

## Vedanta Darshanam

Salutations to all.

The ultimate goal of life irrespective of all differentiations of caste, creed etc. is moksha characterized by complete cessation of sorrow and ever rejoicing in bliss. Until this goal is achieved, a person will go from birth to death to birth to death while searching for eternal bliss from the world but getting only sorrow again and again.

Moksha is realization of the ultimate reality of Brahman as pervading the entire world and as one's very nature of pure Consciousness that pulsates inside as I-exist, I-exist. Since Brahman is known only through the shastras or the philosophy of Vedanta therefore it is essential to learn Vedanta. Sadhakas who desire eternal bliss should therefore strive to master the philosophy of Vedanta.

This doesn't mean that one has to learn all the works on Vedanta but knowing the essence of Vedanta is enough. And the essence of Vedanta is summarized beautifully by Sankara as - Brahman is real; the world is an illusion; and the individual I is Brahman alone, not different from Brahman. With this, entire Vedanta is known. If there are doubts or lack of clarity with respect to the summary of Vedanta then a sadhaka should learn the shastras more and more. Thereby will be achieved conviction - that conviction which will help in constant contemplation of Brahman as pervading the entire world. Through constant contemplation, the goal of moksha will be achieved quickly.

That implementation of Vedanta isn't tough is shown through great masters like AMMA who are ever abiding as Brahman (embodiments of implementation of Vedanta). By looking at these masters, a sadhaka will be able to progress with faith and strength knowing that the goal of moksha is attainable by everyone.

As Krishna says, it is very tough to know action in depth. There are many times initiatives taken in the world that will be halted for one or the other reason. It has to be remembered as Ishwara's will alone as everything that happens in the world is due to Ishwara's will alone (as long as the mind is devoid of preferences of likes-dislikes). Vedanta Darshanam was

started around three years ago but it was not continued after a year. On this benign day of the birthday of AMMA, this initiative is restarted.

May the ultimate reality of Brahman as AMMA guide us through Vedanta Darshanam so that we will be able to learn and implement Vedanta thereby taking us to the goal of eternal bliss in this very birth itself.

AUM NAMAH SHIVAYA

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## Aukramaanika

Vedanta Darshanam .....	1
Upanishad Vivaranam .....	4
Gitaamritham .....	8
Prakarana Prakaashah .....	12
Madhuraamritham .....	16
Praadeshikam .....	20
Acharyasmrithi .....	24
Vedanta Pariksha .....	29
Aukramaanika Nirdesham .....	31

## Upanishad Vivaranam

### Mundaka Upanishad

Though each and every person in the world has different goals yet it is an undeniable truth that we all pursue just one ultimate goal of life. This ultimate goal of life can be explained in two ways - dukha nivritti and sukha praapti. Dukha nivritti means getting rid of sorrow and sukha praapti means rejoicing in bliss. Dukha anubhava and sukha tironadham both are due to not knowing the Self.

What is the Self?

Self is that which pulsates inside each one of us as I-exist, I-exist. Self is also that which gives the world a reality status, the world being superimposed on the substratum of the Self. The Self is termed in Vedanta as Brahman. It is also variously termed as Atman, Paramatman, Bhagavan and as different deities like Vishnu, Siva, Devi etc. Brahman or Self is of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss.

Brahman always exists as it is the eternal substratum of the world. It is also of the nature of Consciousness as it illumines itself and everything. For Brahman to always exist, there should be a light falling on it and this light has to be the very nature of Brahman. Thus Brahman is of the nature of Existence and Consciousness. Brahman by existing always is infinite or unlimited. That which is infinite or unlimited is blissful in nature. Normal happiness (happiness which doesn't last long) is because it is from objects or people that are limited. That which is unlimited is blissful (yo vai bhooma tat sukham). Brahman thus is of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss.

This blissful Brahman is therefore the ultimate goal of life. Now if this Brahman is newly attained through effort, then it will vanish after a period of time (that which is attained will definitely be lost). Therefore Brahman is always present for a person as the person's very nature of Consciousness, I which pulsates at all times as I-exist, I-exist.

How is it possible that I am Brahman?

Aham asmi sadaa bhaami kadaachit naaham apriyah

Brahmaivaaham atah siddham satchidanandalakshanam

I always exist; I am ever shining and never am I hated. Therefore it is proven that I am Brahman of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss.

The anumaana used above is -- aham brahmaiva, satchidaanandalakshanatvaat, brahmavat  
I am Brahman because of being of the same characteristics of Brahman, like Brahman.

If I am blissful Brahman, then why don't I experience this bliss?

This is because of not knowing Brahman clearly. Here "clearly" means distinctively from the external dual world (which doesn't exist at all). In order to intuitively experience bliss, effort should be put to gain knowledge of Brahman. This is essential or required because only through gaining knowledge of Brahman and realization of Brahman will a person be able to fulfill the ultimate goal of life as getting rid sorrow and ever rejoicing in bliss.

What is the source of knowledge of Brahman?

The source of knowledge of Brahman is the scriptures (shaastrayonitvaat). Scriptures alone are the source of Brahman. Though scriptures or decoding the scriptures is learnt from a realized master who is well-versed in the scriptures yet the ultimate source which a person craving for knowledge should stick on to is scriptures (and scriptures alone). Just because of Brahma Sutra saying that source of Brahman is scriptures (and not a brahmanishta) itself proves that focus should be on the scriptures. Moreover scriptures are tested and certified by many realized masters from time immemorial. Any Guru who doesn't teach the scriptures or as to how to decode the scriptures isn't a Guru at all and should be renounced at all costs; else the person will be distracted away from Brahman and the ultimate goal of life will not be fulfilled.

Brahman is beyond words and thoughts as the very basis of words and thoughts itself. But still scriptures are like a mirror in which we can see our own face. Or as AMMA says, scriptures are like a map which will take us towards the goal of moksha.

The scriptural texts which talk about Brahman are called Upanishads. The philosophy which is based on Brahman is called Vedanta and often Upanishads are themselves called Vedanta as well loosely. Upanishads are both the texts which talk about Brahman as well as knowledge of Brahman also.

Sureshwaracharya says thus

Atra upanishad shabdho brahmavidyaikagocharah

Tatraiva chaasya sadbhaavaadabhidhaarthasya tatkutah

Upanishad word means Brahma vidya alone as used here and elsewhere. Also the meaning of the words in the Upanishad can be condensed in this word and in this meaning the usage of the word can be found.

Upanishads are the knowledge portion of the Vedas and hence they are called Vedanta (that which appears at the end of Vedas). They are also called Vedanta because they put an end to knowledge (knowledge completely ends in bliss, bliss is through realization of Brahman, realization of Brahman is through knowledge of Brahman and knowledge of Brahman is from Upanishads alone). Upanishads come at the end of Vedas because initially a person has to purify the mind through nishkaama karma and then gain concentration of mind through upasana. Only after this knowledge of Brahman will be fruitful and will lead to the goal of eternal bliss.

As per Puranas there are 1180 shakhaas or recensions of the Vedas (different branches of the Vedas based on the disciples either remembering or teaching different the same Vedas after learning from their Guru). Each shakhaa has one Upanishad and thus there are 1180 Upanishads. But of this more than hundred alone are extant. 108 Upanishads are available directly through the commentary of Upanishad Brahma yogin of Kanchi on them. And the names of these 108 Upanishads appear in muktikopanishad.

But of these extant Upanishads, just more than 10 alone are considered authentic or genuine by all acharyas. The ten are the ones commented upon first by Adi Sankaracharya and the rest few are those which have been quoted by Sankara in his bhashya on the ten Upanishads. The ten Upanishads or dashopanishads as they are called are Isha, Kena, Katha, Prashna, Mundaka, Mandukya, Aitareya, Taittiriya, Chandogya and Brihadaranyaka. Of these ten there are Upanishads from each Veda and the three Upanishads from Atharva Veda are Prashna, Mundaka and Mandukya. It wouldn't wrong to say that Mundaka denotes sravana or listening, Prashna denotes manana or reflecting and Mandukya denotes nidhidhyasana or contemplation - though each of these Upanishads explain about Brahman very clearly.

Of these three, we are going to learn (successively in each edition of the magazine) the Mundaka Upanishad. Mundanam means shaving of the head. Hence some say that this Upanishad should be learnt by sanyaasis though we find that the instructions in the Upanishad are given to a grihastha. So the more apt explanation of the word Mundaka

would be that a person who learns this Upanishad shaves his head, means he attains sanyaasa.

Krishna says in Gita

Jneyah sa nityasanyaasi yo na dvesti na shochati

Nirdvandvo hi mahabaho sukham bandhaat pramuchyate

Know him to be ever renunciate who doesn't get angry nor gets sad; ever being beyond dual notions, he easily gets liberated from bondage.

Sarva karma phala tyajjah sanyaasa

Sanyaasa is renunciation of the fruits of actions.

Learning of this Upanishad will give us sanyaasa or renunciation of the world through knowledge of Brahman and thereby we will be able to attain the ultimate goal of life as eternal bliss.

This Upanishad consists of 66 slokas split into 3 mundakas. Each mundaka is split into two khandas or sections. It is in the form of a conversation between the shishya of Shaunaka (a householder) and guru of Sage Angiras. The shishya asks the ultimate question of wanting to know that by knowing which everything becomes known. This entity by knowing which everything becomes known is Brahman as Brahman is everything as the substratum. And through knowing this Brahman as one's own very Self, a person will be able to get rid of all sorrow and ever rejoice in bliss. The world will be remembered like a dream world (unreal) and therefore the person will not be affected by the world and activities in the world. Instead as Sankara says, whether yoga or bhoga or sanga or asanga such a person whose mind is ever residing in Brahman (contemplating that Brahman alone exists) rejoices, rejoices and verily rejoices.

May we also through learning of this Upanishad gain knowledge of Brahman and through realization of Brahman ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

# Gitaamritham

## Bhakti Yoga - Introduction

Bhakti or Devotion is something which attracts even a layman who doesn't have much idea about Vedanta. Bhakti can be considered as an ocean which can be seen, experienced and interpreted by many people in their own ways. All analytical statements about bhakti will be true yet incomplete as the only way to understand devotion is to merge unto it, even as an ocean can be fully known only when we merge unto it. In order to merge unto the ocean of bhakti, we need to understand as to what is bhakti is.

It is common wrong knowledge that bhakti is when a person worships Ishwara daily - maybe once a day or twice a day. Some think that going to temples regularly is bhakti. Others think that bhakti is faith in Ishwara. Yet others think that just hearing or singing the names of Ishwara is bhakti. All these definitions are wrong notions about bhakti. These notions are definitely part of the ocean of bhakti but bhakti is much more than these. And these initial involvements with Ishwara will not lead to the fruit of bhakti. The fruit of bhakti or true devotion is eternal bliss denoted in Vedanta as moksha. A person who has these initial symptoms (which are wrongly mistaken or understood to be bhakti) will not be blissful. Instead his happiness is only dependent on Ishwara whenever Ishwara fulfills his desires. The moment Devi, whose temple this person visits frequently, ceases to fulfill his desire the person will go away from Devi and seek another deity. Thus going from one deity to another like a politician, the person will never experience eternal bliss; instead will ever be suffering alone.

Even before trying to analyze Bhakti, it is essential to understand as to who is Ishwara. The term of Ishwara itself is not properly understood by many. Some think Ishwara just resides in temples; others think that Ishwara sits in sky and gives fruits to his beloved people (which are just a set of people who Ishwara likes); yet others think that Ishwara is the all-powerful ruler of this world. All these wrong notions have to be first removed in order to understand bhakti.

Now why is it essential to understand bhakti?

It is essential to understand bhakti because a true bhakta is a jnaani or realized master. And such a jnaani alone is able to ever rejoice in bliss - in other words, such a jnaani alone realizes his very nature of the ultimate reality of Brahman thereby putting an end to all



sorrows, delusion and the ocean of samsara consisting of the vicious circle of birth and death. Until a person becomes a jnani, the chain of birth and death will continue. And the chain of birth-death gives us only sorrow. Getting rid of sorrow and ever rejoicing in bliss is the ultimate goal of life for everyone. Since this goal can be achieved only through gaining knowledge (as found in the shastras) and becoming a jnani and since this is possible only through developing bhakti or devotion, therefore it is essential to understand bhakti. Without understanding bhakti we will not be able to develop bhakti and become the ultimate bhakta of a jnani.

Is Bhakti different from Jnana?

Definitely no. Though the activities in bhakti and jnana are different, true devotion (or where devotion culminates) isn't different from jnana. Hence the Lord says in Gita that the ultimate devotee is a jnani who isn't different from my own very Self and such a jnani who sees everything as one Brahman is very rare indeed to achieve in this world.

Narada says in Bhakti Sutras that there is no fault of forgetting the glory of Ishwara. Here glory means knowledge about who Ishwara is. This means that true devotion is true knowledge and both are just different terms and having different approaches to the one goal of eternal bliss. There will be a time when bhakti and jnana intersect for a sadhaka.

If both are same then why does the shastra talk about jnana as the only way to realization?

Since the word of bhakti is often misinterpreted, therefore the shastras use the word of jnana as the only way to realization. Also since whatever really exists at all times is Brahman (or the Lord) alone and forgetting the Lord is through veiling of Lord's nature (termed as ignorance), therefore jnana or unveiling the veil that veils the ever-present Lord (as our very nature of Consciousness and the substratum of the entire world) is mentioned as the only way to realization.

### **Ishwara - ultimate non-dual reality of Brahman**

Before analyzing as to what is bhakti we need to understand the term of Ishwara. The word of Ishwara means one who controls the world but Ishavasya Upanishad says that Ishwara pervades the entire world. And realization of this Ishwara is through enjoyment after renunciation. After renouncing the names-forms or ignorance or wrong notions, what

remains behind is Ishwara (as the substratum of the entire world) and enjoyment of this Ishwara is the way to realizing Ishwara, thus says Ishavasya Upanishad.

Bhagavatham gives this beautiful sloka to say beyond doubt that Ishwara is what is proclaimed in Vedanta as Brahman.

vadanti tat tattvavidah tattvam yat jnaanam advayam

brahmeti paramaatmeti bhagavaan iti shabdhyate

Knowers of the truth proclaim it to be non-dual and knowledge (Consciousness) in nature; it is termed variously as Brahman, Paramatman and Bhagavan.

Now what is Brahman?

yato vaa imaani bhootaani jaayante

yena jaataani jeevanti

yat prayanti abhisamvishanti

tat vijijnaasasva tat brahmeti

From whom this world has come; in whom this world resides; and unto whom this world merges at the time of its destruction, that is to be known; known that as Brahman.

Thus whatever exists before creation as pure non-dual Existence (one without a second), when creation exists as the substratum of names-forms of the world and after creation exists again as pure non-dual Existence, that is Brahman. This means that whatever exists is Brahman and Brahman alone.

Ishwara thus is the only entity existing at any point of time. All duality that is perceived as the world is just an illusion of names and forms in Ishwara. Hence shastra says that Ishwara pervades the entire world in and out. This knowledge of Ishwara is essential in order to understand devotion.

If Ishwara is one alone, then what are the various deities?

The various deities are different names and forms in Ishwara - these are meant for us to meditate and contemplate in our mind. Such a name-form Ishwara takes our mind away from the external world and unto the ultimate reality of Brahman. Any name-form deity has to be remembered as all-pervasive Brahman. Or a person should try to always remember the deity, this means the deity slowly will pervade the person's mind and the entire world as well. The numerous are deities are there so that a person can choose the deity that appeals

to his mind based on his vasanas. Some may like Vishnu more; others may like Siva; yet others may like Devi. Depending on one's liking, one can choose a deity. Since the deity is liked therefore meditation and contemplation on the deity is possible easily.

### **Devotion - continuous remembrance of Ishwara**

That Ishwara who is all-pervasive Brahman has to be remembered at all times in the mind in order for devotion to be developed in the mind. Once Ishwara pervades the mind, then devotion becomes complete and finally there is only Ishwara perceived everywhere. Whatever is seen is remembered as Ishwara's form, whatever is heard is remembered as Ishwara's names or praises, whatever is performed is remembered as pooja for Ishwara and whatever is there is remembered as Ishwara alone. Thus getting rid of dual notions in the mind, a person will be able to attain the non-dual blissful state of moksha.

Narada's and Shandilya's bhakti sutras explain bhakti very beautifully. Though nothing new or different is mentioned in the 12th chapter of Gita, yet we find the Lord's words very unique. This is because here it is not just a mere textbook of devotion but it is addressed towards the mumukshu of Arjuna. Therefore this chapter easily will appeal to all mumukshus. This chapter defines bhakti beautifully, then explains the ways to attain bhakti and finally concludes with description of a true bhakta.

We will learn this chapter sloka by sloka from the next magazine. May the ultimate reality of Brahman bless us so that we will be able to learn, understand and implement bhakti thereby making us a true bhakta who ever rejoices in bliss.

## Prakarana Prakaashah

### Dakshinamurthy Ashtakam

All scriptural texts talk about the way to get rid of sorrow through knowledge of the ultimate reality of Brahman. This ultimate reality of Brahman is of the nature of eternal bliss and therefore knowledge of this entity is the way to get rid of sorrow and rejoice in bliss. Since the ultimate goal of life is removal of sorrow and rejoicing in bliss therefore it is everybody's duty to seek knowledge of Brahman.

Brahman is defined in the shastras as that from which the world has come, that in which the world resides and that unto which the world merges at the time of its destruction. Thus Brahman is the cause of this world that we currently see. Brahman also is the substratum of this world which is constantly changing (as anything that changes requires a changeless substratum).

It is very clear to understand that this world which constantly changes is not ultimately present in the changeless entity of Brahman. Thus Vedanta talks from two different perspectives - one is the perspective of Brahman or paaramaarthika level where Brahman alone exists and second is the perspective of the world or vyaavahaarika level where the world's existence is accepted (not as eternal but just as a matter of experience for people). Even from a vyaavahaarika level, the world doesn't really exist but appears as existing in its substratum of Brahman.

Vedanta says that though actions and everything with respect to the world is accepted, they are all known to be unreal when a person realizes the ultimate reality of Brahman. This Brahman isn't different from oneself but it is the same Consciousness which pulsates inside as I-exist, I-exist at all times. This Consciousness is devoid of all associations and is the mere witness of the three states of waking, sleep and dreamless deep sleep. Without realizing one's own very nature of Brahman, a person identifies with the individuality or Ego which changes constantly in the three states. As long as identification with Ego is there, a person experiences only sorrow. The moment a person realizes his very nature to be Brahman, then all sorrow ends and there is only rejoicing in bliss.

That realization is essential for a person is known through the fact that even while experiencing sorrow in the world, the person is ever blissful. All sorrowful experiences of the

world are similar to the sorrowful experiences a person has in the state of dream. They appear very real while experiencing it but aren't real.

Until realization happens, a person identifying with the ego takes birth again and again in order to fulfill the ultimate desire of rejoicing in bliss. But since knowledge that the ultimate desire or goal can only be fulfilled through knowledge as this desire is the result of ignorance of one's very nature of blissful Brahman or Self. Taking birth again and again, a person experiences more and more sorrow. Therefore it is important for a sadhaka to realize one's very nature of Brahman in order to put an end to sorrow and ever rejoice in bliss.

Shastras or Vedanta is the source of knowledge of Brahman. Vedanta is established in the prasthaana traya of Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita and Brahma Sutras. But these are tough to grasp for many people and hence the great Sankara wrote various commentaries on them. Knowing that these commentaries also will be tough for many people to understand, Sankara wrote many prakarana granthas or individual texts in order to explain certain concepts of Vedanta. One such very deep prakarana grantha which can be considered as an entire work in itself is the Dakshinamurthy Ashtakam. This work is also known as Dakshinamurthy Stotra.

#### Dakshinamurthy - aadi guru

Brahma created from his mind the son of Narada in order to help him in the creation process. But Narada became so devoted to Vishnu and therefore didn't help Brahma. Brahma then created the four sons, sanaka sages of Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana and Sanatkumara. These four were guided (or misguided) by Narada who said that they should seek knowledge from a guru in order to attain the goal of moksha. They then started searching for the right guru and found the great master of Dakshinamurthy who was sitting under the banyan tree facing south. These sages sat in front of Dakshinamurthy who was in complete absorption. Their mind was instantly calmed and they also attained absorption. Thus the great Dakshinamurthy taught these sages through silence or the means to moksha as silencing the mind-sense organs through focusing on the non-dual reality of Brahman.

Ramana Maharshi gives a slightly different version of this story. Maharshi says that the sages asked questions to Dakshinamurthy who answered them. After a year, questions still

came from the sages. Dakshinamurthy realizing that questions were not ending at all went into samadhi or absorption and thereby the sages also attained absorption.

Though some claim that knowledge can never be instructed through silence but only through words, we should understand that silence here means silencing of the mind-sense organs and that is the only way knowledge can become effective. Else doubts will arise again and again, thus not leading to knowledge or realization. There is a time when knowledge from external source has to end and thenceforth silence through mental reflection and contemplation is what is required.

One of the dhyana slokas of Dakshinamurthy says that the Guru is very young whereas the sages are old. This signifies that the Guru was a realized master thus beyond age or body itself - therefore remaining ever young. Though a person who is beyond aging can be called an infant or child or youth or middle-age or old, here youth is used in order to signify the blissful state as well as energy when it comes to actions in the world. Such actions in the world don't contradict the state of non-duality because non-duality is from the perspective of Brahman and in the mind; externally the world and activities in the world are like activities in dream or a drama which doesn't affect the ultimate state of Brahman-alone-existing.

Dakshinamurthy means one who is facing south. But this also means one who is south of the mind or intellect denoting the heart or the spiritual place of the Self (from where the pulsation of I-exist, I-exist comes). Thus Dakshinamurthy is one who takes us from external perceptions through the mind & sense organs, from the logic of the intellect and identification of the ego to the place of the Self where mere blissful existence alone is there. Any Guru thus is Dakshinamurthy as such a Guru takes us to realization of the Self. In Ramana Maharshi's view-point, the Guru is the Self that appears in front of the sadhaka when the sadhaka desires for the Self ardently and makes the sadhaka introverted to realize the indwelling Self.

### The work

This work of Dakshinamurthy Ashtakam consists of ten slokas in total. It is not called dashakam (ten slokas) but ashtakam as only eight slokas talk about knowledge. The ninth sloka is a sadhana for implementation and tenth is the phala sruthi (talking about the fruit of the work). The eight slokas are set in the metre of Shardoola vikreeditham (that consists

of 19 letters in one quarter of a verse). Though this work consists of just eight slokas, still these eight slokas are filled with deep concepts that we can consider this as a condensation of Vedanta itself. The concepts are deep that Chinmaya says a person should start learning this work only after learning few chapters of Gita and a few upanishads.

Sureshwaracharya wrote a vartika titled Maanasollasa. This vartika has been commented upon by Rama Tirtha. Svayamprakasha yati's Tattva Sudha commentary on the original work is a famous commentary.

Chinmaya's english commentary book and Prof. Balakrishnan Nair's commentary in malayalam (as part of the book of Praudanubhuthi) are good for sadhakas to learn the work.

We will see a summary of this work in the next magazine before starting with the slokas. May the great master of Sankara bless us in order to realize our very nature of the ultimate reality of Brahman through knowledge in this work so that we will be able to ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

# Madhuraamritham

## Hanuman Chalisa

The scriptures or the knowledge portion of the scriptures known as Vedanta are the one and only means to eternal bliss (moksha). Without learning and implementing Vedanta a person will not be able to put an end to all sorrows and rejoice in bliss. Knowledge of Vedanta isn't that easy as there are many wrong notions that are prevalent in almost times in history. For eg: true devotion is true knowledge but still people differentiate between the two and huge rifts are caused as a result; karma can never lead to moksha as karma is born out of ignorance and ignorance is what veils the ever blissful Self as one's very nature.

Though wrong notions are always there, as the Lord says in Gita there will always be advent of Ishwara in this world in one or the other form to uplift dharma (realization of moksha is the ultimate dharma). And such advents protect Vedanta in their core form or through other works which explain the concepts of Vedanta for all people to understand easily. One such advent was the great sage Tulasidas.

Tulasidas wrote the famous Ramacharitamans which is very popular in the north even as Ezhuthacchan's Adhyatma Ramayana is very popular in the south. But more than Ramacharitamans, the smaller work of Hanuman Chalisa is more popular for both sadhakas and those who seek solution to problems in life.

Hanuman Chalisa as the name suggests is 40 verses in praise of Hanuman and explaining the life of Hanuman. Ramakrishna Mission had brought out a small book of hanuman chalisa with each verse on one page on the right whereas a pictorial on the left page which relates to the verse.

## Hanuman

This great figure of Hanuman need not be introduced to anybody as almost everybody is familiar with Hanuman. Many of us have grown listening to the glories of Hanuman. Hanuman is the great bhaktha of Sri Rama. Not only is he a mere bhaktha, he is also a jnaani and therefore the highest bhaktha who isn't different from the Lord himself.

Hanuman is the son of Vayu and therefore possesses great speed. Hanuman can be said to represent either the mind or the individual (jeeva). When denoting the mind, Hanuman who



is a monkey goes from here to there hopping around with no purpose in life and not knowing his own strengths. But when such a mind seeks refuge in Ishwara, then it has a purpose to realize Ishwara and it is able to realize its own strengths. Thus such a mind which focuses on Ishwara will be able to perform impossible feats like crossing the ocean in one jump, becoming very big, becoming very small etc. There is nothing that is impossible for the mind of Hanuman which is ever focused on Ishwara or Brahman of Rama.

When Hanuman is considered as the jeeva, then there is a depiction of all concepts of Vedanta. The jeeva is incapable of majority of things and looks very foolish. Yet it has the ability to attain the supreme because it is the supreme alone, just not realizing its very nature. Hanuman unleashed all the various powers when met with Rama; then his life itself completely changed making it blissful. When the jeeva finds Brahman (realizing that I am Brahman), then life itself becomes blissful for the jeeva. Such a jeeva then finds nothing but Brahman alone as pervading the entire world even as Hanuman find Rama alone pervading the entire world. Through Hanuman, we can learn to focus on Rama and thereby realize our very nature of blissful Brahman. Thus we will be able to ever rejoice in bliss in the state of moksha.

#### Bhaktha as the way to Ishwara

Ishwara though pervades the entire world is tough to realize as the mind is always focused on the external world of duality. In order to shift this mind from the dual world to the substratum of Ishwara it is essential to be in the presence of those who are ever rejoicing in contemplation of Ishwara. This is similar to a person being in the presence of musicians in order to learn music. This association with bhakthas is called as satsanga as bhakthas are ever focused on sat or reality as Brahman or Ishwara.

It is through being in the proximity of bhakthas that we will be able to quickly progress towards the goal of moksha. If sitting at home alone it would take considerable effort (which mostly will not be fruitful) in order to remember Ishwara. But if we sit for a few minutes in the presence of a bhaktha we will be able to instantly contemplate on Ishwara. This is because bhakthas presence is pervaded by Ishwara who is captured in the heart of bhakthas.

Rama was worshipped ardently by Tulasidas yet Rama didn't give his vision. When questioned, Rama replied that in order to get his vision Tulasidas has to praise his bhaktha

of Hanuman. Thereby Tulasidas wrote the work of Hanuman Chalisa and was able to get vision of Rama.

### Ishwara - centre-point of activities of a bhaktha

A bhaktha's activities circle around Ishwara alone. Hence Narada says that once a person develops love for Ishwara then he thinks about Ishwara, talks about Ishwara, imagines Ishwara and hears about Ishwara. In short a bhaktha means Ishwara alone.

The bhaktha of Hanuman's life thus circles around Rama. Every activity performed by Hanuman is for Rama alone (as we can find shown in the chalisa). This bhaktha of Hanuman, it is said, used to come regularly for Tulasidas's discourse on Ramayana. Tulasidas found out that an old person used to come very early itself for discourse and would be the last person to leave the discourse. This old man used to listen to the discourse with full attention and devotion. Thus one day Tulasidas stopped him after discourse and asked as to who he was. Then Hanuman revealed his real nature. Tulasidas asked Hanuman if he would be able to see Rama. Then Hanuman said him to stay in a particular place in a forest where a path was there and to wait till a particular time. The time arrived and Tulasidas was able to see the chariot of Rama passing by along with Sita and Lakshmana. Thus this great bhaktha who was pleased with Tulasidas showed him Rama.

It isn't essential to see Ishwara in the form of Rama or any other form. For a bhaktha all forms are Ishwara alone. Therefore whatever is seen is Ishwara alone. With this knowledge and contemplation in the mind, the bhaktha remains ever blissful. It doesn't matter as to what activities the bhaktha does, he always remembers Ishwara.

AMMA gives this beautiful story about to gopis to illustrate that a bhaktha will always think about Ishwara irrespective of situations (everything will be linked to Ishwara and his glories). Once a pandit came to teach the gopis Vedanta. He explained that the world we see is like water in desert. On hearing the word water, the gopis started crying. The pandit continued - even as snake is seen in the rope, similarly is this world an illusion in Brahman. Hearing the words of snake and rope, the gopis were crying more. The pandit next said that even as various ornaments made of mud are mere names and forms in mud, similarly this world is names and forms in Brahman. Hearing the word of mud, the gopis started crying more. The pandit finally gave the example of gold and gold ornaments. Hearing the word gold, the gopis were crying more. Now the pandit couldn't bear it and therefore asked as to

why the gopis were crying from beginning itself. The gopis replied - when you said the word of water, we remembered the small Krishna in the ocean and we started crying. When you said the word snake, we were sad as to how the small Krishna controlled and danced on the snake Kaliya. When you said the word rope, we remembered as to how Krishna was tied by his mother and we started crying. When you said the word mud, we remembered as to how Krishna had to eat mud and thus started crying. Finally when you said the word gold, we remembered the form of Krishna adorned by various gold jewels and therefore we cried in bliss.

Hearing to all this, the pandit replied that you all don't have to learn Vedanta as you are already living Vedanta by always remaining focused on Krishna. Thus saying the pandit went away.

A true bhaktha's mind is pervaded by Ishwara or Brahman at all times and the knowledge that Brahman alone exists here is always remembered - thus such a bhaktha is ever blissful in the state of moksha and isn't different from Ishwara himself.

#### Hanuman Chalisa - solution to everything

There have been many people who got solutions ranging from marriage to job to removal of sorrow through learning and chanting of Hanuman Chalisa. As Chalisa itself says, those who sing it seven times (or 100 times) in a day will get their wishes fulfilled. Thus Hanuman Chalisa can be used by sadhakas in order to fulfill their worldly desires in order to progress smoothly in the spiritual path.

And ultimately this work can be used to become like Hanuman remembering Ishwara at all times so that we will be able to attain the goal of moksha quickly itself.

We will start with the verses from the next magazine. May the great bhaktha-jnaani of Hanuman bless us so that through constant contemplation on Brahman as pervading the entire world we will be able to ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

## Praadeshikam

### Hari Naama Keerthanam

Though in ancient times, Sanskrit was the language in which works were written and conversations happened, as time passed by many other languages become popularly used in local regions. Though India (many make too much claim on calling India as Bhaaratha varsha but what is changed due to a name? A liar remains a liar even when he is renamed as harischandra. Therefore what is important is the cultural values of sanatana dharma as found in Vedas and Vedanta) has many languages used in many parts of the country, Kerala remains unique in many aspects. With respect to natural beauty, we would have to say that Kerala is among the top. Literacy is very high in Kerala. Kerala people are smart and intelligent; more so than any other place of India. But the biggest blessing of this place is that great masters have taken birth and even lived in this place. Sankara was the first among the great people from Kerala. We have had many masters in the recent past as well like Sri Narayana Guru devan, Sadguru Mata Amritanandamayi Devi, Bhattathiri etc. There have also been jnanis of the level of Gaudapada such as Prof. Balakrishnan Nair.

Among all these great masters from Kerala stands out a very common man who shows a blend of knowledge and devotion. This man is none other than Thunjatthu Ezhuthacchan. This great master is unforgettable for malayalis because of Adhyatma Ramayana, a version of Ramayana in malayalam by the master. This ramayana is chanted by malayalis throughout the ramayana month and at other times too. This ramayana isn't a direct translation of Valmiki's Ramayana but it is Ezhuthacchan's version of Ramayana.

Other than this one voluminous work, Ezhuthacchan also gave us the beautiful work of Hari Naama Keerthanam. This work is filled with knowledge and devotion as well. There are in total 66 verses in malayalam in this work. The work talks about the life of Hari or Vishnu. The various glories of the Lord are brought out beautifully (we can say this is a summary of the stories as found in puranas like Bhagavatham). Though there are stories mentioned, there is no deviation from the ultimate reality of Brahman as found in Vedanta (Advaita Vedanta). Ezhuthacchan as we can see in this work is core advaitin and well learned in the shaastras as well (as he uses vedantic concepts in various verses along with giving stories about vishnu).

### Ultimate reality of Brahman

What we can see from this work is that a sadhaka should always remember the ultimate goal of life as realization of the ultimate reality of Brahman. This entity of Brahman alone exists at all times. Whatever else appears as existing is just mere illusion like water seen in desert, dream etc. Irrespective of all distinctions of caste, creed, knowledge, power, money etc. Brahman alone exists. This Brahman is the very essence of the dual world which is nothing but names and forms in Brahman. Even as various gold ornaments are mere names and forms in gold, similarly this entire world is names and forms in Brahman. This is because the world has come from Brahman, resides in Brahman for a period of time and vanishes back unto Brahman. This can only mean that the world is just an illusion in Brahman even as the dream world is just an illusion in the dreamer.

The I that pulsates inside us as I-exist, I-exist at all times is Brahman alone of the nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. This I is not the ego that identifies with the body, mind, people and objects of the world but it is that I which is changeless from the day of birth till the day of death and further as well. Though there are changes happening around us constantly, this I is never changing (it is the changeless witness of all changes and is the substratum in which these changes appear as existing).

Advaita Makaranda says:

Shadvikaravathaam vetta nirvikaarohamanyathaa

Tad vikaaraanusandhaanam sarvathaa naavakalpathe

The knower of the six modifications (birth, existence, growth, change, disease and death) as I has to be changeless; if not, it would never be possible to perceive the changes.

Anything that changes requires a changeless substratum. This rule is applied even in the case of movement on earth. Considering that earth itself is moving, we cannot say that we are moving in a car (as earth itself is moving). But we still assume the earth to be stationary and say that the car is moving. Similarly all the changes in the world have to be seen with respect to a changeless substratum. This changeless substratum alone is the perceiver of changes. And this changeless substratum is the pure I that pulsates inside us. This I is devoid of all changes and sorrow as seen in the deep sleep state where we are blissful.

It isn't duality that causes sorrow but considering duality to be real. Ishwara's creation is filled in and out with Ishwara. And therefore as Vidyananda beautifully points out (and AMMA often says), Ishwara's creation is not an obstacle to the ultimate goal of life; instead it helps in the ultimate goal of life though making us remember that this entire world is pervaded by Ishwara. Ishwara's creation though is blissful becomes sorrowful when it goes through our mind (our likes-dislikes, preferences). What is required to ever rejoice in bliss is knowing the world to be not real and Ishwara alone to be real as the substratum of the world. This Ishwara alone is Brahman - just different terms used for the same non-dual Conscious entity that pervades the entire world of names and forms.

#### Ultimate goal of life - moksha

The goal of life is to get rid of sorrows and ever rejoice in bliss - for all beings. This goal can only be achieved when we realize that Ishwara or Brahman alone exists here as the substratum of the world. Any amount of karma or upasana cannot give us this blissful state of moksha as that which obstructs this state of moksha is ignorance. Whatever is present is Brahman alone. We all are Brahman alone but we aren't aware of our very nature - this is called ignorance or not knowing the Self as Brahman or misconception. This can be removed only through knowledge. Knowledge of Brahman is found only in the shastras and even a Guru refers the shishya to the shastras rather than giving his own interpretations for moksha. Once knowledge of the shastras is gained, ignorance vanishes and a person realizes that I am ever blissful non-dual Brahman. Then the person will be able to ever rejoice in bliss. This blissful state called as moksha is the ultimate goal of life. Without this goal being achieved, a person will experience sorrow again and again by going from birth to birth (while unknowingly seeking bliss but wrongly in the external world which can give only sorrow).

#### Contemplation or nidhidhyaasana - way to moksha

Knowledge of the shastras is the way to moksha, there is no other way than knowledge to moksha as moksha is our very nature at all times (irrespective of whether we know it or not). Knowledge is in three steps of sravana, manana and nidhidhyaasana. Sravana is listening to the import of the scriptures as non-dual Brahman. Manana is reflecting about Brahman in our mind through logical analysis. Nidhidhyaasana is contemplation in our mind at all times that Brahman alone exists.

It is this nidhidhyaasana that the Lord terms as bhakthi, ananya bhajanam, ananya chintaa etc. in Gita. This nidhidhyaasana is the direct way to moksha though a person who isn't able to contemplate on Brahman should go through sravana and manana in order to know about Brahman and resolve any doubts about Brahman that might arise in the mind.

Constant contemplation on Brahman through stories with focus always on Brahman is what Ezhuthacchan accomplishes beautifully in Hari Naama Keerthanam (singing the names of Hari or Vishnu). Learning of this work will make us know Brahman. Reflecting on the meaning of this work will clear all doubts regarding Brahman. And repeatedly singing the work will make our mind ever focused on Brahman.

As Ezhuthacchan himself says, whatever is seen is Narayana's form; whatever is heard is Narayana's praises; whatever is performed is archana to Narayana; whatever is there is Narayana alone.

We will learn each verse of this work from the next magazine. May Narayana through learning of this work make us ever contemplate on Brahman as pervading the entire world of names and forms at all times so that through getting rid of ignorance we will be able to ever rejoice in bliss here and now itself.

## Acharyasmrithi

### Adi Sankara

Once in creation alone we can find birth of an individual whose impact in the world is so huge that it stays for eternity. Though there are many masters who have come in the past, are there in the present and will be there in the future as well, there will only be very few (we can say that only one) who change society itself as a whole by leaving society indebted to them in one or the other way. Such a master is Adi Sankara.

Though there are controversies with respect to Sankara's birth-date and many other historical facts, yet it remains an indisputable fact from Sankara's works that this master did tread earth long time ago. Within a short life-span of 32 years, Sankara did the impossible - whether it be bhakthi or jnaana or karma or aachara, Sankara set his trademark upon each of this. Though he changed society itself yet his change wasn't his own as he was a true traditionalist - one who is ever focused on the shaastras and the ultimate truth of Brahman preached in the shaastras.

This great master's greatness is known through the fact that many other masters have treaded the path set by Sankara in order to either illumine him or to prove him wrong. There have been many systems of Vedanta that have been created by various masters after Sankara but all of these have been based upon Sankara's works alone. This is because during a time when the scriptures and their meaning was being lost, Sankara rejuvenated the scriptures by writing commentaries on them. Called bhashyas, these commentaries stick onto the original while explaining the words and imports of the original without deviation and without using too many extra words.

Sankara also wrote many prakarana granthas (independent works) in order to put forth either the whole or part of Vedanta to normal people. Knowing that many people are able to gain devotion easily than knowledge, Sankara also wrote many devotional works in which also the emphasis is on Brahman alone. There are many works of Sankara which are of contemplative nature and through contemplation of these a sadhaka will be able to easily remember Brahman (and quickly attain moksha).

Works meant for knowledge and devotion are also not enough because unless purity of mind is attained, these will be fruitless. Thus Sankara set various codes of conduct for



people to attain purity of mind. These conducts was followed by Sankara himself (he wasn't a fake master who instructs everybody to do something he himself doesn't do). Sankara set up a tradition of his followers who would ensure these code of conducts are followed by people (and themselves). Thus we have the Sankara tradition of sanyaasis continuing in various Sankara mutts.

Code of conduct is found only from the Vedas and the various smritis. Thus Sankara set up four mutts in four corners of India and put one Veda as primary in each of these mutts. These mutts propagate knowledge, devotion and action in one or the other way through the guidance of the master in these mutts (the master-tradition goes on from generation to generation through initiation of a new master into sanyaasa by the previous master).

Since Sankara preached the shastras (the true meaning of the shastras), established code of conduct (to lead a life towards moksha) and himself followed these conduct, therefore he is called an acharya. Thus he is known as Sankaracharya. And the tradition of sanyaasis in various Sankara mutts are also called Sankaracharyas.

Other than establishing code of conduct, Sankara also formalized the dasha namis sanyaasa system (ten-fold sanyaasa tradition). Even today all acharyas including the rival madhvacharya, ramanujacharya etc. are also from this dasha namis sanyaasa system alone.

Sankara's life history has been explained in various digvijayas where Sankara's victory in various directions has been described. Sankara was a master who went to people in order to make them understand the import of the scriptures and life as Brahman through discussions and often debates as well. That he was always victorious can be easily understood as the concept of Brahman-alone-existing is the main essence of the scriptures itself and this alone can lead a person to eternal bliss.

### Vedanta or Advaita Vedanta

The argument that Sankara formulated and preached Advaita Vedanta is wrong and foolish as well because Sankara's words are resonances of the scriptures alone. Yes, scriptures have many other statements which emphasize on the duality of the world but these are known clearly as a way to gain attention of the seeker and slowly take the seeker from the world to its substratum of non-dual Brahman.

Shaastras clearly tell again and again that Brahman alone exists here. The duality that is seen is just an illusion in Brahman. And the individual who pulsates inside as I-exist, I-exist is Brahman alone (and the I of ego which identifies with everything is just an illusion as it constantly changes).

Advaita Vedanta or the essence of scriptures has been thus beautifully summarized by Sankara himself as:

Brahma satyam jagan mithyaa jeevo brahmaiva naparah

Brahman is real; the world is an illusion; jeeva or individual is Brahman alone and not different from Brahman.

That Brahman or non-duality alone exists can be easily proven through scriptural statements, logic and experience also. Tribute to Sankara can be done only through learning of the concepts of Vedanta and implementing it in our lives to take us to the goal of moksha here and now itself.

### Sruthi

Ishavasya Upanishad says in the beginning itself that Ishwara pervades the entire world (ishaavasyam idam sarvam). Narayana sooktha says that Narayana pervades the entire world in and out (yat cha kinchit jagat sarvam drishyate srooyatepi vaa, antharbahischa tatsarvam vyaapyannaaraayana sthithah). Purusha sooktha says that Purusha alone pervades this world (purusha eva idam sarvam). Mundaka Upanishad very clearly says that Brahman alone is everything through saying that Brahman is front, Brahman is behind, Brahman is above, Brahman is below, Brahman is on the right and Brahman is on the left (brahmaivedam amritam purastat brahma paschaat).

That duality doesn't exist is clearly told in the Katha Upanishad which says that there is no duality whatsoever here and whoever sees duality as if existing will go from death to death (neha naanaa asthi kinchana, mrityoh sah mrityum gacchati ya iha naanaa iva pashyathi).

Krishna says that there is nothing different from me here (mattah parataram na anyat kinchidasthi dhananjaya) and that I am everything (aham aadischa madhyam cha bhoothaanaam antha eva cha).

Yukthi

Logic of anvaya vyatireka clearly shows that there is no duality at all here and Brahman alone exists. Anvaya means co-existence and vyatireka means co-absence. Anvaya is - when A is there then B is there; vyatireka is - when A is not there B is not there. Through this we find that A is independent and B is dependent on A. That which is dependent is just an illusion in the independent entity even as a variable is just an illusion in the constant.

The two entities of Brahman as the cause of the world and the world alone exists for analysis. When Brahman is there, the world exists. And when Brahman isn't there, the world doesn't exist. Thus it is clear that Brahman is independent and the world is dependent on Brahman. And thus Brahman alone is real and the world is an illusion in Brahman.

That this Brahman is one's own very nature of Consciousness is proven through the fact that Brahman and I are of the same nature of Existence, Consciousness and Bliss. I am Existence in nature as I always exist. I am Consciousness in nature as I always illumine everything. I am blissful in nature as I am never hated. Therefore I am Brahman - that Brahman in which the illusion of world exists.

Anubhava

We clearly experience this non-dual state of Brahman in the deep sleep state where the entire world just ceases to exist and we are able to rejoice in bliss. Any sadhaka who is willing to follow the path set forth in the shastras will be able realize his very nature of blissful Brahman. Thus experience proves and will prove that I as Brahman alone exists and the world doesn't exist at all.

Two levels of reality

Just because the world doesn't exist at all doesn't mean that it is rejected from an empirical view-point. From the ultimate view-point alone the world is negated and the world is accepted as temporarily existing when we experience it. This is like the dream world where the dream world is accepted in dream but negated from the higher view-point of waking state. The ultimate state of Brahman alone existing is the paaramarthika level and the empirical level where the world (and all actions of the world) is accepted as existing is the vyaavahaarika level. Since these two levels are different therefore there is no harm in a person performing actions from a worldly perspective while ever abiding as Brahman mentally. Since vyavahara is like a drama, therefore the actions and the results of the

actions don't taint Brahman or a person who abides as Brahman. Thus there is no harm in Advaita at all.

It is without understanding these two levels that many opponents argue through hair-splitting logic. Logic alone cannot prove something to be real. That is real which exists at all times and it is proven through sruthi, yukthi and anubhava. All these three clearly show that Brahman alone exists at all times - though empirically the world appears as existing and is accepted as existing.

The greatness of Sankara is in that he explained all these concepts through his commentaries and works on the scriptures. The scriptures themselves explain many concepts and often seemingly contrary or contradictory in nature. Without the commentary of Sankara we will thus not be able to understand the import of the scriptures as non-dual Brahman. And without knowing the import as non-dual Brahman, we will not be able to realize Brahman through knowledge. And without realization we will not be able to get rid of sorrow and rejoice in bliss. Thus we all are indebted to this great master of Sankara in showing us the way to eternal bliss which can be attained here and now (rather than after going to brahma loka or any other loka).

May we all offer our prostrations to this great master of Sankara so that we will be able to understand the import of the scriptures as Brahman and through constant contemplation of Brahman as pervading the entire world and as our very nature of Consciousness we we will be able to ever rejoice in bliss in the state of moksha here and now itself.

## Vedanta Pariksha

This month all questions are on Mahatmas.

- 1) Who wrote the famous Jnaaneshwari commentary on Bhagavad Gita in Marathi
  - a) Sridhara Swamin
  - b) Bal Gangadhar Tilak
  - c) Bharathi Teertha
  - d) Sant Jnaaneshwar
- 2) Which mahatma's real name is Sudhamani
  - a) Mayi amma
  - b) Sharada Devi
  - c) Mata Amritanandamayi
  - d) Kanyakumari
- 3) Who was the great Krishna bhaktha and an advaitin at the same time, who also wrote the commentary of Gudartha Dipika on Gita and other works like Bhagavad Bhakthi Rasayana and Bala Mukundaashtakam
  - a) Sridhara Swamin
  - b) Madhusudana Saraswathi
  - c) Adi Sankara
  - d) Neelakanta
- 4) Who wrote the work of Mahabharatha Tatparya Nirnaya
  - a) Adi Sankara
  - b) Vidyananya
  - c) Madhvacharya
  - d) Ramanujacharya
- 5) Who wrote the famous Upadesha Saram
  - a) Sree Narayana Guru devan
  - b) Ramana Maharshi
  - c) Adi Sankara
  - d) Vidyananya
- 6) What was Ramana Maharshi's name given by parents
  - a) Narayanan
  - b) Sankaran
  - c) Venkataraman

- d) Krishnan
- 7) Who wrote the malayalam work of Jnaanappana
- a) Sree Narayana Guru devan
  - b) Ezhuthacchan
  - c) Poonthaanam
  - d) Bhattathiri
- 8) Who was the father of Dhritarashtra, Pandu and Vidura
- a) Bhishma
  - b) Veda Vyaasa
  - c) Indra
  - d) Paraasara
- 9) Who was the saint who got inspired by Swami Vivekananda thereby taking sanyaasa and traveling to the west where for his discourses, was awarded phds from multiple universities which was instantly rejected by the saint (his famous book is "In Woods of God Realization")
- a) Swami Chinmayananda
  - b) Swami Sivananda
  - c) Tapovan Maharaj
  - d) Swami Rama Tirtha
- 10) Who was the great scholar master who after reaching the Himalayas never returned back (always living in the Himalayas)
- a) Swami Chinmayananda
  - b) Mahavatar Babaji
  - c) Tapovan Maharaj
  - d) Swami Rama Tirtha

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

## Anukramaanika Nirdesham

1. Editorial – a general message
2. Upanishad Vivaranam – verse-by-verse explanation of Upanishad (Mundaka Upanishad)
3. Gitaamritham – one sloka of Gita explained
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 a regional work (Hari Naama Keerthanam)
7. Acharya Smrithi – remembering an acharya through brief life-history and works
8. 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)

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