

Divine Discourses



of

**HIS HOLINESS JAGADGURU
SRI ABHINAVA VIDYATHEERTHA MAHASWAMIGAL**

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Sri Abhinava Vidyatheertha Mahaswamikal



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DEDICATION



त्वदीयं वस्तु गोविन्द तुभ्यमेव समर्पये

*O Lord! We dedicate to You, with utmost
reverence and humility, what is actually Yours.*

Preface

This book contains the English translations of 11 benedictory addresses of our Acharyal, delivered extempore in the period 1986 - 1989. Nine of these sacred discourses were in Kannada and two in Tamil.

Acharyal graced devotees with hundreds of speeches, long and short, in the 35 years that He adorned the Sringeri Sharada Peetham, from 1954 to 1989. Each is a priceless gem and truly blessed are those who have had the great good fortune of having heard the ambrosial words of our Guru on at least one occasion. It is a truism that no audio recording of a talk of Acharyal can convey the unforgettable impact of His peace-radiating physical presence, captivating smile, rivetting facial expressions and significant gesticulations. A printed version suffers from the additional drawback of depriving the devotee access to Acharyal's irresistibly-infective laughter and His mellifluous voice, with its myriads of expressive, tonal and volume variations and eloquent pauses.

As those who have listened to Acharyal's benedictory addresses with sincerity, devotion and attentiveness are well aware, our Guru's talks were ever immensely beneficial, pregnant with import, thoroughly lucid, intensely practical, punctuated with rib-tickling humour,

extremely cogent and so smooth-flowing that not a single sentence or phrase was out of place or superfluous. A fully faithful transcript of a sacred speech of Acharyal would necessarily reflect all these seven characteristics.

Since Acharyal's words are perfectly chosen, some degradation of beauty can be expected in any translation. Nevertheless, if a devotee who carefully goes through this book either fails to apprehend or only partially apprehends the characteristics listed earlier, the blame rests solely on the disciple who translated the 11 speeches included here, after personally selecting them. The cause may be the translator's inadvertence or inadequacy of understanding. We, however, hope that his efforts to produce a faithful translation have been successful and that the reader is able to get a glimpse of the magnificence of Acharyal's divine discourses.

A special feature of the contents of this book is the inclusion of the six holy speeches delivered by Acharyal during the 'Smarana Saptaham'. The Smarana Saptaham was a seven-day function organised at Bengaluru in 1987 during which several persons spoke on our Paramacharyal, the great Jivanmukta, His Holiness Chandrasekhara Bharathi Mahaswamigal. Acharyal's hexad of holy discourses provides the most authoritative account of Paramacharyal's life and achievements. It also gives a thorough account of the nature and role of a Guru who is a knower of the Truth; all that a spiritual aspirant needs to know about a Sadguru is contained here.

We are very thankful to Sri G. Ramasubramanian, General Manager, Numeric Engineers, and to Sri R. Subramanian for their very great contribution to the publication of this book. They worked day and night, unmindful of strain, to ready the raw manuscript for offset printing. Sri V. Subrahmanian, Sri H.N. Shankar and Sri K. Suresh Chander lent their valuable services; our thanks to them. We are grateful to Sri K. Srinivasan for penning the introduction about the greatness of Acharyal and for sagacious advices about the translations of the speeches. He has unmatched devotion to Acharyal and is a mine of information about our Guru and so he is very qualified to write about Him.

Sri G. Raghavan of Anugraham Computer Services took personal interest in the publication of this book. We are thankful to him. Our thanks are due to Smt. Sridharan of Sri Maruthy Laser Printers for generating the laser print-out of the contents of this book. The offset printing was undertaken by Sri N. Subramanian at Sudarsan Graphics. Sri M.J. Krishna designed the cover. Our thanks to them.

K. Narayanaswami

R. Krishnan

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Chennai

10.11.1994

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The Greatness of Our Acharyal

by

Sri. K. Srinivasan

Truly speaking, none has the power to describe in words the glory of our Acharyal. Poet Kalidasa has said in praise of Iswara, "If, after exalting Your glory, we remain quiet, it is only on account of our incapacity and fatigue and not because Your glories have come to an end." So too it is for anyone who attempts to portray our Acharyal's life. If His human sport is itself a book then this book contains the highest esoteric doctrines. It is the essence of the Vedas; its language is so sweet and simple that man can easily understand it after a little practice. But the thoughts conveyed are so deep that none can arrive at their end even after constant study throughout a life time. Every day, they exhibit new facets of the Truth; therefore, they remain ever fresh and new. With this backdrop, an attempt is made here to provide some information about Acharyal, with the sole idea of giving the reader a glimpse of His nonpareil greatness.

Our Acharyal's human sport commenced in the month of Aswina of the year Pingala, under the star Swati in Bengaluru, South India. This corresponds to November 13, 1917.

The fortunate parents affectionately called the child Srinivasan. The trappings of a saint were evident in Him even from the days of His childhood. Divine virtues viz., absolute fearlessness, perfect purity of mind, non-violence in thought, word and deed, truthfulness, absence of anger even on provocation, etc., were born with Him. Even then, His only goal in life was to discard the world and behold God!

Sri Srinivasan's Upanayanam was performed on Vaishaka Shukla Shasti of the year Pramodhuta (May 4, 1930), at Sringeri. His prehensile abilities were conspicuous even at that tender age of 13. When being taught the evening Sandhya Vandanam by the Purohit's son, He corrected him by insisting that what was taught in the afternoon pertaining to Abhivadana was different.

The then pontiff of Sringeri, Sri Chandrasekhara Bharathi Mahaswamigal inducted Sri Srinivasan into the Patashala thus keeping Him under His loving care. It was Paramacharyal's desire that Sri Srinivasan should not be disturbed in the course of His studies. So, a few other students, of almost of the same age as Sri Srinivasan were lodged with Him in Siddhashrama, in Narasimhavanam itself.

The boys were once playing blind man's bluff. One of the boys had a cloth tied over his eyes and was the one supposed to touch the others, who were moving around to avoid him. When the boy came near Sri Srinivasan,

the latter stepped aside. The boy bumped against a pillar, removed his cloth and struck Sri Srinivasan a blow, presuming Him to be the cause of his injury. As one who is never given to anger even on provocation, Sri Srinivasan pacified the boy and attended to the injury. The boy's heart melted.

Being a habitual early riser, Sri Srinivasan assiduously engaged Himself in studies. His devotion and etiquette pleased Paramacharyal and soon Sri Srinivasan became the obvious choice for Paramacharyal's successor. He was initiated into the holy order of Sannyasa when He was only 14 years old, on the Shukla Panchami of the Jyestha month of the year Prajapathi (i.e. on May 22, 1931). Paramacharyal named His holy successor designate "Abhinava Vidyatheertha", perhaps because He could envisage that His matchless disciple would surpass the great yogi, the tenth Pontiff, Sri Vidyatheertha, in Yoga.

Acharyal, whose true being is pure bliss, was a perfect disciple of His Guru. He was always looking for an opportunity to serve His Guru. The following episode should teach us what an ideal disciple He was, and how He was ever ready to meet the needs of His Guru.

A certain devotee went to Sringeri to have Darshan of Their Holinesses. Paramacharyal was in His indrawn state and many devotees of the Math who had come to Sringeri could not have His Darshan. This devotee eagerly waited for few days and it so happened that

Paramacharyal suddenly appeared at a window and called him. He asked him to get Him a mango. The devotee brought it by running to the other side of the river and procuring it from the bazaar. The same evening, the devotee told our Acharyal about the happenings of the morning. Acharyal just smiled and nodded His Head.

The subsequent year, when the same devotee paid a visit to Sringeri, our Acharyal, after some general queries, asked him, "Have you brought mangoes for our Acharyal?" When the devotee gave an embarrassing, "No", for an answer, our Acharyal gently disembarassed him by telling him, "I will give you some mangoes. You can place them along with the other fruits that you have brought and pay your obeisance." So saying, He went to an adjacent room, brought some mangoes, chose the best among them with great care and gave them to the devotee.

A devotee presented to Acharyal a small box which opens when a button fixed by the side of the box is pressed. He had affixed a photo of Paramacharyal inside the box before submitting it. Acharyal, upon seeing it, immediately said, "Oh! I will use it. Every morning, I can have Darshan of My Guru by just pressing the button." When an old devotee of the Math reminisced about the loving and enchanting relationship between Acharyal and Paramacharyal, Acharyal's eyes became moist and, with joined hands, He said, "It is very true. Till the end, My Guru looked after Me with such affection."

Once, Paramacharyal asked our Guru whom He would like to emulate. Without a moment's hesitation, Acharyal replied "Sadashiva Brahmendral." Acharyal, ever since He was initiated into Sannyasa, was extremely keen on being an ideal ascetic. The eight steps leading to the acme of yoga came naturally to Him and He attained Nirvikalpa Samadhi, the highest state of yoga, before He was twenty. By repeated attainment of this exalted state, longed for by Yogis, He became a Jivan Mukta, one liberated while alive. To bear testimony to His deep Atmanusandana an instance can be cited. It is so powerful, that it has a profound influence on those nearby, provided they suitably attune themselves. Sri Venkatasubba Rao has this to say, "Acharyal was once traversing from one place to another. I was in the pilot jeep and Acharyal's car was just behind ours. Suddenly, I noticed that Acharyal had ordered His car to stop. His Holiness asked me to sit in the front seat of His car and sent His attendant Mahabala to the jeep. No conversation ensued. Acharyal lost Himself in the contemplation of the import of the Upanishads. The effect on me was extreme, to say the least."

He was a scholar par excellence in Tarka and Vedanta, though He never thought He was One. He was once camping at a devotee's house at Bengaluru. The devotee had vacated several rooms of his house for Acharyal and His staff. Acharyal was staying in a room in which an open cupboard contained some books. The devotee had kept in that cupboard a notebook in

which he had written some Sanskrit Shlokas, in Kannada script, for daily recitation. After His Bhiksha, Acharyal glanced at some of the books and replaced them. When the devotee went for evening Darshan, Acharyal told him, "Fetch the note book from the cupboard." Upon his doing so Acharyal said, "I went through this notebook in the afternoon when I had some free time. You have written some Shlokas which you are probably reciting daily. Some Shlokas contained spelling mistakes. I have corrected to the extent possible. I did so because I didn't want you to recite with mistakes. Verify the correctness of the verses and then chant them." So saying, He handed him the notebook. The devotee was struck by Acharyal's simplicity and humility. By virtue of His unparalleled erudition and the holy seat He was occupying, He could have easily said, "I have corrected all the mistakes. So, you can henceforth chant the verses without errors." But He didn't. Therein lies His genuine greatness.

Paramacharyal was least interested in the administrative affairs of the Math and He decided to transfer the burden of pontifical duties to Acharyal. Acharyal shouldered these responsibilities in His impeccable style and for the welfare of the Math, He strived diligently, even at the cost of His health. Numerous are the improvements to the Math that have been effected by Him. He has established Veda Patashalas at numerous places. He has encouraged scholars versed in traditional lore by providing them financial assistance and

Sambhavanas. At the annual Vidvat Sadas (assembly of traditional scholars) presided over by Him, He never allowed humiliation of any Pandit and, when budding Pandits spoke, He encouraged them by asking simple questions. He established branch Maths at various places and consecrated many a temple. To cater to the medical needs of the people at Sringeri, Acharyal started a hospital and donated several lakhs of rupees for its development.

Various classes of people came to Acharyal for guidance and spiritual illumination. The ocean of mercy that He was, He attentively listened to each one of them and in His eagerness to guide them, readily made Himself accessible to them. Not making any distinction of caste or creed, He has guided many a sincere aspirant. Once, a poor lady from North India came to Sringeri to have His Darshan. She had saved up for a long time in order to be able to make the trip. Realising that it would not be possible for her to stay for long, Acharyal altered His daily schedule to some extent to permit her to obtain the maximum advantage of her trip. On another occasion, even when Acharyal was unwell, He gave audience to a young spiritual aspirant who had travelled a long distance to see Him. He patiently heard him and gave him invaluable spiritual advice. Myriads of such instances of Acharyal's constant eagerness to guide a spiritual aspirant can be cited.

Acharyal's heart melts instantaneously whenever He sees human suffering even in a small measure. Once,

when He was giving Theertha Prasadam to devotees at Tiruchirapalli, an old lady also had joined the long queue to receive His blessings and Theertha Prasadam. Being poor but very much devoted, she wanted to contribute some coins at least as Theertha Kanikka. Having neared Acharyal, before receiving the Theertham, she struggled to untie the knot in her sari in which she had kept the coins. The people behind her were pushing her. Realising her predicament, Acharyal, called one of His attendants and asked him to regulate the queue. He then told the old lady, "I will wait till you are ready." When she was finally ready, He gave her Theertham and blessed her. Through one of His attendants, He asked the old lady to wait. Then, He called one of the Math devotees and said, "It is pitiable to see her in worn out and tattered clothes. Somehow purchase a sari today from a shop (It was a Sunday) and give it to her. See to it that she is fed in the Math. It is sufficient if she leaves the Math after the evening Upanyasam." The devotee did accordingly and the old lady's joy knew no bounds.

A Goshala worker working in the Math had a large family to support and he was finding it difficult to make ends meet. Added to all this, his second son was deaf, dumb, blind, lame, etc. He was just a ball of mud, the worker felt. Everything for the boy had to be done by somebody else. The worker didn't know whether Upanayanam should be performed for him or not. Some Pandits, whom he consulted, were not able to give a definite answer and so he decided to consult Acharyal

Himself. Acharyal patiently listened to his tale of woe and said, "Upanayanam should be performed, but because the boy cannot perform his Nityakarma, it will suffice if you do some extra Gayatri Japam daily on his behalf." Not stopping with this, Acharyal went out of His way to see that the Upanayanam was conducted at the Math itself. He arranged for a priest, and provided a place, money and even food for the conduct of the function. All this He did despite His busy schedule during the Sri Shankara Jayanthi celebration.

When Acharyal was once camping at Dharwad, the headmistress of an orphanage requested Him to grace her school and bless the children. Acharyal readily consented. At the school, she showed Acharyal around the place and told Him about each of the children. She said, "I found this one abandoned in a railway station at the age of three... this one I picked up from a dustbin...." While Acharyal was listening to all this, tears were flowing copiously down His cheeks.

Acharyal responded to various classes of people in an appropriate manner. He was really the Kalpataru of every devotee. His extremely striking personality attracts anyone who has had His Darshan once.

Once a young lawyer happened to visit Sringeri. Coming to Narasimhavanam, he told a disciple of Acharyal, "I came here for sightseeing. I am an atheist but am curious to see what the head of this Math is like. Can I see Him? However, as I have no respect for Sannyasis,

I will neither remove my shirt nor prostrate before Him.” The disciple replied, “Acharyal will be giving Darshan in a few minutes. Anybody can go in. You can decide for yourself whether you want to go or not.” The disciple went inside and, in a few minutes, the door was opened for people to enter for Darshan. The lawyer followed a group of devotees into the room. He stood right at the back. In a few moments Acharyal’s eyes fell on him. Acharyal beckoned to him, holding a fruit in His hand. The lawyer stepped forward, abruptly prostrated and remained so. Some time lapsed. But the lawyer did not show signs of getting up. Finally, Acharyal Himself asked him to rise. He got up with tears in his eyes and, in a choked voice, requested Acharyal to bless him. Acharyal gave him His blessings and also Prasadams. Then the man went out. The disciple whom the lawyer had earlier spoken to emerged and closed the door. He found that the lawyer was the sole man in the Verandah. The lawyer moved up to the disciple and said, “Are you wondering why I behaved in this fashion?” The disciple said, “No, I have seen such things happen often.” Such is the magnetic personality of our Acharyal.

Acharyal’s actions are beyond all human understanding. They have never been sans relevance. At Sringeri, once when Acharyal was proceeding for His afternoon ablutions, He found a medium-sized nail in the pathway that was leading to His bathroom. He beckoned His attendant and asked him to pick it up and place it on a nearby window sill. The attendant did as instructed

but could not help thinking to himself, "Of what use is this nail? Why does Acharyal want this nail to be preserved?" But he was in for a surprise when, a few days later, Acharyal called him and asked him to fetch the nail from the window sill. He was astonished to note that Acharyal used the nail for packing a box containing some materials to be sent to Kotekar, near Mangalore. Recalling to his mind his previous impression, he felt ashamed. He also found that the nail perfectly fitted the box which was getting packed. He realised that no action of Acharyal is desultory.

The water tank supplying the Math premises at Kotekar was fixed directly above the room used by Acharyal. He observed that even after the pump was switched off, a copious amount of water flowed to the ground, unused. He immediately asked the authorities to bring a coconut sapling and Himself saw to it that it was planted at the right spot where the water flowing from the tank reached. Thus, we see that, Acharyal did not believe in wasting and always found some way of using what others might feel constitutes waste material.

Acharyal had a special interest in trees, fields, gardens and protection of the environment. On an occasion Acharyal gave advice about rose plants to the gardener at Bengaluru Math, drawing upon His deep knowledge of flowering plants. The gardener heeded Acharyal's precious suggestions and was thrilled to find the reward very soon. By the time he could convey the results

obtained to His Holiness, Acharyal had left Bengaluru for Sringeri. Undeterred, he left for Sringeri, with his rose plant, in a Math lorry carrying coconuts from the Bengaluru Math.

By the time he reached Sringeri, the budding rose on the plant had fully bloomed and he was all the more enthusiastic about showing it to Acharyal. As he approached Acharyal's place of stay, Acharyal was conversing with some disciples. Upon seeing the gardener with the pot, Acharyal got up from His Asanam and came rushing down the steps to see the flower. He asked the gardener to place the pot on the ground, crouched and lovingly stroked the rose gently with His beautiful, smooth hands. He called the disciples nearby and explained in detail about the beautiful flower.

Many of Acharyal's devotees who have been fortunate to walk with Him in the lush green forests of Narasimhavanam, have observed how Acharyal used to get delighted at the bewitching scenery nature has gifted to Sringeri. He used to keep His palms joined and utter the ninth verse of Sri Dakshinamurthy Stotram. In that verse, nature is spoken of as a constituent of God's form.

Even if an insignificant favour is done to Him by anyone, Acharyal never allows the act to slip from His mind. On the other hand, on account of His self control, He does not remember even a hundred wrongs done to Him. Once when Acharyal was camping at Chennai,

He was to grace a particular temple and bless the devotees assembled there. A devoted lady who lived near the temple, yearned that Acharyal pay a visit to her house also. Though it was not in His day's schedule, Acharyal graced her house and blessed her and her family members. Wanting to express her gratitude at least in a small measure, the devoted lady later went to Acharyal's place of stay and submitted a small silver tumbler filled with sugar.

Acharyal : What is this? Why is this being offered?

Lady : Acharyal, out of mercy, had graced my house. I could not offer anything then. I had not even offered Padapuja.

Acharyal : Even without any of these, I would have come to your place. I am pleased with your devotion.

After a few months, when she went to have Darshan of Acharyal at Sringeri, He remarked to some of the assembled devotees, "Just because I paid a visit to her place at Chennai, this lady offered a big silver vessel to the Math." The lady was spell bound as she was very well aware that she had offered only a small tumbler. She was amazed at Acharyal's memory, magnanimity and easy satiation. After a few months, when she made another trip for His Darshan, Acharyal remarked to assembled devotees, "Just because I visited her place, this lady offered to the Math a large vessel (Acharyal spread His hands wide), how magnanimous of her."

The lady was at a loss for words to explain when some of her relatives among the assembled devotees later questioned her about her large offering to the Math. She understood that Acharyal, on account of His large heartedness, considers even a mole of an offering as a mountain.

We have seen that our Acharyal's benevolence knows no limits. Out of His boundless grace, He has blessed us with Sri Sri Bharathi Theertha Mahaswamigal, the present pontiff of the Sringeri Sharada Peetham. Acharyal has mentioned in a speech that the tradition of the Sringeri Sharada Peetham is transferred from Guru to Shishya just as a lamp lights another lamp. He thus indicated that the lighted lamp becomes as bright as the one that lit it.



1

Scripturally - Ordained Purificatory Rites

(Benedictory discourse delivered, in Kannada, at Kolar on 8.4.1988)

अज्ञानान्तर्गहनपतितानात्मविद्योपदेशै-
स्त्रातुं लोकान्भवदवशिखातापपापच्यमानान् ।
मुक्त्वा मौनं वटविटपिनोर्मूलतो निष्पतन्ती
शंभोर्मूर्तिश्चरति भुवने शङ्कराचार्यरूपा ॥

(To save, by teachings about the Self, people, who are trapped in the dense forest of ignorance and are exceedingly tormented by the heat of the flame of the forest fire of transmigratory existence, Dakshinamurthy (Shiva) gave up silence and, coming from the foot of the banyan tree, moves about in the world in the form of Shankaracharya.)

If a man gets purified, then the deeds performed by him yield good results. That is why the Shastras have spoken of 16 Samskaras (purificatory rites); these have been elaborated into 48 Samskaras. The scriptures declare that we must not lead a life devoid of Samskaras.

There are procedures for doing things. For instance, to do Sandhya Vandanam, a man is required to first bathe, adorn himself with pure clothes, perform Achamanam (procedure in which water is sipped thrice uttering the name of God) and remember the Lord in accordance with:

यः स्मरेत्पुण्डरीकाक्षं स बाह्याभ्यन्तरशुचिः

(He who remembers the Lord becomes externally and internally pure.)

If after all this, a man performs Sandhya Vandanam, a beneficial result accrues.

On the other hand, suppose that a man, without taking a bath, merely sprinkles impure water on his head, saying:

आपो हिष्ठा मयो भुवस्ता न ऊर्जे दधातन ।

(O Deities of the waters! May you, who are joy-conferring, give us food and nourishment.)

Also, suppose that he then takes defiled water and performs Sandhya Vandanam. What, indeed, would be the fruit that would accrue to him?

Here a doubt can arise. Some may feel, "So long as Sandhya Vandanam is performed, what does it matter whether the scripturally-prescribed procedures relating to cleanliness, and the like are observed or not?" The following example reveals the need to do things the way they are required to be done.

A person has to use the prescribed application form to apply for a Government job; only then is one's job-application considered. We may choose to reject the prescribed form and prepare one, using paper of better quality. However, the authorities will not accept it; they will insist that we use the standard printed form. If we keep stressing the superiority of our form, the authorities may tell us, "Keep your fine paper with you; we will keep our ordinary forms with us!"

Just as applications for Government jobs have to be made in the specified mode, if a procedure is prescribed by the Vedas and we transgress it and do something else, Ishwara will not accept our religious observance. We may claim, "Our hymns are superior to those of the Vedas." However, while people may find our poetic utterances delightful, such words will not yield Punyam (virtue), unlike the Vedic utterances.

Thus, Samskaras that are enjoined by the scriptures are very important for us. Before a person is born, his parents perform a Samskara called Garbhadhana. This rite is meant for ensuring or facilitating conception. It is not performed to derive some materialistic pleasure or to get rid of some mental disturbance. People, however, are not often aware of this.

Food, moving about and sleep are natural to man. This is what many think. However, for those who have faith in the Shastras and know their import, taking food is a Yajna (sacrifice); moving about is a Yajna and sleeping

is also a Yajna. Bhagavatpada has said that while taking food, a knower thinks that he is pleasing God by this sacrificial offering. While sleeping, the knower holds that he has merged with God.

द्रष्टाऽस्म्यात्मावलोकात्

On seeing an object, he thinks that he is beholding the Self, which is the unchanging substratum of all objects.

In this manner, if we do everything with a spiritual attitude, our actions become purificatory rites; they render the mind magnanimous and pure. Animals eat whatever item of food they find, roam wherever they want and sleep whenever they feel sleepy. We should not be on par with them. It is sufficient for them to just spend their lives and thereby expend the past actions responsible for their birth as animals. Our case is dissimilar. We can and should strive to attain a better future life than the present one; alternatively, we must achieve total fulfilment in this life itself and become liberated. Thus, it is necessary for us to lead a regulated life.

It is natural for a child to desire to eat food. If it is given all sorts of food, there will be adverse effects. So, to give food to a child in a beneficial manner, the Anna Prashana Samskaram, the purificatory rite in which a child is given a small quantity of rice for the first time in its life, has been prescribed.

Much hair grows on the head of a growing child. The head thereby becomes heavy. Hence, the hair needs to

be removed. The scripture prescribes the Chooda Karma or tonsure ceremony; this is a regulated procedure for removing hair. Everything, inclusive of tonsure, must be executed in the way in which it ought to be done.

Education has to be provided for a child. It may be said that it is sufficient to straightaway have him admitted in a school. The Shastras say that such is not the case; the Upanayanam, thread ceremony, must be performed first.

गुरुसमीपे नयनम्

The word “Upanayanam” means, “Taking one near the Guru.”

During Upanayanam, the boy is initiated into the Gayathri Mantra. Why?

धियो यो नः प्रचोदयात्

Goddess Gayathri impels our intellect. By worshipping Her through the Gayathri Mantra, we pray for our welfare as we do through the following Upanishadic prayer:

स नो देवः शुभया स्मृत्या संयुनक्तु

(May that God endow us with pure thoughts.)

Our education will amount to little if we do not have a pure mind, bestowed on us by divine grace. If the teacher does not act according to their wishes, uncultured students threaten to take him to task when he comes out of the classroom. This is the fruit of education without

culture. How should the good student conduct himself?
It is said:

त्वयाऽऽसने न प्रश्नसितव्यम्

“When the Guru is sitting in front of you, you must not even breathe hard.” If one goes to the extent of being mischievous, the teacher cannot even remain there.

For our intellect to become pure and tranquil, we need God’s blessings. Hence, the Shastras ordain that after having the Upanayana Samskara, one should serve a Guru, get educated and please him.

After the completion of studies:

प्रजातन्तुं मा व्यवच्छेत्सीः

(Do not break the line of progeny.)

Man has got what is known as “Pitru Rina” or obligation to his forefathers. These days, people want their family line to continue to grow. The same feeling was there even in our forefathers. They, begetting good citizens, brought about the growth of their family line. Hence, continuing the family line is also a duty. So, the student is asked to do that by getting married.

Nowadays, the answer to the question, “Whom should you marry?”, is considered to be, “One should marry a girl who appeals to the mind and the eyes.” Some moderners deem it unnecessary to consider even whether the “Gothram” of the boy and the girl are the same or whether

the boy and the girl are very closely related to the extent forbidden by the Shastras.

We now hear that, according to medical science, the farther the relationship between a husband and a wife, the better, as the chances of a familial genetic defect affecting the offspring is less. However, when it comes to a lustful one, it is said:

कामातुराणां न भयं न लज्जा

(Those afflicted by lust have neither fear nor shame.)

As such people have neither fear nor shame, they may do anything. However, once they get married, they begin to think of ways of obtaining a divorce! This is not how things should be.

In the Ramayana, we see that Rama had Sita for His wife while He was at Ayodhya; She was His wife in the forests and He continued to have Her as His wife even when Ravana abducted Her. Thus, Rama, under all circumstances, had only one wife. Further, Sita was the crest jewel amongst chaste wives. Rama and Sita were an ideal couple. By imitating them, people can lead a grand, married life.

During the marriage ceremony, it is said:

धर्मं चार्थं च कामे च नातिचरितव्यं त्वया

“While engaging in any religious act, while earning money and while enjoying worldly pleasures, you

should not desert me.” Making this promise, the couple get married. However, nowadays if the question were asked, “Who uttered these words?”, the answer would be, “The priest who conducted the marriage.” This is because the boy and the girl are unaware of the promise; it is the priest who has learnt by rote, the concerned words, who utters them. This is the level to which we have degenerated.

Just because the import of a purificatory rite is not obvious to someone, it does not follow that the rite is without significance. The following example illustrates this:

When one goes to a hospital, one has to scrub one’s hands before touching the surgical instruments there. Washing one’s hands with ordinary water is insufficient; one has to use a disinfectant. One may ask, “Why should I do so?” The answer is, “To avoid causing infection.” Suppose one were to argue, “I fail to see how I would infect the surgical patient. So, I refuse to disinfect my hands.” The response of the surgeon would be, “Get out.” There is a fixed procedure to be followed.

Bacteria cause infection. It is so written in medical books. Bacteria cannot be seen with the naked eyes but can be seen with the aid of a powerful microscope. What is there inside curds? One can see nothing. However, if one were to use a microscope, one would see very odd things and would say, “Oh, how can I use this curd which has bacteria in it?” A ripe mango is palatable but if it were seen through a microscope one would exclaim,

“I will never eat this fruit”, because one sees strange creatures moving inside it. Thus, there is difference between what we can see and what is actually there.

Why did not God give us the power to see bacteria? Because we have to manage our lives; what He has given us is sufficient for that. If one wishes to see more minutely then one may resort to a microscope. However, if one were to use the science of medicine and instruments such as a microscope to prepare good food, one will only fail. In other words, there is a time and place for everything. For instance, one must cook in the traditional fashion; thereafter one may use medical science to analyse the food.

To sum up, there being a proper way to do things, Samskaras that are prescribed by the Shastras are important. Merely because one does not readily recognise their significance, it does not follow that they do not have any. They indeed purify us.

हर नमः पार्वतीपतये हर हर महादेव ।
जानकीकान्तस्मरणं जय जय राम राम ॥



2

The Correct Way to Perform Actions

(Benedictory discourse delivered, in Tamil, at Chennai on 25.12.1986)

ओं नमः सर्वभूतानि विष्टभ्य परितिष्ठते ।
अखण्डानन्दबोधाय पूर्णाय परमात्मने ॥

(Om. Salutations to the infinite Supreme Atma who is of the nature of unbroken consciousness and bliss and who, having pervaded all beings, remains enveloping them.)

In the battlefield, while advising Arjuna, Lord Krishna said:

न हि कश्चित्क्षणमपि जातु तिष्ठत्यकर्मकृत् ।

No one can abstain from activity and sit totally actionless for even a second. Why?

कार्यते ह्यवशः कर्म सर्वः प्रकृतिजैर्गुणैः ।

On account of Prakriti (primordial nature), comprising 'Sattva', 'Rajas' and 'Tamas', he will necessarily be engaged in some action or the other. When he is asleep, he is engaged in what is tantamount to performing Tamasic

activity. When, desirous of something or the other, he thinks about worldly dealings then Rajas holds sway. “Who am I? Why am I like this? What is my true nature? Can I attain it?” - if, with a desire to know all this, he were to hear the truth from the Guru, his activity would be Sattvic.

Regardless of whether what we perform is Sattvic, Rajasic or Tamasic, how exactly should we act? In response to this, the Lord has said, “You may engage in various activities but should treat them as offerings to the Almighty.”

यत्करोषि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत् ।
यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत्कुरुष्वमदर्पणम् ॥

(O, Son of Kunti! Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in a sacrifice, whatever you give and whatever austerity you perform, do it as an offering to Me.)

Thus, it is said that whatever we do, we must offer to the Lord. Then, to whom does the result of the act accrue? He who truly loves God would be unconcerned with this question.

Suppose that a person sincerely serves his king. If asked, “What do you want for your labour?”, it would be sufficient for him to say, “The king’s grace is what I want.” By being in the monarch’s good graces, he will have what he desires, for all his requirements will be provided by the pleased king. On the other hand, if

he were to express his desire for a house, he would be given only that. Subsequently, if he were to seek anything else, the king would say, "I have already rewarded you once." There would, however, be no limit to the benefits that would accrue to him, had he just sought the king's grace. Likewise, the best course is to offer everything to God and place oneself at His mercy.

What is the nature of the fruit that God will bestow?

फलं कर्मायत्तम्

The fruit will be given in accordance with one's activities. If we perform our duty but are unattached to the results of our actions, our minds will become pure. On the other hand, if we are desirous of the fruits of our actions, our activity will bind us in as much as the fruits of good and bad actions must be experienced and so we will be forced to take a future birth; when one has a body, sorrow is inevitable. The Lord says:

योगः कर्मसु कौशलम्

(Yoga is dexterity in actions.)

When an act is performed in a spirit of dedication to God and one is not attached to the fruit of the act, the very act that normally binds serves to liberate, by producing mental purity, which is needed for liberation-conferring knowledge to dawn. Therefore, let us not long for the results of our actions. The Lord has given us the ability to be detached. "Our duty is to perform action

but not to be attached to the fruit thereof” - if we engage in activity with this attitude, what we do will constitute Dharma (righteousness). Some examples can now be considered.

People support their families. Manu says that it is one’s duty to help one’s father, mother and other dependents. Therefore, even supporting a family, if done in the proper spirit, is Dharma. We eat food. If we do this in the correct manner, even our act of eating is Dharma. Sri Krishna says:

ब्रह्मार्पणं ब्रह्महविर्ब्रह्माग्नौ ब्रह्मणा हुतम् ।

(Brahman is the offering; Brahman the oblation; by Brahman is the oblation poured into the fire of Brahman.)

Virtue will accrue if one eats, at the appropriate time, food that has been offered to God and does so with the feeling, “This food is for the sustenance of the body. It has been given to God. I now take it as His Prasada, the sacred remnant of what He has accepted. It is not for pandering to the organ of taste that I eat this.”

We speak of many things; nevertheless all our speech just comprises words. Amongst the words:

नमः शिवाय मन्त्रोऽयम्

(“Namah Shivaya” or “Salutation to Shiva” is a Mantra.)

It is enough if we chant, “Namah Shivaya”; this is a great Mantra and confers bountiful benefits on us. Thus, even

speech, when properly used, is Dharmic. Instead, if a man were to simply chit-chat, demerit would accrue to him on account of his speech, regardless of whether he did or did not physically perform a sinful act.

Hence, whatever act we do, we should do it in a spirit of dedication to God; an act so done will purify our mind rather than add to our bondage. Further, when we offer our actions to the Lord, we will never even contemplate doing a misdeed. If a Swamigal were to come to one's home, would anyone offer him a faded garland? No. Why? People would say, "As Swamigal is coming to your place, offer him a fresh garland." In like manner, when we act for the sake of God, if we even vaguely realise that our act is wrong, we shall abstain from it. On the other hand, if one were to act for one's own sake, one might think, "I can get a better job by offering a bribe. So let me do so."

In any case, what need is there to crave for worldly objects and status? After all, this world is ephemeral. Sri Krishna says:

अनित्यमसुखं लोकमिमं प्राप्य भजस्व माम् ॥

(Having reached this transient, joyless world, do worship Me.)

How long will anything or anybody last in this world? We see that even,

मान्धाता च महीपतिः कृतयुगालङ्कारभूतो गतः

(Mandhata, the king who was an ornament of the Krita Yuga, the age of righteousness, is no more.)

So many are the kings who have dwelt in this world. There have been great incarnations of God, such as Rama. Yet, none of them is seen now. That is why it is said:

अनित्यमसुखं लोकम्

(The world which is transient and joyless.)

अनित्यम्

This universe is not eternal.

असुखं

It is not as though there is no joy in the world at all; the joy we aspire for is, however, not attained by us. This is the meaning. What sort of joy do we long for? We want to be happy at all times, without any impediment. What is the happiness we actually experience? One that hardly lasts for five minutes before being followed by sorrow. That is why it has been said:

अनित्यमसुखं लोकम्

(The world which is transient and joyless.)

इमं प्राप्य भजस्व माम्

We have obtained our present birth in the transient, joyless world but we desire permanent happiness. So what must we do? We must worship God, for we will

then, by His grace, obtain everlasting joy. How are we to worship Him?

स्वकर्मणा तमभ्यर्च्य

(Worshipping Him by means of the performance of one's ordained duty.)

A Brahmachari must perform Sandhya Vandanam. A householder must not only perform Sandhya Vandanam but also take care of his family and duly attend to guests. If we do our duties for the sake of God, and thereby worship God, we shall earn His grace, our minds will become peaceful and our lives will become meaningful.

हर नमः पार्वतीपतये हर हर महादेव ।
जानकीकान्तस्मरणं जय जय राम राम ॥



3

The Truth Beyond Space and Time

(Benedictory discourse delivered, in Tamil, at Chennai on 20.11.1986)

दिकालाद्यनवच्छिन्नानन्तचिन्मात्रमूर्तये ।
स्वानुभूत्यैकमानाय नमः शान्ताय तेजसे ॥

(Salutation to the tranquil effulgence of the form of eternal consciousness unlimited by spatial direction, time, etc., the sole valid means of knowing which is self-experience.)

In the Chandogya Upanishad, it is said:

नाल्पे सुखमस्ति

There is no happiness in that which is small.

यो वै भूमा तत्सुखम्

That which is big is blissful. What is the meaning of “big” and “small” in the present context? The answer is contained in:

दिकालाद्यनवच्छिन्नानन्तचिन्मात्रमूर्तये ।

Every object in this Universe has a delimitation of the form, "It is found here, but it is not found there." However Brahman, which is Bhooma (big), is devoid of any spatial delimitations. Whatever place you conceive of, It is there. Therefore, there is no area where It is not. It is beyond Dik or spatial direction. Strictly speaking, spatial direction cannot be specified in an absolute sense. For a man in Madurai, Madras (Chennai) lies in the northern direction. However, for a man dwelling in Visakhapatnam, Madras lies to the south. If it be asked, "Per se, does Madras lie in the northern direction or in the southern direction?" the answer would be, "It is neither. It exists. That is all." If we proceed to Visakhapatnam, relative to us, Madras is in the south. On the other hand, if we were to go to Madurai or Tirunelveli, the direction of Madras, relative to us, would become north. Therefore, Dik or spatial direction is something that is relative. Even in a relative, rather than an absolute sense, Brahman cannot be specified as existing in the northern or southern direction.

The case of time is similar to that of spatial direction. With respect to some specific delimiting factor, we speak of a day. What exactly is a day? It is something we determine with reference to the movement of the sun. We now see the sun rising. The time interval between our current and next sighting of the rising sun constitutes a day. When the rising sun is next seen, the next day begins. If this be the case, what is the position if we do

not sight the sun? In other words, what is time, measured in terms of a day, independent of the observed movement of the sun? Time exists but the question, "What time is it?", cannot be answered without reference to something like the movement of the sun. Hence, a measure of time, such as a day, loses its significance without reference to some delimiting factor. A day is thus something relative and not absolute. Thirty days constitute a month and 365 days, a year. As other measures of time, such as a month and a year, are based on a day, they are also not on a firmer footing than a day; they too have meaning only with reference to some delimiting factor.

Time, space and objects are all conjectured by the mind. After all, but for our defining temporal terms, such as day with reference to the apparent movement of the sun in the sky, time would not be discernible as it is now. Similarly, but for our defining directions, as for instance, north with respect to the pole star, spatial direction would lose its value. As far as objects of the Universe are concerned, the answer to the question, "Are they limited by time?" is, "Yes"; everything is limited by time. For instance, we make statements, such as, "We were born on this day. One day or the other, we will die. At present, we exist."

If we consider the case of the body or some other object, it is clear that it did not exist prior to its origination at a certain point in time and that on some day, it will perish; thereafter it will cease to be. It is only between its

origination and destruction that it appears, to an observer, to exist. That is to say, all objects are delimited by time.

What is consciousness or Brahman like? Before the birth of Rama, there was the Kruta Yuga. Now the Kali Yuga is in progress. Brahman is not limited by any such periods of time. It exists and that is all. The question, "When does It exist?" is inapplicable to Brahman, which is beyond time. Whatever point of time you conjecture, Brahman does exist at that time. Did It exist before the Kruta Yuga? It did. It was there at the time of Rama, It is there now and It shall be there even tomorrow. So it was said:

दिकालाद्यनवच्छिन्न

Brahman is beyond the limiting influence of spatial direction and time and objects. However, though beyond space and time, It is not a void or an inert entity. It shines in the form of consciousness. If one were to get the direct realization of this entity, one will attain the summum bonum of life. This is what the scriptures say.

Experience too is like that. The more absorbed we become in Brahman, the more does it seem, "So many things take place in the universe. All this is a mere illusory sport." If the world be a mere illusory sport then what object is good and what is bad? For a person who has desire for the objects of the world, any object will seem to be good or bad depending on whether he sees it as a source of his joy or sorrow. On the other hand, for one who is devoid of attachment and aversion and whose mind is

focussed on the Self, the position is, "I am the witness. That is all." If such a person were asked, "Do you get happiness or unhappiness on account of the world?", he would answer, "I see no reason to either laugh or weep over anything. I merely witness what comes before my eyes and do not even make an effort to experience anything."

We aspire for this state. Shankara Bhagavatpada has said that if we obtain a Sadguru, receive his teachings and follow the means prescribed by him, we too can attain it.

हर नमः पार्वतीपतये हर हर महादेव ।
जानकीकान्तस्मरणं जय जय राम राम ॥



4

The Goal and the Means

(This benedictory discourse was delivered by Acharyal, in Kannada, on 2.7.1989 at Bengaluru. The venue was the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and the duration of the holy talk was 35 minutes. Some points are worthy of note in connection with this divine address.

1. It was delivered by Acharyal on His last visit to Bengaluru in the course of His final Vijaya Yatra prior to His Mahasamadhi on 21.9.1989. From Bengaluru, Acharyal returned to Sringeri to observe Chaturmasyam there. Consequently, this is among His last five benedictory addresses.
2. It was uncommon for Acharyal to speak about or comment on His gracious speeches. However, without any discernible occasion to do so, of His own accord, He recalled and commented on this holy address, at Sringeri, in August, 1989. He told me, "I remember that, while at Bengaluru, I went one day to the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. That morning, I had sat for long in Nirvikalpa Samadhi. Though

I engaged in My normal activities, My mind was particularly indrawn that day. Perhaps, that is why I spoke about the viewpoint of a knower of the Truth and about Samadhi. I now get a feeling that I shall not be discoursing on those lines again.”

3. Acharyal was a nonpareil Yogi and had been frequently abiding in Nirvikalpa Samadhi, the pinnacle of Yoga, since His teens. He had the capacity to confer Samadhi on others. As stated by Him, He had sat for long in Nirvikalpa Samadhi on 2.7.1989. Yet, in connection with Samadhi, He chose to cite, in this sacrosanct address, the experiences of a disciple rather than His own; further, He took no credit whatsoever for those experiences. Such was His matchless freedom from egoism.

- Translator)

The Goal and the Means

(Benedictory address delivered, in Kannada, at Bengaluru on 2.7.1989)

विशुद्धज्ञानदेहाय त्रिवेदी दिव्यचक्षुषे
श्रेयःप्राप्तिनिमित्ताय नमः सोमार्धधारिणे ।

(Obeisance to Lord Shiva, who has a body constituted by pure consciousness, is conversant with the Vedas, possesses a divine eye, bears the crescent moon and is the means to attain liberation.)

नमामि यामिनीनाथलेखालङ्कृतकुन्तलाम्
भवानीं भवसन्तापनिर्वापणसुधानदीम् ॥

(I pay obeisance to the consort of Lord Shiva whose tresses are decorated with the crescent moon and who is a river of nectar that removes the intense heat of transmigratory existence.)

There are several religious traditions in the world. It is our duty to know about the particulars of our tradition and to conduct our lives accordingly.

There are two types of people in the world. Some say:

अयं लोको नास्ति परः

(There is only this world that is experienced and not any other that is attained after death.)

Others aver:

अयं लोकः परश्च

(There is this world as also the hereafter.)

Anyhow, both the Nastikas or unbelievers and the Astikas or believers constantly require the grace of the power that transcends the realm of human thought but, remaining in the background, conducts all activities.

From the words of the Puranas and from our experience, we learn to a great extent that nobody can unfailingly fulfil all his longings. Ravana was incomparably heroic. He decided, "I will procure the Atma Lingam that is with God, keep it with me and worship it. Then, I will definitely do that which is universally regarded as reprehensible." Maybe he felt, "I am deathless. So what hindrance could I possibly encounter? Let me see." But, even as he watched, strong and healthy, his design was thwarted by another.

(Acharyal refers here to the following story with which His audience was familiar. Once Ravana went to Kailasa and prayed to Lord Shiva that he be bestowed with the Lord's own, most-sacred Atma Lingam. Never one to refuse a devotee's request, Shiva obliged. Ravana took the Atma Lingam in his hands and started for his homeland, Lanka. The devas, however, shuddered at

the very thought of the possible consequences of the inestimably-potent Atma Lingam being consecrated and worshipped in Lanka by the power-hungry Rakshasa.

As Ravana was journeying towards Lanka, the sun began to set. So, he stopped as it was time for him to perform his evening Sandhya Vandanam. Taking this opportunity, Lord Vinayaka appeared on the scene in the form of an ordinary boy. Ravana was aware that the Atma Lingam was to be placed on the ground only at the spot where it was to be consecrated. Hence, he approached the lad and asked him to hold the Atma Lingam for some time. The youngster agreed but laid the condition that if he wanted to leave, he would call out to Ravana. If Ravana did not return even after he had called thrice, he would place the Lingam on the ground and move away. There being no one else around to help him, Ravana agreed.

In a very short while, the boy shouted, "Ravana". The Rakshasa asked him to tarry a while. But, in a few moments the lad called out a second time and, shortly thereafter a third time. Having done so, even as Ravana rushed back, he placed the Atma Lingam on the ground. Ravana was furious but the deed was done. He tried his best to lift the Atma Lingam but was unable to do so. Left with no choice, he returned to Lanka, empty-handed, with his desire to possess Atma Lingam remaining unfulfilled.)

The rise of a desire and its subsequent frustration which were what Ravana experienced, are actually experienced

by all. We too, by nature, have desires, some small and some big. When we are successful in consummating several of them, we get puffed up with pride and think, "There is none like me. I am the greatest." However, it is impossible for us to always fulfil our wishes; we do fail. Valorous persons themselves have perished. As death approached them, they realised, "What we understood about being able to achieve all our ends is wrong." Not only can all desired objects not be attained, separation from the ones that have been obtained is also certain. Actually, worldly objects, whether desired and not attained or temporarily acquired, are all false, not real. It is said:

शश्वन्नश्वरमेव विश्वमखिलम्

(The entire world is ever perishable.)

Here, one may object, "Advaitins say that the Universe, being perishable, is Mithya or false. But I do see the world. How then can it be false?" This is a pertinent point. To one who has seen the Truth, the world is clearly false. However, for the multitude who have not beheld the Truth, the world appears real. This difference in viewpoints can be elucidated by means of an example.

Sometimes, children make toy houses. But, to them, what they have built are actual houses. They go about saying, "My house is good." It is, of course, another matter that after some time they get fed up with what they have done and dismantle their constructions. As far as the

elders are concerned, the children are engaged in play. But to the children, they are engaged in an essential undertaking and not in a mere game. Why is that what is regarded by a child as an essential undertaking is considered by us, elders, as play? The reason is that we have a clear understanding of something superior to a toy house; we know of actual houses and their construction. Till we attained maturity, we too did not regard the building of toy houses as mere play. We constructed toy houses and went about saying, "My house is big. Yours is small. Mine is good. Yours is not." Now, we do not do so.

There exists a Parama Satya or absolute reality; everything in the world is real, but this is absolutely real. What characterizes the Parama Satya or absolute reality? It must be "Trikala Abadhya" or unsublated in the three measures of time. What about the world? It was there before our births. It exists now and it shall persist even after our deaths. But then, was it always there? That is impossible. Its present existence is universally accepted. It may be there after we pass away, but for how long? Even common people like us can conjecture that it will get destroyed in some distant future.

The Parama Satya or absolute reality was, is and will be. Since when does It exist? There is no room for this question as It always existed. Whatever point of time that you think of, It was there then. It exists now. It shall continue in the future too. Till when? There is no scope for specifying a time limit, for It is everlasting. Can this

Universe ever satisfy the condition of being untouched by time? Never; neither a Nastika nor an Astika would agree.

Suppose there is a person who has seen this Parama Satya which was, is and will be, without any question of temporal delimitation. To him, the world will obviously appear as specified in

शश्वन्नश्वरमेव विश्वमखिलम्

(The entire world is ever perishable.)

It does not follow that the world is totally non-existent. Undoubtedly, it can be seen by the eye and objects can be grasped by the hand. However, the world is not real in the way we imagine it to be. In the Tarka Shastra, some objects are said to be “Pravahata Nitya” or eternal like a continuous flow; some are “Kutastha Nitya” or unchangingly eternal. According to the Tarkikas, Akasha is not “Pravahata Nitya” as it does not change; it is “Kutastha Nitya.” This is, of course, not the view of the Vedantins, for they recognize the origin and destruction of even Akasha. From the standpoint of people, this world is “Pravahata Nitya.” Something or the other keeps originating. But none claims that there is any single worldly object that persists for ever, without any change.

Consider a person who focuses his attention on the absolute reality, realises Its nature and obtains an unwavering conviction regarding It. As should be expected, he deems It alone as real. In view of his experience of the

absolute reality, everything else is extremely transient. Thus, it is but natural that he should regard the Universe as Mithya or false. Such was the case with Bhagavatpada. He established that correct knowledge of the absolute reality is the cause of liberation.

Earlier, we noted that there are two types of people, Astikas and Nastikas, and that both are in need of the grace of the supreme power. God is this power; in essence, He is the absolute reality that was just discussed. Astikas always accept the existence of God but, nevertheless, deluded by Maya, they do perform what they should not. Nastikas say on some occasion that God might exist. At any rate, they too commit misdeeds. Then, what is the difference in conduct between the Astikas and Nastikas, for both do err?

If there be a respected elder at home, even when there is an occasion to do wrong, a person often restrains himself, thinking, "What explanation will I be able to give when I return home?" On the other hand, in the absence of such an elder, there would be no need to explain and so the person would do whatever he feels like. Having erred, he might be subject to remorse later.

In the case of an Astika, his firm belief in the existence of God serves as a restraining influence on him, like the presence of an elder at home. So, he discards several opportunities to go astray. The Nastika lacks the benefit of such a regulating influence. Where exactly is God who serves as a regulating influence on the Astika?

ईश्वरः सर्वभूतानां हृद्देशेऽर्जुन तिष्ठति ।

He dwells within the heart. Is He then not found outside?

अन्तर्बाहिश्च तत्सर्वं व्याप्य नारायणः स्थितः ॥

(Narayana pervades the interior and the exterior of everything perceived or heard of in this world.)

Thus, God is within and outside. It is relatively easy to see Him in the exterior but apprehending Him within is tough. Madhusudana Saraswati has said:

ध्यानाभ्यासवशीकृतेन मनसा तन्निर्गुणं निष्क्रियम्
ज्योतिः किञ्चन योगिनो यदि परं पश्यन्ति पश्यन्तु ते ।

(By means of the mind brought under control by the practice of meditation, Yogis behold the Supreme Light that is free from attributes and activity. Let them do so.)

Some behold the absolute reality, the Supreme Brahman that is devoid of attributes and form. Who are they?

ध्यानाभ्यासवशीकृतेन मनसा

They are those who, having practised meditation, have brought their minds fully under their control. Even though such a person may be seated in the midst of several people and engaged in conversation, if he were asked, "Where are you?", his heartfelt answer would be, "I am everywhere." He would not feel that he is delimited by the body. For such Yogis, seeing God within is easy.

निष्कलं निष्क्रियं शान्तं निरवद्यं निरञ्जनम् ।

(The Supreme, which is partless, actionless, tranquil and faultless.)

God who is the absolute reality as specified above, can, however, take on forms. As Sri Krishna puts it:

अजोऽपि सन्नव्ययात्मा भूतानामीश्वरोऽपि सन् ।
प्रकृतिं स्वामधिष्ठाय संभवाम्यात्ममायया ॥

(Though I am birthless, undecaying by nature, and the Lord of all beings, still, by ruling over My Maya, I take birth by My own Maya.)

Though actually birthless and undecaying, God manifests for the good of the world. He thereby makes it easy for people to see Him outside themselves. For instance, numerous people had the good fortune of beholding Sri Rama and Sri Krishna in the Treta and Dwapara Yugas. Now, people can take advantage of idols and pictures. When one sees a picture, such as of Lord Krishna or Shiva, the concerned form easily comes to his mind.

However, such visualization, does not, by itself, constitute deep meditation and the clear apprehension of God within oneself. When one observes a picture briefly, closes one's eyes and tries to hold the form steady in one's mind, one is usually unsuccessful. On visualizing the divinity's head, one fails to see the deity's feet; when the feet are seen, the hands do not come to mind; when

a hand is apprehended, some other part is not visible. This is a common problem.

What is a remedy for such inability to meditate on a form of God? If one were to see a picture for long and to then close one's eyes, the form would get imprinted rather clearly in the mind. Then one could meditate upon the form that has got impressed upon the mind; with adequate practice, one succeeds.

Some ask, "What is the need for temples?" It is true that they are not necessary. But for whom? If a person can behold God wherever he happens to be seated, a temple is superfluous for him. On the other hand, consider the case of a man who is unable to focus on God even when he goes to a temple. What would his condition be if there were no temples at all? Thus, for a person of this kind, a temple is essential.

Bhagavatpada recognized this. His explanation of the Truth is lovely. He avers, "Intrinsically, God has no form. But He can take on any form." God comes to some in the guise of a friend. For instance, Lord Krishna came to Arjuna not as God but as a friend. He came to Vasudeva and Devaki not as the Supreme but as their son. To Kamsa, He appeared in the role of an enemy. We cannot know in what form He will come to us.

वासुदेवः सर्वमिति स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः ॥

The best course is for us to recognize that everything has got God for its essence. We should contemplate on God

as immanent and as possessed of a form and make it our aim in life to experience Him. Alternatively, we should strive to make this our last birth by directly realizing that we are intrinsically God, the non-dual absolute reality, devoid of attributes. Only then will our life as humans become truly significant.

On the other hand, having got a human birth, association with a sage and the capacity to discriminate, if we remain concerned only with worldly enjoyments and the means to attain them, the following statement will apply to us:

इतः कोऽन्वस्ति मूढात्मा यस्तु स्वार्थे प्रमाद्यति ।

(Who indeed, is a greater fool than the person who is negligent of his own welfare?)

The Shastra teaches us what is good for us and not about the welfare of some unknown third party. It tells us, "Uplift yourself." If we do not do that, we are thorough fools.

In the time of Bhagavatpada, there were many creeds. For instance, there were Shaivas, Vaishnavas, Shaktas, Buddhists and Charvakas, the total Nastikas. There was discord as to who was right and who was wrong. Reasoning that springs from the mere imagination of persons lacks conclusiveness, for man's conjecture has no limits. It is seen that an argument discovered by adepts with great effort is falsified by other adepts.

An argument hit upon by the latter is proved to be hollow by still others. So, nobody can treat as final any argument springing merely from conjecture; after all, human intellect differs.

However, since time immemorial, we, in India, are familiar with the Veda. The Veda is beyond the confines of human schools of thought and is the final deciding authority. Here, some may object, "The Buddhists do not accept the Veda as authoritative." I too concede that the Buddhists do not accept the Veda as an authentic means of knowledge but recognize that the mental impressions of the early Buddhists were only Vedic. After all, they had studied the Veda. They accepted the portions that appealed to them but discarded the portions that did not. That is why they got the name "Avaidika" or "one who does not follow the Veda." On the other hand, if they had accepted all that is said in Veda, they too would have been termed "Vaidika" or "follower of the Veda."

सत्यं वद ।

(Speak the truth.)

They accept this teaching of the Veda. Next comes the injunction:

धर्मं चर ।

(Practise Dharma.)

This too appeals to them. The Veda further says:

स्वाध्यायप्रवचनाभ्यां न प्रमदितव्यम् ॥

(Do not be careless about learning and teaching.)

They concur with this order. Then comes:

मातृदेवो भव ।

(Venerate your mother as a god.)

पितृदेवो भव ।

(Venerate your father as a god.)

आचार्यदेवो भव ।

(Venerate your teacher as a god.)

अतिथिदेवो भव ।

(Venerate your guest as a god.)

They follow all this as they do believe that the mother, father, teacher and the guest are venerable. Indeed the early Buddhists came from families familiar with the Veda. But when the Buddhists encountered the Vedic teaching,

अग्नीषोमीयं पशुमालभेत

(One should immolate an animal for Agni and Soma.)

they rejected it.

The following maxim is pertinent in the context of their partially accepting and partially rejecting the teaching of the Veda.

अर्धं पाकायार्धं प्रसवाय

(Half for cooking and half for hatching.)

A man purchased an egg. He desired to preserve it till it hatched and he obtained a chick. At the same time, he could not control his desire to have the taste of the egg. So he thought, "Let me keep one half of the egg for hatching and eat the other half." He implemented his plan. The result was that hatching was not possible and, further, he had only half an egg to eat.

Thus, once one takes a text such as the Veda as a Pramana or a valid means of knowledge, one should accept it in its entirety. Here, one such as the Buddhist may object, "There are internal contradictions in the Veda and, as such, it is unacceptable." What superficially appear to be contradictions are actually not so. They can be fully resolved by means of proper, interpretative logic. Such logic must be resorted to. It is the Veda which says,

न हिंस्यात्सर्वा भूतानि

(Do not injure any creature.)

And it is the very same Veda, that also says:

अग्नीषोमीयं पशुमालभेत

(One should immolate an animal for Agni and Soma.)

There is no real contradiction here, for the former is the general rule and the latter is an exception. In the

Karma Kanda of the Veda, we find specifications of the form, “If you desire this, perform such and such a rite.” The question of whether the desire is right or wrong is not analysed at that juncture. In case the desire is not present, it is unnecessary to perform that rite. Viewed in this light, the Veda is blameless and free from contradictions.

One may ask whether the scripture advises one to become a householder or a Sannyasi. In this connection, what Bhagavatpada has said in His Upadesha Panchakam is striking. He advised:

वेदो नित्यमधीयतां तदुदितं कर्म स्वनुष्ठीयताम्
 तेनेशस्य विधीयतामपचितिः काम्ये मतिस्त्यज्यताम् ।
 पापौघः परिधूयतां भवसुखे दोषोऽनुसन्धीयताम्
 आत्मेच्छा व्यवसीयतां...

(Study the Veda everyday. Perform well the acts enjoined therein. Worship God through the performance of duties. Give up the thought of engaging in desire-prompted rites. Eradicate the host of sins. Contemplate the faults in worldly enjoyments. Establish the desire for the Self.)

All this was nice to hear. Abruptly, Bhagavatpada went on to say:

निजगृहात्तूर्णं विनिर्गम्यताम् ॥

“Quickly go away from your house.” Here one may think, “Oh! Having accomplished all this, must I leave home?”

Yes, if, after having done all this, you feel you have had enough of the world, then leave home. If you feel that the worldly experiences you have had are not sufficient, go right ahead and do the above activities not merely for the duration of this life but in a few succeeding lives also. At least thereafter, you will feel, “Enough of the world.” This is the special feature of Bhagavatpada’s Veda-based teaching; the competence of the person is fully taken into consideration.

Next, there is the question, “Should one resort to God as Saguna, with qualities, or as Nirguna, devoid of all attributes?” The answer pertinent to the common man is, “You should resort only to God as Saguna.” With respect to God with qualities, a person may wonder, “Is Shiva the greatest or Vishnu or Shakti or any other?” To the people who have such a doubt, Bhagavatpada’s advice is, “The Supreme Brahman, devoid of all attributes and forms is indeed the greatest. It is this reality that appears as Shiva, Vishnu, etc. You may worship Shiva or Vishnu or Shakti or any other such divinity. When all of them are really one, what room is there for discord?”

येनास्य पितरो याता येन याताः पितामहाः ।

(He should follow the path of his father and grandfather.)

As per this statement, one should worship in accordance with one’s family tradition.

Alternatively,

रुचीनां वैचित्र्याद्दुकुटिलनानापथजुषां
नृणामेको गम्यस्त्वमसि पयसामर्णव इव ॥

(You alone are the sole goal of persons who, because of differences in their tastes, follow different paths, straight and convoluted, just as the ocean is the goal of the rivers.)

In keeping with this, one's preference can be the deciding factor. However, one's freedom is not absolute. One should not resort to whatever catches one's fancy. What is forbidden by the scripture must be left out. Amongst what is prescribed, such as worship of Shiva, Vishnu and the like, a man may choose whatever appeals to one. What is that which is forbidden?

न हिंस्यात्सर्वा भूतानि

(Do not injure any creature.)

There is no question of saying, "I do not agree with this rule." One has to follow it. Then we have,

मातृदेवो भव । पितृदेवो भव । आचार्यदेवो भव ।

(Venerate your mother as a god. Venerate your father as a god. Venerate your teacher as a god.)

One has to accept all this. Further, one is not given a choice when it comes to doing what is specifically enjoined upon oneself by the Shastra and abstaining from what all is explicitly prohibited. One may think, "I am not in a position to do everything that I am required to." To this, the scripture itself provides the solution.

स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात् ॥

(Even a little of this Dharma saves one from great fear.)

Have faith and do as much as you are capable of. The general rule is that one should bathe and only after that perform one's Sandhya Vandanam and worship of God. Suppose you have fever and the doctor tells you that if you bathe, your ailment can turn serious. Should you still bathe and only then perform Sandhya Vandanam? No. You can apply Vibhuti, Gopi Chandana or something else depending on your tradition. Thereafter, you can perform Sandhya Vandanam; there is no need to take a bath.

Suppose the situation is worse and even Vibhuti and water are not available.

अपवित्रः पवित्रो वा सर्वावस्थां गतोऽपि वा ।

यः स्मरेत्पुण्डरीकाक्षं स बाह्याभ्यन्तरः शुचिः ॥

(He who remembers God becomes externally and internally pure, regardless of whether he was impure or pure or in any state.)

In keeping with this, one should think of God and pray, "O Lord! I am unable to access even water. How then am I to bathe. Further, I do not even have the strength to do so right now. But it is said that any good activity should be done while being pure. For me, to become pure, there is just You, the purest of the pure. So I think of You." If, after such sincere prayer, one were to perform Sandhya Vandanam, God would accept it.

On hearing of this position of the Shastras, a boy perversely decided, "In winter, there is no need for me to take a bath. I can just do Sandhya Vandanam straightaway. On the other hand, in summer, I can take three baths and perform Sandhya Vandanam." This is not a conclusion based upon scriptural authority but is dictated merely by one's own desires. The rules prescribed by the Shastras must be adhered to; deviation from the norms is permissible only in exceptional circumstances.

The case of the boy also illustrates that it is necessary for a teacher to consider how much information should be imparted to a particular person. Some years ago, a huge Sabha, was organized well at Paramahamsi Ganga Ashram in Madhya Pradesh, by Swami Swaroopananda Saraswati, who is close to Me. Between 10,000 and 20,000 people attended. One speaker narrated the following story.

There was a Sadhu who was a great devotee of God. He never took food, without first offering it to the Lord. One day, the item that he had kept for offering got contaminated by snake venom. Unaware of this, he offered it to God. Subsequently, he ate the food and went to sleep. He woke up in the morning, quite healthy. However, he found that the image of God that he worshipped had fallen to the ground. What had happened was that when God ate the food, it became pure. So, the devotee was left unaffected. It was Lord's idol that suffered the consequences.

On hearing the story, I told the narrator, "Please do not say such things. Many children are present in the audience. They may offer some milk to God even it happens to be contaminated and, influenced by your story, may casually drink it, expecting to remain unaffected. Do not take the responsibility for such disasters. All that you have said pertains to "Bhakthyudreka" or extreme devotion. When it is there, extraordinary acts, such as the eating of poisoned food, may be carried out. But the normal situation is different. It is necessary to keep the competence of the hearer in mind."

अधिकारिणमाशास्ते फलसिद्धिर्विशेषतः ।

(Attainment of the result is specifically dependent upon the qualification of a person.)

Bhagavatpada's position is that neither Karma or religious action nor Jnana or knowledge is proscribed; both Karma and Jnana are needed and so is Bhakti. In the Bhagavata, it is said that Karma, Bhakti and Jnana constitute the means for a person to attain the highest and that there are no other paths besides these three. Meditation on Shiva, Vishnu, etc., is included in the path of Bhakti. When it is said that Karma and Jnana are both necessary, does it mean that they have to be conjoined? In other words, do they have to be practised at the same time? That is, impossible. Can water and fire be kept together in the same place at the same time? No. Similar is the case here.

Bhagavatpada advises, “You should keep doing Karma with sincerity. By virtue of its performance, your mind will become pure in due course. Then take to contemplation on God. With the practice of contemplation, you will gradually get to the stage where you will see the entire universe as having no existence apart from the Supreme. Then you would have become a Jnani or a knower of the Truth.”

त्वयि मयि चान्यत्रैको विष्णुः
व्यर्थं कुप्यसि मय्यसहिष्णुः ।

(In you, in me and elsewhere, there is only Vishnu. Being impatient, you unnecessarily get angry with me.)

I have examined Myself to see what difference there is between a young person and an old person as far as anger is concerned. When I was young, if someone scolded Me, I used to get angry and demand, “Why do you scold Me?” Now I feel, “Some task of his has not been done by Me. He has come to Me with expectations. He is disappointed now. He is unable to beat Me. So what is he to do to vent his feelings but to censure Me? If I had done his work, he would have left this place, praising Me. I do not have the capacity at present to do what he wants. He is unable to understand this. So, he scolds Me. Let him go ahead.”

When a person has had numerous experiences of being censured, he gradually gets the realization, “In this world, neither censure nor praise has any value.” If we remain

unruffled even in the face of provocation, then we become noble persons. When does this understanding dawn? Usually, on our becoming old. With respect to a young boy, the following conversation is likely.

Boy : He scolded me and so I shouted back.

Elder : You scolded him but what came out of it?

Boy : I retaliated.

Elder : Is that all? What did you achieve? Nothing.

Just as with the passage of years, people progress from immaturity and irritability to maturity and calmness, one gradually progresses from activity to renunciation. One should start by regularly engaging in one's religious duties. It is said:

कुर्वन्नेवेहकर्माणि जिजीविषेच्छतं समाः ।

(Only by being engaged in rites, one should desire to live here for a hundred years.)

Having performed Karma, one gradually comes to the following conclusion:

असारमेव संसारं दृष्ट्वा सारदृक्षया ।

(Having seen that the world is definitely puerile and desirous of apprehending the essence (inmost Truth)...)

No matter what is seen in this world, there is not much to it. The sun rose. We got up. Then, we bathed. Next, we ate breakfast and went to office. There, we did work, came

home, ate our night meal and then went to sleep. The next day, the same sequence was repeated. Nothing else.

मोहान्न लज्जामहे ॥

Bhartruhari says, “We keep doing the same things again and again. However, because of our delusion, we do not even feel ashamed of ourselves.” One should sit, reflect deeply and realize that this is the way of the world. If something needs to be done then let it be carried out; else, let it not be done. When does an understanding of this form arise? Only after prolonged analysis of the ways of the world. Even if one were to go from here to heaven,

क्षीणे पुण्ये मर्त्यलोकं विशन्ति ॥

(On the exhaustion of Punyam, they return to the world of mortals.)

On coming back, the man who went to heaven engages in further Karma. Again, he goes to heaven and then returns. Thus, either in this world or in going to heaven and coming back, there is nothing of consequence. Does it not seem, “enough”?

The river flows and keeps on doing so. Till when? Till it reaches the ocean. Then it just becomes the ocean. It is the water of the ocean that becomes mist, then a cloud and descends to the ground as rain. The rain water forms a brook, then becomes a river and goes back to the ocean. He who has not analysed the situation would say,

“The ocean and the source of the river are far apart and yet some say that the river and the ocean are one. They are stupid.” However, he who has analysed would say, “The river could not have come into existence but for the ocean. The source of the river is the ocean itself and it is to the ocean that the river goes back. As such, they are essentially one.”

When does transmigration cease for the individual soul who goes from birth to birth like the flowing water of a river? The Lord says,

मामुपेत्य तु कौन्तेय पुनर्जन्म न विद्यते ॥

(But on attaining Me, there is no rebirth.)

So many are the Jivas or individual souls that are encountered in the world. Who are they?

ममैवांशो जीवलोके जीवभूतः सनातनः ।

(It is verily a part of Mine that has become the eternal individual soul in the world.)

There is a big fire from which a spark emerges. Is this spark different from the fire? No, they are essentially one. On separation from its source, a fiery particle becomes a spark. On its rejoining its source, it becomes indistinguishable from the big fire. “Likewise”, says the Lord, “If you, who is a spark that has emerged from the big fire that is Myself, want to escape from this cycle of birth, old age and death then merge with Me.” How are we to merge with God?

यथा नद्यः स्यन्दमानाः समुद्रेऽस्तं गच्छन्ति नामरूपे विहाय ।

(Just as flowing rivers give up their names and forms and become indistinguishable after reaching the ocean...)

A river has a name and form till it reaches the ocean but not thereafter. After it merges with the ocean,

समुद्र इत्येवं प्रोच्यते

(It is just called, 'ocean'.)

For us, who have been moving, like a flowing river, from birth to birth in the cycle of transmigratory existence, the goal is merger with the ocean that is the Supreme. What demarcates our case from the merger of a river or a spark into its source is that we were never actually separated from our source, the Supreme. Our separation is only apparent. While we continue to be the Supreme alone, owing to our ignorance of our true nature, we suffer.

मामुपेत्य तु कौन्तेय पुनर्जन्म न विद्यते ॥

(But on attaining Me, there is no rebirth.)

Merger with the Supreme, characterized by our realizing our true nature, is the goal that we must attain. For this, the paths are those of Karma, Bhakti and Jnana; Karma leads to Bhakti and Bhakti to Jnana. After Jnana or firm realization of the Truth is got, what does a person have to do? Nothing. He has no identification with the body and abides in bliss.

There is a disciple of Mine. Owing to the special merit acquired by him in his earlier birth, on his sitting in Samadhi, the acme of Yoga, he does not get up even when three days have passed. One may ask, "Has Sandhya Vandanam not got omitted?" He is doing something that is far superior to Sandhya Vandanam.

लीनः परे ब्रह्मणि

(He is absorbed in the Supreme Brahman.)

I : What was it like when you remained for three days in Samadhi? Were you aware of day and night?

Disciple : No, I was aware of nothing external. I just abided in that state.

I : How did you know that three days have passed?

Disciple : I had kept a watch with me. When I got up, I learnt from it that three days had lapsed.

When he has attained a high state, is it necessary for him to perform Sandhya Vandanam or to perform Abhisheka to a Shiva Lingam? No.

On the other hand, suppose there is a person who desires to eat tiffin, drink coffee and go out and wander in the streets, and also does all this but remains without performing worship of God. What can we say to him except "You are a thorough Nastika." On the other hand, it must be said about this disciple of Mine that he is the ultimate Astika. Why? Because, in Samadhi, he does

nothing. If he were to engage in activities then it might be suggested to him to do Sandhya Vandanam too. But he does nothing whatsoever; even food is not needed by him. There do exist such persons.

What I am saying is what I have been seeing in My disciple. His achievement is because of the special merit acquired by him in his previous birth. He told Me, "I wish to go to a forest and sit in penance."

I : For how many days?

Disciple : One month.

I : What will you eat?

Disciple : I shall keep with me a little Aval (flattened rice).

I : What will you do if a tiger comes ?

Disciple : Oh, am I not there as food for that tiger? If it feels like eating, let it do so.

That is the extent of his firmness of mind. One day, when he was seated, a tiger actually came there. He saw it and felt, "God has come to me in the form of this tiger. He is revealing Himself like this." He just remained seated. The tiger observed him and saw whether he was moving his hands, or legs or head. He did not move at all. What did the tiger think? Perhaps, it concluded that this person must actually be some stone. It went away. If we get that kind of capacity, need we do worship of God? No, for God would be experienced by us right where we are. After all,

अन्तर्बाहिश्च तत्सर्वं व्याप्य नारायणः स्थितः ॥

(Narayana pervades the interior and exterior of everything perceived or heard of in this world.)

To him who cannot see God within, God is only outside, in the temple. Such a person could be advised, "Avoid misdeeds at least in the temple."

There was a person who was engaged in sorcery for malevolent purposes in a place of worship. On being asked, "Why do you commit such misdeeds here?", he replied, "Even if God were here, wrong acts could be done. I have decided that there is no God. So, it does not matter what I do anywhere." What is the remedy for such a pervert? He lacks self-control and is swayed by his senses. His justification is just an instance of:

परोपदेशे पाण्डित्यम्

(Scholarliness only in advising others.)

Such scholarliness is useless. One must have personal experience in life. So, Manu says,

अभिवादनशीलस्य नित्यं वृद्धोपसेविनः ।

चत्वारि तस्य वर्धन्ते आयुर्विद्या यशो बलम् ॥

(Four things - life, knowledge, fame and strength increase for the person who habitually pays obeisance to elders and always serves them.)

Nowadays on seeing an elder, youngsters say, "Hey, old man! Step aside." They do not have the courtesy to

request, “Kindly let me pass.” Manu says that on becoming a nonagenarian, a person becomes venerable, regardless of his position in society. Why? Because of his great experience, there is much that a young person can learn from him. For instance, he would have ingested many items of food during his long life and would be able to say what would be the effect of eating something. Therefore, by virtue of his age itself, he is venerable.

Regardless of our same-sightedness with respect to all people, we should implement in our lives only what is appropriate for us. Whose conduct should we emulate?

ये तत्र ब्राह्मणाः सम्मर्शिनः । युक्ता आयुक्ताः ।
अलूक्षा धर्मकामाः स्युः ।

(Those Brahmanas who may happen to be there, who are able deliberators, who are adepts in duties and customs, who are not directed by others, who are not cruel and who are desirous of Dharma...)

There are persons who are desirous of Dharma and do not wish to cause any unhappiness in the mind of another. Their conduct should be our standard. By emulating them, we would be following our holy tradition and heading towards the goal.

हर नमः पार्वतीपतये हर हर महादेव ।
जानकीकान्तस्मरणं जय जय राम राम ॥



5

Guru

(A “Smarana Saptaha” was organised at the Shankar Math, Bengaluru, from 30.8.1987 to 5.9.1987. Several persons spoke about our Paramacharyal, His Holiness Chandrasekhara Bharathi Mahaswamigal. Our Guru presided over the 7-day function and delivered benedictory discourses on all the days except 4.9.1987 which, being Ekadashi, was His day of silence.

Acharyal’s six divine speeches form a well-knit set. Viewed in one way, they detail Paramacharyal’s life; the extensive scriptural analysis serves to elucidate certain aspects of Paramacharyal’s state and role. Viewed in another way, the divine discourses thoroughly explain the characteristics of a Sadguru, how a Guru enlightens his disciple and how a disciple should conduct himself; incidents from Paramacharyal’s life serve to illustrate the points made.

I reverentially submitted to our Guru that this hexad of sacrosanct speeches appeared to admit the just-mentioned two interpretations. With a smile, Acharyal graciously said, “I realized that even when I spoke.

Presumably, My Guru wanted it to be that way. He was not in the least interested in people speaking of Him or eulogizing Him.” In the translations, the material within brackets highlights the tight links within and between the benedictory discourses and also contains the translations of verses. In His infinite mercy, Acharyal listened and gave His nod of approval to my submission about these links, in 1988.

These sacred speeches unambiguously reveal the excellence of Acharyal’s devotion to His Guru and His complete freedom from egoism. In particular, the last holy talk bears testimony to Acharyal’s humility and lack of inhibition in making fun of Himself. The following incident illustrates the unique relationship between our Paramacharyal and our Guru.

In 1946, Acharyal once went to behold Paramacharyal, taking Sri Subbaramaiya, a Bengaluru-based, close disciple of Theirs, with Him. As He approached the door of Paramacharyal’s room from one side, He noticed that His Guru was reading a book. Not only did Acharyal not enter, He did not even want to stand next to the door on the side where He could be seen. So, He walked round the building and came to the other side of the door. Then, He moved a foot of His slightly forward, leaned, peeped in and, finding that Paramacharyal was still reading, immediately stepped back. Then, He stood motionless and silent. After a few minutes, He again looked inside as before and withdrew. About 15 minutes

passed thus before Paramacharyal happened to notice Him on looking up prior to turning a page.

Immediately, Paramacharyal called our Guru in. Acharyal entered and respectfully submitted that Sri Subbaramaiya had come for Darshan. Paramacharyal rose, walked out of the room and began talking to Sri Subbaramaiya. To enable them to converse in private, Acharyal moved out of earshot. Paramacharyal was scheduled to take Vedanta class for our Guru. So, after some time, our Guru returned to have a word with Paramacharyal. As He approached, Paramacharyal told Sri Subbaramaiya, "The Guru is coming. Do Namaskara." As instructed, Sri Subbaramaiya prostrated before Acharyal. Then, Paramacharyal and Acharyal spoke to each other for a few moments. Thereafter, Acharyal walked backwards till He was out of His Guru's range of sight; He was unwilling to even turn His back towards Paramacharyal. Such was His reverence for His Guru. Paramacharyal, on the other hand, declared to Sri Subbaramaiya while Acharyal was leaving, "Do not think He is just a Swamigal. He is God. He is My Guru."

On an occasion, Paramacharyal even composed verses about Acharyal and gave them to Him. One of them is :

दयासान्द्रं बालं निखिलजगतीरक्षणचणं
हरन्तं विघ्नाद्रिं विमलविमलैर्वीक्षणचयैः ।
परब्रह्माकारं प्रणवविदितं शान्तमनसं
गुरुं विद्यातीर्थं कलयत बुधाश्चित्तकमले ॥

“O Wise people! Hold in the heart-lotus the Guru, Vidyatheertha, the young one with tranquil mind, who is exceedingly compassionate, who destroys the mountain of impediments by His extremely pure glances, who is skilled in protecting the whole world, who is known by means of the Pranava, Om, and who is the manifestation of the Supreme Brahman.”

Paramacharyal told our Guru, “I have written only what I definitely know to be true about You. There is no encomium here.” Acharyal, for His part, felt that it was His Guru’s extreme love for Him that caused Paramacharyal to view Him thus. What a remarkably unique Guru-Sishya relationship characterized by absolute mutual veneration!

- Translator)

Guru

Part I

(Benedictory address delivered, in Kannada, at Bengaluru on 30.8.1987)

शरदिन्दुविकासिमन्दहासां स्फुरदिन्दीवरलोचनाभिरामाम् ।
अरविन्दसमानसुन्दरास्यामरविन्दासनसुन्दरीमुपासे ॥

(I contemplate the beautiful Goddess, whose seat is a lotus, whose smile is radiant like the autumnal moon, who has gleaming, blue-lotus-like, captivating eyes and whose face is as pretty as a lotus.)

Apart from authoring several commentaries on the Upanishads, Gita and the Brahma Sutras, Shankara Bhagavatpada has composed Prakarana texts, light works, to facilitate easy comprehension of the truth. A Guru is essential for one to peruse and comprehend the import of the commentaries. Further, one's intellect must be particularly sharp. On the other hand, there is less difficulty with the Prakarana texts; their style is very simple and they explain the subject matter in a lucid manner. Neelakanta Dikshitar has said:

शास्त्रेषु दुर्ग्रहोऽप्यर्थो स्वरते कविसूक्तिषु ।
दृश्यं करगतं रत्नं दारुणं फणिभूर्धनि ॥

(Even that subject matter which is difficult to learn from the scriptures is readily understood from the utterances of poets. A gem that is terrible on the head of a serpent is attractive when it lies on one's palm.)

When expounded in scriptural parlance, a topic strains the intellect but, when presented in the words of poets, it is easily grasped. For instance, when some scientific topic is elaborated mathematically, people fail to comprehend it. But, when mathematical terminology is dropped and familiar illustrations are proffered, people say that they have understood. Nevertheless, they are not in a position to act on what they have learned. In the present case, the situation is different in that people not only comprehend the import of the scriptures from the Prakarana texts but are also able to put into practice what is taught.

Shatashloki, a composition of Bhagavatpada is one such Prakarana text. Therein, in the beginning, it is said:

दृष्टान्तो नैव दृष्टस्त्रिभुवनजठरे सद्गुरोर्ज्ञानदातुः
 स्पर्शश्चेत्तत्र कल्प्यः स नयति यद्दहो स्वर्णतामश्मसारम् ।
 न स्पर्शत्वं तथापि श्रितचरणयुगे सद्गुरोस्स्वीयशिष्ये
 स्वीयं साम्यं विधत्ते भवति निरुपमस्तेन वाऽलौकिकोऽपि ॥

(No illustration is seen in the three worlds - heaven, earth and the nether world - for the Sadguru, the impartor of knowledge. What if the Sparsha gem were conceived as an example? It indeed transmutes iron into gold but not

into another Sparsha. The Sadguru imparts to his disciple, who has sought refuge in his pair of feet, his own natural state. Therefore, even the giver of worldly knowledge is incomparable. (Alternative meaning: He is therefore incomparable and transcendental.)

If some object is to be indicated, an effective way to do so is to present a familiar article that is akin to it and to declare, "This is what that object is like." If a Guru were to be described in this manner, some well-known object must be chosen as an illustration. A Guru makes an ignorant man a great knower. Is there any example in the world for this function?

स्पर्शश्चेत्तत्र कल्प्यः स नयति यदहो स्वर्णतामश्मसारम्

If a piece of iron were to come into contact with a Sparsha gem, it would get transformed into gold. How low is the worth of iron as compared to that of gold! A Sparsha gem thus has the power of converting iron, whose worth is low, into gold, which is valuable. A Guru too converts an ignorant, worthless person into a valuable epitome of wisdom. It thus seems at the first flush that the Sparsha gem is a good example to indicate a Guru.

However, an attempt to describe the Guru in terms of the Sparsha will not be worthwhile. Why? It is true that a Sparsha transmutes a piece of iron brought into contact with it into a piece of gold. However, if that piece of gold were to be brought into contact with a piece of iron, both the gold and the iron would remain as they

are. There would be no metamorphosis. On the other hand, a disciple, who is endowed with faith and devotion, is not only transformed by the Guru into a knower but is also rendered capable of changing a disciple into a person on par with himself. In other words, a Guru not only transforms his disciple into a knower but also confers on the disciple the power to convert another into a knower. That is why:

निरुपमस्तेन वा लौकिकोऽपि

(Even the giver of worldly knowledge is incomparable.)

When such is the case of even an ordinary teacher, what need be said about a transcendental Guru who imparts knowledge of Brahman? Indeed, great is the merit that would accrue to a man were he to have the good fortune of beholding such a Guru.

श्रवणायापि बहुभिर्यो न लभ्यः

शृण्वन्तोऽपि बहवो यं न विद्युः ।

(He, who is not available to many to even hear about and whom many do not comprehend though hearing about Him...)

In accordance with this Upanishadic declaration about the Self, it is rare to come across such a Guru who is a knower of Brahman and is, in essence, non-different from the Supreme. If, having obtained the rewarding vision of such a Guru, one were to hear the truth from

him, cogitate on it and one-pointedly fix one's mind on it, then one's gain would be even more; limitless would be one's gain if one were to obtain the very realization of the Self from him.

कुलं पवित्रं जननी कृतार्था
विश्वंभरा पुण्यवती च तेन ।

(His lineage is purified, his mother becomes one who has accomplished what is to be done and the earth becomes meritorious on account of him.)

In keeping with this averment, the disciple of a sage becomes one who is

स्वयं मुक्तः परानपि मोचयति

(Himself liberated and who liberates even others from the cycle of transmigratory existence.)

In Vivekachoodamani, another Prakarana text, Bhagavatpada has extolled the glory of the Guru in a delightful manner. He has said:

शान्ता महान्तो निवसन्ति सन्तो वसन्तवल्लोकहितं चरन्तः ।
तीर्णास्स्वयं भीमभवार्षावं जनानहेतुनाऽन्यानपि तारयन्तः ॥

(There dwell calm, great noble ones who move about effecting, like the spring season, what is beneficial to people. Having themselves crossed the dreadful ocean of transmigratory existence, they, without any motive, cause other persons too to cross over.)

Normally, when we wish to cross a stretch of water, we approach a boat and ask the boatman if he will row us across. He agrees, but on completing his task, asks for money. The Guru, however, makes no such demand.

अहेतुनाऽन्यानपि तारयन्तः

He has crossed the ocean of transmigratory existence and also causes other people to cross. Why? For no reason at all.

परोपकारप्रवणं मनः

His mind is intent upon doing what is beneficial to others.

शान्ता महान्तो निवसन्ति सन्तो वसन्तवल्लोकहितं चरन्तः ।

When the spring season commences, people feel joyous. What return does the spring season expect for conferring happiness? Nothing; making people happy is its very nature. Likewise, doing what is beneficial to others is the nature of noble sages. Blessed is he who learns from a Guru of this kind.

What is the characteristic of such a Guru? Bhagavatpada states thus in the Vivekachoodamani:

ब्रह्माकारतया सदा स्थिततया निर्मुक्तबाह्यार्थधी -
 रन्यावेदितभोग्यभोगकलनो निद्रालुवद्वालवत् ।
 स्वप्नालोकितलोकवज्जगदिदं पश्यन्कचिल्लब्धधी -
 रास्ते कश्चिदनन्तपुण्यफलभुग्धन्यः स मान्यो भुवि ॥

(There is some fortunate one, the enjoyer of the fruit of limitless virtue, for whose intellect external objects have completely ceased owing to its constant abidance in the form of Brahman, who experiences like one asleep or a child, what is submitted by others (as, for example, food and water) and who, sometimes, when his mind emerges from absorption in the Self, perceives this world like a world seen in a dream (that is, as a mere appearance). In this world, he is worthy of reverence.)

ब्रह्माकारतया

According to the scriptures, the mind assumes the semblance of whatever object it thinks of. Our minds keep wandering, taking on the forms of sense objects. On the other hand, inward-turned minds have the form of Brahman. That is, they are anchored in Brahman, which is devoid of qualities and which is of the nature of existence, knowledge and bliss.

सदा स्थिततया

The mind that has constantly taken the form of bliss has no reason to engage itself in grasping external objects.

निर्मुक्तबाह्यार्थधीः

The mind of the sage is completely free from the ideas of sound, touch, form, taste and smell and also from tendencies. In other words, the sage is devoid of the thought of any external object; he does not even have an inclination to think of it.

अन्यावेदितभोग्यभोगकलनः

Is there then no worldly dealing at all for the sage? Lord Krishna says that the sage has no need for any activity. Some dealings may, however, arise for him owing to the accumulated merit of the good deeds of others. For instance, a person may come to the sage and request him to do something.

The question then arises whether the sage will do whatever people request him to do. The answer is in the negative. Sri Vidyanarya has written, in Panchadasi, the following verse, which is appropriate to the present times:

बुद्धाद्वैतसतत्त्वस्य यथेष्टाचरणं यदि ।
शुनां तत्त्वदृशां चैव को भेदोऽशुचिभक्षणे ॥

(If a knower of the non-dual Truth were to engage in reckless conduct then what is the difference between a dog and a knower in the matter of consuming what is impure?)

A person may contend as follows: “To a great extent, I have obtained knowledge.

ज्ञानान्निस्सर्वकर्माणि भस्मसात्कुरुते तथा ॥

Knowledge reduces to ashes all good and bad deeds. Therefore, I remain unaffected regardless of my misdemeanours. So I drink whatever I wish, eat whatever appeals to me and act as I please.”

Can this person be regarded as a knower of the Truth? No. Consider a man who is not a knower of Brahman but who dwells in the company of a holy one. Even he would abstain from misdeeds thinking, "Who indeed will perform an act like this?"

शुनां तत्त्वदृशां चैव को भेदोऽशुचिभक्षणे ॥

A dog eats what is unclean. It does not discriminate between what is right and what is wrong. If a knower too lacks discrimination then what is the difference between him and a dog?

Why should a knower of the Truth not engage in misconduct? Since his mental tendencies, nurtured even prior to the dawn of knowledge are very pure, his mind does not feel inclined to do what is wrong. A knower of the Truth thus does not perform any misdeed. If, perchance, he were to do something improper, it would be on account of the evil conduct of those near him and the deed would relate to them, who impelled him; it would not pertain to him who is devoid of even the tendency to do evil.

अन्यावेदितभोग्यभोगकलनः

The sage is one whose experience of what is essential, such as food, stems from the submission of others.

निद्रालुवद्बालवत्

Sometimes, the mind of one who has been abiding in Samadhi does not descend to the level of worldly experience. If at such a time, a person were to go to the sage, draw his attention by shaking him and then indicate, "This must be done", the sage would respond but in an absent-minded manner. That with respect to which we commonly say, "I", the sage says, "The body". Why? Because, for him identification with the body has ceased; a sense of identity has arisen with respect to the Self, which is of the nature of existence, consciousness and bliss.

Sometimes, children who are asleep, wake up partially and eat food given to them by their mothers. However, on waking up in the morning, they deny having consumed anything at night.

Mother : You did eat.

Child : When did I do so?

Mother : When you were sleeping, I repeatedly woke you and gave you food.

Child : Oh, yes. I am beginning to faintly recollect that.

The indrawn knower of the Truth may, in accordance with the wishes of and motivation provided by a devotee or disciple who has come to serve him, engage in action like a sleepy person responding absent-mindedly to an external stimulus or like a child given food by its mother without effort on its part.

स्वप्नालोकितलोकवज्जगदिदं पश्यन्कचिल्लब्धधीः

How does the knower behold the world when he has descended further from Samadhi? He apprehends the world to be akin to a dream. His mind is elsewhere, on the Self, but somehow he engages in activity.

(Having indicated the characteristics of a knower of the Truth, Acharyal now proceeds to show how His Guru, Sri Chandrasekhara Bharathi Mahaswamigal, too was a knower with such characteristics.)

In the life of My Guru, one special feature was that He did not acquire the knowledge of the Truth from the teaching of someone.

Arjuna asked:

अयतिः श्रद्धयोपेतो योगाच्चलितमानसः ।
अप्राप्य योगसंसिद्धिं कां गतिं कृष्ण गच्छति ॥

(O Krishna! What end does a person attain who is endowed with faith but who does not strive and whose mind has slipped from Yoga without his having attained perfection in Yoga?)

The Lord answered:

शुचीनां श्रीमतां गेहे योगभ्रष्टोऽभिजायते ॥
अथवा योगिनामेव कुले भवति धीमताम् ।
एतद्धि दुर्लभतरं लोके जन्म यदीदृशम् ॥
तत्र तं बुद्धिसंयोगं लभते पौर्वदेहिकम् ।

(He who has failed in Yoga is born in the house of the pure and affluent. Alternatively, he is born in the family of wise Yogis. Such a birth is indeed very difficult to obtain in this world. There, he gains the knowledge that was acquired in the previous birth.)

We see people having different kinds of mental tendencies. Some, owing to tendencies stemming from past lives, perform only good deeds. Some others, regardless of how much competence they possess, constantly do what is wrong. Why? In accordance with the statement of Duryodhana,

केनापि देवेन हृदि स्थितेन
यथा नियुक्तोऽस्मि तथा करोमि ।

“I act as impelled by some god who abides in my heart”, they are dragged by the force of past actions.

In the case of My Guru, His introversion did not stem subsequent to His taking Sannyasa, studying the Shastras and practising spiritual disciplines. It manifested right from His birth.

As a boy He had to go to the market. Though He was unconcerned with domestic affairs, He had to keep in mind the requirements of His parents. There is a hymn called Mooka Panchasati. He used to contemplate it and so much was His absorption in the import of the verses glorifying the Goddess that, without knowing it, He sometimes used to proceed well beyond the market,

to the end of the town. It was there that He used to note, "Where have I come? To the market. Where is the market? Oh! I have come beyond the town limits." He then used to return to the market, make the necessary purchases and deliver the goods at home.

Can one encounter such an inward-turned person? He was not enamoured of seeing shops nor was He keen on making purchases; He did not even have money to buy much. What then was His mental attitude? "This purchasing of articles is something that ought to be done. So I must do it. However, there is a mental state which I must have and from it there must be no slipping away" - this was His firm view.

When young, He used to perform worship of Ishwara. The worship of the Lord can be done with the body, through speech and with the mind. Amongst these three forms of worship,

उत्तरोत्तरं विशिष्यते

(The succeeding one is superior to the preceding one.)

When we worship, our hands offer flowers to the idol but our eyes are turned elsewhere and our minds think of something or the other. This is quite a way of worshipping! Some others are not like this. They worship with their gaze rivetted to the idol. Their minds, however, wander. Thoughts of the office, etc., arise in their minds; after all, they do have to go to their places of

work. In spite of their efforts to ward off such thoughts, their minds continue to muse.

In the case of a few, the three instruments, namely body, speech and mind, are concerned with the same object. It is said:

यन्मनसा ध्यायति तद्वाचा वदति तत्कर्मणा करोति

(That which he mentally contemplates, he utters through speech and that is what he executes through action.)

Amongst bodily, verbal and mental worship, mental worship is exalted. My Guru did not have the requisite materials to perform bodily worship. Were He to have offered verbal worship, others might have objected to His loud utterances. What, indeed, is the obstacle to a person offering his mind to God and worshipping Him? Nothing, except that it is very difficult to hold the mind in check. My Guru, whose mind was under His control, used to perform mental worship of Ishwara on every Pradosha (which occurs twice in a lunar month and is regarded as sacred for the worship of Lord Shiva). How did He go about His worship? Without any articles and

श्रद्धानदी विमलचित्तजलाभिषेकैर्नित्यं समाधिकुसुमैरपुनर्भवाय

(with Abhisheka (ablution) performed with the waters of the pure mind taken from the river of faith and with flowers of constant Samadhi, the purpose being to get rid of rebirth.)

There is a traditional temple in Sringeri called the Vidya Shankara temple. I have now given it to the Archaeological department in accordance with the request made. That temple is delightful; it is most pleasing to sit there, at the base of a pillar, in the evening, at six O' clock, on a Pradosha day. My Guru used to sit there till around 7 or 7.30 in the evening, with no awareness of the external world, contemplating:

रत्नैः कल्पितमासनं ...

(I mentally conceive for You a seat made of precious stones...)

He proceeded to mentally offer food to God and to wave lamps before Him.

There is a story in the Mahabharata about the glory of mental worship. Everyone was performing worship on Shivarathri but Bheema was seen just reclining comfortably. Arjuna and the others felt sad thinking, "Even on this day, he refuses to abandon his characteristic of sleeping." Lord Krishna wanted to throw light on what Bheema was actually doing and took Arjuna to Kailasa. On the way, they saw Bilva leaves being carried to Shiva.

On being asked, "How come you are carrying so many Bilva leaves?", the ones carrying the leaves replied, "All we know is that someone is continuously heaping leaves on Lord Shiva and we are carrying them. People offer one leaf at a time but this worshipper, Bheema, seated under a tree, is mentally offering tree after tree."

Arjuna indicated, "I too performed worship." The response was, "Your offering has been placed under that tree. What this man offered mentally is limitless. What you gave is limited exactly to the leaves you actually used."

Mental worship has been highly extolled in the scriptures. My Guru, when young, used to perform such mental worship in an excellent manner. Even about His worship, much remains to be said. I shall, however, confine Myself today to speaking only about some aspects of His life.

After My Guru became a pontiff, several devotees used to come to Him. They wished to plead, "O Mahaswami! Please bless that this, which we seek, come to pass." Yet, on several occasions, My Guru used to provide the concerned answers of His own accord, without the devotees saying anything about their problems. I was a boy at that time. One day, after He had given clarifications and permitted the devotees to leave, I asked him, "How is it, O Mahaswami, that when people come to You to seek clarifications, You provide the answers even before they present their requests?" He replied, "There is nothing to it. God is the one who impels Me and I respond in accordance with His wishes. Such being the case, whatever is in His mind automatically comes to My mouth. I need to make no effort." He was a great soul who had attained such perfection.

His dispassion was so great that though He dwelt as pontiff in such a big Math, He did not even have the idea that He lived there.

करतलभिक्षस्तरुतलवासः

(Having his meal in his palm and dwelling at the base of a tree...)

It was with this mental attitude that He abided in the Math. However, when it came to religious activities and activities relating to the welfare of the devotees, He acted in accordance with the following words of the Gita:

न मे पार्थास्ति कर्तव्यं त्रिषु लोकेषु किञ्चन ।
नानवाप्तमवाप्तव्यं वर्त एव च कर्मणि ॥

(O Partha! There is nothing in the three worlds that I must do; nor is there anything to be attained that has not been attained. Yet I engage in actions.)

यदि ह्यहं न वर्तेयं जातु कर्मण्यतन्द्रितः ।
मम वर्त्मानुवर्तन्ते मनुष्याः पार्थ सर्वशः ॥
उत्सीदेयुरिमे लोका न कुर्या कर्म चेदहम् ।

(O Partha! If I do not, without laziness, ever engage in action, men would, in all matters, follow My path. These worlds would be ruined if I did not perform action.)

Keeping others in mind, He opined, "You have all labelled Me a big pontiff. Regardless of whether or not I should perform worship and obtain the fruit thereof, what would you say if I were to abstain from worship? 'Even Swamigal does not perform any worship. Yet, He repeatedly tells us to do so. Why should we engage in what

He Himself is not interested in carrying out?’ Therefore, I must perform worship. Then you people will act likewise, thinking, ‘The great one Himself engages in worship. It may or may not be necessary for Him but we need it. So we must carry it out.’”

In accordance with the utterance,

उत्सीदेयुरिमे लोका न कुर्या कर्म चेदहम् ।

He gave great importance to actions, though He was established in the path of knowledge. Some of His disciples too have followed His example. Why? They also have the same fear as Him. They reason, “If I leave Sandhya Vandanam for one day, my son will leave it for a whole year. Therefore I must do it everyday to show the correct path to the boy.”

My Guru was a knower of Brahman and was not dependent on any effect or cause. Still He led His life in such a way that there accrued the welfare of the world. Remembering the events that transpired in His life, chanting His name, and incorporating into our lives, at least to some extent, what He demonstrated in His life, constitute a means to our highest good.

हर नमः पार्वतीपतये हर हर महादेव ।
जानकीकान्तस्मरणं जय जय राम राम ॥



Guru

Part II

(Benedictory address delivered, in Kannada, at Bengaluru on 31.8.1987)

आस्ते देशिकचरणं निरवधिरास्ते तदीक्षणे करुणा ।
आस्ते किमपि तदुक्तं किमतः परमस्ति जन्मसाफल्यम् ॥

(There is the foot of the Guru. In his glance, there is limitless compassion. There is something that has been said by him. What else is there that constitutes the summum bonum of life?)

Shankara Bhagavatpada, who authored several Prakarana texts, has composed the above extremely delightful verse.

What do you have? The reply to this question is:

आस्ते देशिकचरणं

I have the lotus foot of my Guru. What else?

निरवधिरास्ते तदीक्षणे करुणा

There is limitless mercy in the side-glance of the Guru. He has graced us with his glance.

What about your path?

आस्ते किमपि तदुक्तं

He has given some Upadesham, teaching. That is indeed there constituting my path. If we have faith in the Guru, become the recipients of his grace and, having heard his teaching, act accordingly, then

किमतः परमस्ति जन्मसाफल्यम् ॥

what else is needed for the summum bonum of life?

It is, however, difficult to obtain such a Guru.

त्रयमेवैतद्दैवानुग्रहहेतुकम्

(These three, namely, human birth, desire for liberation and the refuge of a great soul arise only on account of the grace of God.)

That My Guru was a great person has been known by experience by those who were His contemporaries and beheld Him. How does one become a Mahapurusha or a great soul? When the accumulated good tendencies of numerous previous lives manifest in a person, in a particular life, that person becomes a Mahapurusha.

तां हंसमालाः शरदीव गङ्गां महौषधिं नक्तमिवात्मभासः

(Just as swans approach the Ganga in autumn and just as the great medicinal herb regains its own lustre at night...)

So too, what was practised in the previous birth manifests in the present birth.

Manu has said that no matter how old one is, one must not cease to learn. A person may get the doubt, “I am old. There is no occasion for me to utilize in this life what I have learned. Must I then strive merely to end up straining myself? Is it not much better for me to sleep happily instead?” To this, Manu says:

गतेऽपि वयसि ग्राह्या विद्या सर्वात्मना बुधैः ।

यद्यपि स्यान्न फलदा सुलभा साऽन्यजन्मनि ॥

(Knowledge must be acquired by the wise, with dedication, though they may be old. Though it may not yield any fruit now, it will be easy to acquire in another birth.)

If you have some understanding, then, no matter what your age may be, you must learn. What is the use? While the learning may not be beneficial in this life, in a future life you may again be born as a human. You may then get an opportunity to acquire knowledge. If mental impressions of past learning are there, the mind instantaneously grasps what is taught. Else, what knowledge the teacher imparts wastes away in the preceptor himself as it is not acquired by the disciple. Such a situation must not arise. If we grasp quickly what is taught, the teacher proceeds to teach further. Otherwise, he feels frustrated and thinks, “Why should I impart this lesson?” If that happens we will be unable to learn anything.

The Shastras state, as illustrated by the verse of Manu just considered, that efforts made in previous lives to acquire knowledge play a vital role in determining the

ease with which we acquire knowledge now. So, if we are able to easily acquire knowledge, it can be inferred that we must have developed suitable mental impressions in a previous birth. Thus, on seeing a sage, we infer, "This man must have essentially perfected himself in his previous life. However, owing to some obstacle to his enjoying the fruit of his effort and getting liberated, he has been reborn and so is now present before us."

My Guru was congenitally inward-turned. No matter how many worldly things He was in the midst of, He never forgot the Self and His mind was ever focussed on His goal. This, I indicated yesterday by means of some examples. Speakers at this function have taken up the fruits that accrued to others because of My Guru. I, on the other hand, am only saying what I saw in Him; the sources of My information are what He Himself told Me and what I personally observed. The incidents I narrated yesterday about My Guru going to the market with His mind absorbed in the import of the Mooka Panchasati and of His performing mental worship at the Vidya Shankara temple were made known to Me by Him.

(Acharyal began this benedictory discourse by explaining, in the light of Bhagavatpada's Svatmaniroopanam verse, that one would attain total fulfilment if one were to obtain a Guru, be the recipient of his grace and act, with faith, according to his teaching. Acharyal then showed how mental tendencies developed in former lives play a role in making a person the great soul spoken of in the verse. Once it becomes clear that mental impressions of the

past lives play a role in the making of even a knower, it goes without saying that meritorious deeds of the past births are involved in a person getting a Guru and becoming a recipient of the sage's grace. This point is so obvious that Acharyal has deemed it unnecessary to explicitly elaborate on it.

Acharyal's specifically taking up the involvement of past impressions in the blossoming of a knower is significant in that He has thereby provided a link with His previous benedictory address. Therein, Acharyal explained the characteristics of a knower of the Truth and went on to show how His Guru was a knower, with the concerned characteristics accruing to Him mainly by virtue of His previous lives.

Acharyal now takes up the role of faith. A disciple, who has beheld a sage and become the recipient of the great one's grace, can derive the full benefit of his Guru's teachings and thereby attain the fulfilment of the purpose of life, as indicated in Bhagavatpada's verse, only if he has full faith.)

All of us say that faith is essential. What is meant by faith?

शास्त्रस्य गुरुवाक्यस्य सत्यबुद्ध्याऽवधारणा

(The firm acceptance of the words of the Shastra and the Guru as true.)

There must be the unwavering conviction, "This is true" with regard to what the Shastra and the Guru say.

We may think, “We certainly do have faith. If not, would we be studying the Vedanta Shastra?” “We have faith” - these are only our own words; the question is whether our faith finds manifestation in our actions. If not, our words are hollow.

The Shastra says that Sandhya Vandanam must be performed. However, if at the Sandhya time, some matter were to crop up, it is possible that we may drop our Sandhya Vandanam. If such be the case, it cannot be true that we have faith. If we genuinely accept something as true as, for instance, that it is obligatory on us to do Sandhya Vandanam, we must necessarily act accordingly.

My Guru had made it a practice since His youth to do Parayanam (recital) of the Ramayanam. The procedure for Ramayana Parayanam comprises the chanting of some verses at the commencement of the recital. One such verse is:

यत्र यत्र रघुनाथकीर्तनं तत्र तत्र कृतमस्तकाञ्जलिम् ।
बाष्पवारिपरिपूर्णलोचनं मारुतिं नमत राक्षसान्तकम् ॥

(Salute Hanuman, the destroyer of Rakshasas, who remains with His palms joined above His head and with His eyes brimming with tears of joy wherever there is a recital about Rama.)

What is the nature of Hanuman, the devotee of Rama? He comes and sits down at all the places where a

discourse on the story of Rama is taking place. What does He do if, on Rama Navami day, discourses simultaneously take place in a hundred different places? He sits in all the hundred places. How is this possible? The Veda discusses a related issue pertaining to oblations made at a Yagna.

What oblations we offer the Devatas during a sacrifice is limited. Is it sufficient to fill the stomachs of the Gods? If not, how will the Devatas be pleased? On an occasion, one may have resolved to perform a Homa with a thousand Modakas (sweetmeats commonly offered to Lord Ganesh) and may have fulfilled one's resolve. If the Lord were to consume such a large number of Modakas, would He not suffer from indigestion? We make different quantities of offerings; as such, we may be giving the Devatas either insufficient food or an amount enough to cause indigestion. Raising such an issue, the Veda says:

यावदेका देवता कामयते यावदेका । तावदाहुतिः प्रथते ।
न हि तदस्ति । यत्तावदेव स्यात् । यावज्जुहोति ।

((Sayanacharya's interpretation of this Mantra is:) If the Devatas obtain only as much oblation as is offered into the sacrificial fire, how is it that the little quantity of oblation pleases the Devatas? There is no rule that the Devatas obtain only what amount is offered. On the other hand, the offering increases to the extent desired by a Devata. Thus, they can be satisfied.)

If you have to offer oblation to the Devatas, your duty is to offer, with faith, what the Shastras enjoin. It is not necessary for you to consider whether what is offered is adequate to appease the hunger of the Devatas or whether, in the event of your offering an excessive amount, the Devatas will accept only what they need.

यावदेका देवता कामयते यावदेका । तावदाहुतिः प्रथते ।

Even if you give a little, a Devata has the capacity to make the offering increase to the amount which he desires. What is important is faith. If we have faith, then whatever we offer goes to God.

It is necessary for us to reason in accordance with our scripture-based faith and not in a perverse manner. Else, we may perversely feel, “We have performed for Ganapathy, a Homa with a hundred Modakas. However, on noting the size of His stomach, it is clear that it can accommodate a thousand Modakas. Therefore, what we have offered is inadequate.” If we contend thus, then we are fools. Alternatively, having resolved that we will, in a Homa, offer a thousand Modakas, we may wrongly reflect, “How will Ganapathy eat this much? Even if we eat ten Modakas, we find it excessive. So, He will not consume more than a hundred Modakas.” Reasoning thus, if we perform the Homa with only a hundred Modakas, then we lack faith in the Vedic teaching:

यावदेका देवता कामयते यावदेका । तावदाहुतिः प्रथते ।

(The oblation increases to the extent desired by a Devata.)

What is the sign of faith in the Shastras? One's acting as dictated by the Shastras. My Guru had read the verse to the effect that Hanuman comes and sits wherever Rama is glorified. Hanuman, He believed, has the power to sit in all places; He suitably modifies His body and comes. Wherever there is dearth of air, air rushes there. It fills a place regardless of whether it is big or small. The Devatas grace by their presence the place where oblations are duly offered. Likewise, Hanuman comes to the spot where Ramayana Parayanam is performed.

We have read this verse about Hanuman and know its meaning. Still we hardly believe that Hanuman will come and go. My Guru's stance was novel. He reflected: "What is the procedure for seating Hanuman when He comes? Is it appropriate that He should sit on the ground and listen while we sit on wooden plank and recite? Further, is it appropriate that He should just have to get up and go when we close our books? Is He not to be offered respect and a place to sit?"

Having thought over the matter My Guru decided, "As I Myself sit on a wooden plank, a seat must be placed for Him." Placing a wooden plank for Hanuman to use, He did Ramayana Parayanam with the feeling that Hanuman was seated. Once someone came there and asked, "Boy, why have You placed a wooden plank here?" The following conversation ensued.

"It is for Anjaneya."

"He is not there."

“He may not be seen by you but:

यत्र यत्र रघुनाथकीर्तनं तत्र तत्र कृतमस्तकाञ्जलिम् ।

He is seated there with His hands over His head.”

“What is all this nonsense that You are saying?”

“Can the words of the great be false? Do we not recite this verse about Hanuman’s presence everyday?”

The extent of My Guru’s faith in the verse being factual now becomes clear to us. What faith He had!

While faith may be essential and while the hallmark of its presence may be its influence in our behaviour, one may ask, “How does faith confer any fruit?” The following illustrations throw light on this.

Right from His childhood My Guru was devoted to My Paramaguru (Sacchidananda Shivabhinava Nrsimha Bharathi Mahaswamigal). Being poor, He neither had the courage nor the opportunity to freely go to His Guru and submit what He desired. What did He desire? His longing was, “How wonderful it would be if I could somehow have the Guru’s Padukas in My house and worship them.” An interesting situation arose.

A person living elsewhere came to Sringeri, served My Paramaguru with devotion for many days and became the recipient of his Guru’s grace. Finally when it was time for him to leave, he requested, “Oh Mahaswami, if I have Your Padukas in my house I will get the highest good. Please grace me with them.” The Guru felt compassion for

the man and gave the Padukas. The man collected them and came to My Guru's house, where he was lodged.

While departing, he gathered his belongings. However, being old, he forgot about the Padukas and left without them. My Guru's joy knew no bounds. The man had left and it was not possible for him to return; in those days the arrival of a vehicle at Sringeri was an infrequent occurrence. What was My Guru to do? He thought, "I was so desirous of the Padukas and they themselves came to Me.

पद्गोरुपरि गङ्गाप्रवाहः

What has happened is on par with the waters of the Ganga drenching and purifying a lame man who was merely seated."

A similar incident took place today at a person's house. Some have the desire to wash My feet. If, however, I were to keep washing My legs in everyone's house, My feet would, I feel, be adversely affected. So I avoid it. Today, one person brought, with great faith, a Poornakumbha (a vessel filled with water and with a coconut in its mouth).

Do you know what some people do? They bring a Shoonyakumbha. They do not know the meaning of 'Poornakumbha' (filled vessel). They fetch a clean vessel with a coconut on it but, on the coconut being lifted, there is nothing below; this is a Shoonyakumbha (an empty vessel).

It seems that some elder had duly instructed this person to whose house I went and so he completely filled a vessel with water. As he was bringing it, owing to his joy on seeing Me and the commotion created by the others, the coconut and the water fell. The coconut did not land on My feet but near them. The water, however, fell on My feet.

The man felt, "Alas! An unfortunate event has occurred." I, however, told him, "You are indeed meritorious. You have the desire to wash My feet. But if you had brought water for that purpose I would have said, 'No'. The water, however, fell on its own on My feet. The implication is that what was in your mind has been fulfilled by God. So do not be upset."

I narrated this to point out that if God is merciful to us and we have faith and devotion, then what we wish automatically gets fulfilled. Likewise, by virtue of His faith, My Guru obtained the Padukas. Thereafter, He kept up the practice of worshipping them. What were the fruits that accrued on account of this devout worship of the Padukas of the Guru? I shall elaborate on this later.

हर नमः पार्वतीपतये हर हर महादेव ।
जानकीकान्तस्मरणं जय जय राम राम ॥



Guru

Part III

(Benedictory address delivered, in Kannada, at Bengaluru on 1.9.1987)

कारुण्यसारसान्द्राः काङ्क्षितवरदानकल्पकविशेषाः ।

देशिकचरणकटाक्षाः शिशिराः शमयन्ति चित्तसंतापम् ॥

(Mental affliction is quelled by the glances of the exalted Guru which are cool and dense with the essence of compassion and which, in granting whatever is desired, are excellent wish-fulfilling trees.)

What does the glance of the Guru do?

शिशिराः शमयन्ति चित्तसंतापम्

Man has several bodily, verbal, sense-based and mental afflictions. Mental suffering is the most potent of all. The glance nullifies even mental torment.

What else?

कारुण्यसारसान्द्राः

Shankara Bhagavatpada has described the Guru as an ocean of mercy with no motive. Here, the Guru's glance

is declared to be dense with the essence of compassion. In every portion of the glance, there is a torrent of mercy.

काङ्क्षितवरदानकल्पकविशेषाः

Every man, regardless of how dispassionate he may be, necessarily wants to be free from sorrow. Further, the dispassionate man does have the desire to develop divine qualities. Whatever one's desire may be, in granting the desired object, the glances are excellent Kalpaka trees; the Kalpaka tree has the power to give whatever is sought. The glance of the Guru fulfils all our longings.

आचार्यचरणः

In Sanskrit, this does not mean "Acharyal's foot"; it means "the Acharyal who is pre-eminent."

भगवत्पादश्रीचरणाः

This common reference to Shankara Bhagavatpada means "pre-eminent Acharya." Likewise,

देशिकचरणकटाक्षाः

means "the glances of the pre-eminent Guru" and not "the glances of the Guru's feet."

शिशिराः शमयन्ति चित्तसंतापम्

These cool glances destroy mental afflictions. The prayer is, "May the glance of the Guru fall on us and thereby let all our sorrows end."

(Acharyal, in His preceding benedictory address, explained that the summum bonum of life is attained if a man obtains a Guru, becomes the object of the compassionate glance of the Guru and with complete faith, acts in accordance with the teachings of the Guru. In continuation of what He said then, Acharyal has, in the present benedictory address, spoken of the characteristics and effects of the Guru's glance. Only knowledge can truly destroy all sorrow; the glance of the Guru produces such knowledge. To teach this, Acharyal, now begins to explain how sorrow arises and how knowledge eradicates it. He elaborates on the different kinds of knowledge and shows how His Guru mastered them. Finally, in terms of a verse on Shiva as Dakshinamurthi, He highlights the role of the compassionate glance of the Guru in producing sorrow-eradicating knowledge in a competent disciple.)

While speaking of My Guru, I earlier gave examples to reveal the extent to which He had brought His mind under control and mastered His senses. What was His effort to acquire knowledge like? I shall now talk of this.

In the beginning, He had secular education. With regard to the types of Vidya or knowledge, Manu mentions Loukika Vidya, Vaidika Vidya and Adhyatmika Vidya. By Loukika Vidya (secular knowledge) is meant Artha Shastra (the science of wealth / polity), Silpa Shastra (sculpture / engineering), etc. Vaidika or Dharmika Vidya (Vedic knowledge) relates to those scripturally-indicated

actions by performing which our minds become pure and we attain, after death, the joys of heaven followed by a fine future birth. Adhyatmika Vidya (knowledge of Brahman) means that knowledge which is taught by the Upanishads.

Even if we acquire the first two Vidyas, we cannot have permanent cessation of sorrow. We may get rid of one grief but there is occasion for another. How should absolute cessation of unhappiness be? Once eradication is achieved, sorrows must never recur. How is such permanent removal of unhappiness achieved? It is said:

दुःखजन्मप्रवृत्तिदोषमिथ्याज्ञानानां तदुत्तरोत्तरापाये
तदनन्तरापायादपवर्गः ॥

(“Sorrow, birth, actions, faults (attachment, aversion and delusion) and false knowledge” - in this sequence (in which a member is responsible for the occurrence of the member that precedes it), when each successive element is removed, the preceding element is eradicated and thence there is liberation.)

At the head of the sequence, there is Mithya Jnanam or false knowledge. What is it?

अतस्मिन् तद्बुद्धिः मिथ्याज्ञानम्

False knowledge is the perception of something as what it is not. For example, in semi-darkness, a rope may be wrongly perceived as a snake.

Those who know the import of the scriptures tell us, "You are not the body. On the other hand, you are the one who has identification with the body and performs activities." A worldly parallel is, "I am not the house. The owner is the one who closely associates with the house and conducts the activities there. I am that owner."

(Acharyal has indicated here that the conviction "I am the body" is false knowledge. He who feels "I am just the body" cannot obtain even the benefit of Vaidika Vidya; what then to speak of his getting liberation? The Self is not only not the body but is also not the mind or the intellect and is actually Brahman, which is of the nature of existence, consciousness and bliss. This was indicated by Acharyal in His first benedictory address itself. As such, comparison of the Self with the owner of a house, as done here, is not meant to directly elucidate the true nature of the Self but to show, as the first step, that the Self is distinct from the body.)

By our performing Sandhya Vandanam, etc., we attain heaven. It is not possible for us to go there with our bodies as it is for us to proceed from Bengaluru to Mysuru by boarding a train. If the body does not go to heaven, who or what does so? The Self. Though the Self does not travel per se, the subtle body, which is associated with the Self, transmigrates; there can be activity for the subtle body comprising the mind, senses, etc. Depending on our Karma or actions, we may go to heaven or hell or be reborn on earth in a human

body, in the body of an animal or as an immovable, such as a tree. Even if we wish to perform some Karma and attain an excellent birth, we must first give up the false knowledge that we are just the body.

What has happened is that we strongly feel that we are only the body. If we really are only the body then there is no need for us to perform Sandhya Vandanam, no need to go to a temple and no need to engage in any religious activity. However, if there is something different from the body and what Karma we perform does fructify then we do need to perform religious activities to attain future happiness.

(Acharyal has thus shown that the false knowledge, "I am only the body," must go for us to cease being completely materialistic. He now reveals how it is false knowledge that leads to all activity, good and bad; activity, in its turn leads to rebirth and birth implies experience of sorrow.)

It is from false knowledge that we get 'Pravritti' or activity.

Why? Because false knowledge gives rise to the manifestation of 'Dosha' or defects. What are they?

रागद्वेषमोहा दोषाः ॥

(Attachment, aversion and delusion are the defects.)

We have attachment. Our desires are continuously increasing and, in accordance with them, we go on performing actions; there is no limit to our desires.

Likewise, we have aversion towards numerous objects. Is it possible to eliminate what we dislike and thereby to put an end to our aversion? Today, something may be undesirable and we may remove it. Tomorrow, another object also may be undesirable and may have to be removed. On yet another day, something else may be undesirable. Thus, we cannot get rid of aversion by getting rid of what we dislike. Similarly we cannot eradicate attachment by procuring all that we want because there is no limit to our desires.

Why do attachment and aversion arise? Because of delusion; it consists of incorrectly viewing an object as the cause of our happiness or unhappiness. Delusion, in its turn, stems from false knowledge because if a man did not have the misconception that he is the body, mind, etc., there is no question of his being deluded with regard to some object like wealth. Consider the case of wealth. Bhagavatpada has said:

अर्थमनर्थं भावय नित्यं नास्ति ततः सुखलेशः सत्यम् ।
पुत्रादपि धनभाजां भीतिः सर्वत्रैषा विहिता रीतिः ॥

(Ever reflect that wealth is a harmful object; there is indeed not an iota of happiness from it. For the affluent, there is fear even from a son. Everywhere, this is the established norm.)

You always think of money. Do so, it does not matter. However, does wealth give you what you desire, namely happiness? No. What then?

धनं भयनिबन्धनम्

(Wealth is the cause of fear.)

When money accumulates, fear is great. Suppose one were to ask you, "Will you lie down in the open front verandah?" If you have no ornaments or money on you, you will say, "I shall, by all means, do so." If, on the other hand, you have some ornaments or money on you, you would say, "No, it is not possible for me to sleep there. I need a place inside the house." Further, you would demand that the door be securely shut. Thus, what we think is the means of great happiness is only the cause of our unhappiness.

My Guru used to give humorous examples. The following story was narrated by Him. There was a Bairagi (mendicant); a disciple stayed with him. The Bairagi used to go from place to place, light a fire and sit by its side. He used to remain there doing some contemplation. Wherever he went he used to ask, "Is there some cause for fear here?" The disciple wondered, "Why does my teacher keep talking of fear wherever he goes?" He happened to put his hand inside the Bairagi's Kamandalu (water pot). He found that there was something inside which produced a "kada, kada" sound. He reasoned: "There should be just water here and not something that rolls about." He found that there was a cloth packet inside. Thinking, "Oh, this must be the cause of my teacher's fear", he threw away the packet.

When the Bairagi reached the next place, he asked, as usual, "Is there any fear here?"

The disciple replied, "It has been left behind."

"What do you mean?"

"There is no fear now. It has gone into the river."

"What? Went into a river!"

"I examined your Kamandalu and threw the packet away."

"Why?"

"What is the purpose in your clinging to that source of fear? What have we to do with such worldly things? There is no need for fear and so I threw it away."

धनं भयनिबन्धनम्

(Wealth is the cause of fear.)

What do we think? It is from this wealth that there is fulfilment of all that we desire. For its sake, we go to the extent of doing what is improper. We do not feel inclined to give the Government what is due to it. Therefore, it becomes necessary to prepare a false account. If we get caught, we need to pay a bribe. We feel that somehow we must amass wealth. Yet, where must it be kept? There would be a tax problem if we were to deposit it in a bank. Therefore, it must be kept in a box. The box must be locked. Further, we must sit guarding the box!

When Sandhya Vandanam is done, the thought of the box crops up. When we sit for the worship of God, the thought of the box comes to mind. When does a person in such a situation finally become free from this thought? Only on one day; the day he dies and departs. He then does not even know who subsequently takes his wealth away. Such a man would have wished to take his wealth with him after his death but, being unable to do so, was forced to leave it behind.

“Do you have the desire to take wealth with you?”, asks Neelakanta Dikshitar.

मृतोऽप्यर्थं न मोक्ष्यामि बद्ध्वा नेष्यामि मूर्धनि ।

“I have somehow earned money and so far have kept it with me. I do not at all want to part with it even after death.”

“What do you want to do?”

“I want to place it on my head and take it with me.”

“Where to?”

“To heaven.”

“Only if you have a head left after death, is there any question of your placing your wealth on it and carrying it. No head can remain; it too is cremated.”

इति चेत्सुदृढा बुद्धिः पात्रे देयमशङ्कितम् ॥

If you do have the desire to take your wealth with you after death, then donate it, while you are alive, to a good,

deserving person. What will happen if that is done? The wealth will get transformed into Punyam (merit). Regardless of whether or not you have a head after death, it is certain that the wealth will accompany you in the form of Punyam. Because wealth is really the cause of your unhappiness and because you must part with gross wealth at the time of death, do not be deluded with regard to it.

No matter how much it be stressed, “Do not be attached to wealth”, our attachment does not leave us. Such is the extent of our delusion.

रागद्वेषमोहा दोषाः ॥

These are the words of Gautama in the Nyaya Sutras. Attachment, aversion and delusion are the three defects.

तेषां मोहः पापीयान् ॥

Among them delusion is the most vile. Why?

नामूढस्येतरोत्पत्तेः ॥

(Because attachment and aversion do not arise in one who is not deluded.)

If you are to get attachment, it is from delusion. If you have to get aversion, it too has to come from delusion. Sometimes, we mistake a person who helps us to be good for nothing. Why? Because of delusion. Owing to our wrong notion about our benefactor, we develop aversion towards him.

काम जानामि ते मूलं सङ्कल्पात्त्वं हि जायसे

(O Desire! I know your source. You are indeed born of Sankalpa or the conception that an object conduces to happiness.)

Something may not be conducive to our welfare but we entertain the delusion that that object will give us happiness. On account of such delusion, attachment to that object manifests and grows. So, delusion is extremely bad and should be eradicated. Its removal implies the elimination of attachment and aversion as well.

What will happen if the three defects are got rid of? We will then not engage in activities. If engagement in activities ceases, we will not have a future birth, which we are forced to take to experience the fruits of the actions performed earlier. If there be no birth for us, we will have no sorrow, for it is only one with a body who has sorrow.

Delusion is indeed a big obstacle for us. Because of it we have all our fears; it must be eliminated. My Guru used to say, "Do not have much attachment to wealth." It is to earn this wealth that we go in for secular education.

As I said earlier, My Guru too acquired Loukika Vidya. But this was only till the completion of middle school. He passed in first class.

In those days, there were no opportunities in Sringeri for higher education; one had to go elsewhere for it.

My Guru was the only son of His parents. They did not wish to be separated from Him as would have been the case if He had left Sringeri for high school education. Prior to His birth, His mother had given birth to many children who did not live long. Desirous that My Guru too should not die young, they had left Him in Srikanta Sastry's house saying, "You please take care of this boy."

Owing to the meritorious deeds performed by Him in His previous births, My Guru got the opportunity to learn Sanskrit as a student of the Math Patashala. Everyone studied in each class for a year. But My Guru made it a point to go through two classes every year. Yet, in keeping with,

न गुरोः दुःखकरः

He did not make His teacher unhappy. If anything was taught to Him once, it was sufficient; He grasped it. After reaching the fourth class of the Math's Veda Patashala, He, apart from studying, began to teach students of the lower classes. His teacher used to tell Him, "You must take classes. You teach well." Thus, by helping His teacher, He kept the latter happy.

In those days, books were hard to come by in Sringeri. He copied down, in excellent handwriting, the contents of several books. There is a Sanskrit book called Dhaturupa Manjari. His copy looks just like a printed book. It has the same number of letters per page as the

printed text; I have with Me His copy. In this manner, He studied with great sincerity.

He was greatly devoted to Sacchidananda Shivabhinava Nrsimha Bharathi Mahaswamigal, My Paramaguru. In the preceding discourse, I illustrated this by narrating how He obtained the Guru Padukas. There is another episode which brings out His sincerity and His devotion to His Guru.

My Paramaguru used to go on tours. He had the habit of examining students and teachers. Prior to leaving on a tour, He once told the Pandits, "I will state the fourth quarter of a verse. I would be glad if you compose and append to it the first three quarters." My Guru's characteristic was that He used to keep in memory, with great faith, whatever words came from the lips of His Guru. He thought, "He has now given something to the teachers", and bore what was said in mind. What did the Guru say?

मुद्रा काचन मुक्तिदाननिपुणा निद्राति जागर्ति वा ॥

The meaning is: A figure is seated in front. Is he asleep or awake? There is a reason for this doubt.

मुक्तिदाननिपुणा

The entity is competent to give even liberation. However, on seeing the figure, it is not clear whether he is giving advice or is asleep.

My Paramaguru gave this portion for completion and left on a tour. My Guru thought, "Let Me see if I can complete the verse." He succeeded in doing so and kept the completed verse with Him.

While on tour, the Guru had the habit of asking for the answer papers of the students of the Patashala, perusing them and determining the competence of the students. In the course of His going through the answer sheets, He also saw My Guru's answer papers. He got the impression, "This Narasimha Sastry (as Sri Chandrasekhara Bharathi Mahaswamigal was known prior to His Sannyasa) is extremely intelligent." Almost completing His tour, He camped near Belagola. Distinguished persons came and reverentially beheld Him. My Guru too was present to behold His Guru.

The Guru asked, "I had given you, four years ago, a verse for you to complete. Who all have completed it?" Though unlike the others, My Guru had completed it, He was shy and afraid to say so. However, someone nearby said, "This boy has done it." The Guru remarked, "Has this boy done it? Read the verse."

क्षोणीभृद्वरसानुवर्तिवटवृक्षाधप्रदेशस्थिता
मुद्रापुस्तकमौनयुक् शमयुता नासाग्रदृष्टिस्सदा ।
पाराशर्यसुतादिमान्मुनिवरान्संबोधयन्ती परं
मुद्रा काचन मुक्तिदाननिपुणा निद्राति जागर्ति वा ॥

What is the meaning? My Guru had great devotion to Lord Dakshinamurthi (a manifestation of Shiva). My Paramaguru too had devotion to Shiva. He had tried to complete the verse in terms of Shiva but His composition, as it turned out, referred to Vishnu. So, He was slightly dissatisfied with His own composition. My Guru, on the other hand, had completed the given portion in terms of Dakshinamurthi.

क्षोणीभृद्वरसानुवर्तिवटवृक्षाघप्रदेशस्थिता

Where does Dakshinamurthi abide? He dwells on the Himalaya mountain. There is a big banyan tree there and He is seated in the shade of that tree. How is He seated?

मुद्रापुस्तकमौनयुक् शमयुता नासाग्रदृष्टिस्सदा

In one hand, He has the Chinmudra (the sign of knowledge in which the tips of the thumb and the index finger touch and the others are straight). In another hand, He has a book. He has mastered all the senses and so His body is motionless. In accordance with the utterance of Kalidasa,

केनापि कामेन तपश्चचार

“Desirous of something, He performed penance”, the Lord has, in the mode of penance, directed His gaze at the tip of His nose. His eyes are three-fourth closed. They are only slightly open.

There are some people who sleep with their eyes partly open; I have observed this. The Lord's eyes are slightly open. There is no activity at all in His body. Thus, it seems as if He is sleeping while seated. Yet, if we decide to say that He is indeed sleeping, it will be difficult to reconcile this position with:

पाराशर्यसुतादिमान्मुनिवरान्संबोधयन्ती परम्

Param means Brahman, which is superior to everything. About Dakshinamurthi it is said:

गुरोस्तु मौनं व्याख्यानं शिष्यास्तु छिन्नसंशयाः ॥

(Silence is the mode of Guru's exposition but the doubts of the disciples are rent asunder.)

There is no need for the disciple to ask any question. There is no need for the Guru to verbalize any reply. If one is seated in front of the Guru, Shakti Pata takes place; that is, the power that is in the Guru descends on the disciple. As for the disciple's doubts:

भिद्यते हृदयग्रन्थिशिछद्यन्ते सर्वसंशयाः ।

(The knot of the heart is broken and all doubts completely vanish.)

तस्मिन्दृष्टे परावरे ॥

All this happens automatically on one seeing the Supreme.

Dakshinamurthi, purely by His grace, fulfils the desire of Shuka and others to know the Truth and grants them knowledge. What do the disciples of Dakshinamurthi, such as Shuka, say? Each avers, "On my coming to Your presence, all my doubts have been cleared. I have received instruction about realization of Brahman." If Dakshinamurthi is to teach, He must be awake.

मुद्रा काचन मुक्तिदाननिपुणा निद्राति जागर्ति वा ॥

Therefore, I am unable to say whether this figure, who is competent to confer liberation, is asleep or awake. This is the meaning of the verse.

My Paramaguru was extremely happy and felt, "This boy is so competent. I wanted to complete the verse to refer to Shiva but that did not happen; this boy has done it." His glance fell on My Guru.

My Guru was destined to become a Sannyasi. How did He become a Sannyasi? What was His conduct at that time? I shall talk about these aspects on another day.

हर नमः पार्वतीपतये हर हर महादेव ।
जानकीकान्तस्मरणं जय जय राम राम ॥



Guru

Part IV

(Benedictory address delivered, in Kannada, at Bengaluru on 2.9.1987)

अज्ञानान्तर्गहनपतितानात्मविद्योपदेशै -
स्त्रातुं लोकान्भवदवशिखातापपापच्यमानान् ।
मुक्त्वा मौनं वटविटपिनो मूलतो निष्पतन्ती
शम्भोर्मूर्तिश्चरति भुवने शङ्कराचार्यरूपा ॥

(To save, by teachings about the Self, people, who are trapped in the dense forest of ignorance and who are exceedingly tormented by the heat of the flame of the forest fire of transmigratory existence, Dakshinamurthi gave up silence and, coming forth from the foot of the banyan tree, moves about in the world in the form of Shankaracharya.)

(In His preceding address, Acharyal revealed how a Guru, by His gracious glance, produces knowledge in a disciple and thereby quells the disciple's mental torment. In the present benedictory address, Acharyal elaborates on what He taught earlier and also explains how a Guru ensures the dawn of knowledge in a disciple who is much less competent than the sages who approached

and obtained enlightenment from Shiva in the form of Dakshinamurthi.)

For a long time, the Madhaviya Shankara Vijayam has continued to serve as an authentic record that enables us to know the life of Shankara Bhagavatpada. What was He like intrinsically? This has been elucidated in this verse of the Madhaviya Shankara Vijayam. Dakshinamurthi remained seated at the foot of a banyan tree teaching sages, while observing silence. By that very teaching, imparted through silence, the doubts of the sages were set at rest and they became enlightened about the Self. What, however, is the position in Kali Yuga (the present age of unrighteousness)?

अज्ञानान्तर्गहनपतितान्

We have ignorance. The sages too had ignorance. What is the difference between their ignorance and ours? There is darkness on the night of the full moon as also on the night of the new moon; there is no night without darkness. In the darkness of the night of the full moon, we are able to move about on the roads and are also able to perform our routine activities. We, however, have to strain to read a book; that is all. In the darkness of the night of the new moon, if the sky happens to be overcast too, it is not possible for us to walk on the road or to engage in our activities; the question of reading a book does not arise at all. The ignorance of the sages was like the darkness of the night of the full

moon while our ignorance is like the darkness of the night of the new moon. To get rid of the ignorance that they had, the sages sought refuge in Dakshinamurthi. Our position is like that of the man described in the sequel.

There is a big forest of ignorance. A man has got trapped in its midst. He is unable to see a path in any direction. He does not even remember how far he has come; he is unable to judge the direction in which he must move forward. What is he to do? So unbearable are his bodily and mental afflictions that he is not even in a position to remain where he is. Thus, in the verse, it is said:

अज्ञानान्तर्गहनपतितान्

(Those who have got caught in the dense forest of ignorance.)

आत्मविद्योपदेशैः

It is necessary that this man be shown the way out. If he were merely in an ordinary forest, one could tell him, "Proceed to the East" or "Go to the West." He has, however, been caught in the forest of ignorance. What guidance should be given to this man who has forgotten his very nature? He must be advised, "You are so and so." That is all that needs to be done. So it is said:

आत्मविद्योपदेशैः

(By teachings about the knowledge of the Self.)

In every one, the individual soul is really the Supreme. When the Supreme takes the form of an individual, He must act in accordance with what He taught earlier in the form of God, thereby obtain, as it were, knowledge and get liberated, as it were. What is the basis for saying that the Supreme alone is there and that His becoming an individual, striving to get knowledge and getting liberated are mere illusions and not actualities?

न मुमुक्षुर्न वै मुक्त इत्येषा परमार्थता

(There is none desirous of liberation and no one who is liberated. This is the highest Truth.)

If the highest Truth is known, there is no one desirous of liberation, no one who is liberated and no one who is bound in the cycle of transmigratory existence. There is nothing except Brahman. If, however, one were to behold distinct objects of experience then what prevails is the state of ignorance.

If we sit in a cinema theatre, we see several pictures on the screen. We feel happy, unhappy, angry and so on. What is it on seeing which all such emotions arise in us? Mere images on the screen. Should we get angry or obtain happiness on beholding just an image? Strictly speaking, there is no reason for us to. However, though we are actually seeing a mere image, we do not feel so. We feel that we are watching the hero of a story in front of us. The producers of the film intend that such an idea must come to us; only then does the picture

become interesting. Once we feel that we are seeing not the hero but a mere image, the charm of the picture vanishes.

What has happened to us? Just as, while seeing a picture, we forget that we are seeing mere images projected onto the screen and, on the contrary, feel that the hero is in action in front of us, we have completely forgotten our true nature of being the non-dual Brahman, and, on the contrary, we believe, "I am human. I am a Brahmin. My thread ceremony has been performed." Once this much false knowledge has arisen, can Sandhya Vandanam be discarded? No, it must be performed. If false knowledge were not there, there would be no necessity to perform Sandhya Vandanam.

Sandhya Vandanam and other scripturally enjoined duties are not done by two types of persons for whom the thread ceremony has been performed; he whose thinking is perverse and he who has known the Truth.

यश्च मूढतमो लोके यश्च बुद्धेः परं गतः ।
तावुभौ सुखमेधेते क्लिश्नात्यन्तरितो जनः ॥

(In the world, both he who is extremely foolish and he who has attained the acme of knowledge live happily. The people between these limits of stupidity and wisdom suffer.)

He who is extremely foolish is happy; he is too stupid to anticipate or analyze problematic situations and become

unhappy. He who has attained the limit of knowledge is also happy; he feels, "This is all there is to the world. No purpose is served by laughing or weeping over it." Such a knower is not obliged to perform even scripturally-ordained actions but, out of compassion, he thinks, "The common folk must not get deluded by my non-performance of good acts. Let them see me and do good. They should obtain good results." With this attitude, he engages in good activity. That is why even when God incarnates as a human, He has to do everything.

आत्मविद्योपदेशैः

With regard to the man caught in the forest of ignorance, the Lord teaches about the Atma till realization of the Truth dawns.

त्रातुं लोकान्

(To save people...)

God should save these people caught in the forest of ignorance by this teaching.

भवद्वशिखातापपापच्यमानान्

When a person has some difficulty, the thought of helping him arises in us. Suppose a man with some financial resources is in a position to read but is unable to acquire all the books that he desires. If he were to ask us for help, we would direct him to a library. On the other hand, if the man were penniless, we ourselves would

supply him with some books. Why this difference? Because the difficulty of the penniless man is greater. The help rendered to a person should be proportional to his difficulty.

Transmigratory existence is a forest conflagration. The man trapped in the forest of ignorance, has fallen onto the flame of this fire. Should he go forward or backward? In both directions, there is fire. As such, he is not in a position to go forward or backward; he cannot also remain where he is. For one in such a terrible predicament, the only pertinent succour is a rain of nectar which would put out the fire and also rejuvenate him. The teaching about the Self is this rain of nectar. To save the intensely tormented man by raining nectar, Lord Dakshinamurthi acted by

मुक्त्वा मौनं

(giving up silence.)

For uplifting the sages Sanaka, Sanandana, etc., the Lord just showed the Chinmudra (the sign of knowledge in which the tips of the thumb and index finger touch and the other fingers are held straight). With a smiling face, He radiated peace. By glancing at them, He produced a cool rain of nectar. That was sufficient for the sages. For us, it is insufficient.

When we indicate, "Come", by suitably moving our hand, some correctly interpret the sign and approach us.

Some do not understand. Even if we wave briskly, they just wave back! My Veda teacher narrated an example. During a religious rite, honey was essential; it was kept on the top. The priest was engaged in chanting Mantras and so was not in a position to converse. Hence, when he came to

मधु वाता ऋतायते मधु क्षरन्ति सिन्धवः

the portion where honey was required, he pointed to the honey. The performer of the rite thought, “Maybe I am supposed to do what he is doing”, and he too pointed to the honey. What could the priest do? “I wanted you to bring down the honey”, he said. “Oh! If you had said so earlier, I would not have gestured with my hand at all”, responded the performer of the rite. There are people with this level of understanding also! So, for the sake of people of limited competence:

मुक्त्वा मौनं वटविटपिनो मूलतो निष्पतन्ती

(Dakshinamurthi gave up silence and came forth from the foot of the banyan tree.)

Earlier, the disciples went to the Guru.

तद्विज्ञानार्थं स गुरुमेवाभिगच्छेत्
समित्पाणिः श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्मनिष्ठम् ॥

(To fully know that Truth, he should necessarily, with sacrificial faggots in hand, go to a Guru, who is versed in the Vedas and is established in Brahman.)

In accordance with this injunction, the disciple of the olden days went, with sacrificial faggots in his hand, to the Guru.

प्रश्नकालप्रतीक्षः

(The good disciple waits for the appropriate time to pose questions.)

Accordingly, he used to wait. In this fashion, he acquired knowledge. What is the present situation like? Neelakanta Dikshitar has humorously said, "I have studied Vedanta. But look at what has happened?"

निद्राहेतोर्निशि निशि कथाः शृण्वतां पार्थिवानाम् ।
कालक्षेपौपयिकमिदमप्याः कथं पर्यणंसीत् ॥

(Alas! How did my study of Vedanta end up serving to pass the time of kings who hear stories at nights to get sleep?)

With great strain, with faith, studying for several years in the presence of the Guru and constantly contemplating on the teachings, I acquired my knowledge. It is very surprising how my learning has ended up.

Many people do not get sleep. Why? They have numerous worries; they are enmeshed in various affairs. So, what is to be done to sleep? Some think, "Let me take tablets. I will then sleep." Some others recline comfortably. They summon a scholar of Vedanta and tell him, "You keep expounding Vedanta." The scholar does so and the

listener goes to sleep. Thus, Vedanta ends up serving to pass the time of one who is not even a scholar.

The term “Hari-Katha-Kala-Kshepa” is commonly used; it means a story to spend time! Instead of hearing the story of the Lord, developing devotion and then worshipping the Lord, people often just while away time by nonchalantly hearing the story of the Lord. This is the fate of Vedanta and the Puranas now. It is said that we must go to the Guru’s presence and, there, know the Truth by prostrating before the Guru, serving him and posing our doubts.

तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया ।
उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः ॥

(Know the Truth by prostration, questioning and service. The knowers who have realized the Truth will impart knowledge to you.)

Is this now regarded as feasible? No. So, recognizing the limited competence and deplorable attitude of people in Kali Yuga, the Lord Himself started from the foot of the banyan tree and came to the people.

शम्भोर्मूर्तिश्चरति भुवने शङ्कराचार्यरूपा

(The figure of Shiva moves about in the world in the form of Shankaracharya.)

If the Lord were to come in the form of Dakshinamurthi, all people would fear Him. Why? Because they have

not seen a person who has four hands. They might think, "This being has four hands and as such must be some ghost. Hence, we shall disbelieve whatever this entity says." In the present times too, people are not comfortable with what they are unfamiliar. For instance, the advice of a Swamigal and the discourse of a man who dons a worldly attire are viewed differently. Why? The common folk feel, "The Swamigal does not know our problems. He talks about what is pertinent to himself. We are unable to decide how much of what he says is fit or unfit to be grasped by us. The other man is just like us and so he is in a position to speak on what is relevant to us. As such, what he says is particularly interesting."

This point has been brought out by Neelakanta Dikshitar. He wrote:

स्वेनैवोक्तं निगमवचसा

First, the Lord taught us by means of the Vedas. About the Veda, it is said:

वेदस्य पुरुषः कर्ता न हि यादृशतादृशः ।

The author of the Veda is no ordinary person. He is the Lord Himself. The continuation of Neelakanta Dikshitar's verse is:

... बोधनीयास्तु जीवा
जीवैरेवेत्यपि च मुनिभिः कारितं धर्मशास्त्रम् ।

With reference to the Veda, one may think, “God is omnipotent. So, He has composed the Veda in such a way that it is suitable for Him. We lack His capacity. So, how is it possible for us to practise what is specified in the Veda?” To ward off this objection, the Lord decided that apart from His teaching, the Veda, an individual must also be taught by another individual. So, He got the sages to write the Dharma Shastra, which prescribes what we must and must not do.

परोपकृतिकैवल्ये तोलयित्वा जनार्दनः ।
 गुर्वीमुपकृतिं मत्वाऽवतारान्दशाग्रहीत् ॥
 परोपकृतिशून्यस्य धिञ्छनुष्यस्य जीवितम् ।
 जीवन्तु पशवो येषां चर्माप्युपकरिष्यति ॥

(Having balanced ‘doing good to others’ and ‘absolute freedom’ and, having determined that ‘doing good to others’ is heavier, the Lord incarnated ten times. Fie on the life of a man who never does good to another! May animals live long; even after death, they continue, through their skins, to serve others.)

Lord Vishnu abided in the state of absolute freedom. Why then did He have to incarnate many times, as:

मत्स्यः कूर्मो वराहश्च नारसिंहोऽथ वामनः ।
 रामो रामश्च कृष्णश्च बौद्धः कल्की तथैव च ॥

(A fish, a tortoise, a boar, Narasimha, Vamana, Parasurama, Rama, Krishna, Buddha, and likewise Kalki.)

God wanted to know, "What constitutes the heaviest or most exalted object in the world?" So, He said, "Bring a balance." He took the state of absolute freedom in which He abided and put it on one pan. On the other pan, He kept loading some object or the other; on it, He placed heaven, other worlds, wealth, etc. Yet, no matter what He placed, the pan with absolute freedom on it continued to remain low; it did not rise up at all. The Lord became afraid and thought, "What! Is there nothing at all to match absolute freedom?" Finally, He took "Doing good to others" and placed it on the balance. The pan that was on the top came down while the pan that was below went up.

गुर्वीमुपकृतिं मत्वा

The Lord deemed, "Doing good to others is the truly heavy object. So, what should I do? I shall eradicate whatever problem any person in the world has and cause an arrangement of doing good to others to develop."

मत्स्यः कूर्मो वराहश्च नारसिंहोऽथ वामनः ।

रामो रामश्च कृष्णश्च बौद्धः कल्की तथैव च ॥

Having first incarnated as a fish, the Lord gradually manifested as a man like us. He then showed us the way. Why? In His incarnation as a fish, He uplifted the Vedas. However, it could be objected, "Is it possible for us to become a fish? Can we uplift the Vedas? No. So, what have we to do with this incarnation?" The Lord then

appeared as a tortoise and lifted a big mountain. Here also people could think, “We have neither the power to incarnate as a tortoise nor to lift a mountain. So, what is the point in concerning ourselves with the tortoise-incarnation?” What about the Lord’s incarnation as Narasimha? People may say, “There is no Hiranyakashipu before us to slay. Further, we do not have the power of Narasimha. So, let Narasimha go.” What then? The Lord, in due course, incarnated as Rama.

The people then felt, “Ah! He is just like us. He too has a father, a mother, brothers and a wife. He has all that we have. We have experienced some suffering but He has experienced it much more than us; He dwelt in a forest for fourteen years. We find even our problems too much to bear. So, it seems that the path He showed is appropriate for us.”

God says, “O, Man! I have given you the power to discriminate but you have not used it. Look at a cow.” God created milk for its calf. However, we too are able to obtain and drink the milk of a cow. We take cow dung and put in a field as a fertilizer. Even cow’s urine, we treat as pure and consume a little of it as Panchagavya (a mixture of cow dung, cow’s urine, clarified butter, curd and milk). In every way, the cow is beneficial. People use the skins of all sorts of animals; on seeing a belt made of animal skin, they say, “First class!” Thus, even a dead animal is beneficial to others. If, however, a belt were made of human skin, none would touch it; people would

regard it as disgusting. Being useless after death, if a man is to do good to others, he should do it while he is alive.

परोपकृतिशून्यस्य धिङ्मनुष्यस्य जीवितम् ।

Fie on the life of a man who does no good to others!

On the other hand,

जीवन्तु पशवो येषां चर्माप्युपकरिष्यति ॥

May animals live long; even after death, they continue, through their skins, to serve others.

Such is the important place that has been assigned to doing good to others. That is why the Lord first taught the Vedas for the benefit of mankind, then got the sages to write the Dharma Shastra, and also personally appeared in various forms. He manifested in the form of man to make His teachings appear highly relevant to the people who are trapped in the forest of ignorance and who are tormented by the forest fire of the cycle of transmigratory existence. Thus did Dakshinamurthi give up His silence and His place at the foot of the banyan tree and move about in the world in the form of Shankaracharya.

On encountering Bhagavatpada's advice we feel great joy, as if we have touched the moon. Likewise, on seeing a preceptor belonging to the line of his successors, we feel as if we have encountered Shankaracharya Himself. That is why it is said in the Madhaviya Shankara Vijayam verse that has been expounded so far:

चरति भुवने शङ्कराचार्यरूपा

(He moves about in the world in the form of Shankaracharya)
and not

अचरत्

(Moved about.)

“He is continuing to move about” - it is only because you have this attitude and are devoted that the line of successive preceptors has come about. “Shankaracharya has come and gone” - if this were your view, the Maths of Shankaracharya could not have lasted. It is you who have, by your attitude, sustained the Maths. My Guru too came to us in the form of Shankaracharya.

(Acharyal has so far explained, in the light of a verse of the Madhaviya Shankara Vijayam, how the Lord, the primordial Guru, imparts knowledge to the disciple after taking the disciple’s limitations into full consideration. He now illustrates the kind of advice that is given by a Guru, by considering how His Paramaguru graced His Guru.)

Earlier, I spoke of My Guru’s efforts to gain knowledge. What was the extent to which His Guru’s grace was on Him? I shall now take that up.

My Guru did not have the opportunity to be initiated into Sannyasa by the actual touch of the hand of His Guru. However, initiation of a disciple by a Guru is of several

types. There is Drishti Deeksha or initiation by glance, Sparsha Deeksha or initiation by touch and Manasa Deeksha or initiation by the mind itself.

व्यादिदेश स चतुर्दशविद्या सद्य एव मनसा गिरिनाम्ने

Shankara Bhagavatpada, by His mind itself, imparted fourteen sciences to Giri, His disciple. “By the mind itself”, implies without recourse to classes. Bhagavatpada just thought, “Let him get this knowledge.” If the Guru graces thus and if the Guru has the power to bless, the power descends on the disciple and the disciple obtains knowledge. This is certain.

What happened in the case of My Guru? When My Paramaguru felt that His body had served its purpose, He sent word for My Guru through Srikanta Sastry. I shall give the details of His sending for My Guru later. He made the resolve. “I shall give Sannyasa to Him (Narasimha Sastry).”

How is it known that such a resolve was made? The following details reveal this. Every evening, My Paramaguru used to go to the Kala Bhairava Temple, situated atop a hill in the vicinity of the Ashrama in Sringeri. On the way, He used to chant Antyakshari verses (In Antyakshari verses, the last syllable of a verse must be the first syllable of the succeeding verse) and used to discuss some scriptural topic. One day, Markandeya Brahmachari, Shivananda and My Guru, who were students, went for reverentially beholding

their Guru. He asked them to accompany Him to the Kala Bhairava Temple. When seated in the temple, He looked at My Guru's face and chanted three verses.

संसारनामकसरिन्नाथोत्तरणे तवास्ति यदि वाञ्छा ।
 बालक श्रृणु मद्बचनं श्रुतिमस्तकसंमतं हितोदरकम् ॥
 प्रविधाय सशिखवपनं छित्त्वा यज्ञार्थमादृतं सूत्रम् ।
 स्वीकृतपारमहंस्यः स्थिरतरसाधनचतुष्टयोपेतः ॥
 श्रद्धाभक्तियुतात्मा प्रविचारय तत्त्वमात्मनः सुचिरम् ।
 सद्गुरुमुखाम्बुजातस्रवदागमशीर्षवाक्यपीयूषैः ॥

(O Child! If you have the desire to cross the ocean of transmigratory existence then listen to my utterance which is in consonance with the Upanishads and will later be beneficial. Having shaven your head, together with the tuft, and, having broken the sacred thread donned for performing sacrifices, take up Sannyasa. Very firmly endowed with the four spiritual means, faith and devotion, enquire for long about the Truth by recourse to the nectar-like utterances of the Upanishads flowing from the lotus mouth of the Sadguru.)

What is the meaning? O Child! People have various longings. What desire should be there in your heart? Transmigratory existence is a big ocean. In it, you are sinking and rising. Do you have the desire to reach the shore? This desire must be there.

संसारनामकसरिन्नाथोत्तरणे तवास्ति यदि वाञ्छा

If you have this desire to cross the ocean of transmigratory existence then,

बालक शृणु मद्बचनम्

O Child, hear my words. Are these words just my own? No.

श्रुतिमस्तकसंमतं हितोदकम्

The fruit that shall subsequently accrue from my words is extremely beneficial. In Sanskrit, “Hita” and “Priya” have different meanings. Priya is what is pleasing now. “You have won one lakh in a lottery”, is a Priya utterance. The concerned man may have actually won nothing and the speaker might have intended to have fun at his expense. Nonetheless, the hearer believes the statement and feels happy. Hita is what confers joy subsequently. “Read. You will certainly pass”; this is an example of a Hita utterance.

Priya is:

तत्कालसंतोषदायकम्

(That which confers happiness for the time being.)

On the other hand, Hita is:

उत्तरत्रसंतोषदायकम्

(That which confers happiness subsequently.)

A Hita utterance does not immediately confer joy. For instance, a person who is told to study may feel,

“Why is he pressurizing me?” The advice, however, later proves to be beneficial. Likewise, my words are of the Hita kind. How is it that my words constitute Hita?

श्रुतिमस्तकसंमतम्

Because what I shall tell you is in consonance with the teaching of the Upanishads. Listen to these words. What are they?

प्रविधाय सशिखवपनं छित्त्वा यज्ञार्थमादृतं सूत्रम् ।
स्वीकृतपारमहंस्यः स्थिरतरसाधनचतुष्टयोपेतः ॥

You must take Sannyasa.

Nowadays many take Sannyasa but without anyone to initiate them into it. For their Sannyasa, about ten rupees are sufficient. They just go to a shop and say, “Give me a cloth which is ochre-coloured.” Unlike normal Sannyasis whose clothing is drab, they want theirs to be resplendent. So, they specify, “Give me a cloth which is ochre-coloured and resplendent.” They wear it and wander about as Sannyasis.

The Sannyasa being spoken of here is not like that; it must be taken in accordance with the scriptural injunctions. One such injunction is,

प्रविधाय सशिखवपनम्

(Having shaven the head together with the tuft...)

There was an argument between Mandana Mishra and Bhagavatpada. Mandana Mishra did not have faith in Sannyasis as they lack a tuft and the sacred thread. He asked Bhagavatpada, "What would have been your problem if you had retained a tuft? What indeed would have gone wrong had you continued to wear the sacred thread?" These days, regardless of whether anything would go wrong or not, people discard the sacred thread as if it is not wanted. In those days, people removed the sacred thread only if they felt that something would go wrong if they continued to wear it. Why did they discard it? Because they felt that this cycle of transmigratory existence must be got rid of and that the sacred thread was an obstacle. Mandana Mishra's criticism was:

कन्थां वहसि दुर्बुद्धे गर्दभेनापि दुर्वहाम् ।
शिखायज्ञोपवीताभ्यां कस्ते भारो भविष्यति ॥

(Wicked-minded one! Even for an ass, the rags you wear would be tough to bear. Would the tuft and the sacred thread be a load for you?)

"You take so many books with you and wander. What load will the tuft and the sacred thread constitute for you who carry so many books?", questioned Mandana Mishra.

Bhagavatpada's reply was:

श्रुतेर्भारो भविष्यति

“If I had the tuft and the sacred thread, the load of the Veda, that is, the burden of Vedic rituals, would have been on My head. I do not want that burden. To put it down, I discarded My tuft and the sacred thread and took to Sannyasa.”

Consider a policeman. If he were to wear a dhoti, don a tie, put on a cap and stand on the road, what would people say? “Every thing seems topsy turvy. Below and above this man’s waist, we see the products of different cultures. Is he mad?”, they would wonder. On the other hand, if he were to come wearing the appropriate uniform, people would say, “Oh! A policeman has come. Let us be careful.”

Amongst us, there is the practice of women wearing saris and of men wearing dhotis. Because of men and women wearing distinct dresses we are able to recognize a woman from afar and address her with the words, “What is it, mother?” Suppose women were to quit wearing saris and were, like men, to don trousers and to cut their hair short. Then we would have to stare to determine whether a person is male or a female. If the person were a female, she may scowl and demand, “Why are you staring at me?”

“I was trying to find out whether you are a man or a woman.”

“That is none of your business. Stop staring.”

All such confusion would be absent if men and women were to dress distinctly. It is of course not wrong if a man belonging to the C.I.D. were to camouflage himself and go about in a sari. In such a case, to catch a culprit, it is desirable that a person seeing the detective mistake the latter for a female.

However, the normal course is different. Just as society specifies the kind of dress which would be appropriate for a particular person in a specific situation, the Shastras specify how a celibate must be, how a householder must be and how a Sannyasi must be. What is the scripturally-specified mark of a Sannyasi?

एकदण्डधरा मुण्डाः

If you are a Sannyasi, you must not have a tuft and you must carry a wooden staff. That is why My Paramaguru said:

प्रविधाय सशिखवपनम्

Remove your tuft. Further,

छित्त्वा यज्ञार्थमादृतं सूत्रम्

break the sacred thread worn for performing sacrifices.

“Why must we wear the sacred thread?” - this is a question many ask. There is a book called Mrichchakatika in which a question is raised about the need for the sacred thread and a tongue-in-cheek answer is given. It seems

someone was bitten by a snake. Unfortunately, nothing was available to tie as a tourniquet. At that time, the afflicted man thought, “Now my father’s investing me with the sacred thread has proved useful.” He used the sacred thread as a tourniquet. The sacred thread thus comes in handy when a snake bites! This, of course, is just said in jest.

Actually, the sacred thread is worn to acquire the competence to perform scripturally-ordained rites. The sacred thread is also called Brahmasutram; here “Brahma” means Veda and “Sutram” means thread. While donning the sacred thread, the resolve made is:

श्रौतस्मार्थविहितनित्यकर्मानुष्ठानयोग्यतासिद्ध्यर्थ ...
यज्ञोपवीतधारणं करिष्ये ।

I shall put on the sacred thread for gaining the competence to perform the obligatory rites ordained by the Vedas and Smritis. Sannyasis are unconcerned with sacrifices and so it was specified:

छित्त्वा यज्ञार्थमादृतं सूत्रम्

(Having broken the sacred thread worn for performing sacrifices.)

Some complain, “You say that if Vedanta is studied, knowledge of Brahman arises. I have read all the Upanishads, the Brahma Sutras and the Gita, with the commentary on them, and have also read other

books on Vedanta. In fact, I have read and re-read such books. Still, I have obtained neither Brahman nor knowledge. No matter how much I read, everything continues to be as before.” The reason for this predicament is the absence of the qualifications necessary to study Vedanta. To do anything, there must be the necessary competence.

For instance, judges pass judgments, while lawyers argue cases. There is not much difference between what a successful lawyer says and what a judge says. However, a lawyer argues to establish the innocence of his client, accused of felony, while the judge hears both sides of the case and passes judgment. So, a lawyer is qualified to hold on to one view and to adduce reasons in support of it, while a judge is qualified to hear lawyers of both sides and to give a decision. That is why what a judge says constitutes a judgment while what a lawyer says constitutes an argument.

Just as lawyers and judges are duly qualified to do their respective tasks, we too must have some qualifications to study Vedanta and thereby obtain knowledge.

शास्त्रेऽस्मिन्सोऽधिकारवान्

(He is qualified to study this Shastra.)

He who has discrimination between that which is eternal and that which is not, who is dispassionate, who is endowed with the six qualities, such as control of

the mind, and who has a strong desire for liberation is qualified to study Vedanta. The six qualities are mind control, control of the senses, withdrawal, forbearance, faith and firm fixation of the intellect on Brahman.

We too have the desire for liberation. Sometimes we do not want transmigratory existence, but that is all. Neelakanta Dikshitar has humorously commented thus about the type of desire for liberation that many have.

A person felt like renouncing home and so wanted to determine the auspicious time to leave. He finally concluded that while an auspicious time is chosen to enter a new house, such is not the case with renouncing home and going away. Hence, he just set out. A grandchild of his cried out, "Grandfather! Grandfather! Where are you going?" Replying, "No, no, I am never going to leave you", he returned to his house.

इत्यत्यन्तव्यवसितधियो निःसरन्तोऽपि गेहा -
दावर्तन्ते झटिति रुदतां सान्त्वहेतोः शिशूनाम् ॥

(Those who have firmly resolved thus (to quit home without delay), even while setting out from the house, quickly return to pacify weeping children.)

What is the use of this type of desire for liberation? That is why, in the verses in which abandonment of the tuft and sacred thread were advised, it is said:

स्थिरतरसाधनचतुष्टयोपेतः

The tetrad comprising discrimination, dispassion, six qualities such as mind control, and desire for liberation must be very firm. Possessed of this qualification and,

श्रद्धाभक्तियुतात्मा

endowed with faith and devotion,

प्रविचारय तत्त्वमात्मनः सुचिरम्

you should enquire, for long, about the Truth.

How should such enquiry be done?

(Acharyal first illustrates, in terms of the study of the Veda, how such enquiry must not be done and then shows how it must be done.)

Many feel like learning Rudram (a portion of the Veda used during the worship of Shiva). Some feel ashamed to call a priest and learn from him in accordance with the rule that there should be

गुरुच्चारणानूच्चारणम्

(Repetition of what the Guru has said.)

They feel, "I am fifty years of age, while the priest is only 25. How then can I prostrate before him and learn by repeating what he chants?" Some others feel, "Why should I make a respectful offering of cash to this man and learn? He is not necessary at all." Some others feel that a priest who can teach them to their satisfaction

is not available and use a tape recorder to play back a recorded version of the Rudram. Thus, people see no need for them to overcome shyness and offer prostrations, no need to make a reverential offering of cash and no need for restrictions either. They feel that they just have to return from the office and sit, with a hat and boots on. That is enough, for, on the tape recorder being turned on, it begins to say

नमस्ते रुद्र मन्यवे

(O Rudra! Salutation to Your anger.)

To what extent does a person using a tape recorder in lieu of a teacher learn? He gets his inflexions all wrong.

(Acharyal illustrated the errors in a humorous manner. As the charm of the examples would be lost in a written text, they have not been included here.)

It is also possible that he may learn to chant correctly. However, even if such mastery is attained, the chanting will not confer any virtue. Why? A parrot says, "Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram." Does virtue accrue to it or vice? Neither. On the other hand, if we say, "Ram, Ram, Ram, Ram", we acquire merit. This is because of our mental refinement; the parrot's utterance is thoughtless. Therefore, after investiture with the sacred thread, we must learn the Veda by reciting after a teacher. Only by doing so we can get the merit that stems from Vedic chanting.

Some do not wear a sacred thread and yet begin to chant the Vedic Mantras. So I tell them, “First don a sacred thread. You are qualified to do so and to chant.” It is said:

अष्टवर्षे ब्राह्मणमुपनयीत

(A Brahmin must be invested with the sacred thread in his eighth year, from the time of conception.)

If it be specially desired that the initiated one acquire spiritual splendour, the investiture is to be done in the fifth year. Some children pick up a knowledge of Veda Mantras merely by hearing them. Yet, their parents are lax about performing their thread ceremony. This is wrong. In the case of some others, the thread ceremony is performed after they are sixteen years old. That too is wrong. It is said:

आ षोडशाद्ब्राह्मणस्य

(The Brahmin’s investiture with the sacred thread can be done till he is sixteen.)

Some are happy thinking, “I have completed sixteen years of age. As such, for me, the problem of being invested with the sacred thread does not arise.” For a Brahmin over 16, in accordance with,

स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात्

(Even a little of this Dharma protects one from great fear.)

the investiture with the sacred thread must somehow be done. With regard to Nitya Karma (scripturally-ordained actions which have to be regularly performed on recurring, fixed occasions), ancillary factors are not obligatory. This does not mean that the ancillary factors should be ignored. To illustrate, Sandhya Vandanam, which is a Nitya Karma, must be carried out. Suppose it is not possible to do it at the appropriate time on one evening. Then, even if the time be 10 at night, it must be performed. In like manner, even if the age of sixteen be exceeded, the investiture ceremony must be performed. However, in the case of rites done to consummate a particular desire, the ancillary portions must also be observed in toto. So says the Mimamsa Shastra.

In the light of all this, when we learn the Veda, we must do it the way it is learned traditionally. Then our learning bears fruit. In like manner, Vedanta must be learned in the proper way and must not be learned just by reading some book or by hearing some discourse. So, it is said:

सद्गुरुमुखाम्बुजातस्रवदागमशीर्षवाक्यपीयूषैः

Perform enquiry taking the nectar-like Upanishadic teachings which spring from the lotus mouth of the Guru as your basis. This is what My Paramaguru said. He did not say for whose sake He had uttered the three verses but, while speaking, He kept looking at My

Guru's face. So, My Guru obtained initiation by sight. Further, He obtained the advice contained in the words. He thought, "For whose sake did My Guru utter these verses? They are not applicable to Shivananda. Markandeya Brahmachari was also with Me but the verses do not apply to him either. So, it looks like My Guru said all this for Me. Let Me subject the words of My Guru to memory." He memorized them. It was He who informed Me what His Guru had told Him; I copied the verses.

While My Paramaguru did not tell My Guru about His wanting to give Him Sannyasa or of His wanting to choose Him as His successor, He chanted the verses, containing valuable advice, while looking at My Guru's face; He thereby brought about ripeness in My Guru's mind. I shall speak later about My Guru's receiving initiation into a Mantra, the advice He was given about knowledge, how He was summoned to His Guru, His subsequent effort to get knowledge and His tours.

हर नमः पार्वतीपतये हर हर महादेव ।
जानकीकान्तस्मरणं जय जय राम राम ॥



Guru

Part V

(Benedictory address delivered, in Kannada, at Bengaluru on 3.9.1987)

विशुद्धज्ञानदेहाय त्रिवेदी दिव्यचक्षुषे
श्रेयःप्राप्तिनिमित्ताय नमः सोमार्धधारिणे ।

(Salutations to Lord Shiva, whose form is that of pure consciousness, who is a knower of the Vedas, who has divine vision, who is the cause of the attainment of liberation and who bears the crescent moon.)

नमामि यामिनीनाथलेखालङ्कृतकुन्तलाम्
भवानीं भवसन्तापनिर्वापणसुधानदीम् ॥

(I salute Bhavani, the consort of Lord Shiva, whose hair is adorned with the crescent moon and who is a river of ambrosia quelling the heat of transmigratory existence.)

In accordance with the instruction of My Paramaguru, My Guru studied, prior to Sannyasa, in the Sadvidya Sanjeevini Patashala in Sringeri. Owing to the good fortune of the distinguished people of Bengaluru, My Paramaguru started an excellent educational institution

at Bengaluru, prior to His returning to Sringeri after completing a tour. He named it Bharatiya Girvana Proudha Vidyabhivardhini Patashala and appointed Pandits versed in Vedanta and Poorva Mimamsa to teach students. When the question arose as to who should be sent there as the students of the first batch, He chose those students studying in Sringeri who were highly intelligent. My Guru was amongst those selected.

Prior to sending Him, My Paramaguru initiated Him into a Maha Mantra. There is a Mantra called Neelakanta Tryakshari. He initiated Him into it and told Him, "Both for You and for those whom You shall teach, this shall constitute the means of earning God's grace."

(Acharyal, in His preceding benedictory address, explained how a Guru keeps the competence of a disciple in mind and takes steps to produce knowledge in the disciple. He threw light on some of the modes by which a Guru initiates a disciple; in particular, He took up initiation by sight and initiation by the mind. He also illustrated how a Guru teaches by explaining the advice given by His Paramaguru to His Guru. In the present benedictory address, Acharyal further illustrates how a Guru initiates and instructs a disciple; He does so by considering His Paramaguru's initiation of and instructions to His Guru. Acharyal goes on to show, in the light of His Guru's conduct, how a disciple should carry out, to the last letter, the instructions of his Guru.)

My Guru's parents had no other children. Therefore, My Paramaguru sent them also to Bengaluru along with My Guru. Before My Guru departed, My Paramaguru advised Him, "You are studying but it must not be for the sake of money." What for, then? For the sake of acquiring knowledge. The prime knowledge is the realization of the Self. That should accrue to You. That is why I am sending You for the advanced study of the Shastras. To acquire Self-realization, hearing the Truth from a teacher, reflecting on what is taught and absorption of the mind on the Truth are very essential. However, for the hearing and reflection to bear the fruit, the mind must be pure. For the mind to become pure, it is necessary to carry out the scripturally ordained practices properly. The Poorva Mimamsa Shastra is highly helpful in enabling one to understand the scripturally ordained actions. Therefore, first study the Poorva Mimamsa Shastra well as a student at Bengaluru."

At that time, My Paramaguru also quoted a verse; that verse is well-known. It is:

विद्या विवादाय धनं मदाय शक्तिः परेषां परिपीडनाय ।
खलस्य साधोर्विपरीतमेतज्ज्ञानाय दानाय च रक्षणाय ॥

(A wicked person's learning leads to argumentation, wealth to arrogance and power to oppression of others. On the other hand, a good man's learning is for acquiring knowledge, wealth for performing charity and power for protecting people in difficulty.)

An object is capable of yielding different results. How? Depending on the competence of the person who possesses it, the results differ. If milk is offered to a snake, it ends up as poison. If cow-dung which too comes from a cow, like milk, is used as a fertilizer for a tree, it gets transformed by the tree, which draws nutrients from the soil, into delicious fruit. Thus, a cow-product yields either deadly venom or delicious fruit depending on whether it is taken in by a snake or a tree. Likewise:

विद्या विवादाय

Learning is for the sake of argumentation. Whose learning? A wicked one's. If a wicked man were to become a scholar, he would use his learning to constantly quarrel with others and would insist, "I am indeed great. My arguments remained un rebutted in the end. Your words are useless. I have won the debate." Such a person aims at picking holes in the views of others.

धनं मदाय

On becoming highly affluent, a wicked man sees the world as trivial; his ego increases and he gets blinded by arrogance. In his pride he, as it were, ever walks with his eyes closed.

शक्तिः परेषां परिपीडनाय

What is the nature of the Asuras? In the Chandogya Upanishad it is said that the Asuras once went to Brahma

and asked for advice. Brahma said, 'Da'. The Asuras said, "We have understood. You have given us advice keeping our nature in mind. If we encounter someone whom we find even slightly displeasing, we immediately raise our arms to strike him; this is our nature. We do not think of the final outcome of our act. We just use our might and inflict as much pain as possible. Later, we may have to regret what we have done and experience unhappiness. What, indeed, can be done? This is how we are. But this is not how we should be. So, by means of the abbreviation 'Da', You indicated, 'Dayadhvam or be compassionate.' This is the advice You have given us."

On becoming powerful, a wicked one inflicts injury. But what is the benefit? Finally, he has to experience remorse; his victim is unhappy because of injury. This is not how the position should be.

खलस्य साधोर्विपरीतमेतत्

Knowledge, wealth and power serve radically different ends when possessed by a noble one than they do when they are acquired by a wicked one.

ज्ञानाय

"What is the subject matter of the scripture? How should I conduct myself? When I engage in Anushthanam (religious observance), what are the preceding and subsequent procedures to be carried out? How should

I perform Anushthanam?" - the holy one learns the answers to such questions by studying the Shastra.

दानाय

If God has graced us with wealth, we can spend it on horse-races; alternatively we can go on several jaunts by air and exhaust our wealth. Bhagavatpada, however, has advised as follows:

Wealth will necessarily leave us some time or the other. If someone were to take it away, we lament, "Alas! The money has gone." On the other hand, if a poor student were to approach us for financial assistance and we were to give him some cash, we do not feel dejected. If charity is performed and that is how we part with money then we feel happy, the receiver achieves his end and further, we get Punyam (merit). While money has necessarily to be parted with and while, by performing an act of charity, we can gain happiness, do good to others and also obtain Punyam, we completely forget all this, go on hoarding wealth and then feel miserable on hearing that our money has been stolen. So, we should perform charity and thereby attain beatitude. This idea has been brought out by Bhagavatpada in a verse in Prabodha Sudhakara.

रक्षणाय

Power is meant to protect others. Assume that God has given us physical strength and that we know swimming.

If someone were to lose his footing and fall into the river and we were to observe this, we must help the man and bring him to the river bank. Suppose someone is inflicting injury on another. If we can, we must help the one in distress.

क्षतात्किल त्रायत इत्युदग्रः क्षत्रस्य शब्दो भुवनेषु रूढः

(‘Kshatat Trayate or he protects from injury’: it is in this sense that the word ‘Kshatriya’ is widely known in the world.)

Kalidasa says that the Kshatriya got his name because he is one who protects the person who is suffering; if a Kshatriya does not protect then he is unfit to have that appellation. Hence, power, be it physical, mental or any other, is meant for looking after another. Only if it is used for shielding someone, does it find fulfilment.

My Paramaguru felt that My Guru was going far away and so experienced the need to give the above parting advice. The distance between Sringeri and Bengaluru was regarded as large. Nowadays, young people do not indicate distances in miles; only old people like Me continue to do so. When asked how many miles away a place is, young persons say, “It is a 5-minute distance” or “it is a 10-minute distance” or “it is a 25-minute distance.” What do they mean by, “25-minute distance”? Having continuously travelled by a motor vehicle, they mean that if the journey be undertaken by a motor vehicle, it would require 25 minutes; they do not specify the time

needed for a journey by foot. Earlier, the distance from Sringeri to Bengaluru was considered very large and so My Paramaguru felt that My Guru was going far away; now it is just regarded as a “five or six-hour distance.” Having given initiation into a Mantra as also advice, My Paramaguru sent My Guru to Bengaluru.

My Guru came to the big city from the relatively very small town of Sringeri. He was hardly familiar with going to shops and purchasing things. However, there was a man named Rama Rayar in Bengaluru who developed great affection for My Guru. Why? My Guru was inward-turned, intent on good conduct and free from longing. Who would not feel happy on seeing such a person? Rama Rayar made all the arrangements for My Guru and so My Guru was not put to difficulty at Bengaluru.

In Sringeri, My Guru had the practice of sitting in the Vidya Shankara temple on every Pradosha day and performing the mental worship of God in its entirety, in accordance with the Shiva Manasa Puja Stotram. Where was He to go and sit for such worship in Bengaluru? He wanted a place that was a little far away from the Math and isolated. So, He went to the Gangadhareshwara temple in Gavipura. Now it is not isolated and is in the midst of a populated area. Earlier, if one were to proceed to that temple - when I was young I have been there - it was like leaving the city and going to a village. Seated there, My Guru used to do mental worship.

His Guru had told Him that the Poorva Mimamsa Shastra is studied to gain familiarity with scripturally ordained rituals and had asked Him to concentrate on His studies. Accordingly, He spent long hours studying Mimamsa books, such as Bhatta Deepika. He was taught by Vaidyanatha Shastry, a Mimamsaka Shiromani (crest jewel amongst those versed in Mimamsa); this was not a mere title, for he was indeed a pre-eminent Mimamsaka. It used to be said that studying under him was so delectable a treat that only a scholar could truly appreciate it.

विद्वानेव विजानाति विद्वज्जनपरिश्रमम्

(Only a scholar knows the labour of a scholar to achieve scholarliness.)

While My Guru was studying at Bengaluru, My Paramaguru completed His final tour and returned to Sringeri. My Paramaguru felt, “This body will not last. What I had to do, I have completed. So, I must now perform My final duty of nominating a successor to the Sharada Peetham.” He then thought of sending for My Guru. He called Srikanta Shastry and told him, “I want to accept a successor-disciple. What do you think?”

“Why rush things?”

“The thought came to Me and so I told you. Who do you think should be ordained?”

Shastry named a great Pandit. The Guru said, "Only Brahmacharis have been adorning the Peetham. Why are you referring to a householder? It is not known what worldly ties will attach themselves to him. Therefore, he is not suitable."

Shastry then mentioned the name of a highly intelligent person. The Guru said, "Instead of giving him Sannyasa it would be much better if the Peetham were left vacant."

"Why? He is well-born and is known to all of us."

"Be silent. His conduct itself is not good. No more names are necessary. Fetch Narasimha. "

"But He is far away."

"Do as I told you."

Krishna Shastry, who was there, came to Bengaluru and informed My Guru's parents about the command that had been given. My Guru was their only son. So their minds did not agree. "Krishna Shastry has said that this is the Guru's command. What is there greater than that?", they reasoned ; such was their noble nature. "We have nothing to say in the face of the Guru's command, though our minds are not fully reconciled. Do as you wish in accordance with the Guru's command", they said.

My Guru was a scholar in His own right; He had studied Mimamsa till the completion of a large portion of the

Bhatta Deepika. He was about 18 years of age and as such old enough to think and decide matters independently. Still He asked no questions. "My Guru has commanded Me to come to Sringeri. Hence I must go", was all that He felt. "What about My parents?", "What will be My future?" - no such thoughts arose in His mind.

In those days, it was necessary to cover part of the distance from Bengaluru to Sringeri by train and to then travel by bullock-cart. While My Guru and Krishna Shastry were going by cart, another cart approached in the opposite direction. A man, who was a Math employee, was travelling in it. On seeing Krishna Shastry, he began to shed tears. Krishna Shastry asked, "Why are you crying?"

"What shall I say?"

Krishna Shastry became frightened and asked, "What happened?"

"The... Guru... has left His mortal body."

Krishna Shastry felt as if the ground had vanished under him. His mind became blank about what he should do. He even asked My Guru what to do. Someone else in My Guru's place might have said, "What is the need now to go?"; yet another person might have had some such thought or the other. My Guru only felt, "My Guru has sent for Me. This man is taking Me. He is an elder and is following the Guru's command."

After My Guru reached Sringeri He was, in accordance with the scriptural injunctions and the Math tradition, given Sannyasa and made a pontiff. The Mysuru King of that time, Mummudi Krishnaraja Wodeyar, approved and gave the necessary help.

In that situation, My Guru did not think, "He in response to whose resolve I was brought is Himself not there." His contention was, "He had said that I be brought. To fulfil His command, I have come and taken Sannyasa." In being a pontiff, there is great strain; lot of dealings are there. If one were to think of all that, one would feel like running away. But My Guru never had such a thought. He Himself said, "At that time, there was ground for mental distraction. But I had none. I thought, 'Let us wait and see what will happen by the Guru's will'."

He subsequently arranged for the foremost of Nyaya scholars, Virupaksha Shastry, to take lessons for Him. He learned Advaita Vedanta in the mornings and the Nyaya Shastra in the afternoons. In three years itself, He completed His studies of both the Shastras. In the line of pontiffs of the Sringeri Math, there flowed a torrent of knowledge and austerity and He added to it. In this fashion, My Guru mastered the Shastras and adorned the Sharada Peetham.

When My Paramaguru was alive, numerous devotees were greatly devoted to Him. Seeing His learning, austerity and compassion, they wondered, "Will such a person ever

be seen again? Will the glory of the Peetham remain?" Many had such doubts. However, on observing My Guru, their doubts were set at rest and they felt, "What a scholar! What a person established in the Truth! What a master of His senses! What an inward-turned One!"

Kalidasa has said:

प्रवर्तितो दीप इव प्रदीपात्

If one lamp were to light another lamp, what would be the difference between the two lamps? Only the one who lighted the second lamp would know, "I lit it." To an observer, both would only appear to be lamps with no distinction discernible. Similar was the case of My Paramaguru and My Guru. By My Guru's spiritual power, His fame grew.

He then started on a tour. Srikanta Shastry, who arranged the tour, was himself doubtful and prayed, "He has not dwelt in the presence of His Guru for long. He has not been involved with many people. I am taking Him on this tour. O God, it is up to You to see that everything takes place properly." However, when people heard the discourses My Guru gave while He toured, noted His analysis of the import of Shastric passages, saw His worship of God and so on, they remembered the words of the Madhaviya Shankara Vijayam:

शंभोर्मूर्तिश्चरति भुवने शङ्कराचार्यरूपा

(The figure of Shiva, Dakshinamurthi, moves about in the world in the form of Shankaracharya.)

They reflected, "We were not there in Bhagavatpada's life-time. But He must have been like this"; so, they felt happy. You may ask Me, "Do You believe this?" I do.

When I was in Delhi (in 1982), My disciple (His Holiness Sri Bharathi Theertha Mahaswamigal, the present pontiff of the Sringeri Sharada Peetham) was with Me. He conducted Himself the way a disciple should. On the occasion of the Vidwat Sadas (assembly of scholars convened to analyze the import of scriptural passages), He showed that He was more scholarly than the most erudite of the scholars who came. Wherever I went, He followed Me in accordance with:

गच्छन्तमनुगच्छेत्

(When the Guru goes, the disciple must follow.)

When performing Puja He held the Lingam, wiped it, placed it in the Puja Mandapam and even rang the bell the way I did. I told Him, "What is this? You are doing things the way I do them. Should You not do them in a new way?" "It is sufficient if I do what You do", He replied. Dr. Mandana Mishra, a scholar and a distinguished person, told Me, "Till now, I have seen many people. We have read that Shankara's disciples went with Him. How was He? How were His disciples? I was only conjecturing. Now I have come to the conclusion that they must have been like this. It is so satisfying."

Recently, when I was in Madras (in the last quarter of 1986), several reporters came and asked various questions. First they asked Swamigal (His Holiness Sri Bharathi Theertha Mahaswamigal) questions. Thereafter, they came to Me. I replied them. They opined, “It would have been sufficient if we had met one of them. Even in their words there are no differences. We do not know if they had had a discussion.”

The reason for the similarity in the replies was His having been with Me for long; with His power of intelligence, He thought, “How should I behave for things to turn out right?” His discourses too are like that. Earlier, if He were seated next to Me and He spoke after Me, He used to utter the same verse as I had done and speak on similar lines. I became angry and said, “What is this, Swamigal! What is the need to seat You here to say whatever I say?”

“Should I not speak like that?”

“No. You must speak something new.”

“In that case I shall speak accordingly from tomorrow.”

He was prepared to do that too. What I observed is what I am saying.

Since My disciple can resemble Me, by considering the line of preceptors of the Sharada Peetham, it could be said in the case of My Guru:

शंभोर्मूर्तिश्चरति भुवने शङ्कराचार्यरूपा

(The figure of Shiva, Dakshinamurthi, moves about in the world in the form of Shankaracharya.)

My Guru graced everyone for a long time. I shall later speak about further details of His life.

हर नमः पार्वतीपतये हर हर महादेव ।
जानकीकान्तस्मरणं जय जय राम राम ॥



Guru

Part VI

(Benedictory address delivered, in Kannada, at Bengaluru on 5.9.1987)

तमांसि ध्वंसन्ते परिणमति भूयानुपशमः
सकृत्संवादेऽपि प्रथत इह चामुत्र च फलम् ।
अथ प्रत्यासङ्गः कमपि महिमानं वितनुते
प्रसन्नानां वाचः फलमपरिमेयं प्रसुवते ॥

(Ignorance is destroyed and great tranquility results. Even a single conversation yields fruit here and in the world attained after death. Close association bestows some form of greatness. The words of the pure ones give rise to limitless fruit.)

What is the greatness of a truly blessed one's life? About this, a poet has said:

तमांसि ध्वंसन्ते

By merely seeing a saint, the ignorance that is in our heart is destroyed. Further,

परिणमति भूयानुपशमः

Lack of peace constantly torments us like a flame. But the sight of a saint totally eradicates discomposure and generates great mental tranquillity.

सकृत्संवादेऽपि प्रथत इह चामुत्र च फलम् ।

Even if we converse with him on a single occasion, that conversation yields fruit. What kind of fruit?

प्रथत इह चामुत्र च फलम्

Magnificent benefit is obtained not only in this world but also in the hereafter. In the Bhagavata, it is said that even the words of a great man about his wanton misdemeanours serve as advice for us. Therefore, no matter what a saint may speak, it confers Punyam on us.

अथ प्रत्यासङ्गः कमपि महिमानं वितनुते

If we have the association of such a sage and dwell for long in his presence, greatness is produced in us.

प्रसन्नानां वाचः फलमपरिमेयं प्रसुवते ॥

If we live in the presence of such a saint, get the opportunity of hearing his words and we act according to them, then it is not possible at all to specify any limit to the beneficial result that accrues.

(In His first benedictory address, Acharyal explained that a Guru, who has realized the Supreme and is free from the bondage of transmigratory existence, is not only able to confer knowledge, and hence liberation,

on a disciple but is also able to make the disciple fit to be a Guru. In the succeeding benedictory addresses, Acharyal explained in detail the role played by a Guru and the manner in which a disciple should conduct himself. He illustrated His points by considering the Guru-disciple relationship between His Paramaguru and His Guru.

In this benedictory address, Acharyal concludes what He introduced in His first gracious discourse about a Guru making his disciple fit to be a Guru.)

I have seen in My Guru's case all that has been mentioned in the above verse. Many speakers have narrated well their experiences with Him. Some others have raised scriptural topics and reconciled the scriptural declarations with My Guru.

There is what is known as "Yathokti Alankara"; the description is literal with nothing added to enhance flavour. In an alternative mode of description, poetic fancy plays a role. For instance, it is said:

सौधग्राणि पुरस्यास्य स्पृशन्ति विधुमण्डलम्

(The tops of the mansions of this city touch the lunar orb.)

The houses of the city may be about 100 feet high. There is, however, no elegance in blandly stating, "The buildings are 100 feet tall." On the other hand, there is a poetic appeal in saying that the houses are so high that they reach up to the moon. Unlike this, I have given a

strictly literal account in the past few days of what I have learned from My Guru. Further, I spoke, of the beneficial results that were experienced because of Him. The reason for My speaking of the power that inhered in Him and of what I have experienced is to enable others to worship Him and obtain the same benefits.

In the verse that I cited, it is said that if one were to be in the presence of a great soul:

सकृत्संवादेऽपि प्रथत इह चामुत्र च फलम्

(Even a single conversation yields fruit here and in the hereafter.)

If one were to get an opportunity, even on a single day, to converse with such a person, his words would confer great fruit. Many used to go to My Guru to have their sufferings quelled. Sometimes, they failed to explicitly indicate their desire and left with the thought, "I was unable to put across my problem." However, at the time of their going home, they found that the grief that was in their mind had vanished. This was a matter of experience. In the case of many, My Guru gave the appropriate response even before a problem was posed. How did this happen? If asked, My Guru said, "Sharadambal graced thus." That is all that My Guru would say. His knowledge, qualities, such as mind control, establishment in the Self and compassion to beings serve as ideals. If we imbibe these, even to a little extent, our lives would become purposeful.

Ordinarily, if we undertake some task in deference to the command of a great person and subsequently there is reason to doubt whether the undertaking will be fulfilled or not, our mind becomes dejected. My Guru was desireless. Thus, when He was summoned by My Paramaguru and, on the way to Sringeri learned that His Guru had shed the body, the only thought He had was, "I have come in response to the command of My Guru. It is not for Me to think about what is to happen"; He Himself said so. His mind did not get distracted in the least. This was how His mind was even prior to His taking Sannyasa and becoming a pontiff.

Egoism is normally the prime enemy of man. An egoist goes to the extent of opining:

अहमध्यापये सकलप्रपञ्चम्

(I teach the entire world.)

Even though My Guru was a consummate scholar, He did not have the slightest egoism. However, when someone made a response imperative, He demonstrated His ability to respond appropriately.

जानन्नपि च मेधावी जडवल्लोक आचरेत्

(Though knowing, a wise man should conduct himself in the world like a dull-witted one.)

One may know much but one should not parade one's knowledge. This was His mental attitude. However, for

the good of others, He undertook tours; He taught many for the sake of imparting knowledge; He caused persons to get established in the knowledge of the Self and made their lives meaningful. The Lord has said:

चतुर्विधा भजन्ते मां जनाः सुकृतिनोऽर्जुन ।
आर्तो जिज्ञासुरर्थार्थी ज्ञानी च भरतर्षभ ॥

(O Arjuna! Four types of virtuous men worship Me - the distressed, the seeker of knowledge, the one desirous of wealth and the knower of the Truth, O Foremost of the Bharatas.)

All the four types of people approached Him and He eradicated the suffering of the distressed, imparted knowledge to the seeker of knowledge, graced the seeker of wealth with affluence and when it came to a knower of the Truth, He considered him as His own. There was no distinction at all between the knower and Himself, as far as He was concerned. How?

त्वयि मयि चान्यत्रैको विष्णुः

(The one Vishnu is in you, me and elsewhere.)

He had such a distinction-free disposition. For a long time, He served Sharadambal in the Math and obtained satiation. He then thought that His attainment of the realization of the Self would become purposeful if He shed the load of pontifical activities as, otherwise, there would be a lot of distractions. So, He resolved to give

Sannyasa to a disciple and to train him. He accordingly informed Srikanta Shastry. Impelled by God, Srikanta Shastry took Me to Sringeri.

In the beginning, My Guru taught Me a hymn on Lord Shiva which commences with:

आशावशादष्टदिगन्तराले देशान्तरभ्रान्तमशान्तबुद्धिम् ।

He got Me to memorize it. Later He gave Me Sannyasa. At that time, He told Srikanta Shastry, "Hereafter I will not sit in a palanquin and will not come for functions." Shastry wondered, "What is all this? What is to be done now?" My Guru's point was, "I have chosen a Swamigal. So, why should I come for any function?"

Shastry said, "This decision is not acceptable to good people. I know of Your extreme dispassion. However, in accordance with the worldly custom followed in the Math, You must come in a palanquin, donning royal robes, along with Your disciple." My Guru then said, "Oh! So, in accordance with the worldly custom, I have to come, is it? All right." I learned this directly from My Guru; Srikanta Shastry also said so. What indeed was the extent of His dispassion! He found pontifical functions such a burden that He readily averred, "I have prepared one to handle the Math activities", though at that time He had only given Me Sannyasa and not yet trained Me.

On the occasion of enquiry into the import of Shastraic passages during the annual Vidwat Sadas, if someone

spoke something new, He used to be immensely pleased. There is a Nyaya text called Shatakoti. On an occasion, there was an enquiry into the import of some of its passages. A logical fallacy discussed in the text is called Satpratipaksha. (If, in an inference, that which is established on some ground can be negated on another ground then the first reason is subject to the defect of Satpratipaksha. For instance, it may be said, "Sound is eternal because it is audible." The eternality of sound is negated by the inference, "Sound is perishable because it is a product, like a jar." Here the first ground of audibility is defective; the fault is Satpratipaksha.)

In the text, there is reference to Satpratipaksha in terms of Abhava (non-existence) and Bheda (difference). One form of Satpratipaksha is Bheda Ghatita or that which stems from difference. There is a definition which involves both Abhava (non-existence) and Bheda (difference). The following incident pertains to it.

My Guru, in the early stages, used to make Me memorize what I was to say in the assembly to enquire into the import of Shastraic passages. He felt great joy even if I just spoke what I had practised to say. During My talk based on Shatakoti, I once finished stating all the refinements relating to the definition involving Abhava. However, one defect occurs in it. So, I deeply thought over the matter and incorporated Bheda into the definition. When I began speaking thus, My Guru's face became small. Presumably, He was wondering what was

going to be said by Me, off the beaten track. I, however, was confident that I was expounding correctly. As I proceeded, My Guru's face broke into a delightful smile and soon He was all smiles and His eyes sparkled with joy. He became very happy indeed.

On returning after the assembly was over, He asked Me, "Who told You about this new refinement?" "No one told Me. Keeping what Your Holiness had told Me in mind, I conjectured further and involved both Abhava and Bheda", I replied. To this He said, "This had been mentioned by Virupaksha Shastry. However, it did not come to My mind. I am very happy that You have said it." In fact, that day, He was so pleased that He did not even allow Me to go from His presence. Even if He saw an iota of knowledge in another, He experienced supreme happiness.

A characteristic of My Guru was that He recognized that no matter how we conduct ourselves, some right and wrong events will occur around us. I was then a boy and used to uninhibitedly express Myself. He used to advise Me, "You must not remark thus." Yet, the situation was such that it was difficult to ignore. Mantreshwara Sharma told My Guru, "Because of Your compassion You have suffered a great deal. What about Your disciple?" To this My Guru replied, "He is not like Me. He is ever carefree and happy." It was so.

I used to climb trees and used to swim and enjoy Myself. My swimming, however, got Him worried and if I was

slow in coming out of the water in response to His call, He used to think, "Oh! What will happen?" I have been in danger too. But, at that age, it was not possible for Me to avoid swimming in an uninhibited manner even in rough waters; on seeing the river, I could not resist jumping in. Any repentance was only after a swim. Particularly, on noting the tight situations I had got into, My Guru used to say, "Do not go into the river." Obediently, I used to respond, "Yes, Mahaswami; I shall do as You say." Yet, on seeing water, I forgot all this. If asked, "Why did You swim?", I, who did not know how to tell a lie, used to respond, "I did not do anything in the water that would have been the cause of fear." "There is no need for either fear or a swim", He used to say.

Nowadays I do not go for a swim and, in fact, when I see someone swimming uninhibitedly, I even remark, "Why are you unjustifiably going into the water?" When young, I was different. My Guru brought Me up with such great affection that He, who was established in the Self, used to worry about any danger I might face in the river.

When many difficulties occurred in the Math, I said, "Why stay in the Math at all?" He used to humorously reply, "It is Your fate that You have to stay." When I responded, "But there is difficulty in doing so", He said, "If You run away from problems, where is the role of discrimination? By experiencing a tight situation, let the action of the past birth responsible for it yield fruit and exhaust itself.

One is truly a man only if he accomplishes the task he has undertaken even though he may have to experience problems to achieve his end. If You run away from difficulties, it would not be praiseworthy.”

प्रारभ्यते न खलु विघ्नभयेन नीचैः
 प्रारभ्य विघ्नविहता विरमन्ति मध्याः ।
 विघ्नैः पुनः पुनः प्रतिहन्यमानाः
 प्रारब्धमुत्तमजना न परित्यजन्ति ॥

(Fearing obstacles, lowly ones do not begin what must be done. Middling ones start what must be done but give up when thwarted by difficulties. The best men, though repeatedly impeded by adverse circumstances, do not give up what they have undertaken.)

“It is one thing not to take up a task. Now, the task is on hand. Let happiness or unhappiness be there; it must be accomplished,” He continued.

He brought Me up with great involvement. During His lifetime, in His loving care, I indulged in frolic. Now, however, I have given up such activity and I do not do things which people can make fun of.

How was His mind? This is revealed by His following advice. When staying in Narasimha Vanam in Sringeri, I used to go every evening to behold Sharadambal and used to remain there for some time. On My return, My Guru once asked, “You have crossed the river and come. What thought arose in Your mind?”

“What thought?”, I wondered and replied, “There were various objects which I saw.”

“What was new?”

“Nothing. I saw what was visible.”

“Must You see whatever is in the range of Your vision?”

“If the eyes be kept closed to avoid seeing things then it is not possible to walk.”

“You must see and yet not see.”

“How is that possible?”

To this, He said, “This is how it should be:

आत्माम्मोधेस्तरङ्गोऽस्म्यहमिति गमने

(When walking, the contemplation must be, ‘I am a wave in the ocean that is the Self.’)

When we get up from a seated position and start walking, the feeling should not be, ‘I am walking and going somewhere.’ In the big ocean - the Self - a wave has arisen. That wave is moving forward. There is no difference between the wave and the ocean. When walking, one should contemplate that one is a wave in the ocean of the Self; ‘I am a wave in the ocean of bliss’.”

I was surprised at His advice. He went on, “At all times - even when You talk to someone - repeat this idea in the mind.” With practice, even when I talked, this repetition went on; this I know from direct experience.

What should be the thought when one is seated? He advised:

... भावयन् आसनस्थः

संवित्सूत्रानुविद्धो मणिरहमिति वाऽस्मि

(Contemplating when seated, "I am a gem strung on the string of consciousness.")

In the thread of knowledge, a gem has been strung. The gem cannot be removed; the thread is made of unbreakable consciousness. I am that gem. Contemplation must be done in this manner.

... इन्द्रियार्थप्रतीतौ

द्रष्टाऽस्म्यात्मावलोकादिति

Whenever some object is seen, the stress should not be on the perception of the object. One must feel, "Aha! Consciousness per se is devoid of objects. However, that consciousness has now, as it were, got associated with objects. The fullness of the Self has increased. On receiving a blow, we become markedly aware of the body. In the same way, there is particular manifestation of the Self when objects are seen. Even normally, we have awareness of the body but this awareness is enhanced when we are beaten. In the same way, though consciousness is ever manifest, special perception of the Self occurs when objects are seen."

शयनविधौ मग्न आनन्दसिन्धौ

When lying down one must contemplate, "I am now immersed in an ocean of bliss" and this feeling must be retained; it is very good. Whoever wants can test the difference between simply lying down and going to sleep and sleeping after voluntarily eradicating thoughts from the mind. While lying down, one should generate a feeling of bliss and continue to retain it till sleep overtakes one. The great joy this approach to sleep will give will become clear once it is experienced for a few days.

अन्तर्निष्ठो मुमुक्षुः स खलु तनुभृतां यो नयत्येवमायुः ॥

He who spends his life in this fashion is, amongst people, the firmly inward-turned one desirous of liberation. Therefore, when walking, sitting, standing and even when lying down, this is how we must conduct our life. This is the advice My Guru gave Me.

My Paramaguru had great faith in reading Atma Vidya Vilasam on every Pradosha day. My Guru too had the practice. I also used to do so though now I do not; right now, however, I feel that I must again commence the practice of reading Atma Vidya Vilasam on every Pradosha day. Contemplation of the verses of that poem gives, to a great extent, the experience of the Self. During My Guru's lifetime, if I failed to read Atma Vidya Vilasam on some day, He used to say, "Read." Once, He asked Me to give the meaning of:

जनविपरीतक्रमतो बुद्ध्या प्रविलाप्य पञ्चभूतानि ।
परिशिष्टमात्मतत्त्वं पश्यन्नास्ते मुनिः शान्तः ॥

(After dissolving, by the intellect, the five elements (earth, water, fire, air and Akasha) in an order which is the reverse of that of their origination, the sage remains calm, beholding the Self, which is the residue.)

प्रविलाप्य पञ्चभूतानि

This means “having dissolved the five elements.” Sugar, which is a modification of the element “earth”, dissolves in the element “water”, but stone, mud, etc., which, like sugar, are modifications of earth, do not so dissolve. This is all the meaning that is superficially discernible. Recognizing this, My Guru Himself explained the import. He quoted the following verse of Bhagavatpada’s Brahmanuchintanam:

पृथिव्यप्सु पयो वह्नौ वह्निर्वायौ नभस्यसौ ।
नभोऽप्यव्याकृते तच्च शुद्धे शुद्धोऽस्म्यहं हरिः ॥

(Earth is to be dissolved in water, water in fire, fire in air and this air in Akasha. Even this space has to be merged in the unmanifest cause of the five elements and that unmanifest must be merged in the pure Absolute. I am that pure Absolute, the Dissolver of all.)

Mud does not dissolve in water. But this is not the dissolution that is spoken of. What else? In the reverse

order of the origination of the five elements of the universe, an effect merges into its cause; that cause, in its turn, merges into its cause. Earth has no existence apart from its cause, water. This is the dissolution of earth in water that is spoken of in the Brahmanuchintanam verse and implicitly indicated in the Atma Vidya Vilasam verse. Water, in its turn, has no existence apart from its cause, fire. This is the dissolution of water in fire. Finally, only the Self, which is the ultimate cause, is what remains as the residue of the dissolution process. It is this contemplation on the Self that is referred to in the words:

परिशिष्टमात्मतत्त्वम्

What is the consequence of such contemplation? It is said, in Brahmanuchintanam:

क्षणं ब्रह्माहमस्मीति यः कुर्यादात्मचिन्तनम् ।
तन्महापातकं हन्ति तमः सूर्योदयो यथा ॥

(If even for an instant, a man thinks of his Self as, “I am Brahman”, that thought destroys his greatest sin, just as sunrise dispels darkness.)

He advised Me, “Contemplate in the fashion indicated in the Atma Vidya Vilasam verse.” By His explanation, He created interest in it. When the Shastra is taught, He said, one way is to explain a text line by line. Another is to expound the lines along with one’s experience. It was worth seeing this in His teaching; it gave great joy.

Even ordinary Sannyasis say, "When I die, make a Samadhi (tomb) for me. Build a temple there, perform worship, feed all who come and give discourses about me." Saying so is commonplace even for one who is not a pontiff. My Guru said that a person who came to My Paramaguru to learn was very dispassionate. Someone asked that man, "Why should you not take Sannyasa?" The man replied, "No, Sannyasa must not be taken; there is no elegance in it. Till the time of taking Sannyasa, there is dispassion. On taking Sannyasa, it goes away. So long as it is not taken, the feeling, 'Oh! I have not yet taken Sannyasa', is there. After taking it, the feeling, 'Is this all there to Sannyasa? Let me become a householder again', crops up." The dispassion of many Sannyasis may be open to doubt but how was My Guru?

When I was young, My Guru told Ramachandra Shastry on several occasions, "Ramachandra, when I leave the body let what is done in Kashi be done to it. In Kashi, there is a practice of covering a dead body with a cloth and throwing it into the water. Do like that with My body; then it shall become the food of some creature. There is no need to do anything else." Ramachandra Shastry used to wonder, "What is this that the Guru has said." My Guru was devoid of pride of the form, "I am a pontiff. These things must be done for Me." What a contrast between Him and Sannyasis who want memorials built for them after their death!

In the Vivekachoodamani, it is said that though we tie a bell around the neck of a cow and decorate the

animal, the cow does not care whether the bell or the decorations remain or not. It is the person who tied the bell who is keen that it should not fall off. Similarly, My Guru was unconcerned with His body. My Guru felt, 'We have obtained a human birth, familiarity with the Shastra and the association of a sage. God has given us the power to think. We must therefore strive to attain knowledge. What is the use of involving oneself with mundane matters?'

My Guru did not go even once to the Math vault and behold the precious objects there. Still, Srikanta Shastry prepared a hand-written book listing the contents of the vault; it is there even now. If asked about the items of the vault, My Guru used to say, "It is all listed in the book."

"Will You see the contents of the vault?"

"I should not get involved in all that."

"Why?"

"What is the point in seeing the contents? Officials are there and they will attend to them."

He was so very dispassionate. Dispassion is said to be extreme, middling and mild. What is mild dispassion? When some problem crops up, one temporarily feels, "What is the need for this world?" Extreme dispassion is that in which, owing to the company of a sage, one feels, "This world must be renounced this very instant."

If a person had fire on his head, he would rush to put it out. That is the type of dispassion that must be there. My Guru's dispassion was such.

What prayer should be made in the presence of such a Guru. Bhagavatpada has said:

योगक्षेमधुरंधरस्य सकलःश्रेयःप्रदोद्योगिनो
 दृष्टादृष्टमतोपदेशकृतिनो बाह्यान्तरव्यापिनः ।
 सर्वज्ञस्य दयाकरस्य भवतः किं वेदितव्यं मया
 शंभो त्वं परमान्तरङ्ग इति मे चित्ते स्मराम्यन्वहम् ॥

(O Shambhu! What is there that I should make known to You, who are intent on giving what one lacks and preserving what one has, who are engaged in conferring all higher good, who give instructions about means to seen and unseen ends, who are all pervading, inside and outside, who are all-knowing and who are compassionate? I ever think in my mind, "You are my innermost Self.")

In this way, if we go to a Guru, rather than ask, "This must happen", "That must happen", it is sufficient to say, "If the thought that I exist comes to your mind, then I shall be uplifted." Nothing else is necessary. Yet, in the case of many people,

लब्ध्वाऽपि कामधेनुं ते लाङ्गले विनियुञ्जते

(Though having obtained a Kamadhenu (a divine cow that confers all that is desired), they use it for ploughing.)

On obtaining a Kamadhenu, a man felt, "If it is coupled to a plough, the fields can be ploughed. Thereafter, seeds can be sown." Another rightly pointed out, "What is the necessity for all this? It is sufficient if you sit in front of the Kamadhenu and ask what you wish; your desire shall be fulfilled. The one who obtained the Kamadhenu said, "I did not know this."

It is not necessary to ask the Guru for anything. If his glance falls on us it is sufficient. If he were to bless, "Let this man become a noble one", it is enough; we will obtain good results.

For the past seven days, an occasion was created to remember the life of My Guru, His qualities and the beneficial results obtained from Him and to think of what there is for us to learn from His life. This is a task pleasing to God. May My Guru's grace be on all. May all be the recipients of beatitude - praying thus to Him, I conclude My address.

हर नमः पार्वतीपतये हर हर महादेव ।
जानकीकान्तस्मरणं जय जय राम राम ॥



पादप्रभाविनिर्धूताविद्यान्धतमसाय ते ।
यतये चितिनिर्विष्टचित्तायास्तु नमो मम ॥

(My obeisance to the ascetic whose mind is absorbed in consciousness and the lustre of whose feet dispels the blinding darkness of ignorance.)

श्रीमतां देशिकेन्द्राणां पादपद्मे नमाम्यहम् ।
मन्दोऽपि वन्दनाद्येषां विन्देत गुरुतुल्यताम् ॥

(I prostrate before the pair of lotus feet of the glorious, foremost of Gurus by paying obeisance to which even a dullard becomes akin to the Guru.)

अविद्याध्वान्तानां दिनमणिरनन्तान्तरगतो
विषीदद्विद्धृत्कुमुदवनराकाहिमकरः ।
पराध्वामित्राणां विषयगहनानां हुतवहो
गुरुस्तेजोरूपो जयति जनतानन्दथुरयम् ॥

(To those in the darkness of ignorance, He is the sun that is infinite and also within. To the multitude of drooping lilies that are the hearts of scholars, He is the full moon. To those trapped in the forest of sense objects and without a friend in the path to the Supreme, He is the flaming torch that lights the way. Victorious is the luminous Guru who confers joy on all.)

These are some of the verses composed by Acharyal on His Guru. They have been culled from His letters to His Guru, penned in the late 1930s.

- Translator

6

Greatness of Shankara's Life and Teachings

(This benedictory discourse was delivered by Acharyal, in Kannada, at Mysuru on 15.4.1988. The venue was Abhinava Shankaralaya and the duration of the holy talk was 50 minutes. The twelfth birth centenary of Bhagavatpada was then being celebrated in the different parts of country, with Acharyal as the "Paramadhyaksha" or chief patron.

Acharyal had tremendous admiration for Bhagavatpada. Presumably, His deep feelings of regard were stirred when He gave this divine discourse. Thus, about half an hour after the completion of the holy talk, He initiated a long conversation with me about Bhagavatpada though He was about to commence His evening Anushtanam when I went to His divine presence to offer prostrations. He spoke for over 45 minutes; tears of joy welled up in His eyes and flowed down His cheeks on two occasions.

Acharyal elaborated on some of the points that He had made in His benedictory address and also provided

much additional information and incisive analysis. What He said was, as always, invaluable, absorbing, and impossible to forget. In view of the intimate relationship between Acharyal's public discourse and private talk on the greatness of Bhagavatpada's life and teachings, what has been provided in the sequel is the result of the merger of the two holy talks. Had the contents of Acharyal's private talk been included in brackets in the appropriate places of the translation of the public discourse, the resultant text would have been cluttered with brackets. As for omission of what Acharyal said in private about Bhagavatpada, that would have been quite unjustifiable.

- **Translator)**

Greatness of Shankara's Life and Teachings

(Benedictory address delivered, in Kannada, at Mysuru on 15.4.1988)

विशुद्धज्ञानदेहाय त्रिवेदी दिव्यचक्षुषे
श्रेयःप्राप्तिनिमित्ताय नमः सोमार्धधारिणे ।

(Obeisance to Lord Shiva, who has a body constituted by pure consciousness, is conversant with the Veda, possesses a divine eye, bears the crescent moon and is the means to attain liberation.)

नमामि यामिनीनाथलेखालङ्कृतकुन्तलाम्
भवानीं भवसन्तापनिर्वापणसुधानदीम् ॥

(I pay obeisance to the consort of Lord Shiva, whose tresses are decorated with the crescent moon and who is a river of nectar that removes the intense heat of transmigratory existence.)

In our holy land, Bharat, persons in the Government, Advaitic Sannyasis, devotees and people interested in the Shastras have been celebrating, since the start of the current year, the twelfth centenary of the advent of Bhagavatpada, the preceptor. Historically, 1200 - 1300

years have passed since Bhagavatpada was born. If, following deliberation as on other issues, a consensus had arisen about the year of Bhagavatpada's advent, be it 1200 years ago or earlier or later, there would have been no occasion for dispute. However, be that as it may, it is intensely gratifying that the twelfth birth centenary of that holy one is being celebrated.

Historians have so far not determined the year of Buddha's Nirvana with exactitude and certainty. Yet, in 1956, the 2500th anniversary of Buddha's Nirvana was commemorated, in various parts of the globe. Research has not established that Jesus Christ was born precisely in 1 A.D., on December 25. Nevertheless, the world over, Christmas is observed on December 25 and the Christian era commences from 1 A.D. Thus, there are precedents for the anniversaries of events relating to personages being celebrated even in the absence of historical definiteness about the dates of those occurrences. So, the mere reason that 788 A.D. may actually not be the year of Bhagavatpada's advent cannot debar or render censurable the current twelfth birth centenary celebrations. Further, the present celebrations provide us a special opportunity to think of and express our gratitude to Bhagavatpada, who has done so very much good to all.

What was the state of affairs in India when Bhagavatpada incarnated? What was the attitude that had developed in the minds of the people? There was discord on

metaphysical and Dharmic matters; each deemed his view to be paramount. Bhagavatpada, however, emphasized a sameness in all.

Nowadays, people create a hullabaloo about uniformity, without proper consideration of its nature and scope. They want all the sameness that is favourable to themselves but reject that uniformity which is disadvantageous. For instance, a wealthy young man who wishes to marry a girl of another caste but faces parental opposition is likely to readily advocate "sameness" of people, this uniformity being characterized by the absence of caste distinctions. On the other hand, he would be against "sameness", marked by uniformity in economic status. The populist ideas of uniformity are directly or indirectly incompatible with the dissimilarities between people. Such is not the right import of "sameness". It is a truism that there are and shall be differences between individuals; their natures are disparate. What Bhagavatpada visualized was sameness that is compatible with human variety.

It has been said :

नाट्यं भिन्नरुचेर्जनस्य बहुधाप्येकं समाराधनम्

(A dance drama is a unitary means of delighting people with different preferences.)

People go to a dance hall for entertainment. But they have dissimilar tastes. One feels happy on watching a

performer enact the part of Karna; another revels in the portrayal of Bhishma. The former is disposed to the Veera Rasa or sentiment of valour, while the latter inclines to the Shanta Rasa or the sentiment of tranquillity. Though such is the case, are their joys disparate? No, here there is sameness, notwithstanding the obvious differences between the persons.

Dispensing with all differences could lead to whimsical dressing and functioning by individuals. There are norms relating to the attires of a policeman, a soldier, an office-goer and a Purohit. When the norms are observed, there is an elegance. On the other hand, if an official were to go to his office with a Panchakaccha Dhoti for a lower garment, a Brahmavastram for an upper garment and with a bundle of Durbha grass in his hand, people at his place of work would wonder where they should send him, to a lunatic asylum or to where religious rites are to be conducted. Alternatively, if a Purohit were to put on trousers, a shirt and a cap and enter a house to perform rites, the inmates would not know where to seat him. Such confusion must not occur. Dealings can proceed smoothly only if there be clear-cut rules and regulations in the world. Therefore, great diversity is certainly there. It is in the midst of all this diversity that unity is to be discerned.

True sameness, which has been enunciated by the scriptures and by Bhagavatpada, lies in the way a person conducts himself in the world, the way he mentally reacts

to the world and in his discernment. If a man uniformly behaves in an appropriate manner in different situations and with different people then it can be said that there is a sameness in his conduct. What is appropriate is, however, far from uniform. Thus, the man in question would obey his parents but would instruct his students. While living as a householder, he would attend to the needs of his wife and children but would not continue to do so after becoming a Sannyasi.

A man invited several people for lunch. One of his guests was a well-built adult who was a voracious eater. Another was a child with a meagre requirement of food. A guest loved sweets, while another disliked them. The host thought, "I should not discriminate between my guests. So, I should serve every one of them the same quantity of food." As a consequence, by the end of the meal, the voracious eater was left wondering, "Why was I invited and then made to go hungry?" The child, who had been taught by his parents not to waste food, ended up with a bloated abdomen and a severe stomachache. The man who disliked sweets grumbled, "Why were sweets served to me, not once but thrice, in spite of my indicating that I did not want them?" None of the guests was happy.

On the other hand, if the host had served his guests in accordance with their requirements and tastes, the picture would have been vastly different. His course of action would have been uniform in a laudable sense, for

it would have ensured that the hunger and the taste of each and every one of the guests were appeased. All would have left happy.

The Shastras instruct a person to consistently adhere to his Dharma and to eschew Adharma. For instance, Lord Krishna tells Arjuna,

स्वधर्ममपि चावेक्ष्य न विकम्पितुमर्हसि ।
धर्म्याद्धि युद्धाच्छ्रेयोऽन्यत्क्षत्रियस्य न विद्यते ॥

(Even considering your own duty, you should not waver, for there is nothing better for a Kshatriya than a righteous war.)

स्वे स्वे कर्मण्यभिरतः संसिद्धिं लभते नरः ।

(Being intent upon his own duty, man attains perfection.)

Certainly, there is a uniformity in the conduct of a person who consistently abstains from what he ought not to do and does what he should, with respect to different persons and in different circumstances. A person with such sameness in behaviour is like the dance drama that uniformly entertains the different members of the audience and like a host who uniformly satisfies the appetite and tongue of all his guests.

Commonly, a person's mind is full of likes and dislikes; unchecked attachment gives rise to intense desire, while anger manifests when desire is impeded. Being swayed by attachment and aversion, people stray to the path

of Adharma. Blinded by attachment for Duryodhana, Dhritarashtra did not pay heed to the beneficial advices of Vidura. Aversion led Duryodhana to make an attempt on Bhima's life even when the two were but lads. Thus, likes and dislikes are impediments to true sameness in conduct.

A man engaged in activity cannot avoid pleasure and pain. Persons, objects or even natural situations can serve as their causes. For instance, even when no one disturbs a man, he feels discomfort on a very hot day but experiences pleasure when a cool, gentle breeze blows. Attachment and aversion towards the persons, things or events responsible for pleasure and pain are common. Unlike pleasure and pain, these are avoidable. If a person gets rid of likes and dislikes, a sameness characterizes his mental responses to the world. After all, he does not feel attachment to one who is friendly and aversion towards one who is hostile. Same-sightedness, marked by absence of likes and dislikes, is highly eulogised in the Gita. For example, Lord Krishna says:

ज्ञेयः स नित्यसंन्यासी यो न द्वेष्टि न कांक्षति ।

(He who does not hate and does not crave should be known as a man of constant renunciation.)

Just as true sameness in conduct is not antithetical to the diversity in the world, sameness in mental reactions is not opposed to the experience of pleasure and pain due to external stimuli. When a person is free from attachment and aversion, he consistently conducts

himself in a righteous manner; he has sameness in conduct. Uniformity in conduct is an important step towards developing equanimity of vision. Thus, sameness in mental reactions and sameness in conduct are linked.

A gold bangle and a gold necklace are regarded as different. However, the bangle and the necklace have no existence apart from the single substance, gold. In semi-darkness, a person may mistake a rope to be a snake, while another may misapprehend it as a stick. It is the single entity, the rope, that appears as a snake and as a stick. Likewise, this diverse world has no existence apart from the Supreme Brahman; it is Brahman that appears, on account of Maya, as the cosmos and its inhabitants. The wise man sees Brahman everywhere; there is thus a sameness in his discernment of apparently diverse persons and objects.

सर्वभूतस्थमात्मानं सर्वभूतानि चात्मनि ।
ईक्षते योगयुक्तात्मा सर्वत्र समदर्शनः ॥

(He, whose mind is absorbed in the Self through Yoga and who has the vision of sameness everywhere, sees his Self in everything, and everything in his Self.)

यो मां पश्यति सर्वत्र सर्वं च मयि पश्यति ।
तस्याहं न प्रणश्यामि स च मे न प्रणश्यति ॥

(He who sees Me in everything, and sees everything in Me - I do not go out of his vision and he is never lost to My vision.)

It is only such uniformity of vision that cuts the very root of likes and dislikes. Attenuation of attachment and aversion is important for knowledge of the Truth to dawn. Thus, sameness in discernment, sameness in mental reactions and sameness in conduct form a unit.

In the time of Bhagavatpada, there were several creeds. There were the Vaishnavites, the Shaktas, the Shaivas, the Bhairavas and the Kapalikas. Apart from these, there were the Charvakas who had the enjoyment of worldly pleasures as their sole aim in life.

अयं लोको नास्ति पर इति मानी

(Thinking there is only this world that is experienced and none other that is attained after death.)

They denied the existence of the hereafter, and, thereby, also denied the existence of Gods, such as Shiva and Vishnu and rejected the authority of the Veda, Smritis, Itihasas and the Puranas. They professed and practised the dictum,

ऋणं कृत्वा घृतं पिबेत् ।

(Incur debt and drink ghee.)

They felt, 'We should enjoy ourselves to the maximum extent possible. If we are wealthy, we can have much. Therefore, wealth is very important in life and should be sought. Even if we are not too well off, we can enjoy ourselves by procuring things using the money obtained

from others. If we go and steal, we might get caught and land in severe trouble. People will not give us things on their own. So, let us borrow money and then use it to buy things for ourselves. Alternatively, we can borrow things too. So long as we keep postponing the repayment, we can manage. Later on, we may get into some trouble with the persons from whom we have borrowed but we can do something or the other to evade them. We could even go away to some other places.

So long as we do not get caught and so long as we can keep fooling our debtors, there is no cause for concern. We can enjoy ourselves up to the hilt. In any case, once death overtakes us, there is no problem, for, after death, there is nothing, no virtue or vice. We do not have to suffer in any future birth. This was the kind of thinking the Charvakas had. In a nutshell, their aim was to enjoy, to the maximum extent possible, worldly pleasures and comforts and to treat the acquisition of wealth as something very important. The view they propagated was in keeping with their mental tendencies.

Apart from the Charvakas, there were those who accepted life after death and held that liberation consisted in dwelling in Vaikunta. Another group averred that abiding in Kailasa was liberation. There was a set that postulated the existence of an individual soul but said that liberation comprised in eternal ascent and not in dwelling in any world, such as Kailasa. Yet another group opined that liberation is a state of total void.

Each of the several groups held that only its own view was correct.

It was in this prevailing atmosphere that Bhagavatpada incarnated among the people. Reform is best effected by keeping in mind the ways of the world. Bhagavatpada graced people engaged in austerities, Yogis, seekers of knowledge and those desirous of liberation. But He did not stop with that. He realised that He had the responsibility to set an example for the people by His life. Rama has made such a great impact on us by His having led a life totally wedded to righteousness. As with the life of Rama, that of Bhagavatpada serves as an ideal for mankind.

The Veda enjoins:

मातृदेवो भव ।

(Venerate the mother as a god.)

A mother puts up with so much of difficulty in begetting and raising a child. She bestows all her love on her offspring. Thus, a person is deeply indebted to his mother. If he does not conduct himself properly towards her, he is guilty of the unpardonable sin of ingratitude. Bhagavatpada implemented the Vedic injunction that one should venerate the mother as a god in letter and spirit.

Bhagavatpada's father Shivaguru passed away before he could perform his divine son's Upanayanam. His mother,

Aryamba, arranged for Bhagavatpada's thread ceremony to be performed by a relative, after the impurity period was over. Bhagavatpada was then five years of age. He left for the house of a preceptor, as is enjoined in the scriptures and very quickly learned the scriptures there. He completed His studies and returned from His teacher's home in His seventh year. Thereafter, He served His mother with great sincerity.

One day, as Aryamba was going to the river for a bath, she was unable to withstand the heat of the scorching sun and fainted. Finding that His mother did not return on time, Bhagavatpada searched for her. On seeing her unconscious, He revived her by sprinkling water on her and brought her home. The river was at some distance from His house. Out of love for Aryamba, Bhagavatpada felt that she should not have to endure the strain of covering that distance every day. So, He went to the river and prayed to it, treating it as God. He beseeched the river to change course and flow near His home. Could the divine boy's sincere prayer go unanswered? The next morning, Aryamba found that she just had to step out of her house to bathe in the flowing waters.

Though Bhagavatpada attended to all the needs of His mother without any laxity, in His heart of hearts, He desired to renounce the world. He was dispassionate to the core. One day, some sages came to His house. In response to His mother's query, a sage predicted that Bhagavatpada would have only a short life. This made

Aryamba feel upset. However, Bhagavatpada gradually consoled her and took this opportunity to point out that parting in a family was inevitable and added that there is not even an iota of pleasure in worldly life. He said that He would like to transcend worldly life and death by taking to Sannyasa. On hearing these words of Bhagavatpada, Aryamba protested. She said, "You are my only son. How can I bear separation from You? I want You to get married." Bhagavatpada pacified His mother and let the matter rest there.

He thought to Himself, "My mind is not inclined towards marriage. Yet, I cannot disregard My mother and act against her wishes. So, I should get her consent to realize My desire. Even if I am not able to get it whole-heartedly, I should at least get it in a measure. I can hope only for that much." One day, when He was eight years old, He went to the river to bathe. The river was in floods. As He was bathing, a crocodile caught His leg. Bhagavatpada shouted out.

On hearing His words, Aryamba came to the river and wailed. "When my husband was alive, he was my refuge. After him, it is now my son. Even that son of mine is now caught by a crocodile and is about to perish. O, God, why is this?" She began to sob. Bhagavatpada said, "O, Mother, if I have your permission to renounce everything in the world, this crocodile will release Me. If you permit Me, I will take to Sannyasa." Bhagavatpada chose this kind of appeal to get her permission.

On hearing His words, Aryamba who was stricken with trepidation and was ready to do anything to save her son's life, granted him permission. At once, Bhagavatpada mentally took to asceticism.

Thereafter, technically, He was free to go and take formal Sannyasa. However, He felt that He should console His mother. He told her that she need not worry about Him or about herself. Her relatives would take care of her; after all, His father's property was there. They would tend to her even if her health deteriorated.

He informed her that though He might be far away from her, by being a Sannyasi, He would be benefitting her much more than if He were to be physically with her. Aryamba told Him, "I gave You permission to become a Sannyasi since it was my wish that You should live. However, You are my only son. If I die, You should come and perform my obsequies. Otherwise, what is the use of having begotten You as my son?"

Unwilling to disappoint His mother, Bhagavatpada declared, "I shall fulfil your desire. Wherever I may be and in whatever condition, I shall come to you in the hour of need and personally perform your last rites."

One might ask, "Was it right on the part of Bhagavatpada to have given such a promise?" Yes, in that circumstance, Bhagavatpada's assurance was perfectly in order. He procured her consent on the basis of such an assurance. However, the promise that Bhagavatpada gave cannot

be given by any other, for another would not be able to visualize the time of his mother's death and arrive at his mother's side immediately. Can a person not assuage his mother with promises, take Sannyasa, and then forget the commitments? No, once one makes a promise, it becomes one's bounden duty to see that one fulfils one's commitment at the appropriate time. No promise should be allowed to turn out to be an empty one. Bhagavatpada certainly valued His promise. When Bhagavatpada was at Sringeri, by the special powers that He had, He visioned the approaching end of His mother.

The Mantra Shastra speaks of several Siddhis or supernatural powers. One such is the 'Paduka Siddhi' by which a person can reach the place of his choice in an extremely short time by his mere wish. Bhagavatpada reached Kalady from Sringeri, by the use of Paduka Siddhi. Is this possible? Yes, we should accept the words of those who have experienced it. My Guru has confirmed the existence of Paduka Siddhi. An instance of the use of Paduka Siddhi comes to My mind. There was a person who lived in Sringeri. My Shastra teacher and that person started out together from Sringeri by walk to go to Kigga for offering prayers at the temple there. The concerned person was old and My Shastra teacher moved a little ahead of him. There was only one road to Kigga and so, if, at any point of time, that person had overtaken My Shastra teacher, the latter would have certainly known. However, when My teacher

reached Kigga, he found that the elder person was already there.

Bhagavatpada had Yoga Siddhi and Mantra Siddhi. However, supernatural powers should not be used. Yet, if one abstains from invoking them even in the exceptional circumstances in which they should be, one would be behaving foolishly. Bhagavatpada used the Paduka Siddhi rightly for the sake of His mother. Reaching Kalady in this manner, He performed her last rites. Today, all of us recognise the greatness of Bhagavatpada, but not many of the people in His time did. Even those close to Him had not known Him properly and as the adage goes, "Familiarity breeds contempt." Hence, His action was objected to by His former relatives in Kalady. They contended that as He was a Sannyasi, He was not eligible to perform the rites.

Bhagavatpada's action was guided solely by the consideration that the assurance given by Him to His mother prior to His departure had to be carried out at any cost. Aryamba attained the exalted status that she rightly deserved. Bhagavatpada did not act out of attachment; nor was He motivated by the desire to fulfil some personal ends. It is true that Sannyasis are prohibited from performing funeral rites, but Bhagavatpada was a Brahmavit, a knower of the Truth and such knowers are beyond restrictions.

निस्त्रैगुण्ये पथि विचरतां को विधिः को निषेधः ॥

No injunction or prohibition is there for the one who treads the path beyond Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.

A knower of the Truth can accept food from a lowly one who eats dog's meat as well as from a Somayaji, an orthodox person engaged in conducting the Soma sacrifice, with equal poise and without being affected in any way. On the other hand, an ignorant man who is supposed to observe the prescribed rules will be defiled if he breaks the scriptural injunctions, motivated by attachment and lack of self-control. However, in the case of the knower, no defilement accrues. All the actions of such an exalted one take place as a result of the Punyam (merit) earned by those around him who benefit from his actions. When he feels hungry, without any attachment, merely by habit, he stretches out his hand and accepts what is put therein, only to overcome the pangs of hunger. Thus, if it so happens that he gets something from a lowly eater of dog's flesh and he consumes it, there is nothing wrong in his act. He is beyond all distinctions and does not cognise differences between holy and lowly ones.

If some worldly restrictions were brought to his attention, he might merely say, "Oh, is it so?" The situation is entirely different when one does something with deliberation and doership, both of which do not apply in the case of the knower. Infants do not care to distinguish urinating in a standing posture and in a sitting posture. They are solely guided by their urge to urinate and

they fulfil it; none would object to the child's conduct. The case of the knower who ever revels in the Atma is on a similar footing. Normal restrictions do not apply to him. Such a person does not incur sin due to his actions. His earlier sins do not yield fruit as they have been burnt by the fire of his knowledge of the Truth. His subsequent actions do not touch him as he is free from the sense of doership.

Bhagavatpada's concern was only with regard to the fulfilment of the promise that He had made earlier. What was the fruit of such performance of funeral rites? There was no fruit for Him as He remained established in the Atma. It may be objected that there was a transgression of the scriptural prohibition but this is insignificant in His case. Indeed, it is wrong to transgress the Shastra but in the case of a knower of the Truth, this would not be objectionable.

There is a humorous tale that I have heard. It is historically absurd and perhaps concocted by one who did not have regard for Madhvacharya. Nevertheless, I shall narrate it here solely because it demonstrates what amounts to doing a certain act with attachment and with a sense of doership and doing the same act without attachment and without the sense of doership. It seems that Bhagavatpada and Madhvacharya were walking together on a very hot day. They felt quite thirsty and stopped at the sole place of habitation that was in sight. At that place only toddy was available. Bhagavatpada took it

and gulped it down as He just wanted some liquid to assuage His thirst. Though dissuaded by Bhagavatpada, Madhvacharya also asked for toddy and drank it saying, "When You can take it, why not I?"

After this, they proceeded to walk for some more distance. Again, they were overcome with thirst. They entered the building there; it was a smelting factory. As only molten iron was available, Bhagavatpada took some of it and drank it. Then He asked Madhvacharya if he wanted to follow suit. Madhvacharya protested that he would not take molten iron as it would scorch his throat. At this, Bhagavatpada told him, "In that case, you should purify yourself for the toddy that you drank a little while ago." This narrative brings forth strongly the import of

निस्त्रैगुण्ये पथि विचरतां को विधिः को निषेधः ॥

(For one who is treading the path beyond Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, what injunction is there and what prohibition?)

Bhagavatpada, like Rama, showed by His life, what an ideal son is like. He fully carried out the Vedic teaching:

मातृदेवो भव ।

(Venerate your mother as a god.)

Bhagavatpada mentally renounced the world at Kalady, even while He was gripped by a crocodile. After making His promise to His mother, He went in search of a Guru to get Himself formally initiated into Sannyasa. Nowadays,

several people take to Sannyasa but do so by resorting not to a Guru but to a cloth shop. There, they purchase an ochre dress. They are particular that their apparel, which includes a shirt, be glossy and well-ironed. Tonsuring is a mere formality to them. After donning the ochre robes, they give themselves some new names and thereafter deem themselves to be Sannyasis. Subsequently, such people can be seen in places like hotels and cinema theatres. There is a prescribed way of doing things. The Veda says:

तद्विज्ञानार्थं स गुरुमेवाभिगच्छेत्
समित्पाणिः श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्मनिष्ठम्॥

A seeker of the knowledge of the Truth has necessarily to approach, with reverence, a Guru who is a knower of the scriptures and is established in Brahman.

If a man tries to know the Truth on his own by simply reading books, he will not be successful. Consider the case of a person who has approached a Guru and carried out intense spiritual discipline in an earlier birth but failed to get the realization of the Truth before passing away. Such a person would easily get knowledge in his next birth. In exceptional cases, he may not even require a Guru. In the Upashanti Prakarana of the Yoga Vasishta, there is a story relating to how king Janaka of Videha obtained knowledge without formal instruction from a Guru. Janaka was walking alone in a grove near his palace, when he heard a song sung by several Siddhas.

The song propounded the Truth. For instance, one of the verses that he heard was:

द्रष्टृदर्शनदृश्यानि त्यक्त्वा वासनया सह ।
दर्शनप्रथमाभासमात्मानं समुपास्महे ॥

(Renouncing the seer, the seeing and the seen, together with all mental tendencies, we resort to the Self which is the root consciousness beyond objectification.)

On hearing the song, he automatically and straightaway became enlightened. In the Veda, we hear of Vamadeva who obtained the realization of the Truth even when he was lying in his mother's womb. On the other hand, we daily read the Gita, which contains a lucid exposition of the Truth, but our activity amounts to no more than some mumbling of words; we continue to remain ignorant. The remedy lies in approaching the right person who has direct knowledge of the Truth. Learning from such a one would certainly yield the desired result but not mere study of books or argumentation. The ideal Guru knows how to instruct the disciple according to the latter's capacity. That is the reason why the Shruti declares :

तद्विज्ञानार्थं स गुरुमेवाभिगच्छेत्
समित्पाणिः श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्मनिष्ठम् ॥

(For knowing that Reality, he should go with sacrificial faggots in hand to a teacher versed in the Veda and absorbed in Brahman.)

The disciple must serve his Guru sincerely, be eager to learn from him and satisfy him. The Guru must be a knower of the Truth. With reference to a Guru who is not a knower of the Truth and who goes astray, it is said:

गुरोरप्यवलितस्य कार्याकार्यमजानतः ।
उत्पथं प्रतिपन्नस्य परित्यागो विधीयते ॥

(The Guru who is defiled, does not cognise what is proper and improper and treads the wrong path must be discarded.)

The very scripture that says that the Guru must be served with great sincerity also says that the Guru must be discarded. It seems that there is a contradiction. Actually, there is none. Serving and obeying a Guru is the rule while discarding him is the exception. We can now consider an example of a scriptural rule and its exception.

When a person is not in a position to take a regular bath, the Shastra permits him to don Vibhuti and to treat this act as equivalent to a bath; this is a concession. But taking advantage of this concession, if one were to decide to bathe only during summer and to totally give up bathing during winter, it would amount to misapplication of this concession. During illness, if a doctor were to instruct a patient not to bathe and, if the patient were to insist that he must have a bath as it is a prerequisite for Sandhya Vandanam, the patient would be behaving like a fool. Let him make use of the Shastraic concession

and go ahead with the application of Vibhuti as the substitute for a bath.

Another extreme case is that of a lazy man not willing to leave his bed in winter, saying that he would happily recite the Sandhya Vandana Mantras, sitting in bed, after taking advantage of the concessional application of Vibhuti. Is this truly an emergency situation? No. The Shastras have prescribed concessions only after considering several aspects. One has to carefully analyse them and then try to ascertain the purport of such injunctions. Otherwise, what will result is a desire-prompted misinterpretation of the Shastra.

Bhagavatpada wanted to set an example by adhering to the scriptural norm by approaching a Guru, receiving Sannyasa and learning at the Guru's feet. So, He approached sage Govindapada. Govindapada was in Samadhi, the acme of Yoga, at that time. Bhagavatpada did not disturb His Guru but humbly waited on with the sincere longing for the Darshan of the exalted Guru's holy feet. On coming out of Samadhi, Govindapada asked, "What brings You here? Who are You?" Bhagavatpada replied in ten verses commencing with:

न भूमिर्न तोयं न तेजो न वायु-
 र्न खं नेन्द्रियं वा न तेषां समूहः ।
 अनैकान्तिकत्वात् सुषुप्त्येकसिद्ध-
 स्तदेकोऽवशिष्टः शिवः केवलोऽहम् ॥

(I am not the earth, nor water, nor fire, nor wind, nor Akasha, nor the senses, nor their collection. As they are subject to destruction, I am the residue that is established in deep sleep. I am Shiva, the absolute.)

This composition is known as Dashashloki. Taking the cue from the reply, the Guru, perceiving the divine plan underlining the unique disciple's arrival, prepared himself to play the role of an instrument in the execution of the divine plan. He accepted Bhagavatpada as a disciple and imparted the great Brahmopadesha to Him. Brahmopadesha is ordinarily understood to be the instructing of the Gayatri, for Brahma is the Veda and the Veda has the Gayatri as its basis. The other meaning of Brahmopadesha is instructing about Brahman, the Supreme. This is what is meant in the context. This instruction brings about the identity of the individual soul with the Supreme.

Is this akin to converting a tiger into a goat? No, that is impossible. Even a dog that is black cannot be made white nor one that is white be made black. What then to speak of changing a tiger into a goat? However, if a goat had been painted as a tiger, the task of converting this "tiger" into a goat can be accomplished by simply washing the paint away; the "tiger" then "becomes" a goat. If the soul were to be really finite in its nature it would not be possible to make it the infinite Supreme by any teaching whatsoever. Only seeming finitude can be removed, so as to bring out the inherent infinitude to the limelight.

How is this possible? The seeming finitude is merely due to name and form. How did the originally absolute infinite entity become the finite individual soul?

तदात्मानं स्वयमकुरुत् ।

(That Brahman created Itself by Itself.)

तदैक्षत बहु स्यां प्रजायेयेति

(The Supreme visualised, "I shall become many. I shall be born.")

How can there really be anything other than It, if all these names and forms are merely Its own appearances?

The Veda says:

नासदासीन्नो सदासीत्

(In the beginning there was neither the unmanifest nor the manifest; there was just Brahman.)

The Gita says:

ममैवांशो जीवलोके जीवभूतः सनातनः

(It is verily a part of Mine which has become the eternal individual soul in the world.)

The 'many' is actually only a part of the One, until the 'many' merges in the source, that is, in the Supreme. Upon the individual soul merging with Brahman, all the names and forms vanish.

यथा नद्यः स्यन्दमानाः समुद्रेऽ-
स्तं गच्छन्ति नामरूपे विहाय ।

(Just as flowing rivers give up their names and forms and become indistinguishable on reaching the ocean...)

This is the instruction that Bhagavatpada was blessed with by His Guru. During His stay with His Guru, Bhagavatpada, by the use of His Yogic power, brought succour to the suffering people of the region by taking into His Kamandalu, the flood waters of the Narmada. Later, in accordance with the instructions of His Guru, He set out correcting the attitude of the various people who were following several schools propounded by men merely on the strength of their intellect. He analysed their viewpoints thoroughly and laid bare, before such blind followers, the lacunae contained in their merely relying upon the intellect and upon persons who propound theories having their fancies as basis.

कपिलो यदि सर्वज्ञो कणादो नेति का प्रमा ।
तावुभौ यदि सर्वज्ञौ मतिभेदः कथं तयोः ॥

(If Kapila were to be accepted as the all-knowing one, what is the justification in denying such a status to Kanada? If it be held that both are all-knowing, why is it that their views differ?)

Reasoning that springs from the mere imagination of persons lacks conclusiveness, for man's conjecture has no limits. Thus, it is seen that an argument discovered

by adepts with great effort is falsified by other adepts, and an argument hit upon by the latter is proved to be hollow by still others. So, nobody can rely on any argument as totally conclusive, for human intellect differs. Why not rely upon the reasoning of somebody having wide fame say, for instance, Kapila, under the belief that this must be conclusive? Such reasoning too is inconclusive for even people whose greatness is well-recognised and who are the initiators of schools of thought are seen to hold divergent views.

There are several schools of thought in the world that accept the existence of God. What is the speciality of those who accept the authority of the Veda? Most of the religions have some starting point in time. Their followers aver that God made known His laws to mankind through some messengers of His. These messengers were sent well after God had created the world. So, what is the fate of those who existed prior to God making known His laws? Can they be denied a chance for liberation? This fallacy cannot be set right by the followers of those religions. The correct stance accepted by the followers of the Veda is,

सह यज्ञाः प्रजाः सृष्ट्वा पुरोवाच प्रजापतिः ।

(In the beginning of creation, having created beings together with the sacrifices, Prajapati said...)

That is, the Lord manifested this world and also His teaching, the Veda, coterminously. This teaching, the

Veda, specifies two paths - the Karma Marga, the path of works and Jnana Marga, the path of knowledge. The former path occupies the major portion of the Vedic teaching and it is meant for a large section of the people. On the other hand, the Jnana Marga is meant for a few and is relatively tough.

मनुष्याणां सहस्रेषु कश्चिद्यतति सिद्धये ।
यततामपि सिद्धानां कश्चिन्मां वेत्ति तत्त्वतः ॥

(One in thousands strives for liberation. Even among such persons, scarcely one succeeds in knowing Me as I am.)

Both the paths are prevalent in the world. Bhagavatpada clearly taught, in His Upadesha Panchakam:

वेदो नित्यमधीयतां तदुदितं कर्म स्वनुष्ठीयताम्

Study the Veda daily and perform sincerely the actions ordained therein. First, the Upanayanam ceremony must be performed. Next comes Upakarma or the preparation to the formal study of the Veda, then the actual study, then the performance of the various prescribed duties, then recourse to the householder's life and then the ascertainment that the worldly life is trivial. This is the sequence that Bhagavatpada talks of. When disgust for worldly life arises, one should renounce the home.

निजगृहात्तूर्णं विनिर्गम्यताम् ॥

Such disgust results when a person realizes that by just wallowing in his worldly activities, he is doing neither

good to the world, nor to his own finite family or to himself. He now turns within and attempts to bring about the reform in himself. Upon analysing, he finds the world to be without any stuff.

असारमेव संसारं दृष्ट्वा सारदिदृक्षया ।

(Having seen that the world is definitely puerile and desirous of apprehending the essence (the inmost Truth)...)

He finds it futile to look for any meaning in the world. How can one conclude that there is no true happiness in the world? Nobody is able to guarantee anything of lasting happiness here. Worldly people speak of one thing as giving happiness and, subsequently alter their position and say exactly the opposite of what they had said earlier. One who is happy at one instant is seen to be sorrowful the very next instant. How then can we say that there is any significant meaning behind worldly existence?

When required to perform an underwater job, we get into the water attired in a tight-fitting rubber garment, wearing a mask and carrying a breathing apparatus. But do we go about in that fashion when driving a car? No, we just put on trousers and a shirt. Thus, we take different stances in different situations. Likewise, till such time as we resort to discrimination and develop dispassion, we are enamoured with worldly life. On acquiring dispassion, we see the world as puerile and

seek to renounce it. Till we realize the Truth, regardless of whether we have desires or limited dispassion, the world appears real to us. Once we realize the Truth, we see the world as a mere appearance.

Many are unable to digest the teaching of Bhagavatpada that the world is only an appearance. They wonder, "What is false here? Is our sitting here now false? Is our eating our daily food a mere appearance? What is true and what is false?" To such queries, the reply is that Bhagavatpada's teaching about the unreality of the world is pertinent to those who have realised the futility of worldly experience and have obtained an understanding of the Supreme Reality. Till that realization dawns, we are left with little option but to look upon this world as if it were true. It would be absurd to insist that Bhagavatpada, being a knower of the Supreme Reality, should declare that the world is real. Bhagavatpada gave His teaching on the strength of His realization.

A certain job was said to be lucrative as it fetched a handsome salary of Rs.500/- per month ten years ago. But do we say that a job which fetches the same Rs.500/- per month today is lucrative? Situations have changed and so has the value of money. Likewise, depending upon whether a person gets realization of the Truth or does not, the situation is different.

We have to understand clearly as to what the knowers mean when they say that the world is a mere appearance. It is definitely not a void. There is an entity called "Badhya"

or sublatale and another called "Trikala Abadhya", one that is unsublatable at all times, past, present and future. This world is present now. Before it originated, it was not present. Will it subsist in the future? We cannot say. Everyone accepts that this world exists at present. The Shastras and the materialists say this but in a slightly different manner. Both agree that the world has reached its present state after undergoing several changes. In course of time, it will not be.

What will not subsist in the course of time, cannot be said to be unsublatable. But the Brahman of the Upanishads is one which always was, is and will be. This is what is meant by Reality. But the world does not satisfy this condition. That is why it is said to be unreal whereas Brahman, which is unsublatable, is regarded as the only Reality. This is the teaching of Bhagavatpada. It is the same Reality that appears to us as all the forms seen in the world.

वासुदेवः सर्वमिति स महात्मा सुदुर्लभः ॥

(Rare is the great one, who knows, "Vasudeva is all.")

The one who realises this Truth is transformed into a totally different person. His actions are no longer motivated by considerations of his earlier ignorant state. Performing Sandhya Vandanam is an injunction. There is a person who sits in Samadhi on one evening. Even after the lapse of three days, he does not regain outward consciousness. Can he be said to incur sin for

not performing Sandhya Vandanam? No. Had he been conscious of the Sandhya period, an objection might have been raised. But he is totally unaware of it and is lost in bliss. Later on, if anyone were to tell him that he was in deep meditation for three days, he would be surprised.

On the other hand, it is common knowledge that ordinary persons cannot sit even for a minute in total concentration. For them, Sandhya Vandanam is obligatory. The knower has transcended all such injunctions and prohibitions. In his case, the unreality of the world is obvious. For him, the world does not appear as apart from himself. Distinction asserts itself only when you and I are regarded as different. It is only the One that appears as you and I. Where then is diversity? This, in a nutshell, is the teaching of Bhagavatpada.

He did not propound any new theory. What had been existing down the ages in the form of the Upanishadic teaching had been tainted by the ignorant. Bhagavatpada cleansed this teaching of its impurities and restored it to its pristine purity. He did not prescribe or impose any new deity for worship. He only approved of the various deities being worshipped. There are sects which don Vibhuti, sandal paste or the Namam on the forehead. Each practitioner follows his prescribed mode of worship. One can find several such systems in vogue in the North. There are devotees of Sri Rama as well as those of Sri Krishna. Both adorn their foreheads with sandal

paste, but differently. There is, nevertheless, no second opinion about the need to adorn the forehead and to not leave it blank.

Bhagavatpada solved the difficulty inherent in a variety of sects opposing each other. If the Supreme Lord is denoted as Shiva, the adherents of the Vaishnavite sect oppose this. Likewise, if the Supreme Lord is Vishnu, Shaivites are dissatisfied. Actually, Shiva and Vishnu are not different; they are manifestations of the single Supreme Reality.

To illustrate, using pure water, one can prepare "Payasam" (a sweet drink), "Rasam" (a diluted soup) or a beverage like coffee. But these cannot be effectively made with the saline water of the sea. If the Supreme actually had a name and form intrinsic to It, such as that of Shiva or Vishnu, then It cannot be everything. In other words, if It were Shiva, It cannot be Vishnu and if It were Vishnu, It cannot be Shiva. Such a Brahman would be like the saline water of the sea. On the other hand, the Brahman established by the Upanishads is like pure water. It does not have any attributes of Its own. It is simply Truth and consciousness; It is infinite.

It, however, appears, owing to Its power, as Shiva or Shakti or Vishnu. Which of these manifestations can be said to be most real? Each group has it that his own deity is the greatest. The Supreme appears differently to different devotees, but in truth It is the Absolute. Bhagavatpada accomplished His task of establishing

the sameness by taking care to see that no devotee was displaced and that no devotee was set up against another. The great master showed each adherent the way to the Absolute by making him tread his chosen path without conflict with the other paths. In effect, He did this by dotting the i's and dashing the t's without radically upsetting the various systems.

He emphasized the need for worshipping the Supreme with form, for without such a sincere worship, the mind will continue to remain unsteady. An unsteady mind cannot grasp the infinite attributeless Absolute. The need for meditation on God with form was thus stressed. Madhusudana Saraswati, the famous all-knowing author of Advaita Siddhi, has said:

ध्यानाभ्यासवशीकृतेन मनसा तन्निर्गुणं निष्क्रियं
ज्योतिः किञ्चन योगिनो यदि परं पश्यन्ति पश्यन्तु ते ।

“By means of the mind brought under control by the practice of meditation, Yogis behold the Supreme Light that is free from attributes and activity. Let them do so.”

अस्माकं तु तदेव लोचनचमत्काराय भूयाच्चिरं
कालिन्दीपुलिनोदारे किमपि यन्नीलं महो धावति ॥

“But I am quite contented with the vision of the luminous blue deity, Krishna, who wanders about the banks of the river, Kalindi.”

The purport of the teaching is that one should steady the mind by resorting to the practice of meditation on God with form. Sage Vidyaranya has mentioned in the Panchadasi that there is a practice of worshipping the Lord as dwelling even in the pipal and banyan trees. He cites several such cases and concludes that even such a sincere worship is not unacceptable to those who regard the Supreme as the attributeless reality that appears as everything.

What Bhagavatpada stressed was that while there can be no objection to worshipping the deities that have come down traditionally to each person, the worship of deities opposed to the Shastraic way has to be given up.

Coming to the topic of liberation, who can get it? Evidently, he who possesses the requisite qualifications such as an ardent desire for emancipation. He who lacks the requisite qualifications will not get it. For a post that requires a candidate who has passed the IAS examination, a contender, even though he may be a genius, cannot apply if he has not passed the qualifying examination. Likewise, even though one is capable of accomplishing several other things, one cannot hope to get liberation if one does not possess intense dispassion.

Dispassion leads to mental control, control of the senses, withdrawal, forbearance, faith, one-pointed concentration and finally to intense desire for liberation. He who has a burning desire to be free quickly realizes the Truth and gets liberated.

Bhagavatpada taught in His Upadesha Panchakam:

वेदो नित्यमधीयतां तदुदितं कर्म स्वनुष्ठीयताम्
 तेनेशस्य विधीयतामपचितिः काम्ये मतिस्त्यज्यताम् ।
 पापौघः परिधूयतां भवसुखे दोषोऽनुसन्धीयताम्
 आत्मेच्छा व्यवसीयतां निजगृहात्तूर्णं विनिर्गम्यताम् ॥

(Study the Veda everyday. Perform well the acts enjoined therein. Worship God through the performance of duties. Give up the thought of engaging in desire-prompted rites. Eradicate the host of sins. Contemplate the faults in worldly enjoyments. Establish the desire for the Self. Quickly go away from home.)

“If these are practised sincerely”, said Bhagavatpada, “You can become a Shaiva, a Shakta, a Vaishnava, etc., in the true sense of the terms.” To the Kapalikas, He advised, “Desist from scripturally-unacceptable conduct. By all means, meditate on your chosen deity, Bhairava, but do so in a Sattvic way.” He taught, “One can attain the Highest by hearing about the Truth, by cogitating upon what has been heard, and by focussing on what has been determined beyond doubt by hearing and cogitation. However, it is essential that one give up practices contrary to the scriptures and follow the scriptural path with dispassion. One can then, realize the Upanishadic Brahman as one’s own self.”

The most compassionate Guru, Sri Shankara Bhagavatpada, rendered all of us indebted by His kind and profound

teaching. Smartas, the followers of Bhagavatpada, when questioned as to whether they are Shaivas or Vaishnavas, reply that they are neither. They swear by the Shastra and say that they are followers of the Veda and the Smritis. They do not follow any particular Agama. On account of this, one should not hastily conclude that they do not belong to any category. As they follow the Shastraic injunctions, they are certainly followers of the Upanishadic tradition. Those who fail to understand this, raise irrelevant objections against them.

To illustrate, some boys showed a lot of enthusiasm for learning Sanskrit. The teacher taught them the various Shabdās like Rama, Hari, Shambhu, etc. He also taught them the Pitru Shabda. A certain student's father, upon questioning his boy about the Pitru Shabda, got irritated even though the boy correctly recited the declensions. As the Pitru Shabda declensions did not follow the manner of the Rama Shabda declensions, the father erroneously felt that the boy was wrong. He scolded the boy as well as the teacher and put an end to the learning itself. What is one to do with such persons? How can they be corrected?

If one mistakes one thing to be another and expresses his displeasure and anger, can it be the fault of a teacher, such as Bhagavatpada? A person with a jaundiced eye will insist that a conch is yellow, however much he is told that it is white. Bhagavatpada's teachings do not give rise to any kind of likes, dislikes, delusion, envy, egotism, etc. He wants us to realize,

तदेकोऽवशिष्टः शिवः केवलोऽहम् ॥

(I am the non-dual, pure, absolute Truth that remains as the residue when the cosmos is sublated.)

We, who are fortunate to be His followers, will be gravely erring if we do not reverentially pay our obeisance to Him on such an occasion. The twelfth birth centenary of Bhagavatpada is being celebrated in a fitting manner by numerous persons. Several deserving persons are being honoured on this occasion. I am glad that the event has proceeded so well.

हर नमः पार्वतीपतये हर हर महादेव ।
जानकीकान्तस्मरणं जय जय राम राम ॥



Arare sage, who renounced the world before completing 14 years of age and who attained Nirvikalpa Samadhi, the highest state of Yoga, before He was 20, **His Holiness Abhinava Vidyatheertha Mahaswamigal** was a renowned Jivanmukta and a scholar par excellence in Tarka and Vedanta. He adorned the sacred Sringeri Sharada Peetham and brought great glory to it during the 35 years of His pontificate as its 35th Jagadguru Shankaracharya. The very embodiment of compassion, the Acharya graced innumerable devotees in myriads of ways. His numerous benedictory addresses in Sanskrit, Hindi, Kannada, Telugu and Tamil were characterized by lucidity, cogency, practicality, humour and accurate exposition of the intricacies of the scriptures. This book contains eleven of His gracious talks delivered in the three years preceding His Mahasamadhi on September 21, 1989.

भिद्यते हृदयग्रन्थिर्दृष्टे यस्मिन्निति श्रुतिः ।
जगौ परावरं शान्तं तं विद्यातीर्थमाश्रये ॥

I take refuge in that tranquil Vidyatheertha who is the Supreme One, about whom the Veda says, "On seeing Him, the knot of the heart (the host of impressions of ignorance in the form of desires that hang on to the intellect) is rent asunder."

- H. H. Bharathi Theertha Mahaswamigal

The Jagadguru Shankaracharya of Sri Sringeri Sharada Peetham



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