

Essence of Veda



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Why Study Veda?

"I believe that Veda to be the foundation of the Sanatana Dharma; I believe it to be the concealed divinity within Hinduism - but a veil has to be drawn aside, a curtain has to be lifted. I believe it to be knowable and discoverable. The Vedas and Upanishads are not only the sufficient fountain of the Indian Philosophy and religion, but of all Indian art, poetry and literature."

"Since our earlier ages the Veda has been the bedrock of all our creeds,Our *Darshana*, *Tantra* and *Purana*, our *Shaivism*, *Shaktism* and *Vaishnavism*, our orthodoxy, heresy and heterodoxy have been the imperfect understandings of one Vedic Truth . . . Our greatest modern minds are mere tributaries of the old *risis*..."

"If Indians hardly understand the Vedas at all, the Europeans have systematised a radical misunderstanding. Their materialist interpretations, now dominant in cultivated minds, translated into modern tongues, taught in our universities . . .has been more fatal to Vedic Truth than our reverential ignorance..."

-Sri Aurobindo

"By the Vedas, the Hindus mean the accumulated treasury of spiritual laws discovered by different persons in different times... The discoverers of these laws are called *rsis*, and we honor them as perfected beings...and some of the very greatest of them were women."

-Swami Vivekananda

The collection of books, Vedas, Vedah, is the holiest for the Hindus. They are in vedic Sanskrit. They were preserved orally for a long time before they were committed to writing about two thousand years ago or earlier.

The core of all these books are the hymns or *suktas*. In the beginning it was a single collection. It was later divided into four collections or samhitas.

The four Veda Samhitas contain more than twenty thousand mantras or verses. It is moreover exquisite poetry. There is no real poetry without extensive symbolism and Rigveda is no exception. However the moderns completely ignore the symbolism and write all sorts of essays on it portraying it as silly and devoid of wisdom. They often quote a mistranslation of a small number of verses to support their dubious contentions.

The questions raised by its critics can be broadly divided into two categories:



(i) Some of the short comings of the modern Hindu Society can be supposedly traced to the *Rig Veda* since it is its earliest scripture. Hence how can it be relevant now?

(ii) Easily understandable Hindu scriptures like *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* and the *Upanishads* are praised by all. Why bother to read *Rig Veda* at all and try to understand its symbolism?

The question in (i) is based on a false premise. Some of the untoward aspects in modern Hindu Society persist because of ignoring the high ideals mentioned in the Rigveda, its earliest book. The society pictured in Rig Veda had high regard for women including their right for choosing their mates, high regard for the concepts of freedom and equality, respect for sceptics and unbelievers, respect for knowledge coming from all quarters etc. All these ideals are very much relevant and necessary today. In no other religious text do we find mention of such high ideals. Moreover in all religions, there is a wide gap between precept and practice.

The question in (ii) is handled in detail in the section on Upanishads, and that on psychology. It is worthwhile to note that the three yogas of *Bhagavad Gita* namely yoga of knowledge, yoga of works and yoga of devotion and surrender, personal relation to the deities can be traced to *Rig Veda* directly. The specific yogic methods developed in the Vedas are unique and highly effective.





Four Key Ideas

This is the first, the central teaching: the central aim is the seeking after the attainment of the Truth, Immortality and Light. There is a Truth higher and deeper than the truth of the outer existence, there is a Light greater and higher than the Light of human understanding which comes by extraordinary and transhuman sight, hearing. There is an Immortality towards which the human soul has to rise. We have to find our way to that and get into touch with that Truth and Immortality. We have to be newborn into the truth, to grow in it, to ascend in spirit into the World of Truth and live in it. Such a realization alone is to pass from mortality to Immortality, to unite with the supreme Godhead.

Here is the second doctrine of the Mystics: There is an inferior truth of this world because it is mixed with much falsehood. There is another higher truth, the Home of Truth, The Truth, the Right, the Vast as taught in the mantras. True knowledge there is termed *rta-chit*, Truth-Consciousness. And there are other worlds, but the highest is the World of Truth and Light. This is the World celebrated as the *svar*, the Great Heaven.

And this is the substance of the third Doctrine: In the world-journey our life is a battlefield of the *devas* and *asuras*; the Gods *dev* are the powers of Truth, Light and Immortality and the *asuras*, the powers of the opposing Darkness. These are Vrtra, Vala, the Panis, the Dasyus and their kings. We have to call in the aid of the Gods *devah* to destroy these powers of Darkness who cover the Light. We have to invoke the Gods *devah* in the inner sacrifice by the voice potent with the power of the *mantra*. To them offering of whatever is ours is made; receiving all that is given by them in return, we shall be enabled and competent to ascend the path towards of the goal of all round perfection and bliss.

Finally, this is the supreme secret of the *vedic rishis*: At the summit of all the mystic teaching is 'The One Reality', 'That One' which later became the central goal of the *rishis* of the Upanishads, taught with explanation in detail.





Anecdotes

Max Muller records an interesting incident. Freidrich Rosen was a noted German scholar, one of the pioneers of western students who turned to Vedic studies in the early years of the last century. It appears one day when he was busy in the British Museum copying out the hymns of the Rig Veda, Raja Rammohan Roy—the leading light of the Indian Renaissance—came in and was surprised, disagreeably, at the work Rosen was engaged in. He admonished the scholar not to waste any time on the Vedas and advised him to take to the Upanishads instead. We do not know if Rosen swallowed the advice at all obviously not. For he was still engaged in the Veda at the time of his death and his edition of the First Book of the Rig Veda with Latin translation did appear later. The incident is noteworthy for the light it sheds on the mental attitude of the cultured and educated Indians of the time towards the Veda. The outlook of the educated section of our countrymen as regards the Vedic hymns has undergone little change even after more than a century today. And this is no wonder. For they have but dutifully followed all along in the footsteps of the European professors who have, as a class, studied and regarded the Vedas, more as specimens of antiquarian and philological interest than as records of any sustaining value. To them the Vedas are study-worthy not for anything intrinsically significant but for the side-lights they throw on the social and other conditions of their times. By themselves the Vedic hymns are 'singularly deficient in simplicity, natural pathos or sublimity', they have 'no sublime poetry as in Isaiah or Job or the Psalms of David'. They are primitive chants where 'cows and bullocks are praised in most extravagant expressions' as among the 'Dinkas and Kaffirs in Africa whose present form of economics must be fairly in agreement with that of the Vedic Aryan'. Even such a famous scholar as Oldenburg must needs note that here is 'the grossly flattering garrulousness of an imagination which loves the bright and the garish', while Winterneitz records, with approval evidently, that Leopold Von Schroder finds similarity between some of these hymnal chants and 'notes written down by insane persons which have been preserved by psychiatrists'.

Not all from the West, however, have reacted in the manner noted above. Some have brought to bear a more sympathetic and closer understanding on their studies of the Veda and have confessed to a remarkable widening of the vistas of their higher mental horizons after their study of these Books. There is Brunnhofer, for instance, who is constrained to exclaim: 'The Veda is like the lark's morning trill of humanity awakening to the consciousness of its greatness.'





What is Veda?

Indian tradition, however, has held the Vedas all along in the highest reverence, it has invested them with the authority of a revealed scripture, Books of Wisdom. Notwithstanding all the centuries-old efforts at such debunkings, the Vedas stand firm as a rock towering like the snow-capped peaks of Kailas overtopping and overlooking the vast panoramic expanse below, drawing its nourishment every moment from the ceaseless streams that flow from above—the huge and hoary expanse of Indian life and culture. What is the secret that has enabled the Vedas to hold the pre-eminent position they have occupied from the beginnings of time in this country? Is there anything in them which is valuable for man as to exact respect and reverence to the extent they have done? And if the Vedas are really so valuable and so sacred, why is it that they have become the targets of so much criticism? Why is it that the Vedas are today so much enveloped in misunderstanding and condemnation that they are in danger of being completely lost to sight?

And what, in the first place, is the Veda?

The Vedas are the only extant records of the lives and expressions of our forefathers of an age upon the time-limits of which scholars and historians have been unable to agree with any degree of finality. Indian scholars like Tilak and Europeans like Jacobi are inclined to date the period from Four to Six millenniums before the Christian era while other Western scholars have a strong tendency to advance the date to as near the Christian era as possible. Be that as it may, it is the songs and chants of these fathers of the race—*purve pitarah*—, it is their hymns that form the starting point and the kernel for the vast literature that has flowed from and developed round them and goes by the name VEDA. At some period of their history, very likely at the close of the epoch during which the hymns were first sung and celebrated, it was found necessary to collect and compile all the available hymns current at that time. The necessity for the compilation may have arisen in order to prevent their loss inevitable with the passage of time and also to preserve them in the form in which they were chanted. Tradition has it that they were compiled under the direction of that Master compiler of the Great Age—Vyasa. Certainly what have been compiled do not exhaust all the hymns that must have been current; the compilations represent the remnants that had survived the ravages of time and were still extant at the time of the compilation. These hymnal texts had been handed down from mouth to mouth and it was inevitable that they must have suffered diminution in quantity with each generation.



The hymns were collected and arranged in four different compilations, *Samhitas*, each collection being governed by different considerations about the nature of the hymns, the purpose for which they were compiled, etc. Thus hymns which were largely in the nature of prayers and dedications to Gods were collected—says the tradition—by Paila under the guidance of Vyasa, and went to form the Rik mantra Samhita. Hymns which were particularly chanted during religious and social functions of the community were compiled by Vaishampayana under the title Yajus mantra Samhita. Jaimini is said to have collected hymns that were set to music and melody—Saman. There is also the fourth collection of hymns and chants ascribed to Sumantu, known as Atharva Samhita. We need not dwell upon the subject of the Atharva mantra Samhita and the controversy around it but recognize the Vedic tradition as has come down to us which includes all the four Samhitas in its fold.

Each of these Samhitas was followed gradually by explanations and dissertations in prose and in verse for elucidating the meanings, allusions, legends, etc. of the hymns and their application. These portions are known as Brahmanas. The concluding portions of these or the portions attached to them are discussions and speculations of a philosophical and spiritual import based certainly on the ideas and texts found in the Hymns. They are called the Aranyakas and Upanishads. Each Veda thus comprises the Mantra Samhita, the Brahmanas, the Aranyakas and the Upanishads.





Compilers of Veda

Every mantra of the four Vedas numbering twenty thousand or more was revealed to a human being called as a *rishi* or *rishika* when he/she was in a superconscious state. In the Rigveda, Samaveda and Atharvaveda, the names of the *rishis* or *rishikas* associated with the mantras in the *sukta* or hymn are listed in the heading along with the names of the metres associated with the mantras and also the names of the associated cosmic powers, God (*devi*) or Goddess (*devi*).

It is not correct to state that *rishis* composed the mantra. RV (1.164.39) declares that "the riks abide in the *immutable supreme ether* (*parame vyoman*) where are seated all the Gods (*deva*)". The *rishi* or *rishika* received the revelation of wisdom from this plane and transcribed it into verses or mantras with appropriate words and metres. The process of transformation of the revelation into the verse is mentioned in many mantras of Rig Veda. "They chanted the mantras carved out of the heart RV (1.67.2)"; "O seers, the hymn-composer (*mantra krtam rshe*) Kashyapa manifested (*udvardhayan*) the revelation (*girah*) into the lauds (*stomaih*), RV (9.114.2)". See also the section on mantra for more details.

We may recall that Rig Veda Samhita has ten mandalas. Of them, the mantras of six mandalas are associated with six great *rishis* and their disciples: Mandala 2 with seer Ghrtsamada, mandala 3 with the seer Vishvamitra, mandala 4 with the seer Vamadeva, mandala 5 with the seer Atri, mandala 6 with the seer Bharadvaja and mandala 7 with the seer Vasishtha. Garga Bharadvaja is a seer of sixth mandala whose daughter is the famous Gargi.

The *suktas* in the remaining four mandalas are composed by several *rishis* or *rishikas*. The 191 *suktas* of first mandala are composed by *rishis* or *rishikas* numbering roughly a hundred.

The first ten *suktas* are associated with the name of *rishi* Madhuchhandas, disciple of the great seer Vishvamitra. The eleventh *sukta* is associated with Jeta, a disciple of Madhuchhandas.

Some of the names of the *rishis* associated with first mandala are Romasha Brahmavadini, Shunahshepa Ajigarti, Gotama Rahugana, Agastya Maitravarunah, Dirghatamas Auchitya, Praskanva Kanva, Kutsa Angirasa, Medhatithi Kanva, Parashara Shaktyah, Paruchchhepa Daivodashih known for his use of the long metre *atyashti* with 68 syllables and others. Typically the name of the *rishi* along with his lineage is mentioned. For instance the seer Gotama belonged to the school of Rahugana. Associated with the mandala 8 are Manur Vaivasvata, Medhatitih Kanva, Jamadagni Bhargava, Pragatha Ghaura Kanvah, Matsyah



Sammadah, Apala Atreyi, Sukaksha Angirasa etc. Associated with mandala 9 are Hiranyastupa Angirasa (whose name appears in mandala one also), Avatsara Kashyapah, Shatam Vaikhanasah, Renur Vaishvamitra, Kakshivan Dairghatamasa (who appears in mandala one also). The tenth mandala begins with the mantra of Trita Aptya; Some other *rishis* or *rishikas* there are Yami Vaivasvati, Aditi Dakshayini, Vag Ambhrini, Savitri Surya (*rishika*), Bhudah Saumyah, Mudgala Bharmyashvah, Yajnah Prajapatyah, Prajapati Parameshthi, Paulomi Shachi, Sarparajni etc. The last hymn of the Rig Veda is by Samvanana Angirasah delineating universal harmony. We do not mention Samaveda separately since most of mantras are in Rigveda and the same *rishis* follow.

The entire Shukla Yajurveda was revealed to the seer Yajnavalkya.

Recall that the famous Vyasa divided the single collection of mantras into four Samhitas. The persons who carried out the compilation are Paila (Rigveda), Vaishampayana (Yajurveda), Jaimini (Samaveda) and Sumantu (Atharvaveda). Note that Vyasa and these other four persons did not have revelations of mantra. They are all compilers. Hence they are *kandarshis*.

Note that the Krishna Yajurveda has both rik mantras and yajur mantras. Every rik mantra has a metre, whereas the *yajus* is a rhythmic prose passage not bound by a metre. Krishna Yajurveda has about 700 mantras from Rig Veda Samhita and their names are well known. The seers of the other mantras from Krishna Yajurveda are not known with any degree of finality. Conjectures are there. The sages mentioned with Krishna Yajurveda are Vaishampayana, Tittiri, Atreya, Yaska etc., are all *kandarshis*.

The name of a *rishi* indicates a psychological quality. Gotama means 'most radiant', Gavisthira means 'steadfast in the light'. Bharadvaja means 'those who are full of plenitude (vaja)'. Atri means 'traveler or a destroyer of foes', Vasishtha is 'one who is most opulent', Vishvamitra is 'one who is friend of all etc.





Women & Rishikas

RV is the only scripture among those of all religions in which the Divine Truths are revealed to women sages also and some of these hymns describing the revelation find a prominent place in the Rig Veda Samhita like the hymn (10.125) (tenth *mandala*, 125 *sukta* or hymn) attributed to the woman sage *Vak Ambrini*. There are more than thirty women sages in RV with specific hymns associated with them. In all the Semitic religions like Christianity, Islam etc., there is no mention of any revelation to women and no woman is listed among the prominent disciples of the founders or prophets of those religions.

There are numerous hymns in the Rig Veda indicating the high status accorded to women in the *vedic* society. RV (10.27.12) explicitly states that the practice of a lady choosing her own husband was in vogue. The hymn (10.85), the marriage hymn, explicitly states that the daughter-in-law should be treated as a queen, *samrajni*, by all the family members especially the mother-in-law, husband, father-in-law. See the box below where the bride was exhorted to address the assembly:

10.85.26: Become the house-hold's mistress; Ruler of the home, you will address the religious assembly.

To be asked to address the assembly was regarded as an honour by most of the sages. Thus the statement that, "women were oppressed in Hindu society even from the *vedic times*", made orally and in popular writings by some moderns is nothing but patent falsehood. Some of the quotations given by these critics are from the period of the *sutra* books which are dated more than two thousand years later than the Rig Veda. Naturally these critics suppress quotations which speak of the high status of women in the society of Rig Vedic period and the period of Upanishads.

Even today, some orthodox persons deny the right of chanting the Veda to women. However, they cannot cite any authoritative scripture to support their views. Any book in Sanskrit cannot be accepted as a scripture or divine revelation. When the famous poet, Sanskrit scholar and spiritual savant, Vasishta Ganapati Muni, the foremost disciple of Sri Ramana Maharshi, challenged these orthodox persons to provide evidence to support their claims, no evidence was forthcoming.

Epithets for women in Veda

It is noteworthy that in the Vedic literature although a woman's prime role is portrayed as a wife only, yet several other aspects of feminine form are also



suggested by various names and epithets used to denote a woman. It is quite interesting to derive the exact meaning of these words because it may help in giving a better idea of different roles of woman in home and in society. For instance, a woman as wife is denoted by three words; jaya, jani and patni. Of these, jaya is the woman who gives birth to one's progeny, jani is the mother of children and patni is the co-partner in the religious duties.

Similarly woman is designated as:

1. *Aditi*, because she is not dependent (Nirukta, 4/22)
2. *Aghnya*, for she is not to be hurt (Y.V. 8/43)
3. *Brhati*, for she is large hearted (Y.V. 11/64)
4. *Chandra*, because she is happy (Y.V. 8/43)
5. *Devakama*, since she is pious. (A.V. 14/1/47)
6. *Devi*, since she is divine (A.V. 14/1/45, Y.V. 4/23)
7. *Dhruva*, for she is firm (Y.V. 11/64) a
8. *Havya*, because she is worthy of invocation (Y.V. 8/43)
9. *Ida*, for she is worshippable (Y.V. 8/43)
10. *Jyota*, because she is illuminating, bright (Y.V. 8/43)
11. *Kamya*, because she is lovable (Y.V. 8/43)
12. *Kshama*, for she is tolerant/indulgent /patient (A.V. 12/1/29)
13. *Mahi*, since she is great (Y.V. 8/43)
14. *Mena*, because she deserves respect (Nirukta 3/21/2)
15. *Nari*, for she is not inimical to anyone (A.V. 14/1/59)
16. *Purandhiih*, for she is munificent, liberal (Y.V. 22/22)
17. *Ranta*, because she is lovely (Y.V. 8/43)
18. *rtavari, rtachit*, for she is the preserver / forester of truth (R.V. 2/41/18)
19. *Sanjaya*, since she is victorious (R.V. 10/159/3)
20. *Sarasvati*, since she is scholarly (Y.V. 20/84)
21. *Simhi*, since she is courageous (Y.V. 5/12)
22. *Shiva*, for she is benevolent (A.V. 14/1/64)
23. *Shivatama*, since she is the noblest (R.V. 10/85/37)
24. *Stri*, since she is modest (R.V. 8/33/9, Nirukta 3/21/2)
25. *Subhaga*, because she is fortunate (Y.V. 8/43)
26. *Subhdha*, for she is knowledgeable (A.V. 14/2.75)
27. *Sumangali*, since she is auspicious (A.V. 14/2/26)
28. *Susheva*, for she is pleasant (A.V. 14/2/26)
29. *Suvarcha*, since she is splendid (A.V. 14/4/47)
30. *Suyama*, since she is self - disciplined. (A.V. 14/2/18)
31. *Syona*, for she is noble (A.V. 14/2/27)
32. *Virini*, since she is mother of brave sons (R.V. 10/86/9, 10)
33. *Vishruta*, since she is learned (Y.V. 8/43)



34. *Yashasvati*, for she is glorious (R.V. 1.79.1)
 35. *Yosha*, because she is intermingled with man, she is not separate (Nirukta 3/15/1)

[Indian Feminism in Vedic perspective, by Shashi Prabha Kumar Reader, Univ. of Delhi, Delhi 110007; Journal of Indian studies, Vol. 1, 1998]

Women *rshis* (*rshika*) in the Rig Veda Samhita

(one or more mantra was revealed to each *rshika*)

aditi	4.18
aditirdakshayani	10.72
apala atreyi	8.91
indrani	10.86
urvashi	10.85
godha	10.134
gosha kakshivati	10.39, 10.40
juhurbramhajaya	10.109
tvashta garbhakarta	10.184
dakshina prajapatya	10.107
yami	10.154
yami vaivasvati	10.10
ratrirbharadvaji	10.127
lopamudra	1.171
vasukrapatni	10.28
vagambhrni	10.125
vishvavara atreyi	5.28
sashvatyangirasi	8.1
shradhda kamayani	10.151
shachi paulomi	10.159
sarparajni	10.189
sikata nivavari	9.86
surya savitri	10.85
romasha	1.126
sarama devashuni	10.108
shikhandinya	psarasau
kashyapan	9.104
jarita sharngah	10.142
suditirangirasah	8.71
indra mataro	10.153

(The list is not exhaustive)



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Correct Chanting

The Hindu oral tradition has succeeded through the ages in maintaining to a very great extent the purity of pronunciation of the Vedic mantras with their precise phonetic values. In the Indian tradition the sacredness of the Veda arises not merely by its age; It is important because of its power of self revelation. The Veda reveals its true meaning to those who hear it or recite it with full faith and with the preparation of askesis *tapas* and who aspire to understand its deep meaning.

As mentioned elsewhere, there are three types of mantras namely *rik*, *yajus* and *sama*. Every *rik* mantra is in one of sixteen metres. All the mantras in Rigveda and Samaveda and many mantras in Yajurveda are *riks*. *Yajus* is a rhythmic prose composition we focus here on the *riks*.

The Sanskrit word for metre is *chhandas*. Its root is *chad*, to cover i.e., the *rik* mantra compresses or covers the wisdom in it by means of the metre. A mantra may have several levels of meaning. The deeper meaning is accessible only to the aspirant who studies the mantra with faith and *tapas*.

The subject of the metres (*chhandas*) is complex. The classic book is the *Chandas-Shastra* by Pingala Acharya dated 1000 BCE or earlier.

Mantras in Rigveda are in sixteen different metres. As a first step, each metre is distinguished by the number of syllables in it. For our discussion, a syllable is the smallest group of letters which ends in a vowel. A pure consonant without an attached vowel cannot be a syllable. The individual Sanskrit letters *ka*, *ki*, *ku* etc., are all single syllables. Take the phrase *varenyam* occurring in the famous *gayatri* mantra of RV (3.62.10). It has 3 syllables, *va*, *re*, *nya*.

The index for Rig Veda Samhita mentions that more than 95 percent of the mantras of Rig Veda Samhita are in seven metres. We give their names and the associated number of syllables in parenthesis.

Gayatri (24)	Ushnih (28)	Anushtubh (32)	Brhati (36)
Pangktih (40)	Trishtup (44)	Jagati (48)	

The Taittiriya mantra (TS) Samhita of Krishna Yajur Veda mentions all these metres in various *brahmaṇa* passages in Kanda 2. Moreover TS (2.5.10) specifically mentions a metre by name *viraj* with 30 aksharas (syllables). This metre is not found in the Rig Veda Samhita.

The remaining mantras of the Rig Veda Samhita are in ten types of metres listed below.



atijagati (52)	shakvari (56)	atishakvari (60)	ashtih (64)
atyashtih (68)	dhrtih (72)	atidhrtih (76)	dvipada (20)
ekapada (10)			

There are minor variations regarding the number of syllables in each type. Even though the number of syllables in a verse of Gayatri metre is 24, the famous Gayatri mantra RV (3.62.10) has only 23 letters, the metre being called *nichrt gayatri*.

Gayatri metre of 24 syllables is written as having 3 *padas* or feet each having 8 *aksharas*. Anushtub verse has 4 feet each having 8 *aksharas*. A metre like *atyashtih* having 68 is regarded as having 5 feet, with syllables 14,14,14,14,12 respectively.

Error detection

The *rishis* have focused on developing methods of chanting which can detect any errors in chanting of a mantra such as omitting a syllable or replacing one syllable by another. For each mantra, there are several different methods of chanting, each method capable of detecting one type of error. For illustration consider one half of the famous *gayatri* mantra of the seer Vishvamitra, RV (3.62.10). The standard method of recitation involving conjunction is called *Samhita patha* given below.

Samhita Patha

tatsaviturvarenyam bhargo devasya dhimahi

Separate all compound words into their constituents and number the words:

tat savituh varenyam bhargah devasya dhimahi

1 2 3 4 5 6

In the *kramapatha* chant, use a text obtained by combining 2 neighbouring words following the rules of *sanshi* resulting in 6 words.

1+2 2+3 3+4 4+5 5+6 6+6



Krama pathah

**tatsavituh saviturvarenyam varenyambhargah bhargodevasya
devasyadhimahi dhimahiti dhimahi**

A *Krama patha* expert chants the *krama*-version of all the verses.

To understand its error detecting capability, divide the chant into syllables so that the syllable ends with an vowel a, i, u etc. Both the third syllable and sixth syllables are same namely *vi*. Suppose we commit an error and chant the third syllable as *va*. According to the *krama* chanting the sixth syllable should be same as the third syllable. He would pronounce it as *vi*, since we are assuming he will make only one error. Then he notices that an error has taken place since *va* is different from *vi*. An error has obviously occurred, but he does not know which is correct *va* or *vi*? There are other methods which detect these errors and also indicates the correction.

The various forms of chanting are called as *vikratis* and there are eight of them. For more information see the section on correcting errors in chants.

