loop by the ‘self-referral’ quality found in *Nirukt*. *Nirukt* means ‘spoken back’ and its text is all about words. Like a thesaurus, *Nirukt* describes the relationship of a word with itself. This is represented by the curvature in the loop as the first expression of consciousness, having expanded, now begins to curve back onto itself. The next aspect, *Chhand*, is meter. Based on the number of syllables in a line, *Chhand* maintains the rhythmic structure of the verse. It therefore has a quality of ‘measuring and quantifying.’ The last component of *Vedānga* is *Jyotish* or Vedic astrology. Since it connects the past, present and future, Maharishi has given *Jyotish* the quality of ‘all-knowing.’ This is the completion of the loop, the return of consciousness to itself in the pure state of knowingness. It is the unified wholeness of the knower, knowing and known in one singular self-referral state of awareness.
A self-referral feedback loop can also be found in other systems including the human body. Neurophysiologist Tony Nader (2000), who has located a direct correspondence for each of the 40 aspects of Vedic Literature in the physiology, has described how balance is maintained in the body through a functional relationship between its different components.

The physiology is a dynamic field of continuous transformations, which occur within sets of feedback loops that ensure continuity within change. The physiology may be likened to a river – it always looks the same, but is always new. Loops are available at all levels of the physiology, macroscopic as well as microscopic – at the level of the organ as well as at the atomic and molecular levels. (p. 44)

By referring back to a reference point of order, nature is able to maintain evolutionary balance in the midst of continual change and expansion. The Vedic Literature, even within its own structure of expansion and contraction, is similarly able to give expression to this natural phenomenon.
The Importance of Reading Vedic Literature

The Vedic Literature is the reverberating sounds of consciousness in literary form. Originally the cognition of the ancient seers (*Rishis*), the hymns and verses that comprise the Vedic Literature were preserved in an oral tradition by the Vedic families of India. Passed on generation after generation, the sound of the Veda along with its corresponding form was eventually written down as the vast body of Vedic Literature assumed its present shape. Although rough translations of the meaning of various books of Vedic Literature have been converted into many of the world’s languages, the essence of the Veda cannot be found in any book. According to Maharishi (1998a), it is available within one’s own consciousness.

Veda is the impulse of consciousness, and by listening to the sound of the Veda (*Shruti*) – by reading it or hearing it – one can enliven it within one’s own consciousness and realize the total organizing power of pure knowledge within oneself. (p. 123)

Clearly Maharishi has placed greater emphasis on the sound quality of the Vedic Literature than on its meaning. This is an important distinction and it is the very basis of my proposed research program of reading Vedic Literature for the sound value.

Maharishi feels the Veda was not meant for intellectual study. Attempting to translate certain aspects of Vedic Literature and interpret the proper meaning can be very difficult, even for Vedic scholars. The surface values of knowledge, because they are continually changing, will always be subject to new analyses and differences of opinion. However, the deeper layers of knowledge, which are the vibrations of consciousness that represent the Veda itself, are more unified and able to transcend the surface diversity. Therefore, Maharishi (1986) felt that one should come to experience the Veda as the structuring
dynamics of one’s own self-referral consciousness in the same way the Veda was first experienced by the Rishis.

Veda is the impulse of one’s own consciousness, but this could be observed by the observer, the Self. When the Veda is observed, then it is not involved with the observer – the observer, the Self, is separate from it. But when the total Veda is completely and fully awake in one’s awareness, then vedo ‘ham – ‘I am the Veda’, and this is Vedānta – the awakening that identifies oneself with the Veda. (pp. 573-4)

The connection between the Veda and oneself is enlivened when one reads the Vedic Literature. This is the focal point of my research – to observe the effect of reading the Vedic Literature on myself. Maharishi (1995a) has described the connection between the student and the text he or she is reading.

… no matter what aspect of the Vedic Literature the student reads, in it he reads himself; no matter what he sees, in it he sees himself; he is able to pick up any Sūtra (verse) or phrase and in it he finds himself. (p. 226)

The primary value of reading Vedic Literature, as Maharishi has explained, is to enliven the fundamental impulses of the Veda in one’s awareness and help promote the growth of higher states of consciousness. This has been noted by researchers such as McQuiston (2004) who has described an experience during reading and her subsequent activity.

I feel so centered and full when I read. The Self is strong and lively. It comforts me so I am just witnessing life. I remain on the Self during activity not being overshadowed by the relative happiness or thought of future gains. I am more in the moment. (p. 381)

Freeman (1997) noted an expansion of consciousness and physical boundaries while reading the Brahma Sūtras (Vedānta).

As I just kept reading the Sutras my consciousness expanded even further, beyond what I could see. There was an overwhelming awareness of absorbing everything, like being a vortex that got bigger but smaller at the same time … there was still this small body I knew as mine, but the reality at the same time was that there were no boundaries at all containing me. What was my Self went on forever – and there was a very concrete knowingness that I had always been that, had reached
what I really was, that I could finally be truly at rest, that I had come home. (pp. 384-5)

It was discussed previously that every state of consciousness has a corresponding state of physiology. The growth of higher states is possible only when stress and other imbalances that restrict the physiology’s ability to support higher states of consciousness are removed. Nader (2000) has described the effect of reading Vedic Literature on the body.

The structure of the various branches of Veda and the Vedic Literature correspond to specific structures in the physiology. It is thus reasonable to conclude, as Maharishi explains, that the recitation of the sounds of the Vedic Literature in their proper sequence will resonate with the same anatomic structures to which they correspond. Their specific sequence will also enliven a specific sequence of neuronal, physiological activity. This will induce the physiology to function according to its original and perfect design. Any imperfections in the form of blocks, stress, lack or excess of activity, or abnormal connections between various components of the physiology, will be disfavored by reading the specific aspect of Veda and the Vedic Literature that corresponds to that area of the physiology which is dysfunctional. (pp. 443-4)

Researchers such as Freeman (1997) have made note of a connection in the physiology while reading Vedic Literature.

Sometimes reading Vedic Literature in Sanskrit produced a feeling that the words being spoken-out resonated in a certain part of the body. There was a distinct sensation in that area while reading one text, while switching to another branch of Vedic Literature produced a similar sensation – but in a completely different part of the physiology. (p. 400)

The sounds of the Veda and the effect they produce in the body stems from the pure language in which it is expressed. According to Maharishi (1995b), “Vedic Language is the absolute language of Natural Law, which promotes absolute order in the ever-evolving universe. The Sanskrit language is the spoken language nearest to the Vedic Language” (p. 430). Sanskrit has long been recognized as a ‘pure dialect’, a language conceived entirely within itself and not as a derivative of another language. The
word ‘sanskrita’ means purified or refined. Historians generally regard it as the world’s oldest and most systematic language. Linguist Max Müller (1862) referred to it as the “language of Languages” (p. 203), and Sir William Jones (1786) in his third discourse to the Asiatic Society said Sanskrit was, “more perfect than Greek, more copious than Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either.”

Some feel the precise and systematic grammatical structure of Sanskrit makes it a perfect fit for computer-oriented analysis. In a richly detailed and scholarly article, NASA researcher Rick Briggs (1985) said Sanskrit grammar is “identical not only in essence but in form with current work in Artificial Intelligence.”

Beyond the technical analysis of Sanskrit lies a beautifully conceived language that does justice to the pure essence of Vedic Literature. For those who venture to learn even the basic sounds that constitute the alphabet, a joyous experience awaits. Opening one’s awareness to the primordial sounds of nature that were cognized by the ancient seers creates a link to the organizing power of nature itself. This has been my experience. Learning the Vedic alphabet and applying those syllables to form the words and phrases contained in the Vedic Literature has been an exercise in pure joy. Every step of the learning process was natural, fulfilling and without strain. I could feel a deep sense of personal discovery within myself as each new sound and its corresponding form resonated in my physiology. Learning the Sanskrit alphabet and reading Vedic Literature was a continuation of the same natural experience I found in my practice of Transcendental Meditation – the effortless flow of thought, Vedic mantras resonating in

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3 Sanskrit letters are written in Devanāgarī script. While it is possible to read Vedic Literature using Roman transliteration, the name (sound) and form relationship would be removed. To produce the maximum effect in the physiology it is highly recommended to read in Devanāgarī.
my physiology and my mind transcending in the silence of the gaps between the sounds. From the very beginning I felt as though I had been born to read Vedic Literature. This is the inspiration behind the proposal for my doctoral dissertation.

**Sequence of the Veda**

The vibrations of Natural Law that were formulated in the self-referral consciousness of the Vedic Rishis are expressed as the hymns of the Vedic Literature. In its structure it consists of a sequence of sounds and silence. The sounds are known as mantras and the silence is consciousness. This is expressed in the *Apastamba Shrāutra Sūtram* of the Vedic text of *Kalp* as: *Mantra-Brāhmanayor-Veda nāmadheyam* (sound and consciousness together constitute Veda). (24.1.31) The sounds of Veda are contained in the syllables, words, verses, hymns and *mandalas* that make up the Vedic Literature. The silence is found in the gaps between all those variations of sounds. The significance of the sequential, orderly unfoldment of Vedic knowledge is described in the *Apaaurusheya Bhāshya*, Maharishi’s commentary on *k Veda*. This, according to Maharishi (1997) is, “essentially the commentary on the GAPS between the syllables of the Vedic structure – the unmanifest value of consciousness, which, in its self-referral dynamics, constitutes the mechanics of transformation of the previous sound into the following sound” (p. 11).

While most commentaries on the Vedic Literature explain the meaning of the words, Maharishi’s *Apaaurusheya Bhāshya* is referred to as the ‘uncreated commentary’ because its focus is on the creative process that accounts for the emergence of sound from within the silent, uncreated reality of pure consciousness. This insight stems from Maharishi’s realization that the Veda, through its own internal mechanics, comments on
itself. According to the Apaurusheya Bhāshya, the Veda, beginning with the first syllable, its first expression, contains all the knowledge in seed form for all subsequent expressions. If complete knowledge is contained in the first syllable, then it must also be contained in the first word, the first verse, the first hymn, etc. Like that, the knowledge keeps on sequentially unfolding in more elaborated forms. Each elaboration becomes a ‘commentary’ on the previous more compact expression.

The first syllable of k Veda is A (A – pronounced like ‘Ah’). The pronunciation of A (A) requires the full opening of the mouth and contains within it the total potential for all other possible sounds. Maharishi (1998a) has described the sequential progression of sound into form.

This natural theme of evolution of consciousness starts from the holistic sound, A (A), and evolves into the fragmented expressions of A (A) – sounds of vowels and consonants – and in the continuing process of evolution into the forms of sound, or forms of speech, further evolving into the forms of material creation. (p. 328)

This is Maharishi’s insight into how consciousness, the fundamental level of nature, creates from within itself and is ultimately responsible for all the form and phenomena in the physical universe. Even more important in Maharishi’s view is an individual’s capacity for experiencing the organizing power of Natural Law that is present in the sequential unfoldment of the structure of k Veda. Transcendental Meditation is, as previously discussed, a natural and systematic means of bringing the mind to its least excited state where the subtle vibrations of consciousness that constitute the Veda are lively. The result is that individual thought, speech and behavior becomes more aligned with the order inherent in nature’s functioning. According to Maharishi (1998a) this similarly extends to reading Vedic Literature in sequence. “When the Vedic Text is correctly pronounced in its proper sequence, it stimulates all elements of the brain
physiology to be fully alert and to function holistically in a coherent, orderly manner” (pp. 182-3).

The sequence is important because it aligns the brain with the evolutionary direction of Natural Law that is present in the naturally unfolding structure of the Vedic Literature itself. Just as the total expression of *k Veda* is contained in A (A), the beginning of each text of Vedic Literature contains the wholeness of that particular value of knowledge in compact form. From there, the text unfolds in perfect sequence as the knowledge unpacks itself. The end of each text contains the fully unpacked value of knowledge that is expressed as its point value. Reading the text from start to finish incorporates the full range of knowledge – from totality to its point – in one’s brain physiology. On the level of one’s consciousness it creates the simultaneous awareness of silence (wholeness, totality) and dynamism (point value). This coexistence of opposite values, as we discussed earlier, is the basis of the integrated functioning of the mind in higher states of consciousness. My own research in consciousness, which is outlined later in this proposal, includes a systematic schedule of reading Vedic Literature in sequence in combination with an approach that follows the Vedic Calendar.

**The Vedic Calendar**

The Vedic Calendar is a luni-solar calendar, meaning it is based on lunar months and solar years. Unlike the simple solar-based Gregorian calendar, which has its place in common usage throughout the world, the Vedic Calendar is much more complex and comprehensive. It reflects the cycles of nature by celebrating many of its important dates based on the relative phases of the moon rather than the numbered days of the week, month or year like the Gregorian calendar. For example, *Guru Pūrṇimā*, which honors
the Guru or Vedic Master, is held in the Indian lunar month of Āshāḍha on the first full
moon following the summer solstice. Mahā Shivarātri, a traditional day of observance to
Shiva is held in late winter on the 14th day of the dark half of the Indian lunar month of
Phālgun.

The Vedic Calendar is sometimes referred to as Panchangam (five limbs), which
defines its structure as composed of five elements of time: the tithi (lunar day), the vāra
(day of the week), the nakshatra (lunar constellation), the yoga (luni-solar day) and
the karana (half lunar day). According to Maharishi Vedic Science, the dawn of each
new day awakens specific qualities of nature. These qualities, based on the cycles of the
sun and moon as well as the precise position of the planets and stars, are what distinguish
the days of the week, month and year. By examining each day for its special qualities, the
Vedic Calendar can identify not only an auspicious time and date for holding traditional
celebrations, but can also aid with the planning of various activities. A proper reading of
the Vedic Calendar requires an exact reference point – for example, where an individual
is located – because its time and distance scales are so precise.

In ancient India, those families who had cultured a deep insight and understanding
into the process of change brought on by the cycles of time and the influence of natural
law were known as Jyotishis, or Vedic astrologers. Jyotish means pertaining to light and
refers to an ancient Vedic system of knowledge that describes the relationship between
the individual and the universe in which he or she lives. It connects the two through the
thread of consciousness, which was discussed earlier as the essential constituent of
creation. Jyotish is applied through mathematical calculations based on the exact time
and location of birth. From there, it goes deeply into a person’s life to see what the past
has structured, what the present is offering and what the future may hold. This vision is contained in a unique signature of the heavens at the moment of birth and becomes a blueprint for the expression of personality and the role each person is to play in life.

According to Jyotish, individual life unfolds sequentially through a predetermined process of transformation and change. At the same time, the universe is rapidly evolving and expanding. By understanding the link between the two it is possible to predict when various transformative events are likely to take place, or at least spot the underlying influences and trends that may precede them. This insight can have immense practical value as Levacy (1999) states, “We can use the information of the panchanga and our experience to make projections that will lead us to promote action at the right time or to defer that action to a time where the conditions will generate more success and fulfillment” (p. 370). The art of avoiding the potential for problems before they arise is noted in the Yoga Sūtras: Heyam du kham anāgatam (avert the danger which has not yet come, 2.16)

Understanding the cycles of nature reflected in the Vedic Calendar delineates the importance of proper timing as a useful tool for ensuring success of a new undertaking. While this has long been used as a means of determining the auspicious time for traditional Vedic performances, it is my proposal that this can and should extend to the reading of Vedic Literature, as well.

Vedic Devatā in the Vedic Literature and the Vedic Calendar

Quoting Maharishi, Nader (2000) writes, “… the Vedic Devatā are the various aspects of Natural Law that organize the entire universe and maintain it in perfect order. [They] are the administrators of every aspect of creation” (p. 333). As impulses of
consciousness present in all the expressions of consciousness, the Vedic Devatā can be likened to the subtle vibrations of the unified field whose effects are known in all the excited states of the field. These are the dynamics of the field. Every manifestation is both an expression of the field and the field itself. This accounts for the infinite variety of the universe even as it is connected to an underlying unity that is an unchanging continuum. In its role as an expression, the Vedic Devatā assume an individual identity based on the quality of Natural Law they administer. For example, the Vedic Devatā that administers silence is Shiva while the Vedic Devatā that administers dynamism is Vishu. Again, Nader quotes Maharishi on the relationship between Shiva and Vishu.

… this can be understood as the coexistence of silence and dynamism, or the true oneness of Shiva and Vishu. In this perspective, Shiva and Vishu can be seen as both one and the same, and yet as two different aspects of the Unified Field of Natural Law. It is in this manner that the Devatā are different from each other, because they administer different aspects of reality, and yet remain one undifferentiated wholeness of Natural Law. (p. 334)

According to the Vedic Literature there are five main aspects of Natural Law known as the Panch Devatā. They are Shiva, Vishu, Devī, Gaṇesh and Sūrya. Shiva, as previously noted, symbolizes silence. Pure silence is experienced during Transcendental Meditation when one transcends all thought and feeling in the state of transcendental consciousness. This is expressed in the Upanishads as: Shivam shāntam advaitam (the peaceful, the undivided; that is Shiva, that is the Self). Through regular meditation and activity, the inner silence of transcendental consciousness eventually is found to coexist with the active state of waking consciousness. This is how silence (Shiva) comes to be present along with activity in the consciousness of an individual. In the Vedic Calendar Shiva is celebrated each month on the 13th day (trāyodashi) of Kṛishna Paksha (dark fortnight of the moon), also known as pradosh.
Vishu denotes the quality of dynamism. Nader (2000) explains this in terms of the maintenance of creation.

From a quantum-mechanical perspective, the notion of classical particles vanishes and the unbounded, infinite quality of the maintenance and sustenance of Natural Law is seen to permeate everything. In this quality of maintenance or sustenance, Natural Law is called Vishu. (p. 348)

In the Vedic Calendar, Vishu is celebrated each month on the 11th day (ekādashi) of *Krisna Paksha*.

Of Gaesh, Maharishi (1998b) says, “In the Vedic Literature this ‘Gaesh quality of intelligence’ has a name Vighneshwara – the great remover of obstacles – the administering intelligence of Natural Law that removes obstacles” (p. 333). In many Indian households, a statue of Gaesh sits at the entrance to safeguard against any negative influence that may try to enter. Traditionally in the recitation of Vedic hymns, Gaesh comes first in order to clear the way for the rest of the performance. In the Vedic Calendar, Gaesh is celebrated on the 4th day (chaturthi) of both the waxing (*Shukla Paksha*) and waning moon (*Krisna Shukla*).

Devī refers to the qualities represented by the various forms of Mother Divine. Parvatī (the wife of Shiva) represents the fundamental aspect of Mother Divine.

According to Nader (2000), “She is the source of all that there is in creation. Nothing takes shape without Her; nothing can have a manifest form or a structure without her” (p. 375). Nader, who has located reference points for all the *Panch Devatā* in the human physiology, has offered a further description of the three traditional aspects of Mother Divine. “Lakshmī is the nourishing and wealth-giving value; Saraswatī is the knowledge value; while Dūrgā is the energy and power value” (p. 375). In the Vedic Calendar, Devī
is celebrated on the 8th day (ashtami) of both the waxing (Shukla Paksha) and waning moon (Krishna Shukla).

Sūrya is the sun. According to Nader, Sūrya in the physiology corresponds to the thalamus, which is the gateway to conscious experience. Just as the activity represented by the orbital patterns of the planets revolves around the sun, the activity in the related brain structures generated by sensory stimuli revolves around the thalamus.

Maharishi (1998b) has described how the Vedic culture has a tradition of celebrating the different qualities of nature on specific days outlined in the Vedic calendar.

India has a tradition of celebrating festivals with reference to the structures and functions of the Laws of Nature as they have been portrayed in the Vedic Literature in terms of Gaapatī, Shiva, Vishu, Sūrya, Devī, etc. Every year, as a routine of the Indian calendar, all the qualities of Creative Intelligence that administer life are celebrated. On the day of Mahā Shivarātri, the whole national consciousness wakes up in the quality of Shiva; on Dīpāvali, the whole national consciousness wakes up in the consciousness of Mahā Lakshmi; on the days of Navarātri, Mahā Dūrgā dominates national consciousness; on Kîshonāshtami, the whole national consciousness is awake in that holistic quality of Natural Law lively in the name ‘Ksh’; on Rām Navmi, the quality of the administering intelligence of Natural Law lively in the name ‘Rām’ is awake in national consciousness. Every day the Indian calendar (Panchang) brings to the awareness of the people some specific quality of Natural Law. (pp. 337-8)

The Purānas

The Purānas are a large branch of Vedic Literature written mostly in story form. They were compiled by the Vedic seer Vyāsa and tell the history of ancient times. There are 18 principle Purānas known as Mahā Purānas that contain more than 400,000 verses. In addition there are 18 minor Purānas known as Upa-Purānas. The Purānas typically give prominence to a particular quality of Natural Law previously discussed as Vedic Devatā. Hence, there are numerous stories of Shiva, Vishu, Gaesh, Devī and
Sūrya. Shiva is featured in the Shiva Purāṇa and the Linga Purāṇa. Vishu is in the Vishu Purāṇa and others. Devī is in numerous Purāṇas including the Markandeya, Brāhma, Skānda, Padma and Brāhmaṇanda. Devī is also featured in the Devī Bhāgavata Purāṇa (Upa-Purāṇa). The most popular Purāṇa is the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, which is the story of the life of Kṛishṇa.

In addition to its stories, the Purāṇas also contain several short hymns of praise to the Pancha Devatās known as stotrams and āshtakams. Among the more popular are the Sanksashtanāśhanam Gaṇesh Stotram and the Vishu Achyutāshtakam. Other stotrams celebrate the Pancha Devatās by listing their many names as in the Sahasranāmas (thousand names).

The Purāṇas are part of the Brāhmaṇa loop within Maharishi’s 40 Aspects of Vedic Literature. As was discussed above, the Vedic Literature is comprised of mantra and brāhmaṇa – the sounds and the gaps between them. One sound ‘collapses’ into the gap and is replaced by a new sound. The gap contains the mechanics of transformation that holds onto the memory (Smiti) of the previous sound while giving rise to the next emerging sound in the correct sequential unfoldment of knowledge. The six aspects of Brāhmaṇa are: the Upanishads, the Āranyakas, the Brāhmaṇas, Itihās, the Purāṇas and Smiti. Nader (2000) has noted, “One of the 6 values in the group itself has the name Brāhmaṇa, yet all of them participate in the mechanics of transformation. This is why they are collectively given the name Brāhmaṇa” (p. 206).

Maharishi has given the Purāṇas the quality of ‘ancient and eternal.’ This is with reference to the ‘ancient’ stories it contains and the ‘eternal’ unchanging quality of Natural Law in the gap that is both the silent wholeness of consciousness in its latent
potentiality and its point value that emerges from the gap as a new specific quality.

Maharishi (1980) says the Purāṇas “illustrate the whole of the Veda” (p. 17). The Purāṇas are cited along with Itihās in the Chāndogya Upanishad as being a ‘fifth Veda’ (along with k Veda, Sāma Veda, Yajur-Veda and Atharva Veda): itihāsapurāṇa pañchama vedānā (Itihās and Purāṇa are the fifth Veda, 7.1.2) A similar reference also occurs in the Bihārāyaṇa yaka Upanishad (4.5.11). This establishes the prominence of the Purāṇas in the whole of Vedic Literature.

A Research Proposal for Reading Vedic Literature

For my research in consciousness, I am proposing a program of reading Vedic Literature that follows the Vedic calendar and has special emphasis on the Purāṇas. This approach, in combination with the traditional program of reading in sequence, presents an intriguing model for comparative research. On one hand there is the natural unfolding sequence of Vedic knowledge as brought to light by Maharishi in the 40 Aspects of Vedic Literature. On the other is the natural unfolding sequence of time as it wakes up each new day with a different expression of the innumerable qualities of nature. Such an approach to reading Vedic Literature will take full advantage of the range and scope of Natural Law present in every expression of the Veda.

Looking at the Vedic calendar for the current period that corresponds to the Gregorian month of March 2008, one finds that eight days have a particular Vedic Devatā designation. March 5th is Mahā Shivarātri, one of the most auspicious days of the year according to the Vedic calendar. On this day the qualities of silence and peace, embodied by Shiva, are very lively in nature’s functioning. There is also a monthly recurring day of Shiva that occurs later in March. In addition, there are two days of Vishu, two days of
Gad esh and two days of Mother Divine. The remaining 23 days of March are without any major reference to Vedic Devatā although they have their reference to the Panchangam as mentioned above.

According to Maharishi Vedic Science, when certain qualities – silence, dynamism, removal of obstacles, prosperity, knowledge, etc. – are predominant in nature they are most accessible to human awareness. Activities that allow one to innocently place their awareness on those qualities, through the Vedic Devatā they correspond to, will gain the support of nature for the establishment of those qualities. Therefore it is logical to make a connection between the Vedic Devatā of the text and the day of the month in which the qualities of Natural Law represented by that Devatā are most accessible. It is my intent to construct a reading program based on this relationship. For example, if we consider the month of March, a reading program could consist of the following structure based on a six-day reading week at four hours per day.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day of the Week</th>
<th>Vedic Devatā</th>
<th>Vedic Literature to Read</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sat. March 1</td>
<td>Shikshā</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon. March 3</td>
<td>Vishū</td>
<td>Vishū Sahasranāma (Padma Purāṇa), Achyutāshtakam, Vishū Purāṇa</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tue. March 4</td>
<td>Shikshā</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed. March 5</td>
<td>Shiva</td>
<td>Shiva Sahasranāma, Shiva Sūtras, Shiva Purāṇam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu. March 6</td>
<td>Shikshā</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri. March 7</td>
<td>Shikshā</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat. March 8</td>
<td>Shikshā</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon. March 10</td>
<td>Shikshā</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tue. March 11</td>
<td>Gaṅghū</td>
<td>Gaṅghū Sahasranāma, Sankashtanāshananam (Narada Purāṇa), Gaṅghū Purāṇa</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed. March 12</td>
<td>Shikshā</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu. March 13</td>
<td>Shikshā</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri. March 14</td>
<td>Shikshā</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat. March 15</td>
<td>Shikshā</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon. March 17</td>
<td>Vishū</td>
<td>Vishū Sahasranāma (Padma Purāṇa), Achyutāshtakam, Vishū Purāṇa</td>
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<td>Tue. March 18</td>
<td>Shikshā</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed. March 19</td>
<td>Shiva</td>
<td>Shiva Sahasranāma (Linga Purāṇa), Shiva Sūtras, Shiva Purāṇam</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thu. March 20</td>
<td>Shikshā</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri. March 21</td>
<td>Shikshā</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat. March 22</td>
<td>Shikshā</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon. March 24</td>
<td>Shikshā</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tue. March 25</td>
<td>Gaṅghū</td>
<td>Gaṅghū Sahasranāma, Sankashtanāshananam (Narada Purāṇa), Gaṅghū Purāṇa</td>
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<td>Wed. March 26</td>
<td>Shikshā</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Thu. March 27</td>
<td>Shikshā</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fri. March 28</td>
<td>Shikshā</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Sat. March 29</td>
<td>DevīI</td>
<td>Dūrgā Sahasranāma (Skanda Purāṇa), Mahā Lakshmi Sahasranāma (Brahma Purāṇa), Sarasvatī Sahasranāma (Skanda Purāṇa), Devī Mahatmyam (Markandeya Purāṇa)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon. March 31</td>
<td>Shikshā</td>
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Note: The above schedule consists of 19 days of reading Shikshā in sequence. Based on the length of the available text and my Sanskrit reading skill, this is the approximate time it would take to complete this aspect of Vedic Literature. Once completed, I will begin with Kalp. Kalp is a much longer text, perhaps the longest of the 40 aspects. My research
plan is to read each text for approximately one or two months and move to the next text in sequence. This will enable me to read from, and in some cases complete, 36 aspects\(^4\) in two and a half years. Some texts – including the entire Upānga loop (Nyāya, Vaisheshika, Sānkhya, Yoga, Karma Mīmānsa and Vedānta) – can possibly be read in less than a month (depending on the amount of readings from the Vedic Calendar) so there will be some variations to the overall schedule.

**Conclusion**

Science begins with an investigation into knowledge. Maharishi Vedic Science connects knowledge with the knower by opening one’s awareness to the basis of knowledge in consciousness, which is locatable within one’s own Self. Science is based on observation. The technologies of consciousness, including reading Vedic Literature, are the tools that enliven the knower at the most fundamental level of life and enable one to observe one’s own consciousness. As previously discussed, reading Vedic Literature accomplishes this in a systematic, repeatable and publicly verifiable way, thereby meeting the accepted scientific criteria for valid knowledge.

The research proposal outlined in this paper is designed to test relevant predictions about the development of consciousness in connection with reading the texts of Vedic Literature according to their natural sequence of expression. The originality of this research is further established by taking into account the Vedic Calendar as a means of enlivening specific qualities of Natural Law on days when they are most accessible. This approach, coupled with a focused study of the Purāṇas, will expand research in

\(^4\) In accordance with Maharishi’s guidelines for reading Vedic Literature, Westerners do not read the four Vedas (k Veda, Śāma Veda, Yajur-Veda and Atharva Veda), as these texts are reserved for the pandits who are specially trained to recite them.
consciousness in a new direction and make a valuable contribution to the knowledge base at Maharishi University of Management in an important area of Vedic Literature.

The next two and a half years promise to be a valuable experience of self-exploration in which the research and its application for the researcher occurs simultaneously. This presents a unique opportunity that allows the researcher to participate in original scholarship while also enjoying the satisfaction that comes from the growth of higher states of consciousness. Understood in this way, Maharishi Vedic Science complements and extends modern science by making knowledge complete and fulfilling.
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