

## Introduction to Sadhana Panchakam

Sadhana Panchakam is composed by Adi Sankaracharya. Sankaracharya wrote commentaries on Gita, Upanishads, Brahmasutras and has written many texts, hymns expounding on the teachings of Vedanta. In Sadhana Panchakam (Sadhana - *means/practice*, Panchakam - *set of 5 verses*), Sankara provides 40 steps as a means/practice to achieve the end goal of Moksha. In these 5 verses, Sankara unfolds the entire teaching of Vedanta. There are 5 verses in Sadhana Pancham, each verse having 4 lines and 2 steps in each line making it altogether 40 steps.

Each step is like steps in a ladder taking us progressively to attain the goal of Moksha. This set of 5 verses provides the means for the end goal of Moksha.

### Verse-1

*vedo nityamadhyataam taduditaM karma svanuShThlyataam  
teneshasya vidhyataamapachitiH kaamye matistyajyataam.  
paapaughah paridhuuyataam bhavasukhe dosho.anusandhyataam.  
aatmechchhaa vyavaslyataam nijagR^ihaattuuraNaM vinirgamyataam*

Thanks to Rohinikumar for leading the discussion on Verse-1. We discussed the first step - *vedo nityamadhyataam* (studying the Vedas daily)

### Step-1: Studying the Vedas daily

#### *What are Vedas?*

The word veda is derived from the Sanskrit root vid which means "to know" and is generally translated as "the treasure of knowledge" or "the source or means of knowledge". Hindu culture is essentially a Vedic culture, called Vaidika Samskriti, since it is based on the authority of the Vedas. The Vedas are technically termed 'sruti', revealed knowledge. That they are revealed is an important point. They are not the composition of a human being, arrived at through intellectual and logical reasoning, based on sense perception. For this reason, the Vedas are said to be apauruseya - not of human origin - and are considered revelations.

The scriptures say:"The Vedas are the breath of God". Just as our breath emanates naturally and effortlessly from us as long as we are alive, the Vedas are considered to be the very breath of the Lord Himself. This knowledge or Veda was revealed by the Lord to those great rishis who had purified, tuned and made their minds single pointed through meditation.

#### *What does Vedas teach?*

The subject matter of the Vedas is classified into three parts:

1. Karma Kanda (ritualistic portion)
2. Upasana Kanda (worship portion)
3. Jnana Kanda (knowledge portion)

Vedas point out that the purpose of human life is to realize and to know the absolute Truth, the absolute Reality and not just to live superficially in the world of appearances. In order to know this Truth the mind must be prepared and purified, and so the first portion of the Vedas, the Karma kanda is meant for acquiring this purity of mind.

#### *What does reading/studying Vedas daily mean?*

When we act and respond in this world to different situations and experiences, our actions and responses tend not to be objective. They are often prejudiced, colored and conditioned by our personal likes and dislikes, which are expressions of our vasanas (subtle impressions and inherent tendencies) gathered in innumerable lifetimes. When we act, prompted by our vasanas, rather than guided by the knowledge of what is right and wrong, we strengthen these likes and dislikes, which constitute the impurities of mind.