

Our tradition believes that the Vedas are the breath of God Himself!

With that belief, our Rishis exercised enormous care to preserve the Vedas in its original form without the infiltration of any errors. Especially in the absence of writing, and through only an oral transmission from father-to-son or teacher-to-disciple, for thousands of years, this is an accomplishment of unimaginable proportion! Considering the vast magnitude of mantras contained in the vedas, such a preservation, with built-in safeguards, is mind boggling!

It is believed that the complete benefit of Veda mantras could be achieved only when the following conditions are met:

- “ Correct pronunciation of letters (words)
- “ Correct duration for utterance of letters (words) – and,
- “ Correct intonation of letters,

Our Rishis prescribed several fool-proof methods to correctly recite the veda mantras.

Six ways of recitation were considered incorrect and they are :

One who chants in a sing-song fashion , who chants fast , who nods his head up and down without actually raising or lowering the pitch , who reads from a book , who chants without knowing the meaning , and who chants in a feeble voice , are considered incorrect .

They believed that altering the pitch even (without any change in words and duration), might lead to diametrically opposite effects, as related in the story of Vrtra who, instead of killing Indra, got killed by Indra by just a change in the intonation alone of the mantras chanted by Vrtra’s father, Tvashta.

The rules of correct pronunciation and articulation of sounds are given in the Vedanga, known as Seeksha. Seeksha deals with varNa (letters), svara: (pitch); [there are essentially three svaras, namely, anudatta (gravely accented or low pitched), udatta (high pitched or acutely accented), svarita (circumflexly accented)] maatraa (duration – a prosodial unit of time); balam (strength or force of articulation); saama (uniformity); and santaana: (continuity) during recitation.

Considered to be a divine revelation to the R̥ṣi-s (Seers) of ancient India, Vedic Chanting is bound by strict adherence to six rules – **Varṇa (pronunciation), Svara (chanting notes), Mātrā (duration) Balam (force), Sāma (continuity) and Santāna (conjugation, punctuation).**

Guru Paduka Stotram glorifies the “sandals of the Guru” and the presence of Guru in one’s life. This hymn talks about how a seeker’s life transforms within the presence of the Guru. Guru Paduka Stotram was composed by Adi Shankaracharya during his first meeting with his Guru, Govinda Bhagavatpada.