

## SAI SPEAKS TO SADHAKA

**Sadhaka:** All those who are loyal to Bharathiya culture accept the Vedas as authoritative sources for every aspect of life. They assert that the Vedas are the roots of their faith. What exactly does Veda mean? For what reason has the Veda acquired such importance?

**Sai:** My dear fellow! Born in India that is Bharath, parading yourself as a Bharathiya, you are not aware of what Veda means! Well, Veda is the name for a mass of divine knowledge. Veda teaches the Truth that cannot be revised or reversed by the passage of time through the three stages—past, present and future. The Veda ensures welfare and happiness for the three worlds. It confers peace and security on human society. The Veda is the collation of Words that are Truth, which were visualised by sages who had attained the capacity to receive them into their enlightened awareness. In reality, the Word is the very Breath of God, the Supreme Person. The unique importance of the Veda rests on this fact.

**Sadhaka:** But in the field of worldly life, on the daily, material stage, what light can one expect from the Vedas?

**Sai:** Every being that lives in the world strives to possess what it desires and avoid what it dislikes. Know that the Veda instructs how to succeed in both these endeavours. That is to say, it lays down what has to be done and what should not be done. When these prescriptions and prohibitions are followed, one can earn the good and avoid the evil. Veda is concerned with both the material and the spiritual, both this world and the beyond. If truth must be told all Life is Veda-filled. One cannot but observe its injunctions. “Veda” is derived from “*vid*” which means “to know.” So, Veda means and includes all knowledge, Jnana. Man is

distinguished from other animals by the Jnana that he is endowed with. Devoid of Jnana, he is but a beast, a *pasu*.

**Sadhaka:** They say, the Vedas are numberless, without end (*Anantha*). Are they all full repositories of Jnana?

**Sai:** “*Anantho vai Vedaah.*” The Vedas are infinite. But note that, in the beginning, there was just one Veda. Later, it was dealt with as Three and subsequently as Four.

**Sadhaka:** Why was the one divided into many? What special need was met thereby?

**Sai:** Since the Veda was vast and limitless, it was difficult for ordinary men to study it. Moreover, it would take endless time to complete the study. So those who wished to learn were overwhelmed by fear. So, very few showed earnestness to study the Veda. For these reasons, something had to be done to make the study within reach of all who sought to learn. The *rks* or hymns of praise in the Veda were therefore separated from the rest and grouped under the title, Rk-samhitha; the Yajur-samhitha; The Saama verses (capable of musical rendering) were grouped under the title Saama-samhitha and the Artharva manthras (formulae and spells) were collected under the title Atharva-samhitha.

**Sadhaka:** Who was the person who grouped them in these collections?

**Sai:** It was Vyasa, who was a partial manifestation of Narayana (God, Vishnu) Himself. He was the son of Sage Paraasara. He had mastered the scriptures and spiritual treatises. He was a great sage himself. He was a skillful coordinator. In order to promote the welfare of mankind, he compiled the Veda in four parts and facilitated righteous living by all. He divided the Vedas into four and prepared five samhithas.

**Sadhaka:** The four Vedas are the four samhithas as you explained now. What purpose does the fifth serve? How did the extra one arise?

**Sai:** The Yajus-samhitha (Yajurveda) has separated itself into two, the Krishna-Yajurveda-samhitha and the Sukla-Yajurveda-samhitha. So, the total became five. The process did not stop there. Each of these samhithas developed three separate complementary components. These scriptural texts emerged in order to enlighten people in different states of awareness and different levels of consciousness. The purpose was to enable everyone to benefit by the guidance and cross the sea of suffering. Therefore, there is no trace of conflict in any of these texts.

**Sadhaka:** What are those three elaborations, those three subsidiary texts called?

**Sai:** Brahmanas, Aranyakas and Upanishads

**Sadhaka:** What are Brahmanas?

**Sai:** They are explanatory texts dealing with manthras or ritual formulae. They describe clearly the sacrificial rites and the ceremonies that have to be observed while performing them. There are many texts like Aitareya Brahmana, Taithirya Brahmana, Sathapatha Brahmana and Gopatha Brahmana.

**Sadhaka:** And, what are Aranyakas?

**Sai:** They are in verse and prose. They are mainly intended for the guidance of those, who after passing through the stages of *Brahmacharya* (spiritual studies) and *Grahasthya* (family life), assume *Vanaprastha* (life as recluse in forests). *Aranya* means “forest.” That is to say, these are texts to be pursued and meditated upon silently in lonely hermitages. They deal with the duties and responsibilities of the final stage of active life (*Karma Kanda*), the stage preliminary to the totally spiritual stage (*Brahma Kanda*).

**Sadhaka:** Swami! I have heard the term “Brahma Kanda” being used for some texts. What does it relate to?

**Sai:** Those texts are concerned with sacrificial rites as well as rules of right conduct. They deal with the special features of ceremonial rituals and special elaborations of moral codes.

**Sadhaka:** And Swami, what are Upanishads?

**Sai:** They can be mastered only by intelligent discrimination (*Viveka*). They deserve to be so mastered. Four goals are laid down for humans in the scriptures: *Dharma* (Righteousness), *Artha* (Prosperity), *Kama* (Moral Desire), and *Moksha* (Liberation). *Vidya* or Learning can be classified under two heads: The *Apara* (Lower) and the *Para* (Higher). While the four Vedas, the earlier portion of ancient scripture, deal with the *Apara* (the first three goals), the later portion of the same, the Upanishads, deal with the *Para* (the last among the goals).

**Sadhaka:** But, how did the word Vedanta arise?

**Sai:** These Upanishads themselves form the Vedanta. Memorising the Vedas is of no avail: Vedanta has to be understood and assimilated. Knowledge can never reach consummation until Vedanta is mastered.

**Sadhaka:** Swami! The Vedas are often referred to as Sruthi; why?

**Sai:** The Vedas have nine names by which they are denoted. Sruthi is only one of the nine.

**Sadhaka:** What are those nine?

**Sai:** Sruthi, Anusrava, Thrayee, Aamnaaya, Naamaamnaaya, Chhandas, Swaadhyaaya, Aagama, Nigamaagama.

**Sadhaka:** Each of these names must be indicating some distinct feature. I desire to know how those names arose and what those features are. Please instruct me.

**Sai:** Of course, those names have inner meanings. Sruthi means “That which has been heard.” The guru chants the Vedic hymn, the pupil listens with one-pointed attention, and reproduces it with the same voice modulations. This process is repeated until the pupil masters each hymn. Hence the name Sruthi is relevant. The name Anusrava also means the same, “That which has been heard serially.” Now, the word Thrayee. It means “the Three.” In the beginning there were three collations only in Vedic scriptures—the Rig Veda, the Yajur, and the Sama Veda. These three alone were considered important. So this word was used and it has stayed. The word “*aamnaaya*” is derived from the root “*mnaa*” which means “learn.” Since the Vedas had to be learnt continuously and in a steadfast manner, they were collectively known as “Aamnaaya” and also as “Namaamnaaya.”

“*Chhandas*” means a poetic metre, which can be set to music, as in Sama Veda. So, the Vedas themselves were indicated by that name.

The name Swaadhyaaya was applied to the Vedas, since they were handed down from father to son and from generation to generation, by the process of teaching and learning (*Swaadhyaaya*).

*Aagama* means “that which has come, originated.” “*Nigamaagama*” is an elaboration of the same word. The Vedas have originated from the Breath of God; each syllable is sacred. Each word is a *manthra*. The Vedas are all manthras.

**Sadhaka:** Manthra? What does “Manthra” mean?

**Sai:** Manthra is the exposition of the goal that is set. That is to say, it is that which prompts and promotes *manana* or probing through the mind. “*Man*” syllable indicates the process of probing and the syllable “*thra*” means “the capacity to take across, to liberate, to save.” In short, manthra is that which saves when the mind dwells upon it. While rites and ritual sacrifices are performed, the person has to remind himself constantly of their nature and significance. The formulae he has to repeat to achieve this end are manthras. But today, those who perform these rites either recite them mechanically or allow them to roll on the tongue. They pay no attention to the meaning of the manthra. When manthras are uttered as rigmarole they yield no fruit! The person can reap full reward only when he recites them with the knowledge of the meaning and

significance. Each Veda has many “*saakhas*” (limb) and the total direction and purpose of each “*saakha*” has also to be known by the Vedic scholar.

**Sadhaka:** What are “*saakhas*”?

**Sai:** Saakha means “limb,” a text arising out of the main Veda. A tree has branches, each branch has twigs and bunches of leaves. When all these are conceived together, the tree emerges. Each Veda has a large number of main branches and subsidiary branches. Not all have come to light. Only a few have been identified and studied. The number of saakhas lost from memory and practice will add up to thousands and even *lakhs* (100,000). Even their names have disappeared; no one can recall them. This is the reason why the scriptures declare, “The Vedas are endless” (Anantho Vai Vedaah). As a result, each of the great saints and sages took up for study and practice only a few saakhas from one Veda or the other.

**Sadhaka:** What is the Rig Veda? How was that name applied to it?

**Sai:** Rig Veda is the collection of manthras or hymns in praise of Gods. The term Rig Veda can apply to the Gods who are praised.

**Sadhaka:** Which God is most adored and glorified in this Veda?

**Sai:** There are many Gods whose praise is contained in it. The Rig Veda deals with thirty-three of them as important.

**Sadhaka:** Have these Gods specially distinct forms or are they of the human form?

**Sai:** They have forms akin to the human.

**Sadhaka:** Please instruct me on their *swarupa*, their form, at least, about one or two among them.

**Sai:** Surya, the Sun God, has “rays” as His arms. The flames of Agni, the Fire God, are His tongues. This is how they are pictured.

Agni, the Fire God, is born when hardwood (*Arani*) is churned. Agni has parents, but, as soon as He is born, He eats up His father and mother, that is to say, the pieces of wood whose friction produces the spark. Agni is described as having ten maids. They are the ten fingers that hold the arani and operate it. Since He is born every time the arani is ritually operated, Agni is named the *Bahujanma*, the Multiborn. The column of smoke (*dhooma*) indicates His presence, it is His Flag (*Kethu*) so to say. Therefore, He has another name, Dhooma Kethu, by which He is invited.

Agni is named Yajna-Sarathi, (the Charioteer for the sacrifice), for He brings in this chariot to the place of sacrifice the Gods to whom offerings are made in the ceremonial flames. He conveys the offerings to the Gods to

whom they are dedicated. In every *Yajna* (Sacrificial rite) Agni is the most important participant. So He is praised as officiating in all the four roles: *Rthwic* (priest), *Hotha* (reciter of prayers), *Purohitha* (performer of rites) and *Brahma* (supervisor of ritual). Agni is the closest friend of man, for without fire he can scarce hold onto life. The principle of Fire is at the basis of human activity—both inside the body and outside. So, Agni is addressed as *Grhpathi* (the master of the home). Agni has no preferences and no prejudices. Agni treats all living beings, all races and castes equally with no distinction. Therefore, He is addressed as *Samamithra* (Same Friend).

**Sadhaka:** What is the main lesson that the Rig Veda teaches?

**Sai:** The Rig Veda teaches Unity. It exhorts all men to pursue the same holy desires. All hearts must be charged with the same good urge. All thoughts must be directed by good motives towards good ends. All men must tread the one Path of Truth for all are but manifestations of the One.

People believe today that the lesson of the unity of mankind is quite new and that the idea of progressing towards it, is very praiseworthy. But the concept of human unity is not at all new. In Rig Vedic times, the concept has been proclaimed much more clearly and emphatically than now. It is the preeminent ideal of the Rig Veda.

All are parts of God, His Power, His Energy. The *Atma* that is the Reality in everyone is, in truth, the One manifesting as the Many. The Veda demands that difference and distinction should not be imposed. This universal inclusive outlook is absent among men today. They have multiplied differences and conflicts and their lives have become narrow and restricted. The Rig Veda, in the ancient past, pulled down restrictive barriers and narrow feelings and proclaimed Unity.

**Sadhaka:** What is the Yajur Veda? Why is it known by that name?

**Sai:** The name is derived from the root “*Yaj*.” It has a large number of derivatives, each with a particular meaning. But the meanings most current are “Worship of God” (*Devapuja*) and charity, granting gifts. The Yajur Veda describes the modes and methods of performing *Yajna* and *Yaga* to propitiate the Gods. *Adhwara* also means “a sacrifice”; so, Yajur Veda is sometimes referred to as Adhwara Veda.

**Sadhaka:** What lesson does the Yajur Veda convey?

**Sai:** The Yajur Veda has two recensions, one centering round the tradition of *Aditya* or the Sun and the other, around the tradition of Brahma. The latter is distinguished as *Krishna* (Dark) Yajur Veda and the former as *Sukla* (White) Yajur Veda. The Sukla Yajur Veda is widely current in North India

while the Krishna Yajur Veda prevails in South India. The Krishna recension is closer to the hymns of the Rig Veda collections. The manthras or formulae contained in this are used in the worship of Gods and while placing offerings to the Gods in the sacrificial fire.

The Krishna Yajur Veda comprises eighty-six Saakhas (branches) each with its special explanatory texts. But they have mostly disappeared from the memory for want of people to study and practise. Only four have survived. Eighty-two have been drowned in the whirlpool of time.

The Sukla Yajur Veda had seventeen noteworthy branches, but they too had to succumb to the ravages of time. Only two of them are available now. When we consider how momentous and meaningful (*mahath*) these two are, one has to conclude that the unique value of this Veda is well-nigh indescribable. Estimating the glory and grandeur of the Vedas is a task which no one can fulfil. The Vedas are unreachable, by means of either language or imagination—“*Yatho Vaacho nivarthanthe, apraapya, manasaa saha*” (That from which words recoil, inaccessible even to the mind). Know that this is the truth and exult that you could know that this is the truth and exult that you could know it thus. Those who have become aware of this are really blessed. Diving into the depth, they have gained the precious gem. They have won the goal of Life, the *Purushaartha*.

**Sadhaka:** Swami! You said the Veda is known by nine other names. Has it got more?

**Sai:** Ah! Can it be designated by only nine? It has many more names. For example, it is known as *Prasna*, also as *Prathamaja*. The names reveal the various facets of the Veda, the context and character of the teachings.

**Sadhaka:** Prasna? What does it mean?

**Sai:** The Almighty (Parameswara) is *Prasnagarbha* (He who contains all clarity and wisdom). Prasna connotes purity, clarity, sanctity. So the word indicates that the Almighty has the intelligence, devoid of taint of any kind. The Veda is the concretisation in words of that Wisdom. *Rishis* (sages) who possess purified consciousness and clarified intellect win the grace of the all-pervasive Brahman (Cosmic Self). Brahman prompts them and blesses them to visualise the hymns and sacred formulae (manthras). While adoring the Almighty, who became aware of the Truth, they too recognised and described Brahman as Prasnagarbha.

Rishis who visualised the manthras were not bound by the consequent coils of Karma (works); they merge in Brahman and emerge from Brahman when the cycle of manifestation starts again. So, they are hailed as *Ajah* (unborn). The Veda acclaims them thus. Their very nature is immaculate purity. Therefore, they too are called Prasna. They yearned so agonisingly for grace that in the state of

super consciousness (Samaadhi), Brahmam manifested out of self-will, and awarded them the vision of Brahma Yajna.

**Sadhaka:** What is Brahma Yajna?

**Sai:** Brahma Yajna is Swaadhyaya, that is to say, intense study and observance of the Veda. The Rishis who are “unborn” and therefore authorised by Brahmam to transmit the Truth, formulated, according to the vision they earned, the Yajnas or sacrificial rites designed to promote peace and prosperity in the world. The Vedas acknowledge as Rishis only those who treasure in their hearts the awareness of mantras, of the supreme truth, and of the meaning and significance of Brahmam (the Cosmic Self) and Dharma (the Laws of Social Harmony and Individual Rights and Duties). The ritual sacrifices authorised and accepted by such Rishis are called Yajnas.

The yearning for Truth is *Thapas* or Asceticism. Since Brahmam is won through Thapas, it is referred to as *Thapoja* (attained by Thapas) and the response from Brahmam to the Thapas is described as the Word of God (*Deva-Vaak*), the Voice of God (*Deva-Vaani*).

Thapoja literally means “born of Thapas”; but this does not imply that the Cosmic Self (Brahmam) was non-existent until Thapas brought It forth! Brahmam is ever-existent. It has no Beginning. Time does not affect it. “Born of Thapas” means that “It revealed Itself to the person who

underwent the Thapas.” It ever IS. It has willed to be so. It projected Itself as the *Vaak*, the Word. The Word is the manthra of the Veda. So, the Almighty is described in the Veda as the Designer of Manthra (Manthra-krit), the Creator of Rishis (*Rishis-Krit*), besides the names that occur at some place or other, like Self-emergent (*Swayam-bhu*), Thapoja (born of Thapas), etc.

I mentioned the name Prasnagarbha. That is a very meaningful name for the Almighty. It signifies food (*anna*), water (*jala*), immortalising nectar (*amritha*) and the wisdom of the Veda. Since the Almighty Brahmam has all these in Him, in the womb (*garbha*), so to say, He is named Prasnagarbha. Brahmam is thus declaring His own Reality as the Form of Veda (*Veda-rupa*).

**Sadhaka:** Swami! Prathamaja is another name you mentioned. What does that word mean?

**Sai:** The Three (*Thrayee*), that is to say, the Veda, is extolled as Prathamaja in the Veda; “*Upasthaaya Prathamajam*”;—this statement reveals the belief that Vidya (higher learning) could be attained by the *upasthaa* (revered study) of Prathamaja or the Primal-born. Unless one studies with humility the sacred Veda-vaak (Word of the Veda), one cannot master knowledge of Brahmam (*Brahma Vidya*). This requires, not the verbal recitation of the Veda, but the constant “service,” the conscious worship of the Veda with

full awareness of what the word means and commands. This has been made plain in that statement.

**Sadhaka:** In which Veda, Swami, does the name, Prathamaja occur?

**Sai:** In the Rig Veda. Understand that Prathamaja and another similar expression, *Poorvaja* indicate the impossibility of discovering when the Veda was first revealed. It is beginningless. It is for this reason that Sage Valmiki has praised this Word (Vaak) as the First imperceptible mysterious Word (*Agre Vaak*). The first concretisation of the Cosmic Will was the Cosmos or the Cosmic Womb (the *Hiranyagarbha*); that too is Prathamaja. Knowledge of the Impersonal and its projection as Personal (Brahma Vidya) is also Prathamaja, the Primal Awareness, according to the Veda. Both Brahman and Hiranyagarbha are sometimes referred to as Prathamaja.

**Sadhaka:** Of these two, which is really Prathama, that is to say, the First?

**Sai:** Brahman is the very first. It always is and has been. From it Hiranyagarbha was born. And the Veda too emanated from it. The appellation Prathamaja is very apt, for the Vedas. Since the Rishis heard and pronounced the Veda, it is also named *Aarsha*, that is, related to the Rishis.

Veda is the source of Dharma, moral life, righteous behaviour. Those who observe the norms relating to duties and taboos as laid down in the Veda and as interpreted by the Mimamsa rule deserve the name Dharma-adherents. Those who interpret them as their own desires direct are Adharma-adherents. This is the Artha.

**Sadhaka:** Artha? What does that mean?

**Sai:** Meaning, declaration of distinction! The Vedas are the expression of the highly spiritualised vision of sages or Rishis. The Vedic mantras are the precious treasure garnered by Rishis for liberating man. Thus sayeth the Rig Veda.

The Brahman concept of the Vedas is also denoted by the word that has *sa* as the end syllable. Vedah, for this reason means wealth (*Dhana*), wisdom (Jnana) and the highest potency (*Param Aiswarya*). The wealth here indicated is distinct from worldly gains and possessions. It is the means by which the supreme goal can be attained. In other words, the wealth acquired through the Grace of Mother Veda (*Veda Matha*) is the most potent Wisdom itself. For this reason, the Vedic Rishis prayed thus: “God! You are the very embodiment of the Veda (*Veda Swarupa*). Fill me, not with the burden of cattle and children, but with the Wisdom that is the source of Param Aiswarya. I shall be fully content with that wealth. (Dhana). And since such wealth

is capable of being utilised for your service, you too will be glad when I have it.”

**Sadhaka:** Swami! We do not find today feelings that produce such prayers anywhere among men. People repeat these Vedic prayers, as gramophone records do, without any knowledge of their meanings, out of sheer habit. Is it not so? Do they get the Wisdom that is the most precious treasure of God?

**Sai:** My dear fellow! You yourself said now that they recite the Veda as gramophone records do, didn't you? So, they gain as much wisdom and Aiswarya as those records get, how can they acquire the treasure of full potency? Planting a branch that has been severed, can one claim that it is a tree growing there? Those who recite the Vedas with the awareness of their meaning, experiencing at the same time the feelings embedded in the hymns, they alone can earn the Grace of Brahman, the Brahma Vidya, the Highest Wisdom, the Supreme Treasure (*Sakalaiswarya*).

**Sadhaka:** Swami! Generally speaking, there will be no one who does not crave wealth. But what form of wealth is to be craved for? Which form will be approved by the Veda? What has the Veda said about this? Instruct me.

**Sai:** “*Vedam Paramaiswaryam*” (Veda is the highest treasure) “*Vedayathithi Veda*” (That which gives instruction is

known as Veda) “*Sah Vedasthwam*” (Get instructed by that Veda). Wealth (Dhana) is desired and sought out (Artha) as a means for prosperity and progress (*Subha*). So, He too is known as Arthah. The Veda announces that the intuitive wisdom (Jnana) constitutes the riches (Dhana) the means by which the Almighty is attained; this alone deserves the name “Vedas” or Vedic truth. Sruthi (Vedic scripture) asserts that such wealth alone can confer the joy of satisfaction (*thripathi*) to both the worshipper (*aaraadhaka*) and worshipped (*aaraadhya*).

The Rig Veda extols this form of wealth and refers to it as *Sruthyaak*, for it is the type described and recommended in the Sruthi. The Veda approves as Vedic only that wealth that is earned through adherence to the moral codes laid down clearly for human guidance.

**Sadhaka:** Sruthyaak? What does that mean, Swami?

**Sai:** A prosperous person (*Sreemantha*) is one who is happily endowed with sons and grandsons and who is successful in worldly ambitions beyond even surprising heights. Moral excellence is a more valuable possession. This wealth is the concrete result of Vedic injunctions. It is called Dharma. The *Ramayana* extols Rama as Dharma Personified (*Vigrahavaan Dharma*). Dharma sustains all beings (“*sarva bhoothaanaam dhaaranaath, Dharmah*”).

Dharma is the support (*dhaarana*) for all beings. Hence it

is named Dharma. The Almighty is that support and sustenance; the most effective mode of worship is the offering of Dharma. So, the almighty Itself is identified with the word Dharma. That name is therefore meaningful. The entire Cosmos projected by the Almighty is established on Dharma. (*Dharmo Viswasya Jagathah Prathistaa*). The Dharma imbued with profound sanctity is being interpreted by persons in accordance with their whims and fancies, their selfish interests. Hence it has been severely distorted. The words, Veda and Deva take on new meanings and implications. The process can be clearly recognised in Vedic literature. “*Swayam Sarvam Vetthi-ithi Vedah*” (Itself It Knows All). This statement reveals that Veda is the Omniscient Brahma Itself. Sruthi is Its embodiment.

**Sadhaka:** Swami! In the manthras which the Vedas contain, we have the word *Svaaha* occurring frequently. What does Svaaha mean?

**Sai:** Good! That word is generally taken to indicate only an expression used while offering oblations in ceremonially-lit fire; people imagine that it is not a Vedic word. They argue it is a technical expression applicable to rituals only. There is a deity named Svaaha Devi, invoked by that word. It also connotes “the offering of Havis (sacramental food) to the Gods.” So, the word has two meanings. When Havis or other offerings are made to Divinity under its various forms and in Its various names, this word, Svaaha is used. When however, one invokes one’s forefathers and invites them to

accept ritual offerings, the expression used is *svadhaa*, not *svaaha*. Since the word is full of potency, it is revered as the manifestation of Vaak Devi, the Deity presiding over speech.

The rites prescribed as unavoidable for daily life and those that are laid down as optional for the observance of certain holy days, all these have to begin with “*svaaha*” pronounced along with the sips of sanctified water (*Aachamana*). Generally speaking, there are no ritual offerings in the sacred fire without the accompaniment of the manthras, *svaaha* or *svadhaa*.

**Sadhaka:** What is the benefit that accrues when these two manthras, *svaaha* and *svadhaa*, are additionally pronounced at the end of Vedic manthras?

**Sai:** When offerings are given, while *svaaha* or *svadhaa* is uttered, the Gods (*Devathas*) or manes (*Pitrs*) to whom they are directed, will be pleased. Moreover, when those who are well-versed in Vedic practices perform the worship of fire in order to offer oblations, and do not utter the prescribed *svaaha*, the offerings cannot reach the Gods. *Svaaha* and *svadhaa* are words which invoke the respective deities. They are manthras which awake and alert the Divine. The Rig Veda declares, “*Svaahaa sthoamasya varmanaa.*” *Svaaha* has two meanings: (1) the offering made with the utterance of that manthra, and (2) the vedic statement which conveys praise or glorification. Whether one of the meanings

is preferred or both are adopted, the Gods are pleased and they confer progress on the person who pronounces the manthras—svaaha or svadhaa.

**Sadhaka:** Confer progress on the adorer! What does that mean?

**Sai:** As a consequence of the praise conveyed through words bearing the impress of the Vedas, the person is blessed with various progressive qualities and opportunities to achieve excellence.

**Sadhaka:** I would like to know some examples where the manthra “svaaha” is used in the Vedas to convey its traditional meaning.

**Sai:** *Kesavaaya svaaha; Praanaaya svaaha; Indraaya svaaha.* These are some examples. Here, the meaning of the manthra is: *Svaahutham Asthu, Suhurtham Asthu.* May it be svaahutham. May it be suhurtham.

**Sadhaka:** What do those two words mean? Svaahutham and suhurtham.

**Sai:** They mean, “May the offering made be well burnt,” that is to say, well digested.

**Sadhaka:** Swami! That raises a doubt in me. Whatever

thing is dropped into fire gets burnt totally, even when no manthra is uttered by us. This is the general experience. So, what is the special process that takes place when svaaha is uttered?

**Sai:** “Svaahutha” does not indicate the mere burning out or the total consumption of the offering placed in the fire. From the worldly point of view, only this much is observed. But, the Vedas (Sruthi) concede that Fire has a divine form and function besides the commonly known material form and function. The Divine Forms (Gods) are beyond the reach of the senses. So, the Vedas recommend that the Gods be worshipped through rites and rituals. And Agni or the Deity Fire, has in It the source and sustenance of the Gods. (“*Agnirava deva yonih.*”) Agni is the Divine Principle. He who offers oblations to the Gods through Agni becomes blessed with Divine qualities. Only those who are able to understand this fact can achieve that principle.

*The person who enjoys (Bhoktha)* and the object that provides joy (*Bhogy*)—these two compose the *Jagath* (World). When these two become one, they mix and are then known as *Aththa*, that is to say, Bhoktha. This is the *vyavahara*, the natural conclusion. It does not stand to reason that the One, be known as Bhogy. Well. Who is the Bhoktha? It is Agni, the Fire which accepts the oblation.

The very first Divine Entity is *Aadithya* (The Sun). Its spiritual counterpart is the vital warmth in living beings, the

*Praanaagni*. Agni has in it *Aajya* (ghee) and *soma* (the juice of the soma plant). The oblations placed in fire are named *Aahithayah*. The word means “deposited, placed.” The Gods prefer to be beyond the range of sight. Therefore, the oblations are also referred to as *Aahuthis*.

**Sadhaka:** When Agni is within the range of sight, what is its name?

**Sai:** Then, it is named Agri. Agri means first. It was created earliest. Hence the name. When it is beyond the range as sight (*Paroksha*), it is named Agni.

**Sadhaka:** What is the meaning of Aahuthi?

**Sai:** Oblations offered in the fire, lit and fed as prescribed. Besides, the word denotes that God is invited (*aahvaana*) to accept the oblations. This is the special meaning the word conveys. *Vashatkaara* (the explanatory formula) only complements the effect of *svaaha* manthra. The Gods receive only offerings for which they have been invited (*Aahuthis*).

*Svaaha* is a name applied to Saraswathi, the Deity of the Word (*Vaagdevi*), the Deity of the Vedic Word. Since the Word expresses the Atma the name is *svaaha* too. The *Devi Bhagavatham* declares that the Supreme Deity is both *Gayathri* and *Svaaha*. The *Lalitha Sahasranama* (the 1008 names of *Lalitha*, the Supreme Deity) declares *svaaha* and

*svadhaa* as Her Names. *Svaaha* also means “the close,” “the going under,” “the end.”

**Sadhaka:** Which Veda is named *Artharva*? Is it also known by many other names?

**Sai:** Yes. That Veda has various popular names—*Brahma Veda*, *Angiro Veda*, *Artharvangiro Veda*, *Bhaishajya Veda*. *Kalidasa* has praised sage *Vasishta* as “*Atharva Nidhi*” (the Treasure Chest of *Atharva* knowledge). As a result of his earning such high renown, *Vasishta* was installed as *Rajaguru* (Royal Preceptor) and could claim mastery over all the four Vedas (*Rig*, *Yajur*, *Sama* and *Atharva*) and the authority to supervise ritual sacrifices and perform scriptural rites and ceremonies.

**Sadhaka:** Swami! Have the manthras contained in the *Atharva Veda* any special names?

**Sai:** They are celebrated as *Siddha Manthras*, that is to say, *Manthras* that guarantee the promised effects. The presiding deity of the *Gayathri Manthra*, known as *Gayathri Devi*, is adored as having the *Rig*, *Yajur*, *Sama Vedas* as feet, the *Mimamsa Sastra* (Science of Interpretation and Inquiry) as the passive, steady aspect and the *Atharva Veda* as Activity.

**Sadhaka:** This is rather complicated to me. Is there no other way of explaining the importance of this Veda by some worldly metaphor which is more easily comprehensible?



