

Vedanta Darshanam

Salutations to all.

Yet another eventful year has ended and we have just started the New Year. Majority of people know that the last year ended with confusions as to whether the world will end in December or not (as per various western religions and their texts, the world was supposed to end in December of 2012). AMMA when questioned about this used to always answer that the world has almost ended because dharma is on the fall and people are having only selfish motives; not to mention the agitations that we find in nature or prakriti. Though many calamities of the world can be controlled, agitations of nature cannot be controlled at all. Though technologically we have advanced a lot, still we are very far from even understanding the various natural phenomena in the world let alone control of nature.

A wise sadhaka will not try to control the external world. Instead such a sadhaka will strive to realize his very nature of Brahman along with the knowledge the external world which is constantly changing and therefore sorrowful is just an illusion in the ultimate reality of Brahman.

As time passes by we are moving towards death. Once death pounces upon us, then this precious human birth ends. The next birth depends on our actions and therefore there is no guarantee that we will get a human birth in the next birth. Only human beings are endowed with the intellect which can be used to decide whether to do something or not, what to do and how to do. This intellect thus guided in dharma or worldly righteousness will slowly develop discrimination between real and unreal thereby setting the stage for moksha through knowledge.

Since we aren't sure where we will be in the next birth therefore we have to use this precious birth to the maximum. This is only through gaining knowledge of the scriptures. Knowledge is the one and only way to eternal bliss or moksha – as ignorance is the cause of all sorrows. Knowledge of Brahman is found only through the mirrors of scriptures where a sadhaka sees his own very nature of Brahman (Consciousness).

Until realization of one's own very nature of Brahman happens, there is still scope for falling down from the spiritual path as the world poses an obstacle constantly. It is very easy to say that the world is an illusion but it is very tough indeed to implement in life while facing sorrows/obstacles with our own life. The only way to strengthen the notion that the world is just an illusion is through learning Vedanta. There is absolutely no other path to moksha than Vedanta (knowledge of Brahman as found in the scriptures). Other paths of bhakti, karma etc. are just paths and the final step to moksha is knowledge and knowledge alone. Thus the gopis say in the very beginning of gopi gitam that Krishna isn't the limited being but is the indwelling Self of all beings (this is knowledge).

Vedanta is learnt and implemented through sravana, manana and nidhidhyasaa or listening, reflection and contemplation. Going through of magazines like Vedanta Darshanam is sravana and many times manana (reflection). This will in turn make us contemplate on Brahman at all times (as much as possible). The more and more a person is able to contemplate on Brahman, the more and more the person will progress towards moksha. And eventually such a person who is contemplating on Brahman will abide in Brahman – such a person alone thereby will be able to ever rejoice in bliss.

Since we are into the New Year, people take up lot of resolutions most of which are not implemented after a while (though initially it will be implemented with lot of passion). Instead of merely taking up resolutions it is essential for a wise sadhaka to start focusing on the spiritual path, the goal of moksha and Vedanta as the means to moksha. There is still lot of time left for many of us to attain moksha in this very birth itself but for that we have to put effort to remember Brahman.

Many people think that remembrance of Brahman as pervading the entire world (as the substratum of the entire world) is not that easy but very tough indeed. This is a wrong notion. As the Lord says in Gita, implementation of Vedanta is very easy indeed. The only thing Vedanta requires from us is the desire for moksha which would automatically make us strive to remember Brahman at all times. Without desire for moksha, learning or implementing Vedanta will not be possible and even if it is possible it will only lead to sorrow (no bliss will be experienced). Therefore sadhakas should strive to desire for moksha knowing that this world and experiences of the world are sorrowful because the world itself is temporary (constantly changing). The stronger desire for moksha becomes, the quicker a

sadhaka will progress towards moksha because the easier implementation of Vedanta through remembrance of Brahman will become.

May we all strive to make the New Year the year which will put an end to all sorrows through implementation of Vedanta. Prayers to the ultimate reality of Brahman that we will be able to learn and implement Vedanta quickly itself.

May we all on the starting of the New Year strive to learn Vedanta and thereby remember that Brahman alone exists as our very nature of Consciousness so that we will be able to put an end to all sorrows and ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

AUM NAMA SHIVAYA

Jan 1, 2013

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Upanishad Vivaranam

Mundaka Upanishad – 1-1-3

शौनको ह वै महाशालोऽङ्गिरसं विधिवदुपसन्नः पप्रच्छ ।

कस्मिन्नु भगवो विज्ञाते सर्वमिदं विज्ञातं भवतीति ॥१॥३॥

śaunako ha vai mahāśālo'ṅgirasam̐ vidhivadupasannaḥ papracchal
kasminnu bhagavo vijñāte sarvamidaṁ vijñātaṁ bhavatīti ||1.1.3||

Great shaunaka (endowed with good qualities) approached Angiras and after worshipping him appropriately questioned him thus – O Lord! Tell me that by knowing which everything becomes known.

Attitude of Shishya

The Lord gives three qualities of a shishya with respect to a Guru while approaching the Guru in order to gain brahma vidya. Brahma Vidya isn't easy to be attained ourselves hence it is essential to have a guru. Hence the scriptures say that only a person with an acharya (guru) will attain the ultimate state of Brahman. The three qualities are – being of service to the Guru, prostrating unto the Guru and questioning the Guru.

Generally in the world we are all filled with the sense of I and mine. This in turn leads to impurities in the mind in the form of attachments and aversions which not only taints our vision but also the various activities that we perform. In order to get rid of this I and mine, there are two ways. One is knowledge of oneself as a mere witness to the entire world (as the world is just an illusion in the Self or Brahman of the nature of Consciousness). This is very tough to implement for normal people hence the second way of surrendering unto Ishwara is very easy for majority of people. Ishwara is somebody who is beyond words and thoughts therefore Ishwara can be known only through the Guru. The Guru is a living embodiment of Ishwara. When a person surrenders unto the Guru, then automatically I and mine are surrendered. Thus the mind will not be distracted but would be focus on the Guru, scriptures taught by the Guru and the ultimate goal of life as moksha (realization of Brahman).

In order to surrender unto the Guru, it is essential to purify the mind which is through being of service to the Guru. When actions are performed for the Guru there is no thought about

one's own welfare (with respect to actions). Most of the times we perform activities as a result of I and mine in order to protect myself and my people. But while being of service to the Guru, there is no protecting oneself or one's people. Thereby mind gets purified through selfless service and through surrendering unto the Guru, there is focus of mind as well gained. Though I and mine vanish they aren't permanently removed. Permanent removal of I and mine is possible only through knowledge as they are caused due to ignorance. Temporary removal happens at many times but such temporary removal only adds to sorrow when happiness as a result of the temporary removal vanishes after a period of time.

Knowledge can only be gained from the Guru and the Guru doesn't impart knowledge unless asked for by the shishya. What is to be asked from the guru is also very important. If we go to a shop and ask for water, we will get only water – not food to remove our hunger. If hunger has to be removed then we have to ask for food alone. With respect to food as well it is important to ask for the right food else we will get some food which we don't like and which will add to our hunger. Similarly with a Guru, a shishya should put forth the right questions. Right questions are those which are related directly or indirectly to moksha or realization of Brahman. Since realization of Brahman is only through knowledge therefore questions have to be with respect to knowledge or the scriptures (concepts in the scriptures).

When the shishya serves the Guru, surrenders unto the Guru and puts forth the right question to the Guru then the Guru imparts knowledge to the shishya and through brahma vidya the shishya will realize his own very nature of Brahman.

Now what is the perfect question to be asked? The Upanishad beautifully gives this question through the mouth of the shishya of Shaunaka. This question is very important as it is the perfect question which when answered will directly lead us to realization.

Knowledge of everything

From the day of birth till the day of death there is always a yearning to know. It is this knowing that never ends. Children want to know about fancy things. Adults want to know about the world or happenings in the world. Middle-aged people want to know about their peers. Finally old-aged people want to know about their kith and kin. Thus at all times there is yearning to know. This knowing never ends at all because knowledge can only culminate

in knowledge of the entire world or of everything. Such knowledge of everything is, as of now for us, impossible.

But assuming that knowledge of everything is possible, it will make us all-knowing. And with all-knowing comes contentment, satisfaction, peace and bliss because ignorance is the cause we aren't able to experience these and only experience sorrows and sufferings.

Theoretically through knowing an essence of an entity, all the different types or materials of the entity will be known. For example, through knowing the essence of pot as mud we will be able to know all objects made of mud like pot, wall etc. Through knowing gold which is the essence of gold ornaments, we will be able to know all gold ornaments (present today and that will be invented in the future as well). If similarly there is an entity which is the essence of the entire world, then through knowledge of this one entity we will be able to know everything (the entire world).

Essence of the world

The world though is constantly changing still is seen as existing. There obviously is light falling on the world which makes it existent and since Consciousness is the light of all lights, therefore light of Consciousness falls upon the world. The world also gives happiness but it is short-lived as a result of its limitation of names and forms (which make it changing and temporary in nature). The entire world can thus be said to be of the nature of Existence, Consciousness, Bliss, Names and Forms. Names and forms cause the duality or difference in the world whereas Existence, Consciousness and Bliss is one and ever unchanging. Since names and forms constantly change therefore we have to get rid of names and forms in order to know the essence of the world. When we remove names and forms from the world we find that the world is of the nature of Brahman since Brahman is of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss.

Thus the essence of the world is Brahman alone. Brahman is one alone, unchanging and ever present. We can also add that Brahman is immutable, unthinkable, unlimited etc. but really speaking Brahman alone exists and the world is just names and forms in Brahman.

Even as various names and forms in gold are just illusions in gold, similarly the entire world of names and forms is just an illusion in Brahman.

Knowledge of ONE BRAHMAN

Knowledge of Brahman means knowledge of the essence of the world which in turn means knowing everything (the entire world). Thus through knowing the one essence of the world, we will know everything. And through knowing everything we will attain moksha as moksha is realization of Brahman as the very essence of the entire world. This knowledge or brahma vidya instantly removes sorrow and will make a person ever rejoice in bliss – only through duality sorrow is caused, the moment duality vanishes we will be able to ever rejoice in bliss. This bliss devoid of duality is experienced by everyone daily in the state of deep sleep. But the deep sleep state is temporary thereby showing that removal of duality in the deep sleep state is temporary and not permanent. Permanent removal of duality is through knowledge of Brahman as the very essence of dual world (this is knowing that there is no duality at all here but one Brahman alone exists).

Brahma vidya thus is knowledge of Brahman as the non-dual reality behind the illusory dual world. And in order to know Brahman, a person needs to develop the desire to know the essence of the world. Knowing the essence of the world is in order to know everything and thereby putting an end to sorrows (as sorrow is caused due to differences and ignorance of differences or the world itself).

The question of Shaunaka thus is the perfect question as its answer directly takes us to knowledge of everything, Brahman. Through knowing of the one entity of Brahman we will be able to put an end to all sorrows here and now itself. Though this might appear to be magical and thereby impossible, it isn't so. Just remembering that one Brahman alone exists will instantly make us rejoice in bliss. But this remembrance has to be permanent or at all times in order to ever rejoice in bliss rather than rejoicing in bliss and then forgetting, thereby experiencing sorrow again.

The Lord says in Gita that implementation of knowledge is very easy (susukham kartum). It is very easy because it is the truth and because it is our very nature. That Consciousness which pulsates inside as I-exist, I-exist is Brahman. It is very easy to be natural – therefore implementation of remembrance of Brahman is very easy (simplest thing to implement in life).

But if people aren't able to implement it, then it is only due to lack of conviction. Conviction requires a strong intellect. A strong intellect requires a concentrated mind. Mind can be

concentrated only when it is pure. Purity of mind is achieved only through selfless service (or actions offered unto Ishwara or Guru). Once purity of mind is gained then concentration is achieved through surrender unto the Guru and sadhanas like dhyaana. Once concentration of mind is attained then the intellect is strong and when brahma vidya is gained from Guru, the shishya instantly will be able to gain conviction and implementing it will be able to ever rejoice in bliss.

Shaunaka – a householder

Many people think that there are restrictions or conditions with respect to gaining brahma vidya or giving brahma vidya (for a Guru). Brahma vidya has absolutely no restrictions as it is the ultimate truth behind the entire world and our very nature of Consciousness as well. A householder also can not only gain brahma vidya but implement it as well, as we will find in the mundaka Upanishad.

Brahma vidya only requires the desire for knowing Brahman (desire for getting rid of sorrow and ever rejoicing in bliss). The common notion that only sanyaasis can gain brahma vidya or moksha and householders cannot as they are busy with worldly life is proven wrong by the Upanishad here. If the householder of Shaunaka was able to approach the Guru of angiras in order to gain brahma vidya then any householder can definitely gain brahma vidya. It should be said that any householder should gain brahma vidya as only then there will be knowledge and bliss pervading the family (following the householder people in the family also will strive for knowledge).

Ultimately each and every person in the world is entitled for brahma vidya as it is the ultimate goal of all beings. Until this ultimate goal is achieved we all will be going from birth to death experiencing nothing but sorrow alone. Life isn't to be wasted in mere worldly pursuits as we have already wasted so many lives in the past. While we are wasting lives, we are all fools as well because there is no life at all but one Brahman alone exists. That this blissful Brahman is our very nature is forgotten when a person doesn't seek brahma vidya and runs behind worldly pleasures. All sadhakas thus should strive to gain brahma vidya and attain moksha here and now itself.

Fulfillment of life is only through realization of Brahman as the non-dual reality behind the entire world (illusion of names and forms). Wise person is one who fulfills his life and thereby ever rejoices in bliss. The Upanishad shows us the direct way to this through asking

the question of shishya to know that by knowing which everything becomes known. The answer is just the one word of Brahman. But such one word answers will not be enough for sadhakas and hence we have to listen more about brahma vidya, which is what we will find in the rest of the Upanishad through the answer provided by Angiras. We will see the answering from the next month.

May we all strive to remember at all times that the entire world is just an illusion of names and forms in Brahman so that through knowledge of one essence of the world as Brahman we will be able to get rid of sorrows and will be able to ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

Gitaamritham

Bhakti Yoga

In the second sloka we saw the Lord defining devotion with form as filling the mind with Ishwara, worshipping with steadfastness and considering Ishwara as the ultimate goal of life. Since Arjuna's doubt was with respect to whether form devotion was greater or formless devotion was greater, therefore the Lord now goes on to define formless devotion.

Sloka 3, 4 – Devotion (formless) defined

ये त्वक्षरमनिर्देश्यमव्यक्तं पर्युपासते ।

सर्वत्रगमचिन्त्यं च कूतस्थमचलं ध्रुवं ॥३॥

ye tvakṣaramanirdeśyamavyaktaṁ paryupāsate |
sarvatragamacintyaṁ ca kūtasthamacalaṁ dhruvaṁ ||3||

संनियम्येन्द्रियग्रामं सर्वत्र समबुद्धयः ।

ते प्राप्नुवन्ति मामेव सर्वभूतहिते रताः ॥४॥

sanniyamyendriyagrāmaṁ sarvatra samabuddhayaḥ |
te prāpnuvanti māmeva sarvabhūtahite ratāḥ ||4||

3,4. Those who worship the immutable, indefinable, unmanifest, that which is everywhere, unthinkable, changeless, without movements and eternal through control of sense organs and seeing oneness everywhere, they attain me alone as they think about welfare of all beings.

Ishwara – essentially formless

Before getting into the definition of formless devotion it is essential to understand as to which of form and formless is real. Form is essential in order for sadhakas to focus their mind. It is impossible to focus on that which is formless hence majority of people can only worship Ishwara with form. But Ishwara essentially is formless.

Form is occupation of certain space by an entity. Thus Ishwara with form is Ishwara who occupies certain space (like 6 feet height, 3 feet wide etc.). That which is limited isn't real because it will cease to exist after a period of time. We find that all limited entities of the world cease to exist after a period of time – this is because they are bound by time, space

and causation. That which is limited also undergoes changes and that which undergoes changes goes through birth and death. Thus such an entity is not real (but temporary alone). Ishwara is defined as one who is the cause of the entire world. Such an Ishwara has to be eternal – if not we will have to find another entity which is the cause of changing Ishwara. This analysis will go on until we find a permanent unchanging cause. Due to simplicity we can accept the cause of the world, Ishwara, as permanent. This is also supported by sruti, yukti and anubhava (one's experience will clearly prove that Ishwara who is the indwelling Self of the nature of Consciousness in all beings). Since Ishwara is permanent or real, therefore Ishwara cannot be limited. Since Ishwara cannot be limited therefore Ishwara cannot be with a form. Thus essentially Ishwara is formless. Formless also means without-qualities, attribute-less, beyond time-space-causation etc. Ultimately such an unlimited Ishwara is non-dual in nature – or nothing exists apart from Ishwara and nothing exists different from Ishwara. Scriptures clearly say that there is no duality at all here and one who sees duality as if existing will go from death to death (experience only sorrow at all times).

Keeping in mind that ultimately one Ishwara alone exists let's see what is formless devotion.

Formless devotion – worship of Ishwara beyond qualities/limitations

Ishwara is one who is beyond all limitations (as is unlimited). Such an Ishwara therefore is akshara or without any decay (immutable). Such an entity cannot be defined as this or that – therefore is anirdeshya. The Lord mentions about himself in many places of Gita and many of these mentioning is with respect to the entire world, like I am essence in water etc. This goes on to show that Ishwara is everything. Mandukya Upanishad thus says in the beginning itself that whatever is there is OM alone – the past, present and future. The Upanishad makes its view fool-proof by saying that if there is something beyond these three times, then that also is OM alone. OM is mentioned as Brahman by the Lord in the 8th chapter. Thus Brahman or Ishwara is everything – whatever was present, whatever is present and whatever will be present, everything is Ishwara and Ishwara alone. This is Ishwara's true nature. Such an Ishwara by being everything cannot be defined as this or that. Also logically, that which is defined as "this or that" is limited. Since Ishwara is unlimited therefore Ishwara cannot be defined (doesn't have any boundaries at all).

Such an Ishwara therefore is unmanifest. Though all manifestations are Ishwara alone still these manifestations are just illusions in Ishwara. It is impossible to prove that all manifestations or the world has come from Ishwara. Creation is generally explained either through origination theory or transformation theory – former is like a new pot being created by potter and latter is like milk transforming into curd. Since there is nothing apart from Ishwara therefore a new world cannot be originated from Ishwara. Since Ishwara is unlimited and changeless, therefore transformation isn't possible for Ishwara. Thus the world cannot be created from Ishwara. But the world is perceived now as existing hence Vedanta says that the world is just an appearance in Ishwara (vivarta) – this appearance is a mere superimposition in Ishwara even as snake is superimposed on a rope, water is superimposed on the desert and the dream world is superimposed on the dreamer. Thus Ishwara essentially is unmanifested or avyakta.

Since the entire world is an illusory manifestation of Ishwara, Ishwara pervades the entire world or is sarvatragam. Such an Ishwara is beyond imagination as mind can only imagine that which is limited in space. Since Ishwara is all-pervasive (beyond space) therefore he is un-imaginable by the mind or achintya.

Once the manifestation of illusory world happens, then Ishwara is a mere witness to the entire world and its activities. Therefore Ishwara is called kutastha – like the anvil which is unchanged though many iron pieces are shaped by it similarly Ishwara just a mere witness to everything that happens in the world (and as part of the world).

That Ishwara who is all-pervasive cannot move as movement is with respect to space and possible only when limitation by space is there. For example, a body can move because it is limited in space and therefore movement is moving from one space to another space. Since Ishwara is all-pervasive therefore Ishwara is immoving or achala. Achala also means that any tainting doesn't happen for Ishwara. It was said that Ishwara is a witness to the entire world but we may doubt that eventually the witness also might be tainted or affected by that which he is witnessing. There is no scope for this doubt as Ishwara is achala or steady like a mountain. There is no taint or affecting with respect to Ishwara. We find this clearly in mahatmas like AMMA who are ever the same irrespective of external situations and conditions. Whatever happens in the world, such mahatmas ever remain changeless as they are Ishwara alone.

Ishwara who is unchanging also is eternal or dhruvam. That which changes is subject to birth and death – therefore becoming non-eternal. Ishwara is eternal as is ever unchanging. Ishwara as the cause-substratum of everything except Ishwara (the world) is without any change and eternal as he alone exists at all times. Even as the entire dream world is nothing but the dreamer alone, similarly this entire world is Ishwara alone. Even as the dreamer is unaffected at all times, similarly Ishwara is unaffected at all times.

Worship – all-over

It is easy to worship Ishwara with above mentioned qualities but what is important is worshipping such an Ishwara at all times or all-over. The Lord uses the word of pari upaasana – pari or paritah means surrounding. This means worshipping of Ishwara beyond all limitations of time, space and causation. Ishwara has to be worshipped at all times, in all places and beyond all rules (forgetting Ishwara when our mother or father dies isn't real worship).

Formless devotion thus is worship of Ishwara as non-dual reality of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss – and who is cause-substratum of the illusory world. To be remembered here is the specific of worship that it is all-over (beyond time, space and causation).

Way of worship of formless Ishwara

Though it has been mentioned that formless all-pervasive Ishwara has to be worshiped, there can be doubts as to how to worship such an Ishwara and even if there aren't doubts, it would be good for all sadhakas to be given simple tips or hints as to how to worship such a formless Ishwara. Therefore the Lord tells as to how to worship formless Ishwara.

Controlling sense organs

It is impossible to worship anything at all when the sense organs aren't under our control. Sense organs should be controlled by us rather than we being controlled by them. They shouldn't run here and there whenever they want – instead they should be like sepoy's following the order of the commander who we are. When it comes to worship of forms, little bit of restraint with respect to sense organs is enough but when we have to worship formless Ishwara as pervading the entire world, it is essential to first control the sense organs (as here remembrance of Ishwara is contrary to normal worldly experience). We see everything as different from one-another but we have to worship that Ishwara who alone

pervades the entire world – this requires seeing of everything as filled in and out with Ishwara for which the sense organs first have to be under control.

Equanimity of mind (with everything)

After gaining control of the sense organs, one has to maintain equanimity of mind. The mind is that which guides or orders the sense organs. The mind instead of accepting the differences that are perceived by the sense organs should order them to see everything as Ishwara alone. When sense organs are controlled, then control of mind also automatically happens. As long as formless Ishwara is remembered as the essence of the entire world, the mind will assert to the sense organs that everything is Ishwara alone. Though sense organs see duality, this duality is converted to non-duality in the mind which then orders the sense organs to not get attached or averted to anything because everything is one Ishwara alone. Where there is only one, there cannot be any attachment or aversion.

Mind converting duality to non-duality can be compared to a computer – whatever we provide to the computer, the computer converts it to binaries. Though the computer returns back everything in readable formats to us, still it isn't affected by anything because it asserts everything to be just 1 and 0 (binary). Similarly that mind which asserts everything to be one will maintain equanimity at all times. This equanimity should be maintained at all places or everywhere.

Equanimity also means that one goes beyond both good and bad. Good and bad are perspective or relative and hence ultimately not real. Equanimity of mind since takes us beyond good and bad, therefore is tough for normal people to implement (unless one's intellectual conviction about the entire world being Brahman or Ishwara is strong, it will be impossible to implement equanimity).

Wanting welfare of the entire world

That mind which maintains equanimity will not just ignore the entire world. Equanimity isn't the same as indifferent. We often are indifferent to people and objects of the world which have no relation with us (or no bearing at all with us). This indifference isn't equanimity. Equanimity means seeing everything as one Ishwara. This oneness means that there is no difference between myself and the entire world. Since the entire world is our own very Self therefore we will be doing good for the entire world at all times. Thus equanimity in the mind leads to external activities for the welfare of the entire world. We can see in

mahatmas like AMMA this attitude of helping the entire world externally while internally remaining ever blissful at all times. Welfare to the entire world isn't mere service to the world as service might be associated with desire for results or being affected by results whereas with equanimity, a person knows that one alone exists. Therefore results don't affect such a person while always doing good to the entire world.

What is the use of such formless devotion? What is its goal?

Formless devotion – leads to Ishwara

The Lord says beautifully that those who worship formless Ishwara attain Ishwara alone – that blissful Ishwara who alone exists here. Thus such bhaktas attain the peak of bhakti which is realization of Ishwara.

It is very easy to understand that the devotion in which everything is perceived as Ishwara will lead to Ishwara as such devotion even during implementation includes Ishwara alone. Therefore the goal of such devotion also will be Ishwara alone.

While defining formless devotion the Lord thus says that such devotees also attain Ishwara alone. This means that form devotees are dear to Ishwara (which means that they will lead to Ishwara – *as to how they will be lead to Ishwara, the Lord will explain in the 6th and 7th slokas*) and formless devotees attain Ishwara. Thus we cannot say as to which is greater or better as both lead to the same goal of Ishwara.

If both lead to same goal, then why the two are there? Is there any difference between both? Which should I take?

All these doubts will still persist in the mind which will be answered by the Lord in the next sloka which we will see next month.

May we all strive to remember Ishwara as pervading the entire world whether it be form or formless so that we will be able to get rid of all dualities and thereby we will be able to attain Ishwara and ever rejoice in abidance in non-dual blissful Ishwara here and now itself.

Prakarana Prakaashah

Dakshinamurthy Ashtakam - 3 – Instruction of Guru about Brahman (light of all lights)

यस्यैव स्फुरणं सदात्मकमसत्कल्पार्थकं भासते

साक्षात्तत्त्वमसीति वेदवचसा यो बोधयत्याश्रितान् ।

यत्साक्षात्करणात्भवेन्न पुनरावृत्तिर्भवाम्भोनिधौ

तस्मै श्री गुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्री दक्षिनामूर्तये ॥३॥

yasyaiva sphuraṇaṁ sadātmakamasatkalpārthakaṁ bhāsate
sākṣāttattvamasīti vedavacasā yo bodhayatyāśritān |
yatsākṣātkaraṇātbhavenna punarāvṛttirbhavāmbhonidhau
tasmai śrī gurumūrtaye nama idaṁ śrī dakṣiṇāmurtaye||3||

One whose shining alone is always existent and illumines even non-existent entities
And who instructs the words of the Vedas like Thou Art That to those take refuge in him
And by realization of what there is no return to the ocean of samsara
Unto that Guru who is of the form of Dakshinamurthy, my prostrations.

Brahman – it's nature

We have seen previously that the perceived world requires a substratum. This substratum should be changeless (for if it is changing then we will have to assume another changeless substratum for this substratum – this will go on until we find a changeless substratum; due to simplicity it is easy to accept the substratum of the world itself to be changeless and this is supported by sruthi, yukti and anubhava or scriptures, logic and experience). Such a changeless substratum should exist at all times and therefore is of the nature of Existence. Unlike worldly existence which is temporary (or limited in time), this substratum exists at all times. Existence is impossible without light falling upon it. Consciousness is the light of all lights (if Consciousness is there, then the entire world exists – else the entire world doesn't exist). Therefore the light of Consciousness should fall upon this substratum for it to exist. Since this light needs to fall at all times (for substratum to be ever existent) therefore it should be the very nature of this substratum.

That which is of the nature of existence is unlimited and therefore blissful as well in nature. Thus the changeless substratum of the changing world is of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss.

Brahman – pulsating Consciousness

Brahman, as we saw, is of the nature of Consciousness. This Consciousness is that which constantly pulsates inside as I-exist, I-exist. From the day of birth till the day of death we find that this Consciousness is constantly pulsating. Anything and everything might be doubted and would require proof (for conviction) but Consciousness is self-proven. Consciousness always exists of its own. For a pot, it is essential to switch on the light to see it but for Consciousness, there is no other light required. Even if we find some other light source, such light source cannot illumine Consciousness as Consciousness is that subject which is never objectified – Consciousness is the light of all lights.

That such Consciousness ever exists is clearly known through simple analysis – there is never a time Consciousness vanishes. What we call as birth and death is just that of the body, not of Consciousness or I. Due to ignorance I is considered to be associated with the body, mind, intellect, objects and people of the world. But really speaking, I is pure Consciousness alone at all times. This is known through the states of dream and deep sleep where I as the body, mind and intellect changes and even vanishes (changes in dream state and vanishes in deep sleep state where only I exists).

Brahman – light of all lights

Though there are many light sources in the world include electricity, sun etc. still all these derive their light from Consciousness alone. As long as Consciousness exists, all light exists. If Consciousness ceases to exist, then all light sources cease to exist. This clearly shows that Consciousness is the light of all light sources. The eye sees due to Consciousness, the Sun shines due to Consciousness, the stars shine due to Consciousness, the moon shines due to Consciousness and fire shines due to Consciousness.

Brahman – illumines even non-existent world

Consciousness doesn't just shine light sources but Consciousness also shines non-existent or illusory entities. The world that we currently perceive is not real because it changes and therefore will cease to exist (real being that which never ceases to exist). Such a changing world is just an illusion like water seen in desert, dream world and snake seen in rope. This

illusion is seen in Brahman or Consciousness. Consciousness makes even the non-existent world appear as if existing even as the dreamer makes the dream world as if existing.

It is therefore foolish that people perceive the external world but fail to apprehend the underlying substratum of Consciousness, that Consciousness which throws its light and makes the non-existent world existent. Therefore Sankara says in Bhaja Govindam that many are fools who see yet do not see (they perceive Consciousness as whatever is present is nothing but Consciousness alone, differences being mere illusion of names and forms in Consciousness, but they do not perceive the world as Consciousness instead get deluded into perceiving only the illusion of names and forms).

Guru - essential

Though ultimate knowledge is that Brahman alone exists, still the intellect will be convinced only when hearing this from a realized master, one who is ever abiding as Brahman (at all times). Even as the words of a person who has seen Taj Mahal will make us convinced about beauty of Taj Mahal similarly when we hear about Brahman from a realized master then we will be convinced about existence and nature of Brahman. Even as when traveling to a new place we need a guide in the form of a map, similarly while traveling to the goal of moksha we need a guide who is the Guru. The scriptures are very clear that it is impossible to gain knowledge and attain moksha without a Guru. Though there are exceptions with respect to masters like Ramana Maharshi, AMMA etc. still majority of people require a Guru.

Guru is one who is living as Brahman at all times and hence the words will be very powerful. Generally we say that some people's words touch our heart as they are talking from their heart; realized masters only talk from heart as they are ever abiding as Brahman pulsating in their heart as I-exist, I-exist (Consciousness).

Today we find a lot of people claiming themselves to be Gurus. Many of them are false Gurus running behind worldly benefits from their disciples and devotees. If we fall into the trap of a false Guru then we will not progress in the spiritual path and we will also fall down into the ocean of samsara (more and more). Thus it is important to find out the quality or characteristics of a true Guru. A true Guru is a srotriya and brahmanista – srotriya is one who is well versed in the scriptures (truth or concepts preached in the scriptures) and brahmanista is one who is ever abiding as Brahman. Such a true Guru like flower attracts sadhakas of bees automatically as there is the honey of moksha. A true Guru ever rejoicing

in bliss doesn't need anything at all. Gaudapada acharya says that such a true Guru is one whose all desires have been fulfilled and hence there is no tainting of worldly pleasures.

The moment we find a Guru seeking benefits from people, we can immediately say that the Guru is not a true Guru. A sadhaka shouldn't waste time in exposing the false Guru (as that isn't the goal of life) instead such a sadhaka should renounce such a false Guru and then go in search of a true Guru.

Sometimes we might find that true Gurus also ask for materials from certain people – we shouldn't consider such Gurus as false because these materials are for the welfare of the entire world or for the welfare of the sadhaka. A sadhaka who is so much attached to something will not be able to progress and therefore the Guru will ask that thing from the sadhaka. But afterwards the Guru will give the thing away to some other deserving person. True Gurus will have nothing with them at all – though ashrams and many other possessions might be in their names, still they will not want it or touch it. They will only manage such ashrams in order for the welfare of the entire world. Thus AMMA and Swami Tejomayananda are heads respectively of Mata Amritanandamayi Mission Trust and Chinmaya Mission, still if we look at their lives we find that they don't possess anything at all. Whatever comes to them from devotees and disciples goes to other deserving people of the world.

Last but not the least a true Guru will want only moksha for the sadhaka. Therefore all the Gurus words and actions will be towards moksha for the sadhaka. Spending more and more time with the Guru, a sadhaka will be able to find himself becoming more and more blissful, peaceful and contented.

Upadesha from the Guru

Once a sadhaka approaches the Guru, then through being of service to the Guru, surrendering unto the Guru and questioning about moksha, the Guru provides upadesha or instruction to the sadhaka.

Instructions are many as we find in the various Upanishads but there are certain statements that encompass the entire scriptures in them. Such statements are called mahavakyas or great statements. Understanding such statements in the intellect and living the truth propounded in the statements will lead a sadhaka quickly to the goal of moksha.

One of the great statements that we find in the Upanishads is the statement of TAT TVAM ASI or That Thou Art. This statement comes in the Chandogya Upanishad where the father of Uddhalaka instructs his son Svetakethu nine times that you are that Brahman which is the very basis of the entire world (knowing which everything becomes known).

When a sadhaka hears this great statement from the Guru then such a sadhaka gains intellectual conviction immediately. And if the sadhaka has proper purity and concentration of mind then he will immediately realize his very nature of Brahman. Else, like in Svetakethu's case, it will take a while to imbibe the meaning of the statement and attain moksha through constantly abiding or living in the statement (remembering the statement in the mind at all times).

Though statements are mere statements in insentient books, it is the living Guru who provides life to the statements and books (or Vedas). It wouldn't be wrong to say that the Guru is a living embodiment of the scriptures. Thus when a sadhaka hears the great statement from the Guru, then instantly the sadhaka will be touched by it. "Touching" here isn't physical or mental but it is spiritual. Even as a person who has forgotten his very name will be touched by the statement of a wise person that his name is so and so, similarly a sadhaka who has forgotten his very nature of Brahman will be touched by the statement of the Guru which reminds himself of his very nature of Brahman.

It is important to remember to stick on to the Guru at all times. A sadhaka can attain moksha only through help or guidance from the Guru. The Guru knows as to what is good for the sadhaka and therefore directly or indirectly will be constantly guiding the sadhaka. A sadhaka who has a Guru therefore will be able to attain moksha soon itself (without any fail if the sadhaka sticks on with the Guru at all times). Being always with the Guru is essential in today's world where there are so many Gurus and ashrams that we will be tempted to shift from one place to another and often after learning the scriptures a bit we will feel that we can progress in the spiritual path ourselves without any help from Guru or anybody else. This is but an illusion and will only lead to the downfall of the sadhaka. Therefore a sadhaka aspiring for moksha should constantly be with the Guru until moksha is attained and the sadhaka is able to ever rejoice in bliss at all times.

Moksha – state without any return to sorrow

The Lord says in Gita that my state is that attaining which there is no return. This means that once a person attains moksha then there is no return to the ocean of samsara characterized by sorrows and sufferings. We can see this in great masters who are ever blissful at all times. Even the greatest of sorrows will not taint them even little. Ramana Maharshi thus was ever blissful at all times irrespective of whether he was living in the outside cold or had tumor in his arm. Such is the state of moksha that after attaining this state, there is no return to sorrow.

Ultimately Brahman alone exists as our very nature of Consciousness. It is ignorance that makes a person feel that he is the limited individual. Sorrows and sufferings are as a result of this ignorance of considering the entire world to be real and individuality to be real. Once knowledge is gained from the Guru, then ignorance vanishes through constantly abiding in this knowledge. Knowledge destroys ignorance like light destroys darkness. Really speaking there is no ignorance even as there is no darkness. When knowledge is not there, ignorance appears to be there. But once knowledge is attained then ignorance vanishes and is known to be non-existent at all times.

Thus sorrows caused by ignorance as well don't exist at all but it is just an illusion that the world, sorrows and ignorance exists. The moment knowledge is gained that the world, sorrows and ignorance don't exist at all, then there is no way for sorrow to re-appear. Thereby ends all the illusion and delusion of the world. Until then a person appears to be experiencing sorrow as a result of taking birth and dying (continuing the chain of birth and death constantly). But birth and death are only for the body and not for the Self which pulsates inside as I-exist, I-exist. Once a person gains knowledge that I am Brahman then the chain of birth and death also ends.

A person who realizes non-dual Brahman realizes that only Brahman exists here – thereby there is neither birth nor death, neither sorrow nor happiness and neither illusion nor unreality but blissful Brahman and blissful Brahman alone exists.

Each and every person in the world is striving to attain this blissful state where sorrows don't taint the person at all. Such a state is only possible through knowledge of the scriptures attained from a Guru. The greatest of all gurus is Dakshinamurthy and we should always offer our prostrations unto the great Guru of Dakshinamurthy so that we will be able

to realize our very nature of all-pervasive non-dual Brahman. There is no other way to eternal bliss than through knowledge of our own very nature of Brahman (non-dual Consciousness). And knowledge is possible only through learning of the scriptures from a Guru.

Scriptures aren't that easy to learn or understand hence the great compassionate master of Sankara gives us this simple work of Dakshinamurthy Ashtakam which is the essence of the scriptures. Learning and contemplation of this work will soon lead the sadhaka to the state of moksha – the ultimate goal of life for each and every person in the world. Until moksha is attained we will be constantly experiencing Brahman as pervading the entire world but still experiencing only sorrow (and not bliss of Brahman). Therefore wise sadhakas should constantly strive to realize Brahman so that through abiding in Brahman, they will be able to ever rejoice in bliss.

May Dakshinamurthy as all-pervasive Consciousness which makes the unreal world appear as real and the Guru who provides the instruction that I am Brahman leading to realization of Brahman after which there is no sorrow again bless us so that we will be able to get rid of all sorrows and will be able to ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

Madhuraamritham

Hanuman Chalisa - 2

राम दूत अतुलित बल धामा ।

अंजनिपुत्र पवनसुत नामा ॥२॥

rāma dūta atulita bala dhāmā |
añjaniputra pavanasuta nāmā ||2||

With a mind purified through the dusts from the feet of Guru, I now am going to describe the pure (faultless) glory of Hanuman who is a great in the raghu's clan and capable of bestowing the four fruits (purusharthas).

Hanuman - Servant of Raama

Though it appears very simple in theory to become a servant, it is very tough indeed to implement in real life. Everybody wants to become masters and that too of others. Hence parents try controlling children and children try controlling parents. Husband tries to control the wife and wife tries to control the husband. Bosses try to control sub-ordinates who in turn control their sub-ordinates. And sub-ordinates through unions try to control bosses. Though nobody is willing to control their own body, senses and mind they still try to control the external world. This is a futile desire which will lead to failure alone always as the external world doesn't exist at all. That which doesn't exist cannot be controlled. Trying to control the external world is like trying to control water seen in desert – it is impossible as the desert in water doesn't exist at all.

Trying to live in the knowledge that the external world doesn't exist at all is very tough (for normal people who are addicted to the world). Hence the easiest way is to surrender unto a supreme power. This surrender will ensure that the person goes beyond the external world (differences). Thus easily the person overcomes the world, without controlling anything at all.

Surrender must be handled with care as surrendering unto the wrong person or thing will lead a person to his own doom. Many times we surrender unto people we trust and since those people are temporary or constantly changing therefore we will be lead to sorrows alone. Surrender should only be applied with respect to Ishwara or Guru. Ishwara and Guru

are the only two people who have no desires and who are ever abiding as blissful Brahman. A person who is ever blissful has all his desires fulfilled and therefore doesn't have any desires. Such a desire-less person will not misuse us when we surrender unto him. All other people who have desires will try to misuse us for their own purposes. Hence the moment we go against them, we will find that they become our enemies even if they are our parents. The only desire-less people in the world is Ishwara and Guru, both of who are non-dual reality of Brahman.

Rama denotes the Self which attracts each and every person. Hanuman was a servant of Rama. Such a servant obeys all the commands of Rama. Since Rama is Brahman therefore all commands of Rama are for the welfare of Hanuman alone. Thereby at Rama's request Hanuman went as messenger or doota to Raavana.

A messenger is one who is a mere tool in the hands of the master. Hanuman therefore is a mere tool in the hands of Rama. Therefore we find that one Hanuman alone brought havoc to entire Lanka by setting it on fire. Even Raavana was able to find the greatness in Hanuman as he stood up when Hanuman was brought into his presence. This is because the messenger is nothing but the master alone. The moment we surrender unto Ishwara we will find that we are just a mere instrument in the Lord's hands. Thus at all times we will be able to ever rejoice in bliss irrespective of external consequences. Hanuman was unaffected even when Raavana caught him, set his tail on fire and didn't agree to give up Sita. This is because his life was controlled by Rama who was his master.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa and AMMA always talk about the attitude that a sadhaka should have, which is that I am a mere instrument in the hands of Ishwara. Through this attitude, there will be no doer-ship and enjoyer-ship. Thus such a person will be able to get rid of all sorrows arising out of actions and reactions. Instead such a person ever rejoices in bliss at all times irrespective of actions or the results of actions.

Strength – as a result of Lord's grace

Hanuman due to being an instrument in the lord's hands had great strength. Strength of hanuman wasn't normal but it was incomparable strength. Even as when we have association with a great powerful person in a city we will be or feel strong and powerful, similarly a person who is a mere instrument in the hands of the Lord will feel strong and

powerful. This strength unlike strength from the world will never diminish or vanish as the Lord is eternal (ever-existing in nature).

If we analyze the Lord's nature we find that the Lord is all-knowing, all-pervading and all-powerful. This is because Lord is the very basis of the entire world (creator of the world as well). As long as the thought of the Lord is present in our mind we will find ourselves to be very strong. Strength also means that there is nothing to fear. Fear causes most of the problems in the world. Though a physically strong person might be able to hit hardly a weaker person, still if the weaker person has no fear then he will be able to defeat the stronger person in a combat (very easily). Fear in the mind leads to weakening and often lack of strength. But what will a person fear when there is the thought of the all-pervasive non-dual reality of Lord in the mind? As the scriptures say fear arises out of duality. When there is knowledge in the mind that there is no duality but one Lord alone exists here, then what is there to fear, whom to fear and why to fear?

We find in Hanuman total lack of fear which equals to incomparable strength. Hanuman was able to accomplish the impossible feats without even fearing anything as he was just an instrument in the Lord's hands (and he knew that only the master of Rama exists at all times). Hanuman, as history says, had great strength in himself but due to trying to catch Sun he was cursed by Sun that he will forget his own strengths, Hanuman never knew his strengths. Similarly we all have the strength to withstand the illusory world and ever rejoice in bliss but due to ignorance we don't realize our very nature of blissful Lord. Once the Lord appears in our mind (and life) we will find that ignorance slowly vanishes and we will find ourselves being endowed with incomparable strength (in all walks of life). Thus disciples and devotees of great masters like AMMA are able to perform impossible feats – they do have the capability but it is subdued in them and only through the presence/grace of a master like AMMA, it manifests itself.

The ultimate goal of life is to get rid of all sorrows and ever rejoice in bliss. In order to achieve this goal we need to surrender unto the Lord. There is no other alternative to this. A jnani also surrenders unto the Lord remembering the Lord to be nirguna Brahman – that Brahman which pervades the entire world as its cause and substratum. Since there is no other alternative to the ultimate goal of life as eternal bliss, we all should strive to surrender unto Ishwara remembering Ishwara to be not just a mere form but Ishwara as non-dual reality of all-pervasive Brahman.

Hanuman – son of Anjani and Vaayu

Any being in the world is essentially Brahman or Ishwara but from worldly or empirical perspective there is individuality. This individuality with respect to Hanuman is mentioned by Tulasidas here.

Hanuman was the son of Anjani and vaayu. Anjani was a monkey and hence Hanuman also was a monkey. But Hanuman was the son of vaayu or air. Hence Hanuman had great strengths with respect to jumping, flying etc. Even as air can go anywhere without much obstacles, similarly Hanuman also was able to go to various places which normal people wouldn't be able to go (like jumping over the ocean, going to Lanka etc.).

Though Hanuman's individuality is explained here, this is only from worldly perspective. For a sadhaka, Hanuman is none other than Rama himself. This is because the servant and messenger stands for the master. Since Hanuman was a servant and messenger of Rama therefore Hanuman was none other than Rama himself.

Hanuman – Rama himself

As we have seen earlier, Rama refused to give darshana to Tulasidas unless he praised Hanuman (his devotee). This itself shows clearly that Rama didn't consider Hanuman as different from himself. Wherever Hanuman is remembered, Rama alone is remembered and wherever Rama is remembered, Hanuman is also automatically remembered. Thus it is very clear that Hanuman is Rama himself.

Until this essential oneness of Hanuman and Rama is remembered, we will not benefit out of worshipping Hanuman. Though worshipping of Hanuman with worldly desires will lead to fulfillment of the worldly desires, only fools will take resort to this as worldly desires are seeds of sorrow (as the world itself is constantly changing). Thus wise people will not run behind worldly desires but will seek eternal bliss. Eternal bliss is only possible through the ultimate reality of Ishwara (Brahman or Rama). Unless we remember Hanuman as Rama we will not be able to worship the ultimate reality and unless we worship ultimate reality of non-duality we will not be able to experience eternal bliss. Thus we should worship Hanuman as not somebody different from Rama but as Rama himself.

Many people claim to have attitude of Hanuman with respect to their own Gurus or Ishta devatas. This is wrong because such people think themselves as different from their own

Guru or Ishta devata. Hanuman though externally was different from Rama, essentially Hanuman was not different from Rama (but Rama alone). Hanuman's mind was filled in and out with Rama. As the age-old saying goes, "as one thinks, so one becomes" – since Hanuman's mind was filled in and out with Rama therefore Hanuman was none other than Rama himself.

A true bhakta therefore isn't different from Ishwara but one with Ishwara himself. Such a bhakta or sevaka will say that only Ishwara exists – this itself shows that there is no individuality for the bhakta or sevaka and therefore only non-dual Ishwara exists.

Emphasizing again, it is important to remember that Hanuman is Rama alone. Similarly once we surrender unto Ishwara we will find that we aren't different from Ishwara but Ishwara alone exists here. It is through this vision of oneness that Ishwara alone exists that we will be able to attain the ultimate goal of life as eternal bliss.

May we all strive to, like Hanuman, surrender unto the Lord so that through remembrance that the Lord exists here we will be able to get rid of all sorrows and will be able to ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

Praadeshikam - I

Hari Naama Keerthanam – 3

Ananda chinmaya hare gopikaa ramana
 Njaan enna bhaavamathu thonnazhka venamiha
 Thonnunnathaakilakhilam njaana ithennavazhi
 Thonnenname varada naaraayanaaya nama

Ultimate reality – of the nature of Sat Chit Ananda

The ultimate reality of Ishwara or Brahman is propounded as of the nature of Sat Chit Ananda. It is Sat in nature as it exists at all times. If it isn't Sat, then we would have to find out some other entity which is the basis of this entity (Ishwara) and that entity has to be Sat (or ever existing). The concepts of everything being temporary (changing) or non-existence alone being real is so foolish (and illogical) that spending time to refute it is unwanted. Put in traditional way it is like killing a already dead person.

Thus the ultimate reality of Ishwara is Sat or existence in nature. Existence always requires a light to illumine itself. There is no light that illumines everything except Consciousness. Consciousness is the light of all lights and all other light sources derive their own existence from Consciousness. In order for Ishwara to always exist, Consciousness has to throw its light upon Ishwara at all times. This is only possible if Ishwara is of the very nature of Consciousness. Thus Ishwara is Sat and Chit (Existence and Consciousness in nature).

That which always exists is beyond all limitations as limitations make an entity impermanent or temporary. For example the body, a tree and all objects of the world are limited by time, space and causation – therefore they are all temporary (will vanish after a period of time). Since Ishwara is permanent therefore Ishwara is unlimited. That which is limited gives limited happiness whereas that which is unlimited gives unlimited happiness (or eternal bliss). This bliss is the very nature of Ishwara (as always present in and as Ishwara). Therefore Ishwara is of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss.

The scriptures clearly tell that Ishwara is of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and unlimited (or bliss). Our experience as well clearly proves that the Consciousness which pulsates inside as I-exist, I-exist and is devoid of all associations with the world (objects

and people) always exists and is never hated (therefore ever blissful). This Consciousness always exists and therefore it is Ishwara alone.

We should never forget Ishwara as of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss – that which pulsates inside at all times as I-exist, I-exist.

Then what about this world?

The world is just an illusion of names and forms in Ishwara. The world is like a dream in Ishwara (in this dream Ishwara is the dreamer who appears as the entire world).

The moment this truth that Ishwara alone exists here pervading the entire world and as our very nature of Consciousness is forgotten, that very moment individuality or Ego comes into existence. This Ego constantly leads to sorrow alone as it bases itself on difference or duality. When I consider myself as an individual, I create a micro world from the external world. This micro world consists of people and things which I like and few other people and things which I hate. This kind of micro world strengthens likes and dislikes. Likes and dislikes become attachments and aversions which in turn leads to happiness and sorrow. Since happiness from the temporary world is temporary alone therefore it is seed of sorrow (or sorrowful alone). Thus forgetting of Ishwara and dwelling in the world (thinking the world to be real) is the cause of all sorrows. In order to remove this forgetting, we have to seek Ishwara. Contemplation of Ishwara at all times is the way out of this ignorance.

Hari – destroyer of ignorance

Contemplation of Ishwara will get rid of ignorance hence Ishwara is called Hari. Mere association with Ishwara, even in our mind will get rid of ignorance and dual notions even as mere association with fire will make us hot (and get rid of cold). Therefore scriptures emphasize on satsanga or association with good people (good people are those who always remember Ishwara). Satsanga consists of those activities which are focused on Ishwara like bhajans, dhyaana, japa etc. All these activities ensure that we remember Ishwara. Remembrance of Ishwara directly in our mind at all times irrespective of external situations isn't that easy in practice. But when we are in a place where bhajans are continuously happening then we will be remembering Ishwara automatically.

Care should be taken to ensure that focus in satsanga is the Lord alone rather than food or any other gossip. Today many satsangas are such that people get together only to eat good

food and talk about worldly matters (talking about everything except Ishwara). True satsanga is remembrance of Ishwara while performing activities which are filled with Ishwara (which are focused on Ishwara).

Ishwara is the catalyst who purifies our mind of dual notions. This is because Ishwara is remembered as all-pervasive Brahman. The moment we remember Ishwara as the non-dual substratum of the dual world, that very moment likes-dislikes vanish (as duality is remembered as an illusion in the non-dual Lord).

Thus Ishwara is the light which destroys the darkness of ignorance. Once light of Ishwara fills our life then the darkness of sorrow will vanish. Thus those who spend more and more time in satsanga will find themselves becoming more and more blissful. They will find that their sorrows are removed and even if sorrows are there, they aren't affected by the sorrows (as they remember that blissful Ishwara alone exists here).

Are there proofs for Ishwara removing ignorance and sorrow?

The proofs that we find in the scriptures are the gopis. Mentioning this, the author says Hari is also gopikaa ramana or the dear of the gopis (the one who was loved by all gopis).

Lord - dear of gopis

When we look at the life of gopis we find that they were very normal people (like any of us). They have their own individual lives. They were leading worldly lives. But their attitude was changed as a result of association with the Lord. When the Lord entered their lives, then the gopis were attracted to the Lord.

How the gopis were attracted to the Lord?

The lord performed many miraculous deeds and these deeds attracted the gopis. Many avatara purushas perform great deeds. These magical deeds aren't in order to be amused by them or in order to crave for them ourselves but in order to realize the essential Lord-hood in them. Only through this we will be able to develop faith in them. Only when faith is developed we will be able to spend our time with them (physically or mentally). More and more we think about that Ishwara who pervades the entire world, more and more our mind will be purified. Instead of seeing the entire different world, our mind will be filled with just one Lord. Thus the gopis after association with the Lord found their minds filled in and out with the Lord. Whatever they do, whatever they talk, whatever they think – everything was

filled with the Lord. They were taken from duality of the world to non-duality of Ishwara. Therefore the Lord is one who gets rid of ignorance (duality and sorrow) by his very presence – just that we have to develop faith/devotion unto Ishwara and thereby let Ishwara pervade our mind and life.

If illiterate cowherds (gopis) were able to purify their own mind with association with the Lord, then today's people will very easily be able to purify their mind. What is required is just filling our mind with thoughts/glories of the Lord. Then like gopis, we will be purified in our mind and our mind will be filled with bliss. Gopis approached the Lord with their own individual desires (like taking care of husband, wanting to be near Ishwara etc.) but the Lord purified them and made them realize the ultimate truth of non-duality. Thereafter they found nothing but the non-dual Lord alone at all times.

It is important to fill our mind with the Lord while remembering the Lord to be all-pervasive Brahman. Unless all-pervasive nature of the Lord is remembered, we will get into likes-dislikes with respect to the Lord itself Thus we find people fighting as to whether Siva is great or Vishnu is great – whether my Guru is great or your Guru is great etc. All comparisons with respect to deities and gurus are unwanted and no deity or guru will want people to take this path of comparison – as all of them only want us to focus on non-duality irrespective of what form or what guru we follow. Ultimately only non-dual notion in our mind (that one Ishwara or Brahman alone exists) alone will get rid of all sorrows and make us ever rejoice in bliss.

What if we aren't able to develop faith in Ishwara or Guru?

We should strive to develop faith through listening to the stories or glories of the Lord or Guru. It is through these glories that we will be able to develop faith. But there are many intellectual people in today's world who will not develop faith even after stories or direct experiences with Ishwara or Guru. For such people, the author gives a very beautiful alternative.

Seeing everything as oneself

The alternative that the author gives here isn't very easy to be implemented but it is definitely possible through practice. It can be said to be the path of knowledge where everything is seen and remembered as my own very nature of Consciousness. It is tough to imagine an unknown Ishwara as the source-substratum of the world (and as pervading the

entire world) but it is very easy indeed to remember the entire world to be pervaded by myself.

If it isn't possible to see everything as myself, then as the author says we should strive to see everything as mine. Most problems arise because of perception of differences in the world. Differences leads to all problems – differences work through creating a partition in the world (micro world of my world which I like and the other part of the world being something that I dislike or am indifferent to). But the moment we see the entire world as our own world, then there is no scope at all for likes-dislikes. If in a house there are five people and only one person is my friend, then there will be likes-dislikes and in turn sorrow. But if all the five people are considered as my people, then there is no scope at all for likes-dislikes and therefore there will be no sorrow at all.

Is it possible to see everything as my own?

Yes, definitely possible. We do implement this with respect to our family which includes people from my father and people from my mother. Each time a person in the family marries, the family is growing (number of people in the family). If the family is a close-knit one (where fights and differences aren't there) then the entire family will be considered as mine. If we can implement "mine-ness" with respect to our family then definitely it is also possible to implement this with respect to the entire world.

Mahatmas like AMMA show that through our actions as well we will be able to develop the attitude of the entire world being mine. This is through being of service to the entire world. Automatically through serving the entire world, we will be considering the entire world as our own. And thus we will be able to get rid of differences and sorrow.

Seeing everything as one – Knowledge

When I see everything as mine, then automatically it leads to focus on myself. Here myself cannot be the ego as the ego is limited. Such a limited ego definitely cannot consider the entire world as it's own. Thus the moment we consider the entire world as my own, I becomes the Self (I is the Self at all times but due to ignorance it is forgotten and through considering the entire world as my own, the Self is remembered again). Thus slowly from seeing everything as mine, I will see everything as my own Self. Differences in the world are just names and forms in myself even as dream world is differences of names and forms in the dreamer alone.

Implementation of seeing everything as one is not just a practice but it is the truth as well. Truth is that the entire world is nothing but one non-dual reality of Brahman or Ishwara alone. Somehow ignorance makes us forget this truth and therefore we consider the dual world to be real. Through seeing everything as one, duality is known to be an illusion and differences vanish from our mind. Eventually thus we will be able to ever rejoice in bliss (knowing that one Lord or Brahman alone exists here).

Whether this oneness is seeing everything as one Ishwara or as one's own Self or as seeing everything as mine, eventually it will get rid of all differences, sorrow and thereby make one ever rejoice in bliss. If we aren't able to see everything as Ishwara or our own Self then at least we should consider the entire world as mine so that differences are removed (and eventually through knowledge we will be able to remember the ultimate truth that everything is one Brahman alone).

Mahatmas like AMMA and others show that this oneness is definitely possible to implement in life. Krishna was able to see both Duryodhana and Arjuna as the same when they approached for his help in war even though Duryodhana had earlier disrespected him (and almost attacked him) when he went as dootha or messenger in order to avoid the war happening. Through practice we will also be able to implement vision of oneness (it becomes easy if we remember this to be the truth or knowledge perspective and that through this we will be able to attain the ultimate goal of life as eternal bliss).

May we all strive to develop faith on Ishwara so that through constant remembrance of Ishwara as pervading the entire world we will be able to get rid of all sorrows and will be able to ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

Praadeshikam - II

Kanda Shashti Kavacham - 2

Thuthiporkuvalvinaipomthumbampom

Nenjilpadhiporkuselvampalithukathithongum

Nishtaiyumkaikoodum

Nimalararulkandarshashtikavachamthanai

Those who pray, their intense karmas and sufferings will go away

Those who fix (Lord) in their mind all wealth will be in abundance

All penance will bear fruit

By the kantharshashtikavacham written by the grace of god

In this text of KantharShashtiKavacham, Devarayarswamigal starts with a prayer verse. In this prayer verse he mentions what this work could give by the grace of the Lord whoever chants this. Lord Muruga or Shanmukha is known as the senapthi of the Devas fighting all evils. If we consider our body itself, scriptures point out that each organ of our body is preceded by a devata and hence here Deva Senapathi can also be taken as the Senpathi who wards off all evil that could affect our body or mind or organs. Scriptures point out that Brahman alone is real and getting this knowledge of Brahman is the real purpose of life. To gain this knowledge and there-by to live by the knowledge we need god's grace and protection from all evils which will come in the form of obstacles. The obstacles may come in many different format that could take us away from this goal of Moksha. In order to get the grace of the Lord we have to offer our prayers to the Lord to protect us.

The compassionate Lord of the world always protects everything and everyone at all points of time. Though this fact is known to everyone this is not something to get egoistic about, we have to understand that Lord is doing it out of His Infinite Compassion. We are taking protection from Lord which we can never repay at all at any point in time. Only thing we can do is to offer our prayers to the Lord by surrendering to the Lord.

In the previous posting we saw the first line of the vemba, in which the author DevarayarSwamigal said that whoever prays to Lord Muruga all their sorrows and sufferings will get instantly removed. Not just that, the author says that whoever keeps the Lord in their mind will get wealth in abundance and all their desires fulfilled.

Nenjilpadhiporkuselvampadhithukathithongumnishtaiyumkaikoodum – Those who fix (the Lord) in their mind will get wealth in abundance and all penances will bear fruit:

Lord is the controller of everything in the world since he is the creator and sustainer of the world. Whatever we have, whatever we enjoy is given by the Lord only out of His Infinite Compassion. It is important that we understand and always keep this in our mind. We might have done some extra-ordinary work and as a result we might be experiencing some of the greatest things in the world. But we have to keep in mind that even though we might do all the actions properly and complete it successfully there are numerous uncontrollable factors affecting the outcome of the action and we have to understand that it is only God's grace that made the action to complete properly and also to bear the right fruit.

When we understand that all our actions are done by the grace of Lord, we will be able to carry out all our actions properly and happily. We would also show the respect to everything, even small things that are helping out to perform our action. All fruits of action we perform are ordained by the Lord and if we keep this in mind, we will be able to take the result of the action as coming from the Lord himself. If we do every action keeping the Lord in our mind, that will not only help us it will help everyone and everything around us. The author says that when Lord is kept in the mind, wealth will be abundance. The wealth may not be only money and possession, but abundance of Grace of Lord, abundance of Santhosham and Trupti. Even if the results are unfavorable, we will know that this is the result we deserve for the action we have performed as the result is coming from the Lord. But the author is saying that the person who keeps Lord in the mind will always get all necessary things without any shortage and will also bear results for all penances.

Will continue in the next magazine.

Vedanta Paribhasha

Illusion through Pratyaksha Pramaana

There are 4 kinds of goals available for all human beings which are Dharma, Artha, Kaama and Moksha. Out of these 4, Moksham is the Ultimate goal of human being. As per the scriptures, Knowledge of Brahman is the only way to attain liberation. And to attain knowledge of Brahman, Vedanta accepts 6 means of knowledge. Following are the six pramanas:

1. Pratyaksha - Perception
2. Anumana – Inference
3. Upamana – Comparison
4. Agama – Verbal
5. Arthapatti – Presumption
6. Anupalabdhi – Non-apprehension

Each of these pramana will finally lead to the knowledge of Brahman.

Vedanta Paribhasha is a work of elaborate explanation of these 6 Pramanas written by DharmarajaAdhvarindra in prose form.

In this work, DharmarajaAdhvarindra explains pratyakshapramana very elaborately, this is the longest chapter in this work. Towards the end of the chapter, the acharya explains about illusions and how these are caused. We will see how the acharya explains the perception of illusions. But before we see how illusions are explained, it is important to understand the basics put forth in the beginning of the chapter.

Prama or valid knowledge is defined as the knowledge of an object which is not already known, which will not get invalidated (by a counter experience). The means through which the valid knowledge or prama is obtained is called Pramanam or Means of knowledge.

Pratyakshaprama or perceptual knowledge is the knowledge obtained through perception. Pratyakshaprama is actually the direct experience or aparokshaanubhavam. When the object is perceived, there is perceptual knowledge of the object immediately without any delay. For example, when we see a jar in front of us, immediately we get the knowledge "This is jar".

In this process of perception there are 3 components, they are the

1. Pramatr or Perceiver
2. Pramanam or Means of knowledge
3. Vishayam or object.

Consciousness is the substratum of everything, so there is consciousness associated with the Perceiver (PramatrChaitanyam), consciousness associated with vishayam (Vishayachaitanyam) and consciousness associated with pramanam (Pramanachaitanyam).

When a person is seeing an object, the sense organ of eye is falling on the object. When the eye falls on the object there is modification of mind in the form of the object which is called Vritti.

For the perception to happen, there are some criteria from perceiver stand point and from object standpoint.

Criteria from stand point of perceiver:

1. When a person is seeing an object, there is a Vritti in the form of the object in the same place perceiver is seeing it. Thus, Consciousness associated with the perceiver, consciousness associated with the object and consciousness associated with the Vritti should be all in the same space. For example, if there is a jar in a room the person has to be in the viewing range of the jar so that the jar can be clearly seen. If not, eye cannot fall on the jar, therefore vritti will not be generated and hence there will not be any perception.
2. When a person is seeing an object, the vritti formed must be in the same space and at the same time. For example, if a jar is to be perceived the eye should fall on the object in the same space and same time. Since Vritti is making the jar perceivable, it should not be over applied to recollection of perceiving the jar in the past. For perception, the object must be perceived here and now.
3. The object must be capable of being perceived. For example, Dharma and Adharma does not have the capability to be perceived though they exist.

Perception is not just restricted to the eyes. Knowledge obtained through any of the sense organs satisfying the above criteria are subject to perception. It is not just the external objects that are objects of perception. The internal objects like happiness, sadness, hunger etc are also object of perception that satisfies the above conditions.

Criteria from standpoint of objects:

1. The condition from the standpoint of the object is that the consciousness associated with the object should not be different from the consciousness associated with the subject.
2. Object must be capable of being perceived.

Illusions:

At the very end of the chapter, DharmarajaAdhvarindra speaks about illusions. Illusions here are the illusions that exist in the empirical reality. From the ultimate perspective, world itself is an illusion but here we are talking about the short lived illusions in the world. The illusions are something appears like an object which in reality is a different object (reality here mean the empirical reality). For example, silver in the nacre. The silver that shines as though existing in front is actually nacre and thus this silver is an illusion in nacre. The illusions though are experienced directly is not valid knowledge because the object that was perceived doesn't really exist. As per the definition of valid knowledge, the object should not get invalidated by a counter experience. Once we perceive the substratum the illusion ceases to exist and hence the perception of such illusion is not a valid knowledge.

When a person, who has some kind of a defect in his eyes, sees a nacre in the sea shore, may see it as silver with the sun shining on it as it may exhibit some characteristics of the silver like brightness. When a person something like silver in front he says "This is silver". So there is consciousness limited by "This" and in that reflects "Silver". Now because of the defect in the eye of the perceiver, there is ignorance of nacre. Since the ignorance of nacre veiled the presence of nacre due to the defect in eye, silver is superimposed due to the recollection of seeing silver with the characteristics of brightness.

The ignorance of nacre is transformed into silver and this silver is reflected in the object that is called as "This". Though it can be said that the consciousness limited by the silver is same as the consciousness limited by subject in the space and at the same time, still since the perception is an illusion the perception is not valid. When will the illusion disappear? When the defect (DharmarajaAdhvarindra calls it Dosha) or condition is removed (in this case eye defect), the ignorance goes away and thus the real object will be perceived.

Dream is also an illusion as it satisfies the above condition of illusion. Though the dream is experienced as real during the time of perception of dream, it is not real because when the

condition of "Sleep" is removed the dream vanishes. Here sleep is the dosha that causes the ignorance of the waking world and thus projects the dream world in Consciousness. The only difference between the silver seen in nacre and dream is that, the silver is seen outside by the sense organ on the substratum of nacre and the dream is seen in the mind.

Thus is the summary of how DharmarajaAdhvarindra explains illusions in last portion of Pratykasham.

Acharyasmrithi

Vidyaranya

When we look into the history of Vedantic literature there are few acharyas who stand out with respect to their knowledge as well as the dedication to writing works. Definitely Sankara is like the Sun of the sky of stars of acharyas but if there is any acharya who almost stands up to Sankara with respect to knowledge of various scriptures as well as authoring of works, it is the great Vidyaranya.

Great family yet with controversies

Krishna says in Gita that there need be no doubt that a person who is progressing in the spiritual path will attain an appropriate family or environment in the next birth if moksha is not attained in this birth. Similarly great masters often take birth in very conducive environments. Vidyaranya was also born in a great family which had the great Bharathi Teertha swamigal of Sringeri Ashram (who was the brother of Vidyaranya). The great Lakshmidhara, who wrote the famous Advaita Makaranda, was also was a relative of Vidyaranya. Needless to say, Vidyaranya himself became the next acharya of Sringeri, after Bharathi Teertha swamigal.

Even as there are and will always be controversies with respect to great masters of the past, Vidyaranya's life is also not without controversies. The main controversy is whether Vidyaranya was the great Sayanacharya (who wrote commentaries on the Vedas) or not. Many claim that Vidyaranya was Sayanacharya alone but some claim that Vidyaranya was the brother of Sayanacharya and his purvaashrama name was Madhavacharya. It is not our duty to dwell upon controversies as then we lose out on the concepts propounded by Vidyaranya. We will leave controversies for various scholars who are continuing their research for the sake of removing conflicts in the world – we as ardent sadhakas of Vedanta will not get deluded into controversies with respect to the world, that world which is clearly propounded by Vedanta as temporary (illusory and unreal) and sorrowful.

Vidyaranya – the great minister of Vijayanagara

Vidyaranya was the minister of Vijayanagara under Krishnadevaraaya. That this great master was a minister is beyond doubt looking at the depth of intellectual thinking and acceptance of the entire world (rather than negating other philosophies). History says that during the reign of Krishnadevaraaya, the Vijayanagara empire flourished very well. It is

anybody's guess that Vidyaranya's influence was one of the main factor in the flourishing of Vijayanagara empire.

Many think that Vedanta and worldly life don't go hand in hand. But this is wrong, as mentioned again and again by masters like AMMA. A person who is well versed in Vedanta will be able to lead a worldly life with peace and bliss. Since a Vedantin is a mere witness with respect to actions (and results of actions) therefore such a person is apt in leading a perfect worldly life. Even as a judge is appropriate in judging cases of conflict by being a mere witness (having nothing to do with the doership, enjoyership and relation to the action) similarly a Vedantin is apt to judge the entire world (activities with respect to the world). Since a Vedantin isn't the doer or the enjoyer, therefore right decisions for actions will be undertaken by the Vedantin at all times. This will lead to success with respect to all actions (as much as possible) and thereby flourishing of oneself and whatever one takes up will happen.

The two perspectives of empirical and ultimate have to be remembered by sadhakas at all times. The ultimate perspective is that one Brahman alone exists, duality doesn't exist as it is just an illusion in the non-dual reality of Brahman. Empirical perspective is that the world which is perceived now does exist temporarily. It is like the dream world which exists in the dream state and follows its own rules. But even as dream world is known to be an illusion after waking up, similarly this waking world is also known to be an illusion after waking up from ignorance (through gaining of knowledge).

These two perspectives are not contradicting in nature as one is ultimate reality and the other is empirical reality (valid temporarily but ultimately unreal). If we are able to understand these two levels of reality then we will be able to understand easily as to how the great Vedantin of Vidyaranya was also the most-able minister (of Vijayanagara).

Vidyaranya – all-knowing

Normal people near one philosophy or one science but great masters are those who know anything and everything under the Sun. This doesn't mean that such masters will know programming languages but just that since they know the essence of everything, Brahman, therefore they will be able to easily gain knowledge of any science under the Sun. Great masters are also those who have knowledge of various philosophies at their particular time (since they are masters of philosophy therefore they will be well aware of the various

philosophical systems). That Vidyananda knew the various philosophies as well as concepts in various philosophical systems is clearly known through his works itself.

Vidyananda – compassionate master

Generally everybody is filled with passion with respect to objects and people of the world. Passion is automatically created due to likes and dislikes which are created when difference is perceived in the world. Passion is only with respect to “my” people and it leads to sorrow alone in the long run. Relation or association to the world cannot be avoided hence passion has to be converted to compassion. Compassion is passion directed towards the entire world and in particular towards those who really need it.

Giving money to poor people who are our relatives is passion whereas giving money to those who are really poor in the world (and definitely need money more than our relatives) is compassion. Wherever compassion is there, we will find that there is no effect of results of the action. Thus irrespective of whether the poor people are grateful or not, the compassionate person will be unaffected alone.

Vidyananda is one of the compassionate master who wanted to spread knowledge of Vedanta to the entire world. Though such a master doesn't need anything at all from the world, still due to compassion works are written for the welfare of the entire world.

Vidyananda – encompassing all

Though it was essential to explain just the system of Vedanta, Vidyananda wanted to spread the knowledge of all the various philosophical systems during his time. Therefore he wrote works to propagate all the philosophies while remaining focused on Advaita Vedanta as the ultimate philosophy since it alone leads to eternal bliss. Advaita Vedanta says that only Brahman exists ultimately but empirically the world is valid and accepted as existing. All philosophies can be harmonized with Advaita Vedanta and put into the bucket of Advaita Vedanta. Sankara initially took up this task of encompassing all philosophies into Advaita Vedanta. Similarly Vidyananda was the next acharya who encompassed all philosophies into Advaita Vedanta. This doesn't mean that Vidyananda negated other philosophies but just gave them empirical status while giving Advaita Vedanta the ultimate status (as that alone leads to eternal bliss).

Vidyaranya – the great writer

The list of works written by Vidyaranya is huge indeed. But prime among them are the two works of Panchadashi and Jeevan Mukti Viveka. The former explains Vedanta (different aspects of Vedanta) beautifully in 15 chapters (hence called pancha dashi). This work is an introductory cum encyclopedia of Vedanta. First five chapters end with name of viveka prakaranas (discriminating the world from Brahman); second five chapters end with name of deepa prakaranas (illuminating the different aspects of Self); last five chapters end with name of ananda prakarana (showing the bliss arising out of equality of Jeeva and Brahman, Brahman being the substratum of the illusory world).

Though Vidyaranya says that the work of Panchadashi is for initial and intermediate sadhakas, still this isn't an easy work to learn by oneself. This work has lot of logic being used along with discussions about subtle or advanced concepts of Vedanta; add to this that various other philosophies like nyaaya are also mentioned or compared with, this work isn't very easy to learn by oneself even for advanced sadhakas.

Jeevan mukti viveka is a beautiful analysis of the state of a realized master and can also be considered as a commentary on certain concepts of Yoga Vasishtha.

Other than these two works, Vidyaranya also wrote the work of Anubhooti Prakaasha. This is a twenty-chaptered work which is the essence of the Upanishads, in simple terms. The ten major Upanishads are taken up by Vidyaranya and explained. This work, as Vidyaranya mentions, is in order for normal people to understand Vedanta. Put in his humble words, it is just rephrasing of the Upanishadic concepts and words (rather than Vidyaranya's own theories). Vidyaranya also wrote a dipika on the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad taking up the shaakha which wasn't commented upon by Sankara (there are two shaakhas of Brihadaranyaka Upanishad one of which was commented upon by Sankara and the other was commented upon by Vidyaranya).

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is the largest of the major ten Upanishads. Sureshwaracharya wrote the vartika or critical commentary on Sankara's Brihadaranyaka Upanishad bhashya. This vartika is very exhaustive and consists of around 12000 slokas. Learning of such a voluminous work itself is very tough let alone learning and providing one's own understanding of it in a summary format. Vidyaranya wrote the Brihadaranyaka Vartika Saara which is a summary of sureshwaracharya's vartika.

Vidyaranya – the learned master

That Vidyaranya was a learned master is clearly known through various quotations from Laghu Yoga Vasishtha in his works. Vidyaranya quotes Laghu Yoga Vasishtha exhaustively in Panchadashi and Jeevan mukti viveka. Other than learning various philosophies of his time, Vidyaranya also was well versed in vedantic literature before his time and this itself shows that he was a learned master.

Vidyaranya – the humble jnaani

Though many of his works are very tough for even advanced sadhakas to learn, the humble master of Vidyaranya mentions in his works that they are targeting initial and intermediate sadhakas. This itself shows the level of humility of Vidyaranya.

Vidyaranya also wrote the Madhava Sankara Dig Vijaya explaining the glories of Adi Sankara. Many argue and doubt the content of this work as people around Sankara are related to various devatas or deities but that Vidyaranya was able to poetically explain the glory of Sankara while giving enough credit to people around Sankara itself shows his humility. He himself was a great master but still he humbly extols the glory of Sankara.

That Vidyaranya was a jnaani is clearly known through his works itself. A jnaani ever abides in Brahman while performing activities in the world like a normal person but without any craving for results of actions. The actions of a great master, the very presence of a master is beneficial to the entire world. Vidyaranya's very presence was beneficial to the entire world even long after his time in the external world. The works of this great master of Vidyaranya lives even to this day and helps all ardent sadhakas to understand the concepts of Vedanta.

Sadhakas who learn the various works of Vedanta or at least read the works once will find that all their doubts in Vedanta will vanish instantly. Through getting rid of all doubts and gaining clarity of Vedanta, such sadhakas will be able to quickly progress towards the goal of moksha.

May we all offer our prostrations to the great master of Vidyaranya who still lives through his works which are treasures for sadhakas to get rid of all doubts and progress quickly towards moksha through clear knowledge of Vedanta so that we will be able to through learning of his work, get rid of all sorrows and even rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

बहुग्रन्थप्रणेतारं विद्यानाम् च प्रवक्तारम् ।

ज्ञानस्यारण्यरूपं तं विद्यारण्यं नमाम्यहम् ॥

bahugranthapraṇetāraṁ vidyānām ca pravaktāram |
jñānasyāraṇyarupaṁ taṁ vidyāraṇyaṁ namāmyaham ||

One who has written many works and preacher of knowledge, that forest of knowledge
Vidyaranya I prostrate.

Vedanta Pariksha

This month all questions are on Devi.

- 1) Devi is of the nature of
 - a) Shakti
 - b) Siva
 - c) Siva and Shakti
 - d) Sadaasiva
- 2) What is Devi's name as killer of the demon who had head of a buffalo?
 - a) Tripurasundari
 - b) Shakti
 - c) Lalitaambikaa
 - d) Mahishaasura mardini
- 3) Who is the Devi to whom Lalitaa Sahasranaama was instructed?
 - a) Hayagriva
 - b) Chandra
 - c) Siva
 - d) Agastya
- 4) Who was able to defeat Madhu and Kaitabha with help from Devi?
 - a) Vishnu
 - b) Siva
 - c) Brahmaa
 - d) Indra
- 5) Who was Devi's father when Devi was born again to wed Siva, after being destroyed by Siva's third-eye?
 - a) Daksha
 - b) Himavaan
 - c) Brahmaa
 - d) Siva
- 6) How many Vishnu's were created out of Devi's nails?
 - a) 5
 - b) 3
 - c) 10
 - d) 9

- 7) What is the famous commentary on Lalitaa Sahasranaama written by Bhaskara raya?
- a) Soubhagya Bhaskara
 - b) Shyaamalaa dandakam
 - c) Devi bhujangam
 - d) Devi Maahaatmyam
- 8) How many days do we celebrate in a year due to victory over Mahishaasura?
- a) 5
 - b) 9
 - c) 8
 - d) 1
- 9) What all does Tripurasundari hold in her four hands?
- 10) What is Devi's yantra and mantra?

Watch out the next magazine for answers to this quiz. Email your responses to admin@vedantatattva.org and find out how good your scores really are.

Answers to previous months' quiz

1. c Nilakanta
2. b Moon
3. b 2 (Parvathi and Ganga)
4. b Bilva
5. d Hanuman
6. b Sadaasiva
7. c Bhima
8. d Nayanmaars are 63 in number
9. d Daksha
10. a Sundareswarar

Marks for quiz

Aparna - 10

Nikhila - 8

Congrats to all and special thanks as well for showing enthusiasm to attempt the quiz.

Anukramaanika Nirdesham

1. Editorial – a general message
2. Upanishad Vivaranam – verse-by-verse explanation of Upanishad (Mundaka Upanishad)
3. Gitaamritham – verse-by-verse explanation of a chapter of Gita (Bhakti Yoga, 12th chapter)
4. Prakarana Prakaashah – illumination of a prakarana grantha (Dakshinamurthy Ashtakam)
5. Madhuraamritham – a devotional/song work explained verse-by-verse (Hanuman Chalisa)
6. Praadeshikam – detailed explanation of two regional works (Hari Naama Keerthanam and Kanda Shashti Kavacham)
7. Vedanta Paribhasha – an analysis of illusion through pratyaksha pramaana
8. Acharya Smrithi – remembering an acharya through brief life-history and works
9. Vedanta Pariksha – Q & A

1. Comments
2. Suggestions
3. Corrections (word, sloka, content etc.)
4. Would like to see specific content
5. Would like to contribute (through research from websites, don't need to write up the content yourself)

Mail admin@vedantatattva.org.

Feel free to forward this to anyone who might be interested.

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