

## AGNI SUKTAM

This is the interpretation of Rg Veda's agni sUkta (3.9.1-3.9.9).

The last rk of this sUkta (3.9.9) has been referenced by shrI periyavAcchan pillai in his commentary on thondaradippodi azhwar's "thirumAlai", for the pAsuram, "**maRRum Or deivam...**" He identifies this rk as quoted by aj~nAnIs (avaidikAs) that agni and other gods can be worshipped as equal to bhagavAn, and then disproves it by showing how all such mantrAs only talk about nArAyaNa as antaryAmin of these gods.

Whenever AchAryAs quote a veda mantra from pUrva kANDa, it is always from a special section which is especially beautiful, or talks about a special tattva. This sUkta is no different - it specifically dwells on certain kalyANa guNAs of bhagavAn and explains them. Thus, there is a lot of bhagavad guNAnubhava in this sUkta.

The devata for this sUkta is agni. However, this sUkta has dual meanings and can be interpreted in 2 ways. One set of meanings describes the qualities of agni devatA as a vibhUti of Brahman. Another set of meanings directly describe nArAyaNa, as "agni-sharIraka-paramAtma".

It is well known that Vedas typically have such layers of meanings and this sUkta is one such example. What I have done is this - I have described the meanings that correlate to nArAyaNa. At the end of the interpretation for each rk, I have also provided the meanings for agni devatA, although in a more terse form.

Because, the description of bhagavAn is viSheshArtha and so should be our focus of interest; the description of agni is sAmAnyArtha and only for yogIs doing upAsana on agni-pratIka, so I have not bothered to give detailed descriptions. However, a simple interpretation for agni has also been provided by me.

The first rk of this sUkta describes a few qualities of bhagavAn. The remaining rks each take up one of the guNAs described in the first rk, and elaborate on that guNa. This is the style of the sUkta.

The last rk describes agni devatA himself as the vibhUti of Brahman.

With this introduction, let me begin.

### MANTRA 1 - BHAGAVAD KALYANA GUNAS

सखायस् त्वा ववृमहे देवम् मर्तास ऊतये ।

**Meaning: We, the embodied beings, who are your dear friends by nature, choose you, who are accessible as the Lord of Lakshmi, for our protection.**

“सखायस्” - By nature, we are friends. What is friendship? AchAryAs define a friend as someone who acts selflessly for the sake of another. The nature of a jIvAtma is to serve bhagavAn selflessly. Or, “सखा” can also mean “सहचर” - “We move with you, who are the antaryAmin, at all times. Thus, we recognize ourselves as subservient to you and surrender to you.”

“मर्तास” - Though we are currently embodied, our nature of being subservient to you is intact and unchanging.

“त्वा” - You, who are very accessible to us.

“देवम्” - You who are the lord of lakShmI, since she is the one who makes you a “deva” - a beautiful person with auspicious guNAs as per the shruti “श्रद्धया देवो देवत्वम् अश्रुते” . Thus, by calling bhagavAn “देव”, puruShakAra prapatti to lakShmI is implied.

“ववृमहे” - We choose you, as we realize you as the natural master. Here, “choosing” refers to the mind resolving on ananyagatitvam - seeing bhagavAn as the sole refuge, as per the pramANa

*आलोड्य सर्वशास्त्राणि विचार्यैवं पुनः पुनः। इदमेकं सुनिष्पन्न ध्येयो नारायणः सदा॥*

*[After careful and repeated analysis of all the shAstrAs, this alone is clear - that nArAyaNa alone is to be meditated on]*

The next line of the mantra specifies the guNAs which make him a protector.

**अपां नपातं सुभगं सुदीदितिं सुप्रतूर्तिम् अनेहसम् ॥**

**Meaning: You who are the jIvAtma which is dear to you as the effect, who are fortunate, the resplendent, the swift, the indestructible means.**

“अपां नपातं” - Let me explain this name in detail. “अपां” means “waters” signifying panchabhUtAs and refers to prakR^iti made of those. By sharIrAtma bhAva, it refers to Brahman, who has the subtle Universe as his body.

“नपातं” means grandson. The jIvAtma which is embodied in the gross form is the “son” of the cause (Brahman) as it is the effect. By sharIrAtma bhAva, “नपातं” refers to Brahman, who has the “grandson” - the effected jIvAtma as his body.

Now, though the jIvAtma is the son of Brahman (as the effect), it is called “grandson” by the Veda. This is to signify the affection bhagavAn has for the jIva. Because nampilai says, a person always has more affection for a grandson than his own son -- prahlAda had more affection for mahAbali than for virochana, shrI krishna considered aniruddha, his grandson

abducted by bANAsura, dearer to him than his son, pradyumna! So, the Veda prefers to call the jIva grandson instead of son.

Alternatively, "नपातं" can be explained this way - the nitya sUrIs are called "Sons of Brahman" - "अमृतस्य पुत्रा" . By chatri-nyAya, muktAs are also included here. That makes the baddha-jIvAs, who are dearer than the nitya sUrIs and muktAs, "grandsons of Brahman" as they are once removed from those liberated jIvAs.

Thus, "अपां नपातं" means that Brahman, who has as his body, the jIvAtma (नपातं) is the effect of Brahman who is the Cause (अपां). It is nothing but "तत् त्वम् असि" where "तत्" is denoted by "अपां" and "त्वम्" is denoted by "नपातं".

Either way, "अपां नपातं" highlights that bhagavAn has the jIvAtma as his body and thus has a natural affection for it. This guNa is conducive to him being our protector.

"सुभगं" - He is extremely fortunate. How? He has the good fortune of being resorted to by his devotees. It is called "good fortune" for him because in reality, even though such surrender is for our benefit and he is self-satisfied, he is so magnanimous by nature that he feels fortunate to be sought by us!

Thus, Krishna, in gIta 7.18, calls those who seek refuge exclusively in him as "उदाराः सर्व" - generous ones, as if they are doing an act of charity to him. This is his "good fortune".

"सुदीदिति" - One who is shining, as the innerself of the jIvAtma. This means, he is not affected by the impurities of the baddha-jIva as the indweller and also has a shining, auspicious form. When devotees resort to him, he shows his auspicious form for their enjoyment. This is protection conferred by him as they cannot sustain themselves without a vision of that form.

"सुप्रवृत्तिम्" - One who is very swift. IE, he is very quick in doing what was stated above -- bestowing the vision of his form to his devotees and removing their sins, so that they attain peace, are completely engaged in worshipping him and are not distressed by samsAra .

"अनेहसम्" - This means, "one who cannot be hurt" - indestructible. All of the above establish that he is the indestructible means as well as the end. As per the following pramANa,

*अमृतम् साधनम् साध्यम् यम् पश्यन्ति मनीषिणः, ज्ञेयाख्यम् परमात्मानम् विष्णुम् ध्यायन् न सीदति (~ viShNu dharma)*

*[One never suffers any sorrow, if he meditates on viShNu, the supreme being, who is seen by wise people as the indestructible means and who is attained as the end]*

The first rk is the summary of the entire sUkta. The remaining rks take up each of the above guNAs and explain them in detail.

## MEANING FOR AGNI:

Here, I will explain the meaning of the same mantra for agni devatA in a concise form.

सखायस् त्वा ववृमहे देवम् मर्तास ऊतये | अपां नपातं सुभगं सुदीदिति सुप्रतूर्तिम् अनेहसम् ||

**Meaning:** Agni, we, the embodied beings who are your dear friends, choose you as our protector. You who are the grandson of Brahman called "waters", are fortunate due to receiving oblations, resplendent, swift in carrying the oblations to the gods and indestructible means to receive the fruits of sacrifices.

"सखा" can also mean "सहचर" - we move in sAdhana with agni (lighting the sacrificial fire) always - signifies performance of vedic karmas. Whatever stage of sAdhana a yogI is in, lighting the sacrificial fire is a must. Thus, Agni is a protector of sAdhana and his protection is sought.

"अपां नपातं" - Agni is the "grandson" of paramAtma because as per the bR^ihadAraNyaka upanishad, paramAtma is called "waters" since he has the subtle elements constituting the essence of the Universe as his body. The upanishad says Agni originates from these waters - "स एषोऽप्सु प्रतिष्ठितो" - this makes Agni the "grandson", as he comes from the cosmic egg of the form of waters, which in turn were created by paramAtma.

A grandson is dearer than the son. As the upanishad instructs one to have the view of paramAtman in agni, and as agni brings bhagavAn the oblations offered by bhaktAs, agni is dear to bhagavAn and his preferred form.

Other meanings for Agni are self-explanatory.

## MANTRA 2- EXPLANATION OF "SAULABHYA"

This rk focuses on his guNa of accessibility (Saulabhya), which was indicated by the opening words of the first rk - "सखायस् त्वा ववृमहे देवम्". Also, since all the qualities of Brahman were described, it is necessary to show that he is accessible for the experience of those qualities to be attained.

कायमानो वना त्वं यन् मातृर् अजगत्र् अपः |

**Meaning:** You whose form is a "measure" for the liberated, who has reached the water (Ocean) that is the birthplace of shrI.

This highlights his accessibility as well as his relation to shrI, both of which were implied by "त्वा" and "देवम्" in the first rk.

“कायमानो वना त्वं” - The muktAs and nitya sUrIs are called “वना” because they, who offer numerous services, are like a forest of enjoyments for paramAtma in the supreme abode -- ie, he enjoys their services.

“कायमानः” refers to bhagavAn whose form (काय) is a “measure” (मान - परिमाण) -- ie, it means his form is manifest before them, it can be measured or reflected upon by them as “such and such”. “काय” does not simply refer to his form, but also his divine nature (divyAtma svarUpa), guNAs and vibhUtIs by virtue of close association. All these are directly perceived by the nitya sUrIs and muktAs.

That para-vAsudeva who is only seen by the liberated, has made himself accessible by reaching the milky ocean and reclining on it. “मातृर अपः” means the Ocean which is a body of water that belongs to shrI devI (the mother of the Universe), as her birthplace.

Alternatively, “मातृर अपः” can be explained as follows. “अपः” refers to the panchabhUtAs. bhU devI who is jaganmAAtA presides over them, as the foremost pR^ithvI tattva. So, it means, bhagavAn has travelled from paramapada to samsAra-maNDala to make himself accessible to us.

To sum up, this states that bhagavAn who is visible only to the liberated, has made himself accessible to us in samsAra. Whether we interpret it as “milky ocean” or “samsAra maNDala” in general, the meaning is the same.

न तत् ते अग्ने प्रमृषे निवर्तनं यद् दूरे सत्र इहाभवः ॥

**Meaning:** Agni! Your “return”, ie, repeated births (avatAra rahasya), by which that form of yours so far away from the senses, appears now here manifest to us, is not to be neglected, ie, it should always be meditated on.

“अग्ने” - means “agni-sharIra-ka-paramAtma” - shrIman nArAyaNa.

“ते निवर्तनं” - “Your returning or coming back” - it means, taking repeated births, as avatArAs. By such births, bhagavAn's divine form which is far away from our senses (यद् दूरे) becomes manifest to us. “इह” (here) is an exclamation of wonder - While we are here in this samsAra or this body full of ignorance, yet we can see you directly by our senses.

“न तत् प्रमृषे” - “We should not neglect that avatAra-rahasya, ie, your taking birth among us should always be contemplated upon -- because if we meditate on your rebirths, then our own rebirths will cease”. This is as gIta says,

**जन्म कर्म च मे दिव्यमेवं यो वेत्ति तत्त्वतः । त्यक्त्वा देहं पुनर्जन्म नैति मामेति सोऽर्जुन (~ gIta 4.9)**

**[“Arjuna! My birth (avatAra) is extraordinary; my body is aprAkR^ita (non-material). My leelAs are capable of eradicating all sins at the mere recollection of those acts.**

*He who actually knows this truth regarding my avatArAs and leelAs does not get reborn when leaving this body; he attains me”]*

Thus, this rk celebrates the saulabhyam (accessibility) of bhagavAn and recommends meditation on avatAra-rahasyam.

### MEANING FOR AGNI:

Agni’s accessibility for the sAdhakAs, to aid them in upAsana, is explained in this rk.

कायमानो वना त्वं यन् मातृर् अजगत् अपः । न तत् ते अग्रे प्रमृषे निवर्तनं यद् दूरे सत्र इहाभवः ॥

*Meaning: Agni, among the logs of wood, your form is a “measure” for us, which has reached the Ocean, the abode of shrI as the baDaba-fire. Your return, ie, going back to the gods, by which that which is far away (svarga or paramAtma) is attained here (by sAdhana) - is not to be neglected.*

“कायमानो वना” - “वना” refers to the trees - the wood used for kindling. Amidst the logs of wood, agni can be directly perceived, so he is “कायमान” - Whose form is a measure - can be known.

“निवर्तनं” - “Return” in the sense of Agni returning back to the gods carrying the oblations, which fetches svargaloka prApti for the sacrificer.

“इहाभवः” - We attain that svarga by performing sAdhana in bhu-loka, here itself, by your grace. Or, it can also mean we attain paramAtma - for sacrifices are an accessory to bhakti yoga, and agni aids in success of upAsana, fetching that vision of Brahman to us.

Agni’s accessibility is also explained as him being manifest as elemental fire in the sacrificial altar and the ocean, and as the carrier of oblations to the gods. Thus, one should meditate on this upakAra of agni, as the vibhUti of Brahman.

### MANTRA 3- EXPLANATION OF “APAM NAPATAM”

As mentioned in the first Rk, “अपां नपातं” means that Brahman, who has as his body, the jIvAtma (नपातं) is the effect of Brahman who is the Cause (अपां). This rk endeavors to explain this quality of his - ie, the types of jIvAs he dwells in, and how he is not affected by their defects.

Also, as the previous rk explained he was accessible even in samsAra, this rk clarifies he does not diminish due to his descent in samsAra but retains his glories.

अति तृष्टं ववक्षिथाथैव सुमना असि ।

*Meaning: You are increasing beyond prakR^iti which is “rough” (as it hurts the Atma); furthermore, you are indeed very charming.*

"तृष्टं" refers to anything rough - that which hurts other things. Since prakR^iti or samsAra hurts the Atma by affecting it's knowledge and causing suffering, it is called "तृष्टं".

"अति तृष्टं ववक्षिथ" - bhagavAn is said to increase beyond this abrasive prakR^iti - ie, even though he is the indweller of the jIvAtma which is suffering in samsAra, his nature rises above such samsAra. He is much superior, since he is the master of paramapada which is three times larger than samsAra.

"अथैव सुमना असि" - Not only is he himself unaffected by blemishes of prakR^iti and is the master of the supreme abode - he is very charming in his nature, form and guNAs which cause bliss and thus can remove the worldly desires of those who meditate on him.

Next, the types of effected jIvAs for whom he is the antaryAmin is described.

प्र-प्रान्ये यन्ति पर्यं अन्य आसते येषां सख्ये असि श्रितः ॥

**Meaning: Of those in whose companionship you are situated, the aj~nAnIs go exceedingly in front (of paramAtma) and the mumukShUs "live" (by seeking you as the goal).**

"येषां सख्ये असि श्रितः" - "सख्य" means "companionship" (सहचर) - he is their companion in his form of the antaryAmin.

"अन्य" - Those who consider themselves other than bhagavAn, ie, they see themselves as separate or independent, and not as dependent on him and inseparable to him as his bodies. These are aj~nAnIs.

"प्र-प्रान्ये यन्ति पर्यं" - They "go in front of bhagavAn" - which signifies pravR^itti mArga. They are moving in samsAra "in front of bhagavAn" -- this means, they are witnessed or seen by the antaryAmin who is sarva-sAkShi. As per the "द्वा सुपर्ण" shruti.

"अन्य आसते" - Those who are "others" - different to these aj~nAnIs, are considered to be "living" - ie, seeking bhagavAn as their goal. True "life" is knowledge of bhagavAn. These are mummukShUs - bhakti yogIs and prapannAs who follow nivR^itti mArga.

### **MEANING FOR AGNI:**

As the previous rk explained agni was the manifest god who carries oblations for sacrificers, this rk clarifies he is a form of Brahman, worthy of being meditated on. The tAtparya is that being manifest as the conveyor of offerings for the gods does not make agni different from other gods -- he too like them, is ensouled by Brahman.

अति तृष्टं ववक्षिथाथैव सुमना असि | प्र-प्रान्ये यन्ति पर्यं अन्य आसते येषां सख्ये असि श्रितः ॥

**Meaning: Agni! You are increasing beyond the rough wood. Furthermore, you are agreeable to meditate on as Brahman. Of those in whose friendship you are situated,**

the adhvaryu and eleven others go in front, while others are sitting, reciting mantras (udgAtA etc).

“सुमना” means Agni is worthy of being meditated as paramAtma, being his pratIka. All pure objects can be superimposed with guNAs of Brahman and meditated as Brahman, as per “ब्रह्मदृष्टिरुत्कर्षात्” (~ brahma sUtra 4.1.5).

Wood can be considered to have the element of Earth as it's essence. Agni springs from wood. In addition, it is also mentioned that Agni is worthy of being meditated as paramAtma-rUpa and so dear to him. Hence, the name “अपां नपातं”- grandson of Brahman due to springing from waters constituting the Earth, has been explained for agni.

Sayana's explanation for the rest suffices. The adhvaryu and 11 priests are going in front since they take part in the sacrifice.

#### MANTRA 4 - EXPLANATION OF “SUBHAGAM”

The next guNa from the first rk expanded in this rk is “सुभगं” - He feels fortunate due to being resorted to by his devotees. Thus, the upakAra he does for his devotees and the types of devotees who resort to him are described.

Also, as the previous rk explained his glories do not diminish due to his accessibilities, this rk explains that not only does he not diminish himself, he also augments others by his guNAs.

ईयिवांसम् अति सिधः शश्वतीर् अति सश्वतः ।

Meaning: He has conquered (for his devotees), the enemies which are objects of enjoyment of prakR^iti and has conquered the constant pursuers which are attachments.

“ईयिवांसम् अति सिधः” - He has “gone beyond” the foes - this means, he has conquered the foes of his devotees. What are their foes? They are the enjoyments of the various objects of prakR^iti which bind the jIvAs to samsAra. Since these are enemies of his bhaktAs, he considers them his own enemies.

“शश्वतीर् अति सश्वतः” - He has also conquered the “constant pursuers” - the mix of karma-vAsana-ruci which constitute attachments, that pursue the jIvAtma from birth to birth. As Nammazhwar says, “piNi sArEn” - “I won't acquire disease which will follow birth wherever it goes.”

Who are those devotees who resort to him?

अन्व ईम् अविन्दन् निचिरासो अद्रुहो ऽप्सु सिंहम् इव श्रितम् ॥

Meaning: Subsequently, those devotees who are vigilant, those devotees who are not causing injury - they obtain him situated in the heart lotus, like a lion (in it's cave).



"निचिरासो" - Those who are attentive or vigilant - these are the upAsakAs or bhakti yogIs, who are meditating on bhagavAn ceaselessly, without break.

"अद्रुहो" - Those who are opposed to causing injury or harm to their self, or those who are faultless -- ie, they do not undertake self-effort which is against the nature of their dependent self. These are prapannAs.

Upon destruction of their attachments to sense objects as mentioned previously, these devotees find him in the "water" (अप्सु) - which signifies the heart lotus as it has water as it's subtle element. They find him, like a lion which is resting in it's cave, hidden from others.

### MEANING FOR AGNI:

As the previous rk clarified that agni too is ensouled by Brahman and is worthy of being meditated on, this rk says that he is "fortunate" since he brings good fortune to yogIs by causing their success in sAdhana.

ईयिवांसम् अति सिद्धः शश्वतीर् अति सश्वतः । अन्व ईम् अविन्दन् निचिरासो अद्रुहो ऽप्सु सिंहम् इव श्रितम्  
॥

**Meaning:** Agni has conquered our enemies (objects of enjoyment of prakR^iti) and those who are pursuing us (attachments) -- by aiding karma yoga. Those who are attentive in meditation (j~nAna/bhakti yogins), those who are not causing injury to their self (karma yogins) - they obtain him - Brahman abiding amidst the digestive fire - situated in the heart lotus, like a lion (in it's cave).

The same meaning as given for paramAtma holds here for Agni. Since fire is an accessory to karma yoga, agni can be said to conquer prakR^iti bhoga and sins/attachments. Agni is an accessory for karma yogins.

Since j~nAna and bhakti yogAs have karma yoga as it's accessory, Agni is thus an accessory for those yogins too.

Thus, karma and j~nAna/bhakti yogins are able to view the digestive fire in the heart lotus signified by "waters" (अप्सु). This means, they view nArAyaNa who is situated amidst the flames of the digestive fire, in the lotus of the heart, as said in nArAyaNa sUkta. This is the means for them to succeed in sAdhana and gain a vision of the self.

### MANTRA 5 - EXPLANATION OF "SUDIDITIM"

This rk explains the meaning of "सुदीदिति" in the first rk - "he who shines as the indweller of the jIvAs". It was also said in the previous rk that Brahman is within the hearts of his devotees, so that naturally flows into how a devotee can visualize that form of Brahman.

ससृवांसम् इव त्मनाग्निम् इत्या तिरोहितम् ।

**Meaning:** Agni here, is indeed hidden (in the Atman), like the soma which flows is hidden by the stalk.

“Agni” means agni-sharIraka-paramAtma. He is dwelling in the Atman and so is hidden, just like the Soma juice is hidden in the stalk of the plant.

How do we see him? As below.

ऐनं नयन् मातरिश्वा परावतो देवेभ्यो मथितम् परि ॥

**Meaning:** This paramAtma, produced by “churning” of meditation, was brought to us by garuDa, from it's source which is the self distant to the senses, from qualities like satyam, tapas which are devAs.

“ऐनं” refers to that divine form. “मथितम्” refers to the churning of meditation, as per the following pramANa from shvetAshvatAra upanishad:

*आत्मनमरणिं कृत्वा प्रणवं चोत्तरारणिम् । ध्याननिर्मथनाभ्यासादेवं पश्येन्निगूढवत् (~ shvetAshvatAra upanishad 1.14)*

*[Making the Atman the lower araNi and the praNava the upper araNi, one should see the Lord who is hidden, by the practice of the churning of the form of meditation.]*

“मातरिश्वा” is garuDa, who is swift like the wind. Even yogIs see him as garuDa-vAhana, so garuDa is said to be bringing this form of paramAtma to the mind of the yogI. By this, it is implied that one sees the auspicious form of paramAtma in the mind, since a reference to garuDa-vAhana is a reference to the form seated on garuDa as well.

“परावतो परि” - This paramAtma is brought from the jIvAtma, which is his source (since he dwells inside it). This jIvAtma is very far away from the senses, being only seen by the intellect, so it is called “परावत”.

देवेभ्यो परि - This form of paramAtma is brought from the qualities of satyam, tapas etc which are called “devAs” and thus constitute the source of that form. This is as per the following pramANa from shvetAshvatAra upanishad:

*सत्येनैनं तपसायोऽनुपश्यति (~ shvetAshvatAra upanishad 1.15)*

*[He who follows the means of satyam and tapas, sees that paramAtma]*

shrI ranga rAmAnuja muni explains that “satyam” is sAmAnyA dharma and is indicative of virtues coming under yama (the first limb of aShtAnga yoga), while “tapas” is viSheSha dharma and is included in niyama (the second limb).

## MEANING FOR AGNI:

As the previous rk said that agni brings good fortune to sAdhakAs, this rk dwells on his purity which is the underlying cause of such good fortune. He is called "pAvaka" as he is purifying everything. His resplendent form invoked in sacrifices purifies the sacrifice and this is described here.

ससृवांसम् इव त्नाग्निम् इत्या तिरोहितम् । ऐनं नयन् मातरिश्वा परावतो देवेभ्यो मथितम् परि ॥

**Meaning:** Agni is indeed hidden (in the kindling sticks), like the soma which flows is hidden by the stalk. Agni, produced by "churning" of the araNi-s, was brought to us by garuDa, from it's source which is Brahman, from the devAs (as the messenger).

Agni too is said to be brought from garuDa (मातरिश्वा). shrI vedAnta desikan, in garuDa panchAsat, says that the sacrificial altar and other implements of sacrifice are to be meditated as parts of garuDa's form. It is also known garuDa is vedamaya and so the mantrAs used in sacrifice constitute his body. Thus, he brings agni to the sacrificer.

"परावतो परि" - Agni's source or origin is paramAtma, who is far away from the senses as antaryAmin.

## MANTRA 6 - EXPLANATION OF "SUPRATURTIM"

This rk explains the meaning of "सुप्रतूर्तिम्" in the first rk - "he who is swift in manifesting himself to his devotees and removing their distress of samsAra". It was also said in the previous rk that Brahman manifests his form to his devotees upon meditation, so this rk explains his swiftness in doing so and removing their distress of prakR^iti by experience of his guNAs.

तं त्वा मर्ता अगृभ्णत देवेभ्यो हव्यवाहन ।

**Meaning:** Agni-sharIraka-paramAtma! The senses which are made of Earth, grasp you for the experiences of your auspicious attributes to manifest.

"हव्यवाहन" is agni-sharIraka-paramAtma. "मर्ता" are the senses made of Earth. This implies that bhagavAn has appeared in the mind of the devotee and the senses are all engaged in his service. He is seeing the form of bhagavAn.

"देवेभ्यो" is in the dative case and so can refer to "things for which something else is needed". IE, the senses grasping paramAtma's form and engaged in him, is needed for the experience of his kalyANa guNAs. These guNAs are called "देवा" since they shine out to the meditator, or are free of blemishes and only full of bliss.

It is not enough to merely be engaged in experiencing the bliss of brahmAnubhava for a moment. This meditation must be sustained ceaselessly. So, the remaining portion of the mantra points out that bhagavAn sustains this experience of him without interruption.

विश्वान् यद् यज्ञाम् अभिपासि मानुष तव क्रत्वा यविष्ठ्य ॥

**Meaning:** You who are youngest of the gods! You who possess a human like form! Those meditations (yaj~na) which are complete (due to bhakti that is matured knowledge), you protect with your worshippable vow.

“यविष्ठ्य” means he is nitya-yuva.

“मानुष” means he possesses a form resembling a human, with divine ornaments and weapons. Alternatively, “मानुष” can also mean that he “belongs” to “*मनुष्य-s*” - those who are eligible to meditate on him - his devotees. It signifies bhakta-pAratantryam.

“विश्वान् यद् यज्ञाम्” - The term “yaj~na” means worship and refers to meditations on various guNAs of bhagavAn here through various brahma vidyAs. They are called “विश्वान्” as they are complete or full of bliss.

“अभिपासि तव क्रत्वा” - He protects those meditations by making them uninterrupted, through his strong vow which is a manifestation of his power or will. That vow is called “*क्रतु*” since it is worshippable and is declared by him as below.

*सकृद् एव प्रपन्नाय तव अस्मि इति च याचते ॥ अभयम् सर्वं भूतेभ्यो ददामि एतद् व्रतम् मम (~ yuddha kANDa)*

*[rAma - “To him who has sought my protection only once and begged of me saying “I am yours” - to him, I grant fearlessness (protection) from all beings. This is my vow.]*

Thus, his swiftness in removing the contact of samsAra for his devotees is eulogized in this rk.

### MEANING FOR AGNI:

It was also said in the previous rk that agni has a resplendent, purifying form which purifies sacrifices. This rk thus emphasizes on his other role in sAdhana - his swiftness by which he conveys the oblations to the gods so that the sAdhaka receives the fruits of sacrifice.

तं त्वा मर्ता अगृभ्णत देवेभ्यो हव्यवाहन | विश्वान् यद् यज्ञाम् अभिपासि मानुष तव क्रत्वा यविष्ठ्य ॥

**Meaning:** Carrier of Oblations! The embodied beings, grasp you, ie, contemplate on you as the means, for the sake of the gods (to offer oblations to them). Youthful looking god! You who are associated with the upAsaka! Those sacrifices which are complete (in j~nAna), you protect with your worshippable duty of carrying the oblations.

“मानुष” means Agni belongs to or is associated with men. Here, “men” does not mean just humans, but those who are eligible for upAsana. Includes gods as well. gIta 7.3 uses the term “मनुष्याणां सहस्रेषु” to denote upAsakAs (gods, rishis etc) and not just men.

“ऋत्वा” is his duty of carrying the oblations, which is worshippable. He protects the sacrifices since his duty ensures that the sacrificers receive the fruits of the sacrifice.

### MANTRA 7 - EXPLANATION OF “ANEHASAM”

This rk explains the meaning of “अनेहसम्” in the first rk - “he who is the indestructible means”.

It was also said in the previous rk that Brahman manifests his form swiftly to bhaktAs and removing their distress of prakR^iti. This leads to the realization - if he does all this and so swiftly due to his extreme love for us, then why do we need to undertake any efforts to attain him? He himself is the means to attain him as the end.

तद् भद्रं तव दंसना पाकाय चिच् छदयति ।

**Meaning:** That jIvAtma which is auspicious by nature, is your wondrous power or deed; for one ripened by knowledge, it is covering or protecting (the mind, from seeking other means).

“तद् भद्रं” - The jIvAtma which is auspicious since it is a “dAsabhUta” by nature.

“तव दंसना” - That jIvAtma is your wondrous shakti, ie, it is a vibhUti which has a wondrous nature, superior to prakR^iti. As gIta 2.29 says, the self is **आश्छर्य-वत्**.

By saying it is a shakti or vibhUti of Brahman, it is implied that it is his property and thus, is not required to undertake any self-effort to attain him. After all, would not the owner do everything to recover his property by himself?

“दंसना” can also mean “act” or “deed” as opposed to “power”. In which case, the jIvAtma is a “wonderful deed” of Brahman - ie, a wonderful creation. Though the jIvAtma is not created, bhagavAn endowed it with a wonderful body which is used to worship him. Hence, the same meaning arises.

“पाकाय चिच् छदयति” - For a person (prapanna) “ripened” in the true knowledge of the self as “atyanta-paratantra” (extreme dependence), that knowledge is protecting his mind from seeking other means. IE, realizing his extreme dependence, he does not resort to bhakti yoga etc which requires self-effort and adopts sharaNAgati. As said below,

*बहूनां जन्मनामन्ते ज्ञानवान्मां प्रपद्यते (~ gIta 7.19)*

*[After many auspicious births of bhakti yoga, one gets the clear knowledge that "vAsudeva is the end to be attained and also the means to attain it" and surrenders to me]*

Where "ज्ञानवान्" is the same as "पाक" in this rk.

त्वां यद् अग्ने पशवः समासते समिद्धम् अपिशवरे ||

**Meaning:** Agni! You with whom the senses which are "animals" dwell, are kindled in the "end of the night" or "beginning of the morning".

"पशवः" are the senses. For the prapanna, they always dwell with Brahman, being engaged in kAyika-mAnasIka-vAchika kainkarya. This implies that the prapanna does karma-j~nAna-bhakti yogAs too, but not as a means - he does them as services to Brahman, to pass away the time in samsAra.

"समिद्धम्" - Agni-sharIraka-paramAtma is "kindled", ie, he manifests himself to the prapanna with this performance of sharaNAgati, which takes the form of intense yearning to be in union with him.

"अपिशवरे" - bhagavAn appears to the prapanna in the end of the "night" - which is the period of separation that a prapanna experiences, characterized by proclaiming his helplessness and requesting for his vision. Or, the term can also mean, "in the beginning of the morning" - bhagavAn appears when true knowledge of the self is attained by performance of sharaNAgati, which is "morning".

Thus, this rk establishes that he is the means and end.

### **MEANING FOR AGNI:**

As the previous rk said he is swift in conveyng the oblations to the gods and fetching the fruits of sacrifice, this rk dwells on agni as being "indestructible" - ie, he renders the sacrifice or sAdhana imperishable and protects it from failing, when the sacrificer has true knowledge.

तद् भद्रं तव दंसना पाकाय चिच् छदयति| त्वां यद् अग्ने पशवः समासते समिद्धम् अपिशवरे ||

**Meaning:** That auspicious duty of carrying the oblations is your wondrous act or power; for a person whose sAdhana is mature, it is covering or protecting the sacrifice. Agni! You with whom the sacrificial animals dwell, are kindled in the "end of the night" or "beginning of the morning".

“अपिशर्वर” - Agni is kindled in the “end of the night” when ignorance is overcome by sAN~khyā yoga which is knowledge of the self, since that leads to performance of karma yoga. Or, this term can mean “beginning of the morning” - when knowledge of the Vedas for sAdhana (signified by morning) is received from bhagavAn.

### MANTRA 8 - BHAGAVAN AS THE MEANS AND END

Having explained all bhagavad guNAs in the first rk, this rk further expands on the sentiment that bhagavAn is the means and end, by describing all his activities which he performs as the means and the end.

आ जुहोता स्वध्वरं शीरम् पावकशोचिषम् । आशुं दूतम् अजिरम् प्रत्नम् ईड्यं श्रुष्टी देवं सपर्यत ॥

**Meaning:** Offer oblations of “namaH” to he who is the most easily accessible sacrifice, who is sharp, who purifies his devotees and shines, who is quick in removing their distress, who escorts them to paramapada, who is quick in welcoming the mukta, whose form is ancient but ever young, who is praiseworthy -- offer services to the Lord of shrI who is willing to accept such services.

Let me explain these terms one by one. They refer to all the acts that bhagavAn does as the means and end.

“स्वध्वरं” - One who is the easily accessible “sacrifice”. He is the “Sacrifice” in the sense that he is the means for those who wish to worship him, but do not have the capability to initiate his worship due to ignorance, ineligibility etc.

“शीरम्” - As he is the means, he is “sharp” - hostile to the enemies of his devotees, visible (like asurAs) or invisible (ignorance, sins etc). So he first destroys these enemies for them.

“पावकशोचिषम्” - As he removes their enemies, he then by himself purifies (पावक) such devotees who accept him as the means and shines (शोचिषम्) in a manner showing that he needs no external support from others in doing all this.

The above terms described the guNAs he manifests as the means. The remaining terms describe the guNAs bhagavAn manifests as the end - object of attainment.

“आशुं” - Having purified his devotees of all sins, he is quick in removing their distress, by appearing in their minds and giving them a vision of his divine form, which is their object of attainment. Note that true protection and removal of distress for his devotees consists of seeing him; thus, he protects them by showing himself to them, in blissful union.

“दूतम्” - When all sins are exhausted, he escorts the jIvAtma to paramapada through the path of archirAdi. The first world that the mumukkShu travels through on his way to paramapada is the world of light (archis) presided by Agni. As Agni is the messenger of the

gods, he is called "दूत". Since he is the body of bhagavAn, latter is called "दूत" - agni-sharIraka-paramAtma. So, this means he as agni-sharIraka-paramAtma guides the mummukShu through archirAdi mArga to vaikuNTha.

"अजिरम्" - One who is quick in welcoming the mukta. When the mukta reaches vaikuNTha after crossing archirAdi mArga and bathing in the Viraja, bhagavAn sends apsara-stris who are nitya-sUrIs to welcome him. They swiftly approach the mukta and this swiftness or eagerness of bhagavAn to welcome the mukta is referred to here. As per the following pramANa,

*तं पञ्चशतान्यप्सरसां प्रतिधावन्ति शतं मालाहस्ताः शतमाञ्जनहस्ताः (~ Kaushitaki Upanishad)*

*[Five hundred apsarAs quickly rush forth to receive the mukta. A hundred of them have garlands in their hands, a hundred have pigments to decorate him, etc.]*

"प्रत्नम्" - The ancient one. The mukta approaches and sees para-vAsudeva, whose divine form is ancient - eternal - but appears ever young and new even upon repeated experience.

"ईड्यं" - The praiseworthy. He is always served by the nitya-sUrIs there ever singing about his glories, and so the mukta too glorifies him, experiencing bliss.

"श्रुष्टी देवं सपर्यत" - Offer services to the Lord of shrI, who is ready or willing to accept such services. Despite being self-satisfied, he cherishes the services offered by his devotees with joy. "देवं" means Lord of shrI - it is shrI who makes him a "देव" - a being with auspicious guNAs as per the shruti "श्रद्धया देवो देवत्वम् अश्नुते".

Thus, the injunction is to serve the divine couple - shrI and nArAyaNa - together. That is our nature.

### MEANING FOR AGNI:

Having explained all the guNAs of agni as a vibhUti of Brahman, this rk contemplates on all the guNAs by which he makes sAdhana successful.

आ जुहोता स्वध्वरं शीरम् पावकशोचिषम् | आशुं दूतम् अजिरम् प्रत्नम् ईड्यं श्रुष्टी देवं सपर्यत ||

**Meaning:** Offer oblations to Agni devatA, who is the most easily accessible sacrifice, who is sharp, who is purifying the sacrifice and shining, who is quick in receiving oblations, who goes as the messenger to the gods carrying the oblations, who is quick in bestowing the fruits of sacrifices thereby, who is the ancient Brahman, who is hence praiseworthy - offer worship to that god who is willing to accept our oblations.

"स्वध्वरं" - As per the maxim that a part denotes the whole, this means, Agni is the most easily accessible portion or part of the sacrifice.



“शीरम्” - Agni is sharp - ie, he consumes or burns the havis.

“प्रत्नम्” - Agni is the ancient Brahman, ie, his innerself is paramAtma who has him as his body.

“ईड्यं” means he is worthy of being meditated as Brahman due to this. It is sharIrAtma bhAva only.

### MANTRA 9 - PRAISE OF AGNI

Having clearly understood that bhagavAn, who is the antaryAmin of agni, is the means and end, this final rk says that agni devatA, being his body and hence his vibhUti, has been worshipped by the gods for his role in sacrifices.

The reason this occurs in the last rk is because the knowledge of agni being a body of Brahman is already known by the preceding rks. Hence, there is no scope for incorrect worship in the manner of “यजन्त्यविधिपूर्वकम् ” (~gIta 9.23). So, with firm knowledge of nArAyaNa as the means and end, the worshipper propitiates him as the innerself of agni devatA.

त्रीणि शता त्री सहस्राण्य् अग्निं त्रिंशच् च देवा नव चासपर्यन् ।

**Meaning: Three hundred, three thousand and thirty nine gods have offered services to Agni-sharIraka-paramAtma.**

The number of gods are 33, the others are manifestations of these 33. That is implied by saying they are 300, 3000 and 39.

This rk says that all these gods serve Agni, who is the messenger of the gods. By “Agni”, it is meant that they worship agni-sharIraka-paramAtma, since the praise goes to nArAyaNa, his indweller only. The preceding rks made it clear that Brahman alone is the means and end.

औक्षन् घृतैर् अस्तृणन् बर्हिर् अस्मा आद् इद् धोतारं न्य् असादयन्त ॥

**Meaning: The gods have sprinkled ghee, then they spread the kusha grass for him and have indeed established him as the Hotr.**

The gods have worshipped the indwelling bhagavAn within Agni (sacrificial fire) by sprinkling ghee, spreading the kusha grass and choosing him as the Hotr. For it is said in the shatapatha brAhmaNa,

*अग्निर्हि देवानां होता (~ shatapatha brAhmaNa 1.5.1.5)*

*[Agni is indeed the Hotr of the gods]*

Thus, this sUkta ends with the praise of bhagavAn, who in the form of agni, is the carrier of oblations in sacrifices.

### **MEANING FOR AGNI:**

Having explained all the guNAs of agni, this rk contemplates on the greatness of agni as a chief vibhUti of Brahman.

त्रीणि शता त्री सहस्राण्य् अग्निं त्रिंशच् च देवा नव चासपर्यन् । औक्षन् घृतैर् अस्तृणन् बर्हिर् अस्मा आद्  
इद् धोतारं न्य् असादयन्त ॥

**Meaning:** Three hundred, three thousand and thirty nine gods have offered services to Agni. The gods have sprinkled ghee, then they spread the kusha grass for him and have indeed established him as the Hotr.

The same meanings apply here for agni, as for paramAtma. The difference is, rather than worshipping paramAtma as the innerself of agni, here agni is directly worshipped as a vibhUti or pratIka of Brahman. The difference is only in the perception for the sake of meditation.

With that, this sUkta is concluded.