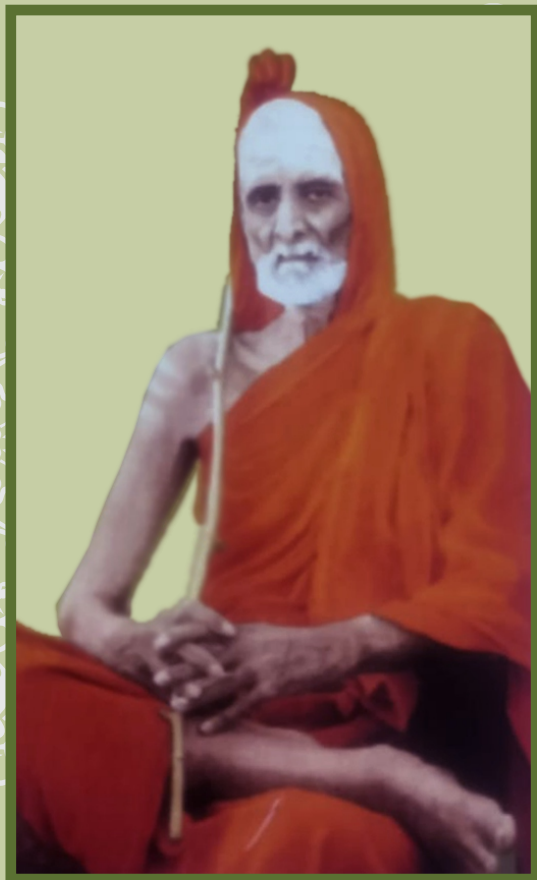


JIVA YATRA

By
Swami Jnanananda Bharati



As taught by
Pujyasri Omkarananda Mahaswamigal



Transcribed by **Sri R. Ramakrishnan**

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Jiva Yatra

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The author of this book, Swami Jnananda Bharati, belongs to recent times (1889-1975). His name before he took *sannyasa* was Sri Krishnaswamy Iyer. He practised law in Madurai. Later, he took *sannyasa*. He lived all alone in a village called Mannadimangalam, near Cholavandan. He engaged himself relentlessly in bringing out in book form the ancient texts of Sanatana Dharma.

Sri Swamigal was a devotee of Sri Sarada Mutt in Sringeri. He took *sannyasa* from the mutt. He was a Brahmanishta- ever dwelling in Brahman, the Self. He was a scholar in English, Tamil and Sanskrit. His scholarship in Sanskrit was such that he could write original verses in Sanskrit.

He came across an English book, titled Spiritual Journey, which dealt with the ideas in Christianity. It inspired him to take up writing a book in Sanskrit containing the ideas of the spiritual journey mentioned in Sanatana Dharma. This book, *Jiva yatra* is the result.

In this short book of nine verses, the essence of vedic teaching has been presented.

INTRODUCTION

Yatra means journey. *Yatra* literally means saving oneself by making an effort (*yatnena traayate iti yatra*). In India, there is a practice called *tirtha yatra* which involves having a dip in all the sacred waters – rivers, oceans, wells – with the purpose of saving oneself from the effects of sinful or wrong actions committed over many lives.

Jiva Yatra means Life's journey. Generally, there are many difficulties in making the preparations for a journey, getting the travel bags ready and so on. In the modern era, there are many facilities, which are increasing day by day, for undertaking a journey. In spite of this, it appears as if there are still many difficulties when making a journey. In ancient days, when there were no facilities of any kind for travel, our respected ancestors have traveled the length and breadth of the country, putting up with many hardships.

During a journey, food may be available in some places; in some other places food may not be available. The body gets fatigued by the rigours of the journey. In spite of this, with the goal of washing away the sins and becoming pure, journeys are

undertaken. If we are committed to reach the goal, we feel that we should bear the difficulties and cross the hurdles. If this desire and commitment are not strong, the willingness to bear these difficulties will not be there.

We undertake many trips by car, by plane and so on. What the author of this book talks about is the *jiva yatra* or the Life's journey.

The *jiva* or the living being is continuously traveling, taking many bodies in the process. The travel is not only in the present body. Before this, it (the *jiva*) has taken so many bodies. If it is not wise, there is no doubt that it will take many more births. Like traveling in different carriages during a train journey, the life's journey continues in different bodies. In the present birth, the *jiva* is in a human body. Before this, there were other bodies in which the journey was going on.

In worldly travel, it is known where we start the journey and what the destination is. In life's journey we do not know how many births we have taken before this. The *yatra* has been going on. It is not known to us as to when it started. But if we are a bit awareful, we can complete the journey in this life. If we are not awareful, the journey will continue.

In this book, the author explains, step by step and in the words of the Vedas, a human being's goal

in life and the path to reach there and the means to be adopted in the spiritual journey.

The author starts the first verse with the word, *nityananda*, as an invocation, constituting an auspicious beginning to the book.






Verse 1

नित्यानन्दसुखं पदं सुविमलं प्राप्तुं समीहायुताः
 सर्वेजन्मभृतः सदा व्यसनिनस्तत्स्थानसंमार्गणे ।
 एवं सत्यपि साध्यसाधनयुगं सम्यङ् न जानन्ति ते
 न प्राप्ता ह्यधुनापि सौख्यपदवीं स्वाभीष्टरूपां यतः ॥ १ ॥

***Nityanandasukham padam
 suvimalam praaptum sameehaayutaa:
 Sarve janmabhruta: sadaa
 vyasaninastatsthaanasammaargaNe |
 Evam satyapi saadhyasaadhanayugam
 samyang na jaananti te
 Na praapta hyadhunaapi
 saukhyapadaveem
 svaabheeshtaruupaam yata: || 1 ||***

THE MEANING

janma bhrutah sarve – all those who are born
suvimalam – pure (free from sorrow)
nityananda sukham – everlasting happiness
padam – goal
praptum – to reach
sameehaayutaa: – being interested

tat sthana sammargane – in the search of that everlasting happiness

sadaa – always

vyasanina: – struggle

evam satyapi – though this is the truth

te – they

saadhya-saadhana-yugam – both the *sadhyam* (goal) and *sadhana* (means)

samyak – clearly

najaananti – do not know

yata: – (how this is known is) because

svaabhishhtarupam – which is most desired by them

saukhyapadaveem – that everlasting happiness

adhuna api – until now

na praapta: – not attained

THE ESSENCE

All human beings are keenly interested in attaining the goal of everlasting happiness without any tinge of sorrow. They are constantly engaged in their efforts to find the way to attain this goal. Though such is the case, they do not seem to have a clear vision about either the goal or the means to

achieve it. This is clear from the fact that despite their efforts, they have not achieved the goal until now.

THE EXPLANATION

All people desire to enjoy limitless happiness. They want happiness which is unadulterated with unhappiness. But they do not clearly know, “This is what I want, this is how it can be achieved”. If they had known this, they would have achieved their goal at least by now. It is obvious that they have not succeeded in their efforts as otherwise they would not be still struggling.

LIMITLESS HAPPINESS

The scriptures which talk about the knowledge of Reality mention two kinds of happiness. One is the happiness which is one's own Being and the other is the happiness derived from the experience of sense objects. The happiness from the experience of sense objects is, by and large, referred to as *sukham*, whereas the happiness which is one's own real nature is termed *Ananda*. The word, *Ananda sukham* in this verse emphasises the happiness that is pure Ananda.

A human being generally considers that he is the personification of sorrow. The scriptures declare, “You are the Happiness”. If an enquiry is taken up, with the help of a competent Guru, on the truths

declared in the scriptures of *advaita vedanta*, the Truth that “I am the Happiness” will be as clear as a berry on the palm.

Whatever happiness we experience is mixed with sorrow. When we are listening with ecstasy to the most melodious music, if there is a blaring noise outside, the happiness of listening to the music is destroyed. When we are relishing the taste of peanuts, eaten one by one, if, by chance, an infected nut is bitten, the joy is cut off and all the joy we experienced in relishing the peanuts until then completely vanishes. When the entire household is bustling with happiness in the preparation for a wedding, if the father of the bride were to suddenly suffer a heart attack, all the joy completely ends and gloom settles down over the entire household. Nobody wants this kind of happiness. They want pure happiness, which is limitless and everlasting and complete, lacking in nothing.

WHAT PEOPLE GENERALLY DESIRE

The concept that people have of happiness is very limited. For example, a parent desires, “My child should study well and score high grades”.

Then?

“He should get admission in a reputed college or university”.

Then?

“He should get a good job and earn lots of money”

Then?

“He should get married and have children”

Then?

“These children should study well and score high marks”

Then?

“They should get admission.....”

The story goes on endlessly. In short nobody wants the slightest tinge of sorrow or sadness. Nobody wants any problem in life. Does anybody pray to God, “Oh God, give me some unhappiness?” Where is the need to pray for this when there is already so much unhappiness in life, they say.

THE SEARCH FOR HAPPINESS

Though people want limitless, uninterrupted everlasting happiness, they do not know where to find it. They look for it in television shows, switching from channel to channel all the time in a 24 hour day. They hope to find it in eating delicious food with a variety of tastes. They seek the company of friends and relatives in the hope of finding that happiness. They look for it in material objects. They search for it going on tours from place to place.

From morning to night, man struggles to earn money. He thinks that unless he struggles he will

not get money. He assumes that once he gets money he will be happy. Thanks to money, many facilities and conveniences increase in life. But the problems in life also increase manifold. Then he is told that he will get happiness by following a religious way of life. He undertakes many religious pilgrimages. He goes to Mount Kailash, Badrinath, Kedarnath and many such places, looking for happiness.

Thus people make all the efforts in pursit of happiness spending money and labouring hard. Everyone searches for happiness, but their search is futile, because their knowledge about happiness is so superficial. No one has a clear idea as to what the limitless, everlasting happiness they are seeking is and what is the means to get it. What is the justification for making such a sweeping statement? Just by looking at them, it is clear that they have grown weary and tired in life, looking for happiness and not getting it.

Thus the first sloka of *Jeeva Yatra* beautifully describes the goal of all human beings. The second sloka teaches the way to achieve that limitless, everlasting, pure happiness.



Verse 2

तत्प्राप्त्यै प्रभुसंमितापि कृपया त्रय्यन्तसारान्विता
 वल्ली काठकमध्यगा कविसमं प्रोत्साहयन्ती नरान् ।
 एवं साधनकल्पनां रचयते सन्मार्गगानां सतां
 तद्विष्णोः परमं पदं च सहसा गन्तुं मनीषावताम् ॥ २ ॥

**Tatpraaptyai prabhusammitaapi
 krupayaa tryyantaSaaraanvitaa
 Valli kaaTakamadhyagaa kavisamam
 protsaahayantii naraan |
 Evam saadhanakalpanaam rachayate
 Sanmaargagaanaam sataam
 tatvisHNo: paramam padam cha sahasaa
 gantum maneeshaavataam || 2 ||**

THE MEANING

tatpraaptyai – to reach that (*nityaananda*)

trayyanta-saaraanvitaa – the essence of
 Vedas

kaatakamadhyavalli – in the middle portion of
 Kathopanishad

prabhusamhita api – though equivalent to a
 Master

kavisamam – as a friend

kripayaa – compassionately

naraan – the individual

protsahayantii – enthuses

sanmargagaanaam – to those who wish to tread the good path

sataam – to the good people

tat vishNo: paramam padam – *nityanandam*

sahasaa – quickly

gantum – to reach

maneeshavataam – to the intelligent persons

idam – the following

sadhana-kalpanaam – imagery for the means

rachayate – explains

THE ESSENCE

Kathopanishad, which is the essence of vedanta, has the authority to command the individual. Yet, like a friend, it compassionately enthuses the individual to attain that state (of everlasting happiness). To those good people treading the right path, to the intelligent persons desirous of reaching quickly vishno paramam padam (the state of eternal happiness), the upanishad explains the means through the imagery as follows (in the next verse).

THE EXPLANATION

This second *sloka* says that Vedanta, the end portion of the Vedas, points out the means to attain the goal of everlasting happiness desired by all people. People do not clearly know what the goal is and what the means are. To such people the upanishad teaches the way. The author declares that the key to the everlasting happiness is in the Vedas and it is only through the Vedas that the path to the goal can be known.

THREE KINDS OF SCRIPTURES:

Prabhu Samhita

Vedas have the right to order people, like a Master. So it is called *prabhu samhita*. Vedas have the power to command the people to “speak the truth, follow dharma (*satyam vada, dharmam chara*)”. Everybody is bound to obey the order of the Vedas. A person who wants to defend his challenging the utterances of another person, ususally asks, “Why cannot it be challenged? It is no vedic declaration”. This implies that Vedic commandments should not be challenged and that everybody is duty-bound to obey the Vedic injunctions.

Suhrut Samhita

Suhrut means friend. *Itihasas*, *smritis* etc. are derived from the Vedas. They point out the methods

for a *dharmic* life, as a friend would do. They advise him affectionately saying, “This is for your good. If you follow this you will be benefitted. It is better to avoid such and such actions, as they will not do any good to you, but may cause harm”. These scriptures give advice in such a friendly manner and are therefore called *suhrut samhita*.

Kanta Samhita

The *puranas* appeal to the heart, like a wife would do, speaking in such endearing terms and coaxing the individual to follow the right path. So these are called *kaanta samhita*.

The intention of these three kinds of scriptures is the same – to do good to the individual.

VEDA'S COMPASSION

Kathopanishad occurs in the Krishna Yajur Veda. There are two chapters in this Upanishad, each with three sections. Though it has the authority to order the person as to what should be done and what should not be done, this Upanishad, with utmost compassion, enthuses the individual to follow the right path. The *sastras* teach those people who are enthusiastic to follow the right path and to those intelligent people who can enquire into the *sastras* with discrimination and who wish to quickly attain *vishno paramam padam* (the everlasting happiness).

VISHNO PARAMAM PADAM

Very often, the expression, *vishno: paramam padam*, is wrongly interpreted to mean reaching Lord Maha Vishnu's feet. It is believed that a person who has dedicated his entire life to service and devotion to Lord Vishnu, reaches, after his death, the Abode of Lord Maha Vishnu, to remain thereafter in His Eternal Presence. This is not a strictly correct interpretation. What this term *vishno paramampadam* really means is *nityaanandam*.

Vishnu means All Pervading. If Ananda is to be *nitya* (everlasting), it must be present at all places and at all times. If it is in one place and not in another, then it will not be there when the person goes to the other place. That means it is not *nitya*. If it is to be called *nitya* it must be present here and now. If it is available at a future point of time and not now, then obviously it is not *nitya* or everlasting as it is not there now. Eternally present means present here and now. *Nityananda* does not have the limitations of place and time and object. If it is present in one object and not in another, then also it is not *nitya*, because it is absent in the second object.

Nityananda Cannot Be Attained.

If *nityananda* is already there, then it is not something to be attained. There is a simple definition

of *nityam*. *Yad yad aagantukam tad tad anityam; yad yad svaabhaavikam, tad tad nityam*. That which comes is not *nityam*. That which is inherent as its own nature is *nityam*.

For example, if a vessel containing water is placed on the fire, the water in the vessel, becomes hot after some time. If the vessel is removed from the fire, the water loses the heat. Heat is not natural to water but is acquired and is, therefore, *anityam*. But the heat is ever present in the fire and is the very nature of fire. It is ever present in the fire and is *svabhika*. It is *nityam*. Anything that is acquired is *anityam*.

Such is the case with Ananda. If it is already there it is not something to be attained. You can never attain *nityanandam*. You can never experience *nityanandam*, because, as we know from experience, all experiences come to an end. If we call any particular experience as the experience of *nityanandam*, that experience will also come to an end and therefore cannot be the experience of *nityanandam*. *Nityanandam* is not something to be attained, because it is already there as your very Nature. If *nityanandam* is my nature, why do I not know it or feel it? It is not known because of ignorance. The *sastras* say, “I will make you **know** it (by teaching you).

To understand the great Truth, the Upanishad, with great compassion, gives a beautiful imagery. This is seen in the next *sloka*.






Verse 3

आत्मानं रथिनं ब्रवीति निगमः बुद्धिं च तत्सारथिं
 देहं स्यन्दनमिन्द्रियाणि तुरगान् शब्दादि तद्गोचरम् ।
 चेतः प्रग्रहमादरेण य इमान् वश्यांस्तनोत्यात्मवान्
 तस्यैवाप्यमिदं पदं सुखघनं पारं परं ह्यध्वनः ॥ ३ ॥

**Aatmaanam rathinam braveeti nigamo
 buddhim cha tatsaarathim
 Deham syandanamidriyaaNi turagaan
 sabdaadi tatgocharam |
 Cheta: pragrahamaadareNa ya
 imaan vasyaanStanotyaatmavaan
 Tasyaivaapyamidam padam sukhaghanam
 paaram param hyadhvana: || 3 ||**

THE MEANING

Nigama: – vedas (mid portion of Kathopanishad)

atmaanam – Jivatma

rathinam – seated in the chariot

deham – the body

syandanam – chariot

turagaan – horses

buddhim – the intellect

tat saarathim – the charioteer

cheta: – the mind

pragraham – reins

sabdaadi – sense objects such as sound etc.,

tat gocharam – the path

braveeti – says

ya: atmavaan – the alert individual

imam – these (body, sense organs, mind and intellect)

aadarena – very carefully

vasyaamstanoti – controls

tasya eva – only he

idam – this

adhvana: param paaram – the ultimate end of the path

sukhaghanam padam – the goal of Absolute Happiness

hi – definitely

aapyam – can reach

THE ESSENCE

The Vedas (the middle portion of Kathopsanishad) pictures the jivatma as the person seated in the chariot, the buddhi (intellect) as the charioteer, the five sense organs as the horses, the

mind as the reins and the sense objects such as sound etc as the path.

Only that self-disciplined person who controls (directs) the body, the sense organs, the mind and the intellect can definitely reach the destination of this path which is nityananda sukham.

THE EXPLANATION

The Chariot Imagery

The following mantras occurring in the third section of the first chapter of Kathpanishad pictures the imagery of a chariot journey mentioned in the second *sloka*.

“Know that the *jivatma* as the one seated in the chariot, the body as the chariot, the intellect as the charioteer, and the mind as the reins.” (Kathopanishad 1-3-3)

“Wise men declare that the sense organs are the horses and the sense objects are the path. They say that the *jeevatma* who has all these is the experienter.” (Kathopanishad 1-3-4)

“To that person who is intelligent and has a disciplined mind, the sense organs are, like the horses of the chariot, under control.” (Kathopanishad 1-3-5)

THE COMPARISON

This third verse compares the goal and the means of the *jiva yatra* with a chariot journey. In any journey the traveller is the most important person. If the traveller is not there, there is no one to take up a journey.

Next in importance comes the destination. The destination must be clearly known. One cannot get into a taxi and say, “Go”. The driver will ask, “Where to?”. If you say, “I do not know”, there can be no travel because you do not know the destination. The third requirement is the vehicle. It can be a bus or a cycle or a car or it may be by walk. Then there must be a driver to drive the vehicle. Lastly, the path must be clearly known. An intelligent driver must know which is the correct path to reach the destination without groping or losing the way. In this *sloka* all these and more are described.

The traveller in the journey is the individual. The goal is the Paramatma which is identical with *nityananda sukham* or *vishno: paramam padam* which is the same as being ever happy and peaceful. The vehicle for this journey (*jiva yatra*) is the body. The horses which pull the chariot, called the body, are the five sense organs – eye, ear, tongue, mouth and the skin. The reins for the horses is the mind. Intellect

is the charioteer. What the intellect decides, the mind will execute into action. The path is the sense objects – sight, sound, taste, smell and touch.

ATMAVAN – THE SELF CONTROLLED PERSON

Sri Bharatiyar said that controlling oneself is *dharma*. *Aatmavaan* means one who is ever alert, firm and well disciplined. He has controlled the sense organs, mind and the intellect and has kept them under his command. They obediently follow his instructions. *Aatmavaan* means one who possesses himself. If the mind, intellect, body and sense organs are kept under his control, they are said to belong to him. If not, he is possessed by them and becomes their slave.

HOW TO DISCIPLINE THE BODY?

We should not be dominated by the body. We must keep it under our control, so that when we want it to do some work or the other, it obeys us. We must use the free will given to us by the Creator and take efforts to discipline the body. We must give the body the food which will do good to it. The body must also be exercised to the required extent. We must give it adequate rest and also engage it in work when needed.

Tirumoolar, the famous saint said, “If the body is damaged (due to not being looked after), the *prana*

or the life force will be destroyed. With the body that is not looked after, one cannot study and attain Knowledge (of the Reality). When I learnt the method of looking after the body, the body lived and so did the life force”.

Only if the body is fit, spiritual *sadhana* (practices) can be performed. If it is not fit, how can one study and practice *sadhana*? Where is the question of gaining Knowledge for such a person? All the time will be spent in attending to the sick body. So the individual must maintain the body in a healthy condition, perform *sadhana* and attain firm Knowledge.

It is said, with an air of contempt, that the body will decay and that it is no more than a bundle of flesh and blood. Such statements are made for the individual to give up his attachment to the body. This does not mean that the body should not be cared for. It is our duty to take care of it but remain detached to it.

HOW TO DISCIPLINE THE SENSE ORGANS?

The five senses are the horses which are dragging the vehicle and must be under control. Otherwise, the destination cannot be reached. How can the senses be controlled? The scriptures prescribe what is to be seen, what is to be heard, what is

to be smelt, what is to be tasted and what is to be touched. We must obey the instructions of the scriptures. *Dharmasastras* specify what is *dharma* (right action) and what is *adharma* (wrong action) in relation to the sense objects. We can experience *dharmic* pleasures but must avoid *adharmic* pleasures.

Normally, the sense organs are inclined towards those pleasures which are prohibited as *adharma*. We must train them to turn away from *adharmic* pleasures and train them to experience only *dharmic* pleasures. God has given us the sense organs to experience the world. But we must use them for *dharmic* actions only. If trained to experience only *dharmic* pleasures, the sense organs will be under our control; otherwise, we will be under their control.

A tortoise, when it senses danger, withdraws all its limbs into its shell. Thereafter, even if a huge rock were to fall on it, it is still protected. Likewise, we must withdraw our sense organs from *adharmic* pursuits, using our power of discrimination or intellectual analysis as to what is right and what is wrong. Discrimination is the shell. Thus sense organs can be mastered by sense control.

HOW TO DISCIPLINE THE MIND?

It is the nature of the mind to be constantly vacillating. By deep meditation on God, the mind

will slowly gain concentration and will come under our control. By analysing the experiences that the sense objects create in us, we can control the mind. Generally, the mind which is flitting from thought to thought can be subdued by practices such as *japa* and meditation.

HOW TO DISCIPLINE THE INTELLECT?

The intellect is generally capable of deceiving us by justifying whatever it fancies. It will point out to what others do and try to prove that there is nothing wrong in what it intends to do. Unjust actions and ideas will be defended as just. The intellect must be given the knowledge contained in our *dharma sastras* and thereby made to develop *viveka* or discrimination.

TO SUM UP

The body must be brought under control by giving it the food that is good for it and by exercising it. Sense organs can be disciplined by directing them to experience only those pleasures permitted by the *dharma sastras*. The mind is controlled by meditating on the God with form. The intellect is disciplined by developing *viveka* or discrimination through a study of the scriptures. If we live according to the dictates of the *dharma sastras*, then all these will be under our control. Our experiences must be

beneficial to us and be moderate. We must avoid severe austerities which may cause damage to the body.

All these faculties must function in unison. In a music recital, the *mridangam* and the violin are tuned to the same pitch (*sruti*) and so does the vocalist. All of them must be tuned in harmony. Even if one of them is out of tune, there will be no one left in the auditorium to listen to the recital. Likewise, body, sense organs, mind and intellect must all function in unison and well coordinated. All of them will then help and cooperate with us all the time.

Only that alert person who keeps the body, sense organs, mind and intellect under control can reach the destination of the path, namely, everlasting, unblemished Happiness.



Verse 4

प्राप्यं तत्परमं सुखं हि मुनयः मोक्षं समाचक्षते
 जीवेशानजगद्विशेषरहितं ज्ञानैकसाध्यं ध्रुवम् ।
 येनात्मन्यतिरोहितः स्वमहिमानन्दात्मको भासते
 मिथ्याध्यासमतिश्च येन गलति ज्ञानं तदेवामलम् ॥ ४ ॥

**Praapyam tatparam sukham hi munayo
 moksham samaachakshate
 Jivesaanajagadvisesharahitam
 jnanaikasaadhyam dhruvam |
 Yenatmanyatirohita:
 svamahimaanandaatmako bhaasate
 Mithyaadhyasamatischa yena galati
 jnaanam tadevaamalam || 4 ||**

THE MEANING

Munaya: – seers (*rishis*)

praapyam – to be reached

tat paramam sukham hi – the ultimate happiness

jnanaikasaadhyam – that which can be reached only through *jnanam* (knowledge)

jiva-isaana-jagad-visesha-rahatiam – free from the differences as *jiva*, *Isvara* and the world

dhruvam – firm (permanent)

moksham – liberation or freedom from rebirth

samaachakshate – clearly declared

yena – by which

aatman – in the mind

atirohita: – uncovered

svamahima – self effulgent with its glory

aanandatmaka: bhasate – glows as happiness

yena – by which

mitya adhyaasa mati cha – thoughts due to erroneous imagination

galati – swallowed

tad – that

amalam – blemishless

jnanam eva – knowledge

THE ESSENCE

The seers have declared that the Supreme Happiness, which can be attained only through Knowledge, is moksham (liberation or freedom from rebirth), in which there is no differentiation as individual, God and the world. That Self effulgence which reveals itself in the mind as pure Ananda and which swallows all the erroneously imagined thoughts, is called Knowledge.

THE EXPLANATION

What has been variously termed in the text as *suvimala nityananda sukham*, *saukhyā padam*, *vishno paramam padam* and *sukha ghana padam* is what the *rishis* have declared as nothing other than Everlasting Happiness. The word, *munaya:*, has two meanings. One is those who observe *mouna* or silence. The other is one who contemplates deeply on the scriptural declarations. It is noteworthy that the author has for the first time introduced the term '*moksham*'. What he has denoted by words such as Ananda, *sukham* etc., is called *moksham* by *jnanis* (wise men). The word '*moksham*' is widely used in common parlance, though its real meaning is not always correctly understood.

KNOWLEDGE – BASED JOURNEY

The journey undertaken for attaining Supreme Happiness is, in truth, not a journey from one place to another. Some religious thinkers say that the *jivatma* has come away a long distance from the Paramatma and that he must go back to the Paramatma. Actually, we have never ever parted from God. We think we have done so; that is all. Even a doer of wrong actions is still with God. And so too is the righteous person. No one can ever be separate from God. To think, “I have been separated from God”, is ignorance. There are

some who say, “If you take one step toward God, He will take sixteen steps toward you”. God is not that far away from us. What such a statement means is that if you make a sincere effort, God's Grace will help you to reach Him.

The journey is not an action based journey. It is Knowledge based. It is only a journey from ignorance to knowledge and not any kind of action. Reaching God is not like going to Kedarnath. Nor is God reached by actions such as meditation on His form or worship. It is not as if the *jivatma* reaches Paramatma and becomes one with It. Paramatma is not limited to any one location. He is All- Pervading. The goal of Life's journey, *moksha*, is not reached by any physical, verbal or mental deed.

KNOWING IS REACHING

What does it mean when it is said that by disciplining the body, sense organs and mind, the goal of Supreme Happiness can be reached? If we control all these three, will we gain any experience of having got something new? No. If we do all these, we get the Knowledge that we are non-different from Paramatma. There will be a clear knowledge that “ I am already the Supreme Happiness, here and now. Even when I say that I am sad, I am still that Ananda”. Sadness comes and sadness goes. Ananda does not come or go. We are that Ananda.

It is said that if we perform *sadhanas* (practices), we can reach God. When we undertake these mental practices, we are already with God. Even before we started the *sadhana*, we were with God. And after we have completed the practices, we are still with God. Then why are *sadhanas* prescribed? It is to know that God Is. Even when we do the *sadhanas* and after the purpose of the *sadhanas* has been served, God is never apart from us. We think that God is away from us – it is just a thought. Such a thought should be changed. Indeed, there is nothing to gain.

It is poetic language to say that a man travels from dream world to the waking state. In fact, there is no such travel. As soon as the eyes are opened, waking takes place. There is no traveling. Likewise, knowing that we are nothing other than the Supreme Self is reaching *moksham*.

ATTRIBUTES OF MOKSHAM

In *moksha*, there are no differences as *jiva*, God and the world. *Jiva-isaana-jagat-rahitam* means *advaita*. We think that there are three different entities – *jiva*, God and the world. We think we, the *jivas*, are different from the world and different from God. Treating these three as different from one another, we differentiate between the happiness we derive from sense objects and the happiness we derive from Isvara *bhakti* or devotion to God.

Moksham is not the happiness derived from sense experiences. Nor is it the happiness produced by *Isvara bhakti*. It is not the happiness we feel by doing *sadhanas* such as the chanting of mantras or God's names or by *japa* etc. It is not even what we feel by contemplating on God. When we think of them that they become external objects in the mind. Therefore, the sense pleasures and happiness of contemplating on God thus obtained are *anitya* (temporary). Ananda is not experienced by sense organs nor by the mind. Undifferentiated, Undivided (Whole) Happiness is *moksha*.

MEANS TO REALIZE MOKSHA

Moksha is something to be gained only by Self-Knowledge. It is always there. It has only to be known—that is all. It is not achieved by any action, but is to be known by the intellect. What is the necessity to repeat this again and again? It is to erase an impression, possibly conveyed by the example of chariot journey. In that example given in the third verse, it was said that there is a chariot, there is a path and a goal. When it is said that the body is the chariot, the *jivatma* is the traveller, and the Paramatma is the goal, it might look as though something has to be done, some movement has to take place. It was also said that the person has to discipline the body, sense organs and the mind and that only such a person can

reach the goal. This might give an impression that having controlled the faculties, some action has to be performed now. After succeeding in controlling them, all that remains is to know the truth and not doing anything. What does it mean to travel from ignorance to Knowledge?. It means that a proper study of the scriptures under a competent Guru must be taken up. Only by study can knowledge be gained. Without study, nobody can obtain knowledge. Having studied, the Truth will be known here. If Truth is something which has to be acquired, then it will also be lost. You can only know, "I am Ananda". Ananda cannot be gained by any other means.

By saying this, the author in one sweep, negates the contention of certain types of religious literature that talk about four types of *mukti* (freedom) – *saaloka* (same place), *saamipa* (nearness), *saroopa* (same form) and *sayujya* (merging). If one does service to God by offering flowers plucked from the plants for worship, making floral decorations, washing the apparel used for covering the icons etc., then one is said to reach Sivaloka or Vaikunta, which is the Abode of Siva or Vishnu. This is called *saaloka mukti*. To serve God in His Abode, is called *saamipa mukti*. Thereafter to have the same form as God – with conch, wheel and mace or with trident and sacred ash – is called *saroopa mukti*. Finally, to merge and become

one with God is *saayujya mukti*. To attain any of the four types of *mukti*, action must be done. *Sadhanas* such as *japa* (chanting the mantra or the name of the God), meditation etc. must be done. But the *moksham* mentioned here is not any of these four. *Moksham* is All- Pervading. It is here and now.

With the help of *sruti* (Vedas), *yukti* (logic) and *anubhavam* (experience), we must come to know that *moksham* is our true Nature. This has to be well understood. *Moksham* is not something to be reached at some point of time in future. **Knowing** that It is Ever-Accomplished is *moksham*. This is the essence of the above analysis. The knowledge that Ananda cannot be attained and that “I am Ananda” is Ananda. It is foolish to search for it. *Dhruvam moksham-moksham* is permanent and indestructible.

BENEFIT OF KNOWLEDGE

There are two benefits of this Knowledge. One is that it reveals our Nature. By enquiry into the contents of the scriptural texts, under the guidance of a competent guru, the covering over our real Nature is removed and Ananda is revealed. My glory is reflected in the mind. It is revealed by Its own Self-effulgence.

The second benefit of the Knowledge is that it swallows all the thoughts wrongly imposed on

the Self. We tend to think that this body, this life, this world, the joys and sorrows are all real. Self Knowledge reveals that they are all mere appearances and that there is nothing real or true about them. When a dream is seen, it appears as if all that is seen in the dream is real. Likewise, when awake, everything around us appears real. When Self- Knowledge is gained, it is realised that the perceptions both when awake and when dreaming are only appearances. The thought that they are real is swallowed by Knowledge. So Knowledge destroys the erroneous imaginations and at the same time reveals the true Ananda.

THE GLORY OF KNOWLEDGE – JNANA

There are two main branches of knowledge. But only Self- Knowledge is unblemished and complete. The author calls it *amalam jnanam* – free from any impurities, unconditioned. Saint Tiruvalluvar says that Intelligence is not to be carried away by perceptions but to know the reality underlying them. Seeing what is as it is, is defect free knowledge. All sciences picture the Universe as real. Even the *karma* and *upasana* (action and worship) portions of the Vedas also talk of unreal things as though they are real. As it talks about limited things, this knowledge is also limited. Only when Vedanta is studied, will it be realised that the *karma* and *upasana* portions of the Vedas are imperfect. However, even

though they give imperfect knowledge, they are still useful as they help us to get the perfect knowledge. It is the play of Maya which separates the individual, God and the world. In fact, they are all one and the same and not different or separate from one another. It is Self- Knowledge which reveals that bodies, minds, *jivas*, worlds are all imposed on the Consciousness by the play of Maya and establishes us in *moksham*.



Verse 5

आस्तिक्यं दृढमूलमेव मनुजः सम्पादयत्वादितः
 कर्माचारयुतस्ततश्च भवतु स्वर्गादिभोगेच्छया ।
 स्वर्गादावपि च क्रमेण गमितो नैराश्यमेवास्थिरे
 नित्यानित्यविचारणे स्वधिकृतस्तत्त्वं समन्विच्छतु ॥ ५ ॥

**Aastikyam drudamuulameva
 manuja: Sampaadayatvaadita:
 Karmaacharayutastatashcha
 bhavatu Svargaadibhogeccchaya ।
 Svargaadaavapi cha krameNa
 gamito nairaashyamevaasthire
 nityaanityavichaaraNe
 svadhikritastattvam
 Samanvicchatu ॥ 5 ॥**

THE MEANING

Manuja: – man

Aadita: – first

drudamuulam – firmly rooted

aastikhyam – faith in the Vedas

sampaadayatu eva – must obtain

tata: cha – then

svargaadi-bhoga-ichaya – desire for pleasures of heaven and earth

karmaacharayuta: – doer of specified actions

bhavati – be

kramena – in course of time

asthire – impermanent

svargadau api – even in heavenly pleasures

nairaasyam – free from desire

nitya-anitya-vicharaNe – analysing the permanent and impermanent

svadhikruta: – deeply engaged

tattvam – Truth

samanvicchatu – desire to search

THE ESSENCE

First, man must acquire a deep well rooted faith in the Vedas. Then desirous of enjoying the pleasures of heaven and earth, he must perform actions as specified (in the sastra). In course of time, he should, freeing himself from the desire for the pleasures of heaven and earth and deeply analysing the permanent and the impermanent, search for the Truth.

THE EXPLANATION

How are the faculties to be disciplined and brought under control? The author explains step by step the process to be followed for this purpose in *sloka*s 5 to 8.

The word, '*manuja*' means descendants of Manu. Manu is the *rishi* (seer) who has given us the *dharma sastra* which lays down how life should be lived and how it should not be lived.

AASTHIKYAM — FAITH IN VEDAS

Vedas are book of Knowledge. They expound to us the knowledge of many topics which are beyond the perception of our senses and mind. They have been given to us by *rishis* (seers). Vedas talk about right and wrong (*dharma* and *adharma*). Many concepts have been explained. God, *punya*, *paapa*, heaven, hell and many such things can be learnt by us only by a study of the Vedas. The faith *punya* and *paapa*, heaven and hell exist and that righteous actions will be rewarded (*punya*) and wrongful actions will be punished (*paapa*) is called *aastikyam*. '*Asti*' means 'exists'. *Aastikyam* is derived from this root. The acceptance that God Is - is faith. To accept that whatever Vedas declare as existing actually exists, regardless of whether what Vedas say is understood by us or not, is faith.

Those who have no faith in the Vedas will try hard to dissuade us from having this faith. They will say that what Vedas state is brain washing stuff and make- believe stories and thereby try to shake our faith in the Vedas. Human beings have a natural tendency to do wrongful actions. Vedas point out that wrongful actions should be avoided and if still done, punishment cannot be escaped. But these non-believers will say that they have seen many people do such actions said to be wrong, but nothing bad has happened to them and thus try to diminish our faith. Adi Sankara says that the Vedas are kinder than thousands of fathers and mothers in advising us what is beneficial to us and that we must drop our ego and accept the ideas mentioned in the Vedas.

SRADDHA – FAITH

We must have an unshakable faith in our scriptures if we wish to discipline ourselves, says the author. He is well aware of the ways of the world and still emphasises the importance of faith. *Drudamoolam* – the faith in the *sastras* must be deep rooted. The concepts stated in the *sastras* must be well soaked in the mind. The faith must be firm. Just as the roots support the tree, the faith in the *sastras* support life. If there is no faith in the scriptures, there will be a vacuum in the spiritual life. The mind will

be disturbed from time to time. Therefore, faith in the scriptures must be well entrenched.

The principles mentioned in the Vedas must not be blindly accepted. Nor is it necessary to accept them blindly. At the same time, they should not be dismissed outright as wrong. They should be neither accepted blindly nor be dismissed lightly. Why should they be not negated? Our intellect is limited in its capacity and cannot understand quickly the great truths enunciated in the Vedas. So they must not be negated. Why should we not accept them blindly? By a blind acceptance, there will not be an intellectual appreciation of these concepts. Whenever doubts arise there will be a tendency to discard these ideas.

Our scriptures are very great. They are divine. They contain the vision of so many seers who have come down, out of compassion for us, to teach us for our own benefit. These scriptures have been in existence from time immemorial. They may contain some details which may not be understood by us. Even if we do not understand them, we must respect them and contemplate on them and make an effort to understand them. This effort is called *sraddha* or faith.

The *sastras* declare that God Is, that our actions have their consequences, and that there is a

moksham which is permanent. We must not doubt whether all these exist or not. We have accepted Vedas as a means of knowledge. We accept the eyes as a means of knowledge and whatever the eyes see, we do not doubt. It is because we accept a certain thing as an instrument of knowledge we unquestioningly accept what the instrument reveals. *Sastras* are *sabda pramaanam* - words as a source of knowledge. So we must accept what the *sastras* declare, pending further verification. We must first develop this faith. Without this faith, we cannot take the next step in our spiritual journey. *Sraddha* is very, very important. Lord Krishna says in the Bhagavad Gita that only a person with faith can get knowledge (*sraddhaavaan labhate jnaanam*). The first stage of human life – the student life or *brahmacharya* – is intended to develop this faith.

PERFORMANCE OF ACTION

It is not enough to have faith in the Vedas. There must be a commitment to follow its instructions.

All human beings have the feeling that their happiness depends on their getting certain things. It is natural for human beings to desire worldly pleasures. The *sastras* accept this fact and guide the individual along proper channels. If one goes against one's nature, one will run into difficulties. The

sastras do not recommend that. It only advises how this nature can be properly directed. *Sastras* convert the uncultured individual into a cultured person. It disciplines a person who is disposed to live as he likes.

Gita says: “All beings function according to their nature. Even a *jnani* behaves according to his nature. What is the use of restricting it?” (3-33)

The sense organs are directed outward. They cannot be restrained beyond a certain limit. This does not mean that there is a sanction to do whatever one likes. No one should ever live like that. Lord Krishna says that discarding likes and dislikes, the sense organs must be kept under control. To live a disciplined life is the first requisite for any person.

Tirukural says that as discipline confers greatness on a person, it must be considered superior to life itself. Only if there is discipline it is possible to enjoy happiness in a rightful manner. *Sastras* mention four goals of life – *dharma* (righteousness), *artha* (wealth), *kama* (objects of desire) and *moksha* (freedom from rebirth). Only by righteous living can we enjoy wealth or pleasures. “Happiness comes through rightful living” says Tirukural.

FOUR KINDS OF ACTION

Nitya Naimittika Karma

To follow the path of rightful living the *sastras* have prescribed certain compulsory actions or rituals called *nitya naimittika karmas*. Without performing these mandatory actions, no one has the right to perform the other actions. If done so, they will be of no avail. *Nitya karma* does not mean daily rituals. Some of them have to be done every day, some once a week, some once a fortnight, some once a month, some once in six months and some others once a year. Daily worship of God, the monthly ritual for *pitrus* (forefathers) on new moon days, the annual *sivaratri vratam* come under the category of *nitya karmas*.

Naimittika karmas are those rituals which are done on certain special occasions in life, like child birth, wedding, eclipses etc. One who has faith in the Vedas should not give up any of the mandatory actions. Whether he likes them or not, he must not give up performing them. He has no right to say that he will not do them. Only *sannyasis* (renunciates) have the right to give up these. Among the four goals, for the goal of righteous living (dharma) yielding *punya*, these mandatory actions must be performed.

Kamya Karma

There are other types of action, called *kamya karma*, which are optional. These actions are done to obtain certain specific results. They can be done if desired. For example, the *putrkameshti yajna* is performed for begetting children. This need not be done by everybody. Only those desirous of having children may need to do this. The Vedas have shown the way for fulfilling such rightful desires.

Prayaschitta Karma

This type of *karma* is recommended for removing the sense of guilt in human minds. The sins or wrong deeds committed in this birth or in the previous births may be obviated by these compensatory rituals. The sins committed in the previous births are not likely to create a feeling of guilt in this birth. The compensatory rituals are mainly for the purpose of relieving the guilt for the wrongs of this birth. In the *sastras*, there is an entire portion called *praayaschitta khandam*, dealing with the compensatory rituals. If the compensatory action for a particular wrong deed is performed, the guilt due to that specific deed will be removed.

A person having faith in the Vedas, can, even when doing the mandatory actions for the sake of punyam, still do actions for the enjoyment of wealth

and earthly pleasures. There is, however, no sanction for doing only actions of *kamya karma* for getting wealth and pleasures, in a spiritual life. For obtaining *punyam* or for the sake of *dharma*, the compulsory actions must be performed. A person can undertake actions purely for enjoying wealth or sense pleasures only if he has done the actions for *dharma* or *punyam*. The Vedas very compassionately say, “Do such and such actions so that you may enjoy heaven and its pleasures”. If in the very beginning it were to say, “Your nature is Happiness”, nothing will be understood. So it says, “If you do these actions in the prescribed manner, you will enjoy prosperity in this life. Even if you were to miss it in this life, you will go to heaven and enjoy the pleasures there. When you go to heaven, you will be received with flowers strewn on your path. You can stay there as long as the *punyam* you have earned by the performance of your mandatory duties last. So, motivated by desires for pleasures, perform these duties and observe discipline”. Thus the Vedas enthuse the individual. There are people who talk nice words and cheat others. But the Vedas after showing us the paths for getting various kinds of pleasures will never deceive us. By catering to our desires, the Vedas, eventually, free us from our desires. They give us the objects and pleasures we want and at the same time point out that these are not long lasting.

DISCRIMINATION BETWEEN PERMANENT AND IMPERMANENT IS VIVEKA

If the actions are done as above, in due course, a certain knowledge will dawn in the individual's mind thanks to the *punyam* earned by his actions. It will come to understand that the worldly life and worldly pleasures are impermanent. Even in heaven, we may be more youthful and live longer than on this earth but while the duration of life is longer there, we will realise that even that will change. Even there we may suffer pain.

Just as we experience directly that the fruits of our action are destroyed in course of time, so, too, our life in the heaven comes to an end when our *punyams* are exhausted. We see that a building gets destroyed, a tree falls, the body dies. From these we can infer an important truth. It may appear that there are more comforts and joys in heaven than on this earth and that we may always remain young. (The word, *ajarah*, refers to those dwelling in heaven and do not have old age or disease). Just as the life on earth comes to an end when the *punyam* gets exhausted, so also the life in the heaven will also come to an end. We learn that anything that is limited is impermanent and we cannot get permanent everlasting joy from what is impermanent.

It is clear to us that this world is impermanent. The *sastras* also confirm that experience. The same *sastras* also declare that the heavenly life is also impermanent. With help of the declaration of the *sastras* and our own experience, we can infer that heaven is also impermanent. None of the pleasures enjoyed by men in this world last long. The very objectives, for gaining which the *sastras* urge us to perform action, are also transient. Then the question arises, “What is it that is permanent?”. It is by the proper discharge of the actions mandated by the *sastras* that, in course of time, the individual loses interest in a happiness which is admixed with pain. In such a mind which is devoid of desire, the question, “What is permanent?” keeps haunting. He gets a thought that there must be something which is ever lasting. He happens to hear that only the Self or Paramatma is real and everlasting and that everything else is constantly changing. Now, on the one side, there is the information that there is something which is permanent and on the other side, there is the knowledge gained from experience that the world is not permanent. Thanks to his performance of the mandatory actions based on his faith in the Vedas, slowly the discrimination as to what is everlasting and what is never lasting sprouts in his mind. His desire for experiencing the pleasures of

this earth and heaven disappears and the desire for the knowledge of the everlasting Reality gains strength. Motivated by this desire, he goes in search of the Self.

The sastra say that there are five kinds of mental imperfections – likes and dislikes, restlessness, ignorance, doubts and erroneous thoughts. It recommends five methods for removing them as follows:

Likes and dislikes – karma yoga

Restlessness – *upaasana*

Ignorance – *sravanam*

Doubts – *mananam*

Erroneous thoughts – *nididhyaasanam*.






Verse 6

ज्ञानाप्तेः परिपन्थिनौ किल मलौ विक्लेषदोषस्तथा
 चेतोनिष्ठमहारिपू प्रथमतश्चोन्मूलनीयौ यतः ।
 कामं दूरमपास्य कर्मनिरतो मालिन्यरिक्तस्ततः
 चित्तैकाग्रयसुसिद्धये च भजतां निष्कामनोपासनम् ॥ ६ ॥

**Jnaanaapte: paripanthinau kila
 malau vikshepadoShastatha
 chetoniShtamahaaripu
 prathamataschonmuulaneeyau yata: |
 kaamam duuramapaasya karmanirato
 maalinyariktastata:
 chittaikaagryaSuSiddhaye cha bhajataam
 niShkaamanopaasanam || 6 ||**

THE MEANING

Jnanaapte: – to gain knowledge

malau – impurities of likes and dislikes

paripanthinau – highway robbers

kila – is it not so?

Tata: – likewise

Vikshepadosha: – defect of the wandering nature of the mind

Yata: – therefore

chetonishtama haaripu – the enemies established in the mind

prathama: – first

unmuulaneeyau cha – must be completely uprooted

kamam – the desire for the fruits of action

duuram apaasya – remove completely

karmanirata: – performing the *nitya-naimittika* karmas properly

maalinyarikta: – from the impurities of likes and dislikes

ata: – thereafter

chittaikagrya-susiddhaye cha – for obtaining mental concentration

nishkaama-upaasanam – contemplation of the Form of God, without desire for the fruits of the action

bhajataam – undertake

THE ESSENCE

Are not the likes and dislikes highway robbers on the path to Self Knowledge? So also is the wandering nature of the mind. Therefore to be established in Self Knowledge, these two defects must first be uprooted completely. Casting away

completely any desire for the fruits of action and performing the *nitya naimittika karmas* properly, freed from the impurities of likes and dislikes and with a view to obtaining mental concentration thereafter, may he undertake contemplation of God with Form, without desiring any results.

THE EXPLANATION

After laying down the first three requirements, namely, *aastikyam* (faith in Vedas), *karmaanushtaanam* (performance of mandatory duties) and *viveka* (discrimination) for obtaining Self Knowledge, the author, in this *sloka*, mentions further qualifications that are needed and explains the methods required to reinforce them.

LIKES AND DISLIKES ARE HIGHWAY ROBBERS

When we travel on a highway, the robbers who waylay us and rob us of our possessions are called highway robbers. In the spiritual journey undertaken for obtaining Self Knowledge, our likes and dislikes are the highway robbers who rob us of our desirelessness and the sense of discrimination to distinguish between permanent and impermanent things in this world. Says Lord Krishna:

“The sense organs are associated with sense objects and develop likes and dislikes. We should not

come under the spell of likes and dislikes as they are highway robbers who will rob us of our prized wealth of discrimination.” (Gita : 3-34)

Even if we have no desires whatsoever, we may not have escaped likes and dislikes. We may not be attracted to either worldly objects or heavenly pleasures. Yet, on account of our long association with objects, the mind may still be accustomed to its likes and dislikes. This may undermine the qualifications of *vairagyam* (free from desires) which triggered our discrimination about what is permanent and what is not.

“The three thieves of desire, anger and greed lurking inside us are waiting to snatch away the jewel of knowledge. May we, therefore, be alert”, says a Sanskrit sloka.

THE VACILLATING NATURE OF THE MIND

Even when we are free from likes and dislikes, the mind may still be vacillating. This vacillating nature of the mind is an obstruction for our gaining knowledge. The mind does not focus in contemplation. Even in practices such as *japa* (chanting of mantras) the mind is restless and gets exhausted soon. The mind lies scattered in various directions. The mind which is dissipated among a variety of objects must be aligned and made to focus

on one thought. The constantly flitting nature of the mind is inimical to its concentration.

The individual, having realised the transient nature of all pleasures, wants to hold on to what is changeless. Though there is discrimination, it is still not firm but is shaky. The likes and dislikes and the constantly vacillating nature of the mind are the enemies for our spiritual progress. How to uproot these enemies is mentioned in this *sloka*

KARMA YOGA

Karma Yoga is the means to get rid of likes and dislikes. The correct definition of karma yoga is: performance of *nitya naimittika karmas* as an offering to God, without the desire for the fruits of the actions.

Some people misinterpret karma yoga to mean that action should be done without expectation of results over which no one has any control. This interpretation is not correct. We have the right over the fruits of our actions. The right to decide whether we want to enjoy them or not is ours.

Krishna advises Arjuna, “Pay attention to your actions but not to the results.” (Gita : 2-47)

It is normal human nature to be attached to the fruits of our actions. But be detached from the results of your actions. This does not mean that you have no

right over the results. What is meant is that there should be no attachment to the results.

It cannot be said that a farmer has the right to cultivate his land but he has no right over the yield. After cultivating the land, he has the right to its yield – either to keep it or to give it to someone else. The results of our actions are ours. Therefore we have the right to keep them or discard them.

“You have the right only to act. But you have no right over the results. They belong to God”, contend some people. But this is not what the *sastra* says. On the other hand it says that it is only because you have the right over them you can give up your attachment to them.

Karma and *prayaschitta karma* cannot be done without expectation of results. They are done only for the sake of some favourable benefits. But this is not the case with *nitya-naimittika karmas* which have to be carried out whether we like to do them or not. Regardless of the moods of the mind these actions have to be done. They can be given up only after the qualifications for getting *jnana* are firmly established in the mind. *Nitya-naimittika karmas* yield *punyam* (benefits) when they are done. But the person should not do them with an eye on the *punyam* these actions can bestow. They should

be done purely in strict obedience to God's commandment. When there is no attachment to the results, the mind starts getting purified. *Vaidika karmas* (vedic rituals) have such a power.

In *poorva mimamsa*, there is a logic called *samyoga pruthaktvam*. According to this, if an action is done with the desire for certain results, these results will be attained. But if there is no desire for such results, then there is still a very subtle benefit which accrues verily by virtue of doing the action without expectation of results. This subtle benefit is mental purity. If a certain result is desired, it will happen. If a result is not desired, there is an outcome of greater value.

Let us say that in a college, a certain lecturer is doing his job well and he gets his salary for it. He will enjoy a certain degree of respect. But if there is another lecturer who declines the salary for his work, the respect he gets will be greater. Similarly a person who performs the *nitya-naimittika karmas* with the expectation of the pleasures of this world and the next as mentioned in the *sastras* will, because of the *punyam* of his actions, get the desired results. This is equivalent to the teacher in the college receiving his salary for the work he does. But the *karma yogi*, who performs the *nitya-naimittka karmas* in obedience to God's commands and without

attachment to the results, attains mental purity. He is like the honorary teacher. He is given greater respect.

Karma Yogi prays to God. But he dedicates even his prayer as an offering to God. He does not pray that God grants him a life free from sorrows. The karma yogi prays because it is enjoined on him to do so. He does not pray wishing for any kind of pleasure. He offers his action and the results of his action to God.

It is not uncommon to find people advising a person as follows: “Do your duty properly. Do not do so for the sake of your superiors. Having been born, you must do your duty to the society. Do not bother about any criticism levelled against you. Whatever work you do, do it to your satisfaction. This is karma yoga”. This may be sound worldly advice. But the Vedas talk not about tangible results. They talk about very subtle results beyond our perceptions. Doing the *nitya-naimittika karmas* as an offering to God and without attachment to the results is karma yoga.

If likes and dislikes are to be got rid of, then it is possible only when *kamya karmas* (and, if possible, *prayaschitta karmas*) are completely given up and the *nitya-naimittika karmas* are done without caring

for the results. It is possible to give up the attachments to the results only in the case of *nitya-naimittika karmas*. When working in an office, the result, the salary, cannot be given up!

The karma yogi gives up the *kamya karma* because he knows that the fruits of such actions are transient in nature. He also gives up *prayaschitta karmas* because they are endless. We do not know how many sins we have committed in all the births we have gone through and so we can never do compensatory actions for all of them.

Adi Sankara, in his Gita *bhashyam*, (2-48) goes one step further and says that even the idea that God be satisfied by one's actions must be given up! It may be asked why the karma yogi, even after renouncing all his desires, should continue to do work. Born in this society, he has realised that the world is not permanent. The *sastras* say that all those who are born should not give up actions. As he is following the *vaidika dharma* (vedic injunctions), he continues to do work. He has renounced his desire for the fruits of his actions in order to achieve a higher goal. His goal is Supreme Happiness. For this he must gain *jnanam*. If *jnanam* is to be gained, the mind must be free from impurities. For getting mental purity karma yoga is the method.

“For one who does action, there are any number of desires. But for the karma yogi, there is only one goal. He, who performs actions expecting results, has his mind wandering in many directions. But for one who is pursuing karma yoga the mind is focussed on one goal” says Krishna. (Gita : 2-48)

The karma yogi, giving up his desire for the pleasure of sense objects, that is, with no expectation of results, does his karma with faith. Swami Chinmayananda says that “for the karma yogi, the work is its own reward”. Doing one's duties without likes and dislikes and without attachment to the results and as an offering to God is karma yoga.

UPAASANAM

If *viveka* has to be fully established in the mind, then the two enemies, namely, likes and dislikes and the restlessness of the mind, must be thoroughly uprooted from our mind because they are the two main obstacles for our spiritual progress. Karma yoga cleans the impurities of the mind. By doing action without desires, one gets qualified for contemplation. Till then he cannot be seated in one place and practice contemplation. One cannot start off with contemplation right at the beginning of the spiritual practice. To gather the scattered

mind and to develop concentration, one must contemplate on God with Form, without expectation of results.

Upa means near; *asana* means to be seated. *Upaasana* means seated near. Near whom?. Near God. This does not mean sitting beside the idol or statue of God, nor does it mean sitting inside a temple. It means contemplation on God. Contemplation of any chosen Form of God is called *upasana*. We must sit in contemplation of the Form without any interruption. We should not even ask God to grant us our wishes. The goal is to concentrate the mind on one object.

MENTAL PURITY

All measures to achieve mental purity may be called karma yoga. There are many ways to achieve mental purity. Service to humanity, going to temples and offering worship and service to God, *japa* are all methods for getting mental purity. However, according to *sastras*, performing *nitya naimittika karmas* without an eye on the results is the way for getting mental purity. Nevertheless, from our experience, we know that when we engage ourselves in service to society, our likes and dislikes diminish. So this also can be taken as a method for cleansing the mind.

Upaasana is only one aspect of karma yoga. According to *sastra*, there are only two yogas – karma yoga and jnana yoga. Various yogas such as *raja yoga*, *bhakti yoga* and *hatha yoga* are all different aspects of karma yoga only. It is often said that there is only one goal and that there are many ways to achieve it. This is not strictly correct. For knowing the Self, there is only one method – *jnana* yoga. When it is said that *moksha* can be gained by karma yoga or *upaasana* or *japa* etc., we must take it to mean that they are all ways to get mental purity.



Verse 7

कर्मोपासनतो विशुद्धहृदयस्तत्त्वार्थसंसिद्धये
 स्वाचार्यं परिचर्य शास्त्रविधिना तस्माच्च विद्यां पराम् ।
 श्रुत्वा संशयनुत्तये च मननं स्थाप्ने निदिध्यासनं
 अभ्यस्य क्रमशः समाधिनिलयः प्राप्नोतु शान्तिं
 ध्रुवाम् ॥ ७ ॥

KarmopaaSanato
visuddhahridayastattvaarthaSamSiddhaye
Svaachaaryam paricharya saastravidhinaa
tasmaaccha vidyaam paraam |
Srutvaa Samsayanuttaye cha mananam
Sthaamne nididhyaasanam
Abhyasya krmasa: Samaadhinilaya:
paaapnotu saantim dhruvaam || 7 ||

THE MEANING

Karmopaasanata: – by karma yoga
visuddhahridaya: – one who has a pure heart
tatvaartha – Self Knowledge
samsiddhaye – to obtain well
svaachaaryam – his guru
saastravidhina – as prescribed in the sastras

paricharya – serve well

tasmat cha – from him

paraam vidyaam – Supreme Knowledge

srutvaa – having listened carefully

samsayanuttaye – remove doubts

mananam – logically analyse

sthaamne – to be established in the Self

nididhyaasanam – meditation

kramsa: – properly

abhyasya – practice

samadhinilaya: – dwelling in the Self

dhruvaam saantim – absolute peace

praapnotu – attain

THE ESSENCE

One who has purified his mind completely by the performance of nitya naimittika karma (karma yoga) and by contemplating on the Form of God, must, for getting Self Knowledge, approach his Guru in the manner specified in the sastras. May he, after worshipping him (serving him), listen to his teachings carefully for getting the knowledge and then analyse logically and deeply on what he has heard, so as to get rid of all his doubts and

then, meditate on the Self to dwell constantly in It and thus ever established in the Self, attain absolute Peace.

THE EXPLANATION

In the fourth *sloka*, it was pointed out that everlasting Happiness is not something that is to be attained but something to be known. This is the conclusion of *advaita* vedanta. If happiness is something yet to be attained, it is not everlasting happiness, because it is not there now. All human beings desire everlasting happiness. It is human nature to desire so. The scriptures also, in the beginning, speak as if that state is to be attained. But, later on, it teaches that everlasting happiness is something that has already been attained. What has already been attained cannot be reached. Remaining in space, space cannot be reached. Space has already been reached.

All of us are already liberated from birth and death. We must drop the thought that we must reach that state. Why we do not know that we are the embodiment of Ananda is because of our ignorance about ourselves. We must remove that ignorance. To remove ignorance, we must gain knowledge. Just as we need light to remove darkness, we must strive to get knowledge if we wish to get rid of our ignorance.

HOW TO GET KNOWLEDGE

How do we ever get to know that the everlasting happiness is already with us? The method to get this knowledge is to approach vedantic scriptures and the Guru. Only through this method of scriptural knowledge obtained from a Guru, can we realise that our real nature is happiness.

Another name for *moksham* is Brahman, Happiness. Brahman can only be known, not attained. **Knowing** what we have already attained is referred to as attainment. Let us say that we are not aware of the existence of a particular thing. When we come to know about it, we say loosely that we have reached it.

APPROACHING A GURU

Having purified the mind through karma yoga and *upasana*, one must, for getting Self Knowledge, approach his Guru and serve him well in the manner laid down in the *sastras*. In saying so, the author conveys that everyone in society has his or her Guru. In Indian culture, there is never any family without its Guru. It is a common practice to go to him respectfully and confide to him the problems in the family and take his advice to find a solution to those problems. A guru is one who helps everyone without the slightest trace of selfishness.

A guru is one who explains thoroughly the truths contained in the scriptures. He guides the people to lead an ethical life. He also follows those guidelines. Only such a person is called a guru in the *sastras*. The first qualification for a guru is that he must live his life as stipulated in the scriptures. Reading books will not help us to know all the things we need to know. Certain things have to be demonstrated by the actual life style of the teacher, if these are to be understood. Books may help us to some extent but not enable us to understand these things merely by reading them. The second qualification for a guru is that he teaches the scriptural truths so that they are understood. The third qualification is that he guides others how life is to be lived as stated in the *sastras*. The students must be guided to live an ethical life. Only those who have these qualifications are given the name “Guru”.

Susrusha means desire to learn by listening. As service to the guru is done out of the desire to learn the teachings of the *sastras*, this service is also called *susrusha*. If we are to learn the message of the *sastras* from the guru, then we must have a cordial relationship with him. Our service to the guru is done with a view to develop this cordiality. By serving the guru, we develop humility. His grace will bless us. Service to the Guru yields some benefits which are perceptible but many which are so subtle that they

are beyond our perception. Bhagavan Sri Krishna, in the Gita, prescribes service to the guru as one of the important values required for getting Self Knowledge.

The first benefit of service to guru is *punyam* or meritorious action. The *sastras* declare that the Guru and Isvara are not two separate identities, different from each other. Guru Gita says that the Isvara is in the form of Guru. Worship or service to guru is equivalent to worship or service to God. Whatever benefits accrue from worship of God, the same benefits are derived from the worship of the Guru. When we worship God, we get intangible benefits. When we worship the Guru, we get both tangible and intangible benefits. The intangible benefit is *punyam*, merit in action. The tangible benefit is *jnanopadesam*, teaching of knowledge.

The second benefit of service to guru is that our faith in the *sastras* gets reinforced. Whatever the guru says are the ideas contained in the *sastras*. Other than the *sastras*, the guru does not speak anything else. Due to this reason, the student who serves the guru respectfully gets greater faith in the *sastras*.

The third benefit is that some of the qualities of the Guru get imbibed in the student. It is our nature

to imitate a person whom we hold in high esteem. We see that even those who admire cinema stars tend to follow their lifestyle in matters such as dress etc. The Guru is one who has noble qualities. We do not have to look like him in external appearance. But, even without our knowledge, his good qualities will seep into us. Being calm under all circumstances, doing actions as they should be done, following *dharma* – all these qualities get ingrained in us even without our knowledge. Only if we live with the guru can this happen. If one stays with the Guru in his Gurukulam (*ashram*), one can follow him and imbibe his good qualities. Above all, as we have faith in his teachings, we get the Supreme Knowledge. We get clarity about both *dharma sastra* (ethics) and *atma vidya* (Self Knowledge).

The Guru Gita and many other texts list many details as to how we should conduct ourselves in the Guru's presence, such as not being seated when he is standing, not sitting at the same level as him, not interrupting him when he is talking and so on. Even when we need to ask the Guru a question to clarify our doubt, we must not do so abruptly. We must choose the time when he is free and relaxed. Even then, we must request him, “ Oh Guru, I have a question. May I ask it now?”. Only if he agrees, the question may be asked. We must ask questions

about Supreme Knowledge. Supreme Knowledge means Brahma Vidya or Atma Vidya, that is knowledge about Brahman, Upanishads.

SRAVANAM — LISTENING

Sravanam does not mean merely lending an ear to listen. We must listen to the inner meaning of the upanishadic declarations. Learning the essence of the upanishads is listening. We use our ears for this listening. We must not listen half-heartedly, thinking that listening itself will bring *punyam* (good results).

The Vedas have been grasped from space by the *rishis* as commanded by God. There may not be a particular order in the way the mantras have been compiled. In some places the Vedas declare that *jivatma* and *Paramatma* are different from each other. In some other places it may say that they are the same. There are some places in which statements are made that karma alone will confer *moksham*. Then in many other places, it is said that karma will not bring any benefits. There are so many such contradictory statements which are confusing to us, preventing us from getting a clear knowledge. There is a specific method prescribed for analysing vedic statements. This is called *mimaamsa*. *Mimaamsa* teaches how to make a scientific analysis of Vedic statements, with faith and devotion. Sri Anandagiri

refers to *mimaamsa* as “*pujita vichara*” – (respectful enquiry).

Vedic study is not like the study of modern science. The study must be undertaken after *santhi patha* (prayer), *Guru stotram* (worship to Guru) with an attitude of respect to Guru. “Knowledge combined with Grace” used to say Swami Chidbhanananda, when referring to this knowledge. Only knowledge combined with Grace will remove sorrows. As some Vedic statements appear confusing, it requires a certain degree of maturity to understand them. For this a certain method has been devised by learned men.

Knowing the essence of *vedanta sastra* from a Guru by means of the six hints such as *upakrama* is *sravanam*.

Mimaamsa (the science of analysis of Veda) states that, an enquiry into *sastras* must be done to arrive at the central teaching of the Upanishads by using the tips such as *upakrama* and *upasamhaara* (introduction and conclusion), *abhyaasa* (repetition), *apurvata* (uniqueness), *arthavaada* (praise), *phalam* (result) and *upapatti* (logic).

The introduction and conclusion should deal with the same idea. For example, in the second chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna starts

his teaching in the eleventh verse with the statement that wise men do not worry (grieve). He concludes his teaching in the sixty sixth verse of the eighteenth chapter saying, “Do not worry”. Introduction and conclusion provide one hint. Again, in many places in the Gita, Krishna again and again repeats this idea that there is no reason to grieve (worry) with several statements (*na tvam sochitumarhasi, nanusochitumarhasi, tatra kaa paridevana*). The idea that is repeatedly enforced in the text is the central idea of the text.

A further hint is that this knowledge cannot be obtained from any other text. The *Veda purva* (the first portion of the Vedas consisting of *karma kanda*) does not give this knowledge. The knowledge conveyed by *advaita Vedanta* that the *Jivatma* and *Paramatma* (the individual and the Brahman) are one and the same is the unique knowledge contained in Vedanta and not in any other sastra. The result or benefit mentioned by the *sastra* provides another clue to the essence of the *sastra*.

Another tip is that that which is praised by the *sastras* is the essence. *Arthavada* is of two kinds – *stutyarthavaada* and *nindaa-stutyarthavaada*. One is praising and the other is deriding. By deriding one, the other is praised. By deriding the *karma kanda* portion of the Vedas, the *jnana kanda* is praised. This

is called *nindaa-stutyarthavaada*. When the *jnana kanda* is directly praised it is called *sthtyarthavaada*. It must be understood that when *karma kanda* is being condemned, in fact, *jnana kanda* is being praised. It is not the intention of the Vedas to condemn the *karma kanda*. Its intention is to praise *jnana kanda*. Both are required for men. But to lead them to *jnana kanda*, the defects of *karma kanda* have to be pointed out.

Logic must be used to emphasise an idea. In the Gita, Bhagavan says that just as a person discards the old worn out clothes and dons new ones, the *jivatma* drops one body to take another. An example is important to point out the logic. There are a number of passages in the Vedas which are declarations of logic. The essence is that which is supported by logic. For example to establish that only the Self is real, the Upanishads say, “Clay is real; pots are not real”. In the Gita also there are many statements such as “Just as the All-Pervading Space is not attached to the things in It, the *atma* pervading all the bodies is not attached to them. Just as one Sun illumines the entire universe, the *atma* illumines everything”.

The Guru must be approached for learning the *Vedantic* texts. *Sravanam* must never be undertaken

without the Guru's help. Only the Guru knows the teaching tradition. Only he knows how to explain statements which appear contradictory and how to logically clarify the doubts that arise due to the apparent contradictions. Adi Sankara, in his *bhashyam* for Mundakopanishad says, "Even if a person has studied the grammar, logic and *purva mimamsa*, he should never study the Vedanta on his own". Grammar, logic etc. may be helpful in learning Vedanta. But knowledge of grammar and logic alone will not be sufficient to study Vedanta.

The Guru-Sishya (Teacher-student) tradition is important. The meaning of words vary according to the context. In Mandukyopanishad and Kathopanishad the word, "*dharma*" is interpreted as "Brahman". In the Gita, in one context, the meaning of 'Brahman' is given as 'Maya'. No dictionary can give the correct meaning. No knowledge of grammar can provide the correct meaning. *Sastras* contain statements which do not use logic, because of the deficiencies in logic. Adi Sankara, in his *bhashyam* for Brahma sutra, uses logic to counter many arguments but finally declares that even logic is useless for revealing the Truth. He logically establishes that logic cannot prove the existence of God. He confirms that only the Vedas is the means for knowing God.

In the eighth chapter of the Gita, reference is made to *uttaraayana punya kaalam* and *dakshinaayana punya kaalam*. Adi Sankara says that this refers not to the time but to the *devata* (deities) of those periods. He clarifies all the doubts that arise naturally in the mind. He raises doubts about the verses in Kathopanishad which we cannot even conceive of in our wildest imagination and answers these in Brahma sutra *bhashyam*. So without a Guru, the study of Vedanta should never be undertaken. *Sravanam* is listening to the Guru's explanation of the Upanishdic statements and grasping their essence. As the ears are used for this purpose, it is called *sravanam*. "Just as butter surfaces by churning, an enquiry into the Guru's words will lead to the surfacing of knowledge. " I have churned this Kaivalya navaneetham " says Sri Thandavaraya Swamikal, the author of the Tamil spiritual text, Kaivalya Navaneetam.

The statements of every Upanishad and the essence of every Upanishad must be clearly understood. *Sravanam* is not to be taken to mean mere listening. By listening Knowledge takes place. That knowledge is an important aspect of *sravanam*. It is not like listening to the stories in the *puranas* for which much intellectual effort is not demanded. But to understand the teachings of the Upanishads, the

intellect must be used properly. If not done properly, the meaning will not be understood. Traditionally, the study of '*prasthanaya trayā*' (three texts) is *sravanam*. The three texts which point out the way to the knowledge for achieving liberation are Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita and Brahma Sutra. These three texts spell out the method for attaining liberation.

CONTEMPLATION IS MANANAM

The upanishads declare that the Omniscient Paramatma and the individual with his limited knowledge are one and the same. This raises many doubts. How can God and I be the same? How can it be accepted that the poor and the rich are the same and that darkness and brightness are the same? Our experience is perception of differences. The *sastras* reveal the oneness. There is a need to contemplate over how to understand that in reality there are no differences but only unity. Do the *sastras* talk from the angle of experience or from the standpoint of Truth. To contemplate thus is *mananam*.

LOGIC BASED CONTEMPLATION

We do not negate the *sastras* because of our faith in them. At the same time what it says is not always either understood by us or acceptable to us. Contemplation must be done to resolve this dilemma.

Mananam is done to remove the doubts. By and large, the knowledge received during listening will itself leave no room for doubts. The Guru's guidance is necessary for this contemplation to be successful.

Brahma Sutra is a text to be studied for *mananam*, for the doubts to be cleared. The upanishads and the Gita are texts for *sravanam*, for getting the knowledge. In north India, it is emphasised that unless Brahma Sutra has been studied no one can claim to have studied Vedanta. Before studying Brahma Sutra, upanishads and Gita must have been studied. A *sannyasi* must read the Brahma Sutra every day. By the study of Brahma Sutra, unshakeable knowledge is gained. Until the knowledge is complete (free from doubts), the study of Brahma Sutra must be continued. Texts such as *ishta siddhi*, *naishkarmya siddhi*, and *chitsukhi* are all texts for removal of doubts. They raise questions which are beyond our imagination and give the answers and go on to explain why those answers are valid.

Sastras do not negate our perceptions. They accept them. But, they say that they are not true. Enquiry will reveal that our direct perceptions are not necessarily true. Our perception is that the Sun rises and the Sun sets. But Science says that the Sun stays in one place and that the earth goes around the Sun. Though our perception has not changed, we accept

what science says. Likewise, though our experience is that this world is real, we must accept the declaration of the *sastras* that the world is not real but only a projection due to Maya. *Mananam* completely removes all our doubts. We logically accept the declaration of the *sastras* that our direct perceptions are only appearances.

NIDIDHYASANAM — MEDITATION

Thanks to *sravanam* and *mananam* (listening and contemplation), we have received knowledge without any trace of doubt that all the differences in creation are only apparent and that there is only One undifferentiated Reality, that I am not the body or mind or intellect or even Isvara but am the Self. Yet the identification with the body (“I am the body”) may not have completely disappeared. If someone makes what appears to be an unjust allegation against us, we immediately react angrily, showing that the identification has not gone altogether. This identification with the body is due to our long association with it (not just in this birth but also in many previous ones).

Meditation must be compulsorily done to remove erroneous thoughts that I am the body or the mind or that Brahman is this body. Meditation is the uninterrupted dwelling on what we have learnt

through listening and contemplation. The Knowledge, that I am the Self, has to be deeply embedded in the mind by meditation. Meditation is the deep contemplation of *Vedantic* ideas. Thanks to meditation, we get the conviction, “Even if a desire sprouts in the mind, it is the mind's job and not mine. I desire nothing. I am always fulfilled. I lack nothing. Only if I lack something I need to search for fulfillment. When fulfillment is my very nature, where is the need for any search? If there are any impurities of the mind or body, they belong not to me but to the mind and body. I am Atma, Pure Consciousness”. Only by such meditation can we be fully established in the Self. But without *sravanam* and *mananam*, meditation cannot be done. *Sravanam* and *mananam* are the pre-requisites for meditation. Otherwise what will we meditate upon?

WHY NIDIDHYASANAM

Meditation is not done to get knowledge. It is done to retain the knowledge permanently. Meditation is not done for liberation. When it has already been learnt during *sravanam* and *mananam* that liberation is something which cannot be attained, where is the question of meditation for the sake of attaining liberation? Knowledge is gained only during *sravanam* and *mananam*.

Meditation is not for getting any new experiences. It is a means to constantly dwell in the everlasting experience of the Self. In meditation a person may have new experiences. Just as so many experiences happen when the eyes are open, there may be many experiences when the eyes are closed. No importance should be given to these experiences, however divine they may appear to be. All of them are related to external objects only and are not permanent. That is why such experiences should not be given any importance. We must not let ourselves be carried away by these experiences. Such experiences as are encountered during meditation may vary from person to person. But the Self remains the same for all. 'I' is unchanging. It is the same for everybody. As a matter of fact, experiences are not only not conducive for meditation, but are obstacles to meditation. If for dwelling in the Self, something we have learnt has to be retained permanently in the mind, we have to repeatedly think about them until the knowledge is deeply entrenched in the mind. This is the purpose of meditation, not for knowledge, nor for liberation and not even for *Atma darsan* (seeing the Self)

ATMA DARSAN

It is the Atma which sees everything. How can the Atma be seen? Some people say that they would

like to have the experience of Atma even as they experience the body. We are able to see the body only because of the Atma. If Atma were not there, the body cannot be seen at all. It is only after experiencing the Atma, that we experience the body. If we do not experience ourselves first, we cannot experience the body. At the same time, without the body, we cannot realise the Atma. To realise the Self, body and mind are required. But to BE the Self, body and mind are not required.

It is not logical to say that Atma should be experienced. By saying so, we make the Atma to become an object. Then the question would arise, “Who is that who experiences the Atma?”. How can the experiencer be experienced? It is not possible at all. When referring to some wise men, it is often said that those men have the experience of Atma. It should not be taken literally. It only means that they have realised the Self, which is the same for all people at all times. People long to experience the Atma. It is neither possible nor necessary. Anything that is experienced would become an *anatma*. So, the purpose of meditation is not *atma darsan*.

Self is always known. When we study the scriptures which talk about this knowledge, we gain this knowledge directly. It is to reinforce this knowledge, to own it up, that meditation is resorted

to. If there are any obstructions preventing the retention of this knowledge, meditation removes those obstacles (erroneous thoughts) and gives the conviction that I am Brahman.

In *upasana*, we contemplate on the Form of God. In meditation we focus our thoughts on the *nirguna* Brahman (Brahman without attributes). When we think of God's form we see it as something other than us. We cannot think of *nirguna* Brahman as something other than us. The fact is that Brahman and I, the Atma, are one and the same. Atma without attributes and Brahman without attributes are not different from each other, just as the Space within the pot and the Space within the building are both the same. There are differences in the embodiment or conditioning. Unembodied and unconditioned, there are no differences. The pot and building are conditionings. Space is unconditioned. Likewise, *jiva* and *Isvara* are conditionings. Brahman is unconditioned. When looked at through the conditionings, there are differences. When the conditionings are removed, there are no differences.

The real nature of both the ignorant person and the wise man is the same - Atma. The wise man knows it but the ignorant man does not. The ignorant man does not have the knowledge that he is Atma which is different from the body. Even if he

does not know it, he is still Brahman only. Whatever work the wise man is engaged in, he is always aware that he is Brahman and that all actions belong to the body. There is no longer any struggle for him to look for Peace. The *sastra* removes the very idea of looking for the source of peace. Absolute Peace is knowing what Peace is and not even thinking that it is something to be attained. At the same time, without knowing what Peace is, nobody can afford to say that he is not looking for peace. Only he who has the knowledge can say, "I am peace" and drive away all disturbances and ever remain in Peace.

ACCOMPLISHMENT OF ALL ACTIONS

When bondage itself is an appearance and unreal, how can liberation from that bondage be considered real? Bondage is an appearance and so is liberation!. "I was never bound; so I have no need to be liberated". Only if one feels he is bound will he have the desire to be liberated. When the bondage itself has been dismissed as unreal, will the desire for liberation ever even germinate? After this, there is nothing to be done for progress in the spiritual journey. Having 'reached' the goal, there is total satisfaction and fulfillment in the heart. Effort is needed only if there is something to be gained. But now, after this fulfillment, there is no need for any effort of any kind." He has done whatever has to be

done”, says Kaivalya Navaneetam talking of such a person who, having known what *moksham* is, has the satisfaction that he has reached the destination.

This really concludes the teaching which the author wanted to convey. But in the eighth verse, the author includes some aspects of yoga *sastra* along with *Vedanta sastra*. This practice has been in vogue from the days of Swami Vidyarnya. In Brahma Sutra, Adi Sankara strongly criticises the yoga *sastra*. Yoga *sastra* holds that there are many *atmas*, that the world is real and that *Isvara* and *jiva* are different and so on. In his Brahma sutra *bashyam*, Adi Sankara says, “Yoga sutras which hold such contradictory views cannot give the knowledge of *advaitam* (one without a second) and cannot therefore give *moksham*”.

But it cannot be refuted that yoga sutras are very effective in dealing with cultivating or training the mind. It is said that some mantras in the Vedas support yoga *sastra*. Even if one does not follow the yoga sutra, one will still get liberated. However, in actual practice, there are certain problems. However much one has studied the *sastras*, there are agitations in the mind. An attempt is made to remove those disturbances by some means or the other. Though the subject has been well understood, there are impressions in the mind which surface from time to time and cause disturbances in the mind. To

remove these disturbances, the *yoga sastra* recommends some methods to quieten the mind (*samadhi sadhana*). Strictly speaking, *nididhyasana* itself can help to get rid of the restlessness of the mind. But if they persist despite meditation, it means that the meditation has not been done properly. The methods mentioned in the eighth verse are neither accepted nor rejected. They are options available for the individual. But there is no mandate that they should be followed.



Verse 8

ब्रह्मज्ञोऽपि स वासनाक्षयमनोनाशौ विधाय क्रमात्
 स्वात्मारामपरोऽनिशं सुखघनः मुक्तः स जीवन्नपि ।
 प्रारब्धे क्षपिते च देहविलये मुक्तिं विदेहाङ्गतः
 सच्चित्सौख्यमये ह्युपाधिरहिते मज्जत्वपारे परे ॥ ८ ॥

Brahmajnoऽpi Sa
vaaSanaakshayamanonaasau
vidhaaya kramaat
Svaatmaaraamaparoऽnisam
sukhaghanam mukta: Sa jiivannapi |
Praarabdhe kshapite cha dehavilaye
muktim videhaangata:
Sacchitsaukhyamaye hyupaadhirahite
majjatvapaare pare ॥ 8 ॥

THE MEANING

Sa: – he

Brahmajna: api – even if he is the knower of Brahman

Krama: – properly

Vaasanaakshaya – removing the impressions
manonaasau – and annihilating the mind

vidhaaya – do

anisam – day and night

svatmaaraamapara: – revelling in the Self

sa: sukhaghana: – he, the embodiment of
Supreme Happiness

jivan api – even if alive

mukta: eva – is liberated

praarabde kshapite cha – on the fructification
of the actions for this birth

dehavilaye – with the resolution of the body

videhaam muktim gata: – liberated when
without the body

apaare – boundless

pare – supreme,

upaadhirahite – free from upadhis

sat-chit-sukha-maye – in Existence-
Consciousness-Ananda

majjatu – be immersed

THE ESSENCE

May he, who has realised the Self, getting rid of his mental impressions and annihilating the mind, revel in the Self day and night. Even if he lives in the body, he is liberated (jivan mukta). When all the actions have fructified in this birth and he drops the

body, he is still liberated without the body (videha mukta). May he be immersed in the limitless, boundless (ocean of) Existence–Consciousness–Ananda.

THE EXPLANATION

He who knows the *nirguna* Brahman is the *Brahmajna*. He may resort to the process of removal of mental impressions and annihilation of the mind.

Vaasanaakshyam – Removal of impressions

There are many impressions registered in the mind due to experiences over the past so many births. We must remove all these past impressions in order to be established in the knowledge. Yoga *sastra* classifies these impressions under five heads and presents the methods by which to eliminate them.

MANONAASAM – ANNIHILATION OF THE MIND

Vedanta questions the need for the annihilation of the mind when it has already established that the mind is not real. It is not possible to destroy the mind. In fact, this expression has no meaning. When it is said that after getting the knowledge, the wise man's mind is annihilated, it goes against the statement of the *sastras* that even a wise man has to experience the results of his past actions which have started fructifying at the commencement of

this birth. For this experience to happen, the mind must be there. If the mind is not there, there can be no experience of *praarabda karma* (actions which have started fructifying in this birth). If the mind gets dissolved once the knowledge is got, then the wise man cannot teach this knowledge to others. Mind is required for teaching. The guru-sishya tradition will completely disappear if there is no mind after attainment of knowledge. *Jeevan mukti* will also not be possible, because the mind must be there for the experience to take place. In deep sleep, there are no thoughts, there is no mind. We must have the mind to know how to encounter favourable or unfavourable situations. We need not get rid of the mind. Vedanta says that likes and dislikes must be got rid of. This can be taken as the intrinsic meaning of *manonaasam*. In fact, Vedanta gives a deeper meaning for *manonaasam*. **Knowing** that the mind is unreal, but only an appearance, **is manonaasam**.

THE MIND IS NO MORE THAN AN APPEARANCE

The mind is not our creation. It is created by God. Nobody can destroy anything created by God. We can only give up our identification with the mind. Such an identification is our action, not God's creation. It is said that what is in the macrocosm is also in the microcosm. Is this world ever going to be without problems? Even when we are asleep, the

world keeps going. When we sleep, the mind is resolved (dormant), not destroyed. Even at the time of the *pralaya* (the great Deluge), the world is only resolved, not destroyed. The world is never destroyed, nor is the mind. We can only understand that both of them have only a relative reality. There is no alternative to this knowledge. Vedanta says, “*Brahma satyam, jagan mithya*”. It says that *jagat* (the world) is *mithya* (relative reality) and not *asatya* (non-existent). There is a question that Adi Sanakra raises in his text, *Prasnottara-ratnamalika*, “What is *mithya*?” and answers, “that which ceases to be real when knowledge takes place is *mithya*.” *Mithya* does not mean unreal or non-existent. That which is true for perception but is falsified by knowledge is *mithya*. The horn of the rabbit, the lotus in the sky are all examples of totally non-existent things. The mind and the world are not non-existent like that. They are experienced and appear to be real. But on enquiry, their non-reality is revealed. According to perception, the rising and setting of the Sun is real, but according to knowledge they are false.

However much one studies, when it comes to practical living, many people have problems with their mind. As long as it is thought that the mind is real, these people feel the need for some kind of a practice or *sadhana*, to get out of those problems.

Once it is understood that the mind is only apparently real, the idea of taking up some practice will drop by itself. Even by practices, only the restlessness of the mind will reduce but the mind will never be totally lost.

Kaivalya Navaneetam says that there are two types of *manonaasam* – *svarupa naasam* and *arupa naasam*. When knowledge is gained, the *svarupa naasam* takes place. At death, the *arupa naasam* happens. For the *ajnani* (the ignorant), even at the time of death the *arupa naasam* does not take place. He will be born with a mind in his next birth.

The author of this book is a *vedantin* and also a yogi. He has recommended practices for removal of mental impressions and annihilation of the mind. Many consider that only if these practices are done, the benefits of *nididhyasanam* can be obtained. According to them, the practice of *samadhi* will help the process of *jnana nishta* or constant dwelling in knowledge. When one sits to meditate on the Self, the past impressions in the mind create disturbing thoughts. The mind becomes a huge burden for such people. But, if meditation is properly done, these problems will be solved. Thinking that the mind is *mithya* is one aspect of meditation. Another aspect is to think, “I am Whole and complete” Even the *upasana* (thinking of God with Form) will help greatly in getting rid of the evil thoughts, leaving behind only

good thoughts. Even these thoughts disappear in meditation.

JIVANMUKTI

He, who has realised the Self, is ever established in it, day and night. Worldly problems do not bother him in the least. Though he is alive and active, he is freed from everything. Having erased the mental impressions and having annihilated the mind, he is freed from bondage even when living. *Jivanmukti* is the experiencing of the *prarabda karma* even while having the knowledge of who he is. Thanks to the knowledge, he is not affected by the fruits of his actions. He is experiencing the *praarabda karma*, because the mind and body still exist. Though he is still experiencing them, those experiences do not bother him at all, as he is so firmly established in the knowledge of what is real and what is unreal. He is an experiencer from the point of view of the body. At the same time, he is free from any effects of those experiences and is not bound by them. He is liberated when living.

VIDEHAMUKTI

When the experiences he has to undergo in this body due to the fructification of his karmas are all over, the body drops. His gross body is resolved into the five gross elements and his subtle body resolves

in the five subtle elements. There is a *sloka* in Vairagya Satakam as follows:

“Oh, Mother Earth, Father Air, Friend Fire, Relatives Water, Siblings Space, I fold my hands in my final salutation to you. Thanks to my association with you, I have attained knowledge and am freed from delusion and I merge in the Supreme Brahman”.

The five elements take their respective positions in the Universe. Before death, he was embodied. Now, he is the Unembodied Satchidananda – Existence-Consciousness-Ananda. He is immersed in the boundless, limitless Satchidananda. He is THAT.






Verse 9

इत्थं वेदवचोभिरेव नियते मार्गेवयं यात्रिकाः
 धर्माख्ये च सनातने कृतपदा वर्णाश्रमाचारिणः ।
 गच्छामः क्रमशश्च मोक्षपदवीमानन्दरूपां यथा
 श्रद्धाभक्तिमथस्तथा धृतियुतानस्मान् विदध्याद्
 गुरुः ॥ ९ ॥

Ittham vedavachobhireva niyate
 maarge vayam yaatrikaa:
 Dharmaakhye cha Sanaatane
 kritapadaa varNaasramaachaariNa: |
 Gacchaama: kramasascha
 mokshapadaveemaanandarupaam
 yataa Sraddhaabhaktimatastathaa
 dhritiyutaanaSmaan vidadhyaat guru: || 9 ||

THE MEANING

Sanaatane dharmaakhye cha – in Sanatana
 Dharma

Krutapadaa – having stepped into

Varnaasramaacharina: – followers of
 varnasrama

vayam – all of us

ittam – such

vedavacha: api – the words of the Veda

yaatrikaa: – travellers

yata: – which way

anandaruupam moksha padaveem – the status of Supreme Bliss of liberation

kramena gacchama: – properly reach

tatha – that way

Sraddha-bhakti-mata: – endowed with faith and devotion

dhrutiyutaan – determination

Guru: – the Guru

asmaan vidadhyaat – may bless

THE ESSENCE

All of us, who have stepped into the way of life called Sanatana Dharma, following the varnasrama dharma, are all travellers in the path shown by the Vedic statements. May the Guru bless us to be endowed with faith and devotion and determination to attain the Everlasting Happiness called moksham.

THE EXPLANATION

We have stepped into the life's journey to live according to Vedic teaching. We are travellers, following the *varnasarma dharma* as laid down in

Sanatana Dharma. We are travelling on the path prescribed by the Vedas.

All the teachings of the author in this short text are nothing but Vedic teaching. The author has beautifully outlined the way as follows: Faith in *sastras*, performance of prescribed duties, developing dispassion and discrimination, practicing karma yoga and *upasana* to be unshakeably established in that dispassion, approaching the Guru in the proper manner to get from him Self Knowledge through *sravanam*, *mananam* and *nididhyasanam*, practice of *samadhi yoga* to resolve any persisting mental disturbances.

Vedas have prescribed specific duties for each of the four professional groups in society (*varnas*) and for each of the four stages in the individual's life (*asramas*). In a family everyone has a schedule of duties. Only if each member of the family carries out properly the allotted duties, the family life will be peaceful. Likewise, if there is to be harmony in society, everybody must perform the allotted duties. *Varna dharma* has been instituted for this purpose.

Varna dharma is for the benefit of society. *Asrama dharma* is for the benefit of the individual. It is everyone's duty to worship God. But, for some, this is a full time assignment. For some others, keeping

the place clean will be the full time activity. There is no superiority or inferiority in this.

An individual's life has been divided into four stages: *brahmacharya*, *grihastha*, *vanaprastha* and *sannyasa*. For each stage there are prescribed functions. *Brahmacharya* is the student's life for acquiring knowledge. *Grihastha* is for performance of the various specific rituals prescribed in the Vedas. *Vanaprastha* is for contemplation and such mental activities. *Sannyasa* is for learning the *vedanta sastras*.

Srutis and *smritis* teach the *varnasrama dharma*. As we have faith in the Vedas, we follow these disciplines. When we do so, there are not only benefits for the society as a whole but also many more benefits for the individual.

May the Guru bless us to have complete faith in the *sastras*, devotion to Isvara and intense commitment to spiritual life so that we can attain the everlasting Happiness called *moksham*.

Thus concludes the author this short text.





Conclusion



ESSENCE OF JIVA YATRA

The first *sloka* defines the goal of life for all human beings as follows: All people desire Supreme everlasting Happiness. They strive to achieve this. But they do not clearly know that they are desiring this happiness and they do not know the methods by which to get it. This is obvious from the very fact that even after a life long struggle, they have still not found it. This proves that there is no clarity about the goal and the means.

The second *sloka* says that the Vedas teach what the goal is and what the means are. It refers to a mantra from Kathopanishad, giving the essence of all the *sastras*.

The third *sloka* restates that mantra in the form of a verse, comparing a spiritual journey to a chariot journey in which the *jivatma* is the traveller, the intellect is the charioteer, the mind is the reins, the sense organs are the horses and the field of experience of sense objects as the path for which Happiness is the goal.

The fourth *sloka* points out that this is not a physical journey but an intellectual journey embarked upon by controlling the body, mind and sense organs and using the intellect to gain knowledge. He introduces the word *moksham* which he says can be attained only by means of knowledge.

From the fifth to the eighth *slokas*, the methods to be followed in the spiritual journey are spelt out. Faith in the *sastra*, performance of actions prescribed in the Vedas, attainment of dispassion and discrimination, practice of Karma Yoga and *upasana* to strengthen that dispassion and discrimination, *sravanam*, *mananam* and *nididhyasanam* for receiving Self Knowledge from the Guru and in case there are any persisting mental disturbances, practice of *samadhi yoga*.

In the ninth *sloka*, he says that we are all traveling in the Vedic path and concludes the text with a prayer to the Guru that all of us, who are traveling on the vedic path, be blessed with faith, devotion and determination and commitment to reach the goal of Everlasting Happiness.



Omkaravidya – Activities

1. Three Batches of Atmavidya Courses were successfully completed by thousands of Vedanta students.
2. Atmavidya Batches 4, 5, 6 are under progress.
3. Hundreds of students are being benefitted by Avasaana Advanced Course batches 1 and 2, which are in progress.
4. Pujyasri Omkarananda Swamiji's Bhagavad Gita Explanations (sloka-wise) are being published everyday in omkaravidya youtube channel.
5. Pujyasri Swamiji's quotes are shared as Jnanamalargal and Jnanasumaani in Tamil and English through Omkara Hrudayam WhatsApp Channel.
6. UV – Kuralin Kural program has enabled the study of Thirukkural in a simple manner, on an online platform.
7. As envisioned and taught by Pujyasri Swamiji, Thirukkural is imparted through

classes / workshops for school students and elders regularly.

8. **Omkaravalluvam.org** – an exclusive website for Pujyasri Swamiji's Thirukkural teachings is built and maintained.
 9. Pujyasri Swamiji's books are published.
 10. Pujyasri Swamiji's Jayanti and Aradhana are conducted every year, with sraddha bhakti.
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