



# Spiritual Giving Unfolded from the Veda

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*D*aksinaa is a donation given to a priest or swami at the end of a ritual, class, or series of classes. *Daksinaa* is the fullness of Isvara's grace, profound in the heart of the student/devotee who offers sustenance to a *paatram* (revered teacher, temple, learning institution, or auspicious cause). *Daksinaa* is giving out of fullness of infinite given grace—not with any ulterior motive or for something in return for the gift.

The devotee gives out of fullness, with clear knowledge that she cannot repay the grace that Isvara has bestowed through the teaching of the Veda. Thus, the devotee gives an amount in an odd number (e.g., 1, 3, 5, or 7) to show that she would love to give more, to say, "Let there be *vrddhihi syaat!*" That is, let there be expansion, an increase of wealth and abundance to the *paatram*.

The odd number of bills is put in a *daksinaa* envelope, the amount unseen, respectfully covered with a reverential note of gratitude. Traditionally, the devotee places the *daksinaa* envelope on a plate with fruits and offers it at the feet of the guru with *namaskaaram/ pranaams* prostrations, with a reverential and grateful heart. The guru then gives a fruit as *prasaadam*, and the student takes formal leave until next time.

The devotee knows that the *paatram* needs relative sustenance. The teacher really needs nothing essentially, for the teacher is absolutely full and complete. The teacher's heart is pure *alam buddhih* (immediate I is absolute enoughness!) and *purnatva bhaavah* (absolute satisfaction in oneself, by oneself, without any reason, which cannot be added to or subtracted from). Therefore, it is clearly a grace for the devotee to give to the teacher. The devotee gives back, sacrifices back, to the Infinite Giver, Isvara, who is this entire given, known and unknown, *jagat* (literally, born-gone-cosmos), which includes the devotee's own body-mind complex. The devotee knows that he is not the author of anything. He is giving back to Isvara in fullness of *krtajnataa-bhaavah* (gratitude for the infinite given grace that is the whole *jagat*), understanding that all in Awareness, here and now, is already complete in every way. *Paraspara aaraadhanam bhuyaasam! Yajno vai Vishnuh!* All this known and



unknown cosmos is sacred sacrifice, the Giver–Giving–Given is one without a second, the all-pervasive, partless Vishnuh.

The devotee repeats out loud, deeply felt in his heart, as he gives, the traditional utterance “*Na mama! Na mama! Na mama!*” (“It is not mine! It is not mine! It is not mine! Oh, Isvara, all belongs to you! I free my heart from possessiveness.”) This helps neutralize ownership or possessiveness, which causes so much suffering.

The devotee receives the *adrsta* (unseen) *punyam* (auspicious spiritual result) for his gift, which he spends, by his motive or intention, called in Sanskrit *sankalpah*. It is prudent on the part of the *jignaasuh* (student or devotee who desires knowledge) to clearly state his motive for removing any obstacles to immediate self-knowledge, which is *moksah* (freedom from all suffering, or freedom from *bhava roga*, the disease of the sense of becoming).

## What the Veda Says About Giving

In the Taittireeya Upanishad, the Mother Veda proclaims:

***Shraddhayaa deyam!*** (*deyam* = may one give). May we give our *daksinaa* or *daanam* (charity to a fit person, institution of learning, or purpose) with consideration of what is given, why it is given, and to whom it is given, with deep trust (*shraddha*) in all these aspects. Otherwise, the result of our giving may be different than we intend. It is a grace (*punya phalam*) to have the opportunity to give. Give as a conscious prayerful ritual, as a prayerful sacrifice.

Give with trust complete in our heart of hearts that giving itself is a gift, and that we receive the priceless spiritual wealth of *adrsta-punyam* (unseen, priceless grace for spiritual growth) to be spent (through our motive) on gaining *moksah* (absolute freedom from suffering) through clear self-knowledge. In a prayerful *saattvic* offering, our motive is only to gain the grace of Isvara to bless us with the infinite wealth of knowledge. When *Aatmaa* (our limitless Self) is known, all else is as well known; when this knowledge is gained, there is nothing further to be gained! *Yasmin vijnaate sarvam vijnaatam syaat, yanllaabhaat na param laabham.*

The desire for *moksah* is the *parama purusharthah* (ultimate defectless goal). It is the one *icchaa* (desire) that alone is called *shubham* (auspicious):



*shubheccha*. For it is the one desire that **can** be fulfilled, and fulfilling it alone will leave our heart absolutely, timelessly, inexhaustibly full and complete. Happiness is *aham* (without any reason).

***Ashraddhayaa adeyam!*** May we not give without trust that the priceless wealth of *adrstam* (unseen result) *punyam* is received immediately on giving, knowing the giver and given is One, Isvara. Let gratitude rain in our heart. If this is not the case, may we not give. That is, let us not give out of guilt, hurt, or any business motive or manipulative motive.

*Note: In contrast to "Ashraddhayaa adeyam," is "Ashraddhayaa deyam." To sacrifice something of value to a worthy cause without shraddhaa (trust) still blesses the giver (even unknowingly).*

***Shreeyaa deyam!*** May we give in abundance, according to the capacity of our wealth. Let us give with a heart of prayerful abundance, with a sense of proportion, not putting ourself in poverty, but recognizing that all wealth is Isvara Laksmi, Fortune of Fortunes, to share in fullness. Goddess Laksmi abides in us with magnanimity, so we give/sacrifice with magnanimity. Wealth stays/abides with magnanimity.

***Hreeyaa deyam!*** May we give with deepest humility and gratitude for the opportunity to give, without arrogance or the need to show off to others what we have given or how much. The opportunity to give is a grace, a deep privilege. Giving an odd number of bills symbolizes that we would dearly like to give more, but it is not possible or practical to give more at this time. May we give with the prayer in our heart "*Vrdhiih syaat!*" ("May there be flowing, increasing abundance for the *patraam* I am giving to.")

*Hreeya* is giving without arrogance, without wanting or craving anything in return. The heart is full of joy that the *patraam* is able to receive it.

***Bheeyaa deyam!*** May we give with healthy fear, with prayers that the *patraam* will gracefully receive our gift—because the *patraam* need not accept! It is a grace that he or she accepts. If the *patraam* does not, then accept this *prasaadam* also. If the offering is not accepted, it comes back





to us. Just knowing this is healthy understanding, called *bheeyaa*. We approach giving with uncertainty and with an invocation that the person accept our gift.

We feel fullness in the chance to give. It is a privilege to give. It is priceless grace, immediate *punyam* for *us*—not for the teacher, temple, *saadhu*, or priest we are offering to.

***Samvidaa deyam!*** May we give with proper respect for the *Shaastras* (traditional, sacred teaching instrument) and for the norms of the *desha kaala paatram* (place, time, person, and context). May we give with knowledge of the recipient, of the gift, and why we give it. Give with knowledge and discrimination, knowing the gift goes to a fit, worthy, auspicious *paatram* that is blessing the less fortunate, helping Mother Earth and her children, or teaching Vedanta, which continues to bless people profoundly. May we do what we do for others as an unconditional friend and equal. All that we say and do to others, we say and do directly to ourselves. Let us have deepest mutual honor and least resistance in all our transactions.