

Vedanta Darshanam

Salutations to all.

Another month has passed and yet another month has started. Time is something which cannot be controlled by anybody; therefore a person should utilize time to the maximum. Time management is something that is being taught and tried to practice by many people today. Even the layman today needs to know time management for without it, his life would be in turmoil (as he wouldn't be able to manage both his personal as well as his official life). Needless to say majority of people are failures with respect to time management – instead they end up putting a lot of effort into time management only for it to become a failure.

Then isn't there any way to manage time better?

Yes definitely there is. If we look at the lives of great master, we find as to how they are able to manage time perfectly. Though they also have just 24 hours in a day still they are able to find a lot more time for things, when we aren't able to find time for many things.

Taking the example of Adi Sankara, he did what others cannot do at the small age of 32 years. If we just look at his works and his activities, we would totally be surprised as if we had to do the same it would take us many births – to say the truth, we will not even be able to do things that Sankara did because he learnt all the scriptures at the age of 8 before getting trained fully by his Guru at the age of 16.

It may be argued that Sankara maybe even didn't live and therefore his life cannot be taken as an example, then we just have to look at the lives of great masters of today. The sringeri acharya or the kanchi acharya and many others spend hours and hours in service of people – they are able to, very easily, dispel the darkness of ignorance in people and lead them to eternal bliss. Sadgurus like AMMA are able to spend each and every minute of their time in perfect management – therefore providing time for the entire world.

If these masters are able to do, then we also will be able to do. But how? The answer lies in the system of Vedanta. Time, space and causation are the basis of the world and is based on relativity. As long as relativity is there, we will not have any control over things. The

moment we go beyond relativity unto the state of absolute, then we will have total control over not just time but space and causation as well.

Thus the way to manage time is to go beyond time. How can we go beyond time? We can go beyond time by realizing the ultimate reality of Brahman who is beyond time. The only entity that is beyond time and in whom time appears as just an illusion is the non-dual reality of Brahman. If we are to realize Brahman, then we will go beyond time.

Though many think that realization of Brahman is very tough and even impossible, this isn't the case because Brahman is our very nature of Consciousness (that which pulsates inside as I-exist, I-exist). Due to being our very nature, it is readily available for us and we are already Brahman alone (even now). Just we don't realize our very nature of Brahman and therefore have to, through learning and implementation of the system of Vedanta, get rid of ignorance that seemingly veils our nature of Brahman. Once ignorance veil is removed through knowledge of Vedanta, then we will find ourselves constantly shining as blissful Brahman. Then internally we will ever rejoice in bliss while externally performing actions to perfection, as we are able to control time. Here control doesn't mean that we change the rule of time itself but just that we will be able to manage whatever time is available to us in the best possible.

A person who is abiding as Brahman doesn't need to change anything as he knows nothing exists. But like an actor portraying his role in a movie, such a person will perform actions in the world while managing everything in the best possible way. The ultimate goal of life is to ever rejoice in bliss while living in the world itself. This is possible through learning and implementation of the system of Vedanta. Therefore everyone should strive for the same.

May we all strive to learn and implement the system of Vedanta so that we will be able to manage whatever is available to us in the best possible while getting rid of all sorrows and ever rejoicing in bliss here and now itself.

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यः सर्वज्ञः सर्वविद्यस्य ज्ञानमयं तपः ।

तस्मादेतत्ब्रह्म नामरूपमन्नं च जायते ॥९॥

yaḥ sarvajñaḥ sarvavidyasya jñānamayaṁ tapaḥ |
tasmādetatbrahma nāmarūpamannaṁ ca jāyate ||9||

One who is all-knowing both generally and specifically and whose austerity is knowledge; from him are born Brahmaa (creator), name, form and food.

Brahman – source of everything

We have seen previously as to how everything comes out of Brahman. The world that we currently perceive in its totality came from its cause of Brahman of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. Without this cause of Brahman, there cannot be anything existing at all as Brahman is very essence of everything. Any effect is just an illusion in its cause. Thus the world is just an illusion in the cause of Brahman. Therefore Brahman is also said to be the substratum of the world (than merely being a cause). Taking the example of mud and its effect of pot, mud is the cause and substratum of pot. At any point of time pot is just an illusion in the substratum of mud. Really speaking, there is no real entity called pot as whatever exists is mud and mud alone.

In the same way, the entire world is nothing but one Brahman as its cause-substratum. It can be argued as to how our thoughts or our very existence depends upon Brahman, the answer is pretty simple. Without the Consciousness of Brahman, nothing (absolutely nothing) can exist, whether it be the gross external world or subtle thoughts of the mind. It cannot be argued that many existence are there (in individual entities) and we don't have to accept just one existence as the basic of all existences, because it is simpler to accept just one existence. Moreover the scriptures say that whatever exists is pervaded in and out by Brahman. Scriptures also say that whatever appears as if shining or living is due to the light of Consciousness (Brahman). The various lights of the world are existing only because of the light of Consciousness. The moment the light of Consciousness ceases to exist, that very moment all other lights will become non-existent.

Thus it is very clear that Brahman is the source and essence of everything.

Brahman – all-knowing

Knowledge is of two types – first is general knowledge and second is specific knowledge. Taking the example of knowledge of computers, general knowledge is brief and overall knowledge of computers (but not knowing anything in depth about computers). Specific knowledge is knowledge of computers thoroughly (as to how they work, what they are composed of etc.). In today's world we can say that any degree or pg is general knowledge and PhD or research is specific knowledge.

The question of whether Brahman is all-knowing or not has been answered thoroughly in the third sutra of Brahma Sutras. What is use of proving Brahman to be all-knowing? Earlier the disciple of Shaunaka asked the guru to teach him that by knowing which everything becomes known. If Brahman isn't all-knowing then knowledge of Brahman will not lead to knowledge of everything – in such a case, knowledge of Brahman doesn't serve anything at all. Therefore it is essential to prove that Brahman is all-knowing.

Brahman due to being the source and essence of everything is all-knowing. That which is the cause and substratum of the entire world definitely will know the world in complete – both general and specific. There is absolutely nothing that Brahman doesn't know. We can put this into practice through gaining knowledge of Brahman. A knower of Brahman verily becomes Brahman and therefore there is nothing such a person doesn't know.

When we look at the early life of Swami Vivekananda, he had learned almost all the sciences of the world but still he didn't know Brahman and therefore he had no all-knowing-ness. But his master of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa was a knower of Brahman and therefore there was nothing that he didn't know. Yes, Ramakrishna Paramahansa wouldn't have had knowledge of the latest sciences but his knowledge of everything means that he didn't have lack of knowledge. Swami Vivekananda on the other hand had this lack of knowledge – as if something is missing. It is only through knowledge of Brahman by the grace of his guru of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa that Swami Vivekananda was able to become a knower of Brahman. Until then, he was a staunch logician but without all-knowing-ness. Later, he became the fierce and all-knowing Swami Vivekananda. The difference that knowledge of Brahman creates is very big indeed.

Taking a recent example – even few decades ago as well, researches and PhDs were popular. Prof. Balakrishnan Nair who was teaching Vedanta in various colleges wanted to

take up PhD. He had prepared his thesis in order to receive the PhD. But then a strange incident happened which changed his perspective itself. His young son (who was in 20s or so) was on his deathbed. But even at that time, the son gave up his life calling out the name of Lord Siva. Seeing as to how blissful his son gave up his life, Prof. Balakrishnan Nair took a vow that he also wanted to give up life blissfully. For that, he had to remain blissful at all times. Therefore he renounced PhD and everything else – he started abiding constantly in Brahman. Since that time, he has never ever deviated from Brahman. Whether it be his speeches or informal interaction with people, he had always abided in Brahman. And the bliss that reflects in his face itself is a testimony of abidance in Brahman. Though knowing Brahman and all-knowingness didn't give him PhD or anything else, yet it gave him eternal bliss which is what we all are knowingly or unknowingly seeking. On a lighter note, it is said that the naxalite (naxalite like people) students of that time would attend only one class in college and that would be Prof. Balakrishnan Nair's class – as it was simple and appealing to everybody.

We should remember that all-knowingness means knowing everything in its essence which would in turn lead us to a state where there is no lack of knowledge of anything and mind is filled with contentment, peace, satisfaction and bliss. Taking the example of a goldsmith, though the goldsmith doesn't know all the varieties of ornaments that are there still he knows all of them essentially as gold. Since he knows gold completely or thoroughly therefore irrespective of whatever is the ornament that is created newly, he would have knowledge of it essentially. Thus we can say that goldsmith is all-knowing with respect to gold (though externally he wouldn't know about all gold ornaments including any new ones that are created).

Knowledge - Austerity of Brahman

The Upanishad beautifully says that the austerity or we can say activity of Brahman is knowledge alone. This in a way symbolizes a lot of things – first is that Brahman can do nothing but knowing alone. Those who thereby try to know Brahman can achieve nothing but all-knowing alone. Those who come to Brahman for worldly pleasures will be utterly disappointed (as they will not get any worldly pleasures). Second is that for the entire world to exist, there has to be knowledge – without knowledge, no light would fall upon the world and therefore it wouldn't exist at all. Therefore the world which appears out of Brahman is given the light of knowledge from Brahman. Without this light of knowledge or Consciousness falling upon Brahman, there wouldn't be any world at all (though a world

might appear to have been created, it wouldn't exist even empirically unless the light of Consciousness falls upon it). Third is that in order to know Brahman, we have to perform the austerity of knowledge. In order to conquer or win over a musician we have to learn music and sing music to him. Similarly in order to win over Brahman whose austerity is knowledge, we have to gain knowledge. The Upanishad thus indirectly says that there is no alternative to attaining Brahman than knowledge.

Knowledge here is scriptural knowledge alone – Vedanta or the philosophy that is found in the scriptures is the only knowledge source that can lead us to Brahman (as Brahman is not known through any other sources or means). The various gurus or realized masters are living embodiments of the scriptures and their words are resonances of the scriptures – thus their too we find the source of Brahman being scriptures alone.

The Upanishad thus beautifully and strongly says to everybody that without knowledge of Vedanta (or scriptures) there will be no knowledge of Brahman, no all-knowingness and therefore no eternal bliss as well.

Brahmaa – the creator

Brahman who is the source-essence-substratum of everything cannot perform any actions for being complete in all aspects. Therefore there has to be somebody who takes up the activity of creation and ensures that it happens properly. It is this person who is termed in the scriptures as Brahmaa, the creator. In a way we can say that Brahmaa includes Vishnu and Siva (the protector and destroyer). Or we can consider Brahmaa as Hiranyagarbha or the controller of the entire world – without whom the world's creation, protection and destruction or world's empirical existence itself will not be possible.

This Brahmaa can also be called as mahat tattva or mahaanaatma. The collective Ego of the entire world; one who considers the entire world as his own (his creation). Brahmaa doesn't exist without the Consciousness of Brahman who remains as a mere witness and whose presence alone leads to existence of Brahmaa and the entire world.

When we see great masters identifying with the entire world, they are at the state of Brahmaa (they are one with brahmaa). They identify themselves with Brahmaa, the creator and therefore consider the entire world as their own (or the people of the entire world as their own people). This view of everything as mine isn't much different from the view that

everything is Brahman – the former leads to the latter. The former of Big or universal ego is better than individual ego as it will get rid of all dualities (no likes and dislikes are possible when we consider the entire world as ours). Hence Ezhutthacchan prays in Harinaamakeerthanam that if I should have any ego, then let me have the ego that the entire world is mine (so that it doesn't lead to problems for myself or anybody else).

If creator Brahmaa is there, then creation should also exist. But the strangeness of the creation of the world is that it is unlike any other creation which is real (and at the same plane as its cause). This creation of the world is at a lower plane or perspective than its cause. The cause of Brahman is eternal whereas the world created out of Brahman is empirically real and ultimately unreal. The very fact that the world is constantly changing itself is proof of the unreal nature of the world (that which is real always exists and never ceases to exist – that which appears as if existing but doesn't really exist is unreal and never exists).

Creation – names and forms

Though many times we hear this concept of the world being names and forms in Brahman it isn't that very easy to implement in our day to day life. Hence there is no other alternative to gain conviction that to repeatedly listen and learn it. The entire world is just names and forms in Brahman. Any name and form doesn't have any reality at all – it just appears as if real but whatever exists is the entity alone. Taking the example of a laptop – the laptop has a name and a form. So is the name and form real? Definitely no as tomorrow the same laptop maybe named and formed differently. Laptop, in its essence, is real but name and form of the same isn't real at all.

Vedanta uses a lot of analogies to show that names and forms aren't real but merely appearances of reality in the ultimate reality of Brahman. The most common analogies are that of mud and gold.

Mud is made into different products like pot, wall etc. Pot, wall etc. appear to be different entities but are they really different form mud? Definitely no, as they are mud alone. Then what makes them appear as if different? The various names and forms of them. One is shaped like vessel and termed as pot whereas another is shaped like a rectangle and called wall. Remove the names and forms and whatever remains behind will be mud alone. Though names and forms appear to be creating something entirely new, they aren't creating

anything new at all. They are just creating the illusion that something new appears as if real. This illusion is due to lack of knowledge of the essence of mud. The moment we know that all objects made of mud are mud alone, that very moment reality of all objects made of mud vanishes and mud alone remains behind.

Various gold ornaments like gold chain, gold necklace, gold ring etc. are made out of gold alone. They appear to be different from gold but at all times they are gold and gold alone. Just the name and form differs. One is called a chain, another a necklace and yet another a ring. These names and forms are not real; they are also temporary. After some wear and tear, the form diminishes and therefore then we take it to the goldsmith to either mend it or make it into a new ornament (of the latest fashion). Then the goldsmith takes up the ornament and after some days, he returns it back as a fresh ornament. What the goldsmith has done is just change the form of the gold and give a new term. It appears to be an entirely new gold ornament but essentially it has always been gold and gold alone.

It is this truth that all gold ornaments are gold alone that fails to capture the attention of people and therefore they run behind various names and forms constantly. One day they want this ornament and another day they want another ornament. This goes on and on. When one ornament dies, they become sad and when a new ornament is created, they become happy. Thus the illusion of ornaments deludes them constantly into happiness and sorrow. That happiness which is caused from worldly objects (or worldly pleasures) is sorrowful alone as it will eventually lead to sorrow. Therefore Gita says that wise people will not take resort to sensual pleasures.

But lack of knowledge that gold ornaments are mere names and forms in gold, people are constantly lead to sorrow as a result of them. In the same way, people of the world are deluded by names and forms of Brahman and therefore they are constantly lead to sorrow alone at all times.

Is there any way out of the sorrow caused by names and forms?

Yes, the way out is to know their essential nature and remember always that names and forms aren't real (they appear as if real but they aren't real at all).

But can everybody have this knowledge of names and forms being not real?

Yes, everybody can. For this the scriptures again use the analogy of gold. With respect to gold ornaments, there are two perspectives maintained by two sets of people. First is the perspective of knowledge where the gold ornaments are seen as gold alone (and the names and forms of ornaments are considered as not real). Second is the perspective of ignorance wherein the names and forms are considered to be real and the essence of gold is forgotten. The first perspective of knowledge is maintained by the goldsmith and normal people maintain the second perspective of ignorance.

Perspective of ignorance leads to sorrow alone (as there is likes and dislikes with respect to duality of gold ornaments). It is this perspective that majority of people in the world have. Rarely a person can be found who has the perspective of knowledge and therefore is lead to eternal bliss.

With respect to gold ornaments, all users have perspective of ignorance. Therefore they constantly get whirled between happiness and sorrow (when one ornament is created and another is destroyed). But at all times the goldsmith ever remains blissful because he knows that gold alone exists and all ornaments are mere names and forms in gold. This vision of goldsmith is termed as kanakaika mahabuddhi or the vision that everything is gold alone. This similar vision if a person has with respect to the entire world, then it is the vision of everything being Brahman (brahmaika mahabuddhi). Such a person is a realized master who is ever abiding as Brahman. Such a person alone will be able to ever rejoice in bliss.

If a goldsmith is able to remain unaffected with respect to the various names and forms of gold, then a normal person can also remain unaffected with respect to the various names and forms of the entire world. Just the knowledge that the entire world is nothing but names and forms in Brahman will make a person rejoice in bliss. The more and more a person remembers this truth, the more and more blissful such a person will be.

Looking at the various realized masters of the past and the fact that our very nature is that of realized Brahman, it is definitely possible for each and every person to achieve the blissful state of abidance in Brahman. It is our very nature and therefore one or the other day we have to achieve this state (whether we want it or not, whether we like it or not). As long as we don't achieve this state, we will be constantly suffering alone.

Food – sense objects and sensual pleasures

The names and forms leads to food. Food can be considered as the food for eating which nourishes various beings and sustains them. But food can also be considered as the sense objects (names and forms of the world). These sense objects are constant food for the mind which is in ignorance (and fails to dwell upon the non-dual reality of Brahman). Such an ignorant mind will often lead a person to sorrow alone.

Therefore those who desire eternal bliss should ensure that ignorance is totally removed from the mind and the mind doesn't dwell upon sense objects and sensual pleasures. This is easily possible through remembrance of the truth that Brahman alone exists here and duality or differences are just names and forms in Brahman. Through constant practice, this remembrance of Brahman will become very easy and natural. Then such a person will be able to ever rejoice in bliss at all times irrespective of where he is or what he is doing.

May we all strive to remember that the entire world is just an appearance of names and forms in Brahman and Brahman alone exists 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.

Gitaamritham

Bhakti Yoga

We saw in the 8th sloka the Lord summarizing devotion (the path and the goal) as remembrance of the Lord in the mind and intellect – this means constantly thinking about the Lord in the mind while remembering the Lord to be the non-dual reality behind the illusory dual world.

Then in the 9th, 10th and 11th sloka the Lord provided alternatives to constantly remember the Lord. It should be remembered that alternatives are only to be used when the original or direct way is not possible for us to implement. Definitely any sadhaka will be easily able to remember the lord who alone exists here; if such a sadhaka isn't able to remember the Lord, then there should be learning of the scriptures along with surrender unto the Lord (prayers unto the Lord).

The final alternative that the Lord provided was renunciation of the fruits of all actions (in the 11th sloka). In order to show that renunciation of the fruit of all actions is indeed great, the Lord praises it in the next sloka.

Sloka 12 – Greatness of renunciation of the fruit of all actions

श्रेयो हि ज्ञानमभ्यासाज्ज्ञानाद्ध्यानं विशिष्यते ।

ध्यानात्कर्मफलत्यागं त्यागाच्छान्तिमनन्तरम् ॥१२॥

śreyo hi jñānamabhyāsājñānāddhyānaṁ viśiṣyate |
dhyānātkarmaphalatyaḡaṁ tyāgācchāntimanantaram ||12||

12. Better than abhyaasa or repetition or practice is knowledge; better than knowledge is meditation; better than meditation is renunciation of fruit of all actions; due to renunciation, a person subsequently experiences peace.

Actions – inevitable

Many people think that actions can be completely avoided in the world. This is impossible even for those who renounce all actions and take up sanyaasa as such sanyaasins also are supposed to perform certain actions (they also cannot avoid actions). This world that we are living in is karmabhoomi or world of actions – therefore actions are inevitable in this world. Whether a person likes or not, he will be performing actions constantly. When not

performing actions externally, he will be performing actions internally (in the mind). At no point of time, can a person avoid actions. The Lord says that everybody is helplessly made to do actions based on their latent tendencies created or generated over many births. It is foolish therefore to think that one can avoid actions completely.

Then what can be done about actions?

The attitude behind actions can be changed. If the attitude is changed, then though the action will not change still the reaction to the action or its fruit will change. It is this attitude change when implemented rightly is called as karma yoga. Thus from karma to karma yoga a person goes through changing of the attitude. In order to change the attitude, we need to understand the triputi that is involved in karma or action.

Action cannot be performed without a doer. The doer performs an action constantly seeking a fruit. Action therefore leads to a fruit (appropriate to the action performed and taking into consideration many other factors that doesn't just involve the doer). The triputi of karma includes the doer, action and fruit of action. These three are inter-linked or inter-dependent. As long as one is there, the other two also will be there. Since action can never be eliminated therefore all three will be present. But if we are able to get rid of doer-ship then we will not be affected by the action or the result of the action. Else we as the doer will be affected by the way action is performed and by the fruit of action as well. If action goes in the way that we expect it to go, we will be happy. If it doesn't go in the way we expect, we will be sad. Similarly if we get the result we expect, we will be happy. If we get the result that we don't expect (and that we are averted to), then we will be sad. Even when we are happy, it is short-lived as this happiness based on the fruit of action is temporary because the fruit of action is sensual pleasure; since sensual pleasure is from sense object which itself is constantly changing, therefore sensual pleasure also is temporary. Thus happiness deriving from action is temporary – though this temporary might be a few days or few years or few births, still it is temporary and therefore thoughts or worries about it vanishing will always be there. Therefore a wise person will not take resort to the fruits of actions (either expecting the fruit of action or gaining happiness from the fruit of action). Instead such a wise person will strive to get rid of doer-ship.

As explained, when doer-ship vanishes enjoyer-ship also vanishes. As long as I am the doer I will become the enjoyer of both happiness and sorrow. The moment I cease to be a doer, I

will cease to be the enjoyer as well. That very moment thus I will become a mere witness to the action happening and the fruit of action as well.

The right attitude behind action is when we cease to be the doer and enjoyer of action. With this attitude, action goes on but we will not be affected by the action. Though there are many ways to implement this right attitude, the Lord mentions two of them in the 9th chapter. First is through knowledge wherein one knows oneself to be the witness Consciousness that isn't performing any action and actions are being performed by the Ego or the sense organs or the mind etc. Second is through offering unto the Lord – the action as well as the result of action is offered unto the Lord. Whatever is offered unto the Lord doesn't affect us and the result of action being the Lord's prasaada or blessing also will not affect us. As AMMA says, in this case the person considers good result as Ishwara's grace and bad result as Ishwara's will – either way it is Ishwara's blessing and therefore he is unaffected by both the action as well as the result of the action.

Renouncing fruit of all actions

But majority of people will not even be able to implement this, therefore an easier way to get rid of all fruits of actions is required. The easiest or simplest way is to renounce all actions through remembering fruits of actions to be temporary and sorrowful. Though this also might be tough to implement, still a person should strive to renounce all fruits of actions. That this is possible is known through the fact that we are able to renounce the fruits of some of the actions. For example, we attend an interview but we know we haven't performed well. Therefore we renounce the fruit of the action as we know that we might not clear the interview. Also in most of the cases, we are able to renounce the fruit of actions of other people around us – we remain a mere witness to action performed by our friend; if we were performing then we will be affected but since it is our friend who is performing therefore we are unaffected.

Since we are able to, sometimes, remain unaffected by the fruits of actions therefore we can definitely implement renunciation of fruits of all actions at all times. Though this might not be possible overnight, still it will definitely be possible through practice. As the age-old saying goes, practice makes man perfect. And there isn't anything that can be achieved through practice. Therefore if we are able to slowly practice renunciation of all fruits of actions then we will definitely be able to achieve it completely at some point of time or the other.

The Lord beautifully praises renunciation of all fruits of actions when compared with other sadhanas.

Abhyaasa or constant repetition (which is associated with viveka or discrimination) is good but better than that is knowledge. Knowledge is always better than mere repetition. But better than mere theoretical knowledge is dhyana or meditation. Better than even meditation is renunciation of fruits of actions; because renunciation instantly leads to peace.

Just doing something once or twice doesn't lead to perfection; perfection is achieved as a result constantly repeating something over and over again. Hence the age-old saying of "practice makes man perfect". Here "man" means actions of man (not man per se). Thus whatever we want to implement in life, we have to try to do it over and over again.

Even learning of a simple sloka is possible only through constant repetition. Those whose memory is very sharp and therefore they remember through just listening or learning once, even for such people repetition is there – it is just that the repetition here has just one cycle rather than many cycles that is required for other people. If we want to implement devotion, then we have to strive to implement it over and over again (practice or repetition of implementation of devotion will eventually make us true devotees).

But better than mere repetition is knowledge. Wherever knowledge is there, implementation automatically follows. If we are able to learn a sloka with its meaning, then remembrance of the sloka automatically will happen. Therefore knowledge is better or greater than repetition (mere repetition without knowledge will not last for long).

But better than knowledge is dhyana or meditation or remaining focused. Theoretical knowledge may or may not lead to implementation. But if there is focus on theoretical knowledge, then implementation will automatically happen. Thus better or greater than mere theoretical knowledge is implementation through focus or dhyana.

Better than dhyana or remaining focused on any action is renunciation of the fruits of actions. It is when we are attached to the fruits of actions that our perspective towards action becomes tainted. With a tainted vision, we will not be able to perform action perfectly (or in the best possible way). When we are to advise a person about smoking, we will be

able to do it if we don't care about the person or the result of this advise. But let's say that this smoking person is our own son – then our advise will not be proper as we are affected by the smoking person as well as by the result of the action of advise.

When we have to point out the mistakes of a third person, we will be able to do it easily (as our relationship with the person doesn't matter). But if this third person is our own boss, then we will be scared and we will think a lot as to whether to point out the mistakes and how to point out the mistakes; because the person is our boss, therefore we will get affected by the action or the result of the action of pointing out the mistakes will affect us (our salary might get reduced, our promotion might be hindered and we might even lose our job).

Thus ultimately renunciation of the fruits of all actions will lead to concentration or focus (dhyaana), knowledge of what is to be done and perfection as a result of proper repetition of the action. We can therefore say that renunciation of the fruit of all actions includes dhyaana, jnaana and abhyaasa – therefore it is the greatest or the best thing to do for a sadhaka.

As simple as it appears, renunciation of the fruits of all actions isn't that simple. Renunciation of the fruit of a single action in our day-to-day life itself is tough so what to talk about renunciation of the fruit of all actions. Thus only through repeated practice, knowledge and dhyaana or focus, will we be able to achieve complete renunciation.

How do we know we have achieved complete renunciation?

The result of complete renunciation is mentioned by the Lord as shaanti or peace. As long peace ensues in the life of a person, there is complete renunciation. If there is no peace, then there is no renunciation though the person himself might claim to be maintaining renunciation. True renunciation will always be associated with peace in the mind.

The mind is away from peace if there is any influence of action and result of action on the mind. When actions are renounced then neither action nor result of action will affect the person – therefore such a person will have peace of mind (peace of mind is very tough indeed to achieve in life).

What about a person who has peace for a short period of time?

Peace is possible only when the mind is calm. A person who implements renunciation not at all times but partially (at some points of time) will experience peace temporarily or momentarily (instead of experiencing it at all times). Only when this renunciation is complete and at all times, will the person ever abide in peace.

Peace – sought out by all

Since majority of people are deluded into thinking that what is being sought out in the entire world is worldly pleasures alone therefore it has to be proven that peace is what is being sought by everybody. Peace, happiness, bliss, satisfaction and contentment are all synonyms. They mean just the state where a person ever rejoices in bliss – there is no tension, no sorrow and no problems.

This state of peace is what is directly or indirectly, knowingly or unknowingly sought out by all. Some accept it whereas others don't accept it. Taking a simple example, everybody wants a job and to earn a lot of money. Why so much money is required? In order to buy expensive dresses, cars and many other things. Why all these are required? So that we are able to live peacefully and blissfully. Thus what is being sought is peace or bliss alone.

Though the abode of happiness seems to be the external world of objects and people, the real abode of happiness is one's own very nature of Self – Lord who is the very basis of the entire world (cause-substratum of the world). Knowingly or unknowingly therefore everybody is seeking peace or eternal bliss alone.

As long as one doesn't realize what is being sought out is peace alone, peace will not be attained. That which is sought out will be achieved if there is enough effort towards achieving the goal. But those who don't even know that the goal being sought out is peace alone will never attain peace (as they are running here and there thinking the goal to be the external world when actually the goal isn't the external world).

Sankara's words on this sloka

Before getting into Sankara's words on this sloka, it is important to get a perspective of this sloka. As per the sloka, greater than everything is renunciation of the fruits of all actions. This renunciation of fruits of actions is greater than even knowledge.

Does this mean that everybody should stop seeking knowledge and seek to implement complete renunciation of action?

Definitely no as Krishna says in the 4th chapter of Gita clearly that all actions end in knowledge and that the fire of knowledge burns the fire-wood of actions into ashes. The Lord goes on to say that there is nothing purer than knowledge as a person who is established in knowledge will, in due course of time, achieve the goal of moksha automatically (without anything else required).

Thus Sankara says that whatever is said through this sloka (continuation of the 9th, 10th and 11th sloka) is for those who are constantly focused on karma or actions. Such people cannot focus on knowledge. As Sankara beautifully brings out in the fourth sutra of Brahma Sutra, karma and jnaana are opposite to each other. Wherever one is there, other cannot be there. Karma is kartru tantra or depending upon the doer (the doer can decide whether to do action or not as well as how to do action, in the prescribed way or a different way) whereas jnaana is vastu tantra or depending on the entity alone (the knower has no control over knowledge as to whether to know or not). Taking a simple example of perception which is knowledge, if eyes of a person falls upon an object (or comes in contact with the object) then the object is seen. The person doesn't have any option as to whether to see the object or not.

Wherever focus is on karma, there cannot be implementation of knowledge. Hence the scriptures preach first purity of mind through nishkaama karma to get rid of association with karma. As long as association with karma exists (through identification with doer or attachment to the action or seeking of fruit of the action), there will not be focus on knowledge. Since majority of people are focused on action (and want to perform actions constantly and cannot stay away from action) therefore the Lord prescribes here renunciation of the fruits of all actions. For a person who is focused on knowledge or one who is gaining knowledge and trying to implement knowledge, there is no question of action at all. Since action is based on triputi and is known as an illusion in the beginning itself by a person following the path of knowledge, therefore there is no question of renunciation of the fruit of actions (as actions themselves don't exist).

Thus the knowledge filled devotional way to eternal bliss or moksha has already been explained by the Lord in the 8th sloka through the statement of "fix your mind and intellect

unto me and you will be fixed on me, there is no doubt in this". The rest 4 slokas from the 9th till the 12th are for those who aren't able to implement knowledge.

As explained, majority of people are constantly focused on action alone. Even when they approach spiritual masters for guidance in the spiritual path, they expect some instruction with respect to action. Hence Ramana Maharshi is very tough for majority of people to follow. Maharshi would say people to just sit idle or find out the real I behind the illusory I that constantly identifies and associates with the entire world. Since this is not possible therefore Maharshi would appeal only to few people.

There are cases where many people are so much averted to certain gurus because they don't instruct them to do anything (any action in particular). All mahatmas or gurus clearly propound knowledge alone to be gained and implemented but in order for those sadhakas who are unable to implement knowledge, they propound selfless actions as well. But these sadhakas, foolish that they are, just keep on doing selfless actions considering it as the goal of life itself. Selfless actions purify the mind and thereby set the stage for knowledge to be imparted (and implemented). They are just the means to gaining knowledge (or gaining eligibility for knowledge).

Here the Lord thus through praising renunciation of fruits of all actions just tells those who are unable to implement knowledge to first gain purity of mind. Through renunciation they will get themselves alienated from actions – they will become a mere witness to all actions instead of getting attached to actions (and the results of actions). Since their mind is pure, therefore they will be able to eventually implement knowledge.

Then why was it mentioned earlier that the lord gives alternatives to implement remembrance?

Yes, these are alternatives to remembering the Lord but constantly remembering the Lord is only possible after gaining knowledge. These alternatives will automatically set the stage for knowledge.

Or we can understand this as just remembrance of the Lord along with these alternatives. A person who remembers the Lord while renouncing fruits of action is implementing both karma and jnaana. Karma initially purifies the mind and thereafter knowledge leads to

eternal bliss – here it isn't mere remembrance of the Lord but remembrance of the Lord as the non-dual reality behind the entire world.

Without knowledge, moksha is impossible even if we are able to find millions of alternatives. Since bondage is as a result of forgetting one's own very nature of Ishwara – that Ishwara who alone pervades the entire world of names and forms – therefore liberation is only through knowledge. Even as light alone removes darkness, similarly knowledge alone can remove ignorance. Action due to being born out of desires which themselves are born out of ignorance cannot remove ignorance – therefore the way to get rid of ignorance is through knowledge alone.

As we have discussed previously, knowledge and devotion aren't different – they are one and the same only. Hence the Lord says that the greatest of all devotees is a jnaani who ever abides as Brahman and remembers the entire world to be pervaded by Ishwara. Such a jnaani isn't different from Ishwara but one with Ishwara. The goal or pinnacle of bhakti is wherein a bhakta merges unto Ishwara – a jnaani merges unto Ishwara as he knows that Ishwara alone exists and abides in Ishwara at all times.

Therefore only foolish people will fight over whether knowledge is great or devotion is great – wise people will just laugh at this as they know that both are one and the same alone. As to karma, it is just a pre-requisite to knowledge and can never replace knowledge.

Nishkaama karma or selfless action that leads to purification of the mind is essential because majority of people are bound by karma so much that implementation of devotion or knowledge is impossible for them. Though they may gain knowledge, it will only lead to harm as they don't have purity of mind – knowledge gained by them is like milk poured into a dirty vessel; the milk will not be useful and will cause harm alone.

The mind is the foundation upon which the house of knowledge has to be established. Therefore for those who are focused on karma, nishkaama karma and dhyanaadi saadhanas are prescribed so that they gain purity and concentration of mind. Such a mind which is pure and concentrated when gaining knowledge will be able to easily and instantly implement knowledge. Such sadhakas will be through constantly implementation of knowledge be able to ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

Once again, it should not be forgotten that praising of renunciation of fruits of all actions is only for those who are focused on karma and therefore cannot implement knowledge. Those who are able to gain and implement knowledge will be able to directly remember the Lord; karma automatically is properly implemented in the attitude of selflessness and renunciation of its fruits. Therefore for such a jnaana sadhaka, there is no need of focusing on karma.

How can we know if we have to do nishkaama karma or not?

If we are able to easily remember that everything is Brahman alone, then we don't have to perform nishkaama karma as we are implementing knowledge. This remembrance of Brahman or Ishwara will instantly lead to bliss. Therefore if one is able to rejoice in bliss while remembering that Ishwara alone exists, then one is implementing knowledge and therefore there is no need of nishkaama karma.

But for those who are implementing knowledge but aren't able to rejoice in bliss (knowledge isn't leading to the fruit of eternal bliss), nishkaama karma is essential as they haven't got purity of mind; therefore in order for knowledge to be effective or fruitful, they have to perform nishkaama karma.

For ardent sadhakas, merely offering all actions unto the Lord is enough to renounce the fruits of all actions. Though this might seem to be very tough, it is very easy if we do all actions a pooja unto the Lord. Devotion or love to the Lord will easily make us not only remember the Lord but perform all actions as a pooja to the Lord.

When actions are performed as a pooja unto the Lord who is remembered as the non-dual reality behind the world, then attitude of pooja will purify the mind and remembrance of Lord will lead to moksha instantly. Such sadhakas therefore through living in the world itself will be able to get rid of all sorrows and will be able to ever rejoice in bliss.

It shouldn't be thought that a realized master will not perform activities in the world. A realized master also performs activities in the world like any other worldly person. The difference is only in the way actions are performed. A realized master performs actions as an offering unto the Lord and therefore isn't affected by the action or the fruits of the actions. On the other hand, a worldly performs actions while getting attached to the action and expecting fruits in return. Therefore such a worldly person gets affected by the result of action – being taken into both happiness and sorrow.

Slight change of attitude itself leads a normal person to being a jnaani and ever rejoicing in bliss here and now itself. The ultimate goal of life is moksha of the nature of complete cessation of sorrow and ever rejoicing in bliss. This goal is what is being sought out by each and every person in the world irrespective of who he is, what he is doing and where he is. Therefore all sadhakas should strive to achieve this goal through devotion of constantly remembering the Lord as the non-dual reality behind the world. Initially itself such sadhakas will be able to rejoice in bliss and eventually through constant contemplation of the lord, they will be able to ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

For those who think it is tough to constantly contemplate on the Lord, the Lord himself says in the 9th chapter that performance of this yoga of remembrance of the Lord is very easy indeed to implement. What is required is just pure devotion unto the Lord. Where devotion or love is there, remembrance is very easy irrespective of however busy we are. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa used to tell about the servant woman working in a rich man's house – this woman would take care of the entire house of the rich man and even call the rich man's son as "my dear" etc. But all the while the woman's mind is on her own son at home. And once her work is over in this rich man's house, she will run to her own son. While working as well (though she would be busy in work) she will be constantly thinking about her own son because of love for the son. If this woman is able to remember her son at home at all times, then we also will be easily able to remember the Lord.

Love for Ishwara can be developed easily when we remember that the Lord is the non-dual reality behind the world and what we are seeking, eternal bliss, is present in the Lord alone and achieved through realization of the Lord alone. This knowledge will strengthen our love for Ishwara and therefore will make us constantly remember Ishwara in our mind (eventually).

Prof. Balakrishnan Nair's interpretation

In his Malayalam commentary, Sivaaravindam mahaabhashyam, Balakrishnan Nair interprets this sloka differently than Sankara. He says that greater than abhyaasa is jnaana. Why is jnaana greater? Because as a result of jnaana, dhyaana ensues; due to dhyaana, karma phala tyaga or renunciation of actions ensues and from this ensues peace.

Balakrishnan Nair says that the Lord anyway praises knowledge as the peak in the 8th sloka itself, therefore saying that greater than jnaana is dhyaana is wrong. Therefore this is the right interpretation.

Grammatically, meaning-wise and contextually, Balakrishnan Nair's interpretation also appears as apt (though for this article, we have taken up the interpretation of Sankara alone).

May we all strive to remember the Lord at all times as pervading the entire world (after gaining purity of mind through nishkaama karma or action performed as an offering unto Ishwara) so that through realizing the Lord we will be able to get rid of all sorrows and will be able to ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

Prakarana Prakaashah

Dakshinamurthy Ashtakam - 8 – Maya, deluder in waking and dream states

विश्वं पश्यति कार्यकारणतया स्वस्वामिसंबन्धतः

शिष्याचार्यतया तथैव पितृपुत्राद्यात्मना भेदतः ।

स्वप्ने जाग्रति वा य एष पुरुषो मायापरिभ्रामितः

तस्मै श्रीगुरुमूर्तये नम इदं श्रीदक्षिणामूर्तये ॥८॥

viśvaṁ paśyati kāryakāraṇatayā svasvāmisambandhataḥ
 śiṣyācāryatayā tathaiva pitṛputrādyātmanā bhedataḥ।
 svapne jāgrati vā ya eṣa puruṣo māyāparibhrāmitaḥ
 tasmai śrīgurumūrtaye nama idaṁ śrīdakṣiṇāmūrtaye॥8॥

He who as a result of Maya appears to be deluded in the states of waking and dream; thereby bringing into existence the differences that are part of the world, of cause-effect, of owner-owned, of teacher-disciple and of father-son; unto that Guru of Dakshinamurthy, my prostrations

Triputi – the trio

Everything that we find in the world is filled with triputi or the trio of subject, object and action that binds the subject to the object. Taking the example of any action, we have the doer who performs the action; the object or fruit seeking which the doer performs the action; and the action in itself. Everything in the world is bound by these three (and the relation between these three). For the example of meditation, the doer is the meditator, the fruit is concentration of the mind and the action itself is meditation. In brief we can say that duality in the form of relativity exists in the entire world.

It is very easy to understand as to why relativity has to be removed at all costs; because relativity causes bondage and bondage in turn causes sorrow alone. Wherever we find dependency between people or objects, we can definitely say that one or the other time it will lead to sorrow. Though dependency between a husband and a wife might not always lead to sorrow, it will definitely lead to sorrow at some point or the other.

Today we find the world in total chaos because there is relativity and dependency everywhere. The ruler of a country depends on the people and the people depend on the

ruler – in this mutual dependency how can there ever be any bliss? In ancient times, rulers like Janaka and others were independent and blissful (as they have knowledge of their very nature of Brahman); therefore the people of such countries also were blissful. In cases where rulers weren't independent, at least there were ministers or gurus (advisers) who were independent. Even one such independent person will be able to lead an entire set of people towards the state of independence and bliss.

The perfect example for this is the Ramana Ashram where even today the presence of Ramana Maharshi takes the entire ashram and whoever visits the ashram to the state of bliss instantly. One just needs to sit in the meditation room where Ramana used to daily sit and there is no need of meditating as the mind instantly comes down. Though Maharshi himself says that such meditation is temporary control of the mind and real destruction of the mind is through oneness alone, but still at least people will be attracted to implement meditation in their day-to-day lives.

When this is compared with even the greatest of families or companies (that boast of employee satisfaction) we can say that they co-exist because everybody needs each other. In such inter-dependent places, just one incident is enough to trigger a big problem that will erupt the entire family itself.

Prof. Balakrishnan Nair once spoke about a husband and wife who were called religious and were living under the same roof but couldn't see each other at all. The husband was a devotee of Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa whereas the wife was a devotee of Siva. Thus one wanted the photo of Devi in the house whereas the other wanted the photo of Siva. Therefore even during food, there would be only fights. Seemingly living in a happy situation they were in total enmity with each other.

As AMMA says when such fighting people give birth to children who have to see this fight happening daily, then their mind will be affected and once they grow up they become mentally depressed in one or the other way. Therefore it is essential for everybody to become independent in order to ensure that there is bliss and happiness in the entire world.

What would happen if everybody becomes independent, as there wouldn't be any dependent person?

This is an invalid argument raised by those who don't want moksha and therefore will say "I don't want moksha; if everybody becomes mukta then what will happen" – nothing will happen in such a case. The entire world will be blissful. Isn't this that individuals, countries or nations and the entire world is struggling to achieve (the state where everybody is blissful)? Therefore all should strive to achieve true independence and eternal blissful living.

How can we achieve independence amidst the triputi?

We should go beyond the triputi in order to achieve independence. This is easily possible through depending upon the absolute behind the relativity. Relativity cannot exist without an absolute. The absolute that is behind the triputi is the non-dual reality of Brahman of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. As long as a person depends on Brahman, he is moving from dependence to independence. Though it might be tough initially to remember Brahman and depend on Brahman alone amidst all the entities of the world, it is very easily possible if we have the strong desire for independence. Strong desire is such that one wants to achieve independence this moment itself – similar to the desire of a person to get out of his burning house.

We all are every moment burning in the inside in sorrows and sufferings. Therefore in order to get rid of this burning we have to depend on the absolute blissful entity of Brahman. The scriptures clearly tell us as to how to find out Brahman amidst the duality of the world (through the analysis of the three states that we daily experience).

Before we enter into the analysis of the three states, here Sankara beautifully also says that all dualities or relations are as a result of Maya alone and aren't real. This is irrespective of whatever is the relation that we find in the world.

Relation – due to Maya and unreal

Relation of cause and effect is found everywhere we look or observe. Whatever we see is an effect and it requires a cause for it to have come into existence and for it to exist as well. Though this relation means that only cause really exists as effect is an illusion of names and forms in the cause, we have many causes and effects in the world. But the relationship of cause and effect itself is an illusion – as explained, effect is just an illusion in the cause and cause alone exists. Though there can be many causes, such many causes are also effects of

the ultimate cause of Brahman – that cause-substratum from which the world has come into existence. If not for the cause of Brahman, the world wouldn't have come into existence and wouldn't exist as well. If Consciousness doesn't exist, there is no world at all. If the world isn't there, still Consciousness exists (as we experience in the deep sleep state). This clearly proves that Consciousness is independent and exists always whereas the world is dependent on Consciousness and therefore is just an illusion in Consciousness.

When it comes to objects and people of the world, there is always an owner attributed. This ownership can be in the form of possessing objects or owning people (controlling people and their activities). Such a relationship also is an illusion alone because objects and people themselves are temporary (constantly changing). One moment we possess a very big house on the shore of a beach and the very next moment a hurricane comes making the entire house vanish. Thus any relationship with possessions of object or people is just an illusion and whatever exists is pure Existence or Consciousness which is the basis of all objects and people. Everybody exist because of the substratum of Existence and the light of Consciousness falling upon them (if there is no existence, they cannot exist; and if the light of Consciousness doesn't fall upon them then they don't exist at all as existence is based on light falling upon it).

It can be asked as to how a person exists without a father and therefore the relationship of father or mother is essential for existence.

What we are talking about is only temporary or relative existence. An individual isn't just the son of a father and mother – he is multi-faceted and therefore his existence isn't just limited to being the son. This itself means or shows that such a relationship between an individual and his parents isn't eternal (as we generally think it to be). As per the scriptures, an individual or the Self (jeeva) goes on in the cycle of birth and death many times before realizing this illusion and getting out of it through knowledge. Therefore it is foolish to say that I am the son or daughter of my parents. Many people become so indebted to their parents that they let their lives depend on parents itself – this is wrong. Ultimately the goal of life is moksha. For this goal of moksha if parents are the obstructions then we have to set aside parents. A true sadhaka seeking moksha will be able to set aside parents and move towards the goal of moksha, like prahlada was able to do.

Once a person went to Ramana Maharshi and started crying about his son dying. To this, Maharshi didn't reply for a while and then said about his dream to another devotee nearby.

Maharshi said that he dreamt yesterday that he had a son and the son died. This small statement of Maharshi is so deep as it is telling the crying person that this entire world is a dream – how many parents and sons we have had in the past? How many more we will have in the future? So what is the point of crying for temporary people of the world? Only fools will do so. Wise people realizing that this entire world is just an illusion of names and forms in the substratum of Brahman (just a dream) will be able to get rid of all relationships and depend on Brahman alone.

What about the relationship of guru and shishya?

☺ Though it is very tough to apprehend for a shishya or a bhakta, even guru and Ishwara are just illusions as they are also relative. Ultimately whatever exists is one Brahman alone – this Brahman by being one without a second doesn't accept any differences. Therefore there is neither guru nor shishya – only Brahman exists.

Then what about statements of mahatmas that they are indebted to Guru and that one cannot say I am Guru but can say I am Ishwara (emphasizing the need of a Guru and the importance of a Guru)?

Such statements are from the empirical plane – where the world is accepted as temporarily existing. In order to progress from the illusion of the world towards the goal of moksha, a person definitely needs a guru. But is this Guru eternally real? Definitely no. The guru exists only at the empirical plane and therefore in the empirical plane we cannot say that I am the Guru or I am equal with the Guru – as I and Guru are different. But such a sadhaka can say, even at the empirical plane, that I am God as God is the essence behind the entire world.

The importance of the guru is that guru is ever abiding as Brahman – therefore unlike a father who is upset with son gets arrested, the guru will be ever blissful internally irrespective of whether shishya attains moksha or not.

Taking the example of dream, we will understand easily as to that the relationship of guru and shishya also is an illusion alone – but it is an illusion that will take us beyond the illusion itself. While dreaming, we find a guru in the dream. The individual I in dream can say that I am the dreamer who is all-pervasive in dream but can I say that I am the Guru (as the guru and I are different in the dream)? The guru in dream is like a dream lion. When

we suddenly face a dream lion, we immediately wake up to realize that there is no real dream lion.

The illusory dream lion was able to wake us up from dream; similarly the illusory guru and knowledge will wake us up from the long dream of the external world. Thus rather than depending on anything else in the world we have to depend on the guru and knowledge. If there is no guru for a person, he just has to learn the scriptures and accept Ishwara (Sadasiva or Krishna) as the guru.

There are many who constantly stick on to their own Guru – this is also wrong as the Guru is as illusory as the entire world. The Guru can be revered and respected but what is to be implemented is the advice of the guru. A true guru cannot advise anything other than remembrance of the non-dual reality of Brahman as pervading the entire world of names and forms. This is because a true Guru is ever abiding as Brahman – therefore such a Guru knows nothing but Brahman and therefore his advises also will be related directly or indirectly to non-dual Brahman alone.

Ultimately all relations whether they bind us or liberate us are just illusions in the non-dual reality of Brahman who alone is absolute (behind all relativity). This truth has to be always remembered – though it is tough to live this truth that no dependency is real and will not help us, still it will eventually lead us to implementation if we constantly remember that we have to depend only on Brahman, nothing else will protect us eternally.

Through practice it will be possible to easily depend on Brahman at all times. This dependency is only internal and externally we can depend on the entire world. This is like an actor portraying all emotions externally in a movie while internally ever remaining calm and unaffected as his real nature.

Brahman is of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss but how can we realize such a Brahman?

Realization of Brahman is only possible through knowledge as found in the scriptures as scriptures are the only source of independent absolute Brahman (that isn't objectified anywhere). This Brahman is realized as our very nature of Consciousness – the I that pulsates constantly as I-exist, I-exist.

It isn't very easy to find out this Consciousness I as generally the I that we all know and use is associated and identified with the entire world of objects and people. Therefore the scriptures use the three states to analyze the true unchanging I behind the changing I.

Analysis of the three states

We all experience three states in a day. First is the waking state where the entire gross world is experienced and sensual pleasures as a result of contact of sense objects with the world are enjoyed. Though this appears as the most real state, it isn't the real state because the entire world is constantly changing. That which is changing isn't real but just appears to be real. And the state which depends on the changing world isn't real.

We have the dream state to clearly us that the waking state is not real. When we are sleeping, we dream as a result of our latent tendencies formed due to the experiences in the waking state (in this as well as in previous births). In the dream state, the mind creates an entire new world. In this world, everything exists and an entire lifetime is experienced (sometimes even more). We may even dream that we are sleeping and dreaming. Though the entire dream state appears very real, it isn't real at all. The moment we wake up, we realize this truth that the dream world wasn't real. Though while experiencing the dream world appeared real, after waking up we realized that it isn't real at all. There never was any dream world and there never can be any dream world also. As much as we may try, there cannot be dream world existing.

The waking world is also similar to the dream world only. Everything appears very real when we are experiencing it now. But logic and scriptures prove that the waking world isn't real but just temporarily appearing to be existing. At all times the waking world is non-existent in the substratum of Brahman (which alone exists). Even as the dream world is an illusion in the dreamer, similarly the entire waking world is an illusion in the waking person of Brahman.

The very fact that both these worlds are negated in each other shows that they aren't real. The dream world isn't present in the waking state and is negated; the waking world isn't present and negated in the dream state. Thus it is clear that both these worlds are just illusions.

Ok, but is there anything that can exist without these worlds as we constantly experience ourselves with world and objects alone?

The third state of deep sleep gives us the answer to this question. When we sleep, we experience two states – first is the state of dream where the mind creates an entire dream world and second is the state where there is no world at all. This dreamless deep sleep state or sushupti proves to us that there can be a state where no world exists, but I do exist. And this I when the entire world ceases to exist is blissful as we experience bliss in the deep sleep state.

Can't this blissful state be our true state of moksha?

No, as it is temporary and there is a veil of ignorance which appears as "I didn't know what happened" after waking up. To put it briefly, the deep sleep state has ignorance in it as we go into the state with ignorance. The deep sleep state without ignorance is called moksha. Ignorance means that the entire world appearing to be real. Once we wake up, we all are in ignorance as we think the world to be real. If we gain the conviction that there is no world existing at all times, then we are in the state of moksha – that deep sleep state where there is no ignorance and which isn't a state at all.

The deep sleep state is temporary as it ensues due to merging of everything unto Brahman (ignorance still exists as merging alone happened of all objects, not permanent destruction). When everything resurfaces, there is sorrow again as a result of ignorance. While in the waking state itself, if we are able to assert that there is no world at all and Brahman alone exists, then we are realized then and there.

The deep sleep state just shows us that there is the state of moksha where the entire world vanishes and only blissful Brahman exists. Here vanishing doesn't mean that the world will cease to exist as the world doesn't even exist now. The world appears as existing and this appearance will not be considered as real – this is vanishing where the world is known to be unreal though the world might still be experienced. This is like water in desert appearing as existing to a person who knows that there is no water – though he sees water, still he knows that there is no water and therefore he ever rejoices in bliss.

A realized person therefore lives in the world while experiencing the entire world and performing actions in the world but internally he ever rejoices in bliss as he knows that there is no world at all and whatever exists is one Brahman alone.

Another way to look at the three states is to find out the changeless entity amidst the changing three states. Though each state is changing, the I who experiences each state is the same. This I isn't the ego identified with the body etc. in the waking state (or with the waking world) as I exists even in the dream state where waking world isn't present. Though there is a changing I in each of the three states, I that binds these three states is a mere witness of these three states. This changeless I is the very basis of the three changing states. It is this I that is the light of Consciousness. This I therefore is Brahman alone.

The moment a person is able to find out this changeless I behind the three states, behind the entire world then that very moment the person has realized Brahman. Thereafter such a person will ever rejoice in bliss.

What creates the entire world, the changing I etc.?

All of these are created by Maya, the illusory power of Brahman. Really speaking, there is no Maya at all but Brahman alone exists. But in order to explain whatever is present to an initial sadhaka, it is said that Maya creates everything. This Maya is like the power of a magician that creates the magic. Ultimately magic itself doesn't so what about the power of magic? The entire world doesn't exist and therefore ultimately nothing exists other than Brahman.

If only Brahman exists as my nature, then why I don't experience it now?

Sankara beautifully says that I am now deluded by Maya in the three states. I, as a result of the delusion of Maya, think that I am the changing I in the three states. This delusion is only because I don't know the truth that I am changeless Brahman.

The Lord says that it is very tough to conquer Maya but those who take refuge in Ishwara easily conquer Maya. Those who remember that Brahman alone exists will be able to overcome Maya very easily (as there is no Maya at all for them). But those who forget this Brahman, they will be deluded by Maya.

Even when being deluded, I am Brahman alone. The dreamer who appears as existing all experiences in the dream state is really speaking unaffected dreamer. He appears to be deluded in the dream state. Only when he wakes up from the dream state, he realizes that he was never deluded and he was ever unaffected (everything was just an illusion in me).

Similarly the I that appears as if deluded in the three states is Brahman alone. As a result of knowledge, this I realizes its very nature of Brahman and thereby ends all sorrows and sufferings.

It is the dream lion of the guru of Dakshinamurthy (who is Brahman alone) who takes us from the state of ignorance to the state of knowledge, from the state of bondage to the state of liberation and from the state of delusion to the state of blissful existence. Sankara thus offers his prostrations unto this supreme guru of Dakshinamurthy who is our own very Self that appears as if deluded and into relations but always is blissful Brahman alone.

With this we have come to the end of Dakshinamurthy astakam though there are two more slokas in which Sankara gives a way of sadhana and the phala sruthi of the work (which we will see in the next editions of the magazines).

May Dakshinamurthy as Brahman or Self, that I which appears as if deluded but is ever unaffected, guide us through knowledge towards realization of our own very Self 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 - 8

प्रभु चरित्र सुनिबे को रसिया ।

राम लखन सीत मन बसिया ॥८॥

prabhu caritra sunibe ko rasiyā |
rāma lakhana sīta mana basiyā ||8||

You always are delighted in listening to the glories of Rama; and Rama, Lakshmana and Sita are always present in your heart.

Bhakti or devotion

Among the various terms and concepts that have been misunderstood and interpreted wrongly in today's world, bhakti is one that will stand at the top. This is because today we consider being religious as devotion. If there is a person who calls out to the Lord daily once through prayers unto the Lord or through visiting the temple daily once, then such a person is considered a devotee (or filled with devotion). Many a times people have asked as to how others who are very devotional are facing so many problems in life.

The first sign of devotion is the presence of the Lord in the devotee's life. A devotee's life is filled in and out with the Lord's thought alone. Wherever he is, whatever he is doing and whatever happens in life, the Lord will be an integral part of all. The second sign of devotion is the presence of bliss in the person's life. This is because wherever the Lord is present, there will be bliss alone as the Lord is blissful in nature. The very thought of the Lord will make a person rejoice in bliss. AMMA narrates this short incident to illustrate this – once the gopis were all around the Lord. Suddenly lightning and thunder ensued. Immediately all the gopis were scared. But since the Lord was present, they all clung close to the Lord. The Lord then asked them a question – as to what they would do when they face trouble in life. One gopi answered that she would pray to the Lord to get rid of the trouble. Another gopi said that she would run to the Lord wherever he is. Yet another gopi said that she would pray to the Lord to give her strength to face and overcome the trouble. Radha was silent among the gopis. The Lord lovingly looked at Radha and asked her as to what she would do. Radha replied that she would remember the Lord. The Lord waited for a few seconds and asked her what she would then. To this Radha replied that nothing – she would just remember the

Lord. The Lord asked her as to whether she would just remember the Lord, that's it. To this Radha replied that merely remembering the Lord alone is enough as the Lord is blissful in nature. Therefore mere remembrance of the Lord will get rid of all sorrows and troubles. Though externally trouble may still be present, still it will not cause any sorrow at all. The person who remembers the Lord will be able to rejoice in bliss that very moment itself. It is for this reason that Kunti devi prayed the Lord to give her sorrow so that she would remember the Lord and thereby rejoice in bliss.

The third sign of devotion is that such a person will be able to bestow bliss unto others. Those who come in contact with a devotee will be able to even rejoice in bliss. Thus those who came into contact with chaitanya mahaprabhu were able to rejoice in bliss. In Mahabharata we find as to how by just having contact with the Lord, everybody would be blissful.

This bliss in the person of the Lord is so strong that devilish tendencies will run away from the place. Thus those who are devilish in nature, like Duryodhana, were not able to be in the presence of the Lord for a long period of time.

It can be argued that historically they might have been true devotees whose very presence gave bliss to all but we cannot find such people today and therefore there is no proof for real devotion. Such argument is wrong as we have masters like AMMA and many others in whose presence we can experience bliss.

Though we think that bliss can be attained from many things in the world, it can only be attained from the non-dual reality of Lord or Brahman. Those who have realized their very nature of Lord or Brahman alone are blissful at all times. Hence in their presence alone we can get bliss. Thus we have even ministers and others approaching masters like AMMA in order to get rid of their problems in life and rejoicing in bliss.

True devotion is when life becomes blissful. When life is blissful, all problems instantly cease to be problems. Though externally they may still exist, internally they don't affect the person even a little. Swami Rama Teertha shows as to how sometimes when we face bigger problems in life, even achievements or gains seem nothing – a person in an office is visited by his boss who says that he got promoted (he was waiting for his promotion since many years). But instead of leading him to bliss, it doesn't create any emotion in him at all. The

reason is he received a call few minutes ago saying that his house is on fire. He has a wife and a son; his entire life is based on the son whom he dearly loves. Hearing the news of his house being on fire, even the achievement of promotion is nothing at all.

Similarly when we lose our wallet, it is nothing at all compared to how we escaped from a burning train (instead of dying, we only lost our wallet). Thus there are times when problems exist in life but they are no longer problems or issues.

For a true devotee, nothing exists other than the blissful Lord. The entire world of names and forms is pervaded in and out by the Lord. The entire world is just the Lord alone – therefore such a devotee ever rejoices in bliss at all times.

Many times we become sad when we face problems and then cry out to the Lord as to why we are facing problems. But during these times we should think as to how much problems other people are facing in life. When we look at the lives of pandavas or meera bhai or sita devi, all our problems are nothing at all. This perspective will help a devotee to consider all problems as non-problems.

But a true devotee doesn't even see problem as he knows that only the blissful Lord exists at all times. Many think that devotion isn't associated with knowledge – wherever knowledge is there, devotion vanishes. Knowledge is often considered as dry whereas devotion is filled with emotions. Again our definition of devotion itself is wrong when we consider knowledge as dry and we think that we can do away with knowledge. Many think that they are emotional in nature, therefore the path of devotion suits them more than knowledge. The scriptures clearly tell that knowledge cannot be avoided for any person who wants the ultimate goal of life as moksha or ever rejoicing in bliss. Though we may try to avoid knowledge through the other paths, those aren't paths to moksha which don't have knowledge in it.

The knowledge that only the non-dual reality of Lord exists is the direct path to moksha. Remembrance of this knowledge will instantly lead a sadhaka to moksha here and now itself. Narada thus says that there is no lack of knowledge of the glory of the Lord in devotion. The glory of the Lord is that the Lord pervades the entire world as its cause-substratum. Without this knowledge, devotion isn't pure or true. Such impure or untrue

devotion will lead to happiness as long as our desires are fulfilled by the Lord. The moment our desires aren't fulfilled by the Lord that very moment devotion vanishes.

Hence the Lord says that the true devotee is a jnani who is indifferent from the Lord. Such a true devotee has the ultimate knowledge of the Lord pervading the entire world. True knowledge is true devotion and only fools will consider both as different; and then fight amongst themselves or others as to which one to choose. Wise people knowing that remembrance of the Lord along with knowledge of the glory of the Lord is the direct way to devotion will strive for it at all times.

Bhagavatham talks about nine types of devotion or nine types of actions that will lead to devotion of the Lord or nine ways or attitudes in which people worship the Lord with devotion. One of the way is listening to the glories of the Lord.

What is the glory of the Lord?

Though many consider just the stories of the Lord as his glory, the Lord's glory is beyond just mere stories of the puranas, Even real incidents in our lives aren't alone the glory of the Lord. The Lord's glory is pervasion of the entire world. Nature of the Lord is true glory of the Lord.

The world that we currently perceive is temporary and therefore sorrowful. Such a temporary or ever-changing world cannot exist of its own. Therefore it needs to have a cause from which it has come. This cause of the temporary world has to be a permanent or eternal entity (if not we will go from one cause to another until we reach a permanent entity). This cause of the world is termed in the scriptures as Brahman or Ishwara. Ishwara is the creator of the Lord and non-dual in nature. There is nothing apart from the Lord at all times – differences or duality cannot exist in the Lord as everything has come from the one cause of the Lord.

Any effect is just an illusion of names and forms in its cause. The effect of pot is just an illusion of name and form in the cause of mud. Similarly the effect of this entire world is just an illusion of names and forms in the Lord. The Lord is of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. The Lord is existence in nature as he is permanent or eternal. Such an eternal entity requires a light for its existence – since eternal existence requires an eternal light therefore this eternal light is ever part of the entity. The only light that shines

everything including the Sun, Moon etc. is the light of Consciousness. The Lord through experiencing himself and illuminate the entire illusory world is of the nature of Consciousness. That which is eternal in nature is also infinite and therefore blissful. That which is limited is sorrowful in nature and that which is unlimited is blissful in nature. The Lord thus is of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss.

The entire world is the Lord's glory. Though we often talk about glory of the Lord as various miraculous activities or deeds performed by the Lord in his various incarnations, the ultimate glory of the Lord is his very nature. It is this Lord that appears as the entire world of names and forms. Knowing this alone is the means to devotion. A person who listens to the all the glories of the Lord along with remembrance of the Lord as the very cause-substratum of the world alone will attain true devotion of moksha.

Needless to say, merely listening to the stories of the Lord will not lead to moksha. Instead it will only take us from sorrow to another. Initially when the Lord fulfills our desires, we will be very happy. The moment the Lord stops fulfilling our desires, that very moment our devotion will vanish. Then there will no longer be listening to the glories of the Lord or even remembrance of the Lord.

Unless we remember true devotion to be listening to the glories of the Lord as the Lord being the entire world itself, we will not be lead to eternal bliss. A devotee through constant listening of the glories of the Lord will be able to develop love and devotion unto the Lord. The more and more such a devotee listens to the glories of the Lord, the more and more blissful such a devotee will be. A true devotee (peak of devotion) is one who always delights in remembrance of the glories of the Lord. Singing the names of the Lord or merely listening to stories about the Lord itself will make such a devotee delight or rejoice in bliss.

Narada says that a true devotee speaks about the Lord's glories, thinks about the Lord and listens to the Lord's glories. In short, such a devotee ever revels and rejoices in contemplation of the Lord.

Tulasidas used to give discourses on Ramayana. Once he was giving lectures and he found a little old man coming for the discourse. This old man would come to the discourse well before time (first person to come), would leave after all others leave and would listen with face full of attention and devotion. Looking at the face of the old man itself made Tulasidas

rejoice in bliss. Tulasidas wanted to find out about this old man. Therefore one day after the discourse was over, he followed this old man. But all of a sudden, the old man went into a forest and couldn't be found. The next day the old man came to the discourse and before he could leave after the discourse, Tulasidas caught up with him and asked him as to who he was. To this, the old man replied that he was Hanuman and he couldn't resist listening to the stories of the Lord. Such was the devotional state of Hanuman that though he was ever contemplating on the Lord, still he ever delighted in listening to the glories of the Lord.

How can a person easily or directly attain the state of true devotion?

There is no short-cut to devotion than constant remembrance of the Lord. This constant remembrance or contemplation of the Lord is termed as worshipping of the Lord. Instead of worshipping the Lord in a temple or in a pooja room, a true devotee worships the Lord in his mind. Thus at all times, the devotee's mind or heart is filled with the Lord.

What is the Lord without his aides of Lakshmana and Sita? Therefore we find here Tulasidas saying that Hanuman's heart was ever filled with Rama, Lakshmana and Sita.

A person, whoever he be, whose mind or heart is filled with the Lord will be ever blissful at all times. Therefore such a person will always be delighted in being around with thoughts of the Lord. His actions, thoughts, words and all sense organs will filled with the Lord at all times. Thus the only thing we can say about devotee is that his presence will emanate the bliss of the Lord at all times. Even if such a person is a liquor shop, the liquor shop will be pervaded with the blissful Lord alone. We all know the story of the Saivite saint Kannappa who offered daily meat to Siva (in the form of a siva linga) – this devotee was considered a great devotee of the Lord by the Lord himself. The priest who daily worshipped the linga was surprised at the atrocious behavior of Kannappa. But the Lord wanted to prove to the priest that Kannappa was a true devotee. Therefore he asked the priest to visit the time when Kannappa would offer meat to the Lord. The priest was hiding when Kannappa after fetching meat from hunting gave it to the Lord. At that time, the siva linga's right eye started bleeding. Seeing this, Kannappa took a knife and taking his own eye gave it to the Lord (placed it on the linga). Then the left eye of the linga started bleeding. Kannappa needed to know the position of the eye of the linga therefore placing his feet (the thumb of his feet) on the eye position, Kannappa started taking out his other eye in order to place it on the linga. Immediately the Lord appeared in front of Kannappa blessing him and

providing him with both his eyes. Seeing this, the priest understood the greatness of Kannappa and his own limitations (his own wrong devotion).

In this story we find as to how even adharmic activities are dharmic along when they are performed with devotion (total surrender unto the Lord). There is no duality whatsoever when a person is immersed with thoughts of the Lord. The Lord as the non-dual reality behind the world negates everything from the mind. A person who remembers the Lord in his full glory as the non-dual reality behind the world is a true devotee and therefore irrespective of wherever he is and whatever he is doing, he will ever be blissful alone.

Bliss is synonymous with peace, satisfaction, contentment and happiness. Ramana Maharshi thus used to say that peace is the sole criterion of a mahatma or realized master or a true devotee. Such a devotee may be well learned in the scriptures or rituals or songs – but he will definitely be ever contemplating on the Lord at all times and therefore ever blissful at all times as well.

What is the significance of Lakshmana and Sita?

Rama denotes the Self or the Lord present in the heart of all beings (of the nature of Consciousness that pulsates constantly as I-exist. I-exist). Lakshmana denotes the Ego which constantly identifies and associates with everything. If not controlled by Rama, then it will create havoc. When this Ego is focused on Rama or Self, then it will not rise high – instead it will just do normal activities while offering everything unto Rama. But the moment focus shifts from the Self, Ego causes trouble like when Lakshmana cut the nose of shoorpanaka and therefore caused the entire war in Ramayana. Everybody should strive to keep their ego in check through remaining focused on Rama or Self. When ego is kept in check, it will be able to accomplish every miraculous feats (due to the grace of the Lord). Sita denotes Maya or that which doesn't really exist but appears as existing – we can also say that Sita denotes the mind (which is a manifestation of Maya and cause of all sorrows). The mind constantly is focused on duality and therefore is lead to sorrow alone (temporary happiness being sorrowful alone in nature). Sita though was devoted to Rama was also attracted to the external world. The mind though might focus on the Lord can also easily get attracted to the world or worldly pleasures. Through practice and control, the mind should never be allowed to get distracted from the Lord and unto the external world. Then like Sita got attracted to the external deer, the mind will be focused on the world leading to its own

problems. The moment Sita was separated from the Lord, there was problem only for everyone externally.

If ego and mind are focused away from the Lord then why worship it in the heart (Hanuman worships them in the heart)?

Lakshmana though got angry at times was still focused on Rama alone. Sita got attracted to the world and taken away by Ravana (or asuric tendencies). But still she was able to remain focused on the Lord through contemplation of the Lord – hence she stayed in the ashoka vana or the forest where there is no sorrow at all (forest is the entire world). Therefore Lakshmana and Sita are also worshipped by Hanuman.

The ego and the mind are required in order to survive in the world. But when they are focused on the non-dual reality of Lord, then they will lead a person to true devotion and make the person ever rejoice in bliss. Though it might appear tough to control the mind and ego and direct everything unto the Lord, it is definitely possible through practice and knowledge that the non-dual reality of Lord alone is real. If the monkey of Hanuman could install Rama, Lakshmana and Sita in his heart and thereby could ever rejoice in bliss, then we smart human beings can also do. What is required is just remembrance of the Lord to be the way out of all sorrows (and to the ultimate goal of life as ever rejoicing in bliss).

May we all like Hanuman strive to develop true devotion unto the Lord through constant remembrance of the glories of the Lord and installing the Lord in our hearts or minds 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.

Praadeshikam - I

Hari Naama Keerthanam – 8

Natthaaril maaninimanaalan puraanapurushan
 Bhaktavalsalan anantaadihiinanithi
 Cittatilacyuta kalippantalittu
 Vilayaadidukenmanasi Naaraayanaaya nama

One who is dear to the mother of flowers, Lakshmi Devi, oldest purushan (first existing entity – old and still the same),

One who has motherly/fatherly love towards devotees, one without beginning and end,

O Acyuta, establish a playground in my mind/heart and play,

O Narayana, unto you my prostrations

Vishnu – Brahman

Since time immemorial there have been constant fights between Siva bhaktas and Vishnu bhaktas over which deity is the greatest. This fight even continues to today where staunch Siva followers and staunch Vishnu followers cannot even look into the eyes of others. Though there are still sub-sects within each of these, still it is these two sects that constantly fight with each other at all times. There are people who will not even utter the name of Siva or enter into a temple of Siva. This is where improper knowledge of the scriptures has lead people into. Instead of having proper knowledge about who Ishwara is, people fight over various names and forms in the world.

This is not something that is just limited to deities; religions fight with each other; countries fight with each other; political parties fight with each other; wherever we find people in the world, we find gang-ism in the name of one or the other thing; this has lead people into constantly fighting with one another. So much have we progressed externally that we can achieve anything by just sitting at home and not even moving out of the house. Yet, the fight in the name of duality still continues in its full strength. Today companies are fighting in the name of patents or things that they sort of own. We have giants ranging from Google to Microsoft to Apple to Samsung fighting with each other – daily going to the court for one or the other case.

It is a pity that though our rich culture provides us with the knowledge to see everything as just one Ishwara, still we fight in the name of one or the other thing. Instead of co-existing peacefully, we just fight with whatever we don't have. Instead of being blissful with whatever we already possess, we fight in the name of that which we don't possess. Hence it is said that only when we lose something we will know its value.

Today we all are knowingly or unknowingly missing just one thing – bliss. Though everything is there in life, there is no bliss whatsoever. In order to achieve bliss which is unlimited and eternal, we have to get rid of all dualities. Though the scriptures do talk about how duality came into existence, they also say that duality doesn't exist at all really. Duality is just an illusion of names and forms in the non-dual reality of Ishwara or Brahman.

Ishwara or Brahman of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss alone exists at all times. The differences that are apparent in the world are merely names and forms in Ishwara even as various ornaments of gold are mere names and forms. Though a normal person might get deluded by the ornaments, the goldsmith is never deluded as he knows that gold alone exists as the substratum of the various ornaments. Therefore when one ornament is lost and another is created, he still remains the same – unaffected and blissful. Similarly a person who remembers the entire world to be one Ishwara will be able to ever rejoice in bliss. Failure to have this vision of oneness or non-duality in the mind will lead us to sorrow alone.

Ok, Ishwara or Brahman alone is present – but what about Vishnu and Siva? Who are they? Everything that is present is Brahman alone – the difference is just in name and form. Siva has a name of Siva and a particular form; similarly Vishnu has a name of Vishnu and a particular form. At all times whatever exists is Brahman alone.

The very word of Siva means that which is shining or luminous. Though there are many luminous entities in the world like the Sun, Moon, Fire, Stars etc. still it is Consciousness that is the basis of all lights. Consciousness is the light of all lights as without Consciousness, no other light will exist. All other lights gain their existence or luminosity from Consciousness alone.

How do we know Consciousness is the light of all lights?

Even in a dark room where there is no light at all, there is light of one's own existence. Nobody doubts one's own existence even in such a state. This itself means that "I" or "existence" or Consciousness is self-luminous. Without this Consciousness, no other light can shine. What is the point of having the Sun or the Moon or any other light when there is no Consciousness? Therefore it is very clear that Consciousness is the light of all lights. Siva thus is the light of all lights or Brahman alone of the nature of Consciousness.

The word of Vishnu is explained by Sankaracharya in his Vishnu Sahasranama bhashya as that which is all-pervasive. We find the various names of Narayana, Vishnu etc. equated to all-pervasiveness. Narayana Sukta says that whatever exists in the world is pervaded in and out by Narayana. That which pervades everything is the essence of everything. The essence of the entire world is its cause which is also the substratum in which the effect of names and forms is seen. This cause-substratum is termed in the scriptures as Brahman or Ishwara. Thus Vishnu is also Brahman or Ishwara alone.

We have many Upanishad terming the ultimate state of Vishnu or Siva (even calling Ishwara by these names). Though it is a minor Upanishad still Skandopanishad says that Siva is filled with Vishnu and Vishnu is filled with Siva – this means that only one entity exists and both Siva and Vishnu are the same Brahman alone. Katha Upanishad goes one step further to say that one should strive to see that there is no duality at all here and one who sees duality as if existing will go from death to death (means such a person will constantly suffer).

Vishnu's nature

Vishnu is Brahman but here ezhutthacchan beautifully describes Vishnu as the husband or partner of Lakshmi who is the mother of flowers. Flowers attract everybody equally. Lovers gift their love flowers because automatically flowers bring in joy and happiness to everybody. Whether it is for a party or for death, we take flowers. Even for worshipping in temples, we take flowers. What is so special about flowers? Flowers have natural beauty in them because they have blossomed. Blossoming implies real growing up through broadening of one's vision. Today we all are narrow-minded into thinking about ourselves or our own perspectives. We have to blossom like a flower – getting rid of our egos, boundaries and limited-vision through seeing one Ishwara. Lakshmi is the mother of flowers and Vishnu is dear to Lakshmi – this means that if we have to attain Vishnu then we have to blossom ourselves like flowers (then we are the son of Lakshmi and therefore easily Vishnu

will be protecting us at all times). Thus very beautifully Ezhutthacchan says that we have to get rid of our egos or individualities through vision of oneness (one Ishwara or Brahman pervading the entire world). There is no other alternative to realization of Ishwara.

Now what happens when we broaden our vision (get rid of duality)?

When we broaden our vision, we will realize that Ishwara who is present since time immemorial. Generally we run hither and thither in search of Ishwara but we never find him. But he alone is always present – the problem is with our faulty vision. The moment we get rid of our faulty vision, we will be able to see Ishwara as ever-present. As AMMA says, Ishwara and his grace is ever-present like the rays of Sun but if we close the doors and windows of our hearts we will not be able to perceive the rays of Sun. Ishwara alone is present from time immemorial but in order to realize this Ishwara we have to get rid of dual vision and see everything as one Ishwara. Then Ishwara will be perceived as purana purshan – one who has been there since time immemorial.

The entire world is constantly changing along with our individualities. But it is simple logic that such changes are impossible without a changeless entity which is the substratum of the changes. This changeless substratum of the changing world is Ishwara or Brahman. Without this Brahman, nothing can and will ever exist.

Today in the name of science we are progressing to great heights but everything is only external – the more we progress externally, the more we are moving away from Ishwara. The more we move away from Ishwara, the more sorrowful we will be because Ishwara alone is real (everything else is just an illusion of names and forms in Ishwara).

It is very tough indeed to overcome the passion of the external world and therefore even the wise learned pundit also will be distracted and deluded by the world.

Then how do we overcome the passion of the world?

We can overcome passion towards the world by seeking the non-dual reality of Ishwara. Ishwara is called acyuta or one without any decay. Therefore anything and everything applied to him or associated to him also will become decay-less. Therefore in order to get rid of the passion of the world we just have to develop passion for Ishwara. Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa therefore used to say that we cannot remove desires but just make them purer or better ones – instead of having desires for oneself, we have to have desire for

Ishwara. Thereby we will find that slowly our minds get purified and without our knowledge itself, we will find ourselves getting rid of passion of the world and becoming devoted towards Ishwara.

Taking the simple example of Totakacharya who was a shishya of Sankara. Totakacharya was supposed to be the weakest among the shishyas of Sankara but Sankara would never start his classes without Totaka coming. The other shishyas were jealous and envious of Totakacharya. Sankara understood this and therefore played his leela. One day Totaka was late, as usual, and Sankara didn't start his class. But to everybody's surprise, Totaka upon arriving recited a set of slokas in the tough Totaka metre. Everybody was surprised at the spontaneous outburst of Totaka which showed them that this shishya was indeed worthy of waiting by the guru for the classes. Here we can interpret the story in different ways but it shows the compassion of Sankara working through the shishya of Totaka.

The lame climbs the mountain and a dumb person becomes a great speaker/composer (like Kalidas) by the very grace of Ishwara. If we are able to develop devotion and surrender unto Ishwara, then all other passions will drop off and Ishwara himself will guide us in the path towards moksha.

The ocean of samsara is filled with crocodiles of kaama, krodha etc. (attachment, aversion etc.). Therefore in order to cross over this samsara without any problems, we have to apply the turmeric powder of bhakti or devotion. There isn't anything that cannot be achieved through devotion of Ishwara. Our puranas have many stories as to how devotion has led to many impossible feats. The great Arjuna is a best example of what can happen if the Lord is with us – the same Arjuna who was unable to even defend Krishna's wives while facing petty thieves in the forest, that same Arjuna was the greatest archer and the Sun in the battlefield of Mahabharatha. The reason for this was that the Lord was present with Arjuna.

Just before Mahabharatha war, both Duryodhana and Arjuna go to seek Krishna's help in the war. Since Duryodhana was standing at the head of Krishna while he was sleeping and Arjuna was standing at his feet, therefore Krishna woke up and saw Arjuna first. Therefore Krishna gave two options and Arjuna to choose one first (and later Duryodhana to choose). Krishna offered himself on one side and his entire army on the other side – but Krishna wouldn't yield any weapon. Arjuna didn't even think twice and chose Krishna whereas

Duryodhana was very happy with the army of Krishna. On returning back, Shakuni scolded Duryodhana as he had missed the opportunity to have Krishna on his side. Vidura says in Bhagavad Gita that wherever Krishna and Arjuna are there, victory will always be there only.

Wherever even the thought of Ishwara is present, there will be eternal bliss alone. Thus even meera bhai was saved from drinking poison as the Lord was present with her at all times.

How can we get the presence of the Lord at all times (which would ensure that we will be able to achieve the goal of moksha here and now itself)?

Ezhutthacchan beautifully gives the way out as filling our mind with thoughts about the Lord.

Mind – Lord’s playground

One of the best portrayal or nature of the Lord can be known from baala Krishna (child Krishna). Ishwara is very tough to get control of as he is a very naughty child who needs full attention from us (instead of partial attention). It was only when Draupadi called out to Krishna with both her hands that Krishna helped her, from far itself. AMMA tells this beautiful story to show as to what would happen if we don’t give full attention to Ishwara. Once Yashoda was feeding baala Krishna who was very hungry. But she had kept some milk on the stove and therefore she wanted to turn it off. Therefore she left hungry Krishna there and went to the kitchen. To her luck, she was in time to save the milk on the stove. When she returned back to baala Krishna, she found that all the ghee in the house was spilled. Baala Krishna was very hungry and therefore he spilled all the ghee in the house. In order to protect or save just few glasses of milk, Yashoda lost all the ghee in the house.

From this we find as to how important it is to fill our mind with Ishwara at all times rather than partially thinking about Ishwara. Partial devotion might work with various people of the world but it will never work with Ishwara who is all-knowing. Ishwara doesn’t need anything at all from us but through our complete surrender we are letting Ishwara into our minds.

Our minds are today filled with a lot of things that there is barely space for Ishwara to enter into it. Today Ishwara’s worship happens just once a week or once a day – there are routines when Ishwara can enter into our mind. The rest of the time, our minds are filled

with thoughts about the world which will eventually lead us to sorrow alone. But not realizing this and not wanting to realize this, we don't let Ishwara into our minds. Here Ezhutthacchan beautifully asks Ishwara to put a playground in his mind – this way Ishwara will always be playing in our mind.

How can Ishwara play in our mind?

Ishwara plays through his memories – through stories, slokas, glories and whatever way possible Ishwara plays in our mind. Here this just means that Ishwara's thoughts pervade the mind. Generally we only let those thoughts into our mind that lead to happiness. What is happy than thoughts about playing Ishwara?

True devotion is when love for Ishwara is generated so much that the mind constantly wants to dwell upon Ishwara. There is no taste at all for worldly pleasures or objects or people. Instead, the mind wants to always immerse itself in thoughts of Ishwara. This doesn't mean that worldly activities will not continue as the person will perform worldly activities like any worldly person does – but the mind will constantly be dwelling upon Ishwara. This is like a servant who is working in a rich man's house – while working also, her mind will always be dwelling upon her own son at home. She will want to finish her job as soon as possible and go to her son in her own house. Similarly a lover always thinks about his love, irrespective of wherever he is or whatever he is doing. Similarly a bhakta is always thinking about Ishwara irrespective of where he is or what he is doing.

Though we can say that such a bhakta will be listening to the glories of the Lord, singing the glories of the Lord and ever performing activities in the name of the Lord, still anything and everything will be pervaded or filled by the Lord. The only thing we can say about a bhakta is that his very life will be pervaded by Ishwara. Any person who comes in contact with such a bhakta will be able to feel Ishwara's presence through the bliss and peace emanating from the presence of the bhakta.

Mere samsarga or association with the bhakta will make a person a bhakta. Just by seeing the bhakta, people's sorrows will instantly vanish. If this is the state of external people when they interact with true bhaktas, what to speak about the mental state of the bhakta? Hence Ezhutthacchan says here that the mind will be the playground of Ishwara. Wherever Ishwara is present, there will be bliss. But this bliss is associated with plays of the Lord – thus it will make each and every moment not just cheerful but blissful.

As Sankara aptly puts it in Bhaja Govindam, such a bhakta ever rejoices in bliss at all times. Ezhutthacchan through his prayers is telling each of us to make our minds a playground of the Lord. This is possible through simply letting Ishwara into our minds – slowly filling Ishwara into our lives and slowly increasing devotion and surrender unto Ishwara. Merely thinking about Ishwara in our mind along with remembrance of the truth that Ishwara is the non-dual reality behind the entire world (pervading the entire world) will make our minds more and more attracted towards Ishwara.

A person used to regularly visit Ramana Maharshi in Tiruvannamalai. He would sit there for sometime but wouldn't ask any questions or talk at all. Once Maharshi gave reply to some other person and this person said that he doesn't believe in what Maharshi says nor he understands it as well. The nearby person asked him as to why then he is coming. The person didn't reply. The next day, the same person was there regularly sitting in front of Maharshi. This time he was questioned again strongly as to why he is coming – then he replied that he cannot help but come. He didn't know as to why he is regularly coming but he was just being pulled to the place by Maharshi.

This is the power of Ishwara – a person who remembers Ishwara at all times and one whose mind is ever contemplating on Ishwara is like a magnet attracting people at all times. People from all walks of life will be attracted though some may choose to stay with the attraction whereas others may ignore it and stay away from it.

Those who have at least a bit of surrender will be able to easily get attracted to Ishwara. Not just this but they also will be purified of all faults. Through the very thought of Ishwara in their mind, they will be taken away from the passions of the world. No longer caring about the world, they will not experience sorrow from the temporary-sorrowful world. Instead they will become more and more blissful in contemplation of the Lord. Irrespective of whatever happens in the world, they will be ever rejoicing in bliss at all times.

The ultimate goal of life is to get rid of sorrows and ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself. This is only possible through constant contemplation of Ishwara as the non-dual reality behind the illusory world of names and forms. There is absolutely no other way to eternal bliss than this. As the Lord says in Gita, implementation of remembrance of the Lord at all times is very easy indeed. It just requires us to develop a little bit of devotion towards Ishwara. Remembering the world to be temporary-sorrowful and Ishwara to be blissful will

easily make us implement constant contemplation of Ishwara as we all are knowingly or unknowingly seeking the ultimate goal of life as getting rid of sorrow and ever rejoicing in bliss.

Whether it is sravana or manana or nidhidhyaasana or the nine types of bhakti, it doesn't matter as long we are able to let Ishwara reside permanently in our mind. Since Ishwara's presence itself will lead us to bliss, therefore there will not be any wise person who will not let Ishwara out of his mind once Ishwara has been established there. Though initially it might appear to be tough to remember Ishwara in our mind, through constant practice it is will be possible easily. If the unlearned gopis of Vrindavan were able to remember the Lord at all times, then definitely we will be able to remember the Lord much easily. Just the desire for eternal bliss and devotion for the Lord has to be cultivated and nourished as much as possible.

May we all strive to increase our devotion unto the Lord so that through constant contemplation of the Lord we will be able to get rid of all sorrows and we will be able to ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

Praadeshikam - II

Kanda Shashti Kavacham - 7

Shanmugan neeyum thaniyoliovvum

Kundaliyaam Siva Guhan dinam varuga

Come Oh Lord, Six headed one, who with your only brilliant light

Who is the kundalini, who is Auspicious, who is Guha, come always

God's grace is the most important factor required to lead a happy life. It is not that God's grace is not present now and God has to shower His grace. God's grace is always present, all we have to do is to realize that God's grace is ever present. The only way to know the presence of God is by remembering God at all points of time. It is only when we don't remember God, we don't realize God's grace and hence we would be in need of God's grace. Thus, the poet calls Lord Muruga mentioning various qualities of his, to protect from all evils and dangers.

In the first two lines above, the poet calls Lord Muruga for protection mentioning Vedantic import. Scriptures mention very clearly at various places that Brahman alone exists one without the second. It is of the nature of Consciousness which illumines everything, and it cannot be illumined by anything and that Brahman is non-dual, one without a second. The poet calls Lord Muruga as the only brilliant light. 'Only' here refers to Brahman being non-dual and one without a second and brilliant light refers to the Conscious nature of Brahman which illumines everything else.

Poet then speaks about Lord Muruga as Kundalini. Kundalini is the power that is dormant for a seeker which when activated and brought up through spiritual sadhana, the kundalini shakti moves through various divine points called Chakras. Tantric philosophy speaks about 7 chakras in our body, Sahasrara being the 7th at the top of the head. When kundalini reaches the Sahasrara it is symbolically equated to Jiva realizing his nature of Self. The Sahasrara is considered as the abode of Siva and Kundalini is considered as the Shakti and so the culmination point is the Sahasrara where Shakti merges with Siva. The other perspective is the rising of Kundalini from the dormant state to Saharara is considered as the journey of a seeker from the state of ignorance to Realization of Lord. Kundalini becoming active from dormant and rising up symbolically suggests that Jiva who was ignorant of the real nature of the Self, starting his spiritual journey towards the path of

Moksha which is the state of the Lord. The various chakras represent various aspects of the world which will come to jiva on his path to Moksha. The jiva would get lot of worldly benefits being in the spiritual path. Each chakra is at different levels and hence kundalini advances from one chakra to another, the level of experiences also differs. Likewise, the chakra can be equated to different levels of accomplishments in the world.

These benefits can be viewed from different perspective. It shows that treading spiritual path may produce lot of worldly benefits and hence if a person does spiritual sadhana keeping these worldly benefits in mind and does it sincerely, he would accomplish those worldly benefits. Even if the sadhaka does not really desire for worldly benefits, the worldly benefits would come to him. A sadhaka should understand that the worldly benefits like name, fame, siddhis etc are just a by-product of the sadhana he is performing, keeping in mind the goal of Moksha to be accomplished. Other way of looking is to consider these as indications that sadhaka is progressing or advancing towards the goal of Moksha. If he doesn't keep in mind that the benefits are by-product, the sadhaka might get stuck at some level and his journey would get stalled there. When the sadhaka keeps advancing without getting distracted by the worldly benefits, he would reach the abode of Lord or state of Moksha from which there is no return. It is important to keep in mind that this is symbolic representation of an ignorant jiva treading the spiritual path and reaching the goal which is the Moksha. The spiritual path towards Moksha is through the study of scriptures under the guidance of a competent Guru for a length of time and the Ultimate Knowledge dawns in the mind of the Sadhaka. In order to aid the study of scriptures to be beneficial, other sadhanas like Japa, Dhyana, etc may have to be taken up. Scriptures are very clear that Moksha can be attained only through Knowledge.

Here the poet says that Lord Muruga is the Kundalini and Lord himself is Siva. It may be interpreted as Lord being the Jiva treading the path, Lord is also the abode or destination also. Poet then calls Lord as Guhan or the one present in the cave of heart.

As Lord Krishna says

Isvara sarva bhootaanaam hrideshe arjuna thishtati

O Arjuna! Lord is present in the heart of all beings.

Keeping this view point in mind, the Poet calls Lord Muruga as the center of all of human being. It is important to keep in mind all devata stand for that Brahman which scriptures

Speak as the non-dual one without a second. If we forget this fact and if we are just focused on the form, we will not be able to attain the Ultimate Goal of Moksha. That is keeping the poet through these lines reminds us about what we should really be focused on, or what we should remember when we are praying to the Lord considering him in a form.

Bhakti Samkshepa

Bhakti

Though the term of bhakti is very well known to majority of people, still the real meaning of this term has been known only by very few people. It is very important to understand this term because the Lord says that he can be known only through bhakti or devotion and not through any other means. Though we have been learning the bhakti yoga, 12th chapter of Bhagavad Gita yet it is essential to get a brief on bhakti.

Bhakti isn't part-time

Generally it is wrong notion that bhakti or devotion is just visiting the temple once a week or remembering the Lord daily once. All these are activities that will take us to the peak of devotion but these aren't devotion. Nobody in the world likes to just be given little preference – everybody wants complete attention. The same applies to Ishwara as well. Ishwara will not fall for part-time devotion. Devotion should be total and complete.

Devotees never suffer

It is yet another wrong notion to think that devotees constantly suffer as Ishwara is either sadistic or tests people or gives sorrow as a result of ignoring people (for a period of time). Ishwara is of the nature of bliss and all-pervasiveness. Such an Ishwara is present everywhere and can give only bliss to everyone. But when this all-pervasive Ishwara goes through our twisted mind (that mind which dwells upon preferences of likes and dislikes), then he becomes sadistic and seemingly leads us to sorrow.

The entire world is filled in and out with Ishwara therefore it is blissful alone. Sorrow is caused only due to our mind – all bondage, all problems and all sufferings are in our mind alone, not anywhere else. Therefore what has to be changed is also our perspective (mental vision) – not the external world.

Today we find the entire world and its people trying to change and revolutionize the world. This is impossible because the world as such doesn't exist. Whatever exists at all times is non-dual Ishwara and Ishwara alone. The scriptures proclaim this truth over and over again – that one Ishwara alone exists and duality is just an illusion of names and forms in Ishwara even as various gold ornaments are mere names and forms in gold; even as the dream

world is just an illusion in the dreamer, similarly this entire world of duality is just an illusion in non-dual Ishwara who alone exists at all times.

In order to develop real devotion and attain the ultimate goal of life as ever rejoicing in bliss, we have to understand devotion properly (that which is properly understood alone will be properly implemented and results out of it will be enjoyed; that which is improperly understood will only lead to sorrow at all times).

What is devotion?

Devotion is defined variously in various devotional and scriptural texts but in brief we can say that devotion revolves around Ishwara alone. Below are some points of the various concepts essential to understand and implement devotion.

1. Devotion centers around Ishwara

Devotion always is centered around Ishwara. This means that if devotion is present then Ishwara will be the centre-point or focus-point of life itself. A true devotee therefore is constantly centered on Ishwara. His thoughts, his words, his hearings and his actions will revolve around the Lord (will be about the Lord alone). As long as our life isn't centered on Ishwara, there is no real devotion.

2. Ishwara is non-dual blissful all-pervasive Consciousness

Many people don't even know who is Ishwara. As Chinmaya puts it beautifully, Ishwara is not a sultan of sky sitting amidst clouds and showering his blessings on selected individuals. This wrong notion of Ishwara is very prevalent that even so-called religious and devoted people think of Ishwara this way only. An Ishwara who showers his blessings only on his devotees is definitely partial and therefore not unlimited. That which is unlimited or all-pervasive is impartial. It is only due to the devotee's open mind that the ever-present grace of the Lord showers on him (and falls as eternal bliss). Others, since they don't have open mind, do not experience the ever-present rays of the Lord.

Ishwara's nature has to be first understood before claiming to be devotees or following the path of devotion. Ishwara is non-dual – nothing exists apart from Ishwara. Everything that exists or appears as existing is just an illusion in the substratum of Ishwara. In short, Ishwara alone exists. Such a non-dual Ishwara is unlimited and therefore blissful. Since everything that is present is Ishwara, therefore Ishwara pervades the seemingly existing

objects (names-forms) of the world. For Ishwara to always exist, he has to be of the nature of Consciousness – that which pulsates inside us as I-exist, I-exist and is the very basis of all lights (or existences).

Without knowing the nature of Ishwara, being centered on Ishwara is not possible.

3. Ishwara has to be constantly sought out

A lover constantly seeks out his love, wherever she is. Similarly a devotee constantly seeks out Ishwara. It is through this constant seeking that devotion is developed (as only then Ishwara will become the center-point of life). This seeking can be in different ways – through friendship, love, brotherhood, fatherhood etc. Whatever be the attitude, Ishwara has to be constantly sought out or remembered in the mind.

4. Attitude behind seeking Ishwara doesn't matter

It doesn't matter as to what is the attitude behind seeking of Ishwara. It may be seeking of wealth or name or fame or partner or job or anything else. What matters is as to that Ishwara is constantly being sought out.

5. Progressing towards wanting Ishwara alone

Though initially people seek Ishwara for one or the other worldly pleasures, eventually they have to be lead to the state where nothing is sought out except Ishwara. Such a devotee constantly cries and yearns for Ishwara. He needs Ishwara here and now itself. He cries like a baby for want of Ishwara. The very thought of being separated from Ishwara leads him to gasp for breath, like a fish on land. This constant yearning and crying will develop love towards Ishwara – this love eventually matures into devotion.

6. Devotion isn't without knowledge

We have already seen as to how it is important to know the nature of Ishwara – without knowing the nature of Ishwara there is no point of remembrance of Ishwara at all times. Many people though are constantly remembering Ishwara aren't able to experience happiness as they don't know the true nature of Ishwara. They think of Ishwara as a limited being or a being with a name and a form. Such an Ishwara is limited and therefore will not lead to eternal bliss.

Narada clearly thus says that there is no lack of forgetting the glory of the Lord. The highest glory of the lord is his very nature of pervading the entire world of names and forms.

That Ishwara pervades the entire world has to be constantly remembered by a devotee. Such a devotee through constant remembrance of Ishwara as non-dual reality behind the world will be able to get rid of all sorrows and ever rejoice in bliss.

7. Devotion is ever blissful

Though we hear about devotees crying and pleading for Ishwara to show himself, this crying and pleading itself is blissful – we never do anything that isn't blissful (or giving temporary happiness). This itself means that wherever Ishwara is remembered (as the non-dual reality behind the world), that will lead us to instant bliss.

Devotion by nature is remembrance of non-dual Ishwara who is blissful in nature. Thus devotion itself is blissful in nature. Whenever a person is implementing devotion, that very moment the person will be able to ever rejoice in bliss. There is nothing to be achieved by a devotee – he ever rejoices in bliss in mere contemplation of the Lord. There is no sadhana to be performed; there is no knowledge to be gained; there is no devotion to be shown or implemented; a devotee through mere remembrance of the Lord is ever blissful.

Generally we all seek Ishwara for one thing or the other, hence slowly we have to progress towards asking for knowledge alone from Ishwara. The Lord says in Gita that there are four types of devotees.

1. Artha – those who seek removal of suffering (the removal need not be permanent but temporary removal is enough).
2. Artharthi – those who seek worldly pleasures (wealth or any other objects of the world). Majority of people in the world fall into the category of the above two devotees.
3. Jijnaasu – those who seek knowledge. Through knowledge is meant knowledge of the scriptures where alone Ishwara is defined or described in the best possible way.
4. Jnani – a knowledgeable person who is ever contemplating on the non-dual reality of Lord alone.

From being artha and artharthi we have to progress towards being a jijnaasu. It can be asked as to why we should try to know about Ishwara, the answer is that Ishwara alone is

blissful in nature. The entire world is constantly changing and therefore sorrowful in nature. Since we all desire for removal of sorrow and ever rejoicing in bliss, therefore we have to seek Ishwara alone (Ishwara being the only way to eternal bliss).

Slowly as we try to learn more and more about Ishwara, passion for the external world will vanish. As passion for the external world vanishes, we will no longer be seeking worldly pleasures. Half of the problem is gone if we stop seeking worldly pleasures of the world which lead to sorrow. Thereby we will also be able to focus more and more on the blissful Lord. Remembering the lord at all times (at least trying to) we will progress from being a jijnasu to being a jnani. A jnani knows at all times that Ishwara alone exists here and therefore is the greatest of all devotees. The Lord himself says that jnani is the greatest of all devotees as he is one with the Lord – such a jnani who sees everything as Ishwara is very rare indeed (only achieved after many births).

It is possible to become a jnani here and now itself if we are able to start towards developing devotion for Ishwara. Through wanting to know more about Ishwara, we should fill our lives with thoughts about Ishwara. This could be through puja of Ishwara or bhajans of Ishwara or dhyana or Ishwara or listening to the stories of Ishwara – it doesn't matter how we remember Ishwara but we should strive to remember Ishwara more and more. Though initially it might be very tough to remember Ishwara, it will be easily possible through constant practice. And knowing that there is no other way to eternal bliss will also make us remember Ishwara very easily.

Even as a youth who has no job will only depend on his parents, similarly when we know that there is no way to get rid of sorrow and rejoice in bliss other than to seek Ishwara, we will be able to seek Ishwara more and more. Needless to say, Ishwara is the most addictive entity in the entire world. Worldly addictions are powerful even though the world is an illusion – so what to talk about eternal blissful Ishwara (who is real)? Thus addiction of Ishwara is the maximum addiction we can find in the world.

Any person who has started towards remembrance of Ishwara will definitely be soon addicted unto Ishwara (and thoughts of Ishwara). Bliss experienced as a result of remembrance of Ishwara will make a person remember Ishwara more and more (even though it might seem to be very tough to remember Ishwara at all times). Eventually

through more and more contemplation of Ishwara, such a person will be able to rejoice in bliss.

May we through this brief understanding of bhakti strive to, through constant remembrance of Ishwara, get rid of all sorrows and may we ever rejoice in bliss in constant contemplation of Ishwara as pervading the entire world.

Acharyasmrithi

Prof. Balakrishnan Nair

Generally in this section, we deal with acharyas of the past who have written scriptural works and set the stage for many sadhakas to progress towards the goal of moksha very easily. But this month, it is going to be a little different in that we will see about a recent master – a recent master who was held by Chinmaya, Nochur Venkatraman and many others.

Aachinoti cha shastraani aachaare sthaapayatyapi

Svayam aacharate yasmaat tasmaat aachaaryam iti kiirtyate

One who preaches the scriptures; establishes codes of conduct of living; and himself implements the scriptures and codes of conduct, he is called an acharya.

Though Adi Sankara and the various Sankaracharyas are perfect examples of acharyas, still there are other masters like Chinmaya, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, AMMA etc. who are true acharyas in the sense of the word.

But what about a professor who used to teach Vedanta in colleges and taking early retirement dedicated his entire life to preaching of Vedanta?

Definitely such a master also falls into the definition of an acharya. If this word of acharya suits anybody at all, then it is this great master of Prof. Balakrishnan Nair. Born in the early 20s and lived till the recent past, this master served and serves as a conch of the truth of Brahman at all times. Mere learning of the life of this master itself is enough to inspire us to progress quickly towards the state of moksha.

Core Communist

He was a core communist in the early part of his life. It is often the case that when one is a staunch atheist then due to the grace of the Lord and a slight change in life, such a person will easily become a staunch theist. This is like saying that one who has full concentration of the mind will be able to concentrate on anything. Though initially he might concentrate on the wrong thing (the world) but if his concentration is shifted unto Brahman, then he will very soon realize the ultimate reality of Brahman.

Being a communist, Prof. Balakrishnan Nair is a true logician. Logicians always think logically. Though there have been nyaaya acharyas in the past, this logician's focus was always on Brahman alone.

Many people think that logic will distract us or take us away from the ultimate reality of Brahman or take us away from devotion. On the contrary, logic will help us assert the non-dual reality of Brahman and enforce our devotion unto Brahman. Through learning of Vedanta, this master's mind was very well set on Brahman that nothing whatsoever could shift it from Brahman.

Turning incident

Though he was communist, an incident which involved his son changed his life. His son was on the deathbed and died after chanting Siva's name for more than 20 minutes; this young son died blissfully. Seeing this, Prof. Balakrishnan Nair decided that he also wanted to give up his life blissfully. If he had to do that, then he had to start then and there itself. Therefore, since that moment he was ever abiding in Brahman – never deviating from Brahman (irrespective of wherever he was and whatever he was doing).

Learned master

It is almost impossible to realize Brahman without having some knowledge of Sanskrit – one need not be an expert in Sanskrit but some knowledge is essential as actual scriptural texts are in Sanskrit alone. This great master was MA in multiple languages and he was mahopaadhyaya in Sanskrit.

Since he was a professor in various colleges teaching Vedanta alone, therefore this strengthened his knowledge and conviction of Brahman. Though there are other stalwarts in the field of Vedanta, still it is not that easy to gain conviction about Brahman and abide in Brahman.

That this master was able to stay always on Brahman shows the conviction of his mind. This master didn't just master one or two subjects of Vedanta but almost the major works of Vedanta. His mastery included the prasthaana traya, bhagavatham, yoga vaasistam, works of Sankara and works of Narayana Gurudevan.

Bhashyas on Prasthaana Traya

All major acharyas who wanted to establish their names in the system of Vedanta have written bhashyas or commentaries on the prasthaana traya of Upanishads (the ten main Upanishads that have been commented upon by Sankarar), bhagavad gita and brahma sutras. Prof. Balakrishnan Nair has written bhashyas on the prasthaana traya, though in the local language of Malayalam.

His Bhagavad Gita bhashya titled Sivaaravindam Mahabhashyam is really a very special work. Bhaasha Institute has accepted and given the title of Mahabhashyam to this work (the only mahabhashyam in Sanskrit language is Patanjali's Mahabhashyam on Panini's Vyaakarana Sutras). In this work, though he differs from Sankara's Bhashya in few places still the focus is constantly on Brahman. Each and every sloka of the Gita focuses only on Brahman – this is what makes this work a treasure for all sadhakas. Each and every sloka is linked directly or indirectly with Brahman.

Upanishad Bhashya which is a two-volume work also is a treasure that helps us to understand the Upanishads much better. The bhashya on Brahma Sutras though is a sort of literal translation of Sankara's Bhashya, still it is so simple and to the point that very much helpful for all sadhakas.

Other works

Other works of this great master includes a book called Praudhaanubhuti which is explanation of a set of works of Sankara – this work even takes up simple anusandhaana work like Nirvana Shatkam while explaining it beautifully with respect to Brahman.

Another book which is a treasure is the work that explains the two masterpieces of Vidyanaraya, Panchadashi and Jeevanmuktiviveka. This work is a real help to all sadhakas who want to learn the masterpieces of Vidyanaraya – one dealing with entire Vedanta and another dealing with jnaanias or the state of moksha itself.

The works of Bhagavatha Hridayam and Vaasishta Sudha are real treasures that aren't dealt with those who are fully into Vedanta. As we have seen in the past, great masters of Vedant generally deal with only core works of Vedanta rather than taking up other story-oriented or purana-like works. But this great master of Balakrishnan Nair has given us two of the best

works of Vedanta that is suited for each and every person in the world (for being simple and explained with illustrations or examples).

Bhagavatha Hridayam though is an explanation of the stories of Bhagavatham along with just mention of few slokas is a work constantly focusing on the non-dual reality of Brahman. Though the work of Bhagavatham itself focuses on the Lord in all places, still this work serves as an added focus on the Lord at all times. Any person who has gone through this work will not find it tough to concentrate on Brahman at all times.

Vaasishta Sudha also though being an explanation of the stories of Laghu Yoga Vaasishta has the touch of Prof. Balakrishnan Nair where each story is linked to the non-dual reality of Brahman thereby always making the reader focus on Brahman alone.

Last but not the least, the two-volume work on all the works of Narayana Guru devan is definitely a treasure for those ardent seekers of Vedanta who also want to learn it in the language of Malayalam. It is doubtful whether such a work has been written before or will ever be written hereafter; therefore this work also is a real treasure for all sadhakas.

Admired by all

Though being admired by a lot of people isn't a right criterion for judging a realized master, still that this great master was admired by even other realized masters speaks a lot about this master.

Chinmaya used to say to all those who used to visit Kerala to go and meet the master of Prof. Balakrishnan Nair. Nochur speaks about this great master in high regards and used to visit him often. Long ago, Nochur read a book of Balakrishnan Nair which was a small book explaining in depth the Maneesha Panchakam, released by Ramakrishnan Mission. Reading this work, Nochur could feel the depth of knowledge coming out of the words. Therefore he wanted to meet Balakrishnan Nair. He went to a particular place where Balakrishnan Nair was giving discourse and met him. Balakrishnan Nair said to him that he had read a small booklet (of Sanskrit slokas) written by Nochur in which the first word was bodha – since Balakrishnan Nair always used to talk about bodha alone, therefore he desired to meet Nochur and miraculously Nochur went and met him.

The Upanishads say that whatever a great realized master thinks, that will fructify. This is exactly what happened with this great master. Nochur often quotes Balakrishnan Nair and used to regard him very high.

In Trivandrum, during the last decades of his life, Prof. Balakrishnan Nair used to give discourses in the local Ramakrishna Mission. There even the swamijis would prostrate at his feet. Such was the regard maintained by people on this great master.

Humble person

True knowledge always leads to humility and this is what we can find in this great master. Whoever wanted to meet him could go to his house and meet him freely. Though always the words of everything is bodha or Brahman alone used to come out of his mouth, still that he was available to everybody says a lot about his humility. As Nochur used to say, Prof. Balakrishnan Nair used to daily get up in the morning, open his door and just sit inside – anybody who wanted to come in could come and whoever wanted to leave could leave too.

Balakrishnan Nair also used to have lot of scientist friends in his circle. He often used to say in his discourses that these friends used to visit him and he would ask them simple questions which they couldn't answer. Though he could provide answers to all questions, still he was ever the humble person alone.

Once when he was given an award along with cash prize of one lakh, he invited a charitable organization person there – once he got the cash prize, he immediately gave it to the organization. Such was his state of mind – as Gaudapada says, what desire is there for a person who has realized Brahman as all his desires are fulfilled.

This great master can be said to be similar to Gaudapadacharya in that focus was always on the non-dual reality of Brahman. Nothing else apart from Brahman existed in his mind and this also reflected in his words and actions.

Personal experiences with this great master

Though haven't had that many experiences with this master, but he along with Sadguru Mata Amritanandamayi have been the guidance in the spiritual path. Whatever knowledge, even little, have sunk into this intellect is only due to the grace of this master of Prof. Balakrishnan Nair.

Everybody is generally scared of the text of Brahma Sutras as it is crisp and considered as the peak of knowledge and literature in Vedanta. But in the early 90s when Prof. Balakrishnan Nair used to give discourses on the Brahma Sutras in the theosophical society in Trivandrum, used to visit the weekly discourse along with father. Those were the starting days of knowledge and whatever sunk in during that time along has been the knowledge gained in this entire life. The base was set with Brahman through the peak scripture of Brahma Sutras and one whose mind has achieved focused on Brahman, even if not complete, will never be able to get away from Brahman even if situations arise for the same. Thus though have stayed for a few years in the United States and everybody around used to say that an individual itself changes after going to the States, there has been absolutely no change whatsoever. Instead the time in United States has served to reinforce the focus on Brahman – the seed that been put in the mind by Prof. Balakrishnan Nair has been watered thoroughly.

Though have read most of his books and listened to many of his discourses, have spoken to him just once alone. Went with father and a friend of father – sat near him down as he was sitting on a chair and holding my hand. Father's friend said that I had read Balakrishnan Nair's Yoga Vaashishtam book. I was a bit embarrassed at being exposed. Looking straight into my eyes, the great master said in Malayalam "mukham kandaal ariyaamallo" or "can know by looking at the face (that Yoga Vaasishta has been learnt)". What more can a person ask for while meeting this great giant of Vedanta.

Though there is a regretting feeling in the mind that couldn't meet him before his samaadhi, still it is certain that this great master always resides in the mind and through his ever-steady focus on Brahman.

Though have used the words of "great master" over and over again, it just goes on to show the greatness of this master and that words are overpowered by emotion when talking about him.

Any number of words are insufficient to explain this great master and whatever one writes, the feeling that one gets by the mere remembrance of this great master is beyond any writing.

Will stop with just one incident that shows the realized state of this master. When his wife was on her deathbed, this master went to see her in the hospital and said to people around "There is only Brahman here, right?" (it wasn't a question but a statement that Brahman alone is there, therefore what to worry about wife dying).

Through this article on the great master of Prof. Balakrishnan Nair, it is hoped that at least a few will be inspired to follow the footsteps of this master whose teachings and life is core Vedanta where Brahman alone exists; and it is hoped that through this sadhakas will be able to achieve the goal of moksha here itself.

May we all offer our prostrations to the great master of Prof. Balakrishnan Nair whose face shone with bliss at all times and whose words wouldn't deviate from the non-dual reality of Brahman so that through remembrance of Brahman at all times (taking a leaf out of his life), we will be able to ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

वेदान्तशास्त्रवेत्तारं ब्रह्मनिष्ठं परं गुरुम् ।

यस्तिष्ठति सदा बोधे बालकृष्णं नमाम्यहम् ॥

vedāntaśāstravettāraṁ brahmaniṣṭhaṁ paraṁ gurum |
yastiṣṭhati sadā bodhe bālakṛṣṇaṁ namāmyaham ||

I prostrate that Balakrishna who is a knower of the scripture of Vedanta, ever established in Brahman, the ultimate guru and one who always abides in Consciousness.

Vedanta Pariksha

This month all questions are on the Dasha Upanishads (the ten major Upanishads that have been commented upon by Sankara).

- 1) Which of these is not part of the dasha upanishads?
 - a) Kena Upanishad
 - b) Isha Upanishad
 - c) Kaivalya Upanishad
 - d) Katha Upanishad
- 2) Which is the biggest of the dasha upanishads?
 - a) Katha
 - b) Mundaka
 - c) Chandogya
 - d) Brihadaranyaka
- 3) Which is the smallest of the dasha upanishads?
 - a) Katha
 - b) Mandukya
 - c) Kena
 - d) Isha
- 4) Which Upanishad has been commented upon by Anubhootisvaroopacharya, the guru of Ananda Giri (who wrote a sub-commentary on Sankara's bhashya)?
 - a) Mundaka
 - b) Katha
 - c) Mandukya
 - d) Isha
- 5) Which Upanishad has the mahavakya of TAT TVAM ASI?
 - a) Kena
 - b) Chandogya
 - c) Brihadaranyaka
 - d) Mundaka
- 6) Who wrote vrittis or glosses on all of Sankara's bhashyas on the dasha upanishads?
 - a) Ananda Giri
 - b) Vidyananda
 - c) Appayya Dikshitar

- d) Vachaspati Mishra
- 7) In which Upanishad does the guru of angiras teach the shishya of shaunaka?
- a) Mandukya
 - b) Kena
 - c) Mundaka
 - d) Isha
- 8) Which Upanishad is called the samhitopanishad (for being part of a samhita)?
- a) Kena
 - b) Isha
 - c) Katha
 - d) Mundaka
- 9) Which Upanishad has the mahavkya of prajnaanam brahma?
- a) Kena
 - b) Katha
 - c) Aitareya
 - d) Chandogya
- 10) On which Upanishad did Vidyananya write a Dipika?
- a) Mundaka
 - b) Chandogya
 - c) Brihadaranyaka
 - d) Kena

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 555
2. d 4
3. b Bhamati
4. a Panchapadika
5. b 2
6. c Appayya Dikshitar
7. b Amalananda
8. b Vachaspati Mishra
9. 5
10. d Adhyaasa Bhashya

Marks for quiz

Nikhila – 9

Sunanda Amma - 9

Congrats to all who answered the quiz on Brahma Sutras and scored very good marks.

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. Bhakti samskhepa – a brief analysis of Bhakti or devotion
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.

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